**How to Run an Overhead-Free Business**

**Introduction**

This hub is mostly based on an article Colin Wright (Exilelifestyle.com) published earlier this month on his blog in [lifestyle design](http://exilelifestyle.com/entrepreneur/running-overheadfree-business/). Other tips are from various experts around the web including: [Dan Schawbel](http://mashable.com/2009/02/05/personal-branding-101/) and [Anita Campbell](http://smallbiztrends.com/2009/02/creative-tips-saving-money-business-growth.html). You might notice that this article has a video on personal branding, and that insight was taken from two personal branding experts. The reason for this is there is some overlap in personal branding and small business branding, so I assure you the content is both useful and relevant to running an overhead-free business.

**What You Should Already Have Established**

If you want to start and expand your business without spending yourself into failure, it is essential that you begin with branding. And if you haven't noticed, the Internet has transformed into a place where consumers want to interact with their favorite brands and know something about the companies they're involved with instead of just shopping anywhere.

You might have noticed the popularity of Twitter. Why are small businesses using Twitter? It allows them to often put a face to their businesses. And, usually there will be one or two people in charge of interacting with customers. Many businesses have even started monitoring the conversations around their brand and turning negative experiences into positive ones by reaching out to those that are complaining and offering to help.

Have a sense of your brand, your niche, and your customers. Spend some time examining your personal values, others in your niche, and talking with potential customers (those that are fans of competing brands). When you are able to put these things down on paper in detail you are ready to consider strategies for reaching your potential customers (audience).

**The Right Attitude**

Be willing to put the time in or the money up to have a professional looking brand developed, and if you want to keep it overhead-free, then you need to forget some of the unnecessary traditional fixtures of a business: office space (laptop with Web access), elaborate phone system (GoogleVoice/Phonebooth free), and advertising (social media campaigns with metrics).

If you have awesome design skills, that’s great. Spend the time to develop a logo, tagline, and photo for your web presence. If you don't have the skills, hand these duties over to a freelancer (be sure to check their portfolio; I can't stress that enough!) These things are the fixtures of an online business or brand.

Many new business owners get caught up in trying to mimic the already established brands. They spend money in PPC (pay-per-click) trying to get more traffic; they spend money outsourcing SEO and customer service even though they have not established positive cashflow. Doing these things almost assures that you will spend yourself out of business and possibly get yourself into financial trouble.

**What To Do**

***Start Free*** One of my marketing buddies and the revered [Seth Godin](http://untemplater.com/video-interview/untemplater-interview-seth-godin/) recommend starting free. Start from where you are and build. If you want to have a billion dollar business, chances are you will have to hire someone down the line, but it is perfectly plausible and practical, ask [Colin Wright](http://colinismy.name), to start and run an overhead-free business making six figures a year.

**Get Your Blog/Website Developed** It should be complete with the logo(s), tagline, and photo(s) that you had previously developed. The days of a website being an online brochure about your business are gone. There should be a link to your brand's Twitter page and commenting and social bookmarking enabled at a minimum. Visitors should have a reason to keep returning to your website. What can you offer "for free" that your potential customers need/love?

Your website is a hub. All the other profiles you develop in the future should link back to it. The goal is to provide another place that your customers/potential customers will love to hang out at and chat about. Here's the key: provide them with what they are looking for, and they will talk. Cheat them and they will talk more.

**Expand** When you are ready, as in when you have developed a solid following of interactive potential clients on Twitter and network of other professionals that you consult for advice, you can move on to developing a presence on YouTube, Facebook, and other "industry specific" social networks. It is easy to send out a few tweets from Twitter asking people you've formed a relationship with to join your Facebook page and subscribe to your YouTube account. But, if they barely know you, why would they want to? Find out where else your potential customers are hanging out online and establish a presence there too. And to give yourself back time, have an affiliate program developed by someone with experience on how to make them work for you.

**Tips from Anita Campbell**

* **Collaborate** with other business owners that provide businesses and services that your potential customers use/need.
* **Presell** a product or idea to raise the capital to develop it or finish it.
* **Create events** and sell advertising space and tickets (spots). Enable attendees to invite others.
* **Contact media outlets** offline (newspapers, trade magazines) and online (blogs), and tell them about your latest developments.
* **Create a distinct and memorable experience** for customers.

This final tip is arguably the bread and butter of small business. Colin Wright recommends passing your savings on to your customers. Use that money that you are saving to create better unique experiences around your products and services. When a small business is able to [create an experience](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA) that causes a customer to love their brand, and this often creates a repeat customer/loyal fan. This is why people buy Apple products. And I have talked with a lot of Apple enthusiasts. Apple users love design. Cost? Not an issue. They had amazing experiences that caused them to tell me that I should buy Apple products.

**Disclaimer:** These tips are just suggestions, if forming a business/changing a current one, be sure to consult your legal counselor. That said, these strategies work best for web-based businesses. If you want more information on how to make these strategies work for traditional (brick and mortar) businesses, I recommend you read some of the work by [Tim Ferriss](http://www.fourhourworkweek.com/blog/2009/12/31/cold-remedy-15-real-world-lifestyle-design-case-studies-now-its-your-turn/).

I wrote this article two years ago under my Hub Pages account: Lis Carpenter.