

5 Tips for Working “In” and “On” Your Business...At the Same Time

By Caroline Jordan MBA

Congratulations! You just landed a big new contract. Now for the bad news. Who will run your company while you're buried under the onslaught of work? Often a new project will derail a business owner's efforts to build a successful business—marketing activities screech to a halt, bookkeeping tasks pile up, planning is thrown out the window, and your friends wonder whatever became of you. When the project ends and you rise slowly to the surface, you often experience a cash flow crunch because no one was taking care of business while you were working.

So, how do you avoid the lingering negative effects that can hold your business back while you get the job done?

1. **Planning is everything.** With a solid plan in place you stand a much better chance of things running smoothly. A plan allows you to anticipate what needs to happen and also to develop contingency plans for the inevitable times when “stuff happens.”
2. **Your marketing plan.** If you don't already have a marketing plan in place before you get busy, chances are you will experience plenty of cash flow ups and downs. A good marketing plan will map out exactly what you need to do each week to generate future work. Once a system is in place, it's a matter of doing the proscribed activities and tasks. You don't need to think about it, you just need to do it (or get some help doing it).
3. **Building a business vs. working for a living.** Often professionals trade the security of a paycheck for the insecurity of small business ownership only to find themselves struggling to earn a living wage. They end up taking any work they can get and working tons of hours just to pay the bills. In the meantime, they have no time to build their businesses. Building a business and working for a living are two very different goals. Building a business requires regular time spent on planning how to grow, reputation or brand building, seeking out additional sources of income, and developing a business that operates when you're not there or tied up with a project.
4. **Sweating the small stuff.** Often your day hinges on the little things—a computer glitch, a cancelled appointment, a car that won't start, or a childcare emergency. Anticipating and preparing for life's little emergencies makes a world of difference in your ability to keep your business on a smooth track. Sometimes it's as simple as having your clothes ironed ahead of time or making sure you have food for lunches in the house.
5. **Managing the boss.** The key to success for every business is having a leader who has the right mix of optimism, realism, leadership, and expectations. You

wouldn't expect your employees to work non-stop for weeks at a time, so don't do it to yourself. You wouldn't want to work for someone who had unrealistic expectations about what you can get done in a day, so cut yourself a little slack. Be sure to schedule time off and stick to it. And dust off your sense of humor when it goes unused for too long.

Being a business owner means always looking beyond the tree in front of you to the forest beyond. Building a truly successful business means operating at a big picture level while still performing the day to day details. No one ever said the balancing act would be easy but with forethought and discipline it becomes much more doable.

Caroline Jordan, MBA, is a veteran small business owner, accountant, consultant, trainer, and author. She is the owner of The Jordan Result, a company specializing in developing real world, practical resources to help small business owners improve cash flow and business operations. Jordan is also an accounting and business professor and the author of "[Stop the Cash Flow Roller Coaster, I Want to Get Off!](#)" For more tips and strategies to build your business visit www.TheJordanResult.com.