

Lightening the Load ... Getting Help When You Need It

By Elena Fawkner

Lightening the Load ... Getting Help When You Need It

Elena Fawkner
jan@ahbbo.com

A Home-Based Business Online <http://www.ahbbo.com>

Lightening the Load ... Getting Help When You Need It

© 2000 Elena Fawkner

If there's one immutable fact of life when it comes to this business, it's that there's so much to do but so little time to do it all in. At some point around the one year mark, if you've been even moderately successful in your online business, you'll find you've reached the limit of what you can do with the time you have available. At that point you have a choice: to deliberately retard the growth of your business to maintain the status quo, or take on additional resources to help you cope with a business that continues to grow beyond the capacities of just one person.

That's just the choice I was faced with when I returned to the full-time workforce last month after running my online business on a full-time basis for two months. I realized almost immediately that if I kept on the way I was, my business wasn't going to go any further. It was taking all my time to deal with the administrative side of the business and that left none for the really important business-development activities that kept getting pushed to the back-burner until I magically found the time to get to them. In this article, we look at getting help when you need it. And no, I'm not talking about going out and hiring a wage-earning full-time employee or even a part-time employee for that matter although that, of course, is one option open to you. Instead, with a little bit of lateral thinking you may well find you can get the help you need for very little (if any) up-front cash outlay.

COMPENSATING YOUR ASSISTANT

Because (I assume) you're still running your business on a shoestring, you can't afford to pay someone a wage in advance of generating additional income. This means that

whoever you choose needs to be someone who's prepared to work for a percentage of the profits of the business rather than a wage. For this reason, the person you choose will most likely be close to you ... a family member, spouse or very close friend.

As for the proportion of profits that you pay to your assistant, this is up to you and your assistant to negotiate and will depend on several factors including the types of tasks your assistant performs, the time they have available to work (and actually do work) and the overall contribution they make to the business. An assistant who takes an entrepreneurial interest in the business and contributes to its growth in addition to its maintenance should be rewarded accordingly.

TAX CONSEQUENCES

Be sure to get professional advice before you start your arrangement with your assistant. You need to think about tax and other issues such as whether your profit-sharing arrangement might create a partnership rather than an employer-employee relationship (this may or may not be something you want). Also, assuming you're not intending to create a partnership relationship with your assistant, think about whether you want an employer-employee relationship or whether you prefer your assistant to be an independent contractor. There are tax consequences for each of the above scenarios so be sure to talk to your accountant about your options.

CONVERTING TIME INTO INCOME

It should be self-evident that you are going to have to convert the time you free up with the help of your assistant into income. In other words, if your business doesn't generate any more income as a result of you taking on an assistant, by the time you split your profits, you're going to be behind. So it's crucial that you take the time you save and spend it wisely. That means using your time on projects that are going to increase the income of your business by more than the cost of splitting your profits.

WHO TO CHOOSE FOR YOUR ASSISTANT

Now, who should you choose for your assistant? To start with, consider who in your immediate circle has both the time and the ability to help you in your business. It could be a spouse, teenage son or daughter, parent, next door neighbor, brother or sister, close friend or colleague.

In my case, my first choice for an assistant was my computer-savvy mother but, because she is retired and on a pension, she can't earn an income without jeopardizing her

retirement income. I therefore didn't consider her as a real possibility.

I then considered one of my sisters but, because of technical problems (she didn't have a suitable computer and wasn't in a position to get one quickly) that wasn't going to work either. Then my other sister, not computer-savvy but obviously a lateral thinker, suggested that, instead of paying my mother her share of the profits in cash which would have jeopardized her pension, why not pay her in airline tickets from Australia to the US? Because I have recently relocated from Australia to the US, this was a perfect solution because it was expenditure my parents would have incurred anyway. And, from my business's point of view, because my mother works for the business, the airfares the business pays for will be tax-deductible as our visits will be, at least in part, business-related. So, give some thought to your particular circumstances and think laterally. Perhaps you have a teenage son or daughter who is good with computers and is looking for a way to earn additional income. Not only does appointing them as your assistant achieve this goal, it also gives your child crucial experience working in the ecommerce field and that sure can't hurt!

Perhaps you have a close friend who is a single mother and is looking for at-home ways to supplement her part-time income. Perhaps a sibling is in a similar position. You get the idea. I imagine that most people know at least one person that they could strike such an arrangement with.

TASKS TO DELEGATE

OK, so you've lined up your assistant. Let's turn now to the kinds of things you can delegate to him/her. As a general rule, you want to delegate those tasks that are routine, repetitive and which maintain (rather than grow) your business. Growing the business is your job. That's what's meant by working "on" the business rather than "in" the business. Consider the following:

= Processing Subscribe/Unsubscribe Requests

If you publish an ezine, then you know what an administrative headache it can be processing all those subscribe and unsubscribe requests even with the aid of automating software.

Despite your best efforts, and clear instructions in your ezine, there are always at least a dozen people who can't seem to figure out how to unsubscribe themselves and send you a message asking you to do it for them. Then there are those who write asking to be added to your ezine list because they've been referred by a friend and don't have your subscribe URL.

So you add them manually too. Then there are those who want to unsubscribe but keep trying to do so using an email address other than the one they signed up with. They send abusive emails to you when, for some mysterious reason they keep getting your ezine. They, of course, think you're so desperate for subscribers that you have set up your devious systems so that once they're subscribed they're on your list forever.

Annoying as this is for ezine publishers, the real problem is the time it eats up dealing with this stuff. So delegate this task to your assistant.

= Processing Advertising Orders

Another routine task that can be delegated to your assistant is the processing of advertising orders in your ezine. Set up your systems so that all orders go straight to your assistant (with a copy to you so you're in the loop) who then schedules the ad, confirms the booking with the advertiser and then formats the ad ready for the next issue.

= Sending Your Ezine

Actually sending your ezine to your list is something that you can delegate to your assistant, too. Just email your ezine to your assistant when you've finished it for sending to your list. You may even leave your assistant to insert the classified ads.

= Submitting Your Articles

Another routine task that your assistant can take care of is article submissions. I have a list of article submission services that I submit my articles to on a weekly basis, as well as a handful of publishers who have specifically requested to receive them. My assistant sends for each article after it is written (they're all available on autoresponder) and submits it to the article submission sites/lists I specify. A longer-term project is to seek out, on a regular basis, new article submission points. That, also, I have delegated.

= Submitting Your Ezine

Similarly, I have delegated the task of submitting my ezine to the various ezine announcement services that are always springing up all over the place.

= Negotiating Ad Swaps

If you're an ezine publisher, you know that receiving ad swap proposals from fellow publishers is a frequent occurrence. Delegate the negotiation of these swaps to your assistant.

= Web Site Updating

Depending on how computer-savvy your assistant is, they may also be able to take on some simple web site

updating for you. We're not talking about major design changes here, just making routine updates to add your latest ezine, article or advertising information, that sort of thing.

~*~*~*~*~*~

By delegating these routine administrative tasks and any others that may apply to your particular business, you will save yourself several hours of work every week. Don't squander this time! Now you have the time you need to overhaul your site, write the next month's articles for your ezine, investigate and respond to the half dozen joint venture proposals you've received this week, create that ebook you've been meaning to get around to writing and, most importantly, *promoting your business*! As stated earlier, you MUST convert your newfound time into dollars. If not, your business is just going backwards ... the very circumstance you sought to avoid when hiring your assistant.

** Reprinting of this article is welcome! **

This article may be freely reproduced provided that: (1) you include the following resource box; and (2) you only mail to a 100% opt-in list. (Articles are no longer being made available via autoresponder due to large numbers of bounced mails due to full mailboxes.)

Here's the resource box to use if reprinting this article:

Elena Fawkner is editor of A Home-Based Business Online ... practical home business ideas for the work-from-home entrepreneur.

<http://www.ahbbo.com>

[Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)