

Business Myths - Avoid These Common Mistakes

By Maria Marsala

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Maria Marsala
maria@coachmaria.com

Special Projects Coach & Consultant <http://www.coachmaria.com>

Are you very human like me? Have you made mistakes running your business that you "could" have prevented? Very costly and painful, isn't it? Remember what happens after you lean from this painful place called "development"? Once everything has calmed down, and you look at that situation again, 94% of the time you can say, " Boy, I saw that coming!" or "I noticed that and didn't pay attention to it."

An alternative to "learning the hard way" is to learn by evolving - not easy but worth the trip! You'll need to stay ever "present", be patient and courageous, practice and learn to trust your gut. You'll learn to recognize the "red flags" life has given you and pay attention to them rather than neglecting the messages completely. Evolving is about noticing that the universe is asking you to do things differently. So, turn anything that isn't working into "feedback," and go from there. You're worth it! For my readers, as well as myself, I hold the intention that our lessons will be learned from a place of "evolving."

The titles below are things I've heard new business owners say that usually invite painful lessons. Each summary includes some ways to evolve - grow, shift the way you're thinking, and do things differently from the get go. Been in business for while? Then look to see where you are "stuck" in the development problems below - and evolve onwards!

"I need money, so I'll start a business."

If you need money to pay for food, clothing or shelter, go get a job. If you have a job, keep it while you start a business. If you have at least two years worth of income plus \$10,000 for business start-up costs, you have the opportunity to work on your new business full time without having another income. If you start a business from a needy place, that is the message that will come across to prospective clients. When you come from need, it shows in so many ways - most of which you're not even aware of because you're not the one watching and listening to you.

"I hate my boss and I hate being told what to do, too."

Keep your day job until you change your attitude. When you own your own company, it's your responsibility to make sure that everything gets done! And all your clients become mini-bosses!

"I don't need much start-up money because I'm not renting office space."

Supplies, memberships, licenses fees, lawyers, accountants, desks, phones, business cards, lunches, phone service, web designers, logo designers, and hiring a coach/consultant. Guess what... they all cost money! Make sure you have enough money so that you can pay others while you build a strong solid business foundation. Keep asking yourself "what will be the best use of my

time" and consider bartering for services.

"I don't need a business plan for a home business."

Wrong. Every business owner needs some sort of plan. At a minimum, start by designing a Dream Board . The business plan I send each client is called The One Page Business Plan. It's a fun business plan workbook (yes I said fun) and by completing the book you'll have information for your brochure, website and more. My final note on business plans is this... if "doing it perfectly" has stopped you from starting a business plan, forget about owning a business! "Something" will always "come up" and life will change as much in business as it does anywhere. Business Plans are guides to be used wisely and to be looked at and adjusted every 6 months, too.

"I don't know who my ideal client is."

If you know who your ideal client is, you can market effectively. Not sure who your ideal client is? See who you are attracting to your business, know what your professional values are, keep an index card around with your ideal client credentials. Knowing who you're marketing to will save you some money, too.

"I don't have any marketing plans."

Design a marketing plan around the ways you enjoy marketing, market with integrity, and learn how to stretch a little, too. Find ways to market that highlight other skills you have, allow you to do things that give you energy, and won't get boring as time goes on. Then every 6 months sit back and take a look-see what worked and what didn't. Make adjustments where necessary.

"I'm running an inconsistent business."

Read the E-myth Revisited for lots of ideas on how to run a consistent business. The book suggests looking at your business like you'd like to franchise it - even if that's not what you really want to do. "Brand" your business using the same colors on all your marketing materials. Keep customer service and other policies consistent. Give advance warning!

"I can't tell people what I charge."

You aren't alone. Many people aren't comfortable telling people what they charge. Practice at home in the mirror or on friends. Make yourself and your potential clients aware of your prices by designing a rate and fee sheet. Put your prices on your website or in your "hand outs". If you ask someone for their prices, and they don't seem confident about what they're charging, would you buy from them?

"I designed a web site, why isn't the business pouring in?"

Website marketing can be used as an "on-line brochure" if your ideal client will be found on the Internet. If your ideal client won't be found on the Internet, a site consisting of 1 or 2 pages is more than enough. Why have a site at all? In this technical age, having a website listed on your printed materials helps to make your business a bit more trustable . Yet it is better to have NO site than an unprofessional looking site or a site you're not maintaining. Good website maintenance includes submitting your site to search engines, checking links, keeping up with search engine requirements, etc. Of course, the URL (website address) needs to be placed on all your written materials (business cards, stationary, brochure) in order for people to find you. Some sites to visit for search engine info: <http://search-engine-maintenance.com> , <http://www.searchenginewatch.com> , and <http://www.searchengines.com> .

"I just have to market this way."

If having a website is not something you want - then don't have one! There are very successful coaches who have no websites. I found that an old fashioned newsletter worked better for me than a brochure. Find ways to market using your gifts and remember to ask your current and former clients for referrals and testimonials. Market in ways that fit you and that will attract your ideal client. Don't

market in a particular way just because it worked for someone else.

"My life is unbalanced, stressful and overwhelming."

More than half of the people who come to me looking to start a business are already overwhelmed by life's challenges. So they end up having to sort out their personal lives before they take their businesses to the next level. Additionally, you cannot spend 100% of your time on your business without it affecting your life in other ways. You'll end up burnt out and no good to anyone - let alone your business. Use this Life Balance Index and balance your life first. Slowly start your business. And practice extreme self-care to keep your energy level up.

"I can do it on my own. I know how to do it all."

So many home business owners "do it on their own" and fail within the first 1-3 years. Instead, take classes, network (in and out of your field), hire a coach, accountant, virtual assistant, etc. Don't do it alone; it's not healthy, isn't self-caring, and won't support you in the long run.

"I expect all my support will come from family and friends."

While family and friends can be very supportive, they are also apt to be "nice" and "not upset the apple cart." They do not always tell you what you really need to hear - "the absolute truth." Their suggestions and ideas come from where they've been. If they have not been a business owner, they may not offer you what your business requires.

"I'm ready to give up."

OK, OK. Soooo many business owners do so much work and then give up just when things are starting to come together. Some of this is about "putting out fires" or "solving problems" or "fixing" so many things. When you live "in the problem", you're not being very self-caring. It's just as important to notice all the successes you're making with your business. Even I have been at the "give up" or "What am I doing here?" stage of a business - and it's happened more than once. Sometimes the "I give up" stage lasts for a few hours; other times for a few days. If you have a strong support network around you you'll be able to come through this period energized.

"I just need a little more practice and then I'll be ready to launch my business."

Many people become business owners in a field in which they have experience - either as part of their former career or doing exactly what they did in their former career. Then they feel uncomfortable asking for full compensation, or their confidence level goes down, or whatever. Take the leap. Go from "practicing a business" to "owning a business".

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