

# The Top 5 support people solopreneurs need by their side

By Robert Gerrish

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Robert Gerrish  
robert@flyingsolo.com.au

Flying Solo <http://www.flyingsolo.com.au>

Going it alone in business doesn't necessarily mean having to make every decision and consider every action without the input of others. Having a good support group can be an essential ingredient of solopreneur success.

Often drawn from the ranks of friends and acquaintances, some members of what we might call your Virtual Board expect little or nothing in return for their support.

Even if your own skill set fulfils one or more of these positions, having access to someone with similar talents provides valuable endorsement.

## 1. A visionary/creative thinker

I liken such people to helium balloons: bobbing around in the wind bringing smiles to the faces of those around. They are a valuable resource, but always remember this is your business so hang on tightly to the string!

A visionary/creative thinker can see opportunities for growth and development that you, being so involved in the business, cannot. To get the best out of such a person always take a moment to set the context at the outset of a talk: tell them what's happening/what's working/what's not, and give them any inklings you may have regarding possibilities for change. Then get your pen and paper ready and wait for the wind to blow!

## 2. An economist/realist

Boring, boring, boring. Just when you're all creatively fired up along comes someone with a pin to burst the balloon: the economist/realist.

Truth is, we all need one of these. We don't have to do everything that's suggested, but their opinion is often worthy of careful consideration. This person may well be your existing bookkeeper or accountant and if not, the ideas and suggestions generated should almost certainly be discussed with the person officially charged with counting the beans.

Having someone keep a foot on the brake helps keep you in check, just don't allow anyone else's thoughts to dampen your vision. After all, an element of risk is standard equipment for the solopreneur, isn't it?

### 3. A personal well-being manager

Do you really think working long days and through the weekend is good for your health? Me neither. In the long run you'll be no good to your business if you don't take time out, time for yourself, time to nurture your well-being.

Imagine a person whose sole task is to drag you away from your desk, take you into the open air, throw away your home delivery menus and point out the banality of those 'reality' TV shows. This is one cool person to have on your team.

If you're guilty of any (maybe all?) of the above, there will almost certainly be a well-being manager waiting in the wings; one of your friends or relatives who's simply craving to help. Appoint him or her today, you will not regret it.

### 4. A virtual assistant

An invention of the internet age, a virtual assistant is a kind of Man/Woman Friday waiting at the end of your email for any overload work that may crop up.

Regardless of how you access such a person (or what you call them) having someone to hand who can help out with tasks that risk taking you away from what you do best, is extremely valuable.

We're fortunate to have a growing population of such resources, both in our cities and in rural areas. Seek and ye shall find.

### 5. A friendly geek/IT whizz

As unlikely as it may seem, there are people who actually enjoy fixing our computer equipment and who are adept at untangling clashes within our peripherals. Whatever that means.

These days we can access them over the phone, via our email (if it's working) or through house calls. Finding your very own IT specialist can be a hugely liberating experience; it's also essential if you're to make the most of new technologies.

In conclusion, I'd be committing something of a crime if I didn't say a word or two in support of the coaching profession. Having the right coach alongside you can go a long way to providing the kind of support mentioned above, with the added discipline of regular accountability. Coaches usually offer a free trial of their services and often have quite flexible working methods - fitting in with your wants and needs.

For those who may be considering joining the ranks of the solopreneur, free agent or microbusiness owner, working alone probably has great appeal. We should remember, however, that 'isolation' is frequently cited as a major downside and contributor to failure. In such cases, appointing a Virtual Board may just be the answer.

Robert Gerrish is a coach working with those going it alone in business. For more of his tips visit his website at: <http://www.flyingsolo.com.au> or to make contact email: <mailto:robert@gerrish.com.au>

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