



10 Ways to Avoid Failure & Grow Your Business

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1. Focus

The word focus encapsulates developing a strategy, a niche and goals. It also captures the need to prioritise in what you do and the order that you do it. Constantly revisiting what you offering, to whom, how, why and when will ensure it is current and appropriate.

Aligning your activities, your people and your suppliers to this strategy will ensure that everyone is clear about the direction and their role. Keeping your eye on the prize will ensure you eventually achieve it.

2. Manage Your Time

Ask yourself how much of your day is spent on marketing or customer-focused activities as opposed to operational management, admin and time-wasting trouble-shooting. Are you busy rather than effective? There are many time management tactics that can support you. [Manage your emails](#), delegate anything and everything that you do not have to do yourself, leaving the tasks only you can do. Your time is valuable and if it is spent taking twice as long





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preparing the accounts than a professional may take, it is distracting you from your main tasks of strategy, marketing and team development.

3. Know Your Numbers

Cash flow is the greatest cause of failure for otherwise stable growing companies. Do you know your break-even point? Equally, turnover does not equal profit so keeping an eye on the cash balance and overall profit will ensure the business stays financially secure as it grows. A simple debtor/creditor ratio analysis will tell you if you are paying creditors before you have been paid or if you have a healthy cash flow process.

4. What gets measured gets managed

Collecting data and analysing performance indicators may appear to distract you from getting those new customers, however a few key measures will enable you to have a continual updated overview of the health of your business. Look at the Balanced Scorecard as a potential tool to build and monitor your business. You can develop a set of 10-12 KPIs that will tell you if everything is on track or if not, which areas need your attention.

5. Recognise what you are good at and get help for the rest

Businesses start from a good idea and many grow from a skill that the business owner has developed. Managing every aspect of a business, however, does not automatically come alongside that great business idea and competency. The tendency in the early days is to develop as you go. Do as much yourself until you can afford to hire others. This may be false economy as you miss out on the pooled brainpower of diverse experts who can save you time and money. It comes back to the question, what can you do and only you can do? What's left? Who could help you with the rest? It may not need additional finance if bartering is an option.

6. Continue to question and learn

Having an open mind, a willingness to question and a continual desire to learn are all attributes of successful leaders. The two most useful questions for anything you hear, read or see are "Why?" and "So What?". The "so what?" question particularly relates to "what





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does this mean for me and my business?”. One CEO of a large successful American company regularly attends training with her team. Her reasons are that she can always do with a little “sharpening” as well as providing the chance to be a role model and connect with her team.

7. Manage, develop and get the most from your resources

Resources include people, assets and finance. Coaching and developing your people will improve their motivation and productivity as well as their competency. For finance and assets, are you structured in the most optimum way? Are your assets working for you? What additional value could you extract if you looked at other options? Leasing, grants, sharing?

8. Know and stay up-to-speed with your market

Who are the new players in the market? What do your customers think of them? What are your suppliers telling you about how the market is changing? What opportunities or threats do these changes have for you and your business? If you change your offerings or business model what is the likely reaction of your competitors? Customers will not stay loyal just because they like you. You have to offer value for money and be in touch with the latest advances. Regularly analysing your market, talking to industry experts and watching the trends will alert you to the right time to check your focus and adjust whatever is needed. Every market will have Critical Success Factors and being aware of what they are, how you acquire and maintain them will ensure your long-term survival and growth.

9. Build relationships not clients

Much is said about customer service and excellence and two points are key. People buy from people and the basis of the relationship is trust. You first need to develop a relationship which offers the opportunity to build trust and thereby a willingness to trade. The second point is that customers make purchasing decisions based on perceptions, not necessarily knowledge. Even if your customer trusts you, they will not buy if they perceive there might be a better offering elsewhere. Keeping a close relationship will allow you to understand their priorities and demonstrate your superiority in delivering on those priorities.





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10. Never be satisfied

Satisfaction leads to complacency and a gradual shift of focus, usually away from external factors. When you are satisfied it is time to hand over to someone else.

What now?

- Let me know our thoughts on these tips and whether you have any to add to the pool.
- If you would like a no obligations consultation, please email me at hfd@ccconsulting.org.uk
- Why not also join the LinkedIn group The Leadership Forum?
- Sign up to my regular updates
- Let me know your progress

