

## **Quizzical Questions to Ponder: "Are You A Solopreneur In The Making?"**

Are These Statements True or False for You?

These questions (and your 'true' or 'false' answers), can be used as guide to either evaluate your ability to be a 'Solopreneur' or determine where you currently are at in your business.

1. I have readily available resources of time, budget, technology, knowledge and a wealth of ideas at my disposal.
2. I have no problems asking for help when I need it, and am always open to working with others to achieve an ultimate goal.
3. I excel at using my own initiative to complete tasks without the need of direct supervision.
4. I know that salesmanship needs to be a part of my business and will determine my success.
5. I have a terrific support group of people around me, i.e. my family, friends, and colleagues.
6. I'm willing to make short-term sacrifices to gain long-term rewards.
7. I seldom have a problem being creative.
8. I'm comfortable with selling myself and my ideas or product.
9. I enjoy meeting people and am comfortable creating conversations with strangers.
10. I realize that I will make mistakes but I try to learn from them.

If you find that you are uncomfortable with answering some of these questions with a resounding "Yes! That describes me exactly" attitude, then you may need to work on these specific areas to boost your confidence in your success.

Remember: Don't strive for perfection but do work on these areas to avoid rejection!

## **“Top 10 Deadly Mistakes Solopreneur’s can Avoid!”<sup>©</sup>**

By Marcia Merrill

We’ve all heard the “doom and gloom” stories of businesses that have started off with big dreams of success, only to fail in less than a year after opening their doors. Why do some businesses fail to launch yet others soar off into the stratosphere seemingly with ease?

Want to know the ten deadly mistakes new entrepreneurs can avoid? Well, here they are, in all their gory detail, from one who knows. As a recent entrepreneur/solopreneur who longed to "be my own boss", here's what I learned along the way to building my very sustainable small business!

### **1. Ignoring your numbers.**

Know your numbers! Construct a budget for ALL of your business items. I learned this the hard way! By creating an overall business plan (and one just for marketing would be extremely helpful). You can keep track of how your business is doing on a month to month basis. Your marketing plan MUST have a budget so you know your costs vs. income-generating activities. I hadn't a clue about this and dreaded knowing. Don't be tempted to skip doing this! It helps you determine your income needs and how to set your fees plus shows areas where you need to re-think your budgetary allotments.

Remember that your budget and plans are not written in stone! Things will come up – your computer will go on the fritz or a delicious opportunity will come your way. So, simply revise your plan. Revisit it at least once per quarter to see how the numbers are looking. Are you on target to reaching your goals? What do you need to tweak?

### **2. Salesperson Denial.**

You are a "salesperson". Regardless of whether you are operating a product or a service based business, you're in sales. Selling can be somewhat clearer if you're offering a product, but make no mistake - offering services is also selling. You're selling YOU!

You **are** the "product" and your packaging is how **you** appear.

So, how DO you appear? Are you a professional? Do you exude warmth and confidence? Do you conduct yourself so others feel comfortable with you and want to work with you? Do you listen first and then speak, or are you waiting to get in there and say your "pitch"?

Listening closely to what your potential customer has to say will allow you to tailor your responses to fit their needs. Knowing what they're looking for or what they expect from you allows you both to be on the same page, and makes the "selling" of yourself that much easier.

### **3. Keeping to yourself.**

Get an objective guide, such as a coach or advisor to bounce ideas off. Or join an association where you can talk with other business owners! I'm in my local Chamber of Commerce and each month I meet with my Executive Dialogues group and share CEO issues. Using your family/friends as sounding boards may be helpful, but they might not be the best advisors or supporters. Some may wonder why you "left that good job and took on this foolhardy risk"?

The first thing I did was get a business coach - an objective listener and advisor who can help me grow my business and understands what a new entrepreneur - a solopreneur - faces daily.

My coach asks me the tough questions and helps me think strategically as I do my plans and budget! Now, I have a clear set of goals in mind that govern everything I do.

### **4. Staying cooped up.**

Make time for activities involving others. Being a solo-entrepreneur can be lonely at times, especially if you're used to having colleagues around to talk with on a daily basis. Make a habit of going to at least one "networking event" or committee meeting each week. I also have lunch twice a week with a friend at a neighborhood coffee place. Your community can be a lifeline. Take time out to phone a friend, email a colleague or take a walk! Get out of the "office" a bit. When you return from your five minute walk, you'll be much more refreshed and willing to tackle your daily workload. It's important to take short "time outs" for you!

### **5. Working for a tyrant.**

Don't be your own "employee"! Don't spend 24/7 on the business! You'll hate it, burnout and maybe even give up! Don't do these things! Learn from my mistakes instead.

You probably started your business to "be your own boss" and have a more harmonious work/life balance. Then you find (especially in the beginning phases of your business), you are totally consumed by your business and trying to do all you can to make it survive!

I know I made this error. My cats would paw and meow at me while I was behind the closed doors of my home office from 8 am – 9 pm. Then I would work downstairs on my laptop until midnight or later! And then the next morning I would wake up and do it all again! Talk about feeling like a hamster on a wheel in its cage!

My husband never saw me without the laptop, and my friends thought I fell off the face of the earth! My clients, however, loved me, because I answered their emails instantly, no matter when! I was exhausted and NOT having any fun - nor were my family and friends whom I was basically ignoring. I had a "job". I was the "employee" with a tyrannical "boss" - me!

As soon as you find yourself doing this, say to yourself "Stop it! I may "own" a business but I will NOT allow it to "own" me!

## **6. Trying to do it all.**

As a new solopreneur, it feels like you and ONLY you can do it! There is no one else. But when you're stressed out and juggling so many balls in the air, some of them are bound to drop!

I learned not only can't you do everything, why would you? Is it a good use of your time trying to learn to do something and spend hours doing it? Why not pay an expert, instead, who can handle this in a fraction of the time you would have spent and concentrate on doing what you do best.

I hired a Virtual Assistant. She is a solopreneur like me and works from home. We talk by email and phone. She maintains all of my databases and my shopping cart set up; submits my articles; researches various software programs and makes knowledgeable recommendations. You might be thinking "How can I afford that?" Well, in my case, I couldn't afford **not** to!

Sometimes you don't even have to pay - you can barter services. I'm getting a brochure done in exchange for a career assessment and interpretation coaching session. Friends of mine have traded their typing skills for printing business cards!

You are limited only by your imagination. Forego that lunch out or new sweater if need be, in order to invest in having an expert help you in your business! It is an investment and frees you up to generate revenue instead of wasting hours trying to figure something out!

## **7. Enduring painful marketing activities.**

Marketing doesn't have to be painful. Use your talents and don't do what you hate!

I love to write, so some of my marketing strategies are writing articles, web logs, newsletters, the curriculum for my teleclasses, and even FREE reports and Top Ten lists.

If you don't like to write - don't! Choose some strategy you enjoy such as public speaking. Perhaps you enjoy interviewing experts. You can record your interviews and put snippets of the recording on your web site, package the recording as a product, or give it away as a free gift to gain the name and email address of prospective client. The bottom line is to pick 3 marketing strategies that you enjoy and concentrate your efforts on them!

## **8. Confusing sales with marketing.**

Do you know what the difference is between sales and marketing? Sales involve placing an order and discussing money where marketing involves activities that lead to the sale, such as networking, flyers, writing articles and teaching FREE teleclasses. Placing an ad involves a cost to you - it in itself doesn't necessarily mean immediate income.

I love being on committees and writing, but neither are contributing to my sales. I've learned I need to spend more time on sales and be aware of what I'm spending my time on. I need to balance out my networking and indirect income-generating activities, with sales activities that get me to the point of having direct conversations with prospective clients. So, how about you? How much time do you spend on sales vs. marketing?

## **9. Taking things personally.**

Most of us got into business because we were passionate about something. The computer engineer loves writing code and inventing ways to create better computer systems, and carpenters love woodworking and designing beautiful cabinetry or furniture. I love coaching and helping others to realize their goals!

When your business is an expression of such passion, it's hard not to take any form of rejection it personally. You may have had (what you thought), was a successful meeting with a new potential client, only to get a phone call an hour later telling you that you're not being hired after all. But it's not about you. Sales are about finding the right fit. It's ok to get a "no"- it's not a reflection of you, and it'll give you more time for prospects that WILL buy.

## **10. Forgetting the big picture.**

Do you remember why you went into business in the first place? You believed in your product or service and that it would be successful. This belief is essential, and it goes a long way to achieving success, but this alone is not enough. You need to also be willing to invest your time and financial resources, to learn and do the necessary things that will help your business to thrive. Enlist experts when needed; consult your business plan once a quarter; and consult your marketing plan annually.

"We do not remember days, we remember moments" - Cesare Pavese.

It is my fervent hope that by avoiding these ten deadly mistakes you will be able to enjoy owning your business and watching it grow and flourish.

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Marcia Merrill, known as the Transition Chick, is a Career/Life Transitions Coach and a solopreneur with a growing business. She helps small businesses go from surviving to thriving! Visit her web site at [www.MarciaMerrill.com](http://www.MarciaMerrill.com) to sign up for a free 25 minute strategy session & you'll also get a free subscription to her newsletter full of tips & resources!