

From Subject Matter Expert to CEO: Lessons in Growth

In my work as a business coach, I often see talented professionals make the leap from being an expert in their craft to running their own business. Recently, I had the opportunity to look back at the first two years of one of my client's journey in his new business. His experience is a masterclass in the growing pains of entrepreneurship and the strategic pivots required for sustainable growth.

Here are the key takeaways for him of transitioning into a leadership role.

1. Mastering Financial and Business Acumen

My client entered the world of entrepreneurship with a solid understanding of his area of expertise, but quickly realized that a solid business plan requires more than just a rough idea of goals. He discovered that "mastery of finances" isn't just about accounting basics; it is about knowing your break-even point, tracking every expense, and setting realistic rates that keep the business afloat without alienating clients.

A critical lesson he learned early on was the danger of over-reliance on a single client. True stability comes from building multiple income streams and maintaining a general practice capable of weathering revenue drops.

2. Efficiency Through Systems, Not Just Hardware

Many new owners think investing in technology means buying the "latest computers and printers". My client learned that operational efficiency actually comes from well-researched, need-specific tools that offer, for example, secure client portals and systemized workflows.

He shifted his mindset from "doing everything myself" to delegating and outsourcing. By hiring professional accountants and outsourcing printing services for bundles, he freed himself from being overwhelmed, allowing him to focus on higher-level firm management.

3. The Shift to Proactive Marketing

In many professions, there are strict rules around advertising. This was the case for my client in his industry in the country he operates in. He initially relied on his existing network, but found that onboarding was not as fast as anticipated. Moreover, he was constantly on the marketing rollercoaster dictated by feast and famine of a non-strategic approach.

Under guidance, he pivoted to proactive marketing within professional boundaries. This included:

- Building a strong LinkedIn presence and a professional website.
- Networking within strategic groups.

- Actively managing his online reputation through client satisfaction surveys and review management.

4. Building a Culture, Not Just a Staff

One of the hardest lessons in any new business is hiring. My client initially faced pressure to hire "family and friends" as favours. However, he realized that for his business to thrive, he had to focus on hiring smart, talented people and treating them exceptionally well with competitive pay and a positive environment. He got the right people on the bus!

He moved away from independent departments and instead fostered a culture of collaboration and continuous learning. When the firm couldn't afford the exact staff they wanted, they invested in development and training to sharpen skills and boost morale.

5. From Survival to Strategic Vision

Perhaps the most important transition was moving from "short-term survival" to strategic planning. In the beginning, my client lacked a long-term vision for his ideal client niche. Over two years, he learned the vital importance of balancing urgent daily tasks with long-term strategic planning to ensure the firm's future.

My client's journey highlights that being a great practitioner is only half the battle. To build a successful business, you must be willing to systemize your operations, diversify your revenue, and invest in your people.

Are you running your business, or is your business running you? It's time to move toward a more strategic, systemized future.

Let me help you live the life you dream of.