

# SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## COMMENTARY

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# Becoming a Strategic Business Owner

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*Last of a series*

Your goal as a business owner should be to design a company that is distinct from you and quite candidly, works in your absence. You should create a separate cash flow entity, not merely a job for yourself. It should pay you a healthy salary plus a return on your investment of money, time and effort. You should build equity. You should build wealth. Bottom line, your role as owner should be to shape, manage and grow this independent and enduring asset – your business.

Your enterprise should function without you, not because of you. I know this sounds bizarre, but hear me out. While you can be the brains behind the enterprise, you should not be like Hercules trying to hold up the entire weight of the company. You will be crushed.

Your business should work harder so you don't have to. You should be able to make money everyday without having to work everyday. You should invest more brain equity and leadership equity and much less sweat equity into your company. Your business should be a product of your brain, not your brawn.

You should strive to build a business that does not enslave you and does not rely on your being present every minute of every day doing all the thinking, deciding, worrying, and working. You must adopt a new way of thinking and acting.

In short, you must become a strategic business owner. Specifically, you must learn to adopt a CEO mindset; systematize and document your business; lead more and work less; create a simple business plan; utilize the leverage of market-

ing; effectively manage your greatest asset, your people; and learn to let go. You must transform the way you see yourself and your business. You must begin to think differently.

As a strategic business owner, your primary aim should be to develop a self-managing and systems-oriented business that still runs consistently, predictably, smoothly, and profitably while you are not there. You should shape and own the business system (an integrated web of processes) and employ competent and caring employees to operate the system.

You should document the work of your business so that you can effectively train others to execute the work. You must make yourself replaceable in the technical trenches of your business.

With a documented operating system, your employees should be able to carry on the work of the business while you focus on big picture priorities or even decide to take a break. You should be able to escape the daily drudgery. In fact, your company should run on autopilot status even while you're on an extended, work-free, guilt-free vacation.

To maintain freedom, independence and fulfillment, as your business grows, so must your leadership effectiveness and operating systems. You must stop micromanaging and start leading (macro managing). You must become more purposeful and proactive. Specifically, I suggest business owners and managers follow the following life-changing process:

**Step one:** Learn to work on yourself by transitioning to a new way of thinking and behaving. Re-program yourself and your habits. Stop acting like an employee and start

thinking like a CEO. Learn to work on your business, not in your business.

**Step two:** Systematize your company by creating, documenting and continually improving all your key processes, procedures and policies. Trust the business system and personnel you put in place.

**Step three:** Increase your leadership capabilities.

**Step four:** Develop clarity of direction for your business and employees by creating a simple business plan and an effective implementation process.

**Step five:** Learn to effectively manage your people, your greatest asset.

**Step six:** Instead of incremental growth, engage the leverage of marketing to achieve substantial, profitable growth.

**Step seven:** Learn to let go, delegate, and truly enjoy business ownership, your relationships, and your life.

By working less in your business, you gain more time to work on your business and make those essential changes necessary to optimize your company and your life. You may well be skeptical. That's normal. However, let me ask you "Are your current paths and strategies working"? If so, you wouldn't be reading this article. If not, I invite you to acknowledge the problems in your business, take responsibility for them, and dare to try new approaches.

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