Tips For The One Person Business

I just got back from spending time in one of my states that I cover for SCORE and I got an excellent question from some very small business CEOs. They asked for some tips for the “one-person business”. This is a great question because many of the businesses that I see start out that way.

At the start of your business, you are doing everything yourself. As you grow, you may decide to hire people to help you act on and manage certain tasks. But not everyone wants to hire help. Some people enjoy making products and managing a business on their own. They want to be a business of one and “stay small and keep it all.”

But those of us who have been there, know very well how difficult that can be. So, I thought about what could I suggest for this kind of CEO. Here are some thoughts.

**Focus your business offerings.** Choose a small segment or niche of retail and/or wholesale Customers. Make absolutely sure you are not trying to be all things to all people. Become super selective about who you sell to, and do not complicate your life by selling internationally. If you are a business that makes a product, only sell into retail stores that order regularly and never balk at paying your prices. Spend most of your time treating your repeat customers like gold, and less time working to attract new customers.

**Master a Single Social Media Outlet.** If you are one of my regular readers, you might have guessed that I would include this toward the top of my suggestions because I believe small business today need to use social media as a part of their marketing strategies. The difference between you and others who use social media is that if you are doing everything yourself, you are better off using a single platform than to try to manage half a dozen of them.

The best thing to do is to have a minimally maintained presence on all of the major outlets (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest), but make it your business to become a master at just one of them. In this way, you can maintain a stellar brand presence at one social media platform, rather than a sub-par presence on all of them. Refer your customers, and other stakeholders to your main social media outlet and
perform minimal monthly maintenance on the rest of them. I always urge small businesses to use a social media management tool that makes it simple to feed several platforms from one place.

**Keep your products/services to a Minimum.** Don’t overwhelm yourself by creating a huge line of products. Keep your inventory fresh and small. Rather than spending time making new lines of products to sell, spend time making your small line of products as unique as you possibly can — with price points to match.

**Automate as much as you can.** You may spend some money here, but it is worth it. Automation is the tool that frees you up to truly enjoy your business, and you can implement it and still maintain the personal touch.

Here are a few examples. Automate emails requesting that ordering customers share a review of a product they recently purchased from you. Set up a system where the review automatically goes into a cue for your review, and where you can push it to your website with a click of a button. As I have suggested in earlier columns, use HootSuite, or another social media tool to automate your social media posts. Use email auto-responders to let people know when you are away from your business so they know when you will be getting back to them.

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Dean L. Swanson
Southeast Minnesota SCORE
c/o Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce
220 South Broadway, Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55904
www.seminnesota.score.org/

*Dean is a volunteer SCORE Mentor and Regional Vice President for the North West Region*