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Lead · Build · Grow · Fix

Stop managing, start *Leading*

Too many owners spend their time fixing and managing their businesses, when they should be growing and leading them, says Noel Penrose.

What takes up the bulk of your time and energy at work? This simple question can be surprisingly revealing about how you operate. It can also help you to assess and focus on your real priorities.

The essential challenges involved in running any business can be split into the following four areas:

- **Fixing** - resolving problems; correcting errors; rescuing relationships; fire-fighting; administering to the details
- **Managing** - organising people; overseeing delivery; making operational decisions; managing resources; reviewing performance
- **Growing** - securing key client relationships; winning new business; innovation and new product development; targeting new sectors or sales territories
- **Leading** - creating the vision; planning and setting goals; inspiring people; managing the culture; nurturing talent

The ideal breakdown of how much time you should spend on each of these activities will vary, depending on the stage of growth of your business. But experience shows that most business owners spend too much of their time 'fixing' and 'managing', when in fact 'growing' and 'leading' should really be their top priorities.

Stages of growth

To start a business, you need certain attributes, such as key skills in your core business activity and an ability to win over customers/clients. You also need a degree of self confidence, as you have to believe that you can provide a better product or service than is otherwise available.

In very small businesses, at the early stage of their development, the owner controls all aspects and has full knowledge of all key activities. Understandably, everything is focused on 'growing' and 'fixing'. However, as the business develops, and you take on staff, your role starts to become more about 'managing'. This is a big change, particularly for confident, self-starting individuals who are used to getting things done themselves. Suddenly they have to get things done through others.

The danger for many businesses, as they grow, is that the owner becomes preoccupied with this 'managing' role and doesn't spend sufficient time 'leading'. They therefore miss out on the immense business benefits that can be gained by developing a vision, inspiring people, creating the right environment, setting the right example and nurturing talent. Often, these are the aspects that separate a winning business from one that merely meanders along.

If your business has reached the stage where you have formal processes, policies, team-based structures and management controls, then you should be spending 40 percent of your time on 'leading' your people; 30 percent on growing the business; 20 percent on managing activities and 10 percent on fixing any problems that arise.

The problem for many business owners who are preoccupied by 'fixing' is that they are unwilling to delegate or they don't feel able to, because they don't have sufficient confidence in the people below them. To create the time to lead, you really do need to delegate some of the fixing and managing aspects. This may mean that you have to develop - or even replace - some of your people.

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Other business owners either don't fully appreciate the significance of leadership or they're not really clear what the difference is between managing and leading. The US scholar and author Warren Bennis neatly summed up this difference as: "Management is getting people to do what needs to be done. Leadership is getting people to want to do what needs to be done. Managers push. Leaders pull."

So, as your business grows, your challenge is to migrate your role from running the business, to managing it and then to leading it. To take people with you on your journey, you need to be out at the front, path-finding with your machete, not back at the rear pushing people on with a whip.

Leadership Activity Profile

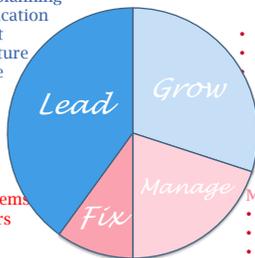
- where should you be focusing your energy?

LEAD

- Setting goals / planning
- Brand communication
- Nurturing talent
- Maintaining culture
- Inspiring people

GROW

- Securing key client relationships
- Winning new business
- Innovation / NPD
- New sectors / territories



FIX

- Resolving problems
- Correcting errors
- Rescuing relationships
- Down in the detail

MANAGE

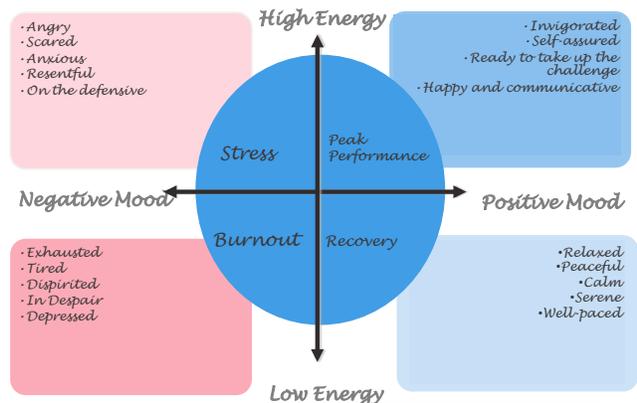
- Reviewing performance
- Managing resources
- Overseeing delivery
- Making operational decisions

Allocate percentage of time 'now' and 'desired'
What are the barriers?

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Energy Management



Source: Krauthammer Int'l

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You also need to conserve your energy. If the bulk of your time is spent fixing and managing, you're likely to feel under intense pressure and you can become stressed and counterproductive. Peak performance comes from having high energy and a positive mood, in which you feel self-assured and ready to take up the challenge. But, bear in mind that no one can function at peak performance all the time. You need to balance the high level of energy you use for peak performance with ample downtime, in which your energy use is low but your mood remains positive, so that you stay calm and composed.

So, think about how you spend your time and energy at work. Ensure your time is focused on what will bring most benefit and that your energy is conserved so that you can achieve peak performance when necessary.

Noel Penrose is chairman of **Juniper2**, an independent consultancy that helps owner-managers to build their business and improve profitability.