

---

# About.com Small Business Information

---

## How to Grow Your Small Business

7 Ways Small Business Owners Take Their Businesses to the Next Level

By Alyssa Gregory, About.com Guide

Many successful small business owners have at least one thing in common -- the ability to see the big picture and envision what their success will look like tomorrow. Here are some of the activities successful small business owners complete to place their focus on the future and keep moving forward.

### Use Goal-Setting to Push Boundaries

Goals can be a great way to clarify your focus, measure progress and track achievements. And for the most successful among us, goals also present an opportunity to push the lines of your comfort zone and take calculated risks.

The more you are willing to stretch and challenge yourself, the more you have to gain over the long term. Creating a plan for this growth in the form of long- and short-term goals, a [business plan](#)<sup>1</sup> or even single targeted tasks can help your business reach new levels of success.

### Put the Focus on Customer Service

Being able to [retain desirable clients](#)<sup>2</sup> plays a significant role in the continued success of a small business. Not only does having regular customers mean regular income, but happy clients can also provide powerful word-of-mouth marketing.

Along with providing your clients with an exceptional product or service, you can encourage repeat business by being customer service-focused. This means asking for and acting on feedback, addressing issues and complaints quickly and thoroughly, and being consistently accessible and accountable.

### Commit to Continuous Learning

You should understand that no matter how much you achieve, there will always be more to be learned and applied for even greater success.

Even if you don't have the time or the desire to learn in a traditional classroom setting, there are a number of ways you can advance your knowledge and continue to learn so your business can continue to thrive. Continuous learning can take the form of [online training](#)<sup>3</sup>, self-paced programs, collaborative opportunities, mentoring, and even reading.

### Learn How to Delegate

Whether you have employees, subcontractors or family pitching in, learning [how to delegate](#)<sup>4</sup> effectively can be the difference between reaching new heights and burning out.

Many small business owners are accustomed to doing a variety of things themselves, so it can be challenging to identify the tasks you don't need to do yourself and assign the work to someone else. Once you overcome the challenge, though, you will have more time to dedicate to what you do best -- grow your business.

### Increase Your Productivity

Some of what you do as a small business owner will be routine; there are a variety of daily tasks that will need to be accomplished to keep your business running smoothly.

The more effective you are when it comes to completing the day-to-day business management tasks (the ones that you don't delegate, that is), the more potential your small business has for greater success. You can boost your productivity by developing systems to streamline these processes.

### Stay Current with Technology

Technology plays a role in every business, so all small business owners can benefit from not only having an understanding of the technology that impacts them directly, but also keeping track of how it changes.

Keeping up with [new and changing technology](#)<sup>5</sup> can help small business owners make better decisions; and it can help save money, time and other resources.

### Change Up Your Marketing

Many small business owners are discovering how [online marketing](#)<sup>6</sup> can add a new dynamic to promoting their goods and services. The most successful small businesses are willing to explore new outlets of online marketing -- in combination with their offline marketing activities -- to see what produces the most interest.

Consistently changing, testing and mixing your marketing activities can be a valuable way to see what works, what doesn't and what type of

result it produces.

While you do not need to do all of these activities at once, most successful small business owners find a way to work them in over time. To gain momentum, start with one or two that are already aligned with the way you run your business, and then start to make changes to incorporate the others gradually.

*This About.com page has been optimized for print. To view this page in its original form, please visit: <http://sbinformation.about.com/od/businessmanagemen1/a/nextlevel.htm>  
©2011 About.com, Inc., a part of [The New York Times Company](#). All rights reserved.*

---

**Links in this article:**

1. <http://sbinformation.about.com/od/businessplans/a/How-To-Write-A-Business-Plan.htm>
2. <http://marketing.about.com/cs/customerservice/a/crmstrategy.htm>
3. <http://sbinformation.about.com/od/ecommerce/a/How-To-Choose-The-Right-Online-Business-Training.htm>
4. <http://sbinformation.about.com/od/businessmanagemen1/a/Effective-Delegation-Tips.htm>
5. <http://entrepreneurs.about.com/cs/beyondstartup/a/keepinguptech.htm>
6. <http://sbinfocanada.about.com/od/marketing/g/onlinemarketing.htm>