

5 Ways Small Business Owners Sabotage Themselves Without Knowing

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Small businesses play a very vital role in the economy of a nation. No economy can grow without them. In fact, [statistics](#) show that they are responsible for approximately 60% of employments in the United States.

But another startling statistics shows that [most businesses close down within the first five years](#). It is appalling, but can be prevented. Most times, this business failure statistics is due to some practices these small business owners engage in ignorantly. Many of them sabotage the future of their businesses without even knowing.

If you are doing any of these five things as a small business owner, then you are sabotaging your business without knowing:

1. You copy the Business Models of Large Corporations

It is noble to make plans for growth and expansion. However there are stages

every business is supposed to pass through in the bid to grow. As a small business owner, if you copy the models and operating systems of big businesses, it could boomerang.

For instance, a large corporation may use Virtual Phone Systems in its customer service department to take care of the thousands of requests they get daily. This works well for them because they receive thousands of customer requests. And getting an automated receptionist may be the only way to keep their [teeming customers satisfied](#).

Don't copy that.

Most of your customers patronize you because of that human touch. And if you lose that touch, the customers may not have any reason to return.

Embrace your position as a small CEO and let the big shots do their thing. You must appreciate and leverage your small business advantages like flexibility, closeness to customers, and ability to respond quickly to customers' complaints and demands.

2. You are still running an invisible Brick and Mortar Business.

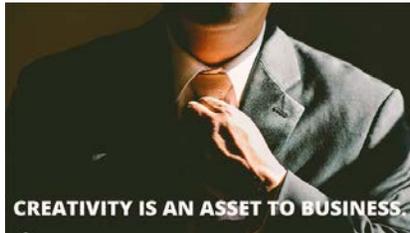
Not taking advantage of the internet and the digital revolution is perhaps the biggest mistake for any SME CEO. The internet has helped to level the playing ground especially in areas of presence, publicity and advertisement.

From [Amazon](#) in the US to [Price Raja](#) in India, most of the big business organizations we see today became successful largely because of the internet. Gone are the days when only the wealthy companies could afford advertisements. Today you too can for a little cost, get a great website.

Through this, you can continuously enhance your online presence while marketing your products and services. This means you can advertise almost as much as the big companies.

3. You lack Creativity in your Approach.

Any small business owner that is not brainstorming, getting new ideas and experimenting regularly is sabotaging his business without knowing it. And such businesses will soon slip into insignificance.



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The competition is getting tougher every day, and only those who can add creativity to their approach can stay ahead. Applying innovative ideas that no one has thought of before is the cheapest way to make your business stand out from the crowd.

You need to ask yourself certain critical questions like, "What can I do that no one else is doing?" "How can I do differently what everyone else is doing?"

For instance, you could choose to give discounts, or give gift cards after purchase of a particular amount. You could even deliver goods free of charge to your high net-worth customers. These things all have a way of making you stand out from the competition.

4. You are too rigid; where is your personal touch?

Big companies have brands, slogans, and codes of conduct. Small businesses on the other hand, have their owners' personalities.

As an entrepreneur, I have been able to start-up a couple of small businesses in the past. One major thing I love about them has always been the flexibility, the lean structure they come with, and that personal touch.

Your personality as CEO soon becomes the personality of your small business. Your business has emotions. Your customers see it, and that is what attracts them.

When a customer comes to Bill's Furniture for instance, they expect to deal with Bill, and not an impersonal business structure. This remains true even if your business has more than 20 staff.

In a bid to appear professional, many small business owners incorporate a lot of unnecessary red tape and formality in appearance and approach. Those things will become necessary when you have grown into a big company. But for now, they are sabotaging your business.

Relax... be yourself! Do not take your customers for granted. Let them weigh in. Soon enough, their involvement will become referrals, and these referrals mean growth.

5. You are all over the place; Find focus

Gone were the days where "Don't put all your eggs in one basket" was the model business advice. Smart Business owners know that they cannot have too many baskets. They make focus a priority. This makes them follow the new advice, "Put all your eggs in one basket, and closely watch that basket".

A lot of CEO's of SME's sabotage their businesses by being all over the place doing anything and everything.

Let's assume that a customer comes to your drug dispensary and sees that you equally sell grocery, you are into conduit wiring, you offer plumbing services, and repair generators as well. It automatically registers in his/her mind that you lack focus. This kills any chance you have of presenting yourself as a professional.

One great thing you should learn from big businesses is specialization. Your small business should target unique products/services for niche markets that big business can't afford to pinpoint.

In conclusion, before you blame the tough competition for sabotaging your business, make sure you are not the one doing so without knowing. If you are, then make the necessary change.

Good luck turning the ship around!

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