



This article first appeared in the June issue of *My Business*
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BUSINESS COACH BRAD SUGARS

Some owners need to sack themselves

SO, YOU STARTED the company, you built it up, but are you the best person to keep running it?

It's a tough question. Entrepreneurs are not always the best managers. In fact, they are often some of the worst.

For entrepreneurs who find themselves "stuck" or see their companies at a growth plateau, a great question to ask yourself is whether or not your greatest strength is managing what you've built. For most owners, it isn't. For most of them, what they really need to do is get out and start a new venture or enterprise.

Because entrepreneurship is what they do best.

What are the characteristics of a great entrepreneur? They're different from those of a manager or employee. That's why owners are entrepreneurs in the first place. Beyond a vision and drive for something more, true entrepreneurs realise trading time for money is not the way to get rich.

However, being stuck as a manager in your own operation is not productive, especially when your talents lay elsewhere. But how do you get out of your own business in a way that benefits everyone – including yourself?

First, you must recognise that "you" may be the issue. Once you admit that, options and opportunities become more clear. Ideally, you already have some systems in place in your business and a good team you can trust to run at least some portions of your operation.

Then, you must take a leadership position to put new leadership in place. There are a few great ways you can successfully make it happen that have proven effective for other owners in your position over the years:

- 1) Recruit two or three high calibre people and let them work their way to the top. Don't let them know you are looking at them as your replacement one day. Instead, mentor them and let them lead their various divisions and see for yourself who would be the best fit for the company long-term.
- 2) Look within. Here, you're looking at your current roster of executive staff you currently have for one or possibly a group of employees who could take over the company and run it long-term. You might even find a way to create an income flow for yourself long-term from this type of arrangement – one that would let you do something else.
- 3) Find and run a business that is not dependent on you. Ideally, this is the business you start after you sell or find a creative way to get your cash out of your existing business.

That said, there are a couple of ways not to replace yourself. In some instances, these tactics may have worked but those successes are the exception – and not the rule.

- 1) Make a clean break. This is the easiest way to replace yourself. Here, you basically go out and hire a pro to come in and run the business. That person comes in, and you go out. Obviously, this isn't recommended for a number of reasons. The new person has little or no institutional knowledge of your business or its history. Secondly, such change is usually too drastic for customers and employees. Sometimes, it's even too drastic for the business owner – who in many instances undergoes a change of heart six months or a year down the road and decides to come back. Many times, the company that the owner returns to is not the one he or she left.

- 2) Put a family member in charge. This is also an easy way to replace yourself, and it is also not recommended. The reasons for this are obvious: resentment among top management and employees; perceptions of nepotism; the idea that skill sets don't match the high standard of a founder.

Putting a family member in charge could be an option if the plan of succession for a business is already laid out that way; if all team members are aware of that plan, and the person tapped to lead the company has paid his or her dues working in the company from the ground up. Most times, however, owners aren't so prepared or long-term oriented in this regard, and the envy and resentment of family members in charge leads to problems from which most companies never recover.

Maybe you're the person who had the great idea, the brilliant innovation or the breakthrough product. But maybe you've taken the business as far as you can take it. Maybe it's time to get out of the way and let a new team of professionals take over so you can move on – and start your next business. Recognising you are not the perfect sales person, manager or marketing director isn't bad. It can be liberating. Realising you're the perfect entrepreneur can be the just what you need to really succeed in business – at a level you may have never dreamed possible. ●

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