

Sample #1: Three Planning Myths By Denise O'Berry

Are you – like 70% of business owners – working without a plan? There are three myths that need to be dispelled about strategic planning for small business.

1. **It has to be formal -- Not so.** The value of a strategic plan for your small business is in putting the ideas on paper, creating action steps that will get you where you want to go and implementing those action steps.
2. **I'm too small -- Not so.** Even a one-person business can benefit from a strategic plan. A strategic plan can help you make decisions about time management and

budget. Use your strategic plan to help you determine whether to attend an event or advertise in a publication. It's a check and balance tool.

3. **A strategic plan is like a ball and chain -- Not so.** It's your plan. Too many business owners feel like once it's on paper, it can't be changed. Wrong! It should be an active document that gets reviewed and updated at least monthly, if not weekly. You're the business owner, you wrote it, and you know what's happening in your market – adjust as necessary.

Sample #2: Freedom! The Battle Cry of the Business Owner By Denise O'Berry

"I wanted freedom from a boss so I started my own business. Now I need freedom from my business because it's running my life." Sound like you? Find your freedom by following these three tips.

1. **Put your stake in the ground.** Where are you headed with your business? Can't answer because you're too busy working on yesterday's problems? Stop and do it now. Much of your freedom is being eaten up by activities that won't get you where you want to go. Define where that is and work toward it.

2. **Set boundaries.** Don't take on work that steals time you should be dedicating to focusing on sales of your core product or service. Sometimes you just have to say "no." Be careful about performing business functions that "don't cost anything." Put a dollar value on your time. Outsource. It will cost you less in the long run.
3. **Take action.** Talking and thinking about doing things that will grow your business are necessary. Writing them down and making them happen is even better. Identify the critical steps you must take now to get closer to the freedom you seek.

A successful entrepreneur with over two decades of business experience, I understand the issues facing small business owners. I've written over 300 columns since 1998. My work has been published in Mountain News, Community News, The Laker, My Business magazine and Business Journal of Tampa Bay and Jacksonville. I have been the quoted expert in Entrepreneur, Bank Rate Small Business, Florida Trend, and Inc. magazines.



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