

Efficiency is key these days as we're pulled in hundreds of different directions. If running your business seems like a struggle, it's time to make things easier. Some businesses choose to do that by hiring additional people, but if you don't have the budget for that right now, there are other things that can be done to help you make the most of the hours in your day.



1. **Outsource.** It costs less than adding new positions at your business and you can adjust "headcount" as needed in slow or busy times. If you work with a great virtual assistant or delegate to some other freelancer or contractor, you may be able to hire them later if you decide to add to your staff. And best of all, you already know how they work.
2. **Employ technology.** Ford changed the automaking industry (and others like it) forever when he compartmentalized the work moving away from one person doing all of it from beginning to end and giving people specific roles to perform over and over. He didn't invent the assembly line but he popularized it. Just like the assembly line, if there is technology or a way to streamline work, consider adopting it. That may take the form of a chatbot (easily implemented through Facebook Messenger) to answer basic questions and take the burden off of employees or a content management system or email marketing software to streamline customer communications.
3. **Have (and use) goals.** This sounds a little remedial. All businesses have goals, right? But you need to make sure all employees know your business goals. This not only gives them something to shoot for, it also provides a framework for decision making. Every

decision can be weighed by asking if this moves your business closer to the goal(s) or not.

4. **Launch one new thing at a time.** When it comes to business, there are hills and valleys of creativity. Occasionally, you're filled with all sorts of ideas on how to grow and improve, to meet more customer needs, to expand markets or offerings. It's often difficult to select the one to focus on but it's imperative you do. Don't launch multiple big projects at once. You'll spend a lot more time getting them off the ground because your attention and focus will be diluted.
5. **Go to the cloud.** Years ago, if you left a file at the office, you were out of luck unless you went back in. Today, you can access all of your files, photos, videos, and projects from the cloud. There are free options like Google Drive and DropBox as well as paid options if you need more storage.

Not only is cloud hosting more efficient, it does provide some peace of mind. While moving to the cloud doesn't save you from hackers (you still need to worry about security), it does ensure that if a physical disaster affects your office or business, your files and important information will remain intact.

6. **Take security seriously.** Many small businesses think that cybercriminals are not interested in them because their operations are too small. However, if you have data that is important to you and involves private customer information (like credit card numbers or social security numbers), you can be assured you are a target. You are even more of a target than a large company because hackers assume you won't have the security protocols that larger organizations have. Make sure your data is safe. It's one of the most important things you can do for your business.
7. **Learn when “done” is better than “perfect.”** Some tasks require exacting specifics and it's important to get it right, like launching a space shuttle, doing your taxes, or building a bridge. While with other tasks it's better to have them complete than done over and over trying to get it perfect, like stocking shelves, for instance. Recognizing what has to be perfect, and what's better just getting it finished is an important step to better efficiency and an easier business life. And once those things are complete, let them go.
8. **Join your chamber.** Most people don't understand the immense help a chamber of commerce can be. Not only can it put you in touch with more potential customers, it can also be a place of learning about business tips and trends, and a group that can help connect you with like-minded business owners. Unlike a lawyer, you're not paying per hour for this advice. You're getting it for the cost of membership.

There's no reason to make your business life any harder than your job requires. Look for ways to streamline your operations and you'll have more time on your hands and less stress.

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