

Step back to step up

When growing a small business from start-up to scale-up, it is vital to build a strong and effective leadership team that empowers your people to maximise their potential, and the potential of the business.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST changes a business goes through as it scales is the handing over of an idea from the founder to the people working in the organisation. The brand moves from being one person's idea to being the professional focus of a whole group of people.

As the team grows, founders often react by micro-managing the details of their business. In trying to take on everyone else's job, the founder leaves the most critical position vacant. Learning to trust and empower others in the organisation leaves room for them to continue innovating, which is critical for business growth.

We have seen on the 10,000 Small Businesses UK programme that our graduates 'pay it forward' after they have taken significant time out of the business to develop their own business skills, and it is no coincidence. Having spent weeks scrutinising every aspect of their business, it becomes clear that there is more work than one person can handle. This is why over 70% of graduates increase the

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training opportunities they provide to their staff, encouraging them to take on new responsibilities both within and outside of the business.

Without building strong leaders, a small business owner will be held back, preventing them from leading the company from the front. Despite this, over three-quarters of SMEs still provide no leadership development for their staff. While businesses focus on improving returns on resources, still too few are recognising the importance of leveraging the human talents within their organisation.

In turn, there is the need for the founder to manage themselves up. As is

often the mantra for managers, leading by example is crucial – taking time to develop specific skills as a business leader is crucial to bringing about a culture of self-development.

With so many competing pressures on resources within a small business, it is rare to find a single, simple action that can spur on growth. However, ceding responsibility for core tasks, and trusting the team to take ownership of their own parts of the business, is one such action that will free up new energy and time to focus on the strategy and future of the business.

As businesses continue to rank hiring talented staff as one of their main barriers to growth, developing the talent already in the business could make the growth journey that little bit easier.



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