

*Women's Enterprise Centre Series - **Installment #3***

*Third in a 10-part series about successful operating strategies for women in business*

## Change from Do-er to Strategist and watch your business grow

By Laurel Douglas  
CEO  
Women's Enterprise Centre

Statistics show that 31 per cent of the small businesses run by women in BC are 'micro-businesses' with five employees or less. In the majority of cases, the woman who owns the business is also the only employee. She does it all.

If that describes you, take heart. Most owners of small businesses start out as 'do-ers'. After all, it's your vision and energy that will get your business off the ground. But unless you began your business with a goal to earn only so much income, or gain a market share small enough for you to handle on your own, the time will hopefully arrive when you need some help.

To grow your business from a one-woman shop to something larger, the first step is changing your mindset. A business of any size needs three types of people:

- Strategists, who come up with ideas, dream big and inspire others;
- Managers, who put those ideas and strategies in action; and,
- Do-ers, who create the business's products and services, whether they are physical or knowledge-based.

In start-up mode, the woman owner of a small business spends at least 75 per cent of her time as a do-er. She devotes herself to creating the real products and services that inspired her to begin her business in the first place. That can lead to problems.

Staying completely focused on the doing can lead to burnout. When you're emotionally drained and physically run down, you're usually not capable of proper planning. You need to keep your dream alive and have the energy to imagine a bright future for your business.

Let's face it, there is only so much time in a day. No matter what your operating format, your business will not grow beyond your personal capacity if you're the only do-er involved. You have to take on greater managerial and strategic roles for your business to grow. Successful owners know that to realize their business dream there comes a time when they must let go of some of the 'doing'. That mindset shift to rely on someone else can be difficult but it is necessary for the owner to manage her time and put it to the best use.

Jennifer Greenberg, the owner of Phoenix First Aid Services was playing every role in her business. She was spending her days doing face-to-face sales and spending her nights doing paperwork. It wasn't long before she realized that in order to make it work, she needed to manage her company rather than work for it.

**Women's Enterprise Centre  
Women in Business Series – Installment #3  
Page 2**

She knew that her life and her business would work better with her as a manager, rather than the person who was everything to everyone. “I like to do both roles; I see it as a balance. But you have to be able to move between your roles as needed,” says Greenberg.

During the process of building her business, Greenberg deliberately planned both the business format and her role within it to run effectively and efficiently, both for customers, her staff and herself. She now runs three units and divides her time between managing business in Merritt and Tumbler Ridge.

Is shifting your mindset that easy? No. But there are some key actions you can take to make it possible.

- *Think about your exit strategy.* When you began your business you had a vision for an end result. If your plan was to create an entity that could be taken over by someone else or sold, it has to show evidence it can function without you. When you decide to move from doing to managing, you need systems, processes, templates and an operations manual. These are all tools that specify how you want your business run. They are the roadmap to your business that the ‘do-ers’ can follow.
- *Figure out the value of your time.* You need to determine what you're worth on an hourly basis so you can evaluate what tasks you're doing that are below that value. Those are the tasks to delegate.
- *Take time to manage.* Selfishly guard the time you set aside in your weekly schedule for strategy and protect it from interruptions. “Don't be scared of downtime – use it,” Deanna advises. “This is the time to re-evaluate just about everything – from your business branding to who you order your supplies from. Ask yourself if it's really working, and if it's not, change it – because you have the time to do it.”
- *And manage the moment.* Through the day remind yourself of what motivated you to start your business. Ask yourself: “Is this what I want or need to be doing right now?”

As you move from do-er to manager to strategist, there will be times when it would just be easier to do a job yourself rather than to delegate. You've done it all before. But that's rarely applying the correct value to your time and won't help grow your business in the long run.

*Women's Enterprise Centre serves women across the province from its offices in Kelowna, Vancouver and Victoria. For more information call 1-800-643-7014 or visit online at [www.womensenterprise.ca](http://www.womensenterprise.ca).*