



The Nine Frameworks of Solopreneuring Success

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Introduction

Premise Underlying Today's Class is: The point-of-views you have on how to operate your business determines the speed at which you achieve the success you desire.

A solopreneur is a self-employed professional service provider. That is, it's someone who primarily provides a service to people or to other businesses. What every solopreneur does NOT have - is employees; though many solopreneurs use subcontractors. Most solopreneurs are in their business for the long-haul; unlike entrepreneurs, who start a business with the idea of growing it and then selling it.

A framework is a point-of-view, a perspective, a way of viewing the world around us. It's a foundational belief or truth from which we make decisions and take actions. Frameworks inform and direct our emotions, behaviors, and hence, the consequences we experience in running our one-person businesses. Unless we consciously intervene to adopt different frameworks, we continue to create the same consequences in our businesses, either success or failure, whether or not we want or intend them.

1. Marketing is More Important Than Expertise

As an employee working for someone else, you were rewarded with pay increases, bonuses, and promotions based on your mastery of specific skills - that is, based on your expertise. In fact, you were hired for jobs based on your expertise and knowledge.

Now, as a business owner, relying solely on your expertise doesn't ensure that you will be successful in your business. You can be the greatest at what you do, but if nobody knows about you, you will quickly be out of business. Yes, it's important that you deliver a quality service. But it's even more important that you consistently and appropriately promote your business.

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. You are doing yo-yo marketing. You only remember to promote your business when you don't have work to perform for clients. When you do partake in marketing your business, you are inconsistent in what to do, where, and how.
2. What marketing activities? You've been open for business for some months now and are still "getting ready" to promote your business. You are stymied or stopped at the "getting ready" stage.
3. You're confused about why your competitors, especially those who you know don't have the level of expertise that you have, seem to have lots of clients and projects. What's up with that?!
4. You don't have enough clients or projects to financially sustain your business.

When You Start Operating from "Marketing is More Important Than Expertise" You'll Get:

- More jobs and clients (have a choice)
- More revenue
- Clients seeking you out
- A level out in the all too common feast-or-famine revenue rollercoaster

2. Risk is Always Reducible and Delay is Unacceptably Expensive

Everyone faces risk -- in life and in business. Just getting out of bed in the morning carries a certain amount of risk. But risk is always reducible. As an employee, it might not have been your job to be concerned with minimizing risk. After all, someone higher in the food chain had usually evaluated the risk before assigning a particular task or project to you.

But as a business owner, it is your job, and yours alone, to minimize the risks your business **and** your clients face. No matter what strategy, process, or procedure is under consideration, there is usually an easier or better way. You need to think beyond the traditional ways of solving a problem, creating a deliverable, or accomplishing an outcome. Doing so results in finding a new, better, easier, faster, less expensive, or less risky way.

However, there's a secondary aspect to reducing risk -- today the windows of opportunity open more often and shut more quickly than ever before. So, you must be able to evaluate these opportunities quickly. Delay lets them pass by without you or your client being able to take advantage of them. When a solopreneur reduces or eliminates delay in their business, it can have the added effects of reducing project costs, increasing the perceived value of the solopreneur to his clients, and giving the solopreneur more opportunities for success.

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. You have too many excitement- and adrenaline-driven activities. These activities are fun once in a while - but you don't want your business to be driven by them!
2. You are either excessively impulsive in your decision-making or you get stuck in analysis paralysis. That is, you don't have a decision making process established.
3. You don't take time for strategic and tactical planning. Or, you take the time to create the strategies, but then don't follow-thru and implement them.
4. You make an unacceptably high number of mistakes or errors.
5. You spend too much time fighting the "crisis de jour"
6. You and your clients are missing out on golden opportunities.

When You Start Operating from "Risk is Always Reducible and Delay is Unacceptably Expensive" You'll Get:

- Long-term stability in your business
- Reduced expenses and expenditures of other resources
- Better outcomes from your decisions
- Increased perception of your value from your clients
- Greater business opportunities
- More discretionary or billable time due to increased efficiencies and productivity

3. Self-Confidence Can Be Arranged

As an employee many of us came to think of ourselves as problem solvers. And our self-confidence grew as we mastered problem after problem. This was usually an internal growth process for each of us.

However, as a solopreneur you don't need to rely on yourself to create a sense of confidence. Nor do you need to wait until you have attained a high degree of mastery in running your business or in delivering your services. Instead, you can arrange for support structures and encouragement, and can design situations that feed you the confidence you need.

For example, you can put in place a support team of advisors - people who are experts in their fields to give you the advice and answers you need. You can also create another support team of colleagues (you know, those people we sometimes call competitors), to help you stay on top of your field or skills.

If you're struggling to promote your business, you can join or create a marketing mastermind group of other solopreneurs.

The point is that you don't need to self-generate all the answers - but you do need to create ways to find the answers quickly and easily.

Knowing that the answer is somewhere, but that you aren't the only source for it, releases you from needing to be the "answer person." This, in turn, frees up your energy for finding the answers you need.

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. You spend lots of time "getting ready" but not much time spent "in action"
2. You're unsure how to proceed, so you delay your decisions, aren't sure about implementing them, and freeze up too often.
3. You let your lack of self-confidence affect your ability to convert prospects into clients (pulling back from being able to sell their services)
4. You're working long hours, but not making much forward progress on gaining the business success you desire. You're probably focusing on becoming a master of every aspect of running a business - but don't yet feel secure enough to go "do" the actions they require.

When You Start Operating from "Self-Confidence Can Be Arranged" You'll Get:

- More discretionary time
- More fun and support!
- More creativity
- Faster business success

4. Everything Is a Project and You're a Project Manager

And whether you want to be or not, as a solopreneur, you are a project manager. Running a business, whether for one person or 500, is a series of projects. For example, creating your business identity is a project. Creating your web site is a project. Upgrading your technology is a project. So is creating and implementing a marketing plan. Successful solopreneurs use project management tools and techniques to save time and keep their business on the right track.

If you are running your business as a series of unconnected and discrete tasks, you aren't using project management techniques and tools to keep your business moving smoothly forward to the success you envision.

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. Though you are very busy and working lots of hours, it seems that not much in the way of actual results is being achieved. Your productivity isn't as high as you want it.
2. You are inefficient in how you use your time. You have a sense that you are continuously jumping from task to task. You are driven and controlled by your To-Do list, or by what's most urgent right now, without a sense of how all the pieces fit together to create direction and success.
3. You don't know how to maximize the use of subcontractors and vendors to free you up to focus on your genius work. Your subcontractors make more off the work you bring them than you do.
4. You don't know how to set up and manage projects.
 - When You Start Operating from "Everything is a Project" You'll Get:
 - What's important to the business gets done.
 - Time in the schedule for discretionary activities and increased billable hours.
 - More time to do what you love.
 - Enhanced control of your schedule/calendar.
 - Increased productivity.

5. Success Requires Mistakes

As a solopreneur you won't stay in business long if you hide your mistakes or blame them on others, the system, or the processes. Your best growth and most important lessons come from making mistakes and then correcting them. By the way, most people avoid even the possibility of failing (because they don't understand that failure is a requirement for success)!

When things "go bad" on a project or in a business relationship, successful solopreneurs analyze the situation for what went wrong and how it could be done differently the next time a similar situation arises. These successful solopreneurs then turn these "mistakes" into lessons and **change the way in which they do business** accordingly.

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. You're not making many mistakes, but the ones you are making are **big ones** that cost you way too much.
2. You've begun down a path of inflexibility and rigidity in how things are done in your business. And the motivation for this is so that you can ensure never making mistakes. (Focus is on perfection at all costs.)
3. Your first response to a problem, challenge, or obstacle is negative. You look for something else (other than yourself) for responsibility - rather than focusing on correcting the issue, learning from it, and moving forward.

When You Start Operating from "Success Requires Mistakes" You'll Get:

- Clean, clear, and open communications between yourself and your clients, and subcontractors
- "Can do" attitude - and a higher level of self-confidence
- Increased learning/efficiencies with each corrected mistake (i.e., lesson)
- More efficient use of your time
- Increases your personal and professional resiliency.
- Increases your strengths of problem-solving, self-responsibility, and resourcefulness.

6. Creeping Excellence Beats Perfection

As a business owner, you can't afford the luxury of being a perfectionist -- and neither can most of your clients.

Creeping excellence is the habit of making incremental improvements each time you work on something. For example, the solopreneur who comes from the habit of creeping excellence will print a limited number of her first business brochure, knowing that she will test and improve it's messaging over time. Only when the brochure has solidified, will she have it printed in a large quantity. Creeping excellence reduces the time and costs racked up by perfectionism.

When the solopreneur operates from the model of perfectionism, she will spend 80% of her time and resources perfecting the last 20% of everything. Taken to the extreme, this behavior negatively affects the scope, budget, and schedule the solopreneur agreed to with her clients for the work she has been commissioned to perform.

This framework is about striking the balance between perfectionism and "quick & dirty" work.

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. Too many times you have exceeded the scope of work or the budget of your client's projects.
2. You consistently underestimate the amount of time and work required to accomplish or deliver something.
3. You just plan on having to working long nights and weekends at the conclusion of any project in order to meet your own standards for quality. Yes, meeting the client's standards for quality are necessary - but are your standards so much higher than your clients that you find yourself frustrated with your clients about it?

When You Start Operating from "Creeping Excellence Beats Perfection" You'll Get:

- Reduces the internal pressure or need to "be right" or "be perfect"
- Increases your productivity - allows you accomplish more work in less time
- Enhances your ability to meet and management your calendar and schedules
- Enhances your working relationships with your clients - creating opportunity for follow-on work and bigger projects later

THE NINE FRAMEWORKS OF SOLOPRENEURING SUCCESS

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7. Focus is Power

"If you chase two rabbits, both will escape." -- Chinese Proverb

Being a Jack-of-all-trades is a sure way to fail as a solopreneur. You can't afford to market your business to the entire world -- you don't have the time, money, or energy for that. You must narrow it down to one financially viable market niche of Ideal Clients for whom you provide one primary service. That's not only doable, it's powerful! Now - picking one niche to market your services to does **NOT** prevent you from taking those weird and wacky jobs that seek you out from other niches. However, it does ensure that you maximize your marketing messages and resources in promoting your business.

Another place to apply the power of focus is in stopping the multi-tasking. It takes 4 minutes to return to the same level of concentration (that is, to the flow of concentration) each time you are interrupted. Staying in the flow increases your productivity, efficiency, and creativity. As time is your most finite resource, you must do all you can to maximize its use in your business. Focus is power!

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. You always answer a ringing telephone, no matter what you're doing when it rings. You have "call waiting" on your phone - and are rude enough to use it even when talking with clients, prospects, and subcontractors.
2. Your office environment is full of distractions. Perhaps it's in a corner of your family room, where the kids watch TV after school, where the dog can come and cry at you to go for a walk, where your neighbors can see you and come over to borrow a cup of sugar in the afternoon.
3. When people ask your partner, spousal unit, or kids what you do, they say "I don't know. He works for himself." When people ask you what you do, you reply with at least 3 or 4 things that you think might be of interest to them, depending on what networking event you're at in the moment.
4. You have more than one business card, brochure, or web site.

When You Start Operating from "Focus is Power" You'll Get:

- Reduced marketing expenses
- Focused marketing activities
- A market niche that knows who you are and what you can do for them
- Clarity about what business you really are in!

8. The Goal's the Thing, Not the Plan

To what does the successful solopreneur commit? The plan or the goal? If the solopreneur is getting the same unacceptable results over and over, he is committed to the plan. To change the results, get a new plan! Solopreneurs who are creating the success they want in their businesses remain flexible in their plans, but are absolutely committed to their business goals.

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. You find you are repeating a process or procedure, even though it doesn't have the results you want.
2. When you don't reach your business goals, you change the goals.
3. You don't set business goals unless you already think you know how to achieve them.

When You Start Operating from "The Goal's the Thing, Not the Plan" You'll Get:

- Business goals that are met.
- Creativity and flexibility.
- Business Success!

9. Business Relationships Lead to Gold

Now that you're self-employed, you must use the power of your personality to develop, nurture, and sustain the business relationships you need for long-term business success. And building long-term relationships with your clients, subcontractors, vendors, and competitors is, over time, the Gold Medal in business success. Hence, successful solopreneurs constantly provide unexpected value to their clients.

In addition, the successful solopreneur encourages each client to raise the bar, do better, or provide more because the successful solopreneur is in this business relationship with a long-term view. As the client expands his best effort, he is granted more responsibility and authority over more and more important and lucrative projects. This, in turn, benefits the successful solopreneur, who is then hired by that client to do more and more lucrative work.

Additionally, successful solopreneurs, welcome diversity in their clients and projects. Diversity of clients and their projects allow successful solopreneurs the opportunities they need to keep their businesses on the leading edge, by stretching their talents, skills, proficiencies, and expertise.

Key Indicators That You Are Not Using This Framework in Your Business Are:

1. You notice yourself grumbling under your breath that your client is unclear, wrong, out of touch, or asking for more than you agreed to deliver. In other words, you feel disrespect for your client or his/her project. Or you may be expressing the more subtle behavior of merely tolerating your clients.
2. You agree to new requirements from your client but continue to chaff against them.
3. You don't regularly offer new strategies or alternative methods to your clients. You do only what your client says to do - you're not thinking bigger or looking for more to contribute.
4. You don't have a system in place for providing unexpected value to your prospects and inactive clients, as well as your currently active clients.

When You Start Operating from "Marketing is More Important Than Expertise" You'll Get:

- You are asked to take on unique and challenging jobs for your client.
- Clients become raving fans -- they refer you to others, hire you more frequently or for follow-on work, and are willing to raise your billable rate.
- The average lifetime value of your typical client increases.
- You enjoy your business more.
- As your clients expand and grow over the life of their careers, so do their spheres of influence and the types of projects they control -- client expansion = bigger jobs for you.

Rose Hill Has the Frameworks, Proficiencies, and Experience...

Rose Hill has, since 1990, supported hundreds of solopreneurs in learning the frameworks, proficiencies, tools and techniques they need to create a solid foundation for business success.

For information on 1-on-1 business coaching, contact Rose at Rose@Solo-E.com.

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