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5 Signs it's Time to Scale Back Your Commitments

We've all been there. No matter how well intentioned we are, and no matter how hard we try, sometimes we just get overwhelmed. This is especially the case with entrepreneurs and small business owners, who wear many hats and are responsible for multiple duties in order to keep their business afloat. When this happens, it's time to take a step back and make the difficult decision to reduce some of your commitments so you don't end up getting burned out. If you're teetering on this point right now, here are some tell-tale signs to let you know it's time to scale back a little.

You can never complete your to-do list. There are always going to be times when you have to push a few things from today off until tomorrow, but if you're finding that you are unable to ever finish your list of tasks, or that it just seems to keep growing, it's probably time to either cut back on some of your responsibilities or delegate some stuff to another team member that you trust.

You can't stay focused. When your list of things to do becomes so overwhelming that it's hard to concentrate on one thing at a time, it's a pretty good sign that you've got too much on your plate. As much as you'd love to keep up with everything, if you can't devote the adequate time and attention to each thing, what good can come of it?

You never say "no". One of the biggest challenges that small business owners face is saying no. You don't want to ever turn away business, or let someone down by not taking on that additional project. The problem is, the more you take on, the less time and energy you'll be able to devote to each and the more likely things will start falling through the cracks. Sometimes you just have to know when to say when.

Your service levels have slipped. Regardless of the industry you're in, customer service should always be your top priority. The problem is, when you take on too many commitments and spread yourself too thin, the level of service you can provide to your customers will inevitably start to decline. If there's any reason to take a step back and get some of those items off your to-do list, this should be it. After all, you're nothing without satisfied customers.

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You didn't have time to read this. Ok, well, obviously this one is a bit tongue in cheek, but you get the point. Nobody knows better than you when you've hit that point of being overwhelmed. And when it starts to affect other areas of your life and business, it's time to scale back some of those commitments. That's the only way you will be able to do your job effectively, efficiently and in a way that doesn't drive you and your business into the ground.

Labels: [small business tips](#), [time management](#)

4 Reasons You Don't Need to Pay a Live Attendant

In today's economy, businesses of every size are struggling to find ways to cut costs in order to stay afloat. Perhaps nobody feels this pressure more, though, than the small business owner. One of the easiest ways to reduce expenditure is to cut staff, but actually doing so when you're already operating on a small team can be challenging. When it comes to staff reduction, how do you choose which role to eliminate? The good news is, with today's technology, you don't have to hem and haw too much.

Here are 4 reasons you can trim your payroll by not requiring a live attendant to handle your incoming calls.

Robust Phone Trees – If your business is large enough that you have multiple team members and departments, you may think you need a receptionist to direct calls as they come in to ensure that they reach the appropriate department. With a virtual phone system, you get the option of building out robust phone trees and using an advanced IVR to allow callers to select from self-service options.

Find Me/Follow Me – Many small business owners feel the need to hire a live attendant to be able to track them down when someone calls while they're out and about. After all, to be successful, you can't be tied to your desk, right? Of course! But that doesn't mean you have to dish out a salary to have someone field your calls to you while you're on the road. Find me/follow me can do that job for you, instantly connecting incoming calls to you wherever you are – office, home or cell – eliminating the need for a live attendant.

Time Based Call Routing – As a busy small business owner, you know your schedule can change at any given moment as you're being pulled in a dozen different directions. You may think that you need an assistant to manage all of these schedule changes so callers can be directed to where you are at any given interval throughout your day. No

necessarily! With a phone system that has a time based call routing feature, you can pre-program how calls will be routed based on your specific schedule.

Live Reception Service – For those business owners that simply can't bring themselves to go completely technical, you still have options that don't involve placing another person on your payroll. Live reception, for instance, allows you to essentially outsource your phone coverage to a professional service. You choose the hours (even 24/7/365 if you want) and provide the details for how calls should be handled and you're good to go!

Carrying extra staff members can be a huge financial burden on a business, especially in today's economy. With a feature rich virtual phone system, you'll have a little more breathing room in terms of salary. Instead of needing to hire a live attendant, you can use your business phone system to always stay connected, any time, any place and save money in the long run. What's not to love?

To learn more about how a virtual phone system can change the way you do business, [click here](#) or call (800) 750 6878 to get started today.

Labels: [business in the cloud](#), [live receptionist](#), [small business tips](#), [virtual phone system](#)

3 Ways to Make Your Brand More “Human”

In a world that is becoming more and more digital, customers are looking for brands that they feel they can connect with. This “human” side of brands is increasingly becoming a competitive advantage, setting businesses apart from others within their market and endearing them to their loyal clientele. If you'd like to tap into this for your own business, you have to start by softening your image and showing your customers the people behind the business. Here are 3 ways to make your brand more human so you can reach and connect with more customers.

Use Social Media to its Fullest – The fact that the word “social” is right in the name should indicate what platforms like Facebook and Twitter are supposed to be used for and they've opened all new doors for businesses to really connect with their customers. Don't sell this tool short. Keep up to date on your social media profiles and use a voice that shows the human side of your business. Invite your audience to interact with you, ask and answer questions, join discussions and just be real. The more your audience can feel that human side of you, the more they'll come to know and trust you.

Show Your Personality – Sure, the web is a great place for marketing your business, but remember to enjoy the lighter side of life too. Show your personality by adding a little humor into things like social media posts and blog articles. Customers are loyal to those businesses with whom they can relate, so show them that you're one of them by providing them with content that is real, not just fluff and self-promotion. When you show your personality, your audience will be able to get to know you better, which will naturally lead to a trusting, loyal relationship.

Don't Just Tell Them; Show Them – The term "a picture says a thousand words" can be applied to business marketing strategy too. In addition to leveraging social media to give your brand a more human "voice", show your audience the people behind the brand by sharing behind the scenes pictures. Snap some pictures of your team hard at work, and also during work social functions and share them with your audience. This allows your customers and prospects to put a "face" to your brand and endears them to you and your employees.

Being successful in today's competitive environment takes more than just establishing a brand. You have to also find a way to bring that brand alive so that your target audience can see that you're more than just a stuffy ol' company. They need to see the real you. By putting these three tips into action, you'll be able to give your brand a personality, a voice and a face that will endear your customers to you and help you build the solid, loyal, long term relationships it takes to succeed.

Labels: [brand marketing](#), [marketing](#), [small business tips](#), [social media marketing](#)

Using Your Virtual Phone System to Capture Leads

If you're leveraging a virtual phone system for your business, you already know it's a cost-effective tool to stay connected, look more professional and provide superior service to your clients, colleagues and prospects. Did you know that you can also use this tool as a way to generate more leads and boost sales? It's simple – you just use [recorded messages](#) to help funnel your buyers through the process.

The first step is deciding on your message. Think about what you can offer to your prospects that would make them want to dial in and pique their interest enough to listen to the whole message. Perhaps product tips or helpful how-to information. You could even provide callers with advice on what they should consider before they make a purchase. The more value you offer, the better.

Next, you have to record your message. Use a script as a guideline and try to sound as

comfortable and confident as you can. Nobody wants to listen to a robot spewing useless sales dribble. If you don't feel confident enough to handle this part, ask someone else on your team or enlist the help of [professional voice talent](#).

Once the message is recorded, it's time to distribute the unique number you have assigned to it. Not only will this direct callers to the exact information they're interested in, but it will make measuring analytics much easier.

Tips for Getting the Most Out of Recorded Messages:

Clearly communicate the value and deliver a call to action that will urge your prospects to pick up the phone and listen to your message.

Make it known that the message is recorded. Sometimes the thing that holds people back from inquiring on a particular product, service or special offer is the idea that they will have to deal with a pushy sales pitch. By letting your prospects know upfront that the number leads to a recorded message makes it much less invasive and overcomes that objection.

Offer them options. With unlimited extensions, you have the ability to offer your caller as many options as you'd like, which can help them narrow down their own selections and help you weed through to identify those prospects that are more inclined to buy.

When it comes to generating leads and boosting sales in today's competitive environment, it's all about being creative and thinking outside the box. Now you can use your [virtual phone system](#) to do just that! It's just one more way we're helping businesses of every size realize their own success stories!

Labels: [sales tips](#), [small business tips](#), [virtual phone system](#)

4 Ways to Entice More Online Purchases

One of the greatest thing about the web is that it has opened so many doors for businesses of any size to increase their sales nationwide – even globally. But the whole “if you build it, they will come” theory isn't necessarily going to have your customers knocking down your cyber walls to give you their hard earned money. There are certain things you must do to improve your online sales. Good news! We've got a few helpful tips to get you started...

Create demand, even if there isn't much. Think about Amazon. How many times have

you added an item to your cart only to see a little indicator that says “only X left in stock”? Strategies like this give the impression to the customer that they must act now or they’ll miss out on the item or sale price, and it’s something that you can leverage a well to improve the chances of closing the deal with your online customers.

Don’t just tell them – show them. Quality content is great, and the better you describe your inventory, the better. That said, research has shown that using video to relay product information is much more effective if pushing a maybe to a yes when it comes to sales. Get creative and put yourself in your customers’ shoes to figure out what type of video marketing would get the best results, such as product demos or helpful how-to’s.

Leverage reviews and feedback. You can shout to the rooftops how fantastic your products are, but when it comes from your customers who have actually bought and used your products, it’s much more powerful. Let your satisfied and loyal customers do your marketing for you by providing them with the opportunity and encouraging them to complete surveys and write reviews. You can then leverage those good reviews by sprinkling them throughout your website to encourage new prospects to buy from you

Use upselling and/or cross-selling techniques to give buyers more options. Set up your site so that when your customers are shopping, they’ll see either a similar product that is of higher quality and slightly more expensive (upselling) or they’ll see another product that complements the product they’re considering buying (cross-selling). Both of these techniques can boost sales in some instances, so it’s worth a shot!

With the technology available today, the possibilities for businesses of any size to market online are virtually limitless. Doing so successfully, however, takes some work. By employing these techniques, you’ll have a much better chance of grabbing those online sales and increasing your bottom line exponentially. What are you waiting for? Get out there and get selling!

Labels: [online marketing](#), [sales tips](#), [small business](#)

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