

## Powerful small businesses -- big impact

Being the best we can be - this articles is looking at how we get the biggest impact from our small business – by Chris Elphick  
Partner in Breadfruit Consulting

***“If you think small things don’t make a difference, try going to bed with a mosquito” Anita Roddick, founder Body Shop International.***

This series of articles is looking at how we get the biggest impact from our small businesses.

No business is too small to plan. In many ways small businesses need more planning than larger ones because everything has to be done by very few people.

To start planning try to visualise a very large, wide river. The nearside of the river is where you are now. That is your starting point. The far bank of the river is your destination – that is where you are heading. Getting across the river from where your current position is to where you are heading is why you need the plan. Imagine setting off on a long journey without a map – you might get to your destination, but it might take longer and you might miss lots of interesting diversions along the way.

If you find planning hard try this approach:

Get a large sheet of paper and draw a wide river – be as creative as you can be!

Start with the far bank – this is where you are heading. Start to identify your vision – whatever it is that keeps you going with your business. Vision is something you are aspiring to at the very highest level – it may include your business, your family, your community, yourself.

Identify three or four high level goals to help you reach your vision – one may be about money.

Make sure you involve others – business partners, senior staff, family, friends – have fun planning your future!!

When you have written down your thoughts on the far side of the river, switch your thinking to the near bank – this is where you are now,

Analyse the current position of your business. Talk to your accountant if you have one or at least review your financial position. Brainstorm the current state of the business using a SWOT approach – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Ask for feedback from customers, suppliers and staff.

Spend some time thinking about the external business environment in which you operate – what is happening economically, politically, environmentally, socially and technologically? Look at your competition. What do they seem to be better at?

When you have done a thorough analysis of the current state of your business then start to prioritise actions and identify some short to medium term goals or objectives that will help you begin your journey across the river. These are your stepping stones to success – actions designed to help you make progress towards your vision.

Don’t have too many! Small steps as long as they all move you forward in some way. Engage with those around you. Involve your business partners and staff. Get into the habit of reviewing your plan weekly and add other stepping stones as required.

Celebrate achievements along the way!

Your business plan does not need to be long or complicated or full of jargon – it is simply your map to business success. It must be capable of being used and understood by everyone involved with the business; it needs to be relevant; it needs to help keep you accountable for the way your business is progressing.

Remember that planning is an on-going active process that should lead the way your business is managed – **if we fail to plan we plan to fail.**

For the next two or three weeks I will focus on the money – making it, managing it, understanding it, profit and loss, budgets and cashflow, break even and financial systems,

Small businesses have the potential to make a big difference but this will not happen by accident. We must plan for impact; we must prepare for impact; we must keep learning.

If you have examples of small businesses making a big impact then I would love to hear them – email me some brief details and I'll get back in touch with you.

There are thousands of small businesses operating all over the Pacific – by celebrating success we will encourage more people to climb their mountains – by sharing stories of success we will all learn and grow and realise what a difference we can make – just like the mosquito!

**Chris Elphick is Partner in Breadfruit Consulting, supporting the development of a range of businesses and organisations in Melanesia and other parts of the Pacific. He is an experienced trainer, coach and business mentor and has years of experience of working with Small & Medium Enterprises. He and his partner Hazel Kirkham live in Vanuatu and are involved with tourism operators and their businesses in several Pacific countries.**

**Breadfruit Consulting have partnered with Fiji Entrepreneur to develop mentoring services for new and young entrepreneurs.**

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