







A Real Help To

Grow your
business

A basic guide to seeking business advice and support

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Growing businesses need all the help they can get

If you run your own business, the chances are that you're always thinking about how you can grow your business, too. But where do you start? In today's business environment, there are hundreds of complex issues to deal with across all aspects of your business - such as sales, software, business finance, premises and people management.

And with employment legislation changing regularly, and many other issues that can affect you becoming even more complicated by the week, it's important to know that you're always doing the right thing - for your business, and for your employees.

So it makes sense to get all the help you can.

One of the best ways to make sure you do the right thing, and to ensure your business stays on course for growth, is to seek expert business support, advice and guidance. And inside this guide, you'll find out just how valuable good business support could be to your business.

In fact, the future growth of your business could depend on it.

Small businesses in the UK - the facts

Small businesses are a big part of the UK's economy, and for that reason alone, there is a lot of support available if you are growing or expanding your business.

Here are a few quick facts that help put the UK small business scene into perspective...

- There are 4.3 million small businesses in the UK (up from 4 million in 2003)
- 97% of firms employ less than 20 people
- 95% employ less than 5 people
- Over 500,000 people start up their own business every year
- Small firms employ more than 58% of the private sector workforce
- 12 million people work in small firms
- Small firms contribute more than 50% of the UK turnover - about 1,200 billion pounds
- 64% of commercial innovations come from small firms
- Small firms collect and pay Tax, NICs, VAT and other dues which help pay for public services

Federation of Small Businesses, January 2006

What are the issues involved with growing my business?

There are lots of things to consider when growing your business and it's virtually impossible to stay in touch with every single issue that could help - or hinder - your growth. There just simply isn't space in a guide like this to cover everything, so we've included just a small number of the essential issues that you need to consider if you're planning to grow your business...

Is it the right time for your business to grow?

How is your business currently performing - are you 100% sure that now is the right time to grow? A useful way to measure this is to use business benchmarking to compare the performance of your business with similar organisations. At a minimum, it could help you pinpoint any changes you need to make to ensure your growth is a success.

What would happen if something goes wrong?

With a bigger business comes bigger risks - to your stock, your people, your software and systems, and the future of your business. Growing your business should also involve planning for increased risk, and minimising any potential impacts on your business.

Are you planning for best practice?

Best practice means keeping up to date with developments in your industry, and making sure you do everything possible to improve your performance in line with market leaders. If your business isn't using best practice techniques, then growth will be more difficult to achieve.

What are your real options for growth?

It's essential to think about the specific areas in which your business could grow. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your business? What about opportunities and threats? Does your business deliver some services or product more successfully than others? Growing a business is about asking yourself questions like these - and capitalising on the things you already do well.

Do you have a strategy for growth?

Any business growth needs careful planning - and it starts with exactly how you plan to grow your business. Will you increase your market share? Diversify or consolidate your services? Look for partnerships or joint ventures? Merge with another company? Or even acquire one?

How will you finance your growth?

What are the options available for your business? Do you know how much money you will need? Do you know when your business will need it? Do you know how to get that money in the first place?

Does your growth involve exporting products?

Exporting your products overseas can make a huge difference to the size of your customer base. However, it is a huge step for any business, and there are lots of complex issues involved.

How will you market a larger business?

If growing your business means you will offer new products or services, you'll need to think about how to market them - probably to a much larger target audience, and potentially to a brand new audience altogether.

How will you deal with more customers?

Are you satisfied with the way you deal with your customers right now? Are your customers satisfied with the way you deal with them? Will your current customer relationship marketing techniques cope with an increased customer base?

Can your infrastructure cope?

Is your telephone and IT system currently running at capacity, or will it cope with much heavier use? Planning growth for your business also means increasing your backend business support systems, which are essential in keeping your business ticking.

Will you need larger premises - or better equipment?

Finding bigger premises is a huge task. You need to think about location, cost, benefits to employees, and the impact that moving will have on your customers - and your sales. Finding better equipment, whether it's a new computer or large plant machinery could also involve a significant cost outlay that you need to plan for.

Do you plan to take on more people?

Recruiting the right people is one of the toughest tasks that business owners face. Not only do you need to find people who can help and support you as you grow, but you also need to pay close attention to employment law, equality, discrimination, health and safety, and all legislation that covers wages and salaries.

How will you make sure your current employees are ready for growth?

Growing a business affects the people who work there, too, and you'll also need to make sure your employees are fully prepared for dealing with growth, through your own training schemes, appraisal systems, and support plans

Will you need to find more suppliers?

Whatever your business growth involves, it's likely that you'll need to find new suppliers. Ensuring you receive quality, reliability, and value for money is vital in making sure your growth is a success - and it means that choosing the right supplier could be more important than you think.

How can business support help me grow my business?

Whatever your business, and whatever your plans for growth, it's likely that finding someone to help, advise and support you will make the whole process much smoother. It also means that growth will happen properly, that you'll have covered every eventuality, and that your new, bigger business has the very best chance of succeeding.

There are 4 key areas of business growth where good business advice can really make a difference...

Planning your growth - even before you begin to grow your business, it's important to draw up a plan that outlines how you intend to grow, how you will manage it, how you will finance it, and how you sustain that growth. An expert business adviser can help you with all of these things, which improves the chances of your business growing successfully before you even start.

Employing more people - expert business advice is essential in helping you deal with Human Resources issues, equal opportunities, health and safety, discrimination, and salary and pay legislation on a bigger scale. And should the unexpected happen, it can also help you prepare for redundancies, accidents, and disciplinary problems.

Finding more customers (and keeping them) - it makes sense that bigger businesses sell more products and more services to more customers. But one of the hardest things when growing a business is finding - and keeping - those extra customers. A good business support service can help you create a strategy for finding those additional customers and sales leads, and make sure your advertising, marketing, and customer relationship activity really is up to the job.

Getting the most from your software - with more customers, more sales and more employees to manage, your software will need to work much harder. In fact, you might even need an entirely new software system to cope with the increased demand. Expert business support can not only help you choose the right software to help you manage your growth, it can make sure you're getting the most from it, too.

Growth: is your business ready for it?

Growing your business is exciting, make no mistake. But it's important to be ready for every eventuality - before you grow, while you're growing, and after you've grown. These quick questions have been designed to help you decide whether your business really is equipped to grow.

If you answer 'no' or 'not sure' to any of these questions, there's a good chance that reliable, expert advice could make your business growth happen much quicker, much more smoothly, and much more effectively.

Before you grow

Do you know exactly how your business could expand?	No Not sure Yes
Do you have enough employees to help and support your growth?	No Not sure Yes
Do you know what training your employees will need to help them cope with the growth?	No Not sure Yes
Do you know when the best time to grow your business is?	No Not sure Yes
Are your premises big/well-equipped enough for growth?	No Not sure Yes
Can your business software cope with more customers and more orders?	No Not sure Yes
Do you know how you will finance your growth, and how much you will need?	No Not sure Yes

While you're growing

Are you confident that you can find and recruit the right people?

No | Not sure | Yes

Will you offer a competitive package to new employees?

No | Not sure | Yes

Are you aware of any new employment legislation that might affect you?

No | Not sure | Yes

Do you know the correct health and safety procedures for new premises?

No | Not sure | Yes

Do you know how to check you will get best value from new suppliers?

No | Not sure | Yes

Do you have a solid marketing and advertising strategy for your new products or services?

No | Not sure | Yes

Have you planned extensively for when things might go wrong?

No | Not sure | Yes

Once you've grown

Do you have a clear strategy for keeping new customers and building loyalty?

No | Not sure | Yes

Will your business software continue to be effective with the extra pressures placed on it?

No | Not sure | Yes

Will your employees be happy in their new roles?

No | Not sure | Yes

Will your business perform better after the growth?

No | Not sure | Yes

Will your infrastructure and other support systems (such as telephones, etc) cope with this increased use?

No | Not sure | Yes

Has your growth given your business an edge over your competitors?

No | Not sure | Yes

Will you grow your business again?

No | Not sure | Yes



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Want to find out more?

You can seek business support and advice from a number of sources, including government business initiatives, local authorities, and many other independent bodies and organisations. But what's most important is that any advice you receive is trustworthy, reliable and up-to-date.



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