



5

Costly Mistakes Business Owners Make (And How to Avoid Them)



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Business Development & VA Services

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Save Time, Improve Efficiency & Protect Your Profit

Running your own business can feel like juggling a dozen plates at once. Between client delivery, admin, marketing, firefighting, and planning, it's no wonder there's so little time left for strategic thinking - let alone scaling.

After working with many small businesses and service-based consultants, I've noticed a pattern: the same five mistakes keep cropping up. The good news? They're all fixable - often with simple, practical changes rather than a complete overhaul.

This Guide Will Help You:

- Spot the most common time and money-draining mistakes business owners make
- Understand why they're so costly to your energy, growth, and profits
- Take simple, actionable steps to fix them - starting today

By the end, you'll have clear ideas on how to streamline your business, work smarter, and reclaim the time and space to focus on what really matters: growing and enjoying your business.

The common mistakes we will explore are:

- Mistake #1: Doing Everything Yourself
- Mistake #2: No Documented Systems or Processes
- Mistake #3: Relying on Manual, Time-Consuming Admin
- Mistake #4: No Clear Client Journey or Experience
- Mistake #5: No Time to Work ON the Business



Mistake #1: Doing Everything Yourself

The Problem: You're wearing all the hats, CEO, bookkeeper, admin assistant, marketer, project manager. It's exhausting... and unsustainable.

Why It's Costly:

- You spend too much time on low-value tasks instead of the high-impact work that really helps to move your business forward (sales, strategy, visibility).
- Burnout creeps in - and when you're stretched, you're less effective across the board.
- There's no room for growth, because you're too busy working in the business instead of on it.

How to Avoid It

- Audit your week: Pick one week to track everything you do. At the end of the week, highlight what only you should be doing - and what could be delegated
- Apply the 3D rule: Do it. Delegate it. Ditch it. If it's not essential or high-impact, offload or eliminate it.
- Start small: Hand over 1-2 low-risk tasks (e.g. admin or routine email handling) to someone else - a team member, or a trusted VA.
- Get organised: Set up a "Delegation-Ready" task list in a shared space (Google Doc, Notion, etc.) so you have a clean, ready-to-go list when you outsource.

What This Looks Like in Real Life

"I recently helped a client who was drowning in admin free up nearly 10 hours a week just by delegating 3 repetitive tasks. Once we created a simple 'delegate list' together, she finally had breathing room - and her stress levels dropped instantly."

Putting a simple delegation system in place early can save you hours of chaos - and help you avoid the burnout trap.

Start small, stay consistent, and watch how much space comes back into your week.



Mistake #2: No Documented Systems or Processes

The Problem: If everything lives in your head, you become the bottleneck. Even if you hire help, no one can support you properly because they don't know how things should be done. That's where overwhelm, and mistakes, creep in.

Why It's Costly

- Tasks get missed or done differently each time because there's no standard way of working.
- Handovers become slow, frustrating, or completely impossible.
- Growth stalls, because trying to scale without systems is chaotic (and usually leads straight back to burnout).

How to Avoid It

- Start with just one process: Choose a simple, repeatable task you do often - something like onboarding a new client, sending monthly invoices, or updating your CRM.
- Document as you do it: Don't overthink it. Record your screen with Loom or write the steps out in a checklist in Trello, Notion or Google Docs. Simple and functional beats perfect.
- Create easy-to-follow SOPs: Keep them short and practical: bullet points, scripts, templates, or screenshots. You don't need a 20-page operations manual - just something someone else can follow to get the work done!
- Build a central home for everything: Create a "Business Manual" in Notion or Google Drive where you store your processes, templates, FAQs, logins, and reference info. It doesn't have to be fancy - it just has to be accessible and kept up to date.

My Take

Systems aren't about being rigid or corporate - they're about giving you freedom.

When your processes are simple, documented and easy to hand over, you save time, reduce errors, and finally stop being the only person who knows how everything works.

Start with one process. Then another. Before long, you'll have a full manual and a business that runs more smoothly - even when you step away.



Mistake #3: Relying on Manual, Time-Consuming Admin

The Problem: So much of your day is spent doing repetitive admin - the kind of tasks that could easily be automated, but you either haven't had the headspace or know-how to set them up. It's draining, and it keeps you stuck.

Why It's Costly

- Admin quietly eats away at the hours you should be spending on sales, strategy, or visibility.
- Repetitive work leads to disengagement, mistakes, and unnecessary stress.
- It becomes almost impossible to scale because every new client adds more admin instead of freeing up more time.

How to Avoid It

- Automate bookings and emails: Use tools like Calendly or your CRM's built-in workflows to automate scheduling, confirmations, reminders and follow-ups.
- Use email templates for common responses: Create email templates for enquiries, onboarding, project updates, proposals, and follow-ups. A few minutes of setup can save hours each month.
- Build simple automations: Tools like Zapier, or built-in CRM automations can handle tasks like adding contacts, sending documents, tagging leads, or updating spreadsheets - automatically.
- Protect your systems time: Block one "Automation Power Hour" each month to review what's working, what's slipped back into manual work, and where you can streamline even further.

What This Looks Like in Real Life

"I recently worked with a client who was manually sending every single welcome email, invoice, and appointment reminder. Together, we automated her booking system and set up a simple workflow to handle client onboarding. Within a week, she'd cut out almost 6 hours of admin, and told me she couldn't believe how much lighter her workload felt."



Mistake #4: No Clear Client Journey or Experience

The Problem: Your clients may love the final result, but the experience of working with you feels a bit inconsistent behind the scenes. Your processes are in your head, the back-end feels messy, and every client journey ends up being slightly different.

Why It's Costly

- Leads drop off because your enquiry or follow-up process isn't clear or consistent.
- Clients don't return, or refer, because their overall experience didn't feel smooth or impressive.
- You waste time "reinventing the wheel" every time by rewriting the same emails, steps, or documents from scratch.

How to Avoid It

- Map out your full client journey: Start from the moment someone discovers you and follow the path right through to offboarding and ongoing nurturing. Include every touchpoint: enquiry, booking, onboarding, delivery, communication, and follow-up
- Template everything: Create templates for proposals, welcome packs, onboarding emails, project updates, and offboarding checklists. When everything is ready to go, you save time and deliver a consistent, professional experience.
- Automate key touchpoints: Set up automated follow-up emails, review requests, reminders, or check-ins using tools like your CRM, Dubsado, or email provider. These small automations create reliability without losing the personal touch.
- Visualise it: Use a simple flowchart tool to map out your client journey. Seeing the steps clearly makes it much easier to spot gaps, remove friction, and build a seamless experience.

My Take

A clear, intentional client journey is one of the fastest ways to improve your client experience and reclaim hours of your time. When every step is mapped, templated, and repeatable, you eliminate guesswork, both for you and your clients.



Mistake #5: No Time to Work ON the Business

The Problem: You're constantly reacting, firefighting client work and admin. There's no space to think strategically, review what's working, or plan what's next. You feel busy... but not necessarily productive.

Why It's Costly

- You miss opportunities to grow, improve, or pivot.
- You stick with what used to work, even if it's no longer right for your business.
- Growth plateaus, and your energy and motivation drop along with it.

How to Avoid It

- Schedule weekly CEO time: Block out 60–90 minutes each week with zero client work or admin. Protect it like a meeting - this is your time to think, plan, and focus on growth.
- Review your performance every month: Look at what's working, what isn't, and what's next. Use your insights to adjust your strategy rather than constantly reacting.
- Work with a consultant or coach: An external perspective keeps you accountable and helps you stay strategic - even when you feel buried in day-to-day tasks.
- Keep a recurring checklist: Consider a Friday routine to review KPIs, finances, lead flow, and team capacity. A consistent check-in ensures you're always in control and can make proactive decisions.

What This Looks Like in Real Life

“One of my clients realised he hadn't had a real planning session in months - he was completely stuck in client work. We blocked out a weekly CEO hour and created a simple Friday review checklist. Within a few weeks, he spotted opportunities to streamline services and had already launched a new offer. he told me he finally felt like he was running the business again,”

Finding time to work on your business is one of the fastest ways to regain control, energy, and momentum. Even a small weekly routine - 60 minutes of strategic thinking and a short monthly review - can completely shift your perspective and unlock growth opportunities.



Next Steps: Let's Fix These Together

These mistakes are common and completely fixable. If any of them resonated, you're in the right place.

I help business owners streamline how they work and get the practical support they need to stay on top of everything. That means:

- Removing hidden inefficiencies and simplifying your operations
- Building clear systems and processes that actually work
- Taking admin and marketing tasks off your plate
- Keeping your business running smoothly day-to-day
- Turning ideas into action without the overwhelm

Whether you need strategy, hands-on support, or a blend of both - I've got you.

Ready to take the next step?

Book a free 30-minute Discovery Call and let's uncover where your business is leaking time, money, or energy - and the simple shifts to fix it. www.businessdeva.co.uk

About Me

I'm Julie Leach, founder of Business Deva.

I help owners and service-based professionals simplify, automate, delegate, and scale. With a background in operational management, marketing, and strategic growth, I blend practical consultancy with hands-on support to create results that stick.

Connect With Me

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I hope you found this guide helpful in understanding some of the fixes you can implement. If you need a helping hand, I would love to work with you and support you with growing your business.

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