

Owner managers generally start their own businesses because they are good at something and believe they can build a successful commercial business off this base, notes Blaise Brosnan. 'Often they are good at the vocational aspect of the business, but are virgins in other areas such as the energising of their commercial model,' he continues. We decided to explore the issue with Blaise and some other well-known figures from our trade. We begin with Blaise's thoughts, which are based on his recent successful book, *Jack*.

'MANAGING A SMALL BUSINESS IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN MANAGING A LARGE BUSINESS' - DISCUSS

Just because you are a skilled operative doesn't necessarily equip you to become a successful, commercial business person. There is a different dynamic required to achieve this.

Our brain has both a right and left side. The right side is the creative side and the left represents the more logical traits. Two-thirds of the population have a reasonable mixture of both right and left characteristics.

CHARACTERISTICS

At both extremes you get the outliers who tend to be recognised for their more extreme characteristics.

The more extreme right-brained people tend to be visionary types who tend to have a clearer picture of the evolving landscape than others. Here is the fertile ground for artists of all hues.

Those with a more developed left brain tend to see the world as more black and white where everything needs to match and be in its place. This is the more familiar territory for engineers, accountants and other such persons who deal with critical precision and consistent accuracy.

Each owner-manager has his/her own personality profile, but naturally enough, none of us have the 'full shilling'. We all have both our strengths and weaknesses.

The critical implication of this for successfully managing our businesses is that the range of these skills is required to varying degrees – depending on our business's position on its business lifecycle.

VISIONARY

Every business starts from an idea in the head of the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs tend to be more right-brained visionary types.

They can visualise the picture of their proposed business before it's born. But unlike extreme visionaries, entrepreneurs don't just visualise and talk about it, they also have some left brain characteristics which facilitate them to go and turn their vision into something commercially tangible.

These right/left traits are poles opposite and don't necessarily lie comfortably with each other. Yet, both are critical ingredients for the successful baking of the businesses

commercial loaf.

RESOURCES

In a large business the MD has the resources to build a team of specialists around himself/herself.

Here the MD can ensure that there is balance within the team for the commercial task on hand, while at the same time, there is not necessarily balance within the heads of the individual team members.

As an owner-manager you are by far the most important input into your business model, while at the same time being its limiting factor.

By building your own relevant management capacity and adopting other balancing tactics, you are enhancing your business's chances of being still standing at the end of this recession cycle and being fitter to exploit the emerging opportunities.

MANAGE

You, as the owner-manager of your small business cannot afford the range of such resources in-house and so you have to try and manage issues you are often ill equipped to manage.

In the course of a typical day you may have to wear the following range of hats. These are:

Accountancy,
HR,
Marketing,
Sales,
Negotiation,
Operations,
Legal,
Logistics,
PR
and many more.

All owner-managers are good at aspects of these, but it's impossible to be well enough equipped to perform adequately in all these areas. Some hats fit, while many fit badly.

Being the owner-manager of a small business is a lonesome journey. You have to make all the critical decisions on your own. You don't have the support of a team like the MD of the larger businesses.

It's often at the follow on implementation

Blaise Brosnan



of these decisions where the mental isolation really manifests itself.

INNOVATIVE

Just because you as owner-manager cannot afford to have a management team around you in order to achieve balance between the right and left type characteristics, you nevertheless must be innovative on how you can achieve the necessary balance to round off your own business's profile.

One way of achieving this balance is to build a trusting relationship with one or more experienced business people, who will both challenge and guide you along your otherwise lonesome journey.

These relationships can be either informal or formal. The formal ones can be energised via your local County Enterprise Board, who will allocate a mentor to you.

Its best if the mentor has an opposite profile to yours, so that together there is more balance within the team rather than balance within either head.

The evolving business relationship needs to be trusting and challenging, since it's being built for the purpose of equipping you and your business to become more commercially successful.

Like all resources, you as the owner-manager must optimise these types of opportunities.