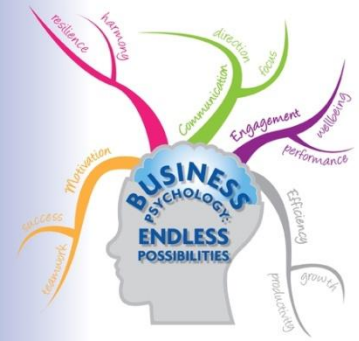




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Working with small businesses

Dr Karol Szlichcinski
K Szlichcinski Associates Ltd

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Small businesses share common characteristics:

- Individual and social psychology;
- Interactions with their environment;
- Processes and technologies.



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The psychology of small business owners

The personality of the entrepreneur (Furnham):

- Achievement motivation;
- Internal locus of control;
- Risk-taking propensity;
- Tolerance of ambiguity;
- Type-A behaviour.



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The psychology of small business owners

- Dislike authority and find it difficult to fit into organisations (Kets de Vries);
- Have confidence in their own abilities (GEM);
- Feel lonely and isolated (Gumpert and Boyd);



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Social psychology of small businesses

Dependency on the owner-manager:

“It is a characteristic of small business that powers of decision are centralized at the level of the owner-manager, so his or her personality, skills, responsibilities, attitude and behaviour will have a decisive influence on business strategy” (Bridge et al, 2003).



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Social psychology of small businesses

- Employer – employee relations: benevolent autocracy or a more fraternal approach (Storey);
- Small group behaviour:
 - Family dynamics;
 - ‘Basic assumption’ behaviours (Bion).



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Small businesses' interactions with their environment

- Little opportunity to control their environment;
- May depend on one or two large customers or suppliers;
- Have access to support services.



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Small businesses' processes and technologies

- The smallest businesses do not need formalised processes.
- As they grow, they start to need a few simple processes and the technology to support them:
 - Accounts;
 - Staff management.



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Common 'people' issues of small businesses

- How to develop the capabilities of the owner as the business grows?
- How to recruit new people?
- How to devolve responsibility as the business grows?
- What skills does the business require for further growth?
- How to reduce staff numbers in a downturn?



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Working with small businesses

Business coaching for leaders of small businesses

Objective: to help small business leaders identify how best to develop their businesses.

Clients:

- Running an existing business;
- Thinking of setting up a new business.



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Business coaching for leaders of small businesses

Aims:

- Enable the client to clarify ideas and objectives;
- Facilitate a full business analysis;
- Develop the client's individual and organisational skills by helping them reflect on their situation;
- Encourage clients thinking of setting up a business to consider work/life balance.



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Business coaching for leaders of small businesses

Approach:

- Two coaches/consultants with complementary skills;
- Initial one hour fact-finding session;
- Further meetings of 1.5 hours duration at intervals of 2 - 3 months;
- One or two one-hour telephone coaching sessions between meetings.



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Business coaching for leaders of small businesses

Approach (continued):

- Appreciative Inquiry techniques;
- Helping clients with established businesses to explore ways of overcoming barriers to developing the business;
- Using ‘Seven Domains of Life’ model to help client assess work/life balance:
 - Finance, Health, Work, Personal Relationships, Family and Extended Family, Friends and Social Life, and Spirituality (Mulligan).



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Business coaching for leaders of small businesses

Issues:

- Coaching approach;
- Intervals between meetings;
- Working with two coaches/consultants;
- Appreciative Inquiry;
- Reviewing work/life balance;
- Blending consultancy and coaching.

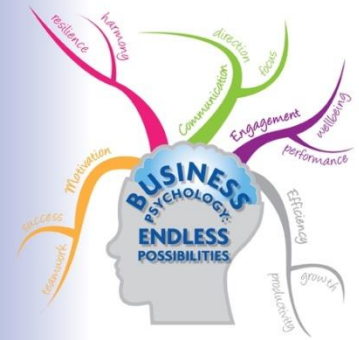


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For more detail:

“Coaching and consulting to small businesses”
in “Mind-ful Consulting”

edited by Sue Whittle and Karen Izod

Karnac Books