

# Invest in YOURSELF!

When did you last take the time to focus on your personal development?



Now that you are an entrepreneur, you are flying solo. Although you are obtaining practical on-the-job training, you have no one to advise you. How can you ensure that you remain relevant in your industry, keep abreast of trends and grow as a leader?

Successful entrepreneurs continually invest in their own education and self-development. They make this one of their priorities, scheduling time in their busy diaries to keep honing their skills. They understand that, as a business owner, they need to guard against becoming inflexible and narrow in their thinking. By attending seminars and courses, acquiring a mentor or reading books and articles, they strive to learn about new ideas and possible alternative solutions for their challenges.

## FIND A MENTOR

Billionaire Warren Buffett has this to say about the people he surrounds himself with: "It's better to hang out with people better than you. Pick out associates whose behaviour is better than yours and you'll drift in that direction."

When you are in business on your own, you need someone who can challenge your thinking and who can act as a sounding board. Even if you have a team of people, you can't share your fears and challenges with your colleagues as your role is to lead and imbue them with confidence that the business will work.

Choose a mentor who you respect and trust. Perhaps it's a family friend or an ex-colleague – you want a mentor who has been successful in business and experienced its ups and downs. You must feel comfortable taking the person into your confidence and sharing with them. Your aim is to learn from their experiences and have them alert you to possible pitfalls. They can help motivate you and may even be willing to introduce you to their network.

You can alternatively go the route of hiring the services of a professional mentor coach, deciding on a list of objectives and the time frame for their achievement. Your

mentor coach will meet with you for an hour or two, once every two to three weeks. The role of your coach is not to provide you with solutions but to facilitate your exploring possibilities and determining the best approaches. This is not necessarily a long-term arrangement, but it's a service that you can utilise whenever the business reaches a new turning point.

Having a mentor is particularly beneficial when you are transitioning from a smaller to a larger business, as you will require new leadership skills. Entrepreneurs, by their very nature, tend to have a controlling management style and when the business grows, they need to learn how to delegate and listen to their colleagues.

## FIND A GOOD BOOK

Develop a passion for reading books and articles. It's the easiest and most cost-effective way to improve your skills and knowledge. You can learn about the strategies successful entrepreneurs have employed, and nowadays, it's possible

## HERE'S HOW I DID IT

“ My mentoring sessions have allowed me to define clear objectives for my business within the next six months. I think when you're involved in managing a business; it's



very difficult to acknowledge one's blind spots. My belief is that having a mentor acts as a sounding board, allowing me to test my thinking and plans, and to receive feedback within a 'safe space'.

My mentor has made me accountable for the goals that I've set and I've been able to focus on what I need to do to accelerate the sales and growth of Shomang Brokers. ”

Mosidi Shomang is the founder and owner of Shomang Brokers, a 100% Black woman owned company, which specialises in insurance broking, risk management and claims handling. Her business has been in operation for four years and comprises a team of five people. Clients include professionals, SMMEs and corporates. While Mosidi is an expert in the field of short term insurance, having managed the claims department of a major international insurance group, worked for key local players and garnered international experience, marketing is not her strong point. She therefore made the decision to approach marketing mentor Shirley Anthony to improve her marketing skills and to help her to focus in this area.

to subscribe to an email newsletter on virtually any topic. Having this information available on the internet and being able to download e-books on e-readers has made this knowledge easily accessible; you can read wherever you are and whenever you have a couple of spare minutes, even when waiting for a meeting.

Have you ever worked out how much time you spend driving in your car? Let's

assume that it takes you half an hour each way to get to and from work. That's five hours spent in your vehicle each week, twenty hours per month, and over a year that equates to 240 hours or ten full days. This excludes any other time you spend in your car. If you find you don't have the time to read, you can always get an audio book and listen whilst driving. You'll be amazed how many books you get through in a short period of time using this method.

## ENROL IN A COURSE

According to leadership expert, Robin Sharma, you can double your income if you triple your investment in professional education. It's not always easy to take time away from one's business; however, attending one- or two-day seminars are an excellent way to acquire new information. It also gives you a break from the office, can be motivational and provides you with the opportunity to network.

Undertaking part-time studies can develop new skills and make your business more marketable, but it can be challenging when you are also trying to juggle your business commitments. It's doable, but you will need to stretch yourself for the period of your studies.

I recently completed a digital marketing course, which was probably long overdue in terms of my acquiring knowledge in this field. I was fortunate enough to be able to undertake it full time and was able to focus on the assignments and complete all the required reading. It's paying dividends, as I've now added an extra arrow to my quiver and am able to provide clients with input regarding their websites and their online presence.

There comes a time when every business owner needs to reinvent themselves to ensure their offering remains relevant to the marketplace. Self-development can play a pivotal role in this process, so keep investing in yourself. **YB**

This is an excerpt from author, Shirley Anthony's book, *The NEW Entrepreneur: A Practical Marketing Guide For Growing Your Business Now*". The book is available from [www.marbreak.co.za](http://www.marbreak.co.za)

