
Leadership Development

A handbook for entrepreneurs, CEOs, and startup founders.



Companeur, LLC

Volume 2

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About the Author

Brandon was recently selected to represent Google, as a Google Small Business Advisor, and has authored several business and digital marketing classes on Google's Primer App.

Brandon has considerable experience in streamlining business processes to maximize productivity, working with executive leadership to come up with new ways to grow the business, forming enterprise content marketing strategies, analyzing data to make more informed educated business decisions, and creating personalized marketing and lead generation campaigns that get results. Brandon helps his customers be accountable, consistent, and accurate, in every aspect of their business.

From me to you.

My goal is to empower you with information, so that you can do better, today. Everything I share is simple, and easy to understand. No junk, no fluff, no nonsense. I only share high-quality, proven information.

Contact Me

I'm more than happy to answer any questions and provide suggestions. Send me an email brandon@companeur.com or text (267) 702-3851 to get the conversation started.

High Overhead Kills Profits

Technology is the solution to the high overhead that's killing your business. Look to invest in technology that replaces time-intensive, and repetitive, people tasks. High overhead kills profits, it's that simple to understand.

“When you have high overhead, you need to charge more to keep your margins, and when you need to charge more, you ultimately become uncompetitive in regards to pricing, and when you become uncompetitive, you lose customers, and when you lose customers, you start to not be able to pay your bills, and when you're not able to pay your bills, you go out of business. There's no two ways about it.”

To help you out, below I've shared a few of the more prevalent time-intensive overhead busters, that burden businesses, and eat up a bunch of money in customer support services.

Manual access to information.

Customer needs to call in and speak with a support representative to receive their information, such as billing histories, executed contracts, receipts, and service histories. As customers continue to want instant access to their information, you're going to need to keep hiring more and more people to answer the phone, gather the information, and then email it or physically mail it to them – the end result will be that your overhead will continue to rise, your productivity will continue to decrease, and smaller, more nimble and technology savvy companies will offer your service or product at a lower cost, thus eating up your market share and eventually putting you out of business.

Manual service and support tickets.

Customer needs to call in and speak with a service representative to open a new service ticket, or to follow up on an existing one to check on an ETA. We live in a mobile-centric world, people don't want to call a business to open up a service call, or to check on an ETA. They want to be able to quickly hit a website or app on a mobile phone and open up a service ticket or check to see what time the service rep is going to arrive – the end result will be that again in order to support the customers needs of instant gratification, you're going to need to

hire more staff, and have them work longer hours, thus again busting you're overhead. Customers want to have a fluid, interactive experience, in real-time, and if you don't offer it to them, they're going to gravitate to the smaller, more technology savvy companies that do provide easy of use, and real-time tracking.

Manual sales information and pricing.

Customer needs to call in and speak with a sales representative to receive product, and/or pricing information. Customers want instant gratification, and when they want to buy something, they want it right away. Not having sales reps manage your phones all day and night, is going to cost you sales, it's also gong to cost you a lot to money, so it's never going to work in the long run – the end result will be that companies that are more savvy in presenting information, pricing, and instant checkout information online, will smoke you and you'll end up out of business within the next three to five years.

If your business is guilty of any of the above, look to implement technology that can automate these tasks. Automation is not nearly as expensive as it used to be, and in most cases, a relatively small investment, can save you big-time dollars. Overhead is no joking matter in business. It's one of the fastest ways to eat up all your profits, and send your business right down the tubes.

Investing in technology will get you to where you want to go in business. It will allow you to cut out all the people sitting at desks doing time-intensive tasks, saving you on office space and payroll. Yes, technology costs money, but people cost way more money. From healthcare, to hiring, training, to firing, it all comes at a big expense to businesses. You can ultimately do what you want, but just beware, there's an entirely new generation coming through the ranks, and they're technology and automation experts, and they know how to run a business on a dime.

To keep up, you must change the way your grandfather ran his business, which is most likely the same way that his grandfather ran his business. It's time to change, it's time to update your technology, and it's time your business becomes competitive again in a crowded, savvy, and technology centric, market space.

Maximizing Monthly Business Subscription Services

Have you ever heard the term over-tooled before? Getting over-tooled simply means that you have way too many tools than needed. Companies get over-tooled all the time now because they get caught up in the hype of the, “Next great monthly subscription website,” only to find out months later that they just wasted a bunch of money. This is the exact reason why it’s important to monitor your monthly business subscription services.

Do an analysis.

If this sounds like you, immediately do an analysis of every monthly subscription website you’re currently using. I can assure you, that you’ll most likely find a handful of them that you can drop and start saving money on asap. There’s nothing wrong with subscribing to a monthly business subscription website if you’re using it to the fullest, but if you’re over-tooled, and you have too much going on to keep a track of your monthly expenses, you’re 100% going to be paying for services that you don’t need.

List out all your subscriptions.

I speak from experience when I share this information, I was over-tooled myself and was paying out way too much money for monthly subscription services that I hadn’t logged into in months. I was astounded, as well as dumbfounded when I saw what in the world I was spending my businesses hard earned money on. One step I took to help myself out in terms of watching my monthly budget, was to list out all the services I currently use onto a Google Docs Sheet, along with what they do and how much they cost, and I review them on a monthly basis to see if I still need to use them. It’s simple, it’s easy, and this is what I’ve found to work best for me.

Use the right tools.

Knowing the tools the pros use is great – the only thing is, it’s not going to get you very far if that’s all you’re relying on. In order to use the tools to the best of their ability, you need to add some grease to them. Not physical grease, I’m talking about enthusiasm and

personalization grease. Everything in life needs grease i.e. tires, nuts, bolts, door hinges, and everything else you can imagine. The same holds true for what you do in business. You are the grease – yes, you.

Add your special touch.

Your personalization, your genuine passion, your effort, and your willingness to help without receiving anything back in return is your grease. Remember the story of the old man and the teenager that have a contest to see who can chop down a tree faster? The teenager spends all day continuously chopping at the tree, while the old man chops at the tree, stops for an hour, gets a drink, sharpens his ax blade, then goes back to chopping. Do you understand the story here? The old man is sharpening and greasing his blade to actually chop faster.

You need to do the same thing with the tools you use in your business efforts. Everyone has the same tools available to them, it's those that grease the tools and use them to their maximum ability that will find ultimate business success. You don't have to listen to what I'm sharing here, but I can tell you from personal experience, when I started adding grease to the tools in my toolbox, things really took off.

Less is more.

One other thing that really helped me turn my business around was focusing on less tools, and really working the tools that I did use, to their maximum capability. In some cases, I find that when I focus on less, I actually get back more. My recommendation is that you select a handful of tools, test them out, and I mean more than just logging into the site and doing one thing.

Grease the tools up, learn from them, and see if they can work for you in the long run. What works for one person may not be right for you, make your own tool recipe, add your own grease to it, and figure out a way to maximize the tools to the best of your ability. And above all, remember to monitor your monthly business subscription services, so that you can reduce costs and increase productivity.

Set Up Business Processes for Best Results

When I first started my entrepreneurial journey years ago, I most definitely was not into following business processes of any form or type, but over the years I've learned that having business processes in place, is really something that is needed for long-term business success.

Things can get crazy quickly.

When it's just you, business processes may not be that important, but when you add an employee or two, or three, things can fall off the tracks pretty quickly, so to protect yourself, you need to clearly define some solid business processes.

“A business process is defined as a series of logically related activities or tasks, such as planning, production, or sales, performed together to produce a defined set of results.”

You can set up business processes to streamline order taking, invoicing, shipping, or whatever else eats up a bunch of your time and causes a bunch of confusion. The idea is to automate the workflow and remove human error from the equation. Once you set up the process, you can just let it run on its own.

Put business processes in place.

By implementing business processes, you'll be able to streamline the way you complete everyday business tasks. Not only that, but you'll also have a clearly defined set of rules for your employees to follow when you're not in the office. Like I mentioned above, when it's just you, business processes may not be that important, but when you start to hire people, they'll become very important to your businesses success.

Improve daily routine tasks.

Above and beyond setting up business processes, look to improve daily routine tasks. In business, it's the little things that will kill you. That's why it's important that your business development team focuses on how to cut down on the time it takes to complete daily routine tasks. Daily routine tasks that suck up a bunch of time are going to severely hinder your ability to accelerate and grow your company.

I'm talking about repetitive tasks that multiple people in your organization have to do, day in, and day out, such as data entry of invoices. Having a person, or multiple people, sitting at a desk, manually typing in information all day, is flat out crazy. That's not cost-effective in any way, shape, or form, but what is cost-effective, is investing in technology that will automate this process for you.

Take a look around your office.

My recommendation is that you take a look around your office, see who's doing the most repetitive tasks, find out why they're actually doing the tasks, and then work with your business development team to streamline or automate these processes. If you keep your eyes open as you walk around your office, you'll clearly start to see some common tasks that can be easily automated. It's all about streamlining workflows to maximum efficiency, while delivering the highest quality results.

Remember, the little things will kill you in business, so make the most of your time, and make the most of your employees time, by looking to remove the manual repetitive processes that grind your business to a halt. The faster you set up business processes to support your exact business needs, the faster you'll be able to move onto future growth projects.

Three Types of Employees You Need to Dump

Employees are the blood that runs through the veins of your company, and if they're not onboard with the way you do business, they need to be dumped. Yes, this is harsh, but unless you want to have much bigger problems later on down the line, you need to dump your defiant, non-disciplined, and entitled employees immediately. They will bring you down, and they'll spread their negative views and bad behavior throughout your organization like wildfire.

You're in business to sell more and more products and services, and make money obviously, but underneath this, there's also a responsibility to help employees have an opportunity to make a good living for themselves, and help them take care of their families by paying them fair wages. The last thing you need is some defiant, non-disciplined, and entitled employee trying to ruin the positive environment that you've worked so hard to build.

So let me break down each type of problem employee that you need to dump. Look at it like this, if an employee has one of the three terrible traits, maybe it's something you can work through, but if they have all three of them, it may be time to just have a quick conversation and let them go work at some other company where they may be a better fit.

A defiant employee.

This will flat out drive you crazy. You say black, they say red, and they'll fight you to death even though they know they're wrong.

A non-disciplined employee.

Shows up late to work and meetings, doesn't get jobs done on time, looks a mess when they show up to work, and just doesn't seem to care if they fail, or don't have great results.

An entitled employee.

They think that they can do the least, get the most, and then actually complain about everything and anything.

All three of the above terrible employee traits will flat out drive you nuts. You don't have time in business to be wasting it with negative people that are trying to share their negative thoughts and actions, with your positive employees. Dumping defiant, non-disciplined, and entitled employees isn't a harsh move, it's a smart move. If you had a bad business relationship, you'd dump that quickly, so do the same when it comes to bad employee relationships as well.

Now that you've listened to my harsh and straightforward side, let me share some love with you. Giving people a chance is only fair. If you do have an employee that embodies these traits, call them aside privately, share what you've seen or heard, and let them know that you know what's been going on, and that it's not going to be tolerated, and give them an opportunity to correct their behavior. If their behavior isn't corrected, and you've notified them properly in advance and have attempted to work through the issues, but no positive improvements have occurred, then take swift and immediate action. I just had to put this disclaimer in here because not every circumstance is black and white. Remember, there's always some grey area in every situation.

Outsource Business Tasks That Eat Up Valuable Time

A job is about getting stuff done, for the lowest price, at the highest quality level. Outsourcing business tasks, not only reduces costs, but it also allows you to hire specific experts, for specific jobs, rather than hiring a jack-of-all-trades. Another benefit of outsourcing is that it allows you to hire and fire as you see fit, enabling your company to quickly pivot in any direction needed, when needed.

The good thing in terms of outsourcing, especially with our younger generation, is that they're excellent at working independently. They don't need to come into an office so that they can be checked on every day. In fact, as long as you provide crystal clear instructions, along with a deadline, the majority of the time they'll come through for you. When you work with an experienced freelancer, the experience will be fluid, and will deliver excellent results as well. If you're going to go the freelancer route, make sure you always keep a small core group of permanent strategic advisors to guide your freelancers with daily activities, and to bounce questions off of in a confidential setting.

So to help you out, I've shared some of the outsourcing lessons that I've learned through the years. Outsourcing your business tasks may be a little uncomfortable at first, but once you settle in and get in the groove, you'll never look back.

Start by outsourcing one simple task.

The big issue with most people is that they make too big of a deal with what they want to outsource, and it gets too confusing, and then nothing ever gets done. The simpler the first outsourced task, the better. You're not looking to outsource a difficult math equation here, you're just looking to offload something that typically eats up a bunch of your time. The best thing to do, is clearly assign jobs that need to be completed. People work better when they know what they need to do, as well as what the expectation is for how long it's supposed to take.

Stop expecting perfection, and start expecting above-average results.

Great, your perfect, and you never make any mistakes, but there's a whole world of people out there that aren't perfect, that do make some mistakes, but do deliver awesome results. There's no way someone is going to do everything the exact way you want them to one-hundred percent of the time, especially if you're not explaining what you want them to do absolutely perfectly. Most of the time, if there's an error, it's probably because of you not explaining it properly.

The first freelancer you work with, doesn't have to be the only freelancer you ever work with.

This is the beauty of outsourcing. You don't need to hire someone and invest time onboarding and training them, only to find out six-months into it, that they're really not the right fit. You can hire and fire as many freelancers as you want until you find the right one for the specific job you're looking to outsource. One freelancer may work well with behind the scenes data, while another one may be great with customer-facing items, everyone is different, find each freelancers strength, and then hire them for jobs where they can succeed. If they're not succeeding, get rid of them, or redeploy them to work on another job. Some people just don't have what it takes to work with your business standards, don't be mean about it, just let them know the job is not right for them and walk away from the situation.

Master the art of outsourcing.

There's nothing better than having a comfort level of being able to have any type of freelancer at your fingertips, for any type of job that may come your way. The better you set up and keep track of what freelancers do what, the better you'll be able to assign them jobs. Outsourcing business tasks that eat up valuable time is no joking matter. Being an effective and efficient outsourcer, will drive your profits through the roof, without any long-term employee payroll or health insurance expenditures.

Be true to your company, look to take care of every penny, and be sure to take care of the people that are taking care of you in business. Growth comes from pushing boundaries, and yes, implementing an outsourcing strategy is pushing the limits of your comfort level, but the faster you become comfortable with the uncomfortable, the faster you'll be able to start to put some real money in your pocket.

Only Do the Most Important Business Tasks

The key to your success in business is not in you doing everything yourself, it's in you doing the most important business tasks yourself. You spending time generating leads may not be in your best interest, while you spending time closing leads that your employees nurtured and educated already, may be the best use of your time. What you need to understand here, is that you need to let go of the little tasks that you can give to your employees.

Working in your business i.e. sweeping the floor, answering the phones, doing data entry, etc., is not going to pay you money to keep your lights turned on in the office. Working on your business i.e. closing down pre-qualified leads, planning marketing strategies, building high-level c-suite relationships, is going to pay you money to keep the lights turned on.

It's not hard to see what I'm talking about when I explain it this way. What I see is that entrepreneurs get caught up in the acts of running their business, when they really need to get caught up in the aspects of growing their business. If you're running a business, focus on becoming a delegation master, hire great employees, surround yourself with go-getters, and never be afraid to try something new.

So the key point to remember, is for you not to get caught up in doing every little single business task yourself, but in you just doing the most important business tasks yourself i.e. activities that generate new revenue streams, taking care of current customers, and growing new strategic relationships.

Empower Employees by Getting Out of the Way

It's easy to get sucked into wanting to be involved in every facet of your business. This is fine in the beginning, because it's most likely just you doing everything, but as time goes on, and your business grows, you're going to need to empower employees by getting out of the way.

What does getting out of the way mean?

Getting out of the way doesn't mean not showing up to work, it simply means that you're going to need to empower the people that you've hired, to excel and provide the services and support that you've hired them to actually provide.

Stop holding on.

What happens sometimes when your business grows rapidly, is that you continue to hold on to wanting to be involved in every meeting and decision-making process. The thing is, when your business is rocking, there's not going to be enough time in the day to continue to be involved in everything, so you need to empower employees by getting out of the way, and start to believe in the people you've hired, and let them make some decisions for themselves.

Hire the right people.

By you wanting to be in every decision making process, you may well in fact be holding up a decision that your staff has already made because of your limited availability. If this starts happening, it's definitely time that you need to get out of the way, because it's ultimately going to end up causing tension between your employees and yourself. If you're going to hire people, hire people because you're going to empower them to be able to make decisions for you.

Don't make your business all about you. When your business is all about you, it means no vacation or downtime for you because everything is based around you. The idea is to let go a

bit, and empower employees by getting out of the way, and give yourself some free time every once in a while. Yes, letting go is hard, but if you don't let go, you're business will ultimately end up suffering.

Watch Every Penny Your Business Spends

The time to watch the money, is when your business is making the most money. When business is good, your guard goes down, you get more relaxed on spending, and you may sign up for a few add-on services you really don't need. But this is not the correct way to think, especially if you're running a small business. I don't care what anyone else says about, "How when they're making a lot of money, they don't need to watch things as much." I'm here to tell you, "You need to watch every penny that goes out of your business," especially when you're making a lot.

Take care of the pennies.

Have you ever read the quote, "Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves?" This is so true, even though it was quoted all the way back in the 1700's. And like with all things, if history repeats itself, like it normally does, companies that spend lavishly while they're making a lot, ultimately end up going broke because eventually business is going to level off, your expenses are going to be way to high, and you're just going to end up looking back and saying, "How did we blow it all."

No regrets.

You don't want to look back and have regrets about wasting money, so take the time now to perform a spending audit. If you don't do an audit and get this information down on paper, how are you ever going to know what you're actually spending on a monthly basis? The answer is, you're not! Once you know what your dollars are being spent on, look into each product or servicing company you use, and go back to them and ask them how you can cut costs, while maintaining the same level of quality. Some may say they can help you by doing XYZ, while others may say there's nothing they can do. In the end, at least you'll have an idea of what companies want to work with you vs. which ones don't. This is cutting costs 101 for businesses.

Get the maximum.

The idea of watching your money is not about just cutting services and chopping things out that you truly need to run a successful business, it's about getting the maximum and highest grade quality products and services, for the least amount of money. You have to push companies hard to get yourself the best deals. If you're spending a lot of money with a company because they provide products and/or services to your company, and you're not circling back to them and knocking on their door negotiating better pricing, shame on you. I can tell you one thing for sure, "If you don't ask, you're not going to get," it's that simple.

You've got to have the persistence of a little kid that wants a particular toy when you're walking around in the toy store. "Persistence wears down resistance." If a vendor says they're not able to do anything, get another vendor involved that offers a similar product and service and see how fast your current vendor gets in line. You're in business to make money, and you need to fight for every dollar, especially when you're making the most money, because this is a great time to pack away the savings.

So let me share a few ideas on how you can watch every dollar and cut costs at your business.

Negotiate, negotiate, and then negotiate even more.

With outside vendors, with employees, with everyone. I'm not talking about being cheap and not paying people well, what I'm talking about is being smart and getting the absolute most for every penny you spend.

Have people work remotely.

Listen, it's not 1980 here where we don't have access to computers. There's no reason for someone to take up high-priced office space just so you can walk out of your office every once in a while to make sure they're working. People know how to work, and they'll work twice as hard if you give them the freedom.

Really focus on hiring super smart people.

Don't just hire a body to fill a spot, hire a person to perform a highly specific and important task, and if you don't need someone full time, outsource the task. Investing in the right people upfront will save you tons of money later on down the line.

Have your happy customers do your marketing for you.

Word of mouth marketing is so much more powerful than spending a fortune on TV ads or magazine ads. Entice your customers with rewards to share what they love about your products and/or services. Only advertise where you can track the ROI. There are tons of companies that promise the world, but don't deliver, stay away from them. If you're not able to track activity, dump them.

Stop investing in IT hardware.

Put everything in the cloud and pay for only the exact amount of licenses or data you're using on a monthly basis. Keep a close eye on license based subscriptions because when people leave the company, and you don't replace them, you won't need that license anymore.

Simplify, simplify, simplify.

Make everything in your business dead simple. From distribution, to communication, and everything else in-between. The simpler, the better. Have an open line of communication and hold virtual roundtable sessions so employees can share ways that they think they can simplify things.

Chew on these suggestions for a while. Remember, if you just sit here and read this information and don't ever implement any of the ideas, nothing is ever going to change in your business. Watch the money, because if you don't, you're going to end up overpaying for everything and getting ripped off all the time. Take action before it's too late. Get that initial audit done, circle back to your vendors and negotiate like crazy, and cut out all the waste. Like I shared above, the best time to watch the money, is when your business is making the most money.

Always be Aggressive in Business

To keep growing your business, you need to be aggressive. If you choose to sit back and relax, and NOT be aggressive in business, a person or company that is aggressive, will eat you up. Yes, this may sound harsh, but it's the truth. You need to constantly be staying up to date with trends and be way out in front of any major market segment changes coming down the line. Being naive and thinking that you can continue to do the same thing day after day without evolving and adapting, is not good.

So here are my go-to tips to always being aggressive in business. Without a doubt, they've worked for me, and they'll work for you as well, but you need to work them. Nothing magic is going to happen unless you, "Get into action," with what you learn here.

Think of customers first.

Not only customers, but partners as well. You're going to be treated the way you treat other people in most cases, so if you want to be treated kindly and have a lovely working relationship where your customers and partners rely on you, and you rely on them, treat people with generosity and sincerity. Always have your customers viewpoints at the top of your thoughts. Your customers are the people that pay your bills to keep your lights turned on, and pay your amazing staff that supports them, let them know how important they are to you, and how much you appreciate them for trusting in you to provide them with the products and services they use from you.

Always continue to listen to requirements.

Industry changes, companies change, leadership changes, and everything else under the sun in business changes, so always be willing to listen to new requirements needed to keep the relationship working. The one thing in business that I can guarantee to be constant, is change. Like I mentioned above, it comes down to being willing to listen, and to adapt and evolve to fit the customers concerns and needs, when they need it most. It's not always going to be easy, but if you can commit to do whatever is needed to help a customer or partner,

you'll position yourself for long-term business relationship success. The additional benefit of listening intently, is that it will give you guidance for future growth, and give you an idea of what direction you need to build your business in. You can pay thousands of dollars in market research, or you can listen to your customers and partners and get it for free. The choice is yours. If it's me, I'm taking the free choice.

Make improvements as needed.

If you see a shortfall or something that needs improvement, don't hesitate, make the updates and changes, and move onto new projects. There's no sense in having a product or service that works half-way. You need to provide an excellent product or service, at an excellent price, while delivering superior customer support. It takes balance, it takes effort, it takes enthusiasm, it takes passion, and it takes a leader, like yourself, with an undying will to provide the, "Ultimate customer experience," to maintain business success. The idea behind making improvements is so that your company can continue to move in the proper direction that your market segment demands.

Challenge yourself.

Don't just settle, make an imprint instead. Business gets boring when you're just showing up because you need to keep the nuts and bolts together. Give yourself a new challenge on a daily basis, and look to achieve it before the day ends so you can go to bed with a sense of fulfillment. Push the limits, try something new, introduce a new product or service line, and never lose that inner flame that you had when you first started building your business. Continue to dream, and dream big, and don't let anyone ever put your inner fire out. You know what you can do, so go out and do it. Fight for what you want and what you believe in, and continue to work together as a team to achieve a common goal. As we say, "Team work makes the dream work."

There you have them, my go-to tips to always being aggressive in business. Remember, be smart about how you conduct yourself in business, not only that, be careful how you conduct yourself in your personal life as well. You're a direct reflection of what you put off to the world, so if you're putting out trash, you can expect to get trash back, but if you're putting out generosity and sincerity, you can expect the same back in return. Now that you know better, go out and do better, and dump any excuses you have for not leaving an imprint and making a difference in your business. You can do it.

I Want to Hear From You

My contact information is below in case you have any follow up questions, or are interested in booking me for a live speaking event.

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