

Prevention is better than cure

To grow a valuable business – one you can sell – you need to set up your company so that it is no longer reliant on you.

This can be easier said than done, especially when, like a PR consultant or plumber, what you are selling is your expertise.

To scale up a knowledge-based business, you first have to figure out how to impart your knowledge to your employees, so that they can deliver the goods. However it can be difficult to condense years of school and on-the-job learning into a few weeks of employee training. The more specialized your knowledge, the harder it is to hand off work to juniors.

The key to scaling up a service business can often be found by offering the service that *prevents* customers from having to call you in the first place. You have to shift from selling the cure to selling the prevention.

Fixing what is broken is typically a hard task to teach; however, preventing things from breaking in the first place can be easier to train others to do.

For example, it takes years for a dentist to acquire the education and experience to successfully complete a root canal, but it's relatively easy to train a hygienist to perform a regularly scheduled cleaning.

It's almost effortless for a real estate manager to hire someone to clean the eaves trough once a month, but repairing the flooded basement caused by the clogged gutters can be quite complex.

For a master car mechanic, overhauling an engine that has seized up takes years of training, but preventing the problem by regularly changing a customer's oil is something a high school student can be taught to do.

For an IT services company, restoring a customer's network after a virus has invaded often takes the know-how of the boss, but preventing the virus by installing and monitoring the latest software patches is something a junior can easily be trained to do.

When you're selling your expertise, it can be tough to hire a team to do the work for you. As ironic as it sounds, sometimes the key to getting out of doing the work is to offer a preventive service, which not only maintains your business income, but also eliminates the need for someone to call you in the first place.