

**Problems that New CEOs Face**  
*Advice on how to handle business and  
personal issues*  
**Family Gets in the Way**



## Family Gets in the Way

Remember the passion that drove you to start your own business? How you pushed and gave up that corporate job and risked it all to work on your own? You knew the type of corporate culture you wanted to create, and the work environment you would establish that would grow your business into one of the Inc. 500 fastest growing companies. Now 5 years into your own business – and after putting in 6-7 day workweeks and 10-12 hour workdays, you get that phone call from your spouse, or one of your children – that goes like this: “You are ruining my life since you can’t leave work for a few days and go on vacation with us.” At that moment you question whether or not this “owning your own business-thing” is worth your personal sacrifice.

Your life has just gotten in the way of your business.

Family always gets in the way of business – that is the way it is for all of us (if we are blessed to have a loving family). So, how do you balance family and work? I realize there are a lot of books written about how to keep a balance between family and work, and this isn’t one of them. This article is something for you to consider before you either commit to starting a business on your own, or if you have started a business, something to consider before quitting what your passion started and going back to work in corporate America.

I have seen many different types of business extremes in my clients. People who have closed their businesses because they were convinced that their lives were passing before their eyes, and they would rather give up their passion for business ownership to become the dedicated parent(s) they felt their family needed.

I have seen people give up their most prized business strengths because they wanted to get back to the 5 day work week, and felt that they just couldn’t give anymore of themselves. I have also seen owners paralyzed by physical exhaustion and afraid to make any further decisions on their own – so they continually “push off” any decisions to “later on”, and the business soon suffers from the CEO’s indecisiveness.

What has happened here? Let’s take a look.

Years ago, you had that passion for a great business idea and started your company – but, before you started, did you truly understand what you were getting into? Did you bounce your great ideas off your circle of trusted advisors? What did they think? Were they supportive, or did they think this was crazy? When a trusted person told you that you were making a mistake, did you listen to them, modify your plan, or did you just press on ignoring their advice? Unfortunately, many of us want only to hear the good news about how smart and creative we are. We don’t want people poking holes in our business ideas, so we ignore any negative/critical comments.

**Recommendation: First, pick your circle of trusted advisors. Have them sign a non-disclosure agreement with you. Open your heart to them, stop talking, listen – and take notes on their recommendations. Review these comments often, and meet with your advisors on a regular basis (minimum of semi-annual). It is lonely at the top – this isn’t just a cliché, but fact – so bring in people with whom you can talk openly and honestly – and listen closely to their advice. If you don’t like what you hear – what is the real problem? Talking through issues and sharing problems with those you trust will help you face your business “demons” and get them under control. Your advisors may very well have faced similar problems, and will offer the advice that they found to have worked for them.**

### Delegate Like Crazy

Remember when did everything on your own? Billing, paying invoices, insurance, setting up meetings, arranging travel, keeping your schedule/calendar and doing “billable” work. As your business continued to grow, and you brought on more employees, did you let go of any of these tasks?

I know CEOs of companies with more than 30 employees who still do all administrative work. They have not hired anyone to handle this mundane and repetitive work, thus freeing them to focus on more important strategic company issues. I know CEOs who won’t delegate tasks to their very capable employees. Instead, since they believe that they are the only one in the company who “does it right” – they continue to do it all and tie up their valuable strategic thinking time in “administrivia”.

In this work environment, you will always see an overworked CEO (I know because I get emails from many of them after midnight on Saturdays or Sundays – when they have their “free” time), and underutilized staff (who don’t know the key corporate issues or needs because the CEO is too busy to share these). After awhile, these unchallenged employees get bored and leave the company. The unmotivated ones stay behind, and are happy to let the CEO continue do all of the work, while they plod along at a mediocre pace.

A friend of mine started a company over 5 years ago. This company now employs over 150 people. He told me that the best advice he got came from one of his trusted advisors. “Your job is to hire the best people you can and have them give you their best ideas on how to grow this business. Your day-to-day activities should be with the customer – not doing stuff behind your desk”. Today, he spends most of his workdays out of the office visiting customers – checking on the status of current contracts and looking for more business.

**Recommendation: Challenge your staff with critical business and administrative assignments. For example, if you need to develop a business process – have an employee give you their best effort. Remember, it won't be your effort. It will be your employees' best efforts – and that may be what you really need. Yes, delegate and keep track of what you've delegated. Follow up when the assignment is to be completed. If you don't delegate – you will have little time for the important strategic planning for your company – and little time for your family.**

Jeff Irons is owner of ironSclad Solutions, Inc. in Huntsville, Alabama, an Alabama-based S corporation.  
Jeff can be reached at [jirons@ironsclad.com](mailto:jirons@ironsclad.com).