

Adopt the Solo Business Attitude

You have come to realize that the world is a market and everyone around you is a potential customer.

You've examined your desires, abilities, temperament, and assets (D.A.T.A.) and have a clear understanding of your personal strengths

D.A.T.A. Businesses

If you're not employed, you can build a successful business based on your D.A.T.A.

Laid off from his executive position at an environmental-services firm, Paul Farrow looked to his D.A.T.A. He wanted to start a business that would be related to health and the outdoors. He had financial and management abilities, manufacturing experience, and twenty years of savings.

On vacation in Maine, Farrow learned that kayaks were made at exacting standards — and were very expensive. But children didn't need high-performance, expensive kayaks.

Farrow recognized the unmet need — and how a business filling that gap was a perfect fit to his D.A.T.A. He now owns a one-person kayak manufacturing company called Walden Paddlers.

At age fifty-five, Virginia Snyder lost her investigative reporting job. But she wasn't ready for retirement.

Snyder wanted to continue investigating. She knew her strengths were accuracy, detail, and the ability to uncover information. She worked well with people, winning their confidence. She treated people with respect and dignity, regardless of their background.

Snyder became a private investigator. Seventeen years later, she is still active and successful — at seventy-two years old.

and weaknesses.

Now you want to enter the marketplace, whether that marketplace is inside your company or outside the boundaries of an organization.

To take the next step, you have to change how you think of yourself.

You changed how you thought of your environment.

Now you must adapt your mindset to that new environment. You can't thrive in a marketplace if you still think of yourself as an employee. Instead, you must think and act as an independent business looking for opportunities.

The Independent Entity

Thinking of yourself as an independent business requires a fundamental change in your mindset — especially if you are employed. You must now think of yourself as a separate entity, not as part of a whole. Whether you are a full-time employee, part-time employee, freelancer or unemployed, your attitude must be exactly the same. In your mind, you are a detached unit. You're an outsider trying to sell something to customers.

Creating Your Business

You are a business. Like any business, to survive you need to start with market research. If you're an employee, that means looking around your firm and finding out what needs doing.

Marketing also means differentiating yourself from the competition. Maybe you can do something for your firm better than the current outside vendor. Your D.A.T.A. should give you clues to the type of contributions that you could be making to the company.

As a business owner, you can't forget about product quality. You're

not trying to please a boss, you're trying to keep a customer. Could you improve customer service? Does your product have weaknesses? Are you working on developing the next generation of products?

“Remember that ‘You Are a Business’ is a metaphorical statement first; it's literally true second, if at all. What you are launching is a new way to think about yourself and to fit into the work world. At an even more fundamental level, it is a new way of seeing the work world.”

Don't wait for company directives. These initiatives have to come from you. Remember, you're not an employee, you're the owner of a

business. If you're not updating and enhancing your product, you will be losing a customer.

Above all, keep in mind that you are selling something. The workplace is a market. You are selling your product (know-how, effort, a new process) for a price (salary, project assignment, responsibilities).

That's the attitude of the independent business owner, not an employee. ☆

Setting Up Shop

Set up shop, even if you're still employed. It will help you feel more like an independent business owner.

- **Learn.** Take extension courses, read books on running a business, or spend time with a local store owner.

- **Organize your office.** Find a specific place at home to set up an office. Get a business phone and all the office equipment you'll need.

- **Make up business cards and professional stationery.**

- **Set up a business electronic database** with resources, contacts, and, of course, potential customers.

- **Join trade and professional groups.**

We're not saying you should quit your job and start a formal business. But these steps will help you think like an outside vendor rather than an employee. You won't limit work to the job at the workplace if you have an office at home. ☆