

## Surviving Start Up

**Anyone who's ridden the small business start up roller coaster knows that it is a crazy combination of scary and fun. If you are struggling to cope, here are a few insights that might help you understand that it's all perfectly normal!**

Whether you have just opened the door of your business for the first time, or this is the start of a new division or service, we all experience the same crazy range of feelings and emotions in the Start Up phase.

I can remember the feeling of absolute joy when my business name registration paperwork was completed; I felt that I had finally achieved a long held goal of being self employed. I can also remember the abject fear when I had to write my first proposal and didn't have a clue where to start or how to cost the project.

In a way starting a business is like going back to being a teenager – your emotions can swing wildly from one feeling to another in the space of an hour or even a few minutes. And just like adolescence, this swing of emotions is a normal and natural part of being a Start Up business.

As adults we find this frustrating and demoralising as we like to think we are in control.

You may find yourself making irrational decisions because everything is changing so quickly; one minute you are patting yourself on the back for winning a new client when the phone rings with details of a missed deadline, unhappy client or supplier error and you are plunged into panic.

We all have our own personal fears, even the most intrepid entrepreneur has moments of self doubt as they take on new markets or learn new skills. Not all of those fears are reasonable or rational.

Of course, those fears are often balanced by the fun which comes from doing new things for the first time and taking on personal challenges. The fun can come from buying your first business computer or the freedom and flexibility of setting your own work hours. Some of my clients love the start up phase of a new venture because they feel so “alive” and connected with their business.

You need to take time to enjoy the fun moments in your business like a client of mine, Roger. For Roger, the best fun when he started his business was selling. For fifteen years he had worked in a corporate environment and been forced to follow strict procedures

for marketing and selling his legal services to medium sized businesses. He had always hated the big business paternalistic approach and was really looking forward to developing his own approach and style.

Being a small business owner, he could empathise with his clients and had soon developed a package specifically for the market. His sales calls became an absolute joy. He was winning customers almost 80% of the time. He laughed, had fun and built strong relationships with his clients; something he had never been encouraged to do in his corporate life.

After every sales call he took time to think about what fun he'd had and how he loved being in business.

Whether you are experiencing fun or fear, you are on the Start Up roller coaster, so strap yourself in and enjoy the ride.