



The Power of Three

by
Gus Griffin

an Instinx® publication

Part of the *Making Your Strengths Stronger* module – see blog.instinx.com

The Power of Three

by Gus Griffin

Author's Note: I wrote this booklet originally as a favour to a friend in the hairdressing industry. It applies equally to managing and recruiting for any kind of small business or small group endeavour—including your own personal career—but I've left it in its original form because we are all familiar with a hairdressing salon as a typical example of a small business. You should find it easy to draw parallels to your own situation.

The most talented hairdresser I've ever met, winner of many national awards, is truly hopeless at running a salon. Does that sound familiar?

Based on reputation alone, she should be a millionaire many times over, instead of avoiding her accountant's phone calls. The respect she commands from other hairdressers is huge, and yet her salon usually self-combusts when it grows beyond a dozen staff, and then she has to rebuild all over again.

Why? Because this paragon of hairdressing refuses to face up to her limitations in business. She keeps on thinking she can cover it all.

Well, she can't. No one can.

Conversely, I know a mediocre hairdresser—he admits it himself—who successfully built his business up from one salon to a comfortably profitable chain of five, in just seven years. Last time we talked he was making plans to expand interstate.

This person knows what he's good at—systems—but more importantly he knows what he's not good at. So he hires other

people to call the shots in his weak areas. He knows it is impossible to cover it all, not even as a full-time manager.

Ability and Awareness

We all tend to think that other people think like we do. You soon learn in life that people have some very strange ways of looking at things, but in the hurly burly of making a living we tend to forget this and expect others to see things as we do. When they don't, our first reaction is to wonder what the heck is wrong with them! Can't they see the obvious?

Well, the truth is that nothing is obvious all by itself. It may be obvious to you, but that doesn't mean it's going to be obvious to the next person. Your awareness follows your ability. If you are good at something then you easily see opportunities to exercise that ability. If you're not good at something, then you will be blind to when that ability is needed. And then it will be others who are astonished that you don't see the obvious.

It is not difficult to know what you are bad at or what you don't enjoy doing. But you will not realise the extent of your blindness in those areas. Why? Because you are blind to it, of course!

So you must have people involved in your salon or assisting you in your career who can cover your blind spots. People who have different strengths and weaknesses to you—so they see what you can't see. And it has to be part of their job to *tell* you what needs to be attended to when it does. *And* you have to listen.

Inescapable Bias

No matter how good you are at hairdressing, no matter how experienced you are at running hairdressing salons, your personality inevitably causes you to focus on certain aspects of your business and to neglect others. However, because these choices arise so naturally out of the type of person you are, you won't be fully aware of the favouritism you are practicing.

Certainly, you may have some idea of what your strengths and weaknesses are, but right now you are psychologically unaware of how badly you are avoiding the areas you are weak on. And this avoidance results in neglect.

We all do this, we all rationalize and justify why it is "more important" to focus on the parts of our business we are passionate about. And we all kid ourselves that we are doing what is necessary on the stuff we don't enjoy—when the truth is that your neglect is probably holding back the growth of your business or the advancement of your career far, far more than you realise.

This applies to you even if you are working in someone else's salon. Every person's career is a mini-business of their own. You will be pushing your career ahead in the ways that feel right and comfortable to you, and you won't realise how you are undermining your ambitions by avoiding what doesn't come easily to you.

Also, employers tend to hire people with similar personalities to their own. It is natural to prefer to work with people who share your outlook and preferences. So, as an employee, you may be reinforcing your boss's inefficiencies and they'd be reinforcing yours too.

Your Biggest Mistake

Talking about what you are "bad at" may seem like a negative way for me to introduce this subject. However, it is more important than identifying what you are good at—because you are doing that anyway, whether you know what it is or not!

Instinctively, human beings will always bring their strengths to bear on the job at hand. You can't stop yourself from doing what you're good at, even when it's not part of the job. The famous story of Tom Sawyer comes to mind: the last thing he wanted to do was paint his Aunt Polly's fence, but she said he had to. And so, being a natural born salesman, he figured out how to get all his friends to do the job for him ... and he convinced them to *pay him* for the privilege!

You naturally push your career or business ahead by focusing on your strengths. Nobody has to tell us to do that, we all do it

unconsciously. Being in a small business setting, however, whether as employer or employee, chances are you are trying to cover your weak areas as well. There simply aren't enough resources, or enough profit in the salon, for those roles to be delegated to others—or that's how it seems.

Well, this is the BIGGEST mistake of the salon owner—or any other small business proprietor. It is also the most common mistake. It's the main reason why small business owners seldom grow to be big business owners.

You have to know what to get *other* people to take care of, who will actually do a better job of it than you. And you have to know how to find the right people to do those things, people who *aren't* like you.

Wasted Learning

No doubt, if you are a salon owner, you have read a book or two about how to build your business. Maybe you've gone to a course on this, watched some business training videos, that sort of thing. At the least, you're applying the lessons you learned while working for other salon owners. And maybe from time to time you ask for advice from experienced people you respect.

Well, you may think you are running your salon just like your favourite boss did, or how your favourite book says to do it ... but you're not. You are doing the parts your mind unconsciously emphasizes in your memory—and you are forgetting about the other bits that don't come as easily. If you could go back and examine that original salon or that favourite book again, you would find this to be true. You would see all sorts of things you could be doing that you had forgotten about.

We all see the world through different coloured glasses, causing some things to stand out more than others. Learning in life is a natural process of "picking the good bits" out of what others are doing that we find easy to emulate. This applies whether we are

learning from observation or from second-hand knowledge in books and courses. We take on what we can use and we use it.

What we don't realise is how much we are *not* taking on. You may think you have learned something so thoroughly you'll "never forget it", but if it doesn't fit with the natural strengths of your personality, it won't be long before you have allowed it to drop out of the picture, even while thinking you've still got it covered.

The only time you continue doing something that doesn't come naturally to your personality is when you have a strict obligation to other people to do so. Either your boss requires it of you, or your employees do (like doing the payroll even though you hate book-work), or your partner or the government, etc. Even then, you will probably leave it till the last minute.

So it is not enough to have good business models or advice to work from. You also have to understand how to fit this information to your *own* personality—and others who actually *want* to cover the parts you don't. Otherwise a lot of it will be wasted, even if it is coming from geniuses.

Simple Model

Ok, so you have to have a clear idea of what your strengths are and what your weaknesses really are. And you have to know this for each of your staff members too. Even if you are “merely” an employee, the better you know this about yourself and your teammates, the better you will be able to work with them and increase your value to your employer. Also, the better you will be able to develop your own career *in the direction of your strengths*.

It may sound like this is going to get complicated, but it's not. No more than it is for an infant fitting pegs into holes—round, square or triangular.

Certainly, we could get very complicated in cataloging your strengths and weaknesses if we wanted to. Nowadays educators measure no less than eight different types of intelligence. Eight!

And I can show you a list of more than 220 transferable skills (useful in a broad range of jobs) you might or might not possess. But we don't have to go into all of that.

No, we can keep this simple by tackling it from the work end of the equation rather than the worker end. What are the basic functions of a business that must not be neglected? No matter how small your salon is to begin with, even if it is just you and one chair, what *has* to be done to enable your enterprise to survive and grow?

The answer is three things: *production*, *marketing* and *finance*. In business, you can't get simpler than that. You have to a) produce a product or service, b) get people wanting your product or service and c) manage costs and payment so you end up with a profit.

As your business grows, you can get more complex, like separating marketing into advertising and sales, or adding legal and personnel management and so on: but for a small business all of those details can be squeezed to fit under one or another of the three basic headings for the time being.

However, you can't squeeze it further than that. You can't substitute one of these basic areas for another. If your passion is product quality, and you think you can forget about marketing as a separate activity because the world will beat a path to your door ... well, think again. You're kidding yourself—probably because you personally find promotion or persuasion difficult or uncongenial.

Conversely, if you're good at inspiring people you may forget to allow enough time to deliver real *quality*: which means you will have to keep on promoting all the time because your hard-won customers don't come back. Eventually, as word gets round that you don't deliver what you promise, your promotional activities generate less and less response.

Or you may be such a bean counter that you economise your business right into the ground, not spending money on the advertising or equipment or quality of staff (wages good enough to keep them) or staff training that your salon really needs. This

mistake is not as common in the hairdressing industry as the first two, but it does happen. Actually, financial management is the area most often neglected by salon owners because they would rather be cutting or talking. Sound familiar?

So, do you get the idea? No matter what type of personality you have, it will lead you to prefer one of these work-basic activities over the other two. But you must ensure all three get enough attention, even though you won't feel like doing so personally.

Yes, you *should* build your business around your strengths, but never at the expense of these essentials. Before anything else, we need to know how your personality—your natural inclinations—affect your willingness and ability to perform these three non-negotiable duties.

You can't neglect them and still have a profitable business. And yet you can't and won't do all of them well. If you try to, you will end up feeling plastered all over the universe.

Your Natural Work Footprint

There are plenty of personality-profiling or 'strengths-finding' instruments around that will teach you more about yourself, but you still have to figure out how that applies to your current business or job.

After almost forty years of helping people to develop and harness their abilities, I've found you have to walk before you can run with this. These intrinsic nature of three activities—*production*, *marketing* and *finance*—require quite different skill sets. So it is not difficult to see which you are suited to and which you are not. You don't need a fancy profile to tell you this, you can work it out for yourself.

Which do you do best? Which do you do worst? Which turns you on and which turns you off? Which do you find challenging and which do you find threatening? It may be obvious already.

You are the "peg" and these are the three "holes". Which do you easily fit into, which *can* you fit into and which bends you out of

shape? That's all you need to know at this stage—to move off of your plate essentials that others will do better, becoming free to get the best from yourself too. As your salon grows and more division of labour becomes possible, that's when you can get fancier about defining strengths and weaknesses in more detail if you still want to.

You may have some talent in all three of these areas, though you'd be a rare person if you do. Most of us mere mortals are only good at one or two of them. Even if you *are* good at all three, you *won't* be when trying to cover them all.

Looking back over your working life, you should be able to pick up the pattern that reveals which area comes most naturally. Do you instinctively gravitate to improving the quality of the product or production capacity, to making sure that the customer gets what they paid for—and then some? Or do you most enjoy attracting people's attention and connecting with them—the more the merrier? Or do you find yourself breaking things down systematically and keeping track of how well it's all going, are you drawn to read the stories that numbers can tell you?

In other words, these three most essential functions of any business—production, marketing and finance—easily translate into psychological inclinations. Every personality will find one easier to perform, more congenial to one's nature, than the other two. So also will one be more difficult and less pleasant.

In assigning staff to particular roles, including yourself, it is not necessary to get any more complicated than this. In fact, I've found that trying to match strengths to jobs more precisely is usually counter-productive. Given a natural inclination in the right direction, it is better to leave room for the team member to evolve their own way of doing their job.

As I said earlier, we all instinctively bring our strengths to bear anyway, *without even being aware we are doing so!* Thus each staff member will find their own way to optimum effectiveness

if you allow them to start off with their “best foot” forward in this way. They will, that is, IF you don’t get in the way of the process.

But regardless of whether you agree with that approach to managing staff or not, one inescapable fact you *can* rely on is that every employee you ever employ will prefer one of these activities—**delivering value** (production), **connecting with people** (marketing) or **crunching numbers & data** (finance/systems)—over the other two.

To help them do their best in your enterprise (or their own career) all you really need know is are they: **Value-oriented**, **People-oriented** or **Numbers-oriented**? Building upon that natural inclination, they will gradually bring the rest of their strengths to bear on their job *without even being aware they are doing so!*

We use the first letters of the words **V**alue (production), **P**eople (marketing) and **N**umbers (**F**inance) to express a person’s **Natural Work Profile**. Your strongest will be your first letter, your weakest your last. Hence there are only six possible instinctive working styles: **VPN, PNV, NVP, VNP, PNV and NPV**.

Very simple, and yet, once we know your natural profile, it tells us immediately how your talents can best be utilized in virtually *any* small business setting—and also what *not* to ask you to do.

Three Pros

These basic activities can be expressed in various ways, depending upon the setting you want to apply them to. There’s the three C’s —*Contributing, Convincing and Calculating*—which can be applied to just about any activity. Production, Marketing and Finance is the commercial way of looking at it. One easy to remember model is the “Three Pros”: *Production, Promotion and Profit*.

A broader way to look at the Numbers/Finance corner of the triangle is with the three S’s: *Service, Sales and Standards*. Or you could broaden it out even further with the three M’s of Management: *Making, Motivating and Monitoring*.

Simply different ways of expressing the essential nature of the activity, these divisions between them need not be sharp. They inevitably overlap: for example, a good atmosphere in your salon is partly the result of excellent hairdressing—a production activity—and partly the result of how well the customers and staff are treated as persons—an aspect of marketing.

Giving your staff a good incentives program—a financial activity—would also help to create the right atmosphere, *if* it is managed to motivate your team rather than drive them. Even if the incentives offered were non-financial, such as extra time off or other perks, I would still class it as a "financial" activity because it involves *monitoring* and *measuring* the activities you wish to encourage.

Even though the edges may be blurred at times, these activities do require different types of talent to be supervised and performed as well as they could be. Let's use the simplest possible economic model to show how such natural inclinations can be combined to build an enterprise:

Do you remember playing marbles as a kid? Well, let's imagine a young boy receives a big bagful of beautiful marbles on his birthday.

However, this little fella knows from experience that he isn't particularly good at shooting marbles. So he decides not to squander his newfound wealth by playing in games he's unlikely to win. Instead, he puts them to use by forming a marble-playing team.

First, he carefully observes all the marble games being played at school over a period of several days. Finally, when he's sure he's located the best marble-shooter in the school, he invites her to join his elite team. He explains to this "shooter" that he will supply her with all the marbles she could ever want, provided she shares her winnings from each game with him.

Now, you might think that the Shooter, being as good as she is, would have won plenty of marbles already—but

that's not how it usually works out in practice. A person who is passionate about producing the desired result often ignores how well the “profits” (wealth – in this case, marbles) are accumulating. Heck, they'd be working at this even if they weren't getting paid for it!

So, to develop her skills, the Shooter will have lost a lot of marbles trying out new techniques. She will have lost more when other players ganged up to beat her. And her natural passion for performance will lead her to play in the most competitive games.

These two kids get together, the Shooter letting the “Sharer” spot which games around the schoolyard are most profitable to play in. The Sharer also pointing out when to pull out of a game that has ceased to be profitable, when opponents team up to clean the Shooter out. And so their partnership works well.

But the Sharer realises they could be raking in even more marbles by running a game of their own—so they recruit the most popular kid in the playground to “attract more business”. It becomes his job to attract more kids to play in their game.

So he does what comes naturally and "shouts" all over the schoolyard how much fun it is to play in this particular marble game. When the game gets too big, they add another great shooter to the team to hive off a second game ... and then a third ... and so on.

And so the Sharer, the Shooters and the Shouter live happily ever after—wealthy in marbles beyond their wildest dreams.

So what is your natural bent? *Shooting, Shouting or Sharing?* It may be obvious to you by now, but just in case it isn't, let's explore which talents draw one to concentrate on which aspects of business ...

P for People-oriented (Marketing)

Inclinations naturally suiting a person to marketing-type activities are perhaps the most obvious, so let's have a look at them first:

Are you outgoing and personable?

Do you like to socialize?

Do you prefer working with lots of people rather than doing things by yourself?

Are you a natural persuader?

Do you find it easy to motivate people?

Is the telephone an extension of your arm?

Is variety the spice of life?

If this sounds like you then you are probably a natural marketer. In the hairdressing industry, good marketers may not be the best hairdressers, but they will end up being the best known hairdressers anyway. Simply because they most enjoy *attracting attention*.

Aside from knowing your own Natural Profile, it also really helps to know this about the people you work with or for. It tells you why your boss makes a fuss about some things and not about other things that may seem equally (or even more) important to you.

A people-oriented salon owner will tend to be someone who starts avalanches for fun. If they're also weak on delivering value, they'll fill up the joint with bodies and then remember to hire some hairdressers. I'm exaggerating, but you get my drift.

If they're weak on numbers then they may not charge enough for the service. You'll have lots of people moving through the salon, but will there be enough money to pay the staff at the end of the week? Or they may charge a proper price, but spend so much money on advertising there's little profit left over.

A people-oriented boss may promise a wonderful cut, but not charge enough to allow the time to produce it. Their credibility will suffer with their own staff. These are the sort of problems that may need to be brought to their attention—because, believe it or not, it won't be obvious to them.

N for Number-oriented (Finance/Systems)

Inclinations that naturally suit a person to “balancing the books” are perhaps the next easiest to recognise:

Are you a details person?

Do you like working with numbers and calculations?

Is it important to you to do things correctly?

Do you actually read the manual and follow instructions?

Do you achieve your goals by planning and following through?

Do you naturally apply measurements to keep track of how things are going?

Do you not like to be rushed?

Do people have to earn your respect before you open up to them?

If so, then you would probably be a natural at finance and similar recording and tracking activities. A numbers-oriented salon owner will be methodical and have good reporting systems. They'll usually know how much the salon is making on a daily—even hourly—basis and will carefully base hiring and firing decisions on cashflow and profitability.

But such bosses can also be inclined to be inflexible. Numbers are an abstraction of reality, not the actual thing, but they want life to be as orderly as their systems are. Hairdressers are not usually the most disciplined of staff, so there may be friction involved in getting everyone reporting as they "should be", showing up on time, that sort of thing.

If connecting with people is also the salon owner's weakest area, then—I've got to say it—they may be boring to work for. Thus the atmosphere in their salon may suffer accordingly. In which case,

even though they offer secure employment, they will regularly lose their best people to "greener pastures".

Alternatively, if delivering value is his or her weak area, then they may be penny-pinching about how long you're allowed with each customer. They may even be seen as selfish by their staff.

Working in such a salon, you may have to fight for the right to work to your highest standards—and also bond with your customers. And fight for this you should, because it won't be immediately obvious to your boss how important this is.

V for Value-oriented (Production)

I've left Delivering Value till last because there can be quite a difference in the types of personalities who naturally gravitate to this defining function of the business.

This includes people who are team-oriented, but also people who like to work on their own. It includes the innovator who will experiment on every head of hair they can get their hands on, including the occasional customer who didn't agree to it. But it also includes the excellent staff trainer, who sets standards and knows intuitively how to bring an apprentice along from one level of skill to the next, helping him or her develop into the best they can be.

So natural "producers" can be a mixed bag, but the main thing to look for is a passion about the *quality* of the service/product, pushing that higher or making it easier to produce, thus also raising the *quantity* in which it can be delivered "to the world":

Are you a good listener? Do you prefer to work one-on-one?

Do you enjoy cooperation more than competition?

Are you fussy about the standard of your work, even after everyone else is satisfied?

Do you like to solve problems?

Are you naturally inclined to find better ways to do things?

Are you sometimes too concerned over the needs of others?

Do you prefer not to work to deadlines, sometimes even miss them?

Do you judge people by the quality of their work?

‘Yes’ answers to some of these questions could point to delivering value as your natural penchant. A value-oriented salon owner will often have a reputation for excellence in hairdressing or consistency of quality (the customer gets what they expect time after time) or both. They are often hairdressing award-winners—though it’s the marketing-oriented hairdressers who are more likely to *go after* awards because they revel in the fame and attention.

Value-oriented bosses will naturally be very aware of how much you are producing and to what standard. They will push for you to improve your skills continuously, and are more inclined to take time to teach you things whenever the opportunity presents itself, even if that could mess up scheduling a bit.

If handling numbers is their weakest area, then they may find it difficult to run the salon profitably. They might spend money they can't really afford on having the best tools, or on travel for the team to stay abreast of the latest developments, things like that. The prices they feel comfortable charging may not reflect the high quality of their service. They will run the best salon for learning, but will not necessarily be the most secure of employers.

If connecting with people is their weakest area, they will expect the quality of service to promote itself. In other words, they’ll rely on word of mouth to attract most of their business. If that doesn't seem to be working, they will tend to raise quality as a solution in preference to attending to essential marketing actions.

He or she may prevent their salon from growing beyond the point where they find it easy to control quality of service. They may do this unconsciously—while wondering why the world refuses to recognise and reward them according to their merit.

Vive la Difference

I provide these descriptions to help you tune into which approach most attracts you, which feels like the most comfortable fit. But if you don't recognise yourself in any of them—don't worry.

Remember, we don't have to get religious about these categories. I'm not saying there are only three types of people in the world.

What I *am* saying is that business boils down to these three activities in its most essential form. And it should not be boiled down any further than that. If you try to, you will lose the plot. I'm also saying that *any* job in the workaday world is likely to harness one of these preferences more than the other two.

Whatever talents you happen to have, it stands to reason that this have a bearing on which of these three activities you prefer. In fact, the message underlying everything you read here is that you should pay attention to your natural preference and follow it. The way to do that successfully is by getting other essentials covered by the people who prefer to do them.

Over 50 years ago, Peter Drucker, the father of management practice, said it never works to try and make a person fit into an uncongenial job. Yet we keep on doing so mainly because most people in the workforce are completely out of touch with what they do prefer. Most are in the rut they're stuck in because they entered that career path for reasons which had nothing to do with what they preferred—and now they're too scared to jump out of it.

To get the best performance, it's ALWAYS more effective to design a job around the person, so what comes naturally *is* their job and what doesn't is given to others. This is supposed to be the great advantage of doing things in a group: so one team member's strength can cover others' weaknesses.

But very few workplaces are actually organized that way today. BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO LIKE THEIR WORK—AND WILL DO IT BETTER IF THEY DO!!!

To create effective teams in this way, team-mates have to be aware of what they personally like. And that must start with the boss.

If you've lost motivation, perhaps you need to re-think how you run your salon or which job you are mainly doing in it. You could be wasting your talents trying to do what you've become convinced is unavoidable, instead of what is best suited to your nature.

As mentioned, employers unconsciously tend to employ people like themselves. So you may have recruited a team which is *unable* to cover your weak areas. This would make the running of a salon seem much more difficult than it actually is.

By teaching you to *appreciate* the differences in other people, rather than being irritated or nervous about them, this approach makes life so much easier for any small business owner—and also for everyone who works for them.

With a bit of practice you'll learn to match candidates to sympathetic roles very quickly—ultimately ensuring that everybody gets to like doing what they're paid for. *Vive la difference* is absolutely the more effective way to build a salon—or any business.

To make this even easier I have developed a **Talent Tuneup Questionnaire**: designed to help people clarify what they do naturally prefer within 10 minutes or less.

If you've gotten into a rut, and out of touch with what you do like, this handy tool will start you on a process of self-discovery. It can be repeated as often as it continues to provide further insight into your natural inclinations.

(Available online at – www.teampower.com.au/talent – results are posted within 48 hours. Questionnaire results can also be plotted visually.)

The Power of Three

I hope you've got the point that there is nothing inherently wrong about running a salon to suit your personal style. You can be wildly successful running a value-oriented, people-oriented or numbers-

oriented salon—or a dozen other variations on those themes. AS LONG AS YOU DON'T FORGET THE OTHER TWO CORNERS OF THIS ESSENTIAL BUSINESS TRIANGLE!

But forget them you will. Trust me, you *will*. Unless you have someone nagging you about your weaker areas.

This was first pointed out to me by Ernesto Sirolli, a startup expert—he calls it “enterprise facilitation”—who maintains that any business plan prepared by just one person is probably worthless, for all the reasons I have been describing to you.

Sirolli insists that a good business plan—to have a real chance of succeeding—must be prepared by no less than three individuals, each passionate about Production, Marketing and Finance respectively. He calls this the Management Trinity approach. (For more info, see www.sirolli.com)

Sirolli’s model fit perfectly with my own research about attitudes and inclinations colouring reality in ways we’re not aware of, Our brains build up a unique view of the world which is really a product of our personality, but that is the world we respond to—except when someone else reminds us there is more to it.

The whole idea of this Natural Approach is to help you concentrate on what you’re good at *effectively*—without stunting the growth of your business (or career) in the process. As we have seen, Sirolli’s Management Trinity concept can be seen to work at three levels:

1. It defines the minimum activities any business needs to cover in order to survive and prosper.
2. It points out that different people are passionate about different aspects of business, and should free themselves up to pursue that as early as possible, instead of suppressing it in favour of “other duties”.

This is what Peter Drucker calls the ‘principle of concentration’ as applied to the individual. You will always get the best results by focusing on what you’re good at.

3. But most importantly, Sirolli points out that one person CANNOT competently plan and supervise any business alone. This was a revelation for me when I first came across his model.

On + In

In running a hairdressing salon or any other business, you're always operating at two different levels: a) seeing what needs to be done, and b) doing it or getting it done by someone else. In other words: a) working *on* your business, and b) working *in* your business.

As the business grows, 'a' tends to drop out because of the increasing pressures of 'b'. Getting too caught up in solving day-to-day problems brought on by increased traffic, you begin to lose sight of the bigger picture. This is usually where our personal psychology starts to seriously get in the way.

If you are a one-man-band or one-woman-band—yes, you can cover doing all three things if you have to. (Though it's wisest to delegate your weakest area to a part-time helper asap.) But what you can't do—ever—is trust yourself to do "a" (seeing what needs to be done) for all three areas.

No-one is psychologically capable of wearing all three hats at the same time; especially not when under pressure. Whichever is your passion will inevitably draw you to neglect the weaker areas.

So you must have somebody keeping an eye on those areas for you. If you can't afford to hire someone to actually do the work, you MUST at least get someone else to *monitor* what's needed—and then TELL YOU (not merely suggest) what must be done.

This advisor could be a spouse or key staff member who is secure enough to nag you as necessary. Or you could swap advisory roles with friends running their own salons or other business—each of you advising the other in turn on your strongest area—so it needn't cost anything but time.

However you arrange it, you must at least assign responsibility for your weakest area to someone else, *someone naturally passionate about it*. Ideally you want two suitably passionate advisors ensuring no essentials ever get neglected. That's if you want your business to grow with a minimum of pain and effort.

Don't bother to do this and you doom your small business to staying small forever—and needing you to run it forever too. The fastest route to absentee ownership and ample passive income is through “pegging” the right people into your business and meeting with them weekly, not monthly.

As Above, So Below

This advice applies equally to every individual hairdresser—or anyone with a career, for that matter. As an employee, not only should you be going for jobs that harness your strongest area, you should also at least be getting advice on your weakest.

If weak on finance, you may need someone to negotiate with your employer (or coach you on this) for pay that reflects your true value. At the least, never agree to terms of employment without first seeking advice. You'll also end up wealthier if you get someone you trust to manage your money for you.

If you are weak on marketing, you could be ignoring opportunities that are just right for you. In which case, you will be better off relying on recruitment agents to find the best gigs for you. At the least, you should be getting advice on all the options open to you, all the ways that you could be raising your profile and selling yourself.

If you are weak on production, you may be better off in a larger salon where your other talents can make the greatest contribution. Or perhaps you can make yourself indispensable by covering what your boss isn't good at.

Also, if you want to keep the job you have, but are sick of bending yourself out of shape to meet the conventional expectations of employers or other stakeholders, you can re-invent it to better fit

your nature. For instance, a numbers-oriented schoolteacher—no matter what subject he or she is teaching—can be very effective at helping their students to get good marks, simply by more carefully tracking how each student is progressing with their studies.

A people-oriented teacher would find it easier to motivate their students, where a value-oriented teacher will be more inclined to ensure their students can use what they learn, not just pass exams.

Aside from their “natural habitat”, you’ll find instinctive Value-people, People-people and Numbers-people in all sorts of exotic jobs. You’d be surprised at some of the unusual tasks you could successfully apply your talents to.

You’d think that a person in advertising should be a marketing type, wouldn’t you? Well, not necessarily so.

Early in my career I did very well in that field, even though I’m more naturally value-oriented than people-oriented. The ad campaigns I wrote worked, not because I had “the gift of the gab”, but because I could see which features would be important to buyers better than the flamboyant attention-attractors I worked with. So I naturally developed a reputation for being more down-to-earth.

However, I should have been paid much more than I was, but felt shy about asking for a raise—because numbers/finance was my weakest area. I could have paid an agent to re-negotiate for me on a regular basis—but it never occurred to me to do so.

By the way, your natural approach to work may have nothing to do with your training and experience. In fact, your schooling and other training may actually be hiding your true nature from you.

Because of my success in advertising, for a long time I thought of myself as a marketing type (even though I always felt like an outsider). So I kept on applying for sales and marketing roles for 15 years, not realizing I would find other pursuits more congenial.

Finally the penny dropped when I launched a manufacturing company. Expecting to concentrate on marketing, instead I found myself

spending much more time ensuring our customers got the value we promised them—and enjoying every minute of it.

In the process, I also found out I was good at training people. Putting those two together—a) improving the value of b) training—has become my passion and my career ever since.

Some of the best salespeople I know are numbers-oriented more than people-oriented. This is especially true for insurance salespeople, business brokers, that sort of thing.

Often a people-oriented person succeeds as a salesperson, but then fails when promoted to sales manager—because sales managers *must* enjoy working with numbers all the time. Number of contacts, number of interviews, number of presentations, deals closed, discounts, sales volume, etc, etc, etc.

There's no telling where your strengths could lead you, regardless of what you are qualified for. A people-oriented marine biologist could end up being an announcer at Sea World. A numbers-oriented musician could end up being the largest retailer of musical instruments in the Southern Hemisphere. (Actual examples.)

But this only happens if you know how to recognize your strengths —AND how to give yourself permission to flex your muscles in that direction by dumping the rest off to others.

The point here is simply to look beneath the surface of any job or business. Dig deeper and see how to bring your real nature to bear on the task at hand, if there's compelling reasons for sticking with it. You may get quite innovative, finding new and more effective ways to get results that wouldn't have occurred to someone more obviously suited to the task.

Either way, my message is to raise your expectations, believing the job that you are doing can be transformed into one you can enjoy. If that proves too difficult—then get out. Life is too short. Find a job that honours your strengths, not makes you think of them as weaknesses. And find people to work with who agree with that approach.

The Right Fit

By this stage I hope you are seeing the value in not only knowing your own Natural Approach, but also that of all the people you work with. And all the people who come to you for a job. *And* all the people you look to for advice in business or career. The more the merrier.

There is no such thing as independent success, that should be obvious to you by now. You need the able and willing support of others—which this simple model makes easy to harness much more effectively than more complicated and expensive approaches.

It allows you to make more out of the human resources available to you—especially where you most need support. It often reveals unsuspected talent right under your nose who can give that help—or can readily learn how to.

It points out how to bring out a person’s natural talents—with just a little on-the-job validation and guidance—which may have remained hidden “all these years” due to indifferent employers. That may be all that’s needed to launch someone into a much more successful career.

It also stops you from wasting everybody’s time training them on weak areas—even if they “get it” they won’t enjoy it. It also reveals the value in your staff (or yourself) that is being wasted. Most managers want us to do it their way, but the smart ones get so much more from their team by empowering them to do it in their own way.

Bon voyage and bon chance.