

Entrepreneurs with multiple business interests become more common

 By [Anton van Heerden](#)

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Many young professionals and entrepreneurs are embracing the idea of pursuing multiple professional interests in search of better earning power or satisfaction that is more personal.

Becoming an accountant does not mean that you need to give up your dream of running a restaurant on the side; taking on a job as sales rep does not stop you from earning some cash pursuing a passion such as freelance writing.

Serial entrepreneurs who move from one business to the next are becoming more common; so are entrepreneurs who run more than one business at once. Sage research shows that 94% of young entrepreneurs in Nigeria and 82% in South Africa expect to start more than one business in their lifetime. The most common reason for wanting to do so is that they believe they have so many great ideas to share with the world.

If you are an entrepreneur, there are many reasons to start up a second (or third or fourth...) business. For many people – and this is often true for African entrepreneurs – one business is not enough to cover their living expenses. They might need to run a taxi service and offer part-time maths tuition to make ends meet.

It could be that your existing business has hit its maximum growth potential, so you could get better returns by investing your cash and time in a new venture or you might want to diversify your income streams to reduce your financial risks. Alternatively, you may simply want to pursue a passion project that allows you to spend at least part of your workday doing something you love.

Managing multiple business interests can be tricky and demands great discipline. At the Sage Summit this year, we learnt that there are many well-known people, such as Ashton Kutcher, who are involved in multiple businesses other than just being an actor. Such business owners whether big or small have one common trait – passion.

Juggling your multiple business interests

Here are a few ideas about how you can juggle multiple business interests:

1. Bed down your first business before starting another - Starting a new business venture has a major strain on your time and your money for at least a few months. If you try to start two businesses at nearly the same time, one or both will suffer from the lack of focus. Be careful of overcommitting yourself when you have limited capital, time and energy to spend. Ideally, your first business should be stable and providing you with a constant income before you try

to launch the next one.



2. Be choosy. The problem that many entrepreneurs face is not a shortage of (seemingly) good business ideas and opportunities, but an excess of them. Pick your projects carefully and dedicate enough resources to them to give them a good chance of taking off. Also, be brave enough to walk away when a side project will not be a success.

3. Hire a talented team. If you want to run multiple businesses, you will need to accept the fact that you will need to delegate more of the day-to-day operations to your team. It is important to find people who you trust and work well with so that you can be comfortable leaving them to get on with it while you are busy elsewhere. It can work well to share skills across your businesses and work with the same external consultants.

4. Get advice about how to structure your businesses. When you decide to diversify, you will need to look at the right structure for your different businesses. It might make sense to add your new line of business to an existing company, to treat it as an associate, or to set it up as a completely new company. Discuss the pros and cons with your financial and legal advisors, with a view to minimising risk and optimising cost efficiencies.

5. Share infrastructure and skills where you can. Do not double up on skills, services and infrastructure when it is not necessary. For example, you might be able to share an IT backbone, receptionist and an office between two or more businesses. As an extension to this thought, if you are thinking about expanding into a new business or market, why not look at ideas that can leverage off the skills, infrastructure and assets you already have in place?

6. Be a time management and multitasking master:

- Use IT systems to save you time—ditch the spreadsheets and use proper accounting and payroll software, for example.
- Learn to prioritise, perhaps focus on sales first, then marketing and admin.
- Make time first thing in the morning or at the end of the day to take care of admin and email when there is no one else in the office to distract you.
- Schedule your time carefully.
- Outsource low value tasks or delegate them to juniors.

South African serial entrepreneur Shezi Ntuthuko says that being an entrepreneur “does become easy after the first 10”. It takes hard work and human sacrifice to turn a dream business idea into a way of life. This entrepreneurial spirit makes the difference all over the world.

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