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The hidden costs of starting a business

This Mental Health Awareness Month, Alan Manly examines some of the overlooked psychological impacts entrepreneurs face when starting a business.

More often than not, the drive to start and build a business from scratch is motivated by far more than money. Martin Zwilling supports this claim in *Forbes Magazine* when he outlines the [six motivations of entrepreneurs](#).

These include making a difference in the world, finding personal meaning from building a business, satisfaction of doing something great, personal growth and accomplishment, seeing the real value of one's beliefs and helping others achieve their goals.

Notably, money doesn't get a mention in the above list. So if the motivations are not monetary what would be the hidden costs of starting a business?

Below, I describe seven of these potential costs for the new business owner, which I've seen play out in multiple ways over the years.

Isolation

The first cost of starting a business is isolation from the herd.

Noam Shpancer is [quoted in Psychology Today](#) as saying:

'Human beings are herd animals. We survive only in highly coordinated groups.

Individually, we are designed to pick up social cues and coordinate and align our behaviour with those around us.

Recent research has shown that social disapproval provokes the brain's danger circuits. Conformity soothes.'

Breaking with conformity provokes the brain's danger circuits. There goes the trust and community recognition that's taken years to build. Your fellow herd members at the golf club, work peers and the dreaded in-laws all regard you in a different light.

Self-doubt

Battling the demon of self-doubt, isn't exclusive to entrepreneurs. But when your future is tied to the success of your startup, there's nowhere to hide.

Employees can always bury self-doubt. For entrepreneurs, you'll be faced with this hidden cost every single day as you remind yourself that every action taken has a direct impact on your success or failure.

Ego

Self-worth will be the first thing to be battered by the events following the moment you strike out on your own. And, it's all of your own making.

Naturally, you'll feel the need to prove yourself or to prove to others that you can be successful in business – but this is a trap.

All may be risked in pursuit of this goal. Family, friends, relationships and money. Nothing can satisfy this need other than success in business, making your ego both necessary and dangerous.

Freedom

Working for a boss is easy when compared to working for any maniac who claims to be an entrepreneur.

Every client is now a supreme ruler in your new world of startup land. No issue too small to not matter.

Oh, the memories of the freedom of clocking off and going home. Instead, the new business starter is lying in bed in the dark, wide awake.

Office meetings have been replaced with 3am reviews of the previous day followed promptly by fears of what could go wrong tomorrow.

An entrepreneur is a prisoner waiting for the great escape that success will surely bring.

Cashflow

You might not have gotten into it for the money, but suddenly every person you meet in startup land wants cash up front. They can smell the risk of a stressed startup entrepreneur.

And the ubiquity of the cash-up-front crowd is matched only by slow payers. Why's everyone obsessed with money when we're all meant to be focused on building something great?

Vision

The skill of being able to see a clear path ahead is often lost in the fog of war in startup land.

While attempting to stay on course, you'll inevitably get caught up in the details of one issue or another, leading you off course and delaying your progress towards the eventual end goal.

Some entrepreneurs can get so caught up in the details of starting and running a business that they lose sight of their intended destination entirely.

It's a classic case of failing to see the wood for all the trees.

Work-life balance

The sacrifice of a healthy work-life balance is a cost that many in startup land ignore at their own peril.

Work is life and life is work — that's what many a startup entrepreneur calls balance, and it's not a sustainable attitude.

READ: [Why your side hustle is killing your day job](#)

Hunting for the exit

Having paid these hidden costs, the startup entrepreneur who eventually succeeds will also need to be strong enough to know when they're satisfied with their achievements and move on.

All going well, our successful entrepreneur retires from startup land with more money than they can imagine spending.

And, if they're truly lucky, they'll have managed to maintain at least one relationship outside work — someone to share their life and wealth with.

If any of the above sounds familiar to you, it could be time to take back control of your mental health. With [Smiling Mind's Small Business Program](#), you'll gain access to a range of meditations and activities designed to help you get the balance back in your life.

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