

COMPANY OF ONE

Why Staying Small is the Next Big Thing in Business

PAUL JARVIS

PAUL JARVIS is a writer and designer. He has run his own company of one for more than two decades and along the way has worked with professional athletes like Shaquille O'Neal and Steve Nash, corporate giants like Microsoft and Mercedes-Benz and with entrepreneurs like Danielle LaPorte and Marie Forleo. His ideas about growth have been featured in *Wired*, *USAToday*, *Entrepreneur*, *Fast Company*, *Forbes* and other publications. Paul Jarvis currently teaches online courses, hosts podcasts and develops software.

The book's website is at: www.ofone.co.

ISBN 978-1-77544-961-4

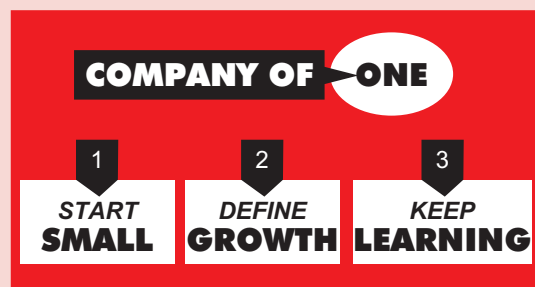
MAIN IDEA

Most people believe to have a successful company, you have to keep growing all the time. That's not necessarily the case. Forming a company of one and then deliberately staying that way indefinitely is often more durable, more profitable and more enjoyable than growing a large organization.

COMPANY OF ONE

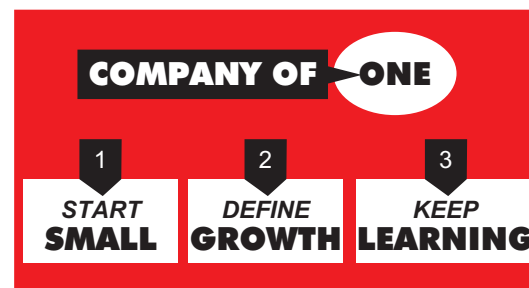
When you work for yourself and you're not trying to get bigger, you can work at being better instead. As you get better, you can spend more time doing what you personally find to be rich and rewarding. Rather than getting locked into managing employees, you can pursue your passions and spend more time with your family and other interests. That's the ultimate aim of building "A Company of One".

The Company of One business model is:



"Staying small doesn't have to be a stepping-stone to something else, or the result of a business failure—rather, it can be an end goal or a smart long-term strategy. The point of being a company of one is to become better in ways that don't incur the typical setbacks of growth. You can scale up revenue, enjoyment, raving fans, focus, autonomy, and experiences while resisting the urge to blindly scale up employee payroll, expenses, and stress levels. This approach builds both a profit buffer for your company to weather markets and a personal buffer to help you thrive even in times of hardship."

— Paul Jarvis



1. Start small Pages 2 - 3

A company of one is a business that questions growth. Instead of automatically chasing growth by hiring more employees and taking more risk, you focus instead on getting progressively smarter, more efficient and more resilient over time. If you plan on staying small forever, you can then focus on growing your revenues without growing your head count. It can be done.

2. Define growth Pages 4 - 6

To succeed and ultimately excel as a Company of One, you need the right mind-set and a real underlying purpose that resonates with you. Pure and simple, your purpose is how you put your personal values into action in your business and career. If you can run your businesses so that it aligns with your purpose rather than blindly chasing growth, not only will the right customers respond but you'll get more enjoyment and satisfaction out of what you achieve. Define growth as doing more of what counts.

3. Keep learning Pages 7 - 8

Today's consumers have got an array of tools they can use to let others know about their customer experience in dealing with you. To accommodate that, you have to build transparency and trust into the way you build your Company of One right from the start. You also have to keep launching new ideas and iterating with customer feedback all the time. You never learn anything until you launch and see what your customers say so keep learning how to better serve.

COMPANY OF ONE



A company of one is a business that questions growth. Instead of automatically chasing growth by hiring more employees and taking more risk, you focus instead on getting progressively smarter, more efficient and more resilient over time. If you plan on staying small forever, you can then focus on growing your revenues without growing your head count. It can be done.

Traditionally, growth has been seen as a by-product of success in business. If a company is doing well, it will usually hire more people, bulk up its infrastructure and generally do more of everything, especially advertising. But is growth really all it's cracked up to be?

"A company of one resists and questions some forms of traditional growth, not on principle, but because growth isn't always the most beneficial or financially viable move. It can be a small business owner or a small group of founders. Employees, executive leaders, board members, and corporate leaders who want to work with more autonomy and self-sufficiency can adopt the principles of a company of one as well. In fact, if big businesses want to keep their brightest minds in their employ, they should look to adopt some of the principles of companies of one."

– Paul Jarvis

If you're a Company of One, your inclination is to build a lifestyle rather than a large enterprise. You try and build your business around your life, not the other way around. You want to work at a pace you feel comfortable with rather than working long hours to support costly overheads, expenses or salaries you have to pay your assistants.

Companies of One tend to typically have four traits:

1. **Resilience** – which comes from a willingness to accept reality, a strong sense of purpose and confidence you will be able to adapt as things change. When you're a Company of One, you can pivot on a dime without having to explain yourself.

COMPANY OF ONE

Trait #1	Trait #2	Trait #3	Trait #4
Resilience	Autonomy	Speed	Simplicity

2. **Autonomy and control** – you master your own core skills and then apply them to the projects of your choosing. You work on projects which appeal to you rather than doing things at the whim of your boss.
3. **Speed** – you can get things done quickly when there are no office politics involved and when you don't have to worry about stepping on someone else's toes. Again, this gives a Company of One the ability to pivot quickly as customers or markets change.
4. **Simplicity** – you can stay focused on what you do well without feeling any pressure to add more and more stuff to justify your investments.

A good example of a Company of One is Psychotactics, a consulting firm established by Sean D'Souza. He decided early on that \$500,000 a year of profit was all he wanted to earn as a one-man business. He produces a daily podcast, runs in-person training workshops and works exceptionally hard to help his customers excel. As soon as he reaches his profit target for the year, he goes on vacation for the rest of the year playing with his kids.

"Part of Sean's customer retention strategy involves sending his customers a box of chocolates, with a handwritten note and sometimes a small cartoon he draws himself. The package costs him approximately \$20, which includes shipping from New Zealand (where he lives currently), but it's the one thing his customers talk about. They'll buy a \$2,000 training program from him and talk about the chocolate. He'll give a speech at an event, and people will talk about the chocolate. His customers love these small touches, and the attention his business gives them, because his company of one focuses solely on serving his existing customers, not on infinite growth."

– Paul Jarvis

The current business paradigm – promoted by people like venture capitalists – is that successful businesses grow over time but the reality is larger businesses are not less prone to fail. If a business requires endless growth to keep the doors open, it stands to reason at some point it will stall. By contrast, a business which turns a good profit at its current size has stickability.

"For companies of one, the question is always what can I do to make my business better?, instead of what can I do to grow my business larger?"

– Paul Jarvis

Starbucks is a good illustration of the folly of chasing growth for growth's sake. When Starbucks was in high-growth mode, it was opening hundreds of stores around the world. Someone decided the company could grow faster by adding sandwiches, CDs and fancier drinks to the menu. All this did was dilute the Starbucks brand and the company was forced to close 900 stores. When it returned to focusing on doing just one thing better – coffee – Starbucks started growing again.

"When you focus on doing business and serving customers in better and better ways, your company of one can end up profiting more from the same amount of work because you can raise the prices until your demand flattens out to where you can handle it. There's nothing wrong with finding the right size and then focusing on being better. Small can be a long-term plan, not just a stepping-stone."

– Paul Jarvis

If you look around, you'll probably notice the traditional way of working – with strict rules and corporate hierarchies – is rapidly giving way to gig-based, remote work that people do with total autonomy. Being a small company and staying that way is feasible because technology is now available which can automate sales funnels, make drop-shipping happen without any need for handling or storing stock and print-on-demand removes the need for investing in machinery and storage. All of these tools empower self-contained one-person companies to up their game and so more.

"We don't need an attitude of world domination and crushing it in our work in order to make a great living or even have a substantial impact. Our work can start and finish small while still being useful—focused on moving toward better instead of more."

– Paul Jarvis

Keep in mind the Company of One concept can work inside a larger organization as well. You don't have to be an entrepreneur going solo to apply the Company of One philosophy. You can also use it to drive an independent and autonomous team within a larger organization.

The stereotype is that successful leaders are outgoing, charismatic and dominant. The reality is quiet introverts can also be exceptionally good leaders.

To successfully lead a Company of One, you'll need to have the ability to:

- Set yourself high goals and stay very focused on chasing those goals at the expense of all other distractions.
- Be a self-starter and able to make the most of your autonomy.
- Have the capacity to manage others on your team or your outside suppliers, freelancers and contractors.
- Understand how to work with your organizations constraints to meet your client or customer requirements.
- Understand how others think so you can sell your products and services and also work in with any collaborators.
- Be a good communicator.
- Be resilient.
- Make timely decisions.

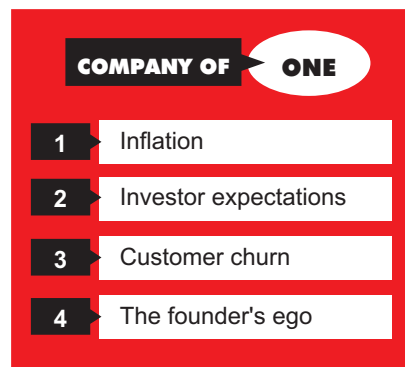
Overall, Company of One leaders have to function as generalists rather than specialists. You have to hustle and make the right things happen because no one else will be doing that if you're not. That certainly does not mean becoming a workaholic but you have to be the driving force for your company.

"The value of leading a company of one is your ability to stay agile and nimble. However, this advantage requires constant vigilance, because as success happens, opportunities happen—mostly opportunities to grow

and scale up. But to stay a company of one and stick to the definition of success you've set for yourself and your leadership, you will have to turn down opportunities that aren't a good fit. Companies of one need to be relentless in what they say no to, since plans, tasks, distractions, meetings, and emails, though they may all seem productive to a team at first, can become counterproductive quickly if not well managed. In saying no to anything that doesn't fit, you leave room to say yes to those rare opportunities that do fit—opportunities that align with the values and ideas of your business."

– Paul Jarvis

So why do most startups and small companies almost automatically seek growth anyway? Most companies look to grow all the time for four main reasons:



1. *Inflation* – is happening all the time in the background. You have to keep increasing your top-line revenue because the purchasing power of your dollars is steadily decreasing over time.
2. *Investor expectations* – the people who contribute money to your enterprise expect to see a return which is a multiple of what they chipped in. Even if you're self-funded, you will want to see a payoff for the risk that you took and your opportunity costs.
3. *Customer churn* – you have to keep replacing departing customers with new customers anyway so you might as well grow at the same time. That's logical and therefore lots of companies attempt that.

4. *The founder's ego* – the bigger your company becomes the more clout and respect you will have.

All four of those reasons are understandable but they fail to take into account the fact growth always adds complexity and complexity always leads to increased overheads to address it. If you make a deliberate decision to stay small, you can keep your personality at the heart of your business. You can act with integrity and in alignment with your personal values more readily when there's just you to answer to.

"As Gary Sutton, author of Corporate Canaries, says, "You can't sell your way out of an unprofitable business." So starting your own company of one with a focus on profitability right from the start, when you're at your leanest, is imperative. Your measuring stick for success doesn't have to be growth as a one-dimensional metric; it can be something more personal and focused on your specific company of one—like the quality of what you sell, employee happiness, customer happiness and retention, or even some greater purpose."

– Paul Jarvis

The savvy way to build a Company of One is to figure out the smallest feasible version of your idea and make that happen quickly. Test the waters without a massive outlay of resources and pay attention to what customers and potential customers are saying. Once you're helping your customers succeed, you can then add polish and enhanced features later on. Being profitable right out of the gate gives you more options for the future.

"In short, start small. Start with just the smallest version of your idea and a way to make it happen. Instead of waiting (sometimes for years) for bigger wins to happen, you can use small wins to propel you. That's actually a much smarter way to launch. Easing up on the "growth equals success" mentality opens you up to starting and becoming more profitable much sooner."

– Paul Jarvis





To succeed and ultimately excel as a Company of One, you need the right mind-set and a real underlying purpose that resonates with you. Pure and simple, your purpose is how you put your personal values into action in your business and career. If you can run your businesses so that it aligns with your purpose rather than blindly chasing growth, not only will the right customers respond but you'll get more enjoyment and satisfaction out of what you achieve. Define growth as doing more of what counts.

Starting a Company of One doesn't automatically mean you have to go do a start-up. It's also feasible to grow a Company of One within an existing organization. This is interesting because in many large companies, as you get promoted you end up doing less and less of what you love. Starting an internal Company of One can address this unwelcome development.

So how do you start an internal Company of One? The path varies but you might approach your boss and ask if you can take ownership of some specific project or even product. Explain that you will become accountable for the deliverables and for seeking out whatever training or mentoring will be required to help you achieve those results. As long as your proposal is credible and your boss can see how that might work, you might be able to get approval to act like an internal start-up.

"Regardless of whether your company of one is just you or is part of a larger organization, with greater autonomy comes greater responsibility to do the work expected of you. How you think about work is important to how work gets done. To succeed as a company of one, you have to have a real underlying purpose. Your why matters as an unseen but ever-present element that drives your business. Your purpose is more than just a pretty-sounding mission statement; it's how your business acts and represents itself. And it's what your business sometimes places above even profit."

– Paul Jarvis

"Success in business is no longer just about making money or moving up the corporate ladder. More and more, one of the biggest indicators of success is purpose."

– Richard Branson, founder, Virgin

It's always a good idea to dip a toe in the water before you make the leap to set up a brand new Company of One. Before you take the leap, ask yourself these questions:

- If I do start my own company, what is my purpose? Do I just want to make money or do I want to make a tangible difference?
- Do I have skills which are already in demand in the marketplace?
- Where else would be obvious places where those skills can be leveraged?
- Is there some way I can test the demand for my skills in a small way first?
- Can I do some part-time gigs using my skills first without having to commit everything?
- Is there any chance some of my existing customers would follow me and give me business if I take the plunge and set up my own company?
- Do I have the self-discipline required to manage my own workday and stay focused on the task or tasks which will add the most value?

The great thing about starting a Company of One is you can project your personality and style. Traditional companies suppress that under the guise of "professionalism" but when you have a Company of One, your personality can be your biggest edge over your competitors. You can have a brand which represents some distinct aspect of your personality which will be impossible for your competitors to replicate or knock off.

"A personality is required for your company of one, regardless of size. Your human characteristics are the way your brand speaks and behaves. For example, Harley-Davidson is a brand that connotes rebelliousness, while Snapchat is associated with being young and fresh (although calling it "young and fresh" probably means that I'm neither). If you don't think about the personality of your business, your audience will

assign one to you—because people relate to other people, and your audience wants to relate to your brand when they see it."

– Paul Jarvis



For example, Marie Forleo is the founder of an eight-figure business training company. She highlights her quirks and her distinct personality and her customers respond. By doing that, she has customers in 193 countries and Oprah has named her a leader for the next generation.

Most large companies try and be the "vanilla ice cream" of their market by projecting a brand personality which is universally acceptable but bland. To build a successful Company of One, you have to aspire to be the "pistachio ice cream" of your industry. For better or for worse, people absolutely love pistachio or they can't stand its weird green color. You need to be interesting, unique and even quirky to stand out and demand attention. Making your business distinct and memorable pays.

"It can be scary to draw that line in the sand—especially when it's your business and livelihood. Doing so immediately alienates certain people or entire groups. But taking a stand is important because you become a beacon for those individuals who are your people, your tribe, and your audience. When you hoist your viewpoint up like a flag, people know where to find you; it becomes a rallying point. Displaying your perspective lets prospective (and current) customers know that you don't just sell your products or services. You do it for a specific reason."

– Paul Jarvis

A good example of being unique to draw customer attention is Just Mayo which markets itself as being mayonnaise without eggs. That drew a heated response from Unilever, the owner of Hellman's Mayo, which pointed out mayonnaise is required to contain eggs according to the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). Unilever accused Just Mayo of false advertising and soon there were other accusations of other problems with Just Mayo including salmonella and listeria.

In response, Target pulled Just Mayo from its shelves until the FDA cleared the product. It then came to light the American Egg Board and the U.S. Department of Agriculture had been hiring journalists to denigrate Just Mayo and its combative CEO Joshua Tetrick. This generated a flood of lawsuits and letters all of which were like marketing gold for Just Mayo.

"By being polarizing with its eggless mayonnaise, Hampton Creek disrupted the entire mayonnaise industry. The ensuing controversy and legal battle only made its brand more desirable to its audience. In the end, Unilever not only dropped the lawsuit but, in a huge about-face, launched its own certified vegan, eggless "mayo" a few years later."

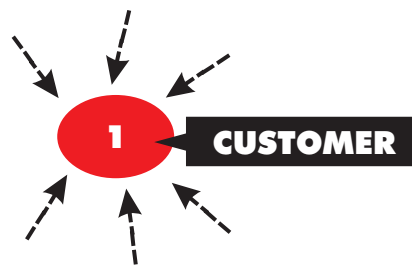
– Paul Jarvis

Another good example of this is Marmite, a classic yeast spread which is popular in the United Kingdom. Marmite's taste is quite distinctive and therefore the company has successfully used a tagline which reads: "You either love it or hate it." Marmite even released an extra strength version of its product and invited thirty of its best customers to a live tasting session on social media. The promotion generated 50,000 visits to the company's website, more than 300,000 Facebook page views and Marmite XO sold out quickly as soon as it hit the shelves.

"Guy Kawasaki, the well-known marketing specialist and venture capitalist, also thinks that we shouldn't be afraid of polarization. Large companies search for the "Holy Grail" of products that appeal to every demographic, socioeconomic background, and geographical location, but this "one size fits all" approach rarely works and often leads to mediocrity (and vanilla ice cream). Instead, Kawasaki believes, we should create products that make specifically identified groups of people very happy and ignore everyone else. The worst-case scenario is inciting no passionate reactions from anyone—no one caring enough about a product to talk about it at all, either positively or negatively."

– Paul Jarvis

COMPANY OF ONE



A Company of One does have one competitive advantage which does not scale. When it comes to delivering great customer service, you can remember the names of your customers and have hands-on involvement in making your customers happy and loyal.

"As companies of one, we are very much in the people-serving business. It's critical that we listen to each of our customers and take full ownership in making sure they are pleased with our service level and then successful in their own lives. Customer service is a huge differentiating factor in why people choose the places where they want to spend their money. If you serve your customers well, they in turn become brand evangelists for your company: basically an unpaid sales force that reduces your need to hire more staff."

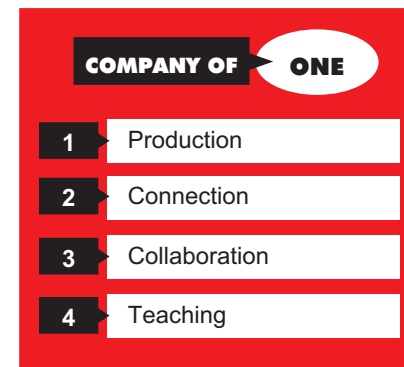
– Paul Jarvis

As you listen to your customers and figure out ways to exceed their expectations, your business will stand out from the rest. The surest way to build a successful business is to make sure all your current customers are successful and love doing business with you. If you go out of your way to add value and to be helpful to your existing customers, that will set off a chain reaction which draws more future customers in.

Great personalized customer service also means you own your mistakes. When things go wrong as they invariably will, if you step up and take personal responsibility that will win you loyalty. Do this in a spirit of complete transparency and you can turn mistakes into opportunities. Everyone wants to deal with companies which have integrity and which honor both the spirit and the letter of all undertakings which are given. Keep your promises and always do the right thing and it will work in your favor over the long haul.

It may sound counterintuitive at first but the key to running a good Company of One is to build scalable systems. In other words, you want to look for ways to use automation and technology to scale so that you don't have to bring onboard more people.

Specifically, you want to look for scalable systems that will help in four areas:



1. **Production** – savvy small companies shift their production and manufacturing activities to on-demand suppliers who can do all the scaling up that's required. By creating separation between your brand and your factory, you can move slower rather than being locked into maximizing everything for profitability. You can also make sure your manufacturing is done ethically and sustainably.
2. **Connection** – you can use the power of outside service providers to do the heavy lifting tasks so you can focus on one-to-one points of contact. For example, when you use the right tools, it takes the same amount of time to send an email newsletter to 50,000 people as it normally would to email one person. Even better, the online tools now commonly available provide sophisticated abilities to segment customers. You can send the right email at the right time to the right person rather than blasting everyone with the same generic sales message. Automation software can handle lots and lots of background tasks so you have more time to spend with your customers.

3. *Collaboration* – where you can get with contractors, partners and clients to come up with new product or service offerings that will appeal. Working for yourself doesn't mean you have to always be working by yourself and there are loads of systems which can be utilized for collaboration. Just be careful that you set clearly defined times in your workday where collaboration is welcome and when it is not.

"Scaled collaboration does make sense when a project can't be advanced without input from several team members. A perfect example is what is known as a "hackathon"—a combination of the words "hack" (exploratory programming, not computer crimes) and "marathon." In a hackathon, several small teams of developers, designers, and project managers are formed, each group collaborating, with speed and focus, to complete a large project over the course of several hours or a few days. Hugely successful innovations have come out of hackathons—for example, Facebook's "Like" button. Hackathons work because they are focused collaboration, not 24/7 "be available at all times" collaboration. They can be fun, energetic, and highly productive, since everyone is collaborating on a common goal and purpose. And once the hackathon is over, everyone goes back to their regular jobs."

– Paul Jarvis

4. *Teaching* – where you share what you know so that future customers welcome hearing from you rather than shun your marketing messages. Teaching is hands down the best way to stand out and make your Company Of One successful.

"To stand out and build an audience as a company of one, you have to out-teach and outshare the competition, not outscale them. Customer education is the new form of marketing. Education makes a real difference between a product that people perfunctorily buy for utilitarian reasons and a product they are truly eager to purchase because it adds real purpose to their lives. As a company of one, what you teach people about your product can and will set you apart."

– Paul Jarvis



If you out-teach and out-share your competitors, several good things will happen:

1. You create a relationship with your audience who see you as a source of good information rather than a pushy marketer. You will be the first person they think about when they need something you have been teaching about.
2. You can show your future customers the benefits of what you're selling. They can then reach their own decision about the benefits of buying from you.
3. You can also educate new customers on how to get the maximum value from their purchases. Education is the ideal way to onboard new customers.
4. Teaching builds trust because customers will see and understand what you're about.

The reality is most business ideas don't need to be kept under lock and key. Except for some proprietary information, most of what you know is probably commonly available if people take the time and effort to search. It's in the execution of your ideas that value is created.

"At the core of many massive, profitable, global companies is an old idea executed exceptionally well. Facebook is just a better MySpace, and both are essentially digital meeting places. Taxis take people from point A to point B. Uber/Lyft just figured out how to make this service more convenient. None of these are billion-dollar ideas; rather, they're billion-dollar executions of ideas. That's why companies of one shouldn't worry about sharing their ideas, as long as they're taking care of execution and their ideas are not proprietary."

– Paul Jarvis

The point that many new companies generate market value by executing better on old ideas is important. The more time you spend trying to protect ideas instead of sharing them and teaching them, the less time you have to execute on them. Furthermore, critical feedback from

the people you teach can be used to enhance the quality of your ideas. Getting others to weigh in on your ideas before you invest lots of resources can help you fine-tune and improve your ideas as you move forward.

Pure and simple teaching builds authority. By sharing information about your product and about your marketplace, you educate your customers about why they need you without them even realizing what's going on. You will become an authority in their view and the logical person to buy from when the time is right.

"Customer education—providing an audience with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to become an informed buyer—is one of the most important parts of a sales cycle. Too often we're so close to what we're selling that we assume others are also experts on it, or know what we know, but most of the time that's not the case. Customers don't always know what they don't know, or don't know enough about something to realize how useful or beneficial that information could be to them or their own business."

– Paul Jarvis

A great example of this in action is Brian Clark who was a practicing attorney with a top law firm in the mid-1990s/ He wanted to be a writer so he quit his job and starting selling articles about popular culture over the Internet. It didn't generate enough money to pay his bills so he started a weekly blog where he taught people how to deal with legal issues without using a lawyer for free. Soon he had more people who wanted to hire him as a lawyer than he could handle but he still didn't want to practice law so Brian Clarke started CopyBlogger to teach companies how to use content marketing. He shared everything he knew to a growing audience and developed some educational products to offer his subscribers. CopyBlogger was later renamed RainMaker Digital and today does more than \$12 million a year in annual revenue selling content management software, online courses and WordPress themes.





Today's consumers have got an array of tools they can use to let others know about their customer experience in dealing with you. To accommodate that, you have to build transparency and trust into the way you build your Company of One right from the start. You also have to keep launching new ideas and iterating with customer feedback all the time. You never learn anything until you launch and see what your customers say so keep learning how to better serve.

Customers now have loads of tools they can use to share their experiences – good or bad – with other people. Therefore, it's vital that you create win-win scenarios – where you make sale and you create a happy customer.

"Why is this important to you and your company of one? Because the power of recommendation—or word of mouth—lies in its ability to create trust by proxy. If your good friend tells you that a product is worth buying, you'll listen because you trust your friend; some of that trust is then passed on to the product they're recommending. This works online to some degree as well: the people you follow have earned a bit of your trust, so you tend to trust their recommendations."

– Paul Jarvis

One defining characteristic of a Company of One is your customers deal direct with you. That means you're perfectly positioned to first build trust and then to incentivize your customers to tell their friends and in essence do your marketing for you. Word-of-mouth marketing or referral marketing is the perfect vehicle for growing your revenues but it won't happen organically. You have to make it happen.

"Rewarding loyalty in your best customers is a great way to incentivize recommendations. MailChimp is fairly well known for sending its loyal customers exclusive swag, like well-designed T-shirts (most don't even have the MailChimp logo on them) or "Freddie" action figures

(Freddie is the name of the chimpanzee in the logo). People then post photos on social media—tagging MailChimp—that show them wearing their new shirt or the action figure on their desk, for all their followers to see."

– Paul Jarvis

Double-sided incentives also work well. This is where both the referrer and the purchaser get a great deal. If you can come up with an incentive which is a great win-win, you can spark a stream of word-of-mouth referrals which will be incredibly beneficial.

"By making customer happiness your top priority over new customer acquisition and then incentivizing customers to share the word about your business, less of your money needs to be spent on promotion. With a company of one, which can be profitable at any size, such slow but sustainable growth makes sense. You start with the idea of creating a trust-centric business, build products that customers love, make sure they're educated and happy with what they've purchased from you, and then give them systematic ways to share their success with others. This doesn't require huge billboards, massive ad spends, or paid acquisitions. In treating trust as a primary factor in running your business, you'll amass an army of loyal fans—and not just a huge customer base of people who bought from you and then forgot about you."

– Paul Jarvis

When you delight your customers with a great product or service, educate them for free and then give them bonuses they really like to bring their friends into the circle, you build trust. You don't have to invest in Superbowl ads or spending heavily on social media campaigns either. It's much better to give money to your happy customers than its ever can be to advertise. Every successful Company of One understands this dynamic.

"Trust in business is more than a matter of adopting an internal slogan or making up a mantra to apply to products and services when it suits a marketing campaign. Trust has to be totally baked into every aspect of not only what you sell, but how you sell and support it. For a company of one, even at a tiny scale, maintaining a business worthy of customer trust creates

a market differentiator and helps you stand out. Such a business focuses on quality over speed, compassion over profit, and honesty over tricks. And since, as a customer, you certainly prefer to buy from trusted businesses, why change that when you're the one doing the selling?"

– Paul Jarvis

The best way to figure this all out is to launch and iterate in small steps. Execute a version of any new ideas you have which will generate your minimum viable profit and start learning more about what customers want and will pay for. For your Company of One to be viable and sustainable, you need to become cashflow positive as soon as feasible. You won't learn anything useful until you launch so get your product out there and make ongoing improvements based on customer feedback.

"Andrew Mason founded Groupon as a basic website where he manually typed in deals and created PDFs to email to subscribers from Apple Mail. Pebble, a smartwatch, started with just a single explainer video and a Kickstarter campaign (no actual product, even) that raised more than \$20 million to fund its development; Pebble was eventually sold to FitBit. Virgin started as a single Boeing 747 flying between Gatwick, England, and Newark, New Jersey. Once these startups were up and running, they were able to build from customer feedback and make positive changes. So, launch your company quickly, but then immediately start to refine your product and make it better."

– Paul Jarvis

Your strongest assets as a Company of One will be your ability to find a simple solution to a big customer problem and your capacity to problem-solve. One way you can leverage those assets would be to use crowdfunding to put your ideas to potential customers and see how they react. If your product reaches the sweet spot, people will preorder and provide you with working capital. If not, then all you've wasted will be the time it took you to develop your crowdfunding campaign.



Try and come up with simple products which are easy to understand and which solve a single problem for a well-defined crowd. If you can build off an existing product and make it better, then you won't have to educate people about what you're trying to achieve. Find people who are willing to pay for upgrades to what they currently use is usually the best way to launch and get started.

"By starting out small, a company of one can put all of its energy into solving problems for real people rather than into growing large enough to maybe solve problems for people one day. This approach also gives your relationship with customers a strong foundation: by eliminating bureaucracy and the friction of large infrastructures, you can interact with, listen to, and empathize with your customers directly."

– Paul Jarvis

LAUNCH QUICKLY, LAUNCH OFTEN

There is a perception in business that you only get one chance at greatness when you launch. That's not correct. Launching is not a one-time event but an ongoing process of launch, measure, adjust and repeat. There's no problem in admitting what you sell won't come out of the gates fully formed and ready to roll. Pretty much every successful company in history has had to course-correct, pivot and iterate their way to greatness and you will need to do the same.

"Iterating is an ongoing process, by the way, and should never stop as long as you're receiving feedback and data from the market, from other businesses in your niche, and even from within your organization (such as requests from the support person or team). Your strategy, then, shouldn't be rigid and set in stone, but capable of being changed each time new information is collected. In this way, your strategy will never fall out of sync with the customers and market you're serving."

– Paul Jarvis

The other advantage a Company of One has over larger or established businesses is you can do relationship marketing rather than pushy interruption marketing. You can connect with potential customers individually and get to know them and speak to them directly. Large corporations just can't do that.

To build relationships with people you hope will buy from you in the future, get into the habit of communicating with them often. Send out information they may find useful or post that information on social media for them to view. Make occasional offers but most of the time just provide useful ideas and material. Talk about what your friends are doing and help promote their businesses as well. All of this helps build a genuine audience around your business, your product or your brand.

"A company of one finds its true north by working toward being better, not bigger, and the way to do that is to build long-term relationships with its audience and customers. Part of being better is better serving an audience who, if served well, will become customers and, if served well as customers, will become advocates. The difference between relationship companies and companies that focus solely on growth is that the former recognize that real relationships are built more slowly, in more meaningful ways, and without massive turnover. Sales aren't asked for immediately; they're brought up after relationships have developed a bit of trust. The idea is that in rewarding an audience who's giving you their attention by giving your attention back to them, through listening and empathy, you'll be rewarded with a sale (and most of the time several sales over the long term). Measuring profit or customer retention can lead to more sustainability because, as the adage goes, "What gets measured gets done." So if you're focusing on growth, growth is what will happen. But if you focus instead on relationships that turn into long-term customers and sales, that's what will happen instead."

– Paul Jarvis

COMPANY OF ONE

This kind of relationship marketing builds social capital for your Company of One. In contrast to financial capital or human capital, social capital can make or break a business. Social capital can drive how the market or your intended audience perceive the value in what your offering.

"Having the empathy to learn what a consumer really wants from your company of one besides your product or service—whether it's knowledge, education, or just help—can go a long way. Empathy takes a relationship from "What can I sell you?" to "How can I truly help you?" This is the way to bank social capital: by starting a long-term and mutually beneficial relationship."

– Paul Jarvis

Large enterprises offer little if any human interaction. A Company of One is the complete opposite. You can get to know people before they become customers, sell them, onboard them and then keep following up to make sure they're getting value out of what they purchased from you. That's a huge advantage which should be harnessed fully all the time.

"Building connections with customers comes down to happiness: if they're happy, they'll keep using your product or service. If they're happy, they'll tell others about your business. If they're happy, they'll stay loyal to your brand. There's no need to overthink customer relationships when the main point should always be: what can you do as a company of one to make your customers happy?"

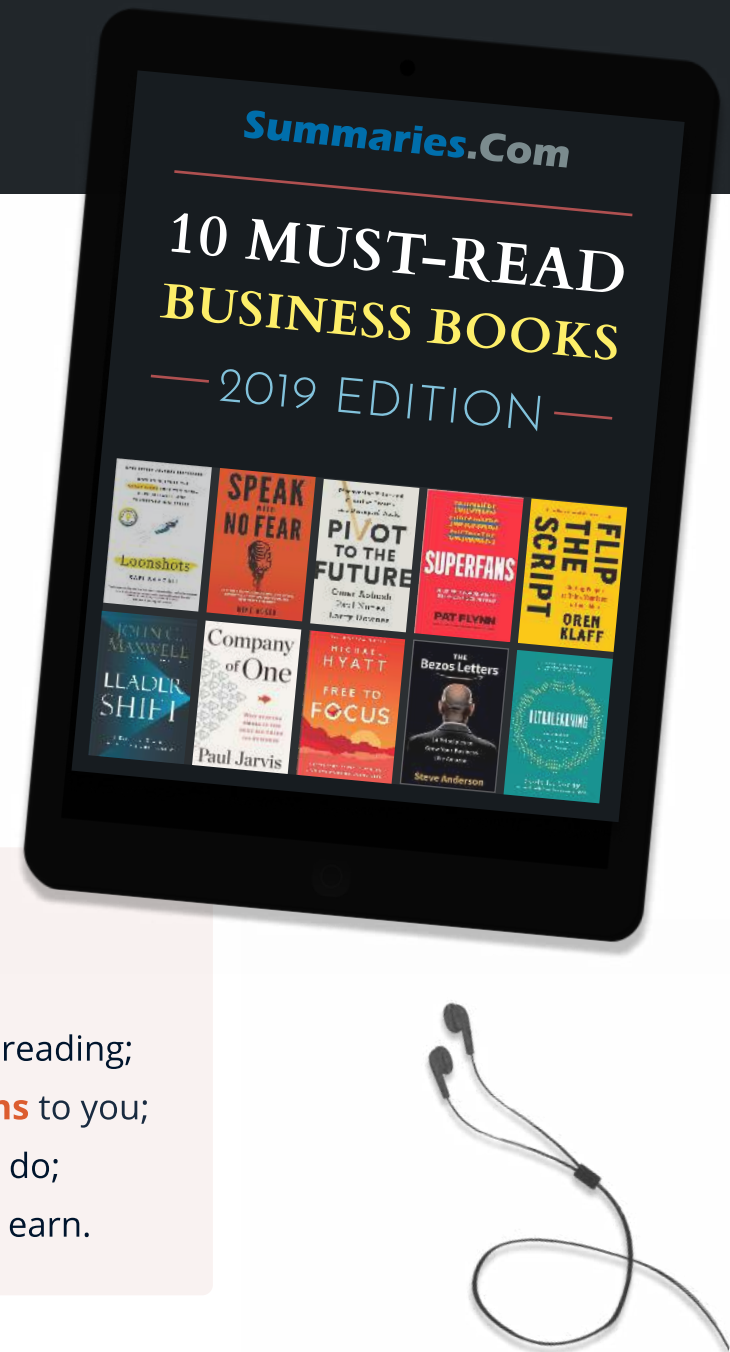
– Paul Jarvis

"Business success does not lie in growing something quickly and massively, but rather in building something that's both remarkable and resilient over the long term. As we've seen time and time again, nothing is too big to fail. With bigger scale come bigger dangers, bigger risks, and much work to become and remain profitable. Instead, you can focus on building something that, in effect, is too small to fail."

– Paul Jarvis

FUEL YOUR BRAIN AND **IGNITE** YOUR CAREER WITH

THE 10 MUST-READ BUSINESS BOOK SUMMARIES OF 2019



These summaries will help you...

- Get a high-level view of the **key concepts** in each book;
- Learn from the author's 20+ years of experience, in just 30 minutes reading;
- Get fresh ideas, strategies & motivation that could be **worth millions** to you;
- Follow emerging trends & **catch the wave** before your competitors do;
- Become a self-directed learner. The more you learn, the more you'll earn.

ACHIEVE MORE IN YOUR BUSINESS, CAREER & PERSONAL LIFE

Claim your **FREE** copy of 10 must-read summaries at summaries.com/2019