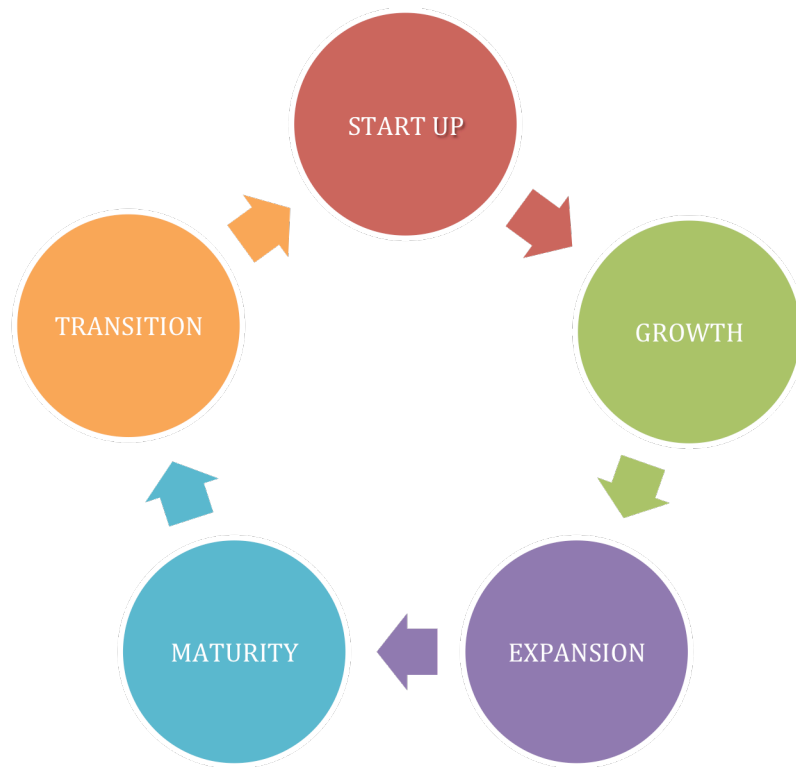


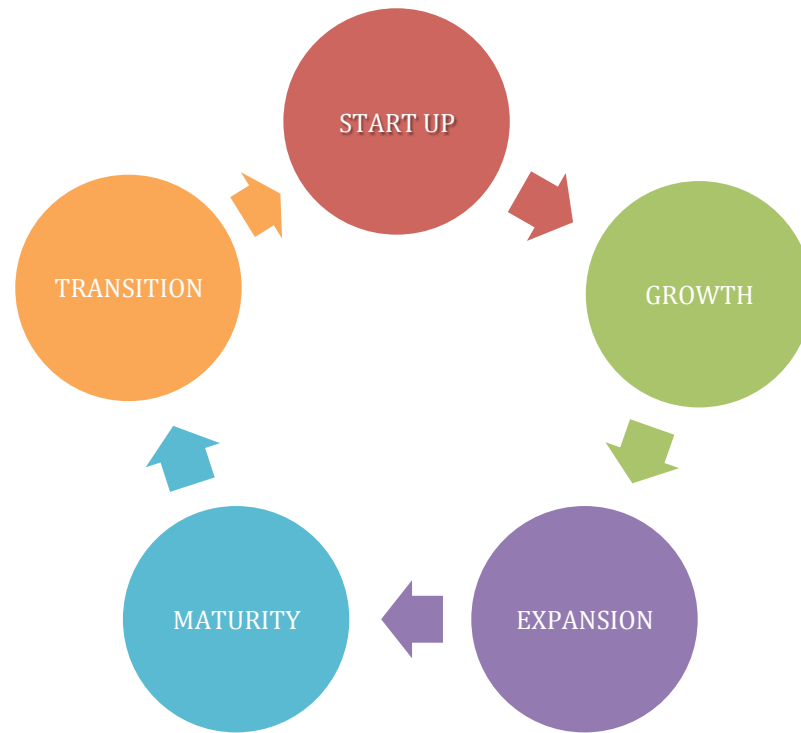
The Small Business Life Cycle



ToP Network Annual Meeting 2013 Durham

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The Small Business Life Cycle



ToP Network

Durham
January 2013

Start up Stage

What did you find challenging from the start?	What did you do to overcome your challenges?	What assets did you bring to the table that propelled you?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarity of core values ▪ Tax requirements ▪ Cash flow ▪ No one to delegate to ▪ Previous relationships were now competitive ▪ Balancing delivery and business development ▪ Legal “fuzzy” navigation ▪ Getting used to being alone ▪ Realistic about sales, delivery and support ▪ Professional presentations ▪ Banking ▪ Evaluation ▪ A hostile director ▪ How do I do these tasks: proposals, manage paper, develop language, banking, document editing ▪ Finding clients ▪ Identify self as new business when known differently in community ▪ Tough to say “no” ▪ Subject matter expert and now I need to know everything ▪ Who will do it? ▪ Complexity of partnership agreements ▪ Balance of business development – delivery on promises ▪ Selling self ▪ Changing mindset from nonprofit to for profit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice ▪ Tacking hours on work (billable and actual) ▪ Created computer templates ▪ Developed customer checklists ▪ Created 2 fee structures ▪ 2 Rates: 1) design & planning 2) based on number of people ▪ Created a “design for the day” to get a sense of rhythm ▪ Hired experts – branding/logo & created master services agreements ▪ Low cash flow – went to SCORE for help and chamber offered new business start up class for reasonable fee ▪ Creating templates, language and agreements ▪ CPA advice ▪ Dissolved partnership and now solo practitioner ▪ Rate structure for 10+ people and design is 50 % of fee ▪ Think time for day including meals, exercise, water ▪ Learned how to say “No” ▪ Virtual meetings meant I was not driving everywhere & saved time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ House – place to work ▪ Reputation established ▪ Key contacts ▪ Financial support from sales ▪ Academic ▪ Motivation – No financial support ▪ Business experience – babysitting & delivering newspapers ▪ Database ▪ Confidence in skills ▪ Other colleagues/mentors ▪ Strong desire ▪ Friends (websites) ▪ Chamber course (consulting for \$25 with outside resources)

Growth

How do we know if the growth is ongoing or temporary based on workload & scope / length of contracts?	How do you allocate time between serving clients & business development in this dynamic phase?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shift of short-term contracts to long-term contracts ▪ Repeat business from clients ▪ Consolidated client base is risky ▪ Referrals from clients ★ Bank account balance ▪ Increasing income ▪ Watch for environmental change in key client base (e.g. MAPP & ToP + CDC is changing public health & MAPP) ▪ Show me the money ★ Assess client commitments to verify alignment between words and actions (reality check) ▪ When partners come to you to co-sponsor training ▪ Fewer new clients than usual ▪ Business is only coming from one sector ▪ Ongoing participation by client ▪ ToP is talked about as “the way we do business” by client ▪ Describe scope honestly (set boundaries) ★ Clarifying and managing expectations ▪ Down payment with up front money ▪ Track the growth & return from network / customer base ★ Referrals from satisfied clients ▪ Do enough to stay on top of the game ▪ Service line feeds another services ▪ Diversified client base / income flow ▪ 19 years consulting; believe & have faith opportunities will continue ▪ Follow/discern energy ▪ Trends analysis using excel graphs ▪ Network analysis (nodes + extensions = growth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do the business development needed to serve exiting clients ▪ Poorly – I spend more time with design and delivery ▪ Add 3 categories: serving clients, business development, personal life/care (be open to use all time differently) ▪ Continuous outreach in simple ways ▪ Communicate general message to prospective clients ★ Show up and then follow the opportunities ▪ Go to places of high potential to meet clients ▪ Make time to follow up with people I have met ▪ Delegate (person/time) to management activities ▪ Take time to ask for referrals from clients ▪ Ask friends for referrals & recommendations ★ Deliver stellar services ▪ Identified 4 sectors and work with key clients ▪ Focus on 2-3 key clients ▪ Treat clients as “pilots”, evaluate, reduce costs ▪ Ask for help/hire ▪ Discipline with time management ★ Keep your focus ★ Phases: 1) design and delivery 2) administration & marketing <p>Key: ★ = Emphasis</p>

Expansion

On what criteria would you base growth decisions?	What else might expansion look like?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to fund additional infrastructure ▪ My capacity (time, skill) to do ▪ Opportunity to get experience ▪ Longevity-ability to sustain over time ▪ Diversification of \$ “streams” of sources ▪ Shaping your work – refine so gems come through ▪ Growth enhances quality of my life and my clients lives ▪ Are complementary partners available? ▪ Doesn’t harm quality of life ▪ Are there new assets and opportunities? ▪ Creating balance (life-work) ▪ Needed financial base ▪ Believing growth will happen 1+1=2 ▪ Create barter – trading for tech help? ▪ New education – PhD ▪ Am I good at change? ▪ Are the people I partner with good at change? ▪ Advancing the overall mission ▪ Personal passion? ▪ Am I bored? ▪ Shift in understanding of risk; spending money ▪ With whom would I like to work? ▪ Will it dilute our core business? ▪ Incorporation and payroll ▪ Personal growth ▪ Need for hiring help, expertise, partnering ▪ Can you establish agreements with partners ▪ Coming up with new offering – “custom service” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Different forms of engagement; community of practice & ToP Partnerships ▪ New structure; e.g. sole practitioner to ToP partnership ▪ Additional expertise ▪ Quality control, create new financial model that recognized R&D ▪ Translating into other sectors ▪ Serious, quality sub-contractors ▪ Data-really assessing “as is” before becoming “to be” (research and evaluation) ▪ Focused on what can make \$, met mission, etc. (market share) ▪ Doing what you like best ▪ Combining interests into new initiatives ▪ New image about what I do ▪ Integrating strands of what you know ▪ Additional market focus ▪ New location, state or city ▪ How do I want to spend my time? ▪ Symbiotic relationships; complementary ▪ Expansion to new geographic markets ▪ Relationships & expectations! ▪ Incorporation & payroll ▪ Is it a new mark ▪ New identification in name

Mature

What are ways the small consulting / facilitation practice might adapt to a changing business landscape?	What are you doing to stay relevant to your current or potential markets?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarity about what you offer and price options ▪ Know what you are good at, freely advise other resources and people ▪ Ask current clients for connections – referrals ▪ Find “staff” to share skills, barter ▪ Take a break & have “fun” ▪ Have fun and & less hassle ▪ StrengthsFinder certification ▪ Create modules, new language ▪ Find a sugar “mama” ▪ Invest in research & development (environmental scanning) ▪ Creating new programs ▪ Develop new market focus ▪ Sleep ▪ Case studies-successful results ▪ Some strategic pro bono work ▪ Merge/align ▪ Other business practices ▪ Engage in the civic involvement (pro bono) ▪ Doing deep dives ▪ Getting clarity on fees the market will bare ▪ Establish credentials – Social Work CEUs, APA, etc. ▪ Take on small pilot project that is low cost & low risk to explore new avenues ▪ Newsletters with edge insight ▪ Charge more ▪ Keep our skills & knowledge “fresh” & add new things ▪ Conduct strategic juncture exercise and wrap up with ORID ▪ Marketing to new niches ▪ Lunch with champions-get inside trends ▪ Attend courses - learn stuff to fill gaps - develop new skills ▪ Work with <u>new</u> associates, new arenas, new language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Networking... networking... networking... ▪ Communication - mention progress - email congratulations ▪ Monetize products – items to sell ▪ Listening, reflecting and stepping back ▪ Read: The Economist, New York Times, Field Journal ▪ Sell new color sticky walls ▪ Expand networking ▪ Workshops, seminars, targeted growth areas ▪ Gathering like this – sharing ▪ Target a market area & know trends & influences on that market ▪ Taking courses: POIS, virtual boot camp ▪ Read websites, educate self ▪ Regular newsletters ▪ Opens new opportunities ▪ What would complement what I am doing?

Transition

What would indicate that you have taken your business – in its current state – as far as you can r want to be?

- No more selling! Hard to love client as required
- When I have decreased energy for starting new work
- Sense of restlessness
- Other interests high priority
- Hit over the head!
- Complain all the time
- Getting to a certain age/got to live my life now
- Like the mountain exploded or you have to take it apart one shovelful at a time"
- The work feels very familiar/comfortable
- On auto pilot
- Limited opportunities to do work
- When I'm more enthused about new material than existing
- When health challenges arise that force prioritization
- Clients/participants refer to me as "elder"
- Crying in a fetal position "self-something has to grieve"
- Success happens
- Plateau
- Seeing the growth that can happen with part-time subcontractors
- Many tasks, only one me
- Support tasks not getting done and I don't enjoy doing them
- Work not energizing
- Does not inspire me
- River dries up; people don't call, dead ends
- Something makes it happen "habitual"
- The market changes – recession, sector detachment increases
- Listening to the messages for the creation of the "new"
- Extreme emotional "know"
- Working with colleague not satisfying

What shifts create new opportunities for your practice?

- New opportunities in new settings
- Business model to mentor!
- Experience with markets & customers
- ToP Grads who want to become certified & trainers
- Less pressure – flexible time + vice versa
- What are the opportunities we want to pick upon?
- ICA-USA models-leads way to new identities & opportunities & environment
- New markets
- Status quo unsustainable
- Geographic relocation of biz
- New relationships at civic and personal levels
- A body of work to build on
- I don't want to work in something meaningless to me
- 14. Complementary methods multiply impact