



“BURNOUT Syndrome”

The [Scientific American Mind](#) may not be one of the magazines sitting on your coffee table, but it's on mine. Or at least the June/July issue is. I was flying back to Portland from Kansas City after attending a 2- day certification FastTrac certification program last month. (See the end of the article below for more information on FastTrac.)

In Detroit on a 2-hour stopover between Portland, ME and KC, MO, I walk past rows and rows of magazines, Detroit souvenirs and unhealthy snacks. The headline BURNOUT screams out at me; stops me dead in my tracks. I stare at it for a moment and then turn to make my way over to the magazine rack for a closer look.

Small business owners (particularly the owner of a business just celebrating a 1-year anniversary - yours truly) can be at high risk of burnout. Even though business is developing as it should and we love our work, it is never easy, there are never enough hours in the day and sometimes having to do it all AND find any time to decompress seems impossible. You add that all up and it's easy to see how burnout happens.

Per the Burnout article, “Even though your job or career might be extremely fulfilling, it can also be extremely demanding--and you feel overwhelmed. You are not alone.”

Great, we're not alone.

Burnout “tends to hit the best”, those with “the most enthusiasm who accept responsibility readily.”

That's good, too. People who own their own business aren't in business successfully for long unless they have enthusiasm and accept responsibility.

The author goes on to say “If someone works 12 hours a day, every day, yet still has found a way to relax, he will very likely have no problem.”

Uh, oh. What slacker are they talking about, working only 12 hours a day? ...finding a way to relax? Hmmmm. He can find a way because he's only working 12 hours a day ...no wonder.

Seriously, though; this article put into black and white something I had been feeling yet wasn't willing to acknowledge the "weakness". Don't most of us find running a successful business and having balance in your life - having a life at all - to be THE challenge? The struggle to find a solution to this challenge is what can lead to burnout.

In today's business climate and with our time scheduled down to the nanosecond, it is hard work to NOT burnout. The S. A. Mind article goes on to describe a few individual "burnout" situations and how each person responded to their crisis; for example: Larry, the 28 year old consultant working 60 to 80 hour weeks collapsed outside the door to his apartment with a terrible headache, a racing heart and vertigo. *Twenty-eight!*

Burnout is more prevalent than it has ever been. According to a November, 2005 Harris Poll, one third of workers ages 25 to 39 say they already feel burned out by their work.

What really woke me up was "The Burnout Cycle", a list of the 12 phases that lead to "Burnout Syndrome" (according to the author, Ulrich Kraft, a freelance science writer in Berlin). The phases include things like neglecting your needs, denial of emerging problems, inner-emptiness, being obsessed with handling everything yourself...and the list goes on. I was able to check off 11 of the 12 phases. Like I said, **NOT** burning out takes work! And a lot of practice.

So, my recommendation to you is to do what I've started doing.

- Breathe more. Yes, it might sound funny, but when you're stressed, you tend to hold your breath and tense your neck and shoulder muscles. As weird as this might sound, breathing consciously helps reduce this stress and tension. Do things that require you to breathe more; take walks, bike ride, do more yoga, meditate, or just take a deep breath whenever you think about it. A good massage will help too.
- Look at your calendar and compare it to your to-do lists. Make sure you recognize everything you've got coming up on your schedule. Next think about all the to-do's and tasks you have in your head that you haven't written down anywhere. Add

those to your schedule and look at all you have on your plate. Be realistic about what you physically CAN get done in a single day; week or month. Then:

- Be realistic about what you really have to do yourself and what you can delegate. Delegate what you can.
- Separate what you have to do now and reschedule what can wait.
- Finally, do what you know you need to do without arguing with yourself. Take the most dreaded and unpleasant task and do it first - get it over with. Treat it as that dive into the cold pool Get it over with.
- When you make a change for the better, pat yourself on the back and reward yourself by leaving the office at a reasonable hour and enjoying a nice evening with family, a good friend or a good book.

Life is short. A realistic view of the world, a deep breath and a heavy dose of BOLD-ness will do you well. Remember ...success and the good life - it all starts with a vision. Good luck!

[FastTrac](#) is a series of hands-on business programs developed and sponsored by the Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City, MO. The programs are designed to help entrepreneurs and business owners start up, operate and grow their businesses. In Maine FastTrac is offered as part of the Center for Entrepreneurship at USM.

FastTrac programs are primarily focused on the more “tangible” and traditional skills needed to be successful as a business owner, i.e. How to read financials, How to price your product or service, Delivery and Distribution issues, HR and Management issues, etc.

[Bold Vision programs](#) focus more on “intangible” “soft” business skills, equally as critical to business success - i.e. Keeping an eye on your longer-term objectives while managing the day-to-day business operations, Perseverance, Time Management, Follow-Through, Keeping some balance in your life when you have to do it ALL, etc.

FastTrac is a high quality program and it compliments Bold Vision Consulting’s programs. I’m happy to be a certified facilitator for FastTrac.

For more information about FastTrac, visit the [Kauffman](#) website. For more information about Maine's FastTrac program, call The USM Center for Entrepreneurship - (207) 780-5919 or visit USM's website at <http://www.usm.maine.edu/cesb/fasttrac.html>



Lynnelle Bianco, President of [Bold Vision Consulting](#) brings 25+ years of professional and corporate working experience to clients. Having held senior positions in marketing, new business development and client service for global institutions — as well as owning and operating her own small businesses — Lynnelle brings real-world experience and forward looking perspectives to helping today's professionals and business owners achieve breakthrough success. ...and remember; **Be Bold!** It all starts with a vision.

