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What Success Factors are Important to Small Business Owners?

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Financial criteria are usually considered to be the most appropriate measure of business success, yet many small business owners are motivated to start a business on the basis of lifestyle or personal factors. Non-financial goals could lead to alternative measures of success, particularly in the small business sector. To explore the significance of these two dimensions of success, 290 small business owner-managers in Western Australia were surveyed. Respondents rated the importance of items relating to lifestyle and financial measures, which they used to judge their business success. Findings suggest that both financial and non-financial lifestyle criteria are used to judge business success, with the latter being more important. Personal satisfaction and achievement, pride in the job and a flexible lifestyle are generally valued higher than wealth creation. Personal factors such as age and also business characteristics influenced perceptions on the importance of these factors.

KEYWORDS: gender; home-based businesses; personal characteristics; small business; success measures

Introduction

As the majority of small business owners (SBOs) work on a full-time basis within their businesses, then logically most business decisions must be taken by the owners, either individually or with a partner. Therefore the personal abilities and motivations of the SBOs will impact on whether they want to grow the business or simply decide to maintain a size that they feel comfortable with. It is not simply a matter of environmental factors impacting on business opportunities, as the SBOs themselves make or assist those opportunities. However little has been written about businesses that do not pursue active growth, or the potentially conflicting measures of success between the SBO's personal goals and the financial requirements of operating a successful business.

Most discussion of success in the existing literature refers predominantly to financial criteria. Very limited attention is given to the issue of whether small business owners ever achieve their personal goals, which can often be their initial

motivation for starting a business. Measuring the success of the small business is likely to reflect a combination of the personal characteristics and attributes of the SBO together with their reasons for starting the business.

With this in mind, this research sought to explore the following questions:

- what success factors are important to small business owners?
- how important are financial measures of success to small business owners?
- what impact do personal and business characteristics have on perceptions of such measures of success?

The research was exploratory in approach and based on a postal survey of a sample of small business owner-managers in Western Australia.

Small Business Growth and Financial Success

Small business success can be measured by financial and non-financial criteria although the former has been given most attention in the literature. Traditional measures of business success have been based on either employee numbers or financial performance, such as profit, turnover or return on investment (Barkham et al., 1996; Brüderl and Preisendörfer, 1998; Forsaith and Hall, 2000; Gray, 1998; Ibrahim and Goodwin, 1986; Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991; Kelmar, 1991). Implicit in these measures is an assumption of growth that presupposes all small business owners want or need to 'grow' their businesses.

For businesses to be deemed successful these financial measurements require increases in profit or turnover and/or increased numbers of employees. As Hall and Fulshaw (1993: 229) state, 'the most obvious measures of success are profitability and growth'. In economic terms this is seen as profit maximization (Greenbank, 1999; Jarvis et al., 2000; Jennings and Beaver, 1997). Economic measures of performance have generally been popular due to the ease with which they can be administered and applied since they are very much 'hard' measures (Barkham et al., 1996; Gibb and Davies, 1992; Ibrahim and Goodwin, 1986). Furthermore as Marlow and Strange (1994: 180), state, 'all businesses must be financially viable on some level in order to continue to exist'. However, given that some businesses have no interest in growth, thereby implying that financial gain is not their primary or only motivation, then there must therefore be other non-financial criteria that these SBOs use to measure their business success. As Dyer and Handler (1994) point out:

Little theorizing and research has been conducted to explore what happens to entrepreneurs after they build a successful enterprise. Indeed, the assumption seems to be that once a new enterprise is viable the entrepreneur's subsequent career path ceases to be of interest since it may not focus on traditional entrepreneurial activities. (Dyer and Handler, 1994: 71)

The question then that needs to be asked is whether using these traditional financial criteria is the most appropriate measure of success for all business owners or whether non-financial measures are a better indicator.

Non-financial Success Measures

It is known that not all business owners may want to grow their businesses and there are some small businesses that deliberately refrain from taking on employees (Baines et al., 1997; Gray, 1998), even though such a decision could be financially detrimental to the business. One reason for this resistance to employing staff is that creating jobs for other people, as opposed to just themselves and perhaps their immediate family, was never an initial goal or motivation for the small business owner-operator when they established the business (Gray, 1994; Smallbone and Wyer, 2000). Whereas it is quite possible that some SBOs do change their attitudes to employment as the business matures, often the intention to not employ is a very deliberate decision. Therefore using employee numbers as a measure of business success is neither accurate nor applicable to all businesses – in particular small businesses.

Non-financial measures of success used by business owners, such as autonomy, job satisfaction or the ability to balance work and family responsibilities (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Green and Cohen, 1995; Kuratko et al., 1997; Parasuraman et al., 1996) are subjective and personally defined and are consequently more difficult to quantify. The ‘hard’ measures previously mentioned therefore are easier to understand and can be used in a comparative way against existing data and as benchmarks for future measures. Non-financial measures are based on criteria that are personally determined by the individual business owner although commonalities within the cohorts of SBOs occur. These non-financial measures presume that there is a given level of financial security already established; it may be that this is within the business, or that the SBO does not require the business to be the primary source of income.

The expression of being either ‘pulled’ or ‘pushed’ into starting a business has been used extensively in the literature (Brodie and Stanworth, 1998; Buttner and Moore, 1997; Gray, 1994; Hamilton, 1987). A ‘pull’ motivation is associated with the individual having a reasonably strong positive internal desire to start a business venture. The opposite motivation is ‘push’, which is associated with a possible equally strong desire, but based on external negative reasons.

A number of pull motivation factors are identified in the literature including: personal freedom, independence gained from being one’s own boss, personal satisfaction, a less rigid, more flexible lifestyle and greater job satisfaction (Birley and Westhead, 1994; Brush, 1992; LeCornu et al., 1996; Loscocco, 1997). A study by Fielden et al., (2000) indicated that a large proportion of their sample (88%) listed making money as a motivator; however, 71% mentioned that job satisfaction, greater independence, creating opportunities, encountering new challenges and pursuing one’s own interests were criteria which were of real importance to them.

Historically these non-financial measures have often been associated with businesses that have been referred to as ‘life-style’ businesses. These life-style businesses are supposedly not interested in financial gain and have no intention of growing their businesses into larger entities (Beaver, 2002). The affective-based criteria mentioned which are linked to intrinsic lifestyle issues are outside the conventional economic paradigms. These intrinsic measures have also been

referred to as psychic rewards by Owen et al. (1992) or psychic income by Wheelock and Baines (1998) and are helpful in explaining personal objectives and goals of the SBO. They are often used by people who have not necessarily been as financially successful (as economic theory assumes or expects businesses to be), so as to measure their success in monetary terms, yet are still happy with other types of rewards, such as personal satisfaction (Wheelock and Baines, 1998). These affective measurements are not necessarily substitutes for, but are complementary to, financial goals. As Jennings and Beaver (1997) state:

... contrary to popular belief, and a great deal of economic theory, money and the pursuit of a personal financial fortune are not as significant as the desire for personal involvement, responsibility and the independent quality and style of life which many small business owner-managers strive to achieve. Consequently, the attainment of these objectives becomes one of the principal criteria for success, as defined by the entrepreneur/owner-manager. (Jennings and Beaver, 1997: 63)

Factors Affecting Perceptions of Small Business Success

If it is accepted that there are non-financial as well as financial criteria used to measure the success of a small business, then other facets of the small business operation and characteristics of the owner might influence perceptions on the relative importance of these measures. Only the factors of location and gender are discussed in this article. The literature is sparse on location but that on gender has historically stated that women owner-managers are different from men owner-managers; there is an assumption that women often operate micro businesses from a home-base.

Gender may be an important factor that affects an SBO's perception of success. One of the myths concerning very small businesses or businesses which are not high growth businesses is that they are often operated by women. Women make up 33% of small business operators in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2002), and they do tend to operate at the small end of the small business spectrum; however, that is not to say that businesses being operated by women are non-growth businesses. Rather, women overall have not been operating businesses for the same length of time as their male counterparts, and have not had the same opportunities as men to found corporations. In addition, a well-documented motivation for women to start business in the first instance is the need to balance domestic responsibilities (Brush, 1992; Buttner and Moore, 1997; Loscocco, 1997; Still and Timms, 1998). Therefore a predominant aspect of their success has often been non-financial affective measures.

A contemporary Australian study showed that women in the paid workforce are still the principal family caregiver, in charge of issues such as childcare arrangements (Bardoel et al., 2000). So the ability to become self-employed often alleviates some of the pressure and stress that they experience in the paid workforce, especially at a managerial level (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Jurik, 1998; Still and Guerin, 1990; Walker, 2000).

The concept of domestic responsibilities being the principal obligation of women is not new; however, a trend has emerged from the work and family literature of

an increasing number of men who want to be more participatory in family matters, such as child rearing. Russell et al. (1999; cited in Russell and Bowman, 2000: 21) state that a large proportion of men (68%) wanted to be more involved with their children in terms of spending time with them, but could not do so because of inflexibility in the workplace and having to work longer hours. A final factor that needs to be considered is the location of the business; that is, whether the business is operated from a home-base or from external premises.

Home-based Businesses

Where people choose to operate their business may well be an important factor in business owners' measures of success, as there are different financial pressures attached to whether the business has to pay accommodation expenses. Most businesses actually start off as small enterprises and often from a modest home-base, so the decision to grow and potentially move from a home-base has personal implications for the owner-operator in relation to aspects such as additional risk, both of a financial and emotional nature. Even though home-based businesses are a large component of the business sector (in Australia they are the biggest single sector, accounting for 58% of all businesses [ABS, 2002]), they have not been the focus of much empirical research. The reasons for this are the perceived lack of credibility of home-based businesses as genuine businesses and the difficulty of identification (Morris and Pike, 2002; Stanger and Woo, 1999).

The credibility factor has led to some 'urban myths' being created around home-based businesses – principally that they are mostly solo owned or operated, predominantly by women; that they are craft/artisan-type operations or cottage industries being operated out of the shed or from the kitchen table, which do not make significant contributions to the household income and are operated for pin-money; and that they are operated on a part-time basis or as a temporary short-term measure until a 'proper' job comes up (Mirchandani, 1999; Morris and Pike, 2002; Small and Medium Enterprise Research Centre [SMERC], 2002; Stanger, 2000, Stanger and Woo, 1999).

Most of these myths have been refuted; however, what is known is that the longer a business operates from a home-base the less likely the business owner is to move the business to external premises. The aspect of convenience features very strongly as the reason given to stay home-based (SMERC, 2002). In addition, as many home-based businesses are service orientated and with the continuing technological advances in electronic communication, there is in fact no real need to move out of home to external premises as the business can very feasibly be conducted from home.

What appears to be the case is that many home-based business operators slip into a comfort zone and are prepared to forgo more business and therefore potentially more financial rewards and the commensurate stresses that more work bring, for a better work life balance. This can also be linked back to the initial motivations for starting the business, with lifestyle being a major factor. The variables of gender and location were used to test whether they had any effect on how owners of small businesses measured their success.

Methodology

Since this study was exploratory, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were adopted. The initial qualitative approach took the form of 11 semi-structured interviews with owners of businesses from a variety of industry sectors and equally apportioned between male and female. These interviews explored motivations for being in business and how they judged success of the business and was intended to establish the themes for the questionnaire construction. By the 11th interview it was considered that saturation point had been reached in so far as factors were concerned.

The questionnaire incorporated sections dealing with: demographic details, respondents perceptions on and reasons for going into business, attitudes to employing staff and measures of business success. It included tested items from earlier research on motivation and small business start-ups (Birley, 1996; Birley and Westhead, 1994; Gatewood et al., 1995; Shane et al., 1991; Volery et al., 1997) and also new items derived from the interviews. The final version of the questionnaire comprised 14 statements about their business on which respondents were asked to indicate the strength of agreement using a 6 point Likert scale with the anchors of strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (6). It was pretested with the interviewees and validity and reliability checked with Cronbach alpha levels of .5 to .76.

While a cross-section of businesses were included in the interview phase, it was decided to administer the questionnaire in a single industry sector, the Property and Business Services Sector. Reasons for this include the fact that it is the biggest of the 13 industry sectors in Australia, accounting for 20% of all small businesses (ABS, 2000) and it has the second highest growth rate of all sectors, after education (ABS, 2000). It was also anticipated that this sector would incorporate the range of demographic variables that were of interest, namely having a reasonable gender ratio, a variety of business sizes and a significant proportion of businesses that are home-based. It was therefore felt that there was sufficient diversity in this industry sector to gain a broad overview of how these small business owners measure their success. Because only one sector is being examined, some caution may be required in extending the findings across the wider small business population.

A commercial database, Australia on Disc, was used to derive the random sample. This database is commonly used for research sampling purposes (Small Business Development Corporation, 1998; Wooden and Harding, 1998). The population was all Western Australian businesses that had the Australian New Zealand Standard Industry Classification (ANZSIC) code for Business and Property Services (7700 to 7899). This provided a list of 13,498 businesses, from which the sampling frame of 1172 was generated. In order to derive meaningful statistical analysis, the number of responses required, based on the size of the population was set at approximately 300 (De Vaus, 1995).

A major difficulty in any research is achieving an adequate response rate. Past research in small business, especially using postal surveys, has had notoriously low response rates, such as less than 10% (Reid et al., 1999). In order to achieve

a better response rate than this, initial telephone contact was made with the business owner before mailing the questionnaire. Due to time and cost constraints, two-thirds of the sample was contacted in this way with the remaining group being sent a questionnaire without the courtesy contact. The difference in response rates was noteworthy. Questionnaires sent to businesses where the owner was spoken to personally had a response rate of 61% while those receiving unsolicited questionnaires sent to 'The Proprietor' had a response rate of only 16%.

In total, 724 questionnaires were posted with 290 usable responses returned, giving an overall response rate of 40%. Given the previously acknowledged difficulty of gaining good response rates (Fischer et al., 1993; Hamilton, 1987) this is considered better than average for the small business sector.

Findings

The demographic characteristics of the sample were similar to the general small business population, with 64% of the sample being male, and the majority of the total population being either married or in a de facto relationship (79%). In relation to age and educational qualifications, the sample was evenly spread, with 30% being under 40 years of age, 34% being between 41–50 years of age and the remainder (34%) being over 50 years of age (2% of the sample declined to state their age). The sample had a higher than average educational status, with 50% having tertiary qualifications; however, this is thought to be because of the industry sample, which included professions such as accountancy and law that require professional tertiary qualifications. An interesting characteristic of the sample was that just under half (45%) had only been in business for a relatively short period of time, less than 5 years, 27% had been in business between 6–10 years, 21% between 11–20 years and the remainder (6%) had been in business for over 20 years. The final characteristics are the size and location of the businesses, which are shown in Table 1, with micro business being defined as employing 5 or less staff.

To gain an insight into how the respondents felt about owning and operating their own businesses, they were asked to indicate the strength of their agreement on 14 statements using a 6 point Likert scale with the anchors of strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (6). The answers are shown in Table 2.

Collectively, the respondents felt that they were running successful businesses and that non-financial measures of this success were more important than money.

Table 1. Size and Location of the Businesses

	<i>Micro Business</i>	<i>Larger Business</i>
External	126	55
Home	100	
Total	226	55

Note: There are 9 missing data.

Table 2. Respondents' Attitudes Towards their Business

<i>Statement Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean*</i>	<i>SD</i>
1 I feel I am running a successful business	290	4.71	1.11
2 Personal satisfaction is more important than making lots of money	290	4.70	1.10
3 Having pride in the job is more important than making lots of money	289	4.62	1.14
4 I am as ambitious now as when I first started the business	290	4.40	1.36
5 Having a flexible lifestyle is more important than making lots of money	288	4.35	1.31
6 Giving people a job gives me great personal satisfaction	249	4.15	1.41
7 Being my own boss is more important than making lots of money	290	4.04	1.34
8 I would like to spend more time with my family but I often have to put the business first	265	4.03	1.52
9 As a small business I have a responsibility to the wider community	289	3.95	1.46
10 Importance of financial success has diminished as the business has become established	289	2.98	1.32
11 When I first started the business I was more money oriented than I am now	288	2.88	1.35
12 Making money is the most important aspect of owning my own business	290	2.87	1.26
13 Financial measures are the only way to measure the success of a business	290	2.79	1.33
14 I think of my business as something that my children can become involved in	242	2.76	1.65

*using a 6 point Likert scale.

Personal satisfaction, pride and a flexible lifestyle were the most important considerations for these business owners. The data also show that a variety of measures are used to judge business success with varying degrees of importance.

Exploratory factor analysis was then conducted on these items – yielding four distinct factors – and is shown in Table 3. These identified psychological rationale, in terms of personal affective criteria (lifestyle factor), financial rationale from both a high and low perspective (diminishing financial factor and strong financial factor) and a social responsibility factor.

The four items that contribute to the first factor, Lifestyle, are personal affective feelings that the SBOs are expressing, balanced against the aspect of making money. The second factor, Diminished Financial, consists of two items that show that financial aspects of business ownership diminish over time. The third factor, Strong Financial, incorporates the two items that are the traditional financial measures of business success (making money and financial measures) and two items (ambition and running a successful business) more associated with personal ego, but which have an implied financial overtone. The final factor, Social/Community Responsibility, incorporates items that place small business ownership as a community responsibility rather than an individual endeavour.

A paired sample *t*-test was conducted on the summed mean for the lifestyle and financial factors, the results of which are shown in Table 4.

A significant difference was found between the combined financial and lifestyle criteria items as an attributed measure of small business success. What this demonstrates is that on a combination of items that made up the lifestyle factor

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix of Respondents' Attitudes Towards their Business

Item	Lifestyle	Diminished Financial	Strong Financial	Social Responsibility
Personal satisfaction vs making money	.759			
Pride in job vs making money	.691			
Flexible lifestyle vs making money	.680			
Being own boss vs making money	.642			
Initially more money orientated		.883		
Financial importance diminished		.809		
Making money most important			.679	
Financial measure is the only way			.601	
Running a successful business			.593	
Still ambitious			.589	
Giving job gives personal satisfaction				.736
Placing business before family				.597
Responsibility to wider community				.555
Business to involve the children				.535
Eigenvalue	2.60	2.06	1.68	1.22
% of variance explained	18.23	12.37	12.20	11.08
Cronbach alpha	.71	.76	.52	.50

Table 4. Paired Sample *t*-test of Lifestyle and Financial Criteria

<i>Item</i>	<i>Lifestyle Criteria</i>	<i>Financial Criteria X²</i>	<i>t-value</i>
	4.43	3.69	**10.25

***p* < .01

(which consisted of personal satisfaction, pride in job, flexible lifestyle and being ones own boss) survey respondents favoured these more highly than the items that made up the financial factor (making money, financial measurements, running a successful business, being ambitious). To answer the research question based on this test, owners of small businesses do not favour financial criteria over lifestyle criteria in how they measure their success.

Tests were also performed on the factors to check for differences between men and women. These are shown in Table 5 and, as can be seen, there were no significant differences on the individual success measures and gender.

The final test was to measure the impact of location on measures of success and showed statistically significant differences on the lifestyle and financial focus factors. Lifestyle factors were more important for home-based business owners than externally based businesses and home-based businesses were less motivated by financial criteria compared to the externally based businesses. These differences are shown in Table 6.

Discussion

The question therefore is, why do the traditional measures of small business success, which are taken to be financially based, appear to be less important overall to the respondents, compared to those of lifestyle criteria, and even less important to businesses that are operating from home? A number of reasons can

Table 5. Paired Sample *t*-test of Female and Male

<i>Item</i>	<i>Female X²</i> <i>n = 105</i>	<i>Male X²</i> <i>n = 185</i>	<i>t-value</i>
I measure my success by my lifestyle	4.60	4.38	1.40
I measure my success in financial terms	4.45	4.41	.25

***p* < .01

Table 6. Paired Sample *t*-test of Home and External Based Businesses

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Home X²</i> <i>n = 107</i>	<i>External X²</i> <i>n = 179</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Factor 1. Lifestyle focus	4.57	4.35	**−2.01
Factor 3. Financial focus	3.53	3.78	**2.63

** *p* < .01

be offered. Businesses are only viable if they are financially solvent; therefore it was anticipated that a reasonable proportion of respondents would value financial criteria highly. This was also supported by statements from several of the interviewees who mentioned making money as being their primary criterion for judging the success of the business.

When the interviewees were pressed further and asked if there were other measures they used in assessing the success of their business, in addition to making money, then the majority mentioned lifestyle factors, particularly the flexibility which self-employment offered. Often, being able to structure their working arrangements in order to free up time was an important feature of being the owner of the business. This allowed them to be able to do personal activities such as mind their young child so that their partner could continue their career, or go for a long lunch, without having to explain their actions to anyone. These aspects of flexibility are generally not available in larger organizations.

The reasons why lifestyle measures are so important to the SBOs can, in part, be explained by the previous literature, but need to be expanded further to incorporate the wider picture of the changing nature of work and working life. The world of commerce determines many broader societal aspects, and is by its very nature a competitive environment, overlaid with masculine mores. This is evidenced in the language and culture of large organizations, which frequently appear to assume a combative and often aggressive stance on business practices. There is not much room for less masculine attitudes, such as achieving results through consensus or the fulfilment of personal non-financial goals. Financial success is highly valued in most Anglo-Saxon cultures and there is both real and implied expectation that everyone must strive to be self sufficient and to not be beholden to the state for financial support, which can only be done by accumulating wealth.

Additional factors that are precipitating the growing importance of lifestyle issues are other general environmental changes in work practices. One of these key workforce changes is the decline of the implementation of the standard working week. The most recent ABS data on employment arrangements show that a large proportion of the paid workforce work more than 50 hours a week (Thornhill, 2001), which is considerably more than the statutory seven and a half hour working day. Further, this overtime is often unpaid, and normally affects employees who are salaried, who potentially have transferable work skills, which could be utilized by themselves in their own businesses. The feeling of being abused by employers is a very real reason for leaving paid employment; and was a reason mentioned by several respondents as a motivation for starting their own businesses.

The 'casualization' of the workplace, which Cooper (1998: 276) refers to as the 'short-term contract culture', has led to more part-time work and short term contracts. This type of condition of employment historically affected women and low-paid workers generally, but is now prevalent for all levels of employees. Some contract work does have a high financial benefit for the contractor; however, it also means that the organization does not have to commit to real permanency of employment. This contracting out of work can lead to high levels

of job insecurity and with that goes high levels of stress (Bardoel et al., 2000; O'Donnell et al., 1998). In the late 1990s approximately 25% of people felt that their jobs were not safe (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training, 1999). This was reflected in some respondents' initial motivation to enter self-employment, as a counterbalance to these issues.

Society reflects current values and there is a changing perception for some workers that work is not the 'be all and end all' of life, and that family and relationships are also important. As Gritzmacher (1993: 148) states, when referring to home-based work, 'although people work for economic survival, they also pursue work as a means for their own fulfilment and satisfaction'. Not all workers want to emulate the long working hours of previous generations. Therefore if some of these negative external factors are translated into the small business environment and to the owners of these businesses, then the aspect of balancing work and lifestyle becomes extremely appealing. Given that these were options that the respondents were consistently expressing, it is easy to see why high financial rewards are not solely what SBOs are seeking from their businesses.

Conclusions

The motivation for people to go into small business ownership is varied, and includes financial as well as non-financial factors like personal satisfaction, independence and flexibility. This study has found that the owners of small businesses measure their success using both of these criteria, and that the non-financial lifestyle criteria are sometimes more important. Given the strong entwined nature of the business and the owner, personal success often equates to business success.

If non-financial measures are accepted as being a legitimate measure of business success, then small businesses do make a major contribution in relation to overall economic and societal well-being. They may not be the panacea for employment growth as many politicians often claim, given that the majority of small business are non-employing and the owners prefer to remain in this state; however, non-employing small businesses are legitimate businesses and they do offer a valid option to employment in the current uncertain world of casualized work.

Accepting the continuously changing nature of work and the workplace and the uncertainty of paid employment, it could be anticipated that even more people will choose the uncertainty of self-employment. Even given the anxiety and stress that go hand-in-hand with operating a small business, most SBOs appear to derive more satisfaction by being the decision maker rather than the recipient of decisions made by others. There will also always be some small business owners who are strongly motivated by financial rewards and who do have aspirations to grow and to become major players, and these SBOs should be encouraged to do so. However, the results of this study, while restricted to the property and business services sector and including many home-based businesses, show that owners who are financially motivated are in the minority and that most small business owners are content to stay very small.

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Quels sont les principaux indicateurs de succès pour les propriétaires de petites entreprises?

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Normalement, ce sont les critères financiers qui représentent la mesure d'évaluation la plus déterminante de la réussite d'une entreprise. Toutefois, nombreux sont les propriétaires de petites entreprises qui envisagent d'ouvrir une entreprise en se basant sur les aspects d'un certain mode de vie ou sur des facteurs d'ordre personnel. L'article précise que des visées non financières peuvent fort bien mener à d'autres mesures de réussite, notamment dans le secteur des petites entreprises. Pour mieux approfondir la signification de ces deux dimensions de réussite, nous avons sondé 290 propriétaires exploitants de petites entreprises en Australie Occidentale. Les sujets interrogés ont mesuré l'importance des éléments par rapport à un style de vie donné et à des paramètres financiers, qui leur permettent de jauger leur réussite commerciale. En fait, les résultats suggèrent que les critères de style de vie, qu'ils soient financiers ou non, représentent des repères d'évaluation de la réussite de leur entreprise, le critère non financier prévalant. Il est évident que le contentement et la réussite personnels et professionnels, ainsi qu'un style de vie sans contrainte, sont bien plus précieux que la création de richesses. D'autre part, les facteurs personnels comme l'âge et les spécificités commerciales influent sur la perception du degré d'importance de ces facteurs.

Mots clés: genre (homme/femme); entreprises à domicile; spécificités personnelles; petite entreprise; mesures de la réussite

¿Qué factores del éxito son importantes para los propietarios de pequeñas empresas?

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Por lo general se considera que los criterios financieros son la medida más precisa del éxito comercial; no obstante, muchos propietarios de pequeñas empresas están motivados a fundar una empresa sobre la base de un estilo de vida o de factores personales. Las metas no financieras podrían conducir a medidas alternativas de éxito, especialmente en el sector de la pequeña empresa. Para investigar la importancia de estas dos dimensiones, 250 directores propietarios fueron encuestados en Australia Occidental. Los entrevistados estimaron la importancia de los elementos relativos al estilo de vida y medidas financieras, que emplearon para valorar su éxito comercial. Los resultados sugieren que los criterios tanto financieros como no financieros sobre el estilo de vida se emplean para valorar el éxito comercial, siendo más importantes los últimos. Los logros, la satisfacción personal y profesional, y un estilo de vida flexible generalmente se aprecian más que la creación de riqueza. Los factores personales como la edad así como las características comerciales influyen en las percepciones de la importancia de dichos factores.

Palabras claves: diferencias por motivo de sexo; empresas domésticas; características personales; pequeña empresa; medidas del éxito

Welche Erfolgsfaktoren sind für Geschäftsinhaber Klein- und mittelständischer Betriebe wichtig?

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Finanzielle Kriterien werden gewöhnlich als die geeignetsten Maßstäbe für den Geschäftserfolg angesehen, aber viele Geschäftsinhaber von Klein- und mittelständischen Betrieben werden durch den Lebensstil oder persönliche Faktoren zur Gründung eines Geschäfts motiviert. Nicht finanziell orientierte Ziele können daher zu einem alternativen Erfolgsmaßstab werden, insbesondere was den Sektor Klein- und mittelständischer Betriebe anbelangt. Zur Untersuchung der Bedeutung dieser beiden Dimensionen des Erfolgs wurden 290 Geschäftsinhaber/-leiter von Klein- und mittelständischen Betrieben in Australien befragt. Die Befragten bewerteten die Bedeutung der jeweiligen Punkte mit Bezug auf Lebensstil und Finanzmaßnahmen, die sie zur Beurteilung ihres Geschäftserfolgs einsetzten. Die Ergebnisse weisen darauf hin, dass sowohl finanzielle Kriterien als auch nichtfinanzielle Lebensstilkriterien zur Beurteilung des Geschäftserfolgs miteinbezogen werden, wobei den letzteren allerdings eine größere Bedeutung beigemessen wird. Persönliche Zufriedenheit und Leistung sowie Stolz auf die eigene Arbeit und ein flexibler Lebensstil werden gewöhnlich höher als Vermögensbildung eingestuft. Desweiteren beeinflussten persönliche Faktoren wie z.B. Alter und auch die Eigenschaften des jeweiligen Geschäfts die Auffassungen zur Wichtigkeit dieser Faktoren.

Schlagwörter: Geschlecht; Heimfirmen; persönliche Eigenschaften; Klein- bzw. mittelständischer Betrieb; Erfolgsmaßstäbe