

Why Your Business Feels Harder To Run Than It Should

How hidden work, growing complexity and unnecessary tasks can quietly make a successful business harder to manage

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Introduction

Running a business can become harder over time — even when the business itself is doing well.

You may have more customers.

More revenue.

More opportunities.

More experience.

And yet you may find yourself thinking:

“Why does running the business feel harder than it used to?”

You spend more time answering messages.

More time managing administration.

More time looking for information.

More time moving information between systems.

More time keeping track of what needs to happen next.

More time dealing with processes that seem to have grown around the business.

None of these things necessarily feels like a major problem on its own.

The difficulty is what happens when they accumulate.

A process that once helped can become another thing to maintain.

A tool that once saved time can create another place to check.

A temporary workaround can become a permanent responsibility.

A task that seemed necessary when the business was smaller can continue long after the business has changed.

Over time, the business can become surrounded by **work that has accumulated without always creating proportional value.**

This is one reason a business can become more successful while also becoming harder to run.

And it doesn't necessarily mean you've made bad decisions.

In most cases, the extra work was created for a good reason at the time.

The challenge is that **your business keeps changing, while some of the ways you work don't change with it.**

This article explores why that happens, how hidden work and complexity build up, and why simply trying to become more productive isn't always the answer.

Because sometimes the problem isn't that you need to get more done.

It's that there is too much unnecessary work to begin with.

When A Business Grows, So Does The Work Around It

Growth is usually a good thing.

More customers can mean more revenue.

New services can create new opportunities.

More marketing can increase visibility.

New team members can increase capacity.

New technology can make certain activities easier.

But every change can also create additional work.

A new customer may create more communication.

A new service may require another process.

A new marketing channel may create more content to manage.

A new system may require information to be entered, maintained and checked.

A temporary solution may become part of the permanent workflow.

The individual additions can seem completely reasonable.

The problem is that they rarely arrive one at a time in isolation.

They accumulate.

You might start with something simple:

Customer enquires → You respond → You deliver the work.

Over time, it can become:

Customer enquires → Check email → Enter details → Update CRM → Send information → Schedule follow-up → Prepare proposal → Update another system → Follow up again → Record outcome.

The business hasn't necessarily become better because there are more steps.

It has simply become **more complicated to operate**.

And this can happen without anyone deliberately deciding to make the business complicated.

A relatable example

Think about your own home.

You might buy a storage box because something doesn't have a proper place.

Then another box.

Then a cupboard organiser.

Then a larger storage unit because the smaller ones are full.

Eventually, you have spent considerable time and money organising things that might have been easier to manage if you had first decided what you actually needed to keep.

Business processes can develop in much the same way.

You keep adding something to solve the problem in front of you.

But rarely stop to ask whether the underlying problem should be there at all.

This is why **growth and simplicity need to be considered separately**.

A growing business doesn't have to become an increasingly complicated business.

But without regular review, complexity can build almost unnoticed.

How Unnecessary Work Builds Up

Most unnecessary work doesn't appear because someone deliberately decided to create it.

It usually develops gradually.

A customer asks a question, so you create a response.

Another customer asks something similar, so you create another response.

A process needs tracking, so you add a spreadsheet.

Later, you introduce software.

The spreadsheet remains because some information still lives there.

Someone creates a checklist to make sure nothing is missed.

Another step is added because something went wrong previously.

A new tool is introduced to solve one particular problem.

Eventually, you have a collection of tasks, systems and processes that all seemed sensible when they were introduced.

But nobody has stepped back to ask:

“Do we still need all of this?”

That's how hidden work develops.

It isn't necessarily dramatic.

It's often the result of **small decisions accumulating over time.**

And because each individual task seems manageable, it can be difficult to recognise the overall effect.

The problem is often the accumulation

Imagine adding one small task to your working week.

Then another.

Then another.

Each one takes only ten minutes.

None feels important enough to remove.

But after a year, you may have dozens of small recurring responsibilities that were never part of the business you originally intended to run.

The problem isn't one ten-minute task.

It's the accumulated responsibility of all of them.

The Hidden Cost Of Small Tasks

Imagine spending five minutes each day looking for information.

Another ten minutes responding to questions you've answered many times before.

Fifteen minutes copying information between systems.

Ten minutes checking whether something has been completed.

A few more minutes recreating a document you know you've already created.

None of these tasks seems significant.

But repeated across a week, month or year, they become something much larger.

And time isn't the only cost.

Repeated small tasks also consume **attention**.

Every interruption requires you to stop one thing and think about another.

Every search breaks concentration.

Every decision that could have been avoided uses mental energy.

Every process that depends on memory creates another thing to keep track of.

This matters because your attention is one of the most valuable resources in your business.

The more of it that gets consumed by low-value work, the less remains for the work where your knowledge, judgement and experience make the biggest difference.

The cost isn't always obvious

Imagine you are working on something important when a message arrives.

You stop.

Answer it.

Then notice another task needs checking.

You switch to that.

Then realise you need information from another system.

You find it.

Return to your original task.

A few minutes later, another interruption happens.

At the end of the day, you may only remember the messages and tasks you completed.

But the real cost was also the **mental switching between them**.

That's why a collection of small tasks can have a much bigger impact than their individual time suggests.

What Is Hidden Work?

Hidden work is the effort involved in keeping the business moving that isn't always obvious when you look at your main responsibilities.

It can include:

- Repeating the same customer communication.
- Searching for information you know already exists.
- Recreating documents or content.
- Copying information between systems.
- Following up for information that could have been collected earlier.
- Completing routine administration.
- Remembering processes that aren't documented.
- Checking multiple places to find an answer.
- Managing software and systems that have accumulated over time.
- Repeating tasks because there isn't a clear or consistent way to handle them.

Some of this work is necessary.

Some may create genuine value.

The issue is not **repetition itself**.

The issue is when work continues to consume significant time and attention without needing to happen in the same way — or sometimes at all.

That distinction matters.

A repeatable process can be useful.

A checklist can improve quality.

A standard response can save time.

The question is whether the repetition is there because it genuinely supports the business or whether it simply exists because nobody has questioned it.

Why Being Busy Doesn't Always Mean You're Making Progress

A full day can feel productive.

You've answered emails.

Completed administration.

Responded to customers.

Updated systems.

Attended meetings.

Followed up enquiries.

Cleared your task list.

And yet the work that could actually move the business forward remains unfinished.

This can create a frustrating cycle.

The more work accumulates, the more effort you put into keeping up with it.

The more effort you put into keeping up, the less time you have to step back and improve the way the business operates.

So you become better at **managing the workload without necessarily reducing it**.

That's an important distinction.

Productivity can help you complete work more effectively.

But if the underlying problem is that too much unnecessary work exists, becoming more productive may only help you **manage the complexity more efficiently**.

It doesn't necessarily make the business simpler.

A better place to start is by asking:

“Why is this work taking my time in the first place?”

Common Beliefs That Keep Businesses More Complicated Than They Need To Be

Sometimes complexity persists because of assumptions that sound sensible.

The problem is that these assumptions can go unchallenged.

Myth 1: Being Busy Means The Business Is Moving Forward

Being busy can certainly mean good things are happening.

Customers are being served.

Work is being delivered.

Revenue is being generated.

But busyness alone doesn't tell you whether your time is being used well.

Imagine two business owners who both work eight hours.

The first spends the day delivering valuable work, speaking with customers and making important decisions.

The second spends much of the day answering routine questions, searching for documents, moving information between systems and keeping track of administrative tasks.

Both are busy.

But the nature of their work is very different.

Being busy tells you that your time is being consumed. It doesn't necessarily tell you that the business is moving forward.

A question worth asking yourself is:

“What did my time actually create today?”

Myth 2: The Answer Is To Become More Productive

This is one of the most understandable assumptions.

If there is too much work, become better at getting through it.

Use a task manager.

Plan your day.

Prioritise.

Reduce distractions.

Work faster.

These can all help.

But consider what happens if you apply better productivity techniques to a process that contains unnecessary steps.

You may simply become better at completing unnecessary work.

It's like getting faster at replying to messages while the number of messages you need to deal with keeps growing. You're becoming more efficient at managing the problem, but you haven't reduced the problem itself.

Productivity improves how you handle work. Simplification questions whether all that work needs to remain.

That's why the two approaches are different.

Myth 3: More Tools Will Make The Business Easier

This is particularly important as software, automation and AI become increasingly accessible.

A business feels disorganised, so you buy a project management system.

You need better customer follow-up, so you add a CRM.

You need better communication, so you add another platform.

You want to automate something, so you add an automation tool.

Each tool may solve a genuine problem.

But every new tool also creates another layer of work.

You may need to:

- Learn how to use it.
- Set it up.
- Enter information.
- Keep information updated.

- Check whether it is working.
- Remember to use it.
- Connect it to other systems.
- Pay for it.
- Maintain it.

The before-and-after problem

Imagine your existing process is:

Customer enquiry → Email → You respond → Follow up

You add a CRM.

Now the process becomes:

Customer enquiry → Email → Enter into CRM → Update CRM → Respond → Record response → Schedule follow-up → Check CRM → Follow up

The CRM may eventually create benefits.

But it hasn't magically removed the existing work.

It has added another layer to the process.

This is why getting the foundations right matters.

Before adding technology, ask whether the underlying process is already as simple as it reasonably can be.

If the process is unnecessarily complicated, adding technology can simply make that complexity more sophisticated.

A relatable everyday example

Think about putting a dishwasher into a kitchen where dirty dishes are constantly being left in different rooms.

The dishwasher might be useful.

But it doesn't solve the underlying behaviour.

You still have to collect the dishes, load the machine, unload it and put everything away.

Technology can make a process easier.

But it doesn't automatically fix a process that hasn't been thought through.

The tool should support a good process — not compensate for a poor one.

Myth 4: “This Is Just How My Industry Works”

Some processes are genuinely necessary.

Regulations may require them.

Customers may expect them.

Professional standards may demand them.

But sometimes a process continues simply because **“that’s how we’ve always done it.”**

The fact that something is common doesn’t necessarily mean it is necessary.

Ask yourself:

“Is this genuinely required, or have we just become used to doing it this way?”

You don’t need to challenge every established practice.

But questioning the ones that create significant effort can reveal opportunities.

A process that made sense five years ago may not make sense today.

Your business may have changed.

Your customers may have changed.

Technology may have changed.

There may now be a simpler way.

Myth 5: “I Don’t Have Time To Improve My Business”

This can be completely true.

When you’re already overloaded, the idea of spending time improving processes can feel impossible.

But there is a trap here.

If you never create time to improve recurring work, you may continue spending that same time on the recurring work indefinitely.

Imagine a task takes 30 minutes every week.

Spending one hour finding a better way might feel like a loss today.

But if the change reduces the task to 10 minutes, the benefit continues every week.

The goal isn't to stop working and redesign everything.

It's to identify improvements where **a small amount of attention now can reduce repeated effort later.**

And sometimes the first step isn't changing anything.

It's simply noticing what keeps consuming your time.

A Business Can Be Productive And Still Be Difficult To Run

There is nothing wrong with wanting to be more productive.

Better planning, clearer priorities and good time management can all help.

But productivity has limits.

If your business contains too many unnecessary tasks, processes, systems and responsibilities, becoming more efficient at completing them doesn't address the underlying issue.

You can answer emails faster.

Process invoices faster.

Move between systems faster.

Create documents faster.

Manage your task list more efficiently.

And still finish the day feeling overloaded.

That's because **efficiency and simplicity aren't the same thing.**

Efficiency asks:

“How can we do this work better or faster?”

Simplification asks:

“Does this work still need to happen, and could it happen in a simpler way?”

That difference sits at the heart of the **Work Lighter** approach.

The Business May Not Be The Problem

If your business feels harder to run than it should, it is easy to assume that you need to become more organised, more disciplined or more productive.

But sometimes the issue isn't you.

It may be the way the work has developed around you.

You may be carrying responsibilities that were never meant to be permanent.

Maintaining processes that no longer make sense.

Using systems that were added to solve problems that have since changed.

Repeating tasks because there has never been time to find a better way.

Or simply doing things because **“that's how we've always done them.”**

That doesn't mean those decisions were wrong.

They may have been exactly right when they were made.

The important question is whether they still make sense **now**.

Your business has changed.

Your customers have changed.

Your services may have changed.

The tools available to you have changed.

Your own priorities may have changed.

The way you work may need to change with them.

What To Look For

You don't need to analyse every minute of your working week.

Start by noticing the moments that regularly make your work harder than it needs to be.

For example, when you:

- Search for something you know you've already created.
- Explain the same information repeatedly.

- Recreate work that already exists.
- Copy information from one place to another.
- Check several systems to find an answer.
- Interrupt valuable work to complete a routine task.
- Chase information that could have been collected earlier.
- Try to remember what happens next.
- Follow a process that feels unnecessarily complicated.
- Think, **“There must be an easier way to do this.”**

These moments are clues.

They show you where the business may be asking for more effort than necessary.

You don't need to solve them immediately.

Notice them first.

Once hidden work becomes visible, you have something much more useful than a general feeling that the business is too busy.

You have specific areas you can question.

And that changes the conversation from:

“How can I keep up?”

to:

“What could make this easier?”

Not All Repetitive Work Needs To Be Fixed

This distinction is important.

A good business often contains repeatable work.

You may use the same process to deliver a service consistently.

You may follow a checklist to make sure important steps aren't missed.

You may send standard information because customers need the same guidance.

You may repeat parts of a process because that repetition creates quality.

The question isn't:

“Can this task be made different?”

It's:

“Is this task creating more effort than necessary, and does it need my direct attention every time?”

Sometimes the answer will be:

Keep it.

Sometimes:

Make it simpler.

Sometimes:

Make it easier to repeat.

And sometimes:

Stop doing it.

The important thing is to question each task rather than simply continuing to do it because that's how you've always done it.

Hidden Work Is Often A Symptom, Not The Whole Problem

A repeated task may point to a deeper issue.

If you repeatedly answer the same customer question, perhaps the information isn't easy to find.

If you repeatedly search for a document, perhaps the information isn't organised clearly.

If you repeatedly copy information between systems, perhaps the process contains unnecessary duplication.

If you repeatedly chase customers for information, perhaps the information should be collected earlier.

If you repeatedly recreate the same document, perhaps there isn't a simple reusable structure.

This is why it can be useful to look beyond the task itself.

Instead of asking only:

“How can I do this faster?”

Ask:

“Why does this keep happening?”

That question can reveal opportunities that a faster version of the existing process would miss.

Your Time And Attention Are Business Resources

It is easy to think of business resources as money, equipment, software or people.

But your time and attention are resources too.

And unlike many other resources, they cannot simply be stored for later.

Every hour spent maintaining unnecessary work is an hour that cannot be spent elsewhere.

Every interruption makes it harder to maintain concentration.

Every small decision adds to your mental workload.

Every recurring task that depends on you personally creates another demand on your attention.

This is why hidden work can have a bigger effect than its individual tasks suggest.

A ten-minute task may not matter much.

But a ten-minute task repeated every day, across several years, becomes a significant amount of time.

And if that task also interrupts deeper work, its impact can be even greater.

The real cost isn't always the task itself.

It's what that task prevents you from doing.

Why More Productivity Isn't Always The Answer

When your workload feels too heavy, the obvious response is often to become more productive.

Plan your day better.

Prioritise more effectively.

Use a task manager.

Reduce distractions.

Work faster.

These things can help.

But they don't necessarily solve a business that has accumulated too much unnecessary work.

If the underlying workload keeps growing, you may simply become better at managing the pressure.

You can process your inbox faster and still have too many emails.

You can organise your tasks more efficiently and still have too many tasks.

You can become better at using software and still have too many systems.

You can work faster and still spend too much time doing work that shouldn't require your attention.

That's why it is useful to distinguish between **productivity and capacity**.

Productivity is about how effectively you complete the work you have.

Capacity is about how much time, attention and energy you have available for the work that matters.

A business can improve productivity without creating much additional capacity.

And for many small businesses, **capacity is the more valuable outcome**.

The Goal Isn't To Eliminate Work

This distinction is important.

The answer isn't to remove every task that takes time.

Some work is valuable precisely because it takes time.

Talking to customers.

Developing ideas.

Solving complex problems.

Creating something original.

Building relationships.

Making important decisions.

Delivering a high-quality service.

These activities may not always be quick or efficient.

That doesn't make them unnecessary.

The opportunity is to distinguish between **valuable work and the extra time and effort involved in getting that work done.**

You might need to spend an hour advising a customer.

But you may not need to spend another thirty minutes searching for their information beforehand.

You may need to create a detailed proposal.

But you may not need to recreate its structure from scratch every time.

You may need to produce content based on your expertise.

But you may not need to spend twenty minutes deciding where the previous version was saved.

Simplification isn't about making valuable work disappear.

It's about making necessary work easier to complete when it takes more time or effort than it should.

A Simpler Business Creates Capacity

This is where simplification becomes more than a productivity exercise.

The aim isn't simply to finish today's task list faster.

It's to create **capacity**.

More available time.

More attention.

More energy.

More room to think.

More space for the work where your experience, judgement and expertise create the greatest value.

That capacity might allow you to:

- Spend more time with customers.
- Improve an existing service.
- Develop a new idea.
- Create better content.
- Think strategically about the future.
- Improve the customer experience.
- Make decisions without constantly rushing.
- Take time away from the business without everything piling up.

The benefit isn't necessarily that you do less work.

It's that **less of your available capacity is consumed by work that doesn't need to demand so much from you.**

That can change how the business feels to run.

Don't Add Complexity To Solve Complexity

When a business feels difficult to manage, it is tempting to look for something new to fix it.

A new app.

A new software platform.

A new automation.

A new AI tool.

Sometimes that is the right answer.

But adding something new also creates new responsibilities.

You may need to learn it.

Set it up.

Maintain it.

Keep the information inside it up to date.

Check whether it is working.

Connect it with other systems.

And remember to use it.

So before adding another solution, ask:

“What problem am I actually trying to solve?”

Then ask:

“Is the problem caused by the work itself, or simply by the way the work is currently being done?”

And then:

“Could I solve some of this problem without adding another layer?”

This is an important principle of the **Work Lighter** approach.

Before adding a tool

Look at the current process.

What happens now?

Why does each step exist?

Which steps are necessary?

Which steps could be removed?

Which could be simpler?

Only then ask whether technology would genuinely improve what remains.

Because a tool added to a poor process doesn't necessarily remove the poor process.

It can simply give you **a more sophisticated way of managing it.**

A Lighter Way Of Looking At The Business

The first step isn't to make the business perfectly efficient.

It isn't to automate everything.

It isn't to create a process for every activity.

And it isn't to redesign the entire business.

It is simply to start looking at the business differently.

Instead of asking:

“How can I fit more into my day?”

Consider asking:

“What actually deserves my time and attention?”

Instead of:

“How can I manage all this work?”

Ask:

“Why does this work exist, and does it still need to be done this way?”

Instead of:

“What tool should I add?”

Ask:

“What problem am I actually trying to solve?”

These questions shift your attention from **managing the workload to improving the way the business works.**

That is the mindset behind **Work Lighter**.

The Business Should Support The Work That Matters

The purpose of a business isn't simply to keep all its processes moving.

The processes exist to support the business.

And the business exists to create value.

That means the way work gets done should ultimately support the things that matter most:

- Serving customers well.
- Using your expertise.
- Delivering valuable work.

- Building strong relationships.
- Developing the business.
- Creating sustainable growth.
- Giving you a business that is worthwhile to run.

When unnecessary work begins consuming too much of your time and attention, it is worth stepping back.

Not because something has necessarily gone wrong.

But because **the business has changed**.

What worked before may not be the best way to work now.

And that creates an opportunity.

Not to do everything differently.

But to make better decisions about **what deserves to remain part of the way you work**.

Small Improvements Can Create Significant Capacity

Creating a simpler business doesn't necessarily require a major transformation.

Small changes can create meaningful capacity when the work is repeated often enough.

Removing one unnecessary weekly task.

Making one recurring process easier.

Creating one useful template.

Making one important piece of information easier to find.

Reducing one source of repeated customer questions.

Each improvement may seem small.

But when the same work happens week after week, the effect compounds.

More importantly, one improvement can make it easier to notice the next opportunity.

Over time, the business can gradually become easier to operate without requiring a dramatic overhaul.

Lighter businesses are often built through a series of better decisions rather than one big transformation.

The Work Lighter Perspective

Working lighter isn't about finding a way to do everything faster.

It's about making better decisions about **what deserves your effort in the first place — and how much time and effort it should require.**

When you notice work that feels repetitive or harder than it needs to be, start by asking:

Does this work still need to happen?

If the answer is no, it may be time to remove it.

If it does need to happen, ask:

Could it be simpler?

Sometimes the work is necessary, but the way it is being done has accumulated extra steps, duplication or manual effort that means it takes longer than it should.

If valuable work needs to happen repeatedly, ask:

Could it become easier to repeat?

This might mean creating a clearer process, template, checklist or other consistent way of handling it.

And if the work still takes more time or effort than it should, consider:

Would technology, automation or AI genuinely help?

This creates the four steps of the **Work Lighter approach**:

Remove → Simplify → Systemise → Support

The important point is the order.

Understand the work first.

Remove what doesn't need to happen.

Simplify what remains.

Systemise valuable work that needs to be repeated.

Then consider technology, automation or AI where it genuinely helps.

What Does This Mean In Practice?

Imagine you regularly prepare proposals for customers.

Preparing the proposal is necessary.

It demonstrates your expertise, helps the customer understand what you're offering and supports the buying decision.

So the answer isn't to remove the proposal.

But perhaps every time you prepare one, you:

- Search through old proposals for examples.
- Copy information from one document into another.
- Recreate the same structure.
- Rewrite standard sections.
- Check several places for customer information.

The proposal is necessary.

But the way you create it may be taking more time and effort than it should.

You could remove steps that no longer add value, simplify the process, create a reusable proposal structure and organise the information you regularly need.

Only after doing that might you find there is still some repetitive work where technology or AI could genuinely help.

That's the **Work Lighter perspective**.

It isn't about asking:

“How can I automate this?”

It's about asking:

“What actually needs to happen, what could be easier, and where would support genuinely help?”

This is why the order matters:

Remove → Simplify → Systemise → Support

The aim isn't to eliminate valuable work.

It's to make necessary work easier to complete when it takes more time or effort than it should.

That's the foundation for the practical approach introduced in the **How To Simplify Your Business: Remove Repetitive Work Before Adding More Tools** article.

From Understanding The Problem To Simplifying The Work

By now, the problem should be easier to recognise.

A business can become harder to run as small tasks, extra steps and workarounds accumulate around the work that creates value.

Some of that work is necessary.

Some could be easier.

And some may no longer need to happen at all.

The opportunity is to stop accepting every task simply because it has become part of the way the business operates.

Instead, start asking:

“Does this still make sense for the way my business works today?”

That's the question that leads into:

How To Simplify Your Business: Remove Repetitive Work Before Adding More Tools

This article takes this thinking into the practical side of the process, helping you look at recurring work and decide what to do with it before reaching for another tool.

Because once you can see where your time and effort are going, the question changes from:

“How can I keep up with all of this?”

to:

“What could I change so there is less to keep up with?”

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does my business feel harder to run than it should?

A business can become harder to run when unnecessary work gradually builds up around the work that creates value.

This can include repetitive administration, duplicated tasks, scattered information, complicated processes, too many systems and activities that continue simply because they have always been done.

The problem is often not one major issue.

It's the accumulation of many small things that consume time and attention.

A good place to start is asking:

“What am I doing repeatedly that feels harder than it should?”

Why am I always busy but not getting the important work done?

Being busy doesn't necessarily mean you're spending your time on the highest-value work.

Your day may be consumed by emails, administration, customer questions, searching for information, managing systems and other tasks that need to be completed but don't require your particular expertise.

Try separating your work into two broad categories:

Work that requires your experience, judgement or expertise.

Work that mainly requires your time.

The more work you can remove, simplify or make easier to repeat, the more capacity you can create for the work that matters most.

How can I simplify my small business?

Start by understanding the work rather than choosing technology first.

Look for tasks and processes that:

- Happen regularly.
- Take longer than they should.
- Involve unnecessary steps.

- Require repeated searching, copying or data entry.
- Interrupt more valuable work.
- Depend heavily on you remembering every step.

Then ask:

Does this need to happen?

Could it be easier?

Could it become easier to repeat?

Would technology genuinely help with what remains?

The **How To Simplify Your Business: Remove Repetitive Work Before Adding More Tools** article takes you through these decisions in more detail.

How do I reduce repetitive work in my business?

Start by identifying the tasks you repeat most often.

Common examples include:

- Answering the same customer questions.
- Writing similar emails.
- Preparing recurring documents.
- Creating proposals.
- Entering information into multiple systems.
- Searching for documents and information.
- Preparing regular reports.
- Following up customers or enquiries.

Once you identify a repetitive task, don't immediately automate it.

First ask whether the task can be removed or whether the way it is done could be simplified.

If the work is valuable and needs to happen repeatedly, look at ways to make it easier to repeat.

Technology and AI can then support the process where they can genuinely save time, reduce manual work or improve the way it is handled.

Do I need more software to make my business easier to manage?

Not necessarily.

Adding another tool can sometimes make a business more complicated rather than simpler.

Before choosing software, ask:

“What problem am I actually trying to solve?”

Then consider whether the problem could instead be addressed by removing a task, simplifying the process or organising existing information more effectively.

If technology is genuinely the best solution, choose something that solves the specific problem without creating unnecessary maintenance or complexity.

The goal isn't to have more business tools.

The goal is to have a simpler way of working.

Should I automate repetitive tasks in my business?

Sometimes — but automation should generally come after you understand the process.

If a task is genuinely necessary, happens regularly and follows a reasonably consistent process, automation may be worth considering.

But automating a complicated or unnecessary process can simply make the wrong process happen faster.

A better sequence is:

Understand → Remove → Simplify → Systemise → Support

The first step is understanding what the work is and why it exists.

Then decide whether it needs to remain, how it could be improved and whether technology or automation can help with what remains.

Can AI help make my business easier to run?

Yes, but AI works best when it supports a clear business need rather than being added simply because it is available.

AI can help with tasks such as:

- Creating first drafts.
- Summarising information.
- Organising ideas.
- Creating templates and checklists.
- Reviewing information.

- Supporting routine communication.
- Turning existing knowledge into useful starting points.
- Reducing some repetitive administrative work.

However, AI shouldn't automatically be the first solution.

First understand the work.

Then question whether it needs to exist and whether it could be simpler.

Then consider where AI or another technology could save time, reduce repetitive work, improve consistency or make the process easier to manage.

Your experience, judgement and understanding of your customers remain important, particularly when reviewing AI-generated work.

How do I know which business processes I should simplify first?

Start with the processes that take the most time or effort to complete, rather than trying to review everything.

Look for work that:

- Happens frequently.
- Takes significant time.
- Interrupts your concentration.
- Causes frustration.
- Requires repeated manual effort.
- Involves copying information between places.
- Creates delays for customers.
- Makes you think, **“There must be an easier way to do this.”**

A useful starting point is to choose **one high-frequency, low-complexity task**.

Improving one recurring process can create a small amount of capacity and make it easier to identify the next opportunity.

How can I make my business less overwhelming?

Don't start by trying to do everything better.

Start by understanding **what is creating the workload**.

Look for tasks, processes and responsibilities that consume time and attention.

Then ask:

- What no longer needs to happen?
- What could be simpler?
- What valuable work needs a more consistent way of being done?
- What genuinely requires my attention?
- What could be supported by technology or AI?

The aim isn't to create a perfectly efficient business.

It's to create a business that is **easier to manage and gives you more capacity for the work that matters.**

Work Lighter Tip

You don't need to fix everything at once.

If your business feels harder to manage than it should, start by noticing **one recurring task that takes more effort than it should.**

Don't immediately try to automate it.

Notice it.

Question it.

Understand why it exists.

Then decide what should happen next.

The goal isn't to become better at managing work that takes more time or effort than it should.

It's to make that work simpler, easier to repeat or, where it no longer needs to happen, remove it altogether.

What To Do Next

By now, you may have identified some of the work that is making your business harder to run than it needs to be.

You don't need to fix everything at once.

Start with one recurring task or process that takes more time or attention than it should.

Ask:

Does this work still need to happen?

Could it be simpler?

Could it be easier to repeat?

Would technology genuinely help with what remains?

That's the thinking behind the **Work Lighter** approach.

In the article, **How To Simplify Your Business: Remove Repetitive Work Before Adding More Tools**, we take these questions further and look at a practical sequence for deciding what to do with the work you've identified:

Remove → Simplify → Systemise → Support

The aim isn't to create another process for you to manage.

It's to make better decisions about the work you already have.

Your Business Should Work For You

Many people start a business because they want greater freedom.

Freedom to choose their work.

Freedom to use their skills.

Freedom to build something meaningful.

Freedom to create a business around the life they want.

But that freedom can gradually disappear as more tasks, processes and responsibilities accumulate around the business.

The answer isn't always becoming better at managing everything.

It isn't always working harder.

And it isn't always becoming more productive.

Sometimes the most useful change is recognising that **not everything needs your time or attention in the same way it does today.**

A lighter business comes from making better decisions about **where your time, attention and expertise create the most value.**

Understand the work.

Question what no longer needs to happen.

Look for ways to make necessary work easier.

Create simple ways to handle valuable work that needs to happen repeatedly.

And use technology or AI where it genuinely helps reduce the time or effort involved.

The result isn't a business where nothing requires work.

It's a business where **more of your time and attention can go towards work that creates value, rather than being consumed by tasks that take more time or effort than they should.**

Because building a business shouldn't mean continually adding more responsibilities for yourself.

It should allow you to create more value **without allowing the way you work to become increasingly complicated.**

Your business should work for you — not simply keep you busy.

That is what it means to **Work Lighter**.