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## **Perspective as important as persistence when running a business**

*By Finance New Mexico*

Business leaders are a hardy breed, loath to admit trouble and express anything but optimism and confidence. This tough façade is handy when applying for loans, seeking investment capital and competing in the rough and tumble marketplace.

But it's hard to maintain when customers are drifting away, employees are quitting, cash flow is falling short and a new product is taking too long to reach market. It's hard to stay externally cool when internal fears wear down nerves and mental stability.



As tempting as it might be to turn inward and work even harder at such times, experts suggest a healthier approach is for the business owner to create some distance between her personal and professional lives.

### **Reach Out**

When a business is failing or struggling, the owner shouldn't isolate himself or develop the tunnel vision of obsession; that just intensifies panic and despair. People who have been there say hard times are the times to strengthen meaningful connections with family, friends and one's inner self—to find meaning outside work.

With the clarity that comes with distance and objectivity, an entrepreneur protects her mental health and might see opportunities and safeguards that aren't apparent up close. She might find ways to cut losses for herself and investors. And she might discover opportunities amid the crisis, according to Harvard Business School professor and former CEO Bill George.

George preaches the benefits of lessons learned the hard way in his foreword to a new book by Steven Snyder, *Leadership and the Art of Struggle*. George writes that failure teaches us about our blind spots and weaknesses. "Only in acknowledging our own flaws and vulnerabilities," he writes, "can we become authentic leaders who empower people to perform to the best of their abilities."

## Reality Check

Every entrepreneur knows the value of perseverance, but perspective is just as important.

Running a business is risky, and the “dropout” rate for startups is high. Only 37 to 58 percent of businesses remain open four years after they start, according to research published in July 2013 by *Entrepreneur Weekly*, the Small Business Development Center, Bradley University and the University of Tennessee.

Given those stats, someone courageous enough to invest time, money and passion to build a business needs to acknowledge that professional failure doesn’t equal personal failure. They should gird themselves emotionally for the anxieties and stresses associated with starting and nurturing a business or navigating a stable venture during setbacks.

This includes taking care of physical and emotional health, which is good for the individual and the business.

The recession and its aftermath have taxed business leaders, entrepreneur and physician Dr. David Bull said in reaction to a 2012 survey by small business insurer Hiscox that showed 75 percent of small business respondents reporting stress-related ailments.

While stress is an important defense mechanism, Bull said, it’s meant to be a temporary response to immediate danger. “It’s important to make sure,” he said, “that you take steps to combat stress, which include eating healthy, making time for exercise, ensuring you get enough sleep, having time out, taking part in hobbies or outside activities and ensuring that you schedule vacations.”

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