



The  
**Leaky Bucket**  
Syndrome

How to Plug the Leaks  
in Your Business So You Can  
Get Stuff Done, Make More  
Money & Keep Your Sanity

*author of Becoming an Online Business Manager*

**TINA FORSYTH**



Picture this... you are making money, sales are higher than ever and the clients are rolling in. Everything that you have been working towards is finally coming true. Woo hoo!

But to your surprise, it is beginning to feel like your business is sucking the life out of you. Strange things are starting to happen in your business that are causing you alarm:

- Instead of working less, you are now **working 24/7 trying to get everything done, there is no light at the end of the tunnel** and you have no idea how you got yourself into this mess.
- You have those middle of the night moments, waking up in a cold sweat thinking, **"OMG, did X get done? Yikes! I don't think it did..."**
- **A client complains that you didn't fulfill on a commitment and they want a refund.** You thought everything was great and you aren't sure what went wrong.
- You realize that a team member didn't do something that you emailed them about a few days ago - **and now YOU have to scramble to get it done on time.**
- You feel like you don't know what everyone on your team is working on, and **wonder if stuff is getting done at all.**
- **You are tired of everyone bugging you all the time with questions** – why can't they just do their work and leave you alone?
- Because so many to-dos keep coming up at the last minute, **your team is starting to get seriously frustrated with a seemingly constant flow of, "Urgent, need this now!" requests** and are threatening to leave.
- Your VA is the only one who knows "how things are done around here" and **you feel trapped and worried that if she leaves, what happens then?**
- You have a certain way that you want things to be done, but it seems like **every time someone else on your team works on it, they do it wrong or miss key pieces.**
- **Your calendar is out of control.** You have no more time to book anything, have missed calls and have even been double booked a few times (which never used to happen!)
- **You aren't sure where the money is at,** and have no way of knowing if payments are coming in on time (or not!).
- You fly by the seat of your pants in your business, not sure what you are going to offer next and **suffering from the roller coaster ride of last minute launches.**
- There is simply so much work to be done – simple things like replying to emails – **that you never get to the important things that are going to grow your business.**
- Sadly, your spouse and/or kids are asking you why you are working so much and may **even be begging you to turn off the computer for once so they can spend time with you.**
- You wake up in the morning dreading the day. **What once felt like a lot of fun is now a drag.**

Bottom line is that you are tired, frustrated and starting to wonder what the heck you've gotten yourself into.

The simple fact is, it's one thing to CREATE a business – it's another thing to RUN a business (which is what most of us are unprepared for.)

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**This is what I call the Leaky Bucket Syndrome. We focus so much on getting more “into the bucket” (sales, marketing and getting clients) but neglect to make sure that the bucket (behind the scenes of your biz) is whole and healthy.**

Holes in your bucket are truly draining, mentally, emotionally and financially.

The good news is this – ALL of these things can be solved with the right perspective, systems and team in place. You are in the “growing

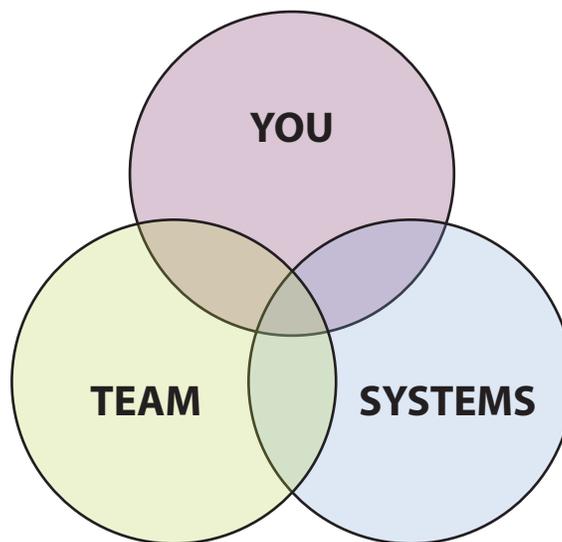
pains” stage and, with a bit of purposeful work and perseverance; this too shall pass (even if it doesn't feel like it right now.)

**Once you plug the leaks in your biz, you will truly find yourself in a place of:**

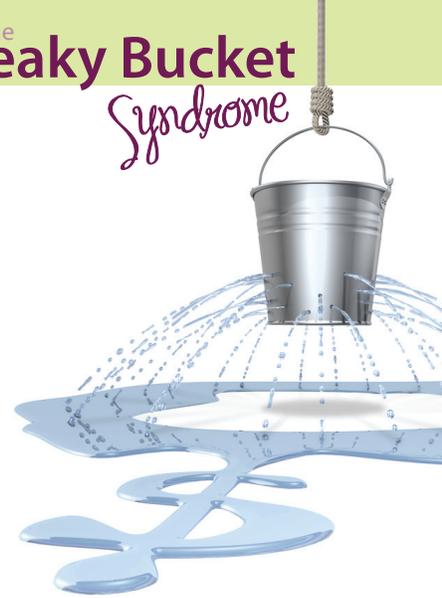
- **working less and continuing to make more money in your business**
- **getting to do more of the work you love and less of what you don't**
- **having a trusted team in place to do the work**
- **waking up excited to start working after an uninterrupted night's sleep.**

## **SO WHAT TO DO ABOUT LEAKY BUCKET SYNDROME?**

There are 3 elements to running a successful (and sane!) business .



All 3 of these are equally important, so let's take a look at each one.





## #1 YOU

You are the hub of your business. It's your baby and you've lovingly nurtured it to where it is now. So it is up to you to decide what happens from here and what kind of business you create.

If I may have a tough love moment here, there is something I really want you to get:

YOU are responsible for the success (or lack thereof) in your business. And yes, that includes the success of how your business is run behind the scenes.

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This might sound obvious to some of you, and yet I really want you to get this. It's up to you to ensure that your business foundation is strong and solid. You can't rely on other people, systems or even just "wishing" to make it so.

Does this mean you have to do all the work yourself? Not at all, in fact you will end up doing much less work over time. What it means is that you need to OWN the journey and be aware of what is going on at each stage. You need to be ultimately responsible for what is working and what is not. You need to be willing to step in and do whatever it takes to plug those leaks in the bucket once and for all.

First step is simple, to discover your default mode for running a business.

### Are you an Ostrich or a Control Freak?

When it comes to running their business, Entrepreneurs will fall into one of 2 categories – Ostrich or Control Freak. This is especially important to understand when it comes to dealing with stress in the business (and growing a business is certainly stressful at times.)

**If you are an Ostrich, you default into avoidance mode**, putting your head in the sand and crossing your fingers, hoping that someone else will swoop in and save the day. Ostriches generally don't like, or understand, the "behind the scenes" stuff in business. In fact, some of them may hate it. So they tend to rely too much on other people for the answers and to do the work that needs to be done. They will hire and blindly trust people on a whim, assuming that whoever they hired is doing it right, which isn't always the case and can lead to big issues. This can lead to a lot of wasted time and money spent on hiring the wrong people, implementing the wrong systems and trying to fix mistakes down the road.

**If you are a Control Freak, you default into do-it-all-myself mode**, where you keep everything on your plate, rarely delegate and end up working yourself to exhaustion. A Control Freak comes from a place of believing that they do it best and that no one else could possibly do the work as well as they could.



Although this might be true to a degree, it's a dangerous place to be in as a Control Freak will get caught in a trap of doing the wrong work. They will spend so much time and energy on all the "behind the scenes" stuff, that they don't have time to actually grow their business and deliver their services. This leads to a lot of frustration, long working hours and ultimately, burnout.

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**What we are aiming for is to be in the middle – what I call being an Empowered Entrepreneur.** When you come from an empowered place as a business owner, it means that you are:

- a. aware of what it takes to run and grow your business (vs. putting your head in the sand) AND
- b. you also have a team/systems in place that you trust to get the job done (vs. trying to do it all yourself.)

You own your responsibility in what it takes to run your business, and you won't settle for less than the best for everyone concerned (including yourself!)

Now that you know your default mode for running a business, it's important to know what kind of business you are building.

### **There are 2 types of businesses out there:**

1. A Solopreneur style business – where you are the one providing a service and doing \*most\* of the work
2. A Legacy style business – this is where the business becomes bigger than you, and you need a lot of support to keep it running and growing.

You need to ask yourself:

### **What kind of business do I want? Why am I in business?**

- If you have a big mission/purpose in your work and you want to GO BIG – 6-figures and above – then you are looking at a Legacy style business.
- If you want to make a good living and keep it simple – generally earning up to 6-figures – then you are building a Solopreneur type of business.

It's absolutely essential that you answer these questions, so that you can purposely create a business that serves you FIRST (and that doesn't suck the life out of you and lead to burn out.)

Like most entrepreneurs, I started with a Solopreneur business working as an Online Business Manager (OBM) for my clients. They hired me to work for them directly (as a contractor) and I did all the work myself.



During this time, I had my daughters – Sam in 2006 and Lexi in 2008 – and was able to easily balance family and client commitments while still bringing in a good income.

Then, in Fall 2008, I launched my book “Becoming an Online Business Manager.” Shortly after, I started the OBM Association and opened up the Online Business Manager Certification Training Program. Although I didn’t realize it at the time, this was the start of my shift from Solopreneur to building a Legacy business.

When my business hit the 6-figure mark in 2009, I was still doing most things myself, with a bit of help from my VA. It was my own coach at the time who said to me, “Tina, you need to do what you tell everyone else to do and hire your own Online Business Manager.” Go figure right? ;)

This was a tough choice to make for a few reasons:

- **I would have to invest a tidy sum to pay for an OBM each month.** Even though I was making 6-figures, this still felt like a stretch because I wasn’t used to investing much in a team, I was used to doing it all myself.
- **Could they do as good of a job as me?** Having been an OBM myself for many years, I knew how to do everything and the thought of having someone else take it over felt really scary.
- **If I gave X to someone else, then what the heck would I do with my own time?** I seriously didn’t know what to do with my time if I wasn’t doing all the day-to-day stuff myself. (This is a very real issue for those of us who are used to doing everything on our own.)

I hired my OBM Tiffany in January of 2010, and she very quickly jumped into managing the day-to-day running of my business – which was great! For the first time ever, I got to experience what it was like to have someone else take care of me and my business, and although it was uncomfortable at first, I have to admit that I got to like it very quickly. (Much to my surprise, there were some other “inner game” things that came up for me on this journey, but that is a story for another time.)

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**In my experience, many business owners work “blindly” towards the goal of continuing to grow and make more money in their business.** They don’t realize that this means they need to be willing to let go. They need to be ready to allow the business to grow bigger than them....

Or not.

If you prefer not to, then it’s simply a matter of being clear on how much work you can handle, still deliver top-notch services as a Solopreneur and not fall into the grow-grow-GROW Trap!

Alrighty, lets’ dive into the nitty gritty here and tackle our next piece of the puzzle.

## #2 SYSTEMS

**Yes I know the word “system” may make your eyes glaze over.** Systems are so boring right? I disagree. Not when you understand what a system is and what it can do for you and your business.

You can essentially break down a system into 3 parts:

1. The process – documented steps to accomplish X
2. The technology – what tools can be used to automate parts (or all) of the process.
3. The people – who does what can't be done by technology.

In other words:

Systems allow you to create a business that functions smoothly, effectively and freely – **so that you (and your team) don't have to spend all of your time putting out fires and trying to keep up.**

In the spirit of keeping this Manifesto short and sweet, I won't get into all the key systems you need here, there are so many, but I do want to give you two simple systems that can be implemented *this week* that can have a huge impact on your business (and your sanity.)

They are based on fixing the two biggest mistakes that entrepreneurs make with their systems.

### **MISTAKE #1: You keep all your “to-do’s” in your head, in a notebook or in your inbox.**

I'll be honest; I did this for years. I kept a lot of the stuff that needed to be done either in my head or in my inbox. **You can get away with this to a point, but I guarantee you that it will catch up with you and become a huge source of frustration as your business grows.**

When something lives in your head, a notebook or an inbox, it is a recipe for dropping balls, missing tasks and making mistakes. It keeps you in reactive mode, always having to think, “What needs to be done next? What about this piece?” Your brain is always plugged in trying to keep track of it all – like an engine that never stops running (tiring!).

**Inboxes get messy. Most people have A LOT of stuff in their inbox** and trying to keep track of “what needs to be done” in there can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Not to mention that the people on your team are generally working with many clients and trying to juggle everything from everyone in their own inboxes. Yipes!

It's no wonder that balls get dropped and stuff gets missed – the system is broken.





**How do you fix it? You need to get an ONLINE project management tool in place, something that both you and your team can access anywhere, anytime.** And yes, the word \*online\* is key here. The to-do list in your Outlook is not the answer because only you can see it.

**So you can stop having to constantly think about, “What needs to be done? What is coming up next?”**

Here’s the kicker guys – the real reason for having a project management tool in place, that you probably haven’t thought of before, is:

So you can stop having to constantly think about, “What needs to be done? What is coming up next?” This will suck the life out of you! (Not to mention causing those middle of the night wake-up moments.)

With a project management tool in place, you get to:

- put all the to-dos into the system, complete with due dates and “who is doing what”
- forget all about it until you need to take action!

**Let me give you an example.** We use (and love) [Central Desktop\\*](#) as our project management tool. Whenever we have a new project, such as the launch of our next OBM Certification Training, here’s what we do:

- Identify what we are aiming to accomplish (overall strategy, etc.) – I do this together with my OBM Tiffany.
- Tiffany will then lay out all the steps and to-dos for the entire project.
- Then she plugs ALL those steps into our Central Desktop, complete with due dates and who is doing each step.

The system is set up to send out notifications of new tasks, as well as daily reminders of what is due and what is coming up – so everyone on the team is aware of what they need to do and when.

I just sit back and wait for the system to tell me what I need to do next. **This has made a HUGE, life changing difference for me.**

I used to spend a lot of brain power thinking about what needed to be done, when, who was doing it, did it get done, etc. Now I know that the system will remind me when tasks are coming due and also when tasks have been completed so I can forget about them until then.

My project management tool gets to do all the worrying for me – I love that! 😊

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*\* In the spirit of full disclosure this is an affiliate link, which means that I may get a commission if you decide to purchase anything from Central Desktop. I only recommend systems that I use and love myself, so I know you’ll be in good hands. 😊*

Now the toughest part here is building the habit of using the project management tool. This will be tough for you as the biz owner and probably for your team as well. It can be hard to break that inbox habit!

**The biggest consideration here is to make sure that someone owns the responsibility of keeping the project management tool up to date. Ideally**

**Don't wait until the walls are falling down around you to get it set up.**

**this would be an Online Business Manager, but if it's you for now, that's totally OK.** This person needs to make sure all the to-dos are being put into the PM tool, be a "loving nag" to ensure people are getting stuff done and making sure tasks are marked as complete along the way (so you have a real indication of where things are at).



If you don't have a project management tool in place already, it's time. Don't wait until the walls are falling down around you to get it set up. (Or if they are falling down already, then it's definitely time!) There are lots of great ones out there.

## **MISTAKE #2: Not documenting your "how-to's" and having to reinvent the wheel every time something needs to be done.**

Consider this scenario:

You are launching a new program and want to do a free Teleclass series. You ask your team to set everything up for you, just like last time.

- Your team isn't totally clear on what you want, so they come back and ask, "What do you mean like last time? Where can I find that information?"
- You feel a bit annoyed and reply, "You know, the call we did back in March. I want to do the same thing this time around as well!"
- They don't want to keep bugging you, so they go ahead and setup everything based on what they think you want. They pop it over to you saying "done!" and, lo and behold, it isn't at all what you were looking for.
- At this point, you are either so frustrated that you, a) decide to do it all yourself just to get it done right, or b) wonder what the heck is wrong with your team and why does this keep happening?

This is a pretty common occurrence and it affects both sides:

- You are frustrated because you don't have the time and energy to "hold your team's hand" every time you want something done, and
- Your team is frustrated because they weren't 100% clear on what you wanted, made their best guess and thought they were on the right track, only to find out that it's not what you wanted at all.

Everyone is wasting time and energy, going back and forth trying to figure this out and get it right – not to mention that you are essentially paying your team to do double the work!

Now, I'm going to give you the answer to this problem, and you might be surprised by its simplicity.

### **Document all of your key processes!**

In other words, create a list of step-by-step instructions for all of the things that you know will need to be done more than once (such as setting up a Teleclass series, sending out your ezine, enrolling new clients, etc.)

We call this an SOP Guide – a Standard Operating & Procedures Guide. A very corporate sounding term, and YES, every business needs one, even yours. 😊

An SOP Guide is important for a few reasons:

- **No more wasting time, energy and money.** Once a process is documented, ANYONE can step in and follow the steps as needed in the future. This is especially awesome when bringing a new team member on board.
- **Keeps consistency in your brand.** You have a certain way of doing things and want to make sure that things always represent you and your business.
- **You could sell your business.** Even if you don't plan on selling your business, an SOP Guide is part of a strong foundation to grow on, to continue to make more money and keep your sanity.

Always treat your business as though it could be sold tomorrow!

### **So how do you tackle creating an SOP Guide?**

First, I want to acknowledge that creating an SOP Guide is not the most exciting thing in the world which is exactly why most businesses that I know don't have one (or only have part of one.) I get it, this isn't my ideal way to spend a day either but it still needs to be done.

**Always treat your business as though it could be sold tomorrow!**

It's kinda like exercise, at first, it sucks. We have to drag ourselves out of bed in the morning to hit the gym when we really don't want to. But we do it anyways because we know the payoff is worth it. And although we may never \*love\* working out, we get to the point where it becomes part of our day and it's no longer such a drag.

SOP Guides are part of a healthy workout for your business.

So, to break it down a bit:

- **Who is creating the SOP Guide?** – Whoever is doing the work and knows the process. If you have been doing most of the work yourself to date, then it's you. If you have a VA (or two) who have been doing the work, then you'll need to get them to help (and yes, you would pay them for this time.) This requires a measure of discipline on both sides – YOU need to demand that they do it as part of their role, and they need to set aside the time to actually do it.



- **When to start?** Now! The best way to create your SOP Guide is “as you go.” You and/or your team can start documenting things as they come up. Don’t try to do it all at once and make it a \*big\* project – too much stress in that and not necessary.
- **What is the format?** Your SOP Guide needs to live online in a place that is accessible by everyone on the team and is easy to update. We use the wiki feature in [Central Desktop\\*](#) to manage our SOP Guide. It can be written, audio, video or a combination thereof.

If you start today, in a few short weeks you will be well on your way to having an effective SOP Guide in place.

There is SO much more to cover when it comes to systems, which isn’t possible to tackle here in the scope of this Manifesto, but with these two foundational pieces in place, you have made a great start that can have a measurable impact on your business within days.

Now last, but certainly not least...

### #3 Team

Team comes after Systems for a very good reason.

I believe, that as an entrepreneur, YOU need to take ownership of your systems. You need to get clear on what systems you need and take the steps to ensure that you have the right ones in place to support your business.

**Now, what I see many business owners do is throw people at the problem.** They hire someone to come in and “put all their systems in place” and blindly trust that the person they hired to do the job knows what they are doing.

**What I see many business owners do is throw people at the problem.**

**I hate to say it, but they may not know.** We live in a world where there are literally hundreds of ways to do things and thousands of software options. Although it’s great to have options, the toughest part is knowing what is best for YOUR BUSINESS. For example, you might have a web designer working on your site that sets up some kind of membership system that they used with a different client, but it turns out to be the wrong one for you and your biz. Then down the road you have to make a switch, which I can guarantee will be costly in time and money. Eeek!

Decisions on what systems to use are NOT something to take lightly! Make sure you are getting your advice from someone who knows what they are doing – a systems expert – **and that they have helped other people who are creating similar businesses, put their systems in place.**

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Now, I'm not saying you have to do all the work on your own, not by any means! You want to start by getting clear on what systems you need. THEN, you can hire the team to help put them in place and continue to work in your business.

One of the best things I ever heard in regards to a team is this:

**Hire for where you are headed, not for where you are now.**

Just as with systems, you don't want to wait until you are drowning in work before you hire someone to help. In this world of virtual support professionals, it is super simple to find someone who fits your needs and budget now and can most likely grow with you over time. Plus, YOU get in the habit of not doing everything yourself, which is essential as you grow your biz.

- **If you are a Solopreneur, then you need to have someone to help you with administrative and basic tech work.** I started with a Virtual Assistant who worked 10 hours a month for me taking care of customer service emails, sending my ezine, managing my shopping cart and other admin projects as they came up.
- **If you are building a Legacy biz, then you will need to hire an Online Business Manager to take over all the day-to-day running of the biz,** in addition to potentially expanding your team of VAs and other support professionals. Note that the needs of your Legacy business will expand over time, leading to potentially hiring full-time employees at the 7-figure and above stage.

I go into this in much more detail in the [THRIVE Hiring System](#) – which takes you step-by-step through the process of finding, hiring and working with the \*right\* virtual support team for you. It includes a handy dandy Directory where you can find the folks you need.

Ultimately, your Team is running the Systems: your OBM is managing the Project Management Tool, your VA is following documented processes, and YOU are focused on growing your business. All 3 pieces of the pie fit nicely together.

**A final question for you**

As your business grows, you are going to be paying for it in one of two ways:

1. **Money** – being willing to invest in the proper systems & team to support your growth

OR

2. **Sanity** – pouring all your own time and energy into running your business and trying to keep on top of it all (and yes, this will suck the life out of you eventually – ESPECIALLY as your business grows.)

So, which do you choose?

**Just as with systems, you don't want to wait until you are drowning in work before you hire someone to help.**

## Comments & Questions? Bring 'em on!



**Post your  
comment and I'll  
gift you a copy  
of my personal  
Systems Checklist!**

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I'd love to hear anything that this Manifesto has stirred up for you – any questions, ideas, eeks, tears, cheers or boos.

Post your comments at [www.TinaForsyth.com/Manifesto](http://www.TinaForsyth.com/Manifesto) and I'll send you a copy of my very own Systems Checklist (the one I use for my own business and with my clients)



## Who the heck is Tina Forsyth anyhow?

### ***My official bio:***

Having worked as an Online Business Manager since 1999, Tina Forsyth is a 'jill of all trades' when it comes to establishing key systems and building virtual teams to help your business thrive. She is the author of 'Becoming an Online Business Manager' and founder of the International Association of Online Business Managers and the OBM Training & Certification program. As an entrepreneur herself, Tina has an intimate understanding of how the right systems and support team can make all the difference in business success and is passionate about helping clients to avoid "Leaky Bucket Syndrome" as they grow their business. Connect via her website at: [www.TinaForsyth.com](http://www.TinaForsyth.com)

*If you want the inside scoop as to what makes me tick check out my story at [www.TinaForsyth.com/About](http://www.TinaForsyth.com/About)*