



IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RUN A SMALL BUSINESS:

HOW ENTREPRENEURS RELY ON THEIR COLLABORATION NETWORKS

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INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

Small business growth is on the rise, and in today's modern business landscape, entrepreneurs are working harder than ever to succeed. One crucial element to a small business' success? Meaningful collaboration when it comes to goal setting, creative strategy, operations planning, and more. We asked 500 entrepreneurs ages 18-60+ about how, why, and when they collaborate with their network of business advisors, colleagues and mentors.

500

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS TOLD US WHY THEIR
COLLABORATION NETWORKS MATTER TO THE
SUCCESS OF THEIR BUSINESS

FOUR KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Entrepreneurs Overwhelmingly Rely on Collaboration Networks

More than two thirds of participants rely on at least one external advisor for help with their business, sounding-board advice, and for collaboration on important issues. *See page 4*

2. You Can't Put a Price on the Value of Collaboration

The majority of small business owners told us that they did not pay a fee for their collaboration sessions with advisors, colleagues, and mentors. *See page 6*

3. Collaboration is Directly Related to Work Satisfaction

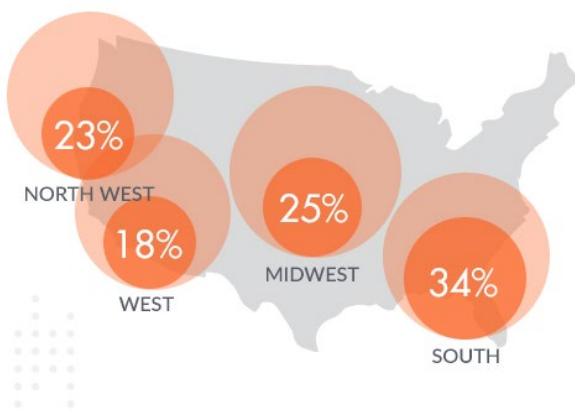
Collaboration with a network seems to be linked with entrepreneurs' overall satisfaction with and optimism for their business. *See page 7*

4. Entrepreneurs' Top Advice for New Business Owners is to Collaborate

We asked those surveyed for their best advice for new business owners, and many said networking, asking questions, and seeking out experienced mentors. *See page 8*

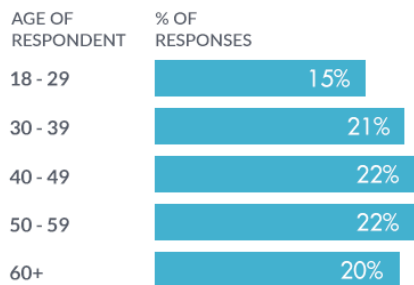
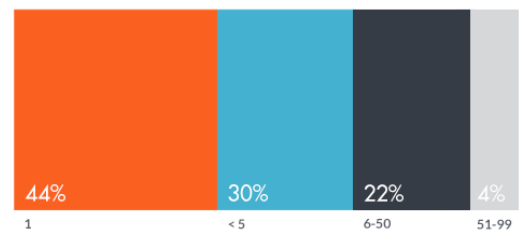
WHO ARE THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS?

We asked 500 small business owners (250 men, 250 women) who were selected at random to participate in the survey. By role, 44% of survey respondents were solopreneurs, 30% were leaders at companies of fewer than five employees, and 22% of respondents were leaders of companies with between five and 99 employees.



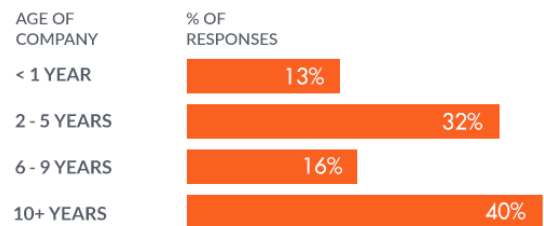
SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY REGION

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES AT RESPONDENTS' BUSINESSES



RESPONDENTS' AGES WERE DISTRIBUTED, AS ABOVE

THE AGE OF ENTREPRENEURS' COMPANIES VARIED CONSIDERABLY



KEY TAKEAWAY #1:

COLLABORATION NETWORKS ARE CRUCIAL TO A SMALL BUSINESS' SUCCESS

More than two-thirds (69%) of survey respondents rely on a network of external advisors for help on a monthly basis. This finding was especially noteworthy when looking at the age of the business. Even among entrepreneurs with the oldest

69%

OF ENTREPRENEURS COLLABORATE WITH THEIR NETWORKS EVERY MONTH

businesses (in existence for 10+ years), 60% relied on at least one external advisor. This finding is consistent with business and technology trends over the last decade: advances in technology have enabled people to collaborate more effectively than ever—inside and out of the office.



SOUNDING BOARD



COLLABORATE



SPECIFIC QUESTION

WHAT ARE THE TOP REASONS THAT YOU TAP INTO YOUR NETWORK?

*Survey respondents could choose more than one answer

The survey respondents could choose more than one reason why they sought out the advice and collaboration from their networks. They answered that they went to their advisors to use as a sounding board (46%), to collaborate on a variety of business issues (41%), and to reach out for advice or answers to very specific questions (40%).

WHO MAKES UP AN ENTREPRENEUR'S NETWORK?



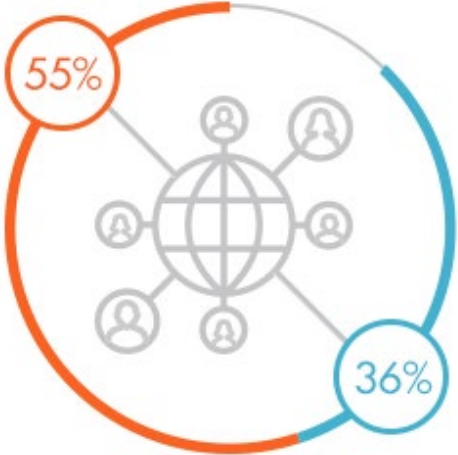
*Survey respondents could choose more than one answer

Not surprisingly, external assistance comes primarily from well-known sources, reinforcing the idea that launching and running a small business is very much a personal, high-engagement effort that “takes a village.”

Survey respondents, again choosing more than one answer if applicable, reported that they rely most heavily on people they already know well for advice and assistance: 47% of respondents cited friends as their most important collaborators, while 41% and 38%, respectively, of those surveyed listed family members and mentors as their key advisors. Only 27% of respondents rely on third-party contractors for help.

THE LARGER THE NETWORK, THE MORE ENTREPRENEURS COLLABORATE

3+ PERSON NETWORK



1 PERSON NETWORK

*Survey respondents could choose more than one answer

The more people in an entrepreneur’s network, the more likely they are to work collaboratively: 36% of survey respondents collaborate with a one-person network, while 55% of respondents collaborate with networks comprised of three or more advisors.

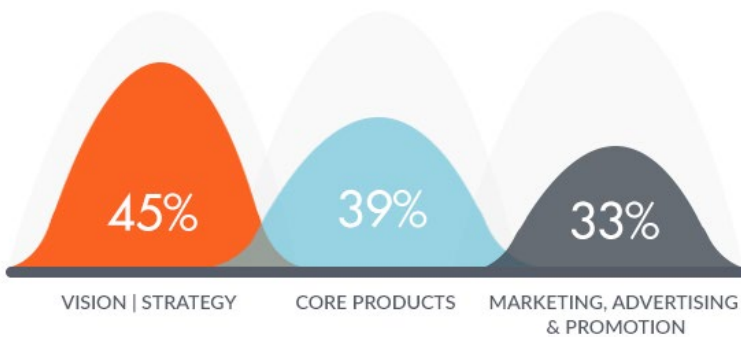
KEY TAKEAWAY #2:

COLLABORATION NETWORKS ARE (NEARLY) PRICELESS

MY NETWORK IS IMPORTANT FOR...



*Survey respondents could choose more than one answer



FOR WHICH AREAS OF YOUR BUSINESS DO YOU SEEK ADVICE?

*Survey respondents could choose more than one answer

Exactly what kind of help entrepreneurs seek varies considerably. 45% of entrepreneurs surveyed seek help and collaboration regarding bigger-picture strategy and vision. 39% of respondents want advice on topics related to their products or services, while only 24% say they leverage their network for help with administrative and / or non-core tasks. Interestingly, most respondents (~80%) are rarely or not at all paying for the help they receive from their network. Only 18% indicated they pay for help from their network more than half of the time.

NEARLY
80%

OF ENTREPRENEURS DO NOT PAY FOR THE HELP THEY RECEIVE FROM THEIR COLLABORATION NETWORKS.

KEY TAKEAWAY #3:

COLLABORATION NETWORKS ARE INTEGRAL TO SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS

HOW IS COLLABORATION VALUABLE TO SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS?

85% SAY IT HELPS THEIR COMPANY SUCCEED

76% SAY IT MAKES THEM OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS GROWTH

86% SAY IT INCREASES THEIR SATISFACTION WITH THEIR BUSINESS

*Survey respondents could choose more than one answer

Networks that foster collaboration are very valuable to business owners, and seem to positively impact their opinion of their business status—both at present and in the future. 85% of survey respondents say that their network’s help and advice are important to their company’s success; 86% of respondents are satisfied with their business; and 76% of respondents are optimistic about their business over the next twelve months.

KEY TAKEAWAY #4:

ENTREPRENEURS CITE NETWORKING AS TOP ADVICE FOR NEW BUSINESS OWNERS

We asked this group what advice or learnings from their own experience they could offer entrepreneurs who are just starting out. The answers were many and varied, but we received quite a few that were in line with the survey topic: advising new business owners to reach out to others, ask questions, network, and practice other forms of collaboration.

Here are just a few of their answers. We believe these show the very personal and all-consuming nature of what it means to be an entrepreneur.

- *Don't be afraid to ask or seek advice about anything that might help you.*
- *Listen and learn from as many people as you can.*
- *Keep an open mind.*
- *Talk to everyone. People know things that you don't, and often can surprise you with tips you didn't expect.*
- *Find what you're not good at and get a good support system around you!*
- *Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help.*
- *Don't go it alone. Ask for advice. Ask for help.*
- *Stay true to your plan but look for others to help in areas where you may be weak.*
- *Choose your advisors carefully and remain open minded about their suggestions.*
- *Advice from others who have "been there" can save you a lot of time and frustration when embarking upon a new venture.*

CONCLUSION

The results from this survey illustrate the importance of collaboration and reliance on an external network of advisors in running a small business. Would-be solopreneurs and small-business owners can benefit from the advice and collaboration offered by friends, family and mentors on a variety of topics, including: strategy, vision, specific product or service issues, and sometimes even more mundane administrative tasks.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

To learn more about the role of external collaboration in the professional lives of small business owners, PicMonkey commissioned an independent, online survey of 500 entrepreneurs ages 18-60+ in the United States.

SURVEY OBJECTIVES

When starting and growing a business, entrepreneurs often rely on assistance from friends, colleagues, mentors, and even family to help propel their success. To learn more about the role of external collaboration in the professional lives of small business owners, PicMonkey commissioned an independent online survey in May, 2019. The survey was conducted by The Digital Edge, a leading market research firm.

The objectives of this survey were to

- *Learn on whom entrepreneurs rely, for collaboration and advice in their business*
- *Understand the types of advice that entrepreneurs seek and value*
- *The role, and importance, of this collaboration, in the entrepreneur's overall business success and*
- *Entrepreneurs' levels of satisfaction regarding the quality of their collaboration, the current status of their business and its near-term growth prospects*

WHAT DID WE ASK?

The target respondent pool consisted of 500 participants from across the United States who were asked to answer 10 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question.

1. How many people (outside your own company) do you reach out to, for help or advice with your business on a monthly (or more frequent) basis?
2. Whom do you typically reach out to? (e.g., mentors, friends, colleagues, etc.)
3. What kinds of topics do you discuss with your network?
4. Of those topics, which topic is most valuable to you?
5. What role do you expect your network to play, when you reach out for help?
6. Do you pay for this kind of help? (at all or in part?)
7. How important is the advice you get from your network?
8. How optimistic are you, regarding the growth of your business over the next 12 months?
9. Overall, how satisfied are you with your business?
10. How long have you had your business?
11. If there is one piece of advice to offer new entrepreneurs regarding collaborating with others, what would that advice be?

ABOUT PICMONKEY

PicMonkey is built for people and businesses to create stunning visuals for social media, digital marketing, advertising and beyond. PicMonkey's ever-growing library of effects, graphics, templates, and fonts, plus a resource center with tips and tutorials, make content creation easy and inspiring. With headquarters in Seattle, Washington, privately-held PicMonkey is backed by Spectrum Equity.

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