

Food for thought

Gordon Ramsay, star of BT's latest TV ads, gives you his tips for growth and success and reveals how he stays at the top of the business world

What do you love most about running your own business?

Running your own business is about a sense of freedom, and the way that you are focused and disciplined. And running your own business scares you – and that's where you get the adrenalin from. It's not like going to work for a boss every day: you are the boss and you have to maintain standards, and that's an amazing challenge each and every day. Not just once a week; not just once a month – every day that business is open.

Have you got any tips for anyone growing their own small business?

A tip for anyone that's starting out in business – discipline yourself. In a way that you become hard on yourself. I've never had dinner in my own restaurant yet. I've never sat and had a glass of champagne with customers. Don't indulge in your own business – treat it as a business.

Building a team is part of the foundation behind a good business. No one calls me Mr Ramsay, it's Gordon; it's not chef: it's Gordon. We spend more time at work than we do with our families, so that's your family and so you've got to bring down the intimidation and make them feel part of it,

and that's what happens in terms of how you get the best out of them.

What's the most common pitfall businesses come up against when expanding, what can they do about it and how has that affected you in your own businesses?

Businesses trip over with a lack of consolidation. Consolidating gives a positive foundation to any business. When you start spreading yourself too thin, it becomes not of the same standard second or third time round. We're now in twelve restaurants across the world.

Has that growth been quite gradual?

It's been a process over the period of a decade. However, for me the secret is making sure the business is running to perfection, with or without you. That's a challenge. If you can master that, and make sure that there are no discrepancies, with or without you being there, that's a tough card to play.

How do you stay on top of it?

You stay on top of it because you build momentum. You communicate on a level that you thrust staff into the spotlight. I expose my staff in the way that I really drop them in the deep end, and it is sink or swim, and if they swim, they're going to go on and become successful. If they sink then unfortunately they're going to drop down a division.



What have you learned from your mistakes over the years?

First, I'm as good as my team. Second, in terms of the level of creativity, you cannot afford to get carried away. If I come up with a dish and I'm really excited about it in the middle of a lunch service, it's not about that one dish. Can we do that times

twenty? And then, can my staff do that, with or without me? The business is successful because, every time a new restaurant opens, whether you're in Barcelona or California, Napa Valley, my staff are there within 24 hours of it opening. And every time a bad restaurant opens, when it's been panned by the critics, we're there as well. There's just as much to learn from a bad experience as there is a good experience, and we come back, and we talk about it, and we look at the negatives.

• For more of BT's exclusive interview with Gordon Ramsay, go to bt.com/business

Think you're the next Gordon Ramsay?

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The small print

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