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FIVE LESSONS I WISH I HAD KNOWN BEFORE I STARTED MY AGENCY

As they say, you can learn through your own mistakes, or you can learn from the mistakes of others. Let me help you to learn from my mistakes. Here are five things I wish somebody would have told me before I started my agency:

1. **Hire for Cultural Fit as Much as Skills**
   It's crucial to hire people who not only have the right skills but also align with the company culture. A team that shares values and collaborates well will drive better results.

   Mistake: I hired a person who didn't share the same values of honesty and integrity as our team, and cost us $20,000 to fix the problem.

2. **Prioritize Processes Early**
   Establishing clear workflows and scalable systems from the start saves time and reduces chaos as the business grows. Solid processes ensure consistency and make onboarding smoother.

   Mistake: I learned the hard way early on, that the things which gave me the greatest headaches and caused the most problems, were project management issues (processes). Our development was top notch, but for some reason clients wanted clarity about invoices, meeting schedules, communications, etc. These processes had to be developed.

3. **Invest in Marketing and Sales Continuously**
   Even during busy times, it's important to keep investing in marketing and lead generation. A healthy pipeline is essential for sustainable growth.

   Mistake: not setting aside money every single month for marketing; not just to cover current marketing bills, but to build up a 'market warchest' so when it was time to make a big marketing purchase or campaign, I had the money readily available.

4. **Learn to Delegate Effectively**
   Trying to do everything solo can stunt growth. Trusting the team, delegating tasks, and empowering others would have freed up time to focus on strategic priorities.

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Mistake: not delegating, and working "in" the business too long, when I should have been working "on" the business. So once I started delegating my technical responsibilities, I was able to set aside time for big-picture thinking and planning for the agency.

5. **Cash Flow is King**
Revenue is important, but managing cash flow is critical. Unexpected costs and late payments can disrupt operations, so building financial buffers and monitoring cash flow closely is essential.

Mistake: not setting aside at least three months payroll for the lean times. Because of this I had to let go a young, but excellent web developer when things slowed down. This takes a long time to build up, of course, but week by week now, I set aside money into the company savings so that we can keep all staff even during slow seasons.

About William Miller

Owner and founder of HighPower Data & Design, Minneapolis, MN, a multi-focus agency that specializes in FileMaker Business Automation Services and Website Development Services. HighPower started with just William, and has grown to more than a dozen team members today.