

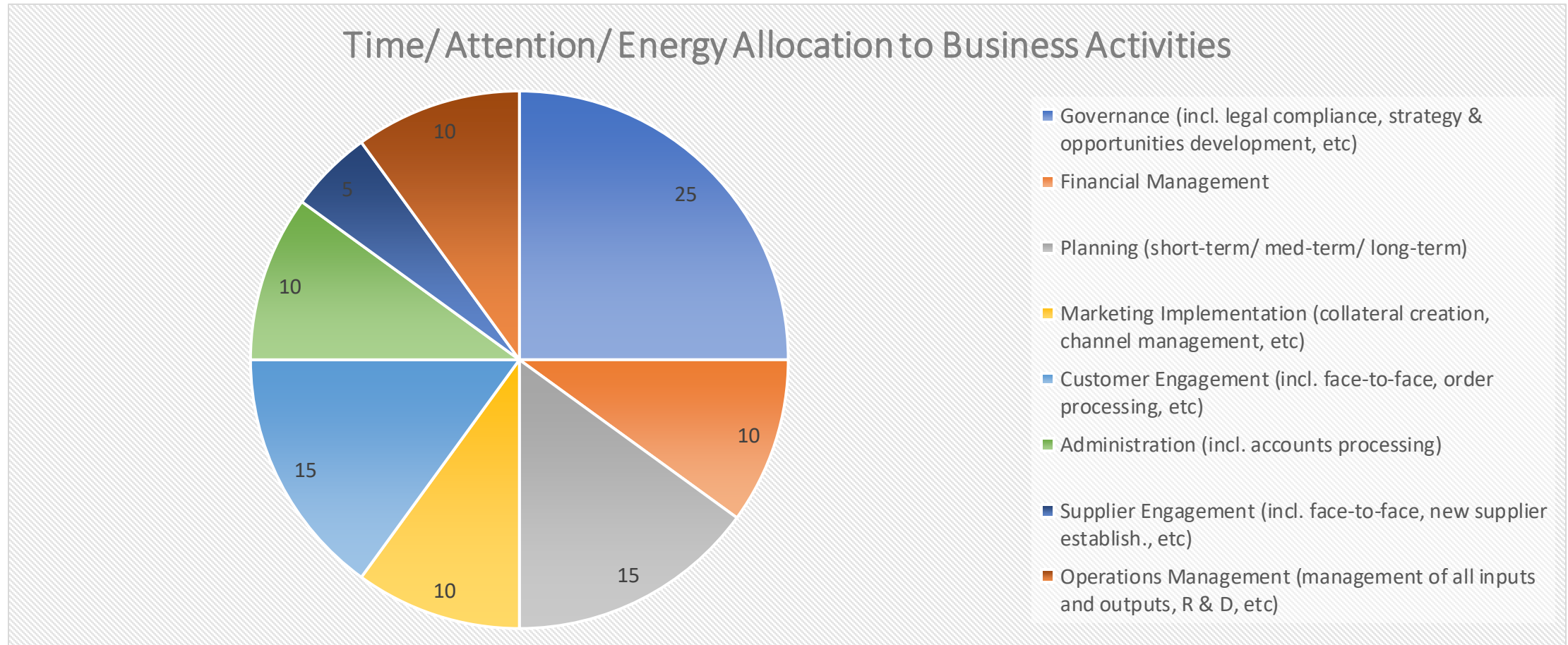
Allocation of SME Business Owner's Time



Reality of Where Time/ Energy is Assigned in a Small-Medium Scale Business

- It is important for owners of small businesses to understand what the areas of their business are that will draw their time, attention and energy – to then consciously plan their work day wisely.
- By taking a planned approach it becomes possible for business owners to understand:
 - What their own capacity (time/ energy/ skills/ knowledge) is to deal with those activities that they consider are their responsibility/ primary focus.
 - What their strengths and weaknesses are.
 - Where they need to introduce greater capacity and/ or capability.
 - What skills/ knowledge they need to inject into the business to complement their own, in order to cover the range of activities/ functions that require resourcing appropriately.

Typical Time/ Attention/ Energy Allocation of a SME Business Owner (ideally)



The Principle of “Noise”

- Often owners of SME scale businesses become consumed by the “noise” (i.e. the day-to-day bluster of communications and “wild fires”) of their organisation – they get caught-up in the “engine room” and become the target of questions/ requests/ problems by all sorts of stakeholders.
- They become distracted from governance tasks/ responsibilities (i.e. the cease becoming effective at leading the evolution of their organisation) and instead simply become another “operational cog” in their business.

Business Owners Can't Wear All of the Caps All of the Time

- Astute SME business owners soon work-out that they can't juggle all of the balls in the air themselves – without at least one coming crashing down from time to time.
- This realisation should lead prudent SME business owners to evaluate their resource allocations in order to free themselves up more in order to wear the “governance hat” most firmly on their heads most of the time.
- This realisation should result in appointing/ engaging suitable additional people to perform functions/ roles that are not the business owner's strengths (i.e. outsourcing and/ or appointment of employees internally).

Marketing Implications

- SME business owners need to think carefully about the number and nature of marketing channels and collateral that they use – not just from a target market alignment perspective, but also in terms of what marketing activities they can realistically take care of themselves (if they don't have the option of outsourcing at least some marketing activity/ functions or assigning these functions to one or more employee).
- Creative thinking generally takes greater time, effort and concentration to achieve, and often a distraction-free environment is needed to achieve it. So if a business owner can afford to out-source at least some of the creative side of marketing collateral development – for it to happen off-site, then all the better.

Marketing Implications

- If the marketing delivery of a SME scale business is going to rely on the owner to perform the maintenance of digital platforms (e.g. update content) then judicious decisions should be made in respect of the type and number of digital platforms that are to be used.
- I advocate that a SME scale business focuses on maintaining the following range of online sites only (given single owner-operator scenario or a two-person owner-operator scenario):
 - Business Facebook site
 - Company website – ecommerce or other
 - Instagram
 - Twitter (minor involvement only)
 - ...and ensure that all communications posted in FB, Instagram and Twitter provide a direct link to the company website.

Marketing Implications

- Because of the time constraint on SME owner-operators to devote time/ attention/ energy to marketing functions (i.e. 10 % of available time), it is critical that they develop and complete a written Strategic Marketing Plan to serve as the basis for operational delivery per Financial Year.
- Once into the given Financial Year, the plan will serve to keep the “ship on course” from a “big picture” perspective.
- The Annual Marketing Activity Schedule (i.e. the operational transformation of the Strategic Marketing Plan) will guide the month-to-month implementation of agreed/ confirmed marketing activity throughout the given Financial Year.