

grow



Audit Excel

A sounding board for
a sound business



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Running a one-man show can be challenging.

Not only do you have to manage all aspects of your business by yourself, but you also must come up with all the ideas and the strategy to move it forward. This was the dilemma Adrian Miric found himself in when he decided to turn to coaching.

Adrian had launched his business, AuditExcel, in 2003. Ten years on and the business was starting to feel stagnant and was not returning the revenues he wanted. AuditExcel's offering was simple: it supplied Microsoft Excel-based services. "If it touches Excel, we have been involved in it in some way," explained Adrian, a self-confessed lover of the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet tool and a leading expert on the software in South Africa.

Having spotted an opportunity to specialise in Excel-based products, Adrian had left the corporate world to start up on his own. "The reality is that everyone uses Excel, even if they claim they don't like it," he said.

Armed with a background in IT and finance (Adrian is a Chartered Accountant), Adrian figured he had a winning formula. His vision was to train people on how to use Excel and then consult using Excel's functionality.

As a businessman, however, Adrian wanted to remain a one-man operation. So, he needed help to develop the type of business that would sustain his lifestyle in the long term, without needing to employ a lot of people.

This is when Adrian turned to coaching. From his days in the corporate world, he had an association with one of the Grow coaches, who introduced Adrian to his business coach-to-be in February 2014.



Coaching for sustainability

The first aspect of the business that they focused on was how the business offered its training solution. Adrian's Coach remembers, "Our work was initially about stabilizing the business and then improving aspects of it. Adrian is a smart individual, but he wanted to develop his skills around the business component of building a good value proposition."

To develop a robust offering, Adrian and his coach set about restructuring the business around four key pillars that were focused on the customer experience. They knew that the market was filled with people of all levels of Excel knowledge – from beginner to advanced. They wanted to be able to give customers exactly what they needed.

They felt that it was key that Adrian's customers become clearer and more focused about the Excel skills they wanted to learn, to match them with the best AuditExcel solution. Experience had shown Adrian that what people thought they needed to learn in Excel, and what they actually had to learn were often two different things. So, they developed the four pillars of AuditExcel.

Pillar 1: Skills Assessment

The online Skills Assessment allowed customers to assess their skills in an objective manner. These insights enable customers to get an objective rating of their skill level. The tool was designed to assess individuals, as well as the skill level of a group of people should corporates be looking to train en masse, and ensure they attended a course that was pitched at the right level for them. The assessment has become a crucial tool for corporates to understand the excel skill levels of their people.

Pillar 2: Which course should I do?

This aspect was designed to help customers understand how they use Excel and what aspects of the program they need to learn to best suit

their needs. It was no use learning pivot tables if the client was never going to be analysing data, for example. "So, if skill level is depth, then this tool is breadth," explained Adrian's coach. It's always been vital for Adrian that his customers get exactly what they need from his courses. He wanted to ensure clients received training that was directly pertinent to their day-to-day needs.

Pillar 3: Different product offerings

Adrian then wanted to ensure that he was giving his customers the best possible course options for their needs. So, depending on their skill level and their needs, a customer had the option of doing a full course that would take several days, or they could simply do a short, topic-specific course that gave them bite-sized learnings about a particular function or tool. Adrian and his coach grappled with whether this was the best business model in terms of generating revenue, but Adrian was determined to look at what was best for his customers. "We didn't want customers to sit through days of training, when they could get exactly what they needed in an hour or so", said Adrian's coach.

Pillar 4: Training delivery options

The final pillar was to help customers choose how they wanted their training delivered. Did they need a trainer to come onsite and offer classes? Were people happy with an online course? Or was real-time virtual learning the way to go, where people were taught by a trainer streaming live to their computers? Putting the customer first again, Adrian wanted to ensure his customers had options around how they received their training, which gave birth to the online courses, which complimented the classroom, public, private, and virtual courses AuditExcel offered.

Getting these four pillars in place was invaluable to Adrian. It allowed him to structure his service offering and freed up a lot of time for him to work on his consulting business.

The ongoing value of coaching

With the training side of the business set up and almost running itself, Adrian had more time to focus on the consulting division - which is his passion. “He is profoundly skilled in this space,” said Adrian’s coach, who explained that Adrian would use Excel to build custom-designed models for clients to help them manage anything from remuneration to budgeting to projects across diverse industries, including banking, mining and agriculture.

Even though the business was back on its feet, Adrian decided to continue with his Grow coach. As a one-man operation Adrian needed a sounding board, someone to discuss his business with and bounce ideas off. “The reality is that when you run your own business there are aspects that you think you are good at, when in fact you are not - the marketing, the finance, the recruitment,” he said. The reality was that Adrian’s Grow coach had become an invaluable member of the small AuditExcel team.

Despite juggling all the roles in his business, it soon became clear in the coaching process that Adrian needed help with the day-to-day running of the company. He had employed a few Excel trainers but had nobody helping him with operations. Adrian’s Coach had also noticed that it was very difficult for Adrian to take a holiday as it was a case of no work, no pay. As a result, he encouraged Adrian to hire a PA. “Adrian needed some support. I walked him through the Topgrading recruitment process, and he hired a very competent lady to help him. Over the last few years, he has been able to take five or six weeks off over December, and the business runs independently of him,” explained his coach, who said this was a really big step for Adrian to take.



Adrian’s online lifestyle business

Adrian’s ultimate vision for his business has always been to create a lifestyle business, which would allow him to do work he is passionate about, anywhere in the world. “My focus has always been to be as light and as flexible as possible. I have always wanted an internet-based offering,” said Adrian. And that is his next big challenge.

From the start, Adrian set up his company to be virtual. Even his PA has always been a virtual assistant. A lot of his consultancy work was also handled remotely. “I have a lot of clients in Rwanda, and I am here. That doesn’t matter. It is a seamless process. That is what I am working towards. Where I operate from should be irrelevant to my ability to do the work,” said Adrian.

The challenge, however, is not in his consulting work but rather on the training side of the business. “Adrian has sold his courses all over the world, but it is a tough and competitive market. We are struggling to get the numbers to where we want them to be, but the potential is massive,” said Adrian’s coach.

So, as the company moves into its next phase, Adrian and his coach have been experimenting with different solutions. His coach explained that marketing in different global jurisdictions can be very expensive, so they need to find a solution that generates results without breaking the bank.

Adrian said that while his focus is still South Africa, he really wants to target the rest of Africa. “Africa is the really interesting market for me. Excel will be used a lot more in Africa because of internet connectivity issues and a lack of IT skills,” Adrian explained, then added, “Hopefully we can do it safely and better and we can help people get value out of their data.”

One of the solutions that Adrian and his coach are working on is to get onboard with partners in various countries. They had already started in Botswana, before COVID-19 derailed the process. But they do believe there is demand for the services that Adrian offers, and they will continue to push for greater international exposure for AuditExcel going into 2021.

Weathering the storm

One thing that Adrian is pleased about is that, with guidance from his Grow coach, he has created a diversified business that is now able to weather economic storms such as the COVID-19 pandemic. "Because we were diversified, which Grow and my coach helped us with, we have training in all its forms," said Adrian. As on-premise training ground to a halt during lockdown, Adrian was still able to offer courses. "The transition was seamless. We were ready. And our clients were realising that you can do a lot of the work via a screen, virtually."

In addition to his online and virtual offerings, Adrian noted that as training slowed down a bit during the lockdown, the consultancy side of the business picked up. This highlighted the importance of ensuring AuditExcel remains a diversified business.

Adrian is happy with where AuditExcel is now. Although he would like to build the online training side of the business which he has spent hundreds of hours developing, he has structured AuditExcel in a way that suits his lifestyle and lets him work on his passion, which is building solutions for businesses using Excel.


Adrian's coaching journey

"Before I started with my coach and Grow, I had written coaching off as something I didn't need," said Adrian, owner of AuditExcel. "But the reality is that we never know as much as we think and being held accountable is worth a lot." Adrian acknowledges that his Grow coach is always checking whether he has done what he said he would, tested a new idea, measured his successes.

Adrian and his Grow coach have built a very strong relationship over the six years they have been working together. "The key is that he really understands my business," said Adrian. "He also understands me. He understood right from the beginning that I was not interested in creating a 100-man consultancy." Adrian appreciated that his coach was willing to work within his vision about what he wanted from his business.

Adrian and his Grow coach meet once a month. "He is a great sounding board," said Adrian. "After six years, I have to admit he has been critical to the success of my business."





When things don't seem clear, it's time to **find focus.**

When you're at the top. Everyone's looking to you for the answers. You're the leader, thinker, decision maker, mentor, planner and doer. Sustained growth and scaling up weighs on your shoulders. Yet, so many questions ruminate in your head.

When you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed yet committed to a sea change, you need a thinking partner to help you see the wood for the trees. An impartial sounding board with years in the seat and war stories to share. Don't lose sight of the bigger picture, and don't do it alone.

Grow. Helping businesses find clarity and the confidence to lead with it.



The Growth Formula is an easy-to-understand model that sets out what you need to master to build a truly successful, profitable, and enjoyable business.



You the Leader

This is about your effectiveness as a leader. The success of your business is directly proportional to your capabilities as a leader.

Setting Direction

This is about disciplined thinking and having clarity on where you are taking your business to, and ensuring everyone in the business is clear and aligned around this direction.

Winning Team

Your business is bigger than just you. To build a successful business, you need a talented and engaged team of people.

Operational Excellence

This is about disciplined action to ensure everything is working in your business to allow it to grow without drama.



Build your business with **clarity and confidence.**



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