

# Does my small business need a business development manager?

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As a new business, finding clients is probably your top priority. Without paying clients you won't be able to keep the lights on — never mind buying that villa in the Bahamas.

That said, as important as bringing clients through the door is to your survival, it's only one piece of the puzzle. You also have to find ways to strengthen your business and make it sustainable in the long term. And that's where business development comes in.

Most big businesses hire a full-time business development manager.

But what if you're a startup or small business?

Should you bite the bullet and hire one too? Or is a business development manager someone you can do without, at least in the short term?

## What is business development?

Business development expert [Scott Pollack](#) defines business development as "...the creation of long-term value for an organization from customers, markets, and relationships." More simply, business development means finding ways to make your business more successful.

Of course, success looks different to different businesses. That said, most business development strategies focus on one or more of the following:

- Increasing profits
- Developing new products
- Expanding into new markets
- Building strategic partnerships with other businesses

The end goal is to make sure your business keeps thriving for many years to come.

## So what does a business development manager do?

A business development manager is the person in charge of growing your business and making it better. Their responsibilities include:

- Looking for new business opportunities, such as:
  - New markets your business could start servicing
  - New products you could develop that would make your customers' lives easier
  - [Upselling and cross-selling](#) opportunities
  - Trends you could take advantage of
- Looking for new leads and getting in touch with them
- Developing relationships with complementary businesses. Run an advertising agency? The business development manager could connect with design studios, PR agencies and printers
- Looking at ways to make the business more efficient and organised
- Building and improving the sales pipeline and setting targets
- Setting goals, creating action plans and executing them

## What skills does a business development manager bring to the table?

Business development spans a wide breadth of activities. So, business development managers need a bevy of skills. Most have a [business qualification](#) and a background in sales or marketing. But to be successful, you must also have the right attitude and soft skills.

In particular:

- **Communication skills**  
[Computan](#)'s VP of business development [Sajeel Qureshi](#) [says](#):  
  
"A business development director is one of the first points of contact someone has with the company, so it's vitally important to be able to explain what the company does and how it can help in simple and digestible terms."  
  
More to the point, business development managers speak to new people every day. So they must be confident, friendly and have [the right body language](#)
- **People skills**  
Building long-lasting relationships is key to successful business development. So a good business development manager isn't just an effective communicator. They also practise [active listening](#) and work well with others.
- **Negotiation skills**  
Making you understand the importance of breaking into a new market? Convincing a supplier to offer a discount? Showing another business the upside of partnering up? It's all in a day's work for a business development manager. Which means they have to be persuasive, assertive and good problem-solvers
- **An eye for the big picture**  
Good business development managers think strategically and plan ahead.  
  
More importantly, they have a knack for identifying patterns and trends. So, they can spot opportunities you could take advantage of before your competitors

## Why hire a business development manager?

The biggest advantage of hiring a business development manager is that you'll have someone working on business development full-time.



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When you're starting out, chances are you'll spend most of your time planning, knocking on doors and building relationships to get your business off the ground. Which means you'll be the one doing the business development manager's job.

But as your business grows you'll probably be too busy running the business. Which means that, as business development becomes more important, you'll have less time for it.

This is an all-too-common problem. When the [British Business Bank](#) surveyed 500 small business owners, for instance, one in three said they wanted to grow their business. But none of them knew how to go about this, let alone which strategies would work best.

Of course, a business development manager is more than just someone to pick up your slack. If you hire the right person, you'll also benefit from:

- Their network of contacts, which they could use to help your business grow
- Skills you might not excel at yourself. For example, not everyone is comfortable doing sales
- A fresh perspective. This can be especially helpful because your business is your baby. Which means you may have trouble being objective or taking tough decisions

And the flipside?

Business development managers cost money. The average business development manager's salary is [\\$67,850 in the US](#) and [£34,000 \(approximately \\$42,500\)](#) in the UK.

## So, should i hire a business development manager or can i do without one?

[Sixty percent of new businesses](#) don't make it through their third year. So, unless you want your small business to become another statistic, it's crucial that you take business development seriously.

But does this mean hiring a business development manager is a must? Or can you get away without one?

Well, there's no easy answer.

Clearly, an experienced business development manager can bring a lot of value to your business. And according to business development coach [David Regler](#), hiring one should be a question of "when" not "if".

In the meantime, if you can't afford one just yet, there are alternatives:

- Make business development a priority and hand off or outsource other time-consuming tasks. For example, a [virtual assistant](#) could free you up by handling more of your admin
- Promote in-house. Have a staff member who's especially great at sales? Or someone who always seems to be on top of the latest trends? They could take on more business development responsibilities and work their way up to manager
- Consider hiring a freelancer or independent contractor. This way, you'll pay only for what you use. And you won't have to spend money on employers' liability insurance, medical insurance (if you're US-based) and other employee perks

Now get back to work.

That villa in the Bahamas won't pay for itself.

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### About the author



André is an award-winning copywriter who's worked with the likes of Amazon, ClearScore, Hiscox,

MileIQ, and LV=. Find out more about him and his work on [maverickwords.com](#)