Opportunity Filter Sheet

LoftyBiz 032 · Say No to Shiny Opportunities

Every yes is a no to something else. Use this sheet before you start anything new, and to close doors that no longer earn their place.

1. Write your one goal for the next 12 months, as a number

My one goal (a number, not five goals)

2. Idea parking lot — nothing starts before 30 days

If an idea is truly good, it will still be good in a month. Most ideas do not survive the wait.

Idea	Date added	Review date (+30 days)	Who suggested it	Decision (yes / no / later)

3. Four filter questions

If any answer is no, or you cannot answer question 4, the answer is no.

- [ ] 1. Does it move my one goal?
- [ ] 2. Does it serve the same customers, using what we are already best at?
- [ ] 3. Could it earn at least three times what the same hours would earn in my core business?
- [ ] 4. What will I stop doing to make room for it?

4. Is it an opportunity, or a problem in disguise?

If this idea is an escape from a hard problem in the core business, fix the constraint in your core first.

Notes

5. Say no kindly, and keep the door open

A short script you can use

“Thank you, it’s a great idea. This year we’re focused on [your one goal].
Can I come back to you in [a later month]?”

People respect a clear no much more than a slow, uncertain maybe.

Close the doors you've already opened

List every line, rank profit per hour, then close with a date

1. List every product line, with three numbers

Revenue, gross profit, and how many of your own hours it takes each week. Then work out profit per owner hour and rank the lines.

Product line	Revenue / month	Gross profit / month	Your hours / week	Profit per owner hour	Open this today?

Profit per owner hour = gross profit ÷ (your hours × 4.33 weeks), or use the Sheet, which does this for you. The worked example also shows the simpler video figures (gross profit ÷ weekly hours).

2. The magic-wand question

"If I were starting today, would I open this?"

If the honest answer is no, do not keep it just because you already paid for the equipment. That money is gone either way.

3. Close with a date and a plan

Set a closing date, tell regular customers, and send them somewhere good. Then put the freed time into your best line. Never close the boring business that pays you to chase a fun one. Close the fun one.

Line to close	Closing date	What you will tell customers	Where you will send them

4. Put the freed time into your best line

Hours freed each week: _____ Hours I will put into my best line: _____

My best line is: _____

What I will do with that time: _____

Where owners often slip

1. Keeping a line because of what you have already spent.
2. Closing the steady business that pays you, to chase the exciting one.
3. Closing slowly, with no date, so it drags on for a year.

Worked examples · and this week's actions

Illustrative figures, not promises or forecasts

Example A · Grace · catering company in Nairobi

Starting point: 8 corporate lunch contracts, each worth about $700 a month. In 3 months she was offered 6 new opportunities (a juice bar, cooking classes, a food truck, reselling kitchen equipment, and two more).
One goal: grow from 8 to 20 corporate lunch contracts in 12 months. She parked every idea for 30 days. After 30 days, 4 of the 6 ideas no longer excited her. The food truck failed questions 1 and 4: it would have taken 15 hours a week, and nothing would have been stopped to make room. The juice bar was partly an escape from slow sales — the bottleneck in the core.
After 6 months, those 15 hours a week went into calling and visiting offices. Contracts grew from 8 to 17. Nine new contracts at $700 each is about $6,300 more every month, from the business she already had.

Example B · Joy · print shop in Manila

Starting point: about $18,000 revenue a month, 6 product lines (including a café corner, a phone-repair counter, wedding invitations, T-shirt printing and a delivery service), 70 hours a week, thin profit.
Profit per owner hour: business printing $3,600 gross profit for 20 hours = $180 an hour. Phone repairs $400 for 10 hours = $40 an hour. Café $300 for 15 hours = $20 an hour. Delivery lost $100 a month.
Magic-wand answer was no for the café, the repairs and the delivery service. She sold the café equipment for $3,000, and referred phone repairs to a neighbour who pays a 10% referral fee. She freed 35 hours a week and spent 20 of them visiting restaurants and offices to sell business printing.
After 4 months: closing 3 lines cut revenue by $5,200 and gross profit by $600. Business printing grew from $8,400 to $14,000 a month, adding about $2,400 of gross profit. Net: gross profit up about $1,800 a month, revenue higher than before, plus $3,000 cash from the equipment, and she works 50 hours instead of 70.

Do this this week

- [ ] Write your one goal for the next 12 months as a number.
- [ ] Start an idea parking lot, and put every idea you're considering on it with a date 30 days from now.
- [ ] Run your biggest current idea through the four questions.
- [ ] List every product line with its revenue, gross profit and your hours.
- [ ] Pick one door to close, with a date.
- [ ] Keep the parking lot and the line list in one place (Systex, our own product, can hold them: loftybiz.net).

These are examples, not promises. Results vary. This is general business education, not financial, legal or tax advice.
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