

How to Shut Down a Business



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Hi, friends—

The last few weeks have brought about a series of life changes and transitions, pushing me into quiet mode to focus on the essentials and gain clarity in my life. This has meant that I've taken a hiatus from social media and several social events and have traded public life for spending more time at home, taking long walks, and making meditation a habit.

Preparing for the end of the year always has me in reflective mode, analyzing the highs and lows of the year. The other day, I spoke with a friend and coach about how much transformation has been required of me this year, leading me to realize that selling my business made me a better person, daughter, sister, aunt, partner, and friend.

By far, my best business decisions along my entrepreneurship journey have been knowing when to put a business to rest. While I believe in grit, perseverance, hustle, and resilience, I also believe in not draining oneself to save face.

Can Stop. Will Stop.

I shut down and sold The Plug after seven years of building one of the first Black long-form, data-driven tech news and business publications to syndicate on The Bloomberg Terminal. Our work was a staple in business communities, and our data sets drove discussions across the big Fortune players and venture firms reshaping their thesis around who gets to build venture-backed startups.

I'm proud of the work that allowed me to employ seasoned journalists and top-notch researchers.

And when I felt that we'd reached our peak and I was just flat out tired of the late-night-early mornings and the toll the work was having on my mental and emotional health and relationships, it was time to say goodbye.

A Checklist for Shutting Down Your Business

If you're considering pivoting your story and want a free pass or permission to say, "Hey, I think I hate this now, and I'm ready to do something new or perhaps do nothing for a while," here's my simplified rule of thumb for shutting down your business with dignity:

1. MOXIE

It can be tempting to keep going long after you know it's time to throw in the towel, pay off your debts, and get a new gig to support your livelihood.

We don't want to feel like failures, but lessons and blessings are still a way forward. You tried and did all you could, making you a stronger thinker, leader, and problem-solver.

Best of all? You can do it all over again now with the wisdom that you didn't have.

2. CREATE YOUR PRELIMINARY CHECKLIST

Start customizing your checklist of what needs to be done to effectively and efficiently flip the switch on your business. Here's a look at what my list looked like:

- Inform investors
- Talk taxes with my CPA
- Inform partners
- Complete books
- Speak with my attorney about dissolution documents
- Dissolve corporate structure
- Have a conversation with my team and contractors — provide adequate notice (30-60 days if possible)
- Cancel renewals on all software
- Once paid, cancel all credit cards
- Complete transfers from the business bank account
- Prepare a departure email for all stakeholders, clients, and customers
- Turn off my social media story comments and put my phone on DND
- Take 1-2 weeks off to process, rest, recover, and care for myself
- BONUS: Write a post-mortem of lessons learned

3. MAKE A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OR DON'T

Because I did so much of my work in public, and we had a very public audience, it made sense to write a Dear John letter. I used this letter to thank my team, highlight our wins and work, and say my goodbyes, and share a bit about my intention to rest and then get back to work and seek new opportunities.

Is this necessary? Some people won't care, but the vast majority did. I received voice notes, text messages, and emails for a week straight from people thanking me for my work and ensuring my mental health and some people even offered to help me pay my bills (unnecessary, but hey, the thought counts). This part can be overwhelming, so I silenced my phone, emails, and social media.

4. UPDATE YOUR BRAND AND RESUME

Whether you're immediately looking for new opportunities or not, start creating a brand for yourself that highlights all that you were able to achieve with your business. Turn your LinkedIn profile, Twitter/X, and even IG into a master marketing tool. Before shutting things down, I hired a professional resume and LinkedIn writer to prepare me just in case an opportunity came across my desk that would be hard to turn down.

5. GRIEVE

Shutting down a business is not an easy choice or decision. Something you've poured your heart and soul into for years, even money, can be daunting and deflating. Take the time you need to nurture your mental and emotional health. Whether you count it as a failure, a pivot, or didn't believe in what you were building anymore, all of it is valid and still heartbreaking. I escaped to the Bahamas a few days after my announcement, sat on a resort, learned to make chocolate, took a rum factory tour, and slept a great deal.

Know that this isn't the end. As long as there is still breath in your body, you can do it all over again as many times as you'd like or have the capacity for.

RECOMMENDED READING

[Success and the Imaginary Rules You Live By](#) | Dr. Julie Gurner

[From Unicorns to Zombies: Tech Start-Ups Run Out of Time and Money](#) | NYT

Simplifying the Hustle to Cultivate a Beautifully Ambitious Life

-[Sherrell](#)



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