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Your Database Design

The information given here is given in strict confidence and shall not be divulged to any employee or other person within your business without your consent. This is important, since we wish you to extract an honest viewpoint from you about yourself, how you see the company and how you understand your employees. Misinformation at such an early stage is extremely detrimental to the success of this project. We have no objection to you saying nothing (if you do not wish to answer a question, simply say so, if you only want to answer part of it, cross part of it out so we can see you prefer not to answer); but we will find that misleading information will steer us down the wrong path! Below each question or statement is a box where you can fill in your answers and comments, go to top left of box and click with the mouse to start your input, the box will grow according to the amount of text you insert. This will form part of the initial process of the Feasibility Study. If you have read the processes online from our website, then you will be familiar with the various steps needed in order to accomplish your wish. To reiterate:

Feasibility Study – where we extract information from you in order to see whether we can provide a realistic solution for you that will see actual savings, either in time or costs or both.

Analysis and Prototype Coding – This part is where we go away, rub a few brain cells together and work out a plan of attack, work through how we are going to approach the project, deliberate as to how the project will interact with users of the system amongst a whole host of other necessary steps. Once we have our plan in place, we present that to you as the client and work out a plan to that will fit in with the current operation of the business. Also, we often produce a mock-up of the beginning stages of the database to show you, so that you are able to mull it over and provide feedback. As they say "a visual representation paints a thousand words", well someone should have said it!

Design Process and Advanced Coding – Here is where we delve deeper into the project by fleshing out the system, supplying operational screens, menus, lists, fully optimised tables, adding required functionality and implementing any feedback derived from previous revisions. The skeleton produced in the previous step is turned into a fully operational solution, adhering to the design specification and meeting all objectives. There may be several drafts for client perusal and feedback installed on the clients system in order to ensure correctness.

Implementation and Debugging – Okay, a bit of a technical term, debugging, but the process of ironing out all the niggly little aspects that were not attended to in the previous step of coding. We generally install a fully operational solution on site, prepare all users and ensure the system works are designed. This is where we find any problematic issues relating to client hardware/software and need to make changes or upgrades to hardware, where necessary. Although we would normally carry out a site survey earlier on in the project, often we have been unable to gain access to some PC's due to limitations imposed upon us. Any necessary changes would not be a surprise since we would have given the client a hardware specification, either written or verbally, that all equipment would be expected to meet.

We hope that this will assist you in seeing that the more information we receive from you, the closer we can get to fulfilling your requirements and being able to understand how your business operates. We endeavor to change as little as possible, the fundamental way your business is run, only to implement changes that will be time-saving, cost-saving and be of benefit to all involved.

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1   About Us

1.1   **In this section you will tell us about your company, how it operates and what skills you have amongst your staff. It will allow us to understand how you operate your business and where you're headed. So, please be verbose with this one as we will not get to know you or your business without you helping us with this valuable information.**

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2   About Our Business

Although this may sound the same as the first question, it's not, simply because we need specific information, which we would assume you have not put above, so we'll ask you some questions here and your answers will give us a deeper insight into your business.

2.1   How are you managing your time currently? Do you re-evaluate your priorities on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis? Where do you see your time is less than optimally taken up? If you were to wave a magic wand, what would you like to change? Is your profit sufficient to compensate for your time and effort invested?

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2.2   If you have staff, are they "on the same page as you"? Do you exert them beyond what they really want to give you? Do you compensate them sufficiently? Are they happy working for you? Do you expect any to leave in the next year or so? Do you see growth in your company, necessitating the need for additional staff?

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2.3   Do you have a firm hold on how much your services/sales cost you? If so, how? If not, how do you compensate for that? Is your profit margin as you expect? What is your percentage of time charged for each employee and the overall figure? Are the administration costs high? If so, any idea why? What are your five top value outgoings?

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2.4   Could the business run without you, for: a) one day; b) one week; c) one month; d) three months; e) longer? Why? How? If you walked away today from your business, would it crumble and die? What value do you place on your business if you sold up today? Has your turnover increased over the past: a) year; b) two years; c) three years; d) since you started? By what percentage?

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3 About your Competitors

Ok, so everyone has competitors, but please analyze them with the following questions

3.1   **Do you know who your local competitors are? Do you know who your national competitors are? Are the competition taking a "lion's share" of the business? Is there any reason why you cannot increase your share? Do you know why they dominate the market?**

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3.2   **In line with the question prior, do you devote enough time, effort and money to marketing? What is your marketing budget? What feedback do you get from the marketing? How much do you spend on advertising? What is the return rate on your advertising?**

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4   Your Routine

Essentially, we are trying to ascertain what each person does during a normal working day, so we can better understand if we can, and how we can, make things better.

4.1   Starting with yourself and all management positions, briefly explain how a day is set out. Include any time that is outside "office hours" that is used to maintain your business.

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4.2   Now, for all the employees that work for you, do the same.

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4.3   Do you have any outside contractors that perform duties to assist your business?

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4.4   Going back to your routine, can you identify where you could improve, either a time-saving measure or a cost-cutting measure?

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4.5   Again, do the same as above for your employees.

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5   Costs

Here we have a mean question, because, we are asking you to value what you think the savings you've identified above to be worth? This can be tricky, but if you do not value the time you would save or the costs you would cut back on, then you can have no incentive to do so! As a general rule, we calculate it form an annual term. By example, if you have too many staff, and by you manage to reassign their tasks in order to reduce the staff, the value is the annual salary of the staff reduced! Or, if you did the same but utilized the additional staff in other areas such as bringing in more business, then the additional turnover could be estimated and you have a value again.

5.1   State the value you place on implementing changes you have noted. If there are none, we can use the information you've given previously, to see whether there is any gain to be had from instigating some time-saving solutions.

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5.2   If you've identified a value, what value do you place on getting someone to make those changes?

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5.3   If you haven't identified any time-saving or cost-saving ideas, what value do you place on getting someone to find out if it's possible?

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5.4   Silly question, but we have to ask as it gives us a little insight into what you're thinking! If we can identify and implement solutions that enable your business to save 10,000 per annum, how much is that worth to you?

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6   Your Priorities

This is where we get to know what makes you excited. Simple questions, but powerful answers that reveal much about a person. Which do you value the most?

6.1   **Money or Power?**   _____

6.2   **Time or Money?**   _____

6.3   **Big things or Little things?**   _____

6.4   **Politics or Religion?**   _____

6.5   **Staff or Customers?**   _____

6.6   **Family or Work?**   _____

6.7   **New Customers or Old Customers?**   _____

6.8   **Health or Wealth?**   _____

6.9   **Your Children or Your Parents?**   _____

6.10 **Loyalty or Respect?**   _____

6.11 **Honesty or Tact?**   _____

7   Anything Else

An opportunity to freely write what you wish. What you are hoping to be the outcome. Any timeframes. Things you're expecting. Things you're not expecting. What effect you think this project will have on you, your staff, and your business. Basically, anything that causes you concern or ideas you may have for making a success of the project.

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