

75 Steps to Start-Up Success

Hundreds of thousands of small businesses start up each year throughout the world - and a similar number cease trading every year too!



A lot of people come across ideas, due to their own personal circumstances. They have a particular problem, it may very well be a unique problem to them, they then think up a solution to that problem. They then tell their nearest and dearest about their problem and their solution.

Their nearest and dearest, tell them that it is an excellent idea and that if it was a business, they would do really well. They then mention it to another friend. That friend tells them that if the product was available, they would buy it.

So that's it, based on this information you think you have a business –
WRONG!

Based on many years of experience in business, combined with working for many small businesses in a mentoring and business support capacity - here is a list of the things that YOU must consider before starting a new business venture. I am not going to go into great detail on each of the points.

Reading this guide will save you time, effort, blood, sweat, tears and of course money!

A business can be broken down into 4 pillars – all of which are important for a strong foundation for future success. Hence the questions you will find in this document are split into these sections: Sales & Marketing, Operations, Resources and Finance.

Sales & Marketing

- Is the product or service unique, or are there any other people already doing it.
- If there are others doing it, what is different / special / unique about your version?
- Have you visited other people's websites / shops that are doing it, what was the experience like, what was poor, what could be improved?
- Have you considered the pricing of the product?
- How will you market the product / service?
- How will you get to the top of Google for the keywords that people are using? Do you know what keywords people are using to find you?
- How will you survive whilst sales levels are poor?
- Where will you market the products / services?
- Who is your target audience, and how will you attract them?
- There are a billion websites out there. Why will anyone come to yours?
 - What problem / problems does your solution sort out?
 - Have you discussed your solution with others that have that or a similar problem? Have they provided any input into the product / service design?
 - Have you done any independent focus groups to evaluate your ideas?
 - Have you considered what the competition will do once you have arrived?
 - Is it a regional product, or a global product?
 - Have you thought about trade shows, exhibitions? If so, have you budgeted for this?
 - Website traffic is key, how will you get it. What method will you use? Do you understand Pay Per Click and Google adwords?
 - Have you considered how long it will take to bring the idea to fruition, and what will be needed to do so?
 - How will you earn the trust and credibility of your customers?
 - Have you considered any PR - have you any budget for this?
 - Have you considered a newsletter? If so what will the content be?
 - Marketing is the key to success. Have you a serious budget for this?
 - Do you enjoy cold calling people? Will you need to cold call people?
 - Will you need to buy in mailing lists? Have you budgeted for this?

What lists will you buy, who are you going to target?

- Will you need samples to show people, if so what will this cost?
- Have you thought about a copywriter for your communication platform? Have you a budget for this?
- Have you done any customer questionnaires on what they are looking for in this sort of service / product, and what they may pay?
- Have you considered joint venturing with others?
- Can you get clients or customers before you officially start?
- Have you considered what free resources are available to possibly help you promote your business i.e. Facebook, YouTube?
- Is your new business seasonal? If so, do you have a window of opportunity which governs when you should start?
- Have you considered going along to networking groups to promote your business? Have you budgeted for the cost of membership and attendance fees?
- Have you considered using others to promote your products i.e. affiliates?

Operations

- What is your company structure: sole trader, partnership, limited, etc?
- Have you taken any legal advice?
- Have you thought about protecting your ideas?
- Is the domain name available that you want? If it has gone, what is on the websites that already have it?
- Have you done a comprehensive business plan, to include sales projections and cash flow forecasts?
- If you are selling a product, how will you distribute it?
- Have you set milestones for the business that you can measure?
- Do you need any licences to sell your goods? If so how long will it take to get them?
- If your new business has people and premises, it's up to you to ensure that everything and everyone is safe and meets health and safety legislation. Are you familiar with this?
- Have you considered who will answer the phones? Will you need a call answering service? Have you budgeted for this?
- Have you considered how you will deal with complaints, returns, faulty goods, and general customer service issues?
- Have you thought about who will be updating your website with new products / prices? Have you budgeted for this?

- Will you need to join a trade association or other official body? Have you budgeted for this?
- Do you need to be registered with the regard to data protection legislation?

- Your website will need hosting, have you budgeted for this?
- Have you considered whether to start from scratch, become a franchisee or buy an existing business?
- Will you need any record keeping systems or software? Have you budgeted for this?
- Have you considered how you will back up important information?

Resource

- Do you need any other people to help you? Admin, sales etc... What are your strengths and what are you weak at?
- What is your level of experience in business?
- How hard are you prepared to work to make things happen?
- How many hours per day / week / month are you going to spend on this business?
- Have you actually asked yourself what you want from your business? What are your personal and business goals?
- If you need staff, do you understand how to recruit people, and the laws surrounding staff employment?
- Are you familiar with up to date human resources practices?
- Will you need headed paper, business cards, and other stationery? Have you budgeted for this?
- Will you need mobile phones, photocopier, fax machine, and a PC? Is there a budget for these items?
- Have you considered whether the business needs to be geographically located?
- Have you considered how the business will function without you?
- Will you need terms and conditions drawn up for your suppliers? Have you budgeted for these?
- Do you have a plan B for income if your new business failed?
- What happens to your business when you go on holiday?

Finance

- How will you take payment for the products / services?
- Have you budgeted for a website? If so how much?
- Do you need to be registered for tax on sales?
- Have you taken any accountancy advice?
- Will you need to buy stock in advance if so how much will this cost?
- Have you done any research as to what grants and outside support are available through government funding
- Have you thought about what compulsory insurance products you may need and have you budgeted for them?
- Have you considered how you will actually pay yourself? Making sure you make the correct tax adjustments
- Have you considered which bank you may use? Do you know what the costs of business banking are?
- Is there a long lead time between selling an item, and getting paid? How will you pay people during this time?

Congratulations. You should now be in a position to know whether or not you have an idea that has the possibilities of business success. I hope you have benefited from this guide.

If you need help to take the next step – for help with generating a business plan or to review an existing plan, please contact us on startupguide@ukba.co.uk