



TOP TEN TIPS FOR STARTING YOUR BUSINESS

1. Have a plan. Know what resources are available to you. Do your research. Explore your contacts and use your network. Meet with people in your potential business arena. Know what it takes before you jump in.

2. Be creative. What makes your product better or different from anyone else's? Is your idea so innovative that it will break through all the ideas out there? Get some objective advice from some neutral people. Your friends will all think it is a great idea, but run the idea by others who are a little less subjective...their perspective might be invaluable and might offer a different perspective.

3. How much time do you have? Time management is a crucial skill for entrepreneurs. We no longer have the departments of marketing, accounting and legal behind us. We do it all. How much time do you have to create (and run) this business? Figure out what kind of time it will take to launch your concept. Think through each step before you launch will save on that precious commodity.

4. Define Your Target Audience and Communicate. Figure out who you are going to sell your product to and how. What is your message? Do you know how to find your target audience? What tools will you need to get that message to your target audience? Why should someone spend the money with you (rather than another, similar entrepreneur)? You must be able to practice the very fine art of selling effectively.

5. Over Deliver. Don't Over Promise. Great customer service will almost certainly lead to solid relationships. Going above and beyond should be practiced consistently. Treat every client as if they were gold. Your bottom line is the true reflection of your clients and their referrals. People do business with those they know, like and trust, so when you do receive great feedback, use it to your advantage. Testimonials are great advertising tools: in print, in store and in social media.

6. You Don't Know It All. Tap into your network and create an advisory board, or at least a few trusted advisors. Mentors can be friends, family members, even existing clients. Capitalize on the wisdom of people who are experienced in one facet or another of what it takes to make it as an entrepreneur. Even if you think you know all there is to know about your field, use someone with a similar background and expertise to get feedback.

7. Leverage all your assets. We are not just talking about your finances. Who are your key contacts, references, business relationships and associations? Think about how to leverage them.

8. Ride the technology wave. Learn how to use social media and any new communications devices. These tools help your business relationships and they can really boost your efficiency.

9. Spend some time on research. Spend time learning your business. Who are your clients? What do they do, how do they think? Learn about your industry as well. Changes in your industry probably occur regularly (technology, constantly) and you should do your best to keep on top of the news.

10. Motivate. Find a supportive group like B.I.G. (Believe, Inspire, Grow) to help motivate you. Lack of support can really slow you down—this includes a lack of confidence, self belief or motivation. Don't give up. Build relationships; share your ideas and thoughts with others. Most importantly, stay focused on a tangible goal, one that is not too far in your future.