

Tips for Starting A Business

Starting a business can be overwhelming; it's hard to know where to start. There are a lot of steps to take and decisions to make. We're here to help. Our list of Tips for Starting A Business can help you get started, and our Business Bankers are always available at branches near you to provide further direction and support every step of the way.

Step 1. Write a Business Plan

1. **Executive Summary.** Short synopsis of the entire plan. Include concept, financial features, financial requirements, current business position, and achievements thus far (patents, prototypes, contracts, etc.)
2. **Market Analysis.** Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of competitors as compared to yours and identify gaps for your unique selling proposition.
3. **Company Description.** Detail your target market and your unique value proposition. Define your industry (type of operation – wholesale, retail, manufacturing, etc.) and legal structure.
4. **Product or Service.** Describe how your product or service is targeted to your audience. Based on your market analysis describe how your product or service that stands out from others in your market.
5. **Organization & Management.** Describe how the business will function on a daily basis. Responsibilities, personnel, capital requirements, etc.
6. **Marketing & Sales Strategies.** Develop your marketing and sales strategies based on the market analysis. Determine the total potential market and the target within that market, then your tactical ways of reaching that audience.
7. **Funding Request.** Determine what seed money you will need to get your business off the ground. Do you have the capital you require, or are you going to look to borrow money from a bank or institution or from family and friends?
8. **Financials.** Know how to categorize your costs so that you can plan accordingly. You will have: up-front costs (hardware, software, furniture, inventory), fixed costs (payroll, rent, utilities), and variable costs (raw materials, production, etc.)
9. **Real Estate.** Is your business going to be dependent on foot-traffic? Determine the best real estate option for your business. (High traffic locations typically go for a premium, but will drive more customers.)

Step 2 Seek Expert Advice

1. Have you registered your business with the appropriate city and state governing bodies?
2. Do you have a relationship with an accountant who can help with tax planning?
3. Do you have a relationship with an attorney who knows your industry?
4. Have you consulted with a financial advisor who can help you review your financial projections?

Step 3 Acquire Funding

How will you acquire funding?

1. **From family and friends.** Have you gotten everything in writing and established firm equity / repayment terms?
2. **From a loan or a line of credit.** Are you personally liable or is your business?
3. **From investors.** Do you have a clear agreement with firm equity / repayment terms?

Step 4 Banking Needs

1. Do you have a relationship with a business banker?
2. Have you opened a business checking account?
3. Do you have a business savings account?
4. If you are starting a new retail business, do you have credit /debit cards payment processing?

Step 5 Protection Needs

1. Do you have a relationship with an insurance agent? Have you secured the appropriate and relevant insurance?
 - a. Property Insurance?
 - b. Liability Insurance?
 - c. Worker's Compensation Insurance?
 - d. Auto Insurance?
 - e. Excess Liability Coverage?
 - f. Life Insurance?
 - g. Health Insurance?

Step 6 Local Support

How you identified local resources to help you? Here are some ideas to get you started

1. US Small Business Administration website and local offices
2. Better Business Bureau website and BBB networking events
3. Your alma mater
4. Local small business community
5. Subscriptions to small business publications
6. IRS small business center