



Small Business Entrepreneur Tips

Tips for Before you Start.....

Be Educated, Be Smart

- **Know your resources**
 - **The Small Business Development Center** provides comprehensive business assistance and resources and it's **FREE!** Consult with them before opening any small business. www.wsfdc.org .
 - **Camas Washougal Chamber of Commerce**, www.cwchamber.com, can provide demographic information, business connections, and business event info.
 - **Downtown Camas Association**, www.downtowncamas.com, can provide downtown lease space availabilities, connections with other businesses and merchants, downtown information, historic preservation guidelines, B&O tax incentive information, event information, etc.
 - Industry organizations and tradeshows
- **Do your homework!**
 - Know if what you are offering is needed in area
 - Know area demographics and target audience
 - Do feasibility studies as needed
 - Know your industry!
- **Know who you're dealing with**
 - Always get references for partners, employees, contractors
 - Only go into business with those you know you can trust and are a good fit
 - Always get business transactions in writing! Even if you trust the other party.
 - Always have integrity.

Plan, Plan, Plan!

- **Do a Business Plan!**—keeps you focused and helps you see issues or needed changes more clearly; update as needed to keep business on track, fresh.
 - For information and templates go to <http://www.wsfdc.org/business-plans> or <http://www.business-plan.com/outline.html>
- Have a clear budget and financial plan. Use consultants as needed. Have a program in place before you start!
- Don't rush things and don't take on too much.

Be Realistic

- Weigh excitement for new venture with reality.
- Is it possible to accomplish with your available resources (time, money, help)?

- Be prepared for:
 - Lots of extra time required
 - Lots of money needed—have reserves and don't expect immediate take home income. Monies made in the first few years are usually reinvested directly back into the business.
 - It will take longer to be profitable than you think! Think years not months.

Be Different

- What sets you apart? Why would someone come to you instead of another similar business?
- Do what you love and make it your own—add something unique that you will be remembered for (product with a twist, outstanding customer service, extended hours, extra services)

Be Patient and Persistent

- Businesses are not full grown overnight. It takes years!
- Ups and downs are perfectly normal in business.
- Keep at it and learn from your mistakes. Don't give up! Get guidance as needed.

Be Consistent and Nice Does Matter!

- Have integrity and do what you say you will do. Customers will give you their loyalty when they can rely on you.
- In addition to consistent quality products and/or services, you MUST have outstanding customer service. You market your business with each transaction.
- Have an honest desire to help and be kind...your best marketing tool is word of mouth by a satisfied and happy customer.

Brand and Market Your Business

- Use branding that represents your business
- When marketing, be consistent and as frequent as possible to the right audience(s) for your business
- Host events. Events create a different and more meaningful connection to your business.
- Initial Must haves/Must dos in business:
 - Logo, business cards, website
 - Facebook page (and Twitter for some businesses), see [Social Media Guidelines](#)
 - Give donations to local charitable auctions/functions
- Consult a marketing professional/firm for help.
- Contact your local media representatives for further info on what avenues would best serve your business.
 - Camas Washougal Post Record, www.camaspostrecord.com/contact/
 - The Columbian, www.columbian.com/contact/
 - Vancouver Voice, www.vanvoice.com/advertising
 - Vancouver Business Journal, www.vbjusa.com/advertise-with-us/
 - North Bank Magazine, www.northbankmagazine.com

Be Involved

- Connections with other businesses and the community brings:
 - Increased business with your connections

- Referrals from your connections
- Help with concerns—your peers know a lot!
- Opportunity to cross promote or advertise together
- Being educated about other local businesses which improves customer service
- Good will—don't underestimate
- Ways to get connected:
 - Networking groups
 - Local Connections , <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/C-W-Local-Connections/151883851518491?sk=wall>
 - WIN (Women in Networking) meetings, <http://www.womeninnetworkingnw.com/>
 - Trade groups
 - Business association meetings
 - Chamber luncheons
 - After Hours networking events
 - Local committees
 - Merchant groups
 - Group events
 - Go to other businesses' grand openings
 - Support local businesses around you
 - Call the Downtown Camas Association, 360-516-0600, for more info.