

Sage One

sage

# StartUp Guide

Everything you need to  
start up a small business



An Enterprise Nation book  
[www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)

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# Who this guide is for...

This guide is for anyone considering or starting a business.

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You may have been thinking about how you can make a living from a particular passion, hobby or skill. Perhaps you're working a day job and already making sales on the side – now you want to take it to the next level. Maybe you haven't hit upon the right idea yet; you just know in your heart that you want to be your own boss.

This Guide offers all the tools, tips and templates you need to succeed. It'll help you find an idea, spot a gap in the market and start your own small business. Doing so will be one of the best moves you've ever made!

# About the Author

Emma Jones is a business expert, author and founder of small business community Enterprise Nation. Her books include *Working 5 to 9*, *Go Global: How to take your business to the world* and *Turn Your Talent Into a Business*.

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Following a five-year career at an international accounting firm, Emma started her first business at 27. That business was sold 18 months later, and the experience led to Emma's next venture, Enterprise Nation.

Its website ([www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)) was launched in 2006 and became the most popular site for home business owners in the UK, attracting over 100,000 visitors each month.

In seven years, Enterprise Nation has grown into a community of over 75,000 homegrown businesses that find help and support on its website, in its books and at live events. In 2011, the company gave away over £10,000 in funding to UK start-ups, and has recently launched a premium membership scheme, which helps its members promote their businesses and take their venture to the next level.

Emma is also a co-founder of StartUp Britain, a national campaign to encourage more people to start a business.

Emma was awarded an MBE for services to enterprise in July 2012.

# About Sage One

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Since 1981, Sage (UK) Limited has been at the heart of the British economy and over 830,000 UK companies currently use its software to run their business. 1 in 3 people in the UK are paid using Sage payroll software and a third of the FTSE-100 use Sage too.

Sage One is the cloud-based accounts and payroll service created specifically for start-ups and small businesses like yours. We've stripped out all the jargon and simplified each process so that anyone can use the software without any prior knowledge or training.

As everything is hosted online, you can access Sage One from anywhere with an internet connection giving you ultimate freedom and flexibility to work whenever and wherever you like.

There's no need to install any software on your machine or worry about losing your data as it's always backed up by us on our secure servers. Being in the cloud means it's always up-to-date too.

Best of all, free 24hr telephone and email support from our UK-based and award-winning Customer Support Team is included in your monthly subscription from just £5 + VAT per month, making it the best all-round service for start-ups and small businesses.

Find out more and start your FREE 30 day trial of Sage One today at [uk.sageone.com](https://uk.sageone.com)

# Let's Get Started

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There has never been a better time to start a business and in 2012 record numbers of people did just that. A survey called the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor revealed the highest number of people starting a business since research began in 1999. This was closely followed by data from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills showing the number of small businesses having increased to 4.8 million at the start of 2012 – a record high.

Why is this happening? Simple: because it's now perfectly possible to start and grow a successful business

- in your spare time
- from home
- on a budget
- with help from friends and others.

In this guide, I'll show you how it's done.

People in their thousands are spotting gaps in the market or turning their hobbies into a successful venture. They are embracing free or low-cost technology to promote themselves and make sales, with a good number of these sales coming from overseas customers. Having access to the internet means you can start a business on a Monday and be trading with the world by Wednesday.

If you'd like to experience the same sense of independence and excitement, all you have to do is follow some basic steps: come up with an idea, do some research and marketing, offer good customer service – and you're in business!

In the following pages I'll walk you through everything that's involved in doing this successfully.

Emma Jones @emmaljones

# Guidelines for Preparation

## Part I: Preparing



# 1. Coming up with an idea

Ingredient number one: a business idea! Many people tell me they would like to start a business but what's holding them back is not having an idea. It's easy to come up with one. Ask yourself these three questions:

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## 1. Is there a gap in the market?

Have you tried to buy something that you just can't find? Could others be looking for the same thing? If so, this presents a market opportunity.

## 2. What is my passion/hobby/skill?

Many people are turning what they love into a way of making a living. Best of all, when you work on what you enjoy, doing it never really feels like work. Are you a dab hand at design? Have an eye for photography? A head for figures? These skills and hobbies can easily be turned into a business.

## 3. Is there something someone else is doing that I can do better myself?

If you've bought something and been unimpressed, why not step in, set up a business, and provide a better offer? Many good ideas stem from spotting products and services that can simply be improved upon or offered for less.

Your idea will develop over time. Don't be surprised if in 12 months' time it looks different to when you started out. This is okay. Business ideas tend to get refined over time; your offer will get sharper the more experience you gain in the marketplace. What's important is to get started with the beginnings of idea – there'll be time to develop it as you get feedback from customers and input from others.

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# 1. Coming Up With an Idea

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## Niche is nice

When coming up with your idea, bear in mind that niche businesses are often ideal. Meeting the needs of a very well-defined audience helps keep your efforts focused and your offering clear in a crowded market. It also means success should naturally consolidate itself. So rather than just selling clothes, why not become the go-to place for men's blazers, and instead of offering food to suit all palates, how about re-inventing pizza so it offers a balanced meal to consumers interested in healthy eating?

With a niche business:

- **you keep marketing costs low**, as your audience is well-defined; you know where your audience are and understand the kind of marketing messages to which they will respond
  - **customer loyalty remains high**, as you become the expert in your field or the only provider of certain products; customers will want to stay with you and benefit from the specialist product or service you offer.
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## Friends and family focus group

Talk to family and friends and ask them where they think your talents lie.

They might just help you discover your Business idea in an area you hadn't thought of.

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Whatever the idea, good ones tend to be based on what you enjoy, what people will buy and something that improves on what's already available. Think about how you can fashion your idea so it has a clear purpose for a clearly defined audience.

## An idea as part of the package

If you're not able to settle on a viable idea of your own, consider buying into someone else's idea. You can do so through a franchise or signing up as a partyplan consultant and/or direct sales agent. Benefit from being your own boss whilst having the support of a central team and the proven idea that comes with it!



“Keeping an eye on what I spend money on and when has without a doubt been a major reason why we are still in business after three years. You have to know how much money is in the bank, when money needs to go out and when you can expect money to come in.”

Jules Quinn (The \*TeaShed)

## 2. Research the market

You have your idea. Turning it into a business requires some research, followed by a straightforward exercise in building that research into a plan. Here's how to go about it.

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First, **research your potential customers**, the competition and a price point by visiting competitors' sites, online trade sites/forums, reading reports, and seeking intelligence from experts.

Look for data and comments that will answer the following questions:

- What is the number of potential customers you can serve, and how do these customers like to be served?
- What are their core characteristics and spending patterns, and who are their key influencers?
- Who is currently serving your market?
- Where are your potential customers going for their goods and services?
- What do they like about what they're getting and, more importantly, what do they dislike (as this opens up opportunities for you to improve on the status quo)?

In view of the above, what price can you charge for your product/service?

Price yourself at a rate that's competitive with other providers in the market, that takes into account the amount of time, personal service and added value you offer, and that will turn a profit at the end of the day.

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### What am I worth?

How much do you think customers or clients would pay for your product or service? Take a look at how similar offerings are priced and talk to people about how much they'd be willing to pay. Then talk to suppliers to check you can source materials and deliver at a price that covers your costs. Since starting a business from home (which I recommend you do!) will save you lots of money, you can pass some of these savings onto your customers. It will give you an edge over other businesses. But don't undercharge for the expertise and knowledge you offer. Only consider charging less for work that will reflect well on your business and boost your reputation, perhaps in the media or with a particularly important customer.

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## 2. Research the market

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You can also source primary, or firsthand, data by conducting a survey or posing questions on social media channels.

### Survey tools

- SurveyMonkey [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)
- Wufoo [www.wufoo.com](http://www.wufoo.com)

### Social media channels

- Twitter [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)
- Facebook [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
- LinkedIn [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

Or, of course, you can hit the streets with a clipboard! Work on your own market research plan by completing Template 2.

### The name game

Coming up with an idea and carrying out research will get you thinking about what to name your business. If selling your knowledge, the company could be named after you – for example, ‘Emma Jones Advisory Services’. In which case, job done! But if you’re looking for something else, think of a name that:

- is easy to spell
- has an available domain name
- is not already registered with Companies House (use the free web-check service to access existing company names at [www.companieshouse.gov.uk](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk))
- people will remember

You might want to protect the name with a trademark.

If you get stuck, visit Enterprise Nation ([www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)) where you will find people who can help you: the site is buzzing with talented copywriters and wordsmiths.

## 2. Research the market

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### SWOT analysis

With your idea, and now your research in-hand that supports it, prepare a SWOT analysis. This stands for: **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats and looks as follows:

#### Strengths

##### What are my strengths?

- What can I do better than anyone else?
- What resources do I have?
- What's my unique selling point?

#### Weaknesses

##### What are my weaknesses?

- What should I avoid?
- Where do I lack skills?
- What might hinder my success?

#### Opportunities

##### What opportunities do I see?

- Does my idea tap into any trends?
- Are there any emerging technologies that could help my idea?
- Has there been anything in the news related to my idea?

#### Threats

##### What threats might I face?

- Who's my competition?
- Does changing technology affect my idea?

# 3. Write a Plan

A business plan will act as your map. It will guide the business from start to growth, with reference to milestones along the way.

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The plan will include information about how you intend to get started and what your ultimate objectives are – and how you aim to get from one to the other. You might want to start a business and sell it in a few years' time, or grow to a point where you wouldn't want to grow anymore.

Of course, you'll need to refer to resources: what you have already, what you'll need and how you'll pay for it.

So, after coming up with an idea and doing your research, writing the business plan is your first practical step to starting your business. With it under your belt you can say, "I'm off!"

Or **IMOFF**. It's an easy way to remember the headings to include in your business plan: **I**dea, **M**arket, **O**perations, **F**inancials and **F**riends. Have these as headings in your plan and you've taken a big step closer to becoming your own boss.

## Idea

What's your idea?

## Market

Who will be your customers or clients? And who is your competition?

## Operations

How will you develop the idea, promote it and provide good customer service?

## Financials

Can you earn more than you spend, so that the business makes a profit? Do you need any funds to get started?

## Friends

Do you have a support network on hand for when you need business advice? Are there complementary businesses you've identified with whom partnerships are a possibility?

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## Target Check

Return regularly to your plan to check progress against targets or to make amends as you respond to new opportunities.

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# 3. Write a Plan

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## Company ABC

### Business Plan

2015 – 2017. (This business plan is for a two-year cycle. You may choose to do a 12-month plan, or up to five years.)

### Contents

#### ☐ Executive Summary

- The Idea
- The Market
- Operations
- Financials
- Friends & Family\*

\* This title would be more like 'Advisory Board' if preparing the plan for a bank or funder.

### Executive Summary

Summarise what's in the rest of the plan. Something like this:

*The vision for ABC is to become the leading company for selling abc to xyz. This plan sets out how the vision will be achieved in the period 2015 – 2017. It outlines the product on offer, provides data on the market and shows how the company will be operating profitably within the first three months.*

*Having identified a clear gap in the market, I'm excited about the opportunity to start and build a successful business that will offer a quality product [or service] to a well-defined market.*

A. Person

Founder, Company ABC



# 3. Write a Plan

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## The Idea

Include here your 'elevator pitch'; what is your product and how will it benefit the customer?

This is the opportunity to explain the idea of the business in a few sentences.

## The Market

### Customers

Who will be your customers? Include the quantity, their demographic profile, geographic locations, social backgrounds; essentially any strong data that shows you know your audience.

### Competition

Who is selling a similar product/service? How do you differ from them? What is your unique selling point?

You can do this by producing a table that lists the competition. Outline what makes you stand out in the market: is it that your service will be online, that you'll charge a different price, have an innovative marketing approach or offer the service with a special extra twist?

### Operations

#### *The CEO*

You have come up with the idea for the business and you've done your research on the market. Now it's time for the reader to know a bit about you! Note your background, skills, experience and any credentials for running this business. Plus information on other key members of staff (if there are any).

#### *Sourcing*

If this applies to your business, refer to how you'll source your product/service. You may be making it yourself!

# 3. Write a Plan

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## Sales & Marketing

How will you promote what you offer to your customers? Include a brief sales and marketing plan with headings like this:

- **Press** – how many press releases do you plan to distribute each year and to which press channels: newspapers, magazines, radio, etc.?
- **Online** – will you have your own blog/website? Mention other sites that you'll approach for reciprocal links
- **Partners** – what about marketing tie-ups with other companies selling to the same audience?

You know where your customers are, so let your marketing plan show that you'll reach them in print, online and even in the streets!

## Systems

You've sourced the service/product and told customers about it. Refer here to the process customers will go through to buy from you and the systems you'll have in place to deliver in time and on budget. Systems that may include online ordering and payment, a professional call-handling service to take orders or maybe some specific software.

## Financials

Last but not least come the figures. Make this as clear as possible and it's probably best to do it in table form:

Drawing up a simple financial forecast will highlight any need to borrow money.

## Friends & Family

In starting and growing your business, will you call on friends and family for advice? If so, refer to this here; mention your board of advisors, your expertson- call, your support network!

(See later for details on how to access expert advisors and find a mentor whose details you can also include here.)

## 4. Register the Company

When you set up in business, there are a couple of organisations you need to contact: Companies House and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). Before registering with either, have a think about the company status that suits you best.

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### Self-employed

This status means you are working for yourself. You keep records and accounts of your own activities and, in acting alone, get to keep all the profits – but are also solely liable for any debts.

### Limited company

Limited companies exist in their own right, with the company's finances kept separate from the personal finances of its owners, so your liability is limited.

### Partnership

If you'd like to be self-employed but want to work with a friend or colleague, consider a partnership. It means that two or more people share the risks, costs and workload.

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### If you're unsure, ask

The status of your company will affect how much admin you have to do and the kind of financial records that you need to keep and file. Take advice from your accountant or local tax office on which one to choose.

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## 4. Register the Company

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### Being social

Should you decide to start a social enterprise – a business trading for social and environmental purposes – there are additional legal structures to consider, including:

- community interest company (CIC)
- industrial and provident society
- charitable status

To find out more about launching a social enterprise or creating a CIC visit:

- Social Enterprise UK [www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk)
- CIC Regulator [www.cicregulator.gov.uk](http://www.cicregulator.gov.uk)

### Companies House

When registering with Companies House, there are three options from which to choose. You can buy a ready-made company from a company formation agent, incorporate a company yourself by sending documents and a registration fee to Companies House or register online via GOV.UK. If you decide to complete registration yourself, see form IN01 – application to register a company. It can be easier to go with a formation agent as they do the work on your behalf.

## 4. Register the Company

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### HM Revenue & Customs

The rules on registering a new business with HM Revenue & Customs are pretty clear-cut. You are required to register as soon as you start earning from any business activity. As stated, you can choose to register as self-employed, as a partnership, or as a limited company. Each category has its own filing requirements, as shown below.

#### Sole trader/self-employed

The calculation of tax and National Insurance owing is done through selfassessment. You either need to complete a form CWF1, or simply call the newly self-employed business helpline. It should be done by 5 October after the end of the tax year in which you started your business to avoid a fine.

- Form CWF1 [www.hmrc.gov.uk/forms/cwf1.pdf](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/forms/cwf1.pdf)
- Helpline for the newly self-employed 0845 915 4515

It's not onerous to complete the form and, once registered, you'll be classified as self-employed and sent a self-assessment tax return each year, which you complete, showing your income and expenses from self-employment as well as details of your employment elsewhere (if that applies).

You will be subject to tax and National Insurance on any profits you make, but the good news is that any losses incurred can be offset against your employed income (if you have any), which could even result in a tax rebate.

Depending on your turnover and how straightforward your tax affairs are, you may be able to simply fill out the short tax return (SA200). However, this cannot be self-selected, nor is it on the HMRC website or orderable; HMRC will send it to you automatically if they think you qualify, based on information given in the previous year's return. If you have turnover below £68,000, it's likely that you will qualify. As ever, though, it will depend on individual circumstances, and the law (and various criteria it uses) may change!

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#### Deadlines

Self-assessment tax return deadlines are as follows:

- paper tax returns should be received by HMRC by 31 October
- online tax returns should be completed by 31 January (giving you an extra three months)

#### Useful links

- Leaflet SE1 – 'Thinking of working for yourself?' [www.hmrc.gov.uk/leaflets/se1.pdf](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/leaflets/se1.pdf)
  - Helping you understand self assessment and your tax return, HMRC [www.hmrc.gov.uk/sa](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/sa)
-

## 4. Register the Company

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### Partnership

According to HMRC, a partnership is where:

“Two or more people set up a business. Each partner is personally responsible for all the business debts, even if the debt was caused by another partner. As partners, each pays income tax on their share of the business profits through self-assessment, as well as National Insurance.”

In terms of filing requirements, each partner should complete a partnership supplementary page as part of their individual self-assessment tax return. This is in addition to a partnership return, which has to be submitted by one nominated partner and show each partner's share of profits/losses.

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### Deadlines

The deadlines for partnership tax returns are:

- paper tax returns should be received by HMRC by 31 October
  - online tax returns should be completed by 31 January (giving you an extra three months)
- 

### Limited company

Limited companies exist in their own right, with the company's finances distinct from the personal finances of the owners. What this means is that the company is liable for any debts, not the individual owners, as is the case if you are selfemployed or in a partnership.

In April 2008 it became legal to form and run a limited company with just one person, without the need to involve anyone else (prior to this you also needed a company secretary). As noted, you can form a new limited company by registering with Companies House via GOV.UK or by using a company creation agent.

As well as registering with Companies House, you also need to let HMRC know you are operating as a limited company. And you will need to set up and register a PAYE scheme, as you are an employee of the company.

- Register PAYE scheme [www.hmrc.gov.uk/newemployers](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/newemployers)
- New employer's helpline **0845 60 70 143**

In terms of filing requirements, you should complete a self-assessment company tax return at the end of the accounting period. The return will show the company's taxable profits and whether any corporation tax is owed, and can be filed online at [www.hmrc.gov.uk/ct](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/ct).

## 4. Register the Company

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The return should also be filed with Companies House to comply with the Companies Act 2006. This can be done free of charge, using the online WebFiling service at Companies House:

**<https://ewf.companieshouse.gov.uk/>**

On your returns, you can claim wear-and-tear allowances (capital allowances) on any equipment you buy, and an element of your expenses for working from home. You can also claim travelling expenses, subsistence and a proportion of your phone calls.

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### **Deadlines**

Whereas filing deadlines for self-assessment and partnership tax returns are specific dates, that is not the case with company tax returns, which must be filed 12 months after the end of your company's corporation tax accounting period.

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For advice from HMRC on good record keeping, visit: **[www.hmrc.gov.uk/startup/keeprecs.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/startup/keeprecs.htm)**

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### **In Good Order:**

Keep records of your business dealings – this will make it much easier to complete tax returns when the time comes. Keep hold of receipts of business-related purchases; copies of invoices to customers; bank statements, especially if you don't yet have a separate account for the business (it is worth starting one); utility bills (if you are starting the business from home and using part of the house for business), which can be claimed as a business expense and so reduce your tax bill.

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## 4. Register the Company

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### VAT

Whichever company status you choose, if your business turns over more than £77,000 (in the 2012/13 tax year), or you think your turnover will soon exceed this amount, you should also register for value added tax (VAT).

You can voluntarily register at any time. Being VAT-registered can bring credibility with certain customers, but adding VAT to your invoices may make you more expensive than competitors and you will have to file a VAT return four times a year.

- 'How and when to register for VAT', HMRC [www.hmrc.gov.uk/vat/start/register](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/vat/start/register)

### Accountant accompaniment

Talk to a qualified accountant about the structure that is best for your business. And consider employing their services to complete your tax returns. Even if your accounts are very simple, it is well worth seeking professional advice, particularly as the rules and regulations can change frequently and without warning.

Find an accountant by visiting:

- ICAEW [Institute of Chartered Accountants for England and Wales] [www.icaew.com](http://www.icaew.com)

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### Useful links

- 'Starting a Business', HMRC [www.hmrc.gov.uk/startingup](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/startingup)
  - 'Tax Help – and advice for small business' [www.businesslink.gov.uk/taxhelp](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/taxhelp)
-



## 5. Protect the Brand

You have now registered with Companies House and HM Revenue & Customs. Your final consideration should be your intellectual property.

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You may decide to register a trademark to protect your company name or brand or, if you've come up with a unique invention, a patent. Registering either means that companies can't come along and use your name or invention without your permission.

### The four forms of IP

There are four different kinds of intellectual property that you can protect:

#### 1. Patents

These protect what makes things work. For example, says the Intellectual Property Office (IPO), "what makes a wheel turn or the chemical formula of your favourite fizzy drink".

#### 2. Trademarks

These are "signs (like words and logos) that distinguish goods and services in the marketplace".

#### 3. Designs

What a logo or product looks like: "from the shape of an aeroplane to a fashion item".

#### 4. Copyright

An automatic right that comes into existence for anything written or recorded.

Register and protect your intellectual property by visiting the UK Intellectual Property Office website ([www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk)).

Charlie Ashworth is founder of Venture Proof ([www.ventureproof.com](http://www.ventureproof.com)) a company that helps small businesses protect their IP. Charlie says:

"It doesn't matter what product your business makes, or what service it provides, every enterprise is regularly generating and applying a considerable amount of intellectual property. This is a prized and valued possession – and one you should aim to protect to secure your venture."

## 6. Take Care of Household Admin

When starting out, you'll likely be starting from home – your own, your parents' or maybe a friend's. It's the best way to start, keeping costs low and the commute short. In other words: more time and money for the business.

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You'll probably be outsourcing work as opposed to employing staff, so there's no need for lots of people to come into the office each day. And you can meet clients and contacts in the local hotel or serviced work space. It's also good to know you're not alone in starting at home – over 60% of businesses do. You may have a few questions around household admin and who you need to tell.

Here are the answers.

### **Q: Do I need planning permission?**

**A:** You'll only need planning permission to base the business at home if you answer 'yes' to any of these questions:

- will your home no longer be used mainly as a private residence?
- will your business result in a marked rise in traffic or people calling?
- will your business involve any activities that are unusual in a residential area?
- will your business disturb the neighbours at unreasonable hours or create other forms of nuisance such as noise or smells?

If your house is pretty much going to remain a house, with your business quietly accommodated within it, then permission won't be required. If you're unsure, contact your local council to seek their views ([www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)).

### **Q: Do I need to tell the local authority I'm working from home?**

**A:** Depends on whether you pass the planning test. If you need planning permission, you'll have to inform your local authority. If you don't, then the only benefit of telling them is that they'll charge you business rates (rather than council tax) on the part of the house being used for business purposes – not really much of an incentive! Business rates are different in each area and something that should be agreed with your local authority.

## 6. Take Care of Household Admin

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### **Q: Do I need to tell the landlord?**

**A:** Yes, it's best to let them know that you will be working from home. Good news is, it was announced by the government on 1 November 2010 that social landlords should review any contracts prohibiting people from working from home, making it much easier for people in social housing to use living space as work space. Since then we've seen some social landlords such as London & Quadrant ([www.lqgroup.org.uk](http://www.lqgroup.org.uk)) organise business training for tenants. A welcome sight.

### **Q: What about my insurance provider? Do they need to know?**

**A:** Yes, do inform your insurance company. Tell them about the equipment and stock you have at home. An upgrade from domestic to a business policy is not expensive so don't be put off in making this call. Your insurance provider is likely to recommend that you also take out public liability insurance in case anyone who comes to visit suffers an injury in or around your home office. See the next page for a guide to all kinds of insurance.

### **Q: Do I need protection for when customers and contacts come to visit?**

**A:** Yes, carry out a health and safety check, which is easy to do by following the steps set out by the Health and Safety Executive ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) in their Homeworking guide (available at [bit.ly/aGDc8N](http://bit.ly/aGDc8N)).

### **Q: Should I tell the neighbours?**

**A:** Yes. When working from home, it's worth keeping your neighbours firmly on side. You don't want them getting annoyed by any deliveries or distractions. If you know of a time when there'll be an unusual amount of activity in your home office, let them know in advance and perhaps send a bottle of wine.

# 7. Your Tech Setup

Putting together a tech setup for your new business needn't mean starting from scratch or spending lots of money. Once your business starts to grow, you can upgrade your tech as and when money becomes available.

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To start with, there are affordable and free solutions that can get you up and running in no time at all. Chances are, you have some of them already.

So, let's take a look at what you might already have and what you might need to buy. We'll separate them by hardware and software.

## Hardware

### Computer

When starting out, using a shared computer will be just fine. Bear in mind, however, that in the first few months of starting your business, you may find yourself working more hours than usual trying to put it all together. So let your friends and family know you may be hogging the computer!

Also, when your business starts to grow, the information you collect – info on your customers, clients and contacts; including financial details – will become more and more valuable. You might then start to think twice about sharing your computer with other people.

You may already have your own laptop. If you don't, when you've got a bit of money behind you, look into buying one for your new business. Budget laptops start at around £300, but when buying a computer it sometimes pays to buy the best you can afford in order to prepare for the future.

### Peripherals

#### Multifunction printer

Even though I find myself using it less these days, I still think it's too early to pronounce the printer dead, especially if you use a multifunction printer like I do.

It's a real space-saver – imagine keeping a printer, scanner, photocopier and fax machine in one office. Mine sits neatly on my desk and is handy when I want to email sketches to my designer. He uses his to archive printed documents. When he receives important letters, for example, he scans them into his computer and recycles the hard copy! We're both on our way to paperless home offices.

# 7. Your Tech Setup

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## External hard drive

External hard drive External hard drives are great for adding more storage capacity to your computer but they're especially useful for backing up your machine. This is an important process, which you should do regularly – imagine what would happen if your computer crashed and wouldn't restart, or if it was dropped or stolen.

Macs have backing-up software built-in; as do the latest PCs. If not, try SuperDuper! for the Mac and True Image for the PC.

- SuperDuper! [www.shirt-pocket.com/SuperDuper](http://www.shirt-pocket.com/SuperDuper)
- True Image [www.acronis.com](http://www.acronis.com)

## VoIP phones

You can make serious savings on your phone bill by using a VoIP phone. VoIP stands for 'voice over internet protocol' and basically means making calls over the internet rather than your phone line. As such, it's a much cheaper way of making calls (it's sometimes free). And it's the easiest way to set up a second line. The VoIP phone I use is made by a company called IPEVO.

- IPEVO [www.ipevo.com](http://www.ipevo.com)

## Software

You may already be using many of these programs, so there's no need to splash out when setting up your business. Once it grows you can upgrade to more advanced versions if required. To start, here are the basics. Later we'll look at software (much of it free or very affordable) for when your business is up and running.

### Office software

The industry standard in office software is Microsoft Office. If you're trying to save money, try these free alternatives:

- OpenOffice.org [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org)
- Google Docs [www.google.com/docs](http://www.google.com/docs)

Both do pretty much everything that Microsoft Office does, and can open and save Microsoft Office files as well.

## 7. Your Tech Setup

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### Web browser

Internet Explorer and Safari both do a good job when it comes to web browsing, as does Firefox. But there's a browser I use that I think is better. It's called Google Chrome and it's faster, more secure and more customisable.

You can add features that will help you do your work and manage your lifestyle. These include features to control your music (without having to switch programs), comparison shop and even change the way your browser looks. It's a free, small download, and it works on Macs and PCs. Its speedy and uncluttered nature makes it particularly good for netbook use.

- Google Chrome [www.google.com/chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome)

### Email

If you've got Microsoft Office you might use Outlook (or Entourage, as it's called in the Mac version), which is Outlook Express's big sister. It includes calendar and address book features, but it's not free (or cheap). On Macs, Mail is standard.

An alternative is provided by the people who make the Firefox browser. It's called Thunderbird and can do pretty much everything that Outlook can. You can also use it with web-based mail, like Gmail.

- Thunderbird [www.getthunderbird.com](http://www.getthunderbird.com)
- 

### Signature Touch:

Make the most of the opportunity every time you click 'send' on an email. Include a professional email signature or sign-off that has your basic contact details (company name, website, postal address, telephone, etc.). And consider including a discreet mention of any seasonal or product offers, and your social media sites.

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### Instant messaging and VoIP

Lots of instant messaging programs also allow you to make video and voice calls. Skype integrates text, voice and video chat. With it you can make free calls to other Skype users and to landline or mobile phones for a small fee, deducted from pay-as-you-go style Skype credit.

You can assign a landline-esque phone number to your Skype account in order to receive calls at your computer, using a VoIP handset, or divert calls to your mobile when out and about.

- Skype [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)

# 7. Your Tech Setup

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## Support

If you're in need of assistance with anything from hardware set-up to software installation, call in the help of a local IT expert. You may know a neighbour who's a dab hand at technology. If not, check out one of a growing number of companies who send a 'geek' direct to your door.

- Geeks-on-Wheels [www.geeks-on-wheels.com](http://www.geeks-on-wheels.com)
- KnowHow [www.knowhow.com](http://www.knowhow.com)
- Geek Squad [www.geeksquad.co.uk](http://www.geeksquad.co.uk)

## On the move

Now that you've found the right technology for your office it's time to take it outside. If you ever get tired of your four walls, it's good to know that it's possible to work elsewhere. With a few simple tips and tricks you can enjoy total flexibility, and work from almost anywhere.

### With your computer

If you have a laptop, you pretty much have all you need to work on the move. Almost all laptops come with built-in wireless receivers, so you can hop onto Wi-Fi in public places like coffee shops and libraries. But if you're not sure whether there'll be ample power supply where you're going, a spare battery is well worth considering.

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### Check Out

Wi-fi hotspots close to you via WorkSnug: [www.worksnug.com](http://www.worksnug.com)

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## Getting connected

You'll need broadband right from the start: during your research, while you're setting up your business, through to when it grows and takes over the world!

Your two main options are ADSL broadband, which is offered by companies like BT, Orange and Sky, and cable broadband from Virgin Media. The biggest difference is that ADSL requires a phone line, while cable broadband does not.

The advantage of cable broadband is that if you don't have a landline phone, and always use your mobile, you can save money by not having to pay line rental on your phone as well as on your internet connection. It's often faster, too, but you'll need to check whether it's available in your area. ADSL broadband is more commonplace and there are lots of companies offering it. As always, read the fine print before you sign anything.

# 7. Your Tech Setup

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## Network

Setting up a network used to be the work of professionals and, I suppose, in big companies it still is. But setting one up for your home by yourself is much easier these days.

There are two types of wireless router: one for ADSL internet service providers, like Sky and BT, and another for cable internet, like Virgin Media. Check with your internet service provider to find out which is the best router for your type of connection.

If you didn't get a router from your provider, check out Netgear.

- Netgear [www.netgear.co.uk](http://www.netgear.co.uk)

## The Cloud

If you already use web mail, you'll be accustomed to the idea of your messages and contacts being available from any computer or device connected to the internet. So, how about running your entire business from any computer or device anywhere?

The Cloud refers to web apps. You run them through your web browser and all the data is stored online, so in effect you can use them from pretty much any computer anywhere!

The best example is provided by Google, whose Google Apps ([www.google.com/a](http://www.google.com/a)) offering includes email, instant messaging, a calendar, word processor, spreadsheet and presentation software, as well as a website builder. It's free and easy to use.

All the work you do is stored in 'The Cloud' so you can log in and out from anywhere and see the same information. Also, if your computer crashes or you buy a new system you won't lose any data or have to reinstall it on a new machine.



## 8. Working 5 to 9

You don't need to give up your studies or throw in the day job to get all this done. Nor do you need to for the next two stages – launch and growth.

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You can plan the business, register the business and continue to run the business successfully by 'working 5 to 9' – this is the term I apply to the five-million-plus people in the UK who are working or studying by day and building a business at night and weekends.

It's a sensible way to start and grow. If you're working a day job, you give yourself the time to build confidence and cash flow in the business, and can keep putting money aside until you're ready to go full time in your own venture.

Here's what you need to do regarding your current job and boss in order to make this as smooth as possible.

### The contract

If you have written terms and conditions of employment they are likely to contain reference to the pursuit of personal business ventures outside your contracted working hours. The clauses to look out for include 'the employee's duties and obligations' and what is commonly known as 'whole time and effort'. These clauses require the employee to devote the whole of their time, attention and abilities to the business of the employer.

If your contract contains these or similar clauses, don't despair, as it doesn't necessarily mean you can't pursue your business. Many employment contracts are drafted using standard templates with little consideration to personal circumstance. You know your job better than anyone, so if you don't think your business venture will affect the way you do your job, it probably won't – and your employer will recognise this. Having checked how things stand in the contract, it's time to talk things through with your boss.

## 8. Working 5 to 9

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### The conversation

Treat it as an amicable and informal conversation to gauge your employer's initial reaction.

I asked Patrick Lockton, a qualified lawyer, for his take on the matter and advice on how employees should go about having this conversation:

“When you approach your employer, be prepared to negotiate, be flexible and compromise. If you think it appropriate, make it clear your business venture will in no shape or form affect your ability to do your job or affect your employer's interests. If anything, it will make you a better, more confident and experienced employee and it will not cost your employer a thing.”

Patrick goes on to say:

“After having such a conversation, you can do one of two things:

1. If your employer has not expressed any concerns about your intentions and you have no concerns of your own, disclose your intentions to your employer anyway. Treat it as something you want to do for the sake of clarity and for the record, as opposed to something you want their permission for; or
2. If your employer has expressed concerns, try and negotiate a package that you are both happy with. Address their concerns, agree some ground rules and get their permission in writing. Give your employer as much helpful information as possible. If you are going to need some time off or to change your hours then this is the time to bring it up.

“Always take written notes so that you don't forget what was said and so you can remind your employer what was agreed.”

So long as you're not competing with your employer or breaching their trust, you shouldn't have any problem at all in pursuing your 5 to 9 ambitions. After all, as Patrick says, your employer benefits from all the new skills you're picking up, and it doesn't cost them a penny in training or resources!

## 9. Your Budget

It has never been more straightforward to build a business on a shoestring of a budget and keep on top of finances with basic spreadsheets or software.

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You probably already have a computer and a mobile phone, so you might not need to buy much more equipment (depending on your business). Here are some tips for keeping costs low.

### Start the business from home

Why take on the cost of an office when the spare room/attic/garden shed will do just as well? Think of the money you'll save: no premises, no commute, no overpriced sandwiches at lunchtime . . . !

### Embrace social media

Make the most of free or low-cost technology tools to raise your profile and make sales. Chapter 12 offers details of the major social media tools and how they can best be used to your benefit.

### Beg, borrow and barter!

When starting out, access all the free and discounted resources you can.

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### The Beauty Of Barter

Many start-up businesses barter their goods and services, e.g. "I'll produce a sales brochure for you, in exchange for a handmade cushion for my living room." This works well – both parties get what they want. But take heed of the tax implications. Bartering means money doesn't show up in your accounts, but there has been an exchange of goods and services which implies a taxable activity. The taxman could view bartering as a way to avoid tax. Nevertheless, with so many beneficial arrangements underway, maybe it's time they revised the tax situation?

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### Access deals

Source deals on the StartUp Britain marketplace (<http://www.startupbritain.org/offers>) or daily deals site Huddlebuy ([www.huddlebuy.com](http://www.huddlebuy.com)).

# 9. Your Budget

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## Funding

### Friends and family

Friends and family are people you can trust – and asking them for money hopefully won't come with strings attached. Do consider having a written agreement, though, that covers the amount borrowed and a payback schedule.

### Start-Up Loans

Aged between 18 and 30 and starting a business? You'll like the sound of Start-Up Loans then! These are loans of up to £2,500 made to young entrepreneurs across the UK. Alongside a loan, you also receive a mentor who offers help throughout your business journey.

- [www.startuploans.co.uk](http://www.startuploans.co.uk)

### Crowd funding

Crowd funding is fast becoming a popular route to secure start-up and follow-on funding. It involves sourcing funds from a crowd of others. Check out the following links for sites that offer this service.

- CrowdCube [www.crowdcube.com](http://www.crowdcube.com)
- Kickstarter [www.kickstarter.com](http://www.kickstarter.com)
- Seedrs [www.seedrs.com](http://www.seedrs.com)
- PleaseFund.UK [www.pleasefund.us](http://www.pleasefund.us) (with a focus on creative projects)
- IWOCA [www.iwoca.co.uk](http://www.iwoca.co.uk) (for online retailers only and for working capital as opposed to start-up funding)

### The bank

Ask to speak to a small business advisor at your local bank. Take a copy of your business plan with you and be prepared to talk it through.

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## A Clear Division

Open a bank account early on so you don't mix up your business and personal finances, which may complicate record keeping.

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# 9. Your Budget

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## Shelling out the funds

We have one £5,000 Shell LiveWIRE Smarter Future Award to give away each month to new businesses in the UK (in their first 12 months of trading).

- [www.shell-livewire.org/awards](http://www.shell-livewire.org/awards)

## Investors

Angel investors and venture capitalists can help raise large amounts of startup funding or development capital for businesses looking to grow. It might be an idea to consider this route further down the line. It doesn't have to be a gruesome experience (à la Dragons' Den), though, as there are plenty of funds and investors out there who are eager to part with their money and back good ideas. What's more, the government has made it financially attractive for angels to invest through the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme which offers individual income tax relief of 50% and exemption from capital gains tax (CGT) on any proceeds of sale of a SEIS investment.

Visit the dedicated SEIS website ([www.seis.co.uk](http://www.seis.co.uk)) for details and the Business Finance For You site ([www.businessfinanceforyou.co.uk](http://www.businessfinanceforyou.co.uk)), which offers a listing of available grants and funds, searchable by your local area.

### In the words of an Angel

Andy Yates is an experienced angel investor and serial entrepreneur. In terms of what he looks for, he says:

“Great businesses are created by great people. I always look out for the three Ps – passion, personality and perseverance. I also back entrepreneurs who really listen and learn. The ability to be flexible, take on board advice and feedback and adapt a product or service to win customers is the real key to unlocking success.”

- Angels Den [www.angelsden.co.uk](http://www.angelsden.co.uk)
- Funding Circle [www.fundingcircle.com](http://www.fundingcircle.com)

See later for details on accelerator programmes that will take your business from start to growth at speed, and often come attached with funding.

# 9. Your Budget

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## Straightforward finance

When planning a business you'll want to be sure earnings are higher than outgoings. Earnings are also referred to as revenue, turnover or income and this should be a greater figure than outgoings, overheads or costs. Let's look at the items that come within each category.

### Incoming

Earn from selling your product or service and any associated income opportunities. For example, you set up a business selling unique handmade cushions. From the outset, earn income from:

- Selling 24 x handmade cushions at £25 per cushion = £600 income per week
- Speaking at events to teach others how to make cushions = £150 per event
- Custom requests, e.g. a unique and one-off production = £75 per item
- Developing a blog on the topic of cushions that attracts cushion-istas as readers and paying advertisers as your customers – £priceless!

### Outgoings

Here are the costs; some payable at start-up stage and others ongoing:

- **Salary** – how much do you need to pay yourself? (You will be pleasantly surprised at how thriftily you can live when not commuting.)
- **Property** – start the business from home and avoid the cost of a pricey office
- **Raw materials and equipment** – what are the materials you need to deliver and promote your finished cushions? And do you need any equipment to make that product; a sewing machine, computer, printer, smartphone or camera?
- **Insurance** – be insured from the start and choose a policy that covers all your needs.
- **Website/promotion materials** – we will cover in Chapters 10–12 how you can build a home on the web and promote the business on a shoestring of a budget.

Keep records of 'Incoming' and 'Outgoing' in a basic Excel spreadsheet as in the following. See later for an example invoice and how to keep a record of invoices raised and amounts paid.

# Case Study

**Name:** Paul Stewart

**Business:** Uni Baggage

**Website:** [www.unibaggage.com](http://www.unibaggage.com)

**Social Media:** [www.facebook.com/UniBaggage](https://www.facebook.com/UniBaggage) / @UniBaggage

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Paul Stewart started his small business Uni Baggage while studying at the University of Edinburgh.

“I had to travel to and from Northern Ireland with all my belongings every term and was getting ripped off with excess baggage fees and shipping costs - I decided there must be a better way to do this and Uni Baggage was born!”

Paul found his first customer through word of mouth and hasn't looked back since.

“I put the word out among my peers that Uni Baggage was launching soon and when we did go live we had our first customer very quickly. Since then we've used a mix of both traditional and online marketing. As our main market is students, we utilise social media to interact and market to both customers and potential customers, and we also use PR focused towards the parents of students, as they are the ones usually paying for our services!”

Paul has grown the business by making the most of the website among the student population and also by providing a great service.

“We asked our existing customer base to review us online, post comments on social networks and recommend us to their family and friends. This has really worked well for us as turnover has increased 250%. We believe it is important to build up a good picture of your business online.”

To manage the finances of the business, Paul has turned to Sage One Payroll which he finds easy to use on the go and from multiple computers.

“I love being able to pay my employees so fast - I can run Payroll, make BACS payment, send out payslips and see what is owed to HMRC within 20 minutes. It makes Payroll so simple for my business.”

Uni Baggage is an international business, currently shipping to 39 countries, with plans to extend this to over 200 within the next few months. They already have contracts in place and are now developing the infrastructure to handle the bookings and create the necessary paperwork that is required.

Alongside this, Paul plans to increase Uni Baggage's market share of the student shipping industry in the UK in the next twelve months.

“This market is growing year on year due to students studying abroad more, international students coming into the UK and British students that need to save money and time on transporting their belongings to and from Uni each term and Uni Baggage can be a part of that.”

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## Top Tip

“As Nike would say, Just Do It. Once you have set up your own business you will never look back. There are lots of resources and website out there to help you, in my opinion there has never been a better time to set up a business, so get stuck in!”

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# beginning

## Part II: Launching



# 10. Create a First Impression

You may have started out by making sales to friends and family who know and trust you to deliver. To attract new customers, it's important to create the right first impression, whether that customer meets you at an event or visits your home on the web. Here's guidance to getting it right and offering a professional welcome.

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## Your home on the web

You have the tools and connection to get online. The first thing to do is build a presence through a blog, website or store. Not only is a website your window to the world and home on the web, it has become an essential requirement for any new business. Your site can be used as a powerful marketing tool and a way to make money. Having the right technology and knowledge allows you to build, develop and maintain your site. And you can do it all in-house.

Let's look at the three main ways to develop a professional-looking online presence.

### 1. Blogging

Blogging is a website or part of a website that's regularly updated by an individual or a group of bloggers. There are blogs on any number of topics and the fact that anyone can start blogging for free makes the medium diverse and exciting.

It's an easy way to get online, as you write posts on your topic of choice, upload images and video, and become the go-to place for customers looking for your advice/tips/services/products. Search engines love blogs and the more you write, the higher up the search-engine ranks you will go. Writing regularly is likely to lead to a loyal readership and it's an effective way to communicate your news with existing and potential customers. Readers can add their comments to your entries if you allow them, and you can use your blog to answer questions and establish yourself as an expert in your field.

It's free and easy to get blogging:

- Blogger [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)
- Typepad [www.typepad.com](http://www.typepad.com)
- WordPress [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## 2. Your own website

Build your own website that you can spec to your own requirements or invest in a template website. Let's look at both options.

### DIY

You have decided to build your own site or have a developer take care of it for you.

The first thing to do is buy a domain. A domain makes up a part of your website and email address. So, for example, the domain name I own is enterprisenation.com. My website address is [www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com) and my email address is [emma@enterprisenation.com](mailto:emma@enterprisenation.com). Both use the enterprisenation.com domain name.

A domain isn't only your address on the web, it's also a big part of your brand, so think carefully when choosing one. There are domain registration companies whose websites allow you to check for available domain names and often suggest available alternatives.

Registering a domain name doesn't give you a website, just an address for it (and an email address). Think of it like reserving a car parking space. You've got the space, now you need to buy the car!

A hosting company will sort you out with the web space to host your site. This is measured in megabytes and gigabytes, just like the information on your computer.

In terms of how much web space you will need, basic hosting packages offer about 250 MB of space, but anything over 1 or 2 GB is more sensible and will also allow you to handle more traffic as your website grows more popular.

With a domain name and web space, potential customers should be able to type your website address into their browser and find out all about your business – just as soon as you've built your site. Finding a hosting company shouldn't be hard. Most domain registration companies, including those mentioned above, offer web space as a package; and hosting companies usually offer domain registration, too.

- 1&1 Internet Ltd [www.1and1.co.uk](http://www.1and1.co.uk)
- 123-reg [www.123-reg.co.uk](http://www.123-reg.co.uk)
- Easily Ltd [www.easily.co.uk](http://www.easily.co.uk)

When it comes to hiring a designer, have a think about what you'd like your website to do for your business. The easiest way to start is to think of your website as a brochure, but remember to include the following pages at the very least.

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Pages to include

- **About us:** the story behind your business and its mission
- **News:** the latest and greatest of your products, business developments, maybe a topical focus if relevant to your business.
- **Products or services:** punchy with the detail, using images of your best work, and text and video testimonials from satisfied customers
- **FAQs:** questions which you get asked. A lot.
- **Contact us:** email and social media details.

Choose a designer who has carried out work you like the look of and for companies in a similar kind of sector to your own. That way, the designer will understand what site you're after – and what your kind of visitor will be looking for, as well as how they like to browse and buy.

## Template site

If DIY feels and sounds too much like hard work, there are a number of companies offering template websites that come with domain registration, hosting, e-commerce and a basic level of design as part of the package. See later for template site providers offering websites that can be set up today and trading tomorrow. Many e-commerce platform sites come with an in-built payment system. Here are the main ones.

## PayPal

PayPal has more than 100 million active registered accounts and is available in 190 markets, meaning you can successfully trade in all these markets!

The company offers three main products: website payments standard, website payments pro and express checkout. To enable your customers to buy multiple items, use a free PayPal shopping cart. To put the 'Add to Cart' button on your website you simply copy and paste the HTML code from PayPal to the coding of your own site. Your customers then click the button to make a purchase. With PayPal, there are no set-up charges, monthly fees or cancellation charges, and fee levels vary depending on the volume of sales.

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## **Sage Pay**

Sage Pay ([www.sagepay.com](http://www.sagepay.com)) is a card payment service that allows you to accept payments by PayPal and major debit and credit cards. It is simple to manage and easy to integrate within your website. The fee is £20 per month for merchants processing up to 1,000 transactions per quarter and 10p per transaction for merchants processing more than 1,000 transactions per quarter, with a minimum charge of £20 per month. There are no set-up fees, no percentage fees and no annual charges.

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Make your website legally compliant

*These tips are offered by Joanna Tall, founder of [www.OfftoseemyLawyer.com](http://www.OfftoseemyLawyer.com)*

### 1. Display terms of use

“Think of your website like a board game you are about to play with your visitors. They arrive and are ready to play and you need to state the rules or else it will be chaos! So, for example, state what they can and cannot do – e.g. may they copy your materials? May they link to you? May they rely on the information you provide without double-checking with you or elsewhere? What liability are you prepared to accept? Provide a link to your terms of use, ideally on every page of your website or under a ‘Legals’ section.

### 2. Display your privacy policy

“Most websites collect personal data on their visitors either by getting them to register on the site or sign up for a newsletter. By law you must tell visitors what you will be doing with this data and the best way to do this is to set out the information in a privacy policy. Again, a link to it on every page is best. More complex rules apply if you plan to collect sensitive information or information from children, or want to pass the information to third parties; for this you should consult a lawyer. Additionally, you are likely to need to register as a data processor under the Data Protection Act. Simply go to [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk) for more information.

### 3. If selling goods or services online, display your terms of sale

“Just as with the board game example, you need rules for selling your goods or services. Most importantly, you need to get your visitors to acknowledge that they accept them. So ideally get them to tick a box stating that they accept them before they proceed to check out. You also need to draw their attention to their rights under the Distance Selling Regulations, e.g. cancellation rights amongst others.

### 4. Protect your copyright in the website content

“Although you automatically own the copyright in the content that you create, best practice is to remind your visitors! Say, for example: “Copyright 2012 Lawyers R Great Ltd”. And if your logo or name is trademarked, broadcast the fact! After all, you will have spent money in getting it that far and it will enhance your brand in the market.

### 5. State who you are!

“By law you need to state a full postal address and contact number and if you are a limited company, the company’s registered address, number and country of registration. This also applies to your emails.”

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Distance Selling Regulations

One thing to bear in mind when selling goods or services to consumers via the internet, mail order or by phone, is compliance with the Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000. The key features of the regulations are:

- You must offer consumers clear information including details of the goods or services offered, delivery arrangements and payment, the supplier's details and the consumer's cancellation rights before he or she buys (known as prior information). This information should be provided in writing.
- The consumer has a period of seven working days from delivery of the items to cancel their contract with you

These regulations only apply when selling to consumers, as opposed to businesses. In the event of a contract being ceased, you have to refund money, including delivery charges, within 30 days of the date of cancellation.

## 3. A presence on other sites

Maybe you'd prefer to start raising your profile and making sales via other established platform sites, as opposed to your own. Whether selling homemade crafts or business concepts, there are a number of options.

The upside is that these sites attract customers on your behalf, and some of them attract customers from all over the world. Here are seven sales platforms that enable you to sell . . .

### Alibaba

Having a presence on this site enables you to buy and sell with, and source supplies from, companies across the globe. The site has visitors from 240 countries and regions, with over 1 million registered users in the UK. Through the site you can locate suppliers or make sales of your finished product direct to customers. Alibaba is a champion of international trade; carrying out research on the topic, providing a platform for traders to interact, and promoting overseas sales as a form of business that is wholly viable, regardless of company size.

- [www.alibaba.com](http://www.alibaba.com) @AlibabaTalk\_UK

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Amazon Marketplace

You may be used to buying from Amazon, but have you considered the site as a platform from which to sell? Have your products appear before millions of customers all around the world by signing up to Amazon Marketplace. It offers two sales options: a package for casual sellers who expect to sell less than 35 items a month (a fixed fee per sale plus a referral fee), and, for more seasoned sellers, there is the 'sell a lot' package, which has a monthly charge plus a referral fee for unlimited sales that do not have to be in the Amazon catalogue.

- [www.amazon.co.uk/marketplace](http://www.amazon.co.uk/marketplace)

## eBay

In 2012 there were 190,000 registered businesses trading on eBay in the UK, generating billions of pounds-worth of sales. Having a store on eBay means you are opened up to an international audience and a lot of potential customers.

- [www.eBay.co.uk](http://www.eBay.co.uk)

## Etsy

With its tag line 'Your place to buy and sell all things handmade' this is still the mother of all craft sites. Since the company launched in June 2005, more than 500,000 sellers from around the world have opened up Etsy shops and buyers of Etsy-listed products span more than 150 countries.

To start selling on Etsy you need to register for an account (this requires a credit card and valid email address for verification purposes) and then it costs 20 cents to list an item for four months. When your item sells, you pay a 3.5% transaction fee. For anyone who makes handmade items, the power of this global platform cannot be denied. Head a few pages on for a listing of handmade marketplaces you can try today.

- [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com) | [@etsy](#)

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Facebook

With more than 30 million users in the UK, a significant number of your present and potential customers spend time on Facebook every single day. If your business isn't there, it's missing out. Countless small business owners in the UK use Facebook to quickly and cost-effectively grow their company. The easiest way to start is through having an effective Facebook Page. Learn how to do this step by step in the free guide *Boost your Business with Facebook*, which also shows how to connect with new fans and make the most of Facebook ads.

- Boost Your Business with Facebook  
[www.enterprisenation.com/facebook-book-offer](http://www.enterprisenation.com/facebook-book-offer)

## iTunes

If you are a creator of audiobooks, a publisher of podcasts or developer of apps, then the iTunes platform is your route to market. For apps, Apple gives 70% of revenues to the seller. As of July 2011 over 15 billion apps had been downloaded from its App Store, making it the world's largest mobile application platform.

Become a registered Apple developer for the iPhone ([developer.apple.com/iphone](http://developer.apple.com/iphone)) submit audio books to iTunes via Audible.com ([www.audible.com](http://www.audible.com)) and create iBooks for the iPad through the iBookstore.

Apple is opening up a world of opportunity for content creators and app developers.

- [www.apple.com/itunes](http://www.apple.com/itunes)



# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Handmade Marketplaces

A growing number of sites are dedicated to helping the young artisan and handmade business owner sell goods across the globe.

### Etsy – [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com)

*“The world’s handmade marketplace”* (and a great place to start your selling).

#### How does it work?

1. You list the item on Etsy for a fee. It costs 20 cents (roughly 12p) to list an item for four months
2. Shoppers then find your item, and purchase it from you directly, using your payment system which you have set up with Etsy. Etsy takes a 3.5% transaction fee from the total price of each sale.
3. You then ship the item directly to your customer.

#### Getting started

Setting up a shop on Etsy is easy and should only take a few minutes: [www.etsy.com/join](http://www.etsy.com/join)

You will need to enter your Etsy username here, which will be displayed to customers looking at your products. Remember to think about your branding and how you want to present yourself to potential customers when entering these details.

#### Paying fees

All of your fees will be paid using the credit card you list when you register, or the PayPal account you link to your Etsy account. Etsy will calculate your fees on a monthly basis and email you with a list of payments that are due. You can also pay your bill manually through your account.

#### Community

Etsy has a thriving community where sellers, artists and creators all come together to share their work and ideas with one another. Etsy also run events such as Craft Nights, which could be a great way to meet other crafters and promote your products to a receptive audience.

The site has a blog which highlights new product launches and new initiatives, plus featured sellers and debates on various topics. Forums feature strongly on the site.

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Not On The High Street – [www.notonthehighstreet.com](http://www.notonthehighstreet.com)

*“One basket, hundreds of unique shops”*

### **How does it work?**

Not On The High Street offers you the chance to promote and sell your product under the umbrella of their brand and be supported by their in-house team. They look after all of the e-commerce, administration and marketing elements of selling through the site, so all you need to worry about are the products.

Not On The High Street differs from a number of other platform sites in that they are very selective about who sells with them and decline over 90% of applications. Membership packages vary but the basic package allows you to add 30 products to your own store, with your own logo, company name and URL.

### **Getting started**

If you're interested in getting set up with NOTHS, you will need to take some photographs of your products and submit these using the online application form.

Applications can take up to seven working days to be processed. After that time you will be contacted by a member of the team.

# 10. Create a First Impression

## Folksy – [www.folksy.com](http://www.folksy.com)

*“Folksy is a place to buy handmade things, and for makers to sell their work and find supplies. Based in the UK, Folksy aims to reclaim craft and showcase talented makers and their work.”*

You can sell craft supplies on Folksy as well as handmade goods, so long as they are listed as ‘supplies’ and not in the ‘handmade’ category.

### How does it work?

1. It costs 20p to list an item for 180 days or until the item is sold
2. Shoppers purchase from you directly, using your payment system which you have set up with Folksy, for example PayPal, or you can accept other payments, such as cash or cheques at your own discretion. Folksy takes a 5% commission fee from the total value of each sale.
3. You then ship the item directly to your customer.

### Getting started

The first thing you need to do is decide on the username for your shop. This can’t be changed so think carefully about your branding and how you want to appear to prospective customers.

Once your item is listed, customers can start viewing and purchasing. When an order is received you will get an order from Folksy with all the buyer’s details and the information about the product ordered. You will also receive notification to say payment has been completed. You then ship the product directly to the customer.

### Paying fees

You settle fees through the Your Account section of the website. The total shown will be made up of billed and unbilled fees as well as the 5% commission on sales.

### Community

Folksy features a blog which gives updates on important news and events. The site also has a forum where members can discuss craft tips, as well as events, ideas for your shopfront and anything else that takes your fancy!

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## A Top Quality Image

Whether you decide to start online with a blog or a full e-commerce site, place high quality images on your site and printed materials so that on first click or at first glance, a customer is inclined to buy. Take professional images yourself or consider subscribing to a stock image library such as [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com). Other image libraries include: [www.imagesource.com](http://www.imagesource.com), [www.photos.com](http://www.photos.com) and [www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com). Search for Creative Commons licensed images you can use commercially from Flickr at [www.compfight.com](http://www.compfight.com).

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# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Rise up the search engine ranks

Promote your business and website through search engine optimisation. Commonly referred to as SEO, this is the process by which you can improve rankings for your website in the top search engines such as Google, so that your site appears on the first few pages of results rather than on page 75.

Google is a search engine that uses software known as ‘spiders’ to crawl the web on a regular basis and find sites to add to their index. There are steps you can take to make it easier for the spiders to find and add your site.

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## Think like a buyer

When thinking of the keywords to use in PPC (pay per click) ad campaigns (and in search engine optimisation) think of the words your buyers will be using when searching for your product or service. Use the Google AdWords Keyword Tool to find out the most popular search terms. Apply these words in the campaign and include them in the text on your site.

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## Start with the homepage

Provide high-quality, text-based content on your pages – especially your homepage. If your homepage has useful information and good quality, relevant text, it’s more likely to be picked up by the spiders. Beyond the homepage, write pages that clearly describe your topic/service/product. Think about the words users would type to find your pages and include them on the site.

## Make contributions

Identify influential bloggers and sites in your trade/industry, contact them and offer to write posts. You can also improve your visibility by writing helpful comments in forums and on other people’s posts.

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Be well connected

Improve the rank of your site by increasing the number of other high-quality sites that link to your pages; these are referred to as inbound links. For example, if you're running a competition, go to sites that promote competitions and add yours.

Register your site with the major search engines.

- Google [www.google.co.uk/addurl](http://www.google.co.uk/addurl)
  - Yahoo [search.yahoo.com/info/submit](http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit)
  - Bing [www.bing.com/webmaster/submitsitepage.aspx](http://www.bing.com/webmaster/submitsitepage.aspx)
- 

## Search engines love links

Another way to increase your ranking in the search results is to link to other sites and vice versa, but think quality here as opposed to quantity. Sites offering the best 'link juice' are trusted domains, such as news sites, and very popular sites. You could post comments on such sites and blogs and include a link back to your site. Try these handy hints: approach sites complementary to your own and suggest reciprocal links; ensure that your website link is included in all your social media profiles; register with the major search engines (see above); add your domain to local search services such as Google Maps [www.google.co.uk/maps](http://www.google.co.uk/maps), Qype [www.qype.co.uk](http://www.qype.co.uk), Yahoo! Local [www.uk.local.yahoo.com](http://www.uk.local.yahoo.com) and BView.

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## Tagging

A webpage's title, referred to as a 'title tag', is part of the SEO mix and can make a difference to your search rankings. It is also the text that appears in the top of the browser window. Include in your title tag the main key phrase you'd like the search engines to associate with your webpage and keep it to 60-90 characters in length. Duncan Green of Moo Marketing is an SEO expert and explains: "the title tag on the homepage for Moo Marketing reads: 'Moo Marketing – Search Engine Marketing – PPC Management – Search Engine Optimisation'. As you can see the title element is 85 characters long, contains three key phrases and identifies the subject of the webpage."

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Pay per click advertising

The results from your efforts in SEO will appear on the main engines as a natural or 'organic' search result. But have you spotted results on the right of the page when searching for items yourself? These are paid-for results and referred to as pay per click or PPC advertising. PPC is where you pay to have ads displayed when people type in certain words, in the hope it will attract more visitors to your site.

Google AdWords is a form of PPC advertising. Think of the key words or phrases you reckon your customers will be searching for and apply them in your Google campaign. Link to your home page or other pages on the site where you're running a promotion and make the most of geotargeting, which lets you target your ads to specific territories and languages. You are in full control of the budget and campaign duration.

- [adwords.google.co.uk](http://adwords.google.co.uk)

## Spread the word

Make it easy for visitors to spread word of your site through social sharing. Have your site Stumbled, Dugg and Tweeted and make the most of this viral effect. You can add these social bookmarking tools by visiting AddThis ([www.addthis.com](http://www.addthis.com)) and choosing the icons you'd like to have displayed on your site.

The most popular are:

- Delicious [www.delicious.com](http://www.delicious.com)
- Digg [www.digg.com](http://www.digg.com)
- StumbleUpon [www.stumbleupon.com](http://www.stumbleupon.com)

## Your business in print

Print is far from dead, so get yourself some business cards, postcards and promotion flyers to hand out at business events, social occasions, and to just about anyone you meet! Have fun with designing your cards at [www.moo.com](http://www.moo.com) and get a range of designs printed in each batch. Sell vintage fashion? Upload pictures of your products to the reverse of each card. Offer web design services? Have a portfolio of sites you've designed there.

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## Look at my logo!

When you contact potential customers you'll want them to read about you and get a sense of your style. You can do this very effectively with a nice-looking logo or company design that's repeated across all your promotion materials, from business cards to brochures.

Think about what you'd like as your company font, colours and layout. Have a go at designing this yourself or hire the services of a designer/neighbour/friend. Good presentation can make a world of difference. This may just be the difference you need to clinch a contract.

Find a professional to design your logo via these sites:

- CrowdSPRING [www.crowdspring.com](http://www.crowdspring.com)
- 99designs [www.99designs.com](http://www.99designs.com)

## Office address

If you are running the business from home there are a couple of reasons why you might not want to put the home address on your business card: it might sound too domestic, and you might not want people turning up on your doorstep!

You can solve this with a P.O. Box number, which starts at £185 per year and is easily set up with Royal Mail ([www.royalmail.com/pobox](http://www.royalmail.com/pobox)). Alternatively, you could invest in a virtual office, which gives you a more tailored and personal service than a P.O. Box – plus you get a nice-sounding address and a place to use for meetings. Having a virtual office enables you to choose the address that suits you best, have post delivered to that location, and then forwarded on to you. Companies providing this service include:

- Regus [www.regus.co.uk](http://www.regus.co.uk)
- Bizspace [www.bizspace.co.uk](http://www.bizspace.co.uk)

When holding meetings, consider hiring professional meeting space. Many offer serviced addresses and secretarial services too, so there could be great continuity for your clients if they only have to remember one address.

# 10. Create a First Impression

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## On the phone

When running the business from home, consider who will be picking up the phone! It's cheap and sometimes free to get an 0845 local rate number or an 0870 national rate number for your business. This will hide where you're based and divert your calls to wherever you specify. But beware: sometimes having such a number – especially with national rates – might put customers off ringing you.

If you use a landline number it's best to have a separate line for your home and your business. These days you don't need to invest in an actual second line. You can use a VoIP (voice over internet protocol) phone, which uses a broadband internet connection to make and receive calls, something we looked at earlier.

- Skype [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)

Another idea is to get some help from a call-handling service. They will answer your calls with your company name, text urgent messages to you and email the others, giving you a big business feel for about £50 per month. Services on offer include:

- Moneypenny [www.moneypenny.co.uk](http://www.moneypenny.co.uk)
- Regus [www.regus.co.uk](http://www.regus.co.uk)
- MyRuby [www.myruby.co.uk](http://www.myruby.co.uk)
- Answer [www.answer.co.uk](http://www.answer.co.uk)

You might consider a 'follow-me number' to ensure you're available when you need to be and able to deliver the right impression to clients. A follow-me number involves choosing a number and directing calls from it to your landline or mobile. The beauty of choosing a number is that you have the option to select either a freephone or a geographical number so, say you'd like to have a Manchester area code, simply buy a number starting with 0161. The same goes for hundreds of other locations.

Offer virtual phone numbers where the caller pays a local rate, regardless of where you are, through Vonage ([www.vonage.co.uk](http://www.vonage.co.uk)) or direct calls to you from a chosen number using internet technology and a virtual receptionist at eReceptionist ([www.ereceptionist.co.uk](http://www.ereceptionist.co.uk)).



# 10. Create a First Impression

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## In person

You are about to attend your first networking event or trade show and want to create a good first impression. With an attractive business card in hand, directing prospective customers to a good-looking online presence, all you have to do is follow the rules of effective networking!

### The art of networking

- Wear your name tag (if you have one) on your right side. It's easy to catch sight of when you are shaking hands
- Deliver a nice firm handshake and make eye contact.
- Say your name clearly and, in under ten seconds, tell the other person who you are and what you do
- Listen carefully. Ask the other person plenty of questions about their line of business, their hobbies, etc
- Be positive and energetic
- Swap business cards
- Send a thank-you email after the event, confirming any actions you and they have promised
- Keep in regular and meaningful contact

*See Chapter 12 for details of networking groups to join and for information on how to host your own event or attend a trade show to promote your business.*

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## A memorable exchange

Richard Moross, founder of moo.com, says: "The point of having a business card is to make a connection, create a relationship and leave something with the recipient that reminds them of you. Have cards that tell a story. Use that card as a sales tool, for sure, but also show appreciation by having cards relating to your customer." Richard achieves this by having images on his cards showing places he's visited and meals he's eaten. With 70% of moo.com's business being outside the UK, Richard travels a lot and the cards act as the ice-breaker in meetings as he tells the story behind the pictures.

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# 11. Make Sales

With a professional image established, you are ready to start making sales. This chapter will help you achieve that first sale, plus provide tips on how to make money from your website or blog.

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## 1. Make a list (check it twice)

Draw on your existing resources, grab your address book and select the friends, family, colleagues and acquaintances you think might be interested in your product or service. Add to the list with details of local people and businesses, too.

## 2. Pitch up

Contact the people on your list and announce your new business venture. Consider this an opportunity to make your pitch, but don't be too pushy. Remember to address each recipient personally. No one likes a group email!

## 3. Follow up

Follow up in a few days time, either with another email or, better still, a phone call. Take some soundings as to the success of your pitch and react accordingly. If the potential customer or client sounds keen, go for it! Arrange to meet him or her to show your product or explain more about your service.

## 4. Meet up

Arrange a time and place to meet that's convenient for your potential customer or client. Be professional, but also likeable. These are equally important characteristics when making a sale.

If the customer agrees the deal, bring the meeting to a fairly speedy end. Your job is done – for now. It's time to head home and deliver on the promise you made with your first customer.

## 5. Make some noise

Once you've made your first sale – shout about it! If your new customer or client agrees, include them in a press release or write about them on your website or blog, so other potential customers or clients can see that you're well and truly in business!

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## Sales are flying high

Have promotional flyers made to take to events or deliver through doors. Increase chances of turning flyers into firm sales by:

- having a design that is memorable, possibly quirky and, ideally, that your potential customers will want to keep on their desk/in their bag/atop the kitchen shelf
  - making the offer clear and confirming the benefits of buying
  - including a call to action, i.e. a way in which the interested customer can contact you
-

# 11. Make Sales

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## Selling into physical stores

Maybe you've started by selling products direct to customers at shows and fairs, but what about making sales via local shops?

Before you approach any shops, make a list of appropriate places where you think your product could work well. For example, does your town have gift shops or an art gallery, are there lots of boutiques that stock a range of different items? Think outside the box. Could your local coffee shop stock some of your items?

### Five top tips for market placement

Laura Rigney, founder of Pitcher House, is author of *Pitching Products for Small Business* and offers five top tips for pitching your product effectively:

#### 1. Be confident with pricing

"Selling in wholesale is a whole new ballpark as far as pricing is concerned. Make your product attractive to buyers with your pricing. A great way to show you're trying to help retailers is to setup a structured pricing system, i.e. 100 units or less £xx per unit, 101-500 units £xx per unit and 501 units or more £xx per unit. This system could also encourage shops and buyers to place larger orders.

#### 2. Understand your product inside out

"This means technical data as well as knowing why someone would buy it. When you get a meeting with a buyer or approach a shop owner, talk with confidence about where the product is made, by who, and using what kind of materials. Remember there is pressure on large retailers to "go green", so the more you can offer that as a potential supplier the more attractive you will be.

#### 3. Be prepared

"If a buyer places an order, how quickly will you have manufacturing, distribution and storage in place? Buyers won't expect a new small business to have a giant factory sitting waiting for someone to press the 'go' button but they will want a realistic estimate of how long it will be until your product is in their warehouses/on the shop shelf. Once you have given your timings, stick to them. Even if this means exaggerating the time it will take for them to be delivered. Better to be early rather than late!

# 11. Make Sales

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## 4. Pitch perfect

“If you’re pitching in person, make it informative, exciting and interesting and where possible have evidence of past sales and customer satisfaction. You need to know your figures without having to look through paperwork and be prepared to haggle a little on prices. If someone likes your product enough and you have sold it well enough they will buy it, even if it’s a few pennies more than they would like to pay. In the other direction, sometimes it may be worth offering a larger than normal discount as a trial for a first order.

## 5. Stay listed

“When a company takes on your product it’s called being listed. Once you are listed the work is just beginning! It is now time to stay listed for as long as possible and the way to do this is through marketing and PR. The more you promote your product and the shops/galleries/boutiques that are selling them, the more they will be bought by consumers thus encouraging buyers to place more orders with you!”





# 11. Make Sales

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Here's how to ensure your PopUp experience is a profitable one.

- **Place** – choose a shop in a location that suits your products and is populated with people who represent your target market.
- **Offer** – ahead of moving into the shop, prepare sufficient stock at a price that's right for the particular area. Present the produce in a way that will attract customers' attention. Consider your own presentation and body language when approaching and dealing with customers.
- **Promote** – now you're in the shop, tell people you're there! Promote your presence to existing customers through social media. To attract new trade, consider partnerships with neighbouring retailers, flyers in the train station, releases to the local press and PopUp parties, lock-ins, cook-offs and fashion shows, to deliver a retail experience that customers will never forget!

# 11. Make Sales

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## Going global

To discover more about the specifics of international trade and how to go global in five basic steps, download a free eBook ([tinyurl.com/goglobalguide](http://tinyurl.com/goglobalguide)) which offers all you need to know on topics from customs documentation to website translation and perfecting the art of cultural etiquette.

- Go Global eBook [tinyurl.com/goglobalguide](http://tinyurl.com/goglobalguide)
- Go Global on Enterprise Nation [tinyurl.com/goglobalEN](http://tinyurl.com/goglobalEN)
- DHL blog [www.dhlguide.co.uk/blog](http://www.dhlguide.co.uk/blog)
- UK Trade & Investment [www.ukti.gov.uk](http://www.ukti.gov.uk)

## Make money from your website

As traffic to your blog increases, so does your chance of generating income. Make a profit from your posts with this top-ten list of options.

### 1. Display advertising

Offer advertising on your site. The more niche your audience, the more likely you are to attract advertisers.

The information you'll need to provide includes:

- number of unique visitors
- number of impressions
- average duration of visit
- visitor demographics

Write a basic rate card (see a few pages' time), add it to your site and send it to corporate marketing departments and media-buying agencies.

### 2. Google AdSense

This tool from Google does the work for you by placing relevant ads on your site and earning you money when people click on them. You can customise the appearance of the ads so they sit well with the style of your site.

- [www.google.co.uk/adsense](http://www.google.co.uk/adsense)

# 11. Make Sales

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## 3. Text Link Ads

These ads offer direct click-throughs from text on your site. You submit your site to Text Link Ads and then upload the ad code provided. It's your choice whether you approve or deny the supplied ads. Once that's done, you start making money as visitors click on the ads. Try this and Skimlinks, which converts words on your site to affiliate links so that you earn from those, too.

- [www.text-link-ads.com](http://www.text-link-ads.com)
- [www.skimlinks.com](http://www.skimlinks.com)

## 4. Sponsored conversations

Get paid for posts (and now tweets) with services like IZEA that match bloggers with advertisers. Some doubt the ethical stance of paying a blogger to write something about a product but there's no doubt that it's a money maker.

- [www.izea.com](http://www.izea.com)

## 5. Affiliate schemes

Sign up to affiliate schemes like the Amazon Associates Programme, where you can earn up to 10% in referrals by advertising Amazon products. The programme works by driving traffic to Amazon.co.uk through specially formatted links. You earn referral fees on sales generated through those links. Monthly cheques are sent to you from Amazon and it's easy and free to join.

- [affiliate-program.amazon.co.uk](http://affiliate-program.amazon.co.uk)

## 6. Sponsored features

This could include a host of options. Approach advertisers with suggestions of a sponsored eBook, e-news, podcast, webchat, poll or survey. These applications can be added to your site at a low cost yet generate good revenue.

For:

- eBook creation, try [www.blurb.com](http://www.blurb.com)
- a survey or poll feature, try [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)
- email marketing, try [www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com)



# 11. Make Sales

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## 7. Expert help

Offer your expertise and charge people to log on and watch or listen. This could be made available through Teleclasses where you invite customers and contacts onto a call where you offer your expertise on a one-to-many basis. Or deliver a presentation to potentially thousands of paying customers via [www.gotowebinar.co.uk](http://www.gotowebinar.co.uk).

## 8. Deals with suppliers

Do deals with suppliers. Hosting a travel blog? Agree a percentage each time a booking is made via your site. Hosting a wedding blog? Create a directory of wedding suppliers such as venues, photographers, dressmakers and caterers with an enhanced listing for those who pay.

## 9. Turn a blog into a book

Follow the lead of Alex Johnson who turned his Shedworking blog ([www.shedworking.co.uk](http://www.shedworking.co.uk)) into a book – and then a second book – which are now selling across the UK and overseas, acting as an effective marketing tool for the site!

## 10. Please donate

If you'd rather just ask for a small donation from your visitors, this is possible too via a donate feature from PayPal. Add a PayPal donate button to your site:  
[bit.ly/ikf832](http://bit.ly/ikf832)

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## Just-in-time payment

Add a PayPal payment button to your site and you'll be able to accept payment from all major credit and debit cards, as well as bank accounts around the world. You can set it up in less than 15 minutes.

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# 11. Make Sales

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Maybe you've decided to start selling products through your site. But if you only carry content, you'll need to add an e-commerce feature to make sales.

## Add an e-commerce plug-in

Want to open your site up to sales? Do so by plugging in an e-commerce tool such as:

- WordPress e-Commerce shopping cart – “suitable for selling your products, services, or fees online”: [bit.ly/fEgQHo](https://bit.ly/fEgQHo)
- PayPal Shortcodes – insert PayPal buttons in your posts or pages using a Shortcode: [bit.ly/KGNE5f](https://bit.ly/KGNE5f)
- View a complete list of WordPress e-commerce plugins: [bit.ly/eTEkwZ](https://bit.ly/eTEkwZ)

## Add a shopping cart to your site

Make it easy for your visitors to click and buy. Check out these shopping cart providers:

- GroovyCart [www.groovycart.co.uk](http://www.groovycart.co.uk)
- RomanCart [www.romancart.com](http://www.romancart.com)
- ekmPowershop [www.ekmpowershop.com](http://www.ekmpowershop.com)

# 11. Make Sales

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## Show me your rates!

The purpose of a media rate card is to show potential advertisers what your site can deliver to them in terms of traffic and sales. To do this, include some key points:

- **A brief description of the site:** What it does and for whom
- **Visitor demographics:** Do you have data on the age of your visitors, their home region, gender, etc? If so, include it, as it helps build a picture of your audience
- **Site traffic:** What are your unique visitor numbers and length of time spent on the site? Make a note if the figures are increasing
- **Costings:** Do you have a cost-per-click (CPC) or cost-per-impression (CPM) rate? If so, include it here, along with the price of other sponsorship options. Offer a menu but leave some flexibility, with 'costed on a project basis' for sponsor features that would benefit from a more tailored proposal
- **Screen shots:** Showing how and where adverts or sponsored features appear on the site
- **Media activity:** Note where you've recently been covered in the media, online and off, so that potential sponsors can see how and where you're promoting the site
- **Testimonials:** Positive comments from existing sponsors gives you credibility and gives confidence to the next potential sponsor.
- **Team details:** Who are the faces behind the site and what are their credentials? In other words, your background career and activities, etc.

Round this off with your contact details so that interested potential sponsors can get in touch and place an order!

# 12. Make Some Noise!

Sales are coming in, customers are happy and you want to tell the world about you and your new business. Profile brings new customers and new sales. Get yourself known in the press and online by making friends with the media, hosting events, entering awards and embracing social media. Here's what to do.

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## Plot the script

Imagine yourself as the star of your own Hollywood movie. Are you an action hero, battling against the odds (think James Dyson) or a brand leading lady (think Nigella Lawson)? Plot the action and write the script. It will help you define your message to the media.

## Find the right contacts

Research the journalists you think are interested in your field. Note their email addresses from the bottom of their articles, follow them on Twitter, get to know them and send them exclusive stories about you and your business.

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## Link request

If you're being featured online ask the journalist if they can include a live link to your site. That way, readers can be on your site with one click.

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## Write a release

Writing a press release costs nothing but your time, yet it can generate thousands of pounds' worth of publicity. If you're emailing a press release to journalists, write the text in the body of the email and include it in an attachment, too.

Your press release should have an attention-grabbing headline, the main facts in the first sentence, and evidence and quotes from as high-profile people and companies as possible in the main body of the text. Include great quality images wherever you can to lift the piece and put a face to the brand.

You could also use a press-release distribution service to secure wider exposure. My personal favourite is ResponseSource ([www.responsesource.com](http://www.responsesource.com)) but there's also PR Newswire ([www.prnewswire.co.uk](http://www.prnewswire.co.uk)) and PRWeb ([www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)).

If you don't get a response, follow up!

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## **An image speaks louder than words**

When a picture speaks a thousand words you can afford to talk less! Consider hiring a professional photographer to take pictures of you and your work. Maybe you can do this as a barter deal? Or pick up your own digital camera and do it yourself. Consider approaching a local college to suggest a photography student takes your images in exchange for including the end result in their portfolio. A journalist is much more likely to cover your story if you have great imagery to go with it. Use the images on your website and in promotion materials, and let your business speak for itself..

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## **What to put in your press release**

1. Attention-grabbing headline
2. The first line is punchy and explains the what, who, why and where of the headline
3. Back up the headline and intro with more detail – facts and figures if you have them
4. Include a quote from you (or your business partner, if relevant)
5. Can you include a quote from someone else?  
A happy customer, industry expert or celebrity
6. End with a call to action. Where can people go to find out more/how to download the report/ which site to visit to claim a free gift, etc.?
7. Include 'Notes to Editors', with brief details on you and your company
8. Remember to include contact details – your email address and telephone number
9. Attach a relevant and interesting image

## **Tweet, Tweet**

Follow media channels, journalists and personalities on Twitter so you're the first to pick up the news and media requests:

- @BBCBreakfast
- @BBCOnthemoney
- @talktothepress
- @findaTVexpert
- @TheTimes
- @guardian
- #journorequest

And finally . . . please contact Enterprise Nation with your story. We are always profiling start-ups and small businesses on our website, in books (like this one!), in kits and in videos. Submit your story at [www.enterprisenation.com/ contribute](http://www.enterprisenation.com/contribute).

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## Enter awards

Enter awards and competitions and enjoy the press coverage that goes with it. Many award schemes are free to enter and are targeted at young start-up businesses. Writing the entry will help to clarify your goals and vision, and winning will bring profile and prizes. To find out about upcoming awards across the UK, visit: [www.startupbritain.co](http://www.startupbritain.co)

Here are some to get you started:

- **The Pitch** ([www.thepitchuk.com](http://www.thepitchuk.com)) – enter regional heats and pitch to experienced judges for a place in the national finals and a £50,000 prize. Takes place across the UK.
- **Social Enterprise Awards** ([www.socialenterprise.org.uk/events](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/events)) – celebrates social enterprises of all ages
- **Nectar Small Business Awards** ([www.nectar.com/dynamic/smallbusiness](http://www.nectar.com/dynamic/smallbusiness)) – offers cash prizes and plenty of Nectar points!
- **Startups Awards** ([www.startups.co.uk/startups-awards](http://www.startups.co.uk/startups-awards)) – celebrating small businesses of all shapes and sizes
- **Smarta100** ([www.smarta.com/smarta100](http://www.smarta.com/smarta100)) – an annual award to find Britain's brightest businesses with a grand prize of £10,000 in cash to the winner decided by popular vote

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## Host an event

Invite the press to come and meet you. This doesn't have to be an expensive affair; the secret is partnering with others who could benefit from being in front of your audience. Approach a venue and ask if you can host at no cost, in exchange for the venue receiving profile. Do the same with caterers. Then give invited guests a reason to attend – have a theme, an interesting speaker, a launch announcement, something that will grab their attention and encourage them to attend.

Make use of free online services such as Eventbrite ([www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com)) or Meetup ([www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)) to send out invites and receive RSVPs.

## Successful events in 5 steps

### 1. Planning = winning

Plan your event so you don't forget anything important. When will the event be held? When do you need to find a venue? When will tickets go on sale? When will you find sponsors by? When do you need materials delivered?

### 2. Take it online

Create an event page on Eventbrite so you can manage sign ups and communicate with attendees in one place. You can create custom URLs, promo codes and even different ticket types, such as an early bird rate.

### 3. Partner up

Start-ups grow and thrive off the back of collaborations. Put your event idea to contacts in the same space or at a similar stage and make it a group effort.

### 4. Get people talking

Be remarkable! Get creative and find a USP – an unusual venue, theme or format – so people remember your event. Once that's sorted, make the most of Eventbrite's social media integration to share your event... everywhere! And don't forget to create a Twitter hashtag so attendees can spread the word for you. #Bonus!

### 5. Stay in touch

The event doesn't end when guests leave. Write follow up emails, newsletters, tweets, or connect on LinkedIn, and thank guests for attending. Encourage them to stay in touch and add them to your email list so they are in the loop about your next great event!

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## Attend events

Be seen and heard by getting out and about – a lot!

There's a wealth of events for start-ups. Most are free or low cost and offer an opportunity to learn from experts, mix with peers, and find new customers and suppliers. To see a full enterprise events listing visit [www.startupbritain.co](http://www.startupbritain.co) and click on Enterprise Calendar.

Across 2013 Enterprise Nation will be hosting a whole range of events designed to help you start and grow. We'd love to see you!

- **StartUp Saturday** ([www.enterprisenation.com/saturday](http://www.enterprisenation.com/saturday)) – offering all you need to know to start a business in a day. Held throughout the year and across the UK
- **StartUp Workshops** – a mini version of StartUp Saturday and hosted instores from North to South. Full details for all of these can be found at the 'Events' section of [www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)

In terms of events there's also . . .

- **Global Entrepreneurship Week** (November each year) [www.gew.org.uk](http://www.gew.org.uk)
- **NACUE events** at universities and colleges [nacue.com](http://nacue.com)
- **StartUp Weekend** hosted in locations across the UK [www.startupweekend.org](http://www.startupweekend.org)
- **StartUp Britain Industry Weeks, national tour, and StartUp Day** [www.startupbritain.co](http://www.startupbritain.co)

### Jump On Board!

Rolling into its third year in 2013, the national StartUp Britain Tour sees a bright and buzzing bus travel to universities and colleges with entrepreneurs and experts on board. Register to receive the StartUp Britain e-news ([www.startupbritain.co](http://www.startupbritain.co)) and you'll be first to hear about bus tour dates and locations.



# 12. Make Some Noise!

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As your business grows, why not offer to go and speak to those younger than you who dream of following in your footsteps? Do so by linking up with:

- **Peter Jones Enterprise Academy** – started by Dragons' Den entrepreneur Peter Jones, the academy offers a full-time educational course and qualification in enterprise and entrepreneurship for 16–19 year olds. [www.pjea.org.uk](http://www.pjea.org.uk)
  - **Young Enterprise** – a charity that helps 250,000 young people every year to learn more about business. [www.young-enterprise.org.uk](http://www.young-enterprise.org.uk)
  - **School Speakers** – started by entrepreneur and Apprentice TV star Claire Young, this organisation matches enterprising and inspiring speakers with schools. [www.schoolspeakers.co.uk](http://www.schoolspeakers.co.uk)
  - **Inspiring the Future** – deliver an enterprising talk at a local school and pass on lessons learned. [www.inspiringthefuture.org](http://www.inspiringthefuture.org)
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## Become a startup local champion

Raise your profile and the likelihood of being approached for talks and coverage in national campaigns by becoming a StartUp Britain Local Champion. As a Local Champ, you'll be the face of StartUp Britain in your area and have opportunities to get involved in projects like High Street StartUp and StartUp Spaces. It's a route to making connections and, best of all, encouraging even more people to become their own boss.

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## Attend trade shows

Promote your brand by attending the shows your customers attend. Research the best shows by reading industry magazines and visiting online forums where people in your sector are talking.

### Trade show tactics

#### Before the event

- **Negotiate a good deal** – if you're prepared to wait it out, the best deals on stands can be had days before the event is starting. The closer the date, the better the price you'll negotiate as the sales team hurry to get a full house
- **Tell people you're going** – circulate news that you'll be at the event through online networks (giving your location or stand number) and issue a press release if you're doing something newsworthy at the event, maybe launching a new product, having a guest appearance, running a competition, etc

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## At the event

- **Be clear on the offer** – determine what you are selling at the show and let this be consistent across show materials; from pop-up stands to flyers. Be creative with the stand to keep costs low. Pop-up banners can be bought for £45 each from companies like Demonprint ([www.demonprint.co.uk](http://www.demonprint.co.uk)). Consider offering a supply of mouth-watering refreshments and branded accessories like pens, bags and t-shirts which can be ordered from companies like Vistaprint ([www.vistaprint.co.uk](http://www.vistaprint.co.uk))
- **Collect data** – find ways to collect attendees' names and details. Offer a prize in exchange for business cards or take details in exchange for a follow-up information pack or offer. Some events also offer the facility to scan the details from the delegates' badges (for a fee)
- **Take friends/family** – invite a supportive team. If you're busy talking to a potential customer, you'll want others on the stand who can be doing the same. If there's time, get to know the exhibitors around you
- **Be prepared** – wear comfortable shoes, bring some spare clothes and pack your lunch; if you're busy there may not be time to spend buying food and drink!

## After the event

- **Follow-up** – within a couple of days of returning from the show, contact the people who expressed interest so that interest can be turned into sales
- **Plan ahead** – if the show delivered a good return, contact the organisers and ask to be considered for a speaking slot or higher profile at the next event, and confirm your willingness to be a case study testimonial story in any post-show promotion

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## Become an expert

If you have a special set of knowledge or experience, set yourself up as an expert in your field and the media will come knocking on your door. Here are eight ways in which you can promote your expertise.

### 1. Publish a book

Become a published author on your special topic. Utilise the book as a business development tool, taking copies to events, and offering free and downloadable versions to potential customers. Being an author lends you credibility and gives customers information and insight. Get in touch with publishers and agents via *The Writer's & Artist's Yearbook*, or self-publish:

- Blurb [www.blurb.com](http://www.blurb.com)
- Lulu [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)
- Ubyu [www.ubyubooks.com](http://www.ubyubooks.com)

### 2. Present yourself

Put yourself forward to speak at events (consider asking for a fee and/or costs to be covered) or suggest being a satellite speaker, where you are beamed in via video link-up, so saving the effort and expense of travel. Invite customers and prospects and make the presentation openly available via SlideShare or Prezi.

- SlideShare [www.slideshare.com](http://www.slideshare.com)
- Prezi [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)

### 3. Host a webinar

Share your expertise or demonstrate a process by hosting a webinar or visual presentation where a live audience can see you and interact. Achieve this via platforms such as GoToMeeting, GoToWebinar and WebEx, and remember to host it at a time that suits your target audience.

- GoToMeeting [www.gotomeeting.com](http://www.gotomeeting.com)
- GoToWebina [www.gotomeeting.com/webinar](http://www.gotomeeting.com/webinar)
- WebEx [www.webex.co.uk](http://www.webex.co.uk)

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## 4. Produce a film

Maybe the word 'film' is a little ambitious but why not create your own video content and have a sponsored series of guides (or other content) that can be uploaded to video sharing sites such as YouTube, Vimeo and eHow?

- YouTube [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
- Vimeo [www.vimeo.com](http://www.vimeo.com)
- eHow [www.ehow.co.uk](http://www.ehow.co.uk)

## 5. Broadcast a podcast

For customers who like to listen to what you have to say at a time that suits them, upload a podcast with top tips, interviews and your thoughts of the day. Make it available on your site, iTunes and Podcast Alley to be sure of a wide audience.

- Submit a podcast to the iTunes store  
[www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts](http://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts)
- Podcast Alley [www.podcastalley.com](http://www.podcastalley.com)

## 6. Deliver training

Whether your skill is in embroidering handmade shoes or developing stylish websites, your knowledge could be shared with others. Rather than seeing this as surrendering intelligence to potential competitors, offer instruction you're comfortable with that will create fans and followers who will learn from you, buy from you and, critically, encourage others to do the same. Check out platforms GoToTraining, WebEx and Blackboard, encourage contacts to sign up and then after the demonstration you have a chance to follow up with a group of new contacts.

- GoToTraining [www.gotomeeting.com/fec/training/online\\_training](http://www.gotomeeting.com/fec/training/online_training)
- WebEx WebTraining [www.webex.co.uk](http://www.webex.co.uk)
- Blackboard [www.blackboard.com](http://www.blackboard.com)

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## 7. Develop an app

Take your content and make an iPhone app. Turn to browser-based platforms such as Appmakr; “AppMakr can be used by anyone with existing content and fans or customers to reach; bloggers/writers, business owners, website owners . . .”.

You can either set a list price to make sales via the App Store or make it available free of charge.

- AppMakr [www.appmakr.com](http://www.appmakr.com)

## 8. Form groups

Encourage others to discuss, debate and contribute to your content by forming groups utilising social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Ning. Bonding interested people to each other will bond them ever closer to you, the content creator and group host.

- Facebook [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
- LinkedIn [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)
- Ning [www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com)

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## Be everywhere

Keep in touch with existing customers via a newsletter and reach out to the new by making regular appearances at events, on other people’s websites and blogs, in newspapers and magazines, and on radio and TV. Write to the magazines and radio stations that ask people to send in their story. It’s a free way to get coverage. The more you’re covered, the more you’ll be invited to speak and comment, and before you know it, you’ll be everywhere!

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# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## Price point

These options will raise your profile but you can also generate revenue from them. Your options are:

- make your content and knowledge available at no charge to customers, to build your reputation as the go-to person and place for a particular product or service
- charge for access/downloads/viewing and turn your micropublishing activity into a revenue stream in its own right

This is something you can assess over time. Start with a mix of charged-for and free content, ensure you're providing good value and incentives for your community to remain interested and engaged, and the options to introduce charged-for content will increase.

## Embrace social media

Thanks to social media, there have never been so many tools to promote our businesses free of charge. According to research company Nielsen, the world now spends over 110 billion minutes on social networks and blogs per month.

That's 22% of all time online, or one in every four and a half minutes. Embrace this and your business will become known. Here are the key tools to use and, crucially, how best to use them.

### Facebook

Facebook has over 1 billion users worldwide, so if you need to be where your customers are, there's a good chance some of them will be there!

You can list on Facebook for free and/or advertise on the site and select target audience based on location, sex, age and interests. As an advertiser, you control how much you want to spend and set a daily budget. The minimum budget is US \$1.00 (63p) a day. After designing your ad(s), decide for how long you want the campaign to run and whether you want to be charged for the number of clicks you receive (CPC – charge per click) or the number of times your ad is displayed. Visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), create an account, invite friends and contacts to join your group and get promoting.

**Cost:** free (ads are charged-for)

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## Twitter

Visit [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com), create an account, follow friends and contacts (and their followers) and get tweeting.

**Cost:** free

## Flickr

Join [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) and promote yourself visually by uploading photos of you and your products or service, and maybe even a few shots of happy customers. The site also carries video clips so you can show:

- events you host, speak at, or attend
- products you make (the finished product) as well as images of the production process
- happy customers wearing/using/enjoying your products and services
- your workspace
- your family (if you – and they – feel comfortable showing your personal side)

You can also easily pull the photos into your blog and social media pages.

**Cost:** free (option to upgrade to a pro account which is a paid-for package)

## LinkedIn

Referring to itself as “the world’s largest professional network”, LinkedIn has over 100 million members in 200-plus countries. Visit [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com), create an account and start connecting with contacts and finding new ones.

**Cost:** free (option to upgrade to a business account, which is a paid-for package)

# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## YouTube

YouTube is the world's most popular online video community, with 24 hours of video uploaded every minute. Start your own business channel for free, and upload videos profiling you and your work.

Create an account ([www.youtube.com/create\\_account](http://www.youtube.com/create_account)), start a channel (advice via YouTube video!), and start broadcasting to the world. You can give each of your videos a name and assign keywords to it to help with searching, plus you can have a short description of your company on your profile page. Again, these clips are very easy to add to your website, and they help keep the content fresh and interesting.

**Cost:** free

## Pinterest

Pinterest is a virtual pinboard that lets users organise and share the beautiful things they find on the web. Big brands and small businesses have taken to Pinterest to pin pictures of their products to virtual 'pinboards'. More powerfully, customers are pinning their favourite products – and doing some of the marketing work for them!

The site has just over 2 million daily active users. Head to [tinyurl.com/ENPinterest](http://tinyurl.com/ENPinterest) to view other Pinteresting facts and figures.

**Cost:** free

**Total budget required for online promotion: £0**



# 12. Make Some Noise!

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## Measure the results

Time to measure what's working and what's not. Measure media and press mentions through signing up to Google Alerts – and you'll be pleased to know there's a whole host of tools that are free to use and will show real-time results for what's working on your site.

Google Analytics offers intelligence on your website traffic and marketing effectiveness: [www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics) There are other analytics options:

- **Alexa** – web traffic metrics, site demographics and top URL listings: [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com)
- **Clicky** – monitors and analyses your site traffic in real time: [www.getclicky.com](http://www.getclicky.com)
- **Opentracker** – gather and analyse web stats and monitor online visitors: [www.opentracker.net](http://www.opentracker.net)
- **StatCounter** – an invisible web tracker and hit counter that offers data in real time: [www.statcounter.com](http://www.statcounter.com)
- **Marketing Grader** – generates a free marketing report that compares your site with a competitor's: [www.websitegrader.com](http://www.websitegrader.com)

Hopefully what you will see is an upward curve of visitors and time spent on the site.

If you're selling anything, then hopefully this means more sales. If your site is the business, this means you're in a strong position to attract advertisers and begin doing affiliate deals.

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## Monkeying around

Run a poll with, for example, Wufoo ([www.wufoo.com](http://www.wufoo.com)) or Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). Both are free to use, then publish the results via a press release and online. The media loves good polls!

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Look out, in particular, for the sources of your traffic (which are your highest referring sites) and your most popular pages. You can see days where your site receives spikes in visitor levels (and track this back to marketing) and measure if visitors are spending longer periods on the site and which times are popular, e.g. weekends, evenings, lunchtimes, etc.

## Part III: Growing

# Growing

# 13. Attract Customers Back

You are making sales via your site and developing a strong community of fans and followers. Give visitors and customers a reason to return with content that is regularly updated.

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If you have a blog, try to post regularly, and if you're selling, keep the product range updated. Give your site some TLC each day, as fresh content will attract visitors who want to see what's new and will also appeal to the trawling web spiders who determine search engine results.

## User-generated content

Encourage your site visitors to get to know each other through a forum or comment boxes. Before you know it, a sense of community will develop and visitors will log on each day to find out who's saying what and what's happening with whom.

## Exclusive offers

Extend offers to your existing customers, readers or members that will tempt them back. This offer could be conditional on customers referring a friend: that way your customer returns to the site with others in tow. Add to this with a badge of honour; design an icon that visitors can display on their own site to show their affiliation with you.

## Guest appearances

Invite special guests to appear on your site via guest blog posts, hosting a webchat or a featured interview.

# 13. Attract Customers Back

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## Keep in touch

Communicate all these good and sticky things to your users through a regular e-newsletter powered by sites such as MailChimp ([www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com)), Constant Contact ([www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com)) or AWeber Communications ([www.aweber.com](http://www.aweber.com)).

## Email marketing: keep it clean, keep it simple, keep it relevant

Email marketing works best when it is targeted. This means keeping your lists clean and organising them according to previous customer contact. A wellsegmented list means you can send more frequent campaigns, ensuring a steady flow of business, without worrying about clogging up inboxes. Keep your email designs clean and simple – making it easier for your customer to make informed buying decisions in a snap.

# 14. Outsourcing

The business is growing, time is your most precious resource and you are in need of help. The quickest and most affordable place to get it is from other companies with whom you can partner to get projects done, as well as from expert advisors and mentors who will offer advice on how the business can continue to grow.

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With outsourcing you can free yourself up to dedicate your attention to sales, strategy or whatever the business activity is that you do best. My advice to all businesses is always: focus on what you do best and outsource the rest.

## What can be outsourced and to whom?

### Admin

Hire a VA (virtual assistant) to do the admin tasks you don't want or don't have the time to do:

- International Association of Virtual Assistants  
[www.iava.co.uk](http://www.iava.co.uk)
- Society of Virtual Assistants  
[www.societyofvirtualassistants.co.uk](http://www.societyofvirtualassistants.co.uk)
- VA Success Group [www.vasuccessgroup.co.uk](http://www.vasuccessgroup.co.uk)

### Accounts

Unless you are in the accountancy business, this is almost a must to be outsourced. Monthly payroll, accounts, VAT returns and corporate tax returns all take time and it's time you can't afford or simply don't have. A cost/benefit analysis is likely to show that it's cheaper to outsource to a qualified accountant. Ask around for recommendations of accountants in your area who deliver a quality service at a competitive cost and are registered with the Institute of Chartered Accountants for England and Wales.

For online accounting and invoicing that makes life easier for you and your accountant, check out SageOne ([www.sageone.com](http://www.sageone.com)).

### PR, marketing and design

Outsource your PR to a specialist who can be pitching and promoting the business whilst you're at work. Find skilled professionals on directory sites such as Enterprise Nation ([www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)), oDesk ([www.odesk.com](http://www.odesk.com)) and PeoplePerHour ([www.peopleperhour.com](http://www.peopleperhour.com)).

# 14. Outsourcing

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## Sales

Hire a sales expert to make calls, set up appointments and attend trade shows. Find these professionals online, contact telemarketing companies that offer outbound sales calls as a service, or look at sales specialists such as Winning Sales ([www.winningsales.co.uk](http://www.winningsales.co.uk)).

## Customer service

Looking after customers is vital, but even that can be outsourced. Get Satisfaction's tagline is "people-powered customer service" – it provides a webhosted platform, much like a forum, where customers can ask questions, suggest improvements, report a problem or give praise. It can save you time and money by having the power of the crowd take care of customer questions!

- Get Satisfaction [www.getsatisfaction.com](http://www.getsatisfaction.com)

## IT

Spending too many hours trying to fix a single IT problem? Outsource the hassle and save your time, money and blood pressure. Find IT professionals online or contact IT support teams connected to the large retailers.

- Geeks-on-Wheels [www.geeks-on-wheels.com](http://www.geeks-on-wheels.com)
- Knowhow [www.knowhow.com](http://www.knowhow.com)
- Geek Squad [www.geeksquad.co.uk](http://www.geeksquad.co.uk)

# 14. Outsourcing

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## Steps to successful outsourcing

### **Do the groundwork**

Spend some time working on the task yourself so you've built foundations before handing it over to someone else. For example, if you outsource sales then have a ready-made contacts list and some open doors that the specialist can build on, rather than starting from scratch. This will make it more cost-effective for you and means that they hit the ground running.

### **Be clear on the brief**

Having spent some time doing the task yourself, you will have a clear idea of the brief. Back to the example of outsourcing sales, if you've spent 6–12 months sourcing leads and making contacts, you'll have a much clearer idea of the type of work the specialist should do.

The clearer the brief, the better the results.

### **Take your time**

And take references. Spend time evaluating the specialists in the market and, if you can, talk to their existing clients. Do they have the industry experience you're after? Will they represent your brand in a professional manner? Have they delivered a good job for other clients? When an outsourced arrangement works well, the partner becomes part of your team – so choose them as carefully as you would choose an employee.

### **Let go!**

Outsourcing means having to let go a little. Someone else becomes accountable for these results. Embrace this rather than resist it. As the business owner you remain in ultimate control but the expert will need their own space in which to flourish. Outsourcing can save you time and help make you money. Finding the right partner, on the right terms, will make you feel like a new and liberated person.

# 14. Outsourcing

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## Form teams

Once you've chosen your outsourced partner(s), it's important to keep in regular contact and work together as a team. There are a number of online project management and collaboration tools to help you stay on top of projects and in control of the company.

- Basecamp ([www.basecamp.com](http://www.basecamp.com)) is the project management tool we rely on at Enterprise Nation. This is a top-class product that allows you to create projects, invite people to view them, upload files and make comments. It's effective online project management that can be accessed from anywhere.
- Share documents via Google Docs ([docs.google.com](http://docs.google.com)). You can edit on the move, choose who accesses documents and share changes in real time.
- Huddle ([www.huddle.com](http://www.huddle.com)) offers simple and secure online workspaces. Huddle is hosted, so there's no software to download and it's free to get started.

## Solutions to enable group-talk

- GoToMeeting [www.gotomeeting.com](http://www.gotomeeting.com). Work with anyone, anywhere with this easy to use online meeting tool.
- Ketchup [www.useketchup.com](http://www.useketchup.com). Share and record meeting notes.
- Powwownow [www.powwownow.co.uk](http://www.powwownow.co.uk). Free conference calling at 'open access' level. Priced packages available.



# 14. Outsourcing

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## Form partnerships

If relationships develop, you may decide to form a partnership. Consider writing a partnership agreement as your pre-nup in business. At the outset of a relationship, all is good and you're excited about the potential, but it's best to be safe; have the terms written and agreed so that all parties are clear on expectations.

The following should not be taken as concrete legal advice, more of a guideline on how to draw up an agreement.

### Scope of agreement

What is your partnership working to achieve? For example, "This agreement is made between Company A and Company B. The agreement is related to the generation of online advertising revenues/hosting of an event/development of a new product."

### Respective responsibilities

Set out the expectations on who does what. For example, Company A will be responsible for promotion and business development and Company B will take on technical development and client care. Also include a note of how you'll keep each other briefed, maybe through the use of an online project management tool.

### Finances

What will be the split in revenue, and is this before or after costs? And who owns the intellectual property of the product/service/activity? Consider including a clause that states the agreement will be reviewed in six months so that both parties can check on progress and have the right to cease the agreement if it hasn't gone as planned.

### Be fair

Agreements where both parties feel that they're receiving their fair share are likely to be longer-lasting than those when one party feels embittered. Talk about this before writing and concluding the agreement. Make sure there's no resentment or sense of being exploited on either side.

### Sign it!

After making the effort to produce an agreement, be sure to sign it! And then store it so that you can access it easily if the need arises.

When writing the clauses in your agreement, think about all the things that could go wrong and safeguard against them. It's a practical exercise and won't harm your newly formed business relationship but will get it off on a firm footing. If you're looking for a template agreement, check out sites such as [www.clickdocs.co.uk](http://www.clickdocs.co.uk).



“When the business is at a stage to take on its first new employee, visit the ‘Growing your business’ section of the GOV.UK site ([www.gov.uk/growing-your-business/hire-and-train -staff](http://www.gov.uk/growing-your-business/hire-and-train-staff)), which offers details on how to employ and your obligations as an employer over time.”

# 15. Keep the Business in Balance

As the business continues to grow, you will want to maintain momentum and grow at a comfortable pace. Achieve this by following what I call ‘the golden triangle’, which will keep you and the business in balance. This requires spending roughly a third of your time on three key things:

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## 1. Customer care

Look after your customers by delivering a quality product or service, on time and within budget. And remember . . . the customer is always right!

I ask clients for feedback so that I can keep a check on what they’re thinking and changes they’d like to see. It’s good to know some personal details about your customers, too. (Maybe their birthday, their favourite hobby.) As you gather these details, make a quick note so you can send a birthday card on the right date, etc. Don’t go overboard, but showing that you care certainly won’t harm your relationship.

Offer customers good service, regular communication and an innovative line of products and services. It will stand you in good stead.

## 2. New business

Taking care of customers means taking care of sales. Why? Because it costs less to win business from existing customers than it does to find new ones. If customers are happy, they’ll say good things about you to new and potential customers. This is called word-of-mouth marketing and achieving it is every business owner’s dream!

Secure new clients through marketing, encouraging recommendations, and direct-sales calls and pitches.

# 15. Keep the Business in Balance

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## 3. Admin

Not as enjoyable as the first two, but it still has to be done. Keep the books in order by raising invoices in good time, being on top of cash flow, and filing tax returns and company documents on time and in order. In short, keep the finances in check and the books up-to-date.

### **Cash is king**

In Chapter 9 we looked at the topic of straightforward finance and how to plan income and outgoings.

Keep an eye on the accounts so you can see how much money is in the bank, how much is owed and whether this covers your outgoings.

This is a vital part of running your business and something you will need to keep close tabs on especially at the start. Monitor this using your accounts software and online banking. It's a very well-worn phrase in business, but cash is most definitely king.

### **Getting paid and paying others**

A key part in managing your cash flow is making sure you get paid and get paid promptly. How you get paid will depend quite a lot on the type of business you have and whether you are selling direct to customers or to other businesses. If selling directly, you will mostly be paid immediately. If you are dealing with other businesses, the chances are most will expect to pay on invoice (more on this below) and will expect a credit period in which to pay. Be prepared to offer credit terms, but be careful about how long you give, how much credit you'll allow and who you offer this to.

If you need to buy in products or services from others as part of your business it's always worth seeing if you too can arrange credit terms with suppliers. This should help you balance payments in and out. This isn't always easy at the start and you may have to pay upfront to begin with, but it is something to ask for. Having built up a good relationship with your supplier it should be a natural next step.

# 15. Keep the Business in Balance

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## Invoices

Be on time with invoicing and keep a record of amounts outstanding. I have a simple spreadsheet with five columns labelled 'client', 'invoice amount', 'invoice number', 'date submitted' and 'date paid'.

- Your invoices should be a simple document with basic details. The less cause for question on the invoice, the faster it will be paid
- Always find out in advance who should be named on the invoice, where it should be sent and whether you need to include any sort of order reference number. When dealing with large companies in particular, this sort of thing can make a big difference to how quickly you get paid
- Settle invoices as promptly as you can. Your suppliers should be grateful and repay you with good service.

Hopefully your clients and customers will always pay promptly, but occasionally you might need to remind them. Do this politely and clearly. It's often sensible to send a monthly statement to a client detailing any outstanding invoices, and usually that's enough to spur them into action.

You can balance the budget with a piece of accounting software. See 'Accounts' earlier for details of options, and don't forget to have a look at the offers available in this guide.

## Receipts

Keep business-related receipts in a place where they're easy to find. I have a big wicker box that I use as a collecting place for receipts. It's helpful that they're all in one place when it's time to do the VAT return.

## Track your time with time-tracking software

- Cashboard [www.getcashboard.com](http://www.getcashboard.com)
- TraxTime [www.spudcity.com/traxtime](http://www.spudcity.com/traxtime)

# 16. Support

Ask questions at every opportunity and build a support network.  
Here's where to look for people who are happy to help.

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## Peers

Who better to turn to than those going through the same experience as you? Visit the sites below and join their active communities of business owners.

- Enterprise Nation [www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)
- Business Zone [www.businesszone.co.uk](http://www.businesszone.co.uk)
- Startups [startups.co.uk](http://startups.co.uk)
- Fresh Business Thinking [www.freshbusinessstinking.com](http://www.freshbusinessstinking.com)

## Mentors

Find a mentor through making a direct approach to experts, professionals and business owners you admire and respect. Or source one via government website [Mentorsme.co.uk](http://Mentorsme.co.uk).

And don't restrict yourself to one mentor! I have learnt from many people as my businesses have passed through different stages of development. My approach was to get in touch with the person I felt best placed to have the answer, take on board their views, consider my options, and then act.

In my view, the ideal mentor is someone who possesses four things:

1. Experience of your industry/sector
2. The ability to listen
3. The technical skills to advise
4. A willingness to make introductions to useful contacts.

If you can find these in one person, you are very fortunate indeed.

# 16. Support

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## Business advisors

Consider approaching your local enterprise agency, university/college society, chamber of commerce or the Prince's Trust for additional support.

- National Enterprise Network ([www.nationalenterprisenetwork.org](http://www.nationalenterprisenetwork.org)) offers links to local business support agencies in your area.
- NACUE ([www.nacue.org](http://www.nacue.org)) represents enterprise societies in universities and colleges that could be your first port of call
- In 2011, the Prince's Trust ([tinyurl.com/princestrustenterprise](http://tinyurl.com/princestrustenterprise)) helped almost 13,000 young people through its Enterprise Programme
- Local Enterprise Partnerships ([www.bis.gov.uk/policies/economicdevelopment/leps](http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/economicdevelopment/leps)) have been set up to encourage enterprise and will be interested in hearing any success story.

## Accelerate!

And finally . . . if you want to give your business an extra injection and growth spurt, check out some of the 'Accelerators' launched by companies to give you space, funding and access to mentors, technology and customers.

- School for Creative Startups [www.schoolforcreativestartups.com](http://www.schoolforcreativestartups.com)
- Entrepreneur First [www.entrepreneurfirst.org.uk](http://www.entrepreneurfirst.org.uk)
- Springboard [www.springboard.com](http://www.springboard.com)
- GrowthAccelerator [www.growthaccelerator.com](http://www.growthaccelerator.com)

# The Best of Luck

You've read the stories, devoured the tips and completed the templates. It's time to take your own idea, passion, hobby or skill, and turn it into a business.

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I hope what you've picked up from this guide is that regardless of your age, background or sector, if you're starting out as your own boss there's support all around. In whichever direction you turn, you'll find people to cheer you along and answer your questions; you'll find loans on offer and resources on tap.

Make the most of this support and never be afraid to seek help or approach mentors. With guidance from those who've trodden the entrepreneurial path, you will find your own way and build a future that offers financial reward and freedom in your working life.

Many times I exclaimed that "start-ups are the new rock stars" and see no sign of this wearing out. Big companies want to be seen alongside you and customers want to buy from you. These are good conditions in which to start a new venture.

So, now it's over to you. And even though this farewell is entitled 'Best of Luck', one of my favourite quotes is one that's well known and came from golf pro Gary Player, who said: "The harder I practise, the luckier I get."

My advice to you: go practise and get lucky!

Emma Jones @emmaljones



# How Enterprise Nation Can Help

Enterprise Nation ([www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com).) provides support for UK homegrown businesses through its books, events and on its website.

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Whether you're dreaming of becoming your own boss, turning a talent into a business or taking over the world from your kitchen table, Enterprise Nation can help.

There's lots of free business advice on our website, events where you can learn about starting up or 'going global', and books for any kind of business in our bookshop. We can even help you with your marketing. Add your business – whatever stage it's at – to our free business directory, and we'll help you get found on the web.

Become a premium member and get even more for your business, including free eBooks, discounted tickets to events, and more ways to promote your business.

# Get the Best Support for Your Business

**Join Enterprise Nation:** A thoroughly modern business club

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- Free business eBooks
- Discounts on business events
- Exclusive business benefits – including access to over 1,000 workspaces in 85 countries

**Enterprise Nation helps thousands of people turn their good ideas into great businesses.**

We also represent your views in the heart of government.

So, take your business to the next level – with comprehensive support, including marketing help, networking opportunities and over £500-worth of exclusive business benefits.

**Join the club now for just £20 per year – and get a FREE Enterprise Nation mug!**

Find out more at **[www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)**

