

WE'RE OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

Overview

Welcome to our community! This checklist is a good starting point for you as you begin your business. It is in no way meant to be a substitute for professional advice or counsel.

Formulation and Planning...

Formalize Your Idea

Formally select a business idea, product or service that you will sell. This may sound like an easy step, but think hard about what exactly you will be selling and whether you have the skills and qualifications to run a business. This is also a good time to start thinking about the feasibility of making your business idea profitable.

Research the business industry

What will you sell? Who will buy it? How often?

Are you willing and able to do what it takes to sell your product?

Who are the competitors?

What will your product cost to produce, market, sell, and deliver? Can you make a profit? How long will it take for your business to make a profit?

What compliance issues do you need to address?

How to Make Your Business Plan Stand Out

One of the first steps to business planning is determining your target market and why they would want to buy from you. For example, is the market you serve the best one for your product or service? Are the benefits of dealing with your business clear and are they aligned with customer needs? If you're unsure about the answers to any of these questions, take a step back and revisit the foundation of your business plan. The following tips can help you clarify what your business has to offer, identify the right target market for it and build a niche for yourself.

Be Clear About What You Have to Offer

Ask yourself: Beyond basic products or services, what are you really selling? Consider this example: Your town probably has several restaurants all selling one fundamental product—food. But each is targeted at a different need or clientele. One might be a drive-thru fast food restaurant, perhaps another sells pizza in a rustic Italian kitchen, and maybe there's a fine dining seafood restaurant that specializes in wood-grilled fare. All these restaurants sell meals, but they sell them to targeted clientele looking for the unique qualities each has to offer. What they are really selling is a combination of product, value, ambience and brand experience.

When starting a business, be sure to understand what makes your business unique.

What needs does your product or service fulfill? What benefits and differentiators will help your business stand out from the crowd?

Don't Become a Jack of All Trades...Learn to Strategize

It's important to clearly define what you're selling. You do not want to become a jack-of-all trades and master of none because this can have a negative impact on business growth. As a smaller business, it's often a better strategy to divide your products or services into manageable market niches. Small operations can then offer specialized goods and services that are attractive to a specific group of prospective buyers.

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Identify Your Niche

Creating a niche for your business is essential to success. Often, business owners can identify a niche based on their own market knowledge, but it can also be helpful to conduct a market survey with potential customers to uncover untapped needs. During your research process, identify the following:

- Which areas your competitors are already well-established
- Which areas are being ignored by your competitors
- Potential opportunities for your business.

Web site considerations

If you are going to have a web site, be sure to register the domain name.

Using a domain registry service, see if the business name is available for use as an Internet domain name.

Legal Formation...

Registering your business with the State of Missouri

Go to www.sos.mo.gov/business/outreach/starting_steps.asp

Create a business structure

Learn more about the differences in business structure and determine the best one for your venture. The most common choices are: sole proprietorship, limited liability corporation, partnership, corporation or s-corporation.

- If your business will be a sole proprietorship and you will be using an assumed name, you must check the availability of the name you have chosen and register it.
- If your business will be a partnership, draw up your partnership agreement. If the partnership will be using an assumed name, register the fictitious name.
- If your business will be a corporation, file Articles of Incorporation.

For online information and registration, go to www.sos.mo.gov/business/corporations/startBusiness.asp or www.business.mo.gov

Obtain a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)

The EIN is an official number that is given to a business by the US government to calculate the amount of tax liability due. To learn more and register, go to <http://www.irs.gov/Businesses>.

Register for required state taxes, including unemployment tax, where applicable.

Go to <https://dors.mo.gov/tax/coreg/index.jsp>.

Business License

To obtain the application for licensing your business, contact your local city clerk or county clerk at the telephone numbers listed in the Resource section of this document.

Be sure that you register with other Missouri agencies if required in your industry

Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 333, Warrenton, MO 63383

www.warrentoncoc.com warrentoncoc@socket.net

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Resource information...

Warren County

636-456-3044

www.warrencountymo.org

City of Warrenton

636-456-3535

www.warrenton-mo.org

City of Truesdale

636-456-3166

www.cityoftruesdale.org

Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce

636-456-2530

www.warrentoncoc.com

Boonslick Regional Planning Commission

636-456-3473

www.boonslick.org

SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives)

(314) 539-6602

www.stlouis.score.org

Moving Forward...

Choosing a business location

If you are going to have a brick-and-mortar presence, research possible locations for your business. Where appropriate, analyze that location for traffic, parking, customer and delivery access.

Planning and Zoning

A Zoning Code is oriented toward how a project fits into a community: it regulates setbacks, types of uses, height, parking requirements, design (for some types of projects) and similar concerns. The area is divided into various zones and each zone will have its own set of regulations. For example, the regulations that would apply in a single family residential district will be different than those for a multi-family or commercial district. When a separate Zoning Permit is required for a new development, there will generally be a requirement to have that application to accompany site and building plans (including preliminary architecture). **Before purchasing property for your business site, contact your Planning and Zoning department to verify zoning.** Make sure to look at an up to date zoning map and ask the zoning officer to make a determination of which zone the property is in and what relief may be needed.

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Public Utilities

To ensure that your business site has the necessary utilities, contact the public works department for the jurisdiction of your site location.

Warrenton (water and sewer) – 636-456-3535

Truesdale (sewer) – 636-456-3166

Warren County (sewer) – 636-456-7169

Montgomery Water (water) – 636-456-8227

Other utilities you may need:

Ameren Missouri (electric and gas) – 1-800-552-7583

Cuivre River Coop (electric) – 1-800-392-3709

CenturyLink (telephone) – 1-800-201-4099

Charter Business (cable) – 1-888-871-4485

Christian Environmental Services (trash) – 636-566-8367

Wilson Waste (trash) – 636-456-1836

Building Codes and Permits

Building Code is oriented toward ensuring that structures are constructed to an appropriate standard and are safe for the uses intended. Application for most Building Permits must be accompanied by detailed construction drawings.

If you plan to build a new building or alter an existing building, a building permit will be required. Contact the Building Department for Warrenton, Truesdale or Warren County to obtain those requirements and an application.

Fire Code Requirements

Warrenton and Wright City Fire Districts will provide occupancy inspections as related to their departments. They require site and building plans for all commercial and residential buildings within the area covered by their department.

Warrenton Fire – (636) 456-8935

Wright City Fire – (636) 745-2262

Signage

Each municipality has signage requirements related to the commercial zone of your business. Signage application must be accompanied by two (2) blueprints or ink drawings of the plans and specifications of the sign to be erected or affixed and the method of construction and attachment of the building or in the ground. Such plans and specifications shall include details of dimensions, materials, color, weight, and electrical.

Other considerations...

Business insurance

Chamber of Commerce membership

Accountant and/or attorney

Banking institution

U.S. Post Office

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