

SAMPLE

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Three Most Important Early Steps in Launching a Business from Scratch

I have been doing this for a little while and I'll be honest – I still don't know very much about running a business. You can spend years as an entrepreneur – even a darn successful one – and you won't necessarily be at the top of the field. But, if there's one thing I do know, it's that when you spend time writing and talking about your business and the steps you've taken to be successful, you not only learn a ton about yourself, you help other do the same.

That's why I run this blog and that's why I love getting your comments. They make me not only feel good about what I've done for my business, but what I can offer all my fellow marketers and business owners out there.

So, just to show you all how awesome I think you are, I'm going to give you three of my personally favorite tips for starting a business from scratch. The kinds of things that will help anyone build any kind of business from the ground up. That doesn't mean you'll be a millionaire overnight, but it will sure help you set the groundwork for what you have planned.

1. Know EXACTLY What You Want to Do AND How You'll Get There

A friend of mine sent me an email the other day asking for help with his business plan. I love business plans so I was more than happy to help. I gave him an enthusiastic smiley emoticon and waited for his draft.

In a couple days, I got a second email of about 3,000 words. It was all written in the body of the email, there was not document attached, and no numbers. It was essentially a raw brainstorm of what my friend foresaw his company *becoming* in two or three years. It wasn't horrible but it wasn't what you want for a business plan.

I told him as much and we proceeded to spend the next few weeks going over the vagaries and details of exactly what he wanted his business to be, and the steps it would take to get there. Don't just write down how much money you want to make or how many employees you plan on hiring. For reference, here are three questions I told him to ask himself when outlining that business plan:

- Can you write a detailed sequence outlining how you plan on getting your first customer?
- How much money do you have now, how much will you need, and exactly what will you spend every dollar on?
- What are your five strongest assets as a business and how can you monetize each of them?

The goal is to provide yourself with a strong focus. Don't just know what you want to become. Know exactly what you are and you'll have a far better idea of how to get there and what your business will demand of you along the way.

2. Start Building Connections NOW

The easiest way to be successful in business is to create networking connections early and often and then call on them when you need them most. A lot of people take this the wrong way. They think they should collect business cards and build up a backlog of favors. But, that's not what I mean. What I mean is simply be nice to everyone you meet and show them that you do your job well.

Everyone is a potential connection. Even your old college roommate's eldest son – 15 years old and completely aimless – might someday become a bank executive. Treat the kid like an old pal now and you

never know what will come of it. Now, don't go around trying to befriend 15 year olds (that can go wrong for a lot of different reasons), but do spend time looking for connections where you least expect them. And above all else, don't think about what's in it for you...yet. Eventually it will come back, but for now, it's just about offering value and help to your fellow business owners.

3. Record Everything

Eventually, if you pull off your big dream, every little detail of your life will be recorded, filed and catalogued by an assistant who types 120 WPM and can speak three languages. But for now, you need to do the job of five people and one of the most important tasks you can perform is tracking your early moves.

Write down what you buy, what you make, who you talk to, how you land a client, how you fail to land a client, and anything else you can think of. I spend as much as 2-3 hours a day taking down notes, writing up client profiles and building a database of data I can reuse in the future.

The key to success as a small business is to be ready for anything and to plan. Overnight successes do happen, but even they have a nasty habit of falling apart after a couple years because they lack infrastructure and foresight. Do these things and you'll be more than set in the future.