

Owner's Checklist for Starting a New Business

Background work

- assess your strengths and weaknesses
- establish business and personal goals
- assess your financial resources
- identify the financial risks
- determine the start-up costs
- decide on your business location
- do market research
- identify your customers
- identify your competitors
- develop a marketing plan
- choose a business name and do a registered name search to confirm it's not in use

Business transactions

- choose an attorney
- decide on a form of business (sole proprietorship, LLC, partnership, or corporation, etc.)
- file necessary legal paperwork to form business (register a business name, file incorporation, LLC, etc. with state agency)
- choose an accountant
- draft a business plan
- select a bank and open a business checking account
- apply for business loans (if applicable)
- establish a line of credit
- choose an insurance agent
- purchase business insurance

Initial tasks

- create business cards/stationary/sales literature
- get familiar with business codes and regulations (zoning, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, OSHA requirements, federal tax, state and local tax, self-employment tax, payroll tax requirements such as FICA, federal unemployment tax, and state unemployment tax, sales and use tax)

- obtain a business location
- establish a business phone number/internet service
- line up suppliers (if applicable)
- order inventory (if applicable)
- hire employees (if applicable)
- obtain furniture and equipment
- obtain a business license or permit (if applicable)
- get a federal employer identification number (if applicable)
- get a state employer i.d. number (if applicable)
- set up record-keeping.-create any necessary contracts, service agreements and invoices so you can easily bill customers, track payments and keep records
- send for federal and state tax forms
- join a professional organization
- set a business opening date
- register a domain name
- create a website or hire web designer/host
- register or reserve state or federal trademark
- register copyrights
- apply for patent (if applicable)
- order any required notices (advertisements you have to place) of your intent to do business in the community
- have sales literature prepared
- send out publicity releases
- call for information about Yellow Pages advertising.
- place advertising in newspapers or other media if yours is the type of business that will benefit from paid advertising

Businesses that Require Federal Licenses

- investment advising (<http://www.sec.gov>)
- drug manufacturing (<http://www.fda.gov>)
- preparation of meat products (<http://www.fda.gov>)
- broadcasting (<http://www.fcc.gov>)
- ground transportation (<http://www.dot.gov>)
- selling alcohol, tobacco or firearms (<http://www.atf.gov>)

Businesses that Require State Licenses

Some occupations and professions require a state license or permit, depending on state laws, which vary by state. If you are engaged in one of the following professions, you should contact the responsible state agency to determine the requirements for your business:

- building contractors
- banks
- insurance carriers
- physicians
- appraisers
- accountants
- barbers
- real estate agents
- auctioneers
- private investigators
- private security guards
- funeral directors
- bill collectors
- cosmetologists

State Licenses and Permits for Select Products

Some state licensing requirements are based on the item sold. Contact your state licensing authorities to determine if licensing requirements apply to your business. For example, most states require special licenses to sell:

- liquor
- lottery tickets
- gasoline
- firearms