

QUESTIONNAIRE: Am I Ready to Launch My Small Business?

The success of a small business depends on good planning—for your life, your finances, your business plan, and your legal and tax obligations. This diagnostic questionnaire is designed to help you determine whether you've asked yourself (and your attorney and other professionals assisting you) the right questions to make a good decision whether to start a business.

Questions About Your Goals

_____ What are my immediate goals for myself and my business?

_____ What are my long-term goals for myself and my business?

Questions About Your Business

Yes/no

_____ Do I have a complete list of all the products and services I will be selling, their cost to me, their prices, and the profit I expect each to bring in?

_____ Do I have a firm understanding of what customer base(s) I intend to appeal to?

_____ Do I have a marketing plan that fits my business and customer base, and which I have budgeted for adequately?

_____ Do I know who all my suppliers will be, and on what terms I will be purchasing goods and services from them?

_____ Do I have contracts ready to go with my suppliers and distributors as appropriate, and has my attorney reviewed them?

_____ Do I know what personnel I will need, and have a means to pay them as my business gets off the ground?

_____ Do I have a plan for recruiting and hiring the personnel I need?

_____ Do I have an employment policy or manual which will lay out expectations, benefits, and other employment details? Has my attorney reviewed it?

_____ Do I have a plan to train, motivate, and retain employees?

_____ Do I have a clear understanding of what records I will need to keep, and an organized way to keep them safely?

_____ Do I know who will keep the business' records, and what I will do if that person for any reason stops doing so?

Questions About Legal Issues

Yes/no

_____ Does my business require licensing or registration? How often, and by whom?

_____ Do I understand what I must do now to obtain all necessary licenses and registrations? Are there any possible roadblocks to my obtaining them?

_____ Am I familiar with the tax and employment laws and regulations (such as employer withholdings, unemployment insurance, and OSHA requirements) that apply to my business?

_____ Do I understand what to do to comply with the tax and employment laws and regulations, and do I have a plan to do so? Have I reviewed my plan with my attorney?

_____ If my business involves hazardous waste, fume emissions, or other regulated substances, am I familiar with applicable environmental codes? Do I have a plan to comply with them?

_____ Am I aware of consumer protection laws that apply to my kind of business? Has my attorney reviewed whether my sales and collection policies are in line with them?

The more "no" answers you gave, the less prepared you may be to start your business. Thinking about and discussing these questions with your attorney or other appropriate professionals advising you will help you avoid costly mistakes.