



CBN Lauds EDC on Training

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Getting Business Right

Foluke Ademokun



If you think getting a paid job is difficult these days, starting a new business or expanding your current one can be described as herculean. Either way, you require much more than luck to make a success of your choice. To grow a business successfully for instance you require more than technical skills, you need a vision! Many businesses have been observed to fail because owners do not match technical capability with vision or innovation if you like.

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I Have My Style

- Susan Craig

Mrs Susan Craig, the CEO of Tropic Décor & Design, leaves her mark on everything she does. Her attention to detail, giving her clients every moment just as they dream, gives her an edge in the business of decoration.

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"I am not afraid of competition. I have my style, it marks my business and it stands out any day"



EDC Project Director, Mr. Ayodele Aderinwale MFR speaking at the EDC Quarterly lecture series

EDC Launches Quarterly Lecture Series

INTERVENTION

The Centre is creating a platform for stakeholders to discuss issues affecting enterprise development in Nigeria

Driven by the need to have focused discussions on issues affecting entrepreneurship in Nigeria, the Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC), Lagos, has launched a quarterly lecture series.

The maiden lecture of the series was held on July 27 at the Centre with the theme "The Impact of Multiple Taxation on Enterprise Development in Nigeria: Need for a Rethink". Participants were drawn from the public and private sectors.

In his introductory remarks, the Executive Director of Africa Leadership Forum and Project Director of the EDC, Mr Ayodele Aderinwale, MFR, said the series would provide opportunity for the EDC and other stakeholders to push for policies and reforms that will benefit entrepreneurs. Mr. Aderinwale said a report of the maiden lecture will be compiled and sent to the executive and legislative arms of all states in the South West region, which EDC Lagos covers.

The event was chaired by the

School Netherlands Nigeria, Mr Lere Baale. While opening discussions, Mr Baale said multiple taxation in Nigeria impedes the development of small businesses and the issue must be addressed for businesses to grow. He recounted a personal experience in which he was travelling and had to pay countless numbers of levies and taxes in every state he passed through. He said the situation negatively affects business in the country.

Multiple Taxation Threatens Vision 20:2020

Speaking at the event, Director of Development Finance at the Central Bank of Nigeria, Mr. Paul Eluhaiwe, said enterprise development is vital to achieving the Vision 20:2020 objectives but is threatened by multiple taxation. He said the average SME in Nigeria is subjected to about 34 taxes and levies by federal, state and local governments.

Mr. Eluhaiwe said the situation can be corrected if tax reforms like Automated Tax System, e-Payment, comprehensive data base are introduced across the three tiers of government. He also said consultation with stakeholders in tax law formation needs to improve.

The CBN official commended Africa Leadership Forum for steering EDC Lagos to become "the foremost centre among the

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EDC Launches Quarterly Lecture Series

'Illegal and multiple taxes combined with existing infrastructure deficiencies add to increase in the cost of doing business in Nigeria'

He said the Central Bank is encouraged by initiatives of EDC Lagos and has requested the centre's profile in order to establish three more centres in other regions of the country.

The Lagos State Chairman of Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, Rev. Isaac Agoye, delivered the key note address. He identified official neglect of enterprise development, dearth of basic infrastructure, multiplicity of taxes and lack of conducive business environment as some factors that have contributed to the growth of Nigeria's informal economy. He said the sector accounts for 65% of gross National Product and accounts for 90% of all new jobs.

Rev. Agoye, however, lamented the "burden of taxes payable by business enterprises". He said illegal and multiple taxes combined with existing infrastructure deficiencies add to increase in the cost of doing business in Nigeria, a situation that has led to the closure of many businesses.

Among other recommendations, Rev. Agoye said government should direct revenue agents and officials to desist from collecting illegal or multiple taxes. He also said authorities should consider the overall impact of tax policies and laws on the economy with a view of reforming them where necessary.

Other speakers at the event included the Regional Controller, Federal Inland Revenue Service, Mr Ohagwa Innocent; a tax expert and Managing Partner at Saffron Professional Services, Mrs Adebimpe Balogun; and the Group Head, Advisory Services at Wema Bank, Mr. Lanre Ajayi.

Rounding up the discussions, Mr Aderinwale, the Project Director of the EDC, Lagos said there is need to establish a pressure group that will lobby for beneficial tax policies. He said EDC Lagos is willing to provide the personnel and intellectual framework for such a group but other stakeholders would have to provide the funds for its operations.

Mr. Aderinwale thanked participants for their activeness during the lecture and urged them to return on October 26 for the last quarter lecture which has the theme "Microfinance Banks and Entrepreneurship Development: building the Appropriate Synergy".

Mr Aderinwale, the Project Director of the EDC, Lagos said there is need to establish a pressure group that will lobby for beneficial tax policies.



Rev. Isaac Agoye, Chairman Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, Lagos Chapter presents the lead paper



A trainee at a Business Plan Defence Session

CBN Lauds EDC on Training

Impressive

Official says apex bank is satisfied with the progress of EDC, Lagos trainees

Impressed by the success of an ex-trainee of Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC), Lagos, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), has commended the Centre for evolving a system of training that facilitates the growth of small businesses.

This commendation was given by an official of the apex bank, Mr. Muhammed Dawa, during a field visit to ex-trainees. Mr Dawa was in company of two EDC specialists, Mr. Victor Malaolu of the Monitoring and Evaluation unit and Mr. Adetoro of the Business Development unit, to participate in the evaluation exercise.

The destination of the experts was Beckon Nigeria Limited. Mr. Samuel Olubobokun, the subject of CBN's accolade, is the Managing

"The experience has been great. Since I came back from the training nothing has been the same again. The company now operates a regular organogram clearly defining personnel and their functions. I experienced turmoil. I was gloom all over the place but the training especially, that on management, has really helped.

"It did not take long before the changes came. The business experienced a turn around and we began to produce new products and that has resulted in more sales and of course, more income for the company." The CBN official, after listening to the entrepreneur, expressed satisfaction with his progress. He praised the EDC, Lagos for its efforts in training people like Mr Olubobokun and advised the Centre to always stand by their graduates in accessing credit facilities.

The monitoring visit also afforded the CBN official opportunity to shed more light on the rationale behind the establishment of EDCs, saying it was an initiative for the economic

All over the world, self employment through small and medium scale enterprises is replacing the multinational corporations in providing employment

Director of the company, located in Ogun State. Mr Olubobokun told the visitors that the training he received at EDC, Lagos helped his business grow in many ways. He lauded the training modules of the Centre and said he had become a better manager.

According to him, the adhesive producing company was rapidly growing as a result of the changes he made in its management.

"I was combining so many things together. But then came the opportunity to acquire business training at EDC, Lagos," Mr Olubobokun said. "Now as result of the training, I am able to separate my personal interest from the business by employing a general manager who now oversees the day to day running of the company.

empowerment of Nigerians.

"Entrepreneurship Development Centres were established for the purpose of equipping people, with entrepreneurial skills so that they can be self employed and consequently be employers of labour.

"Nigeria should stop the illusion of everybody getting white collar jobs. All over the world, self employment through small and medium scale enterprises is replacing the multinational corporations in providing employment. The big companies can only employ thousands. Getting jobs for teeming millions is in the hands of small scale entrepreneurs. The good thing is that EDC, especially with what I have seen in Lagos centre, is up to the task of empowering Nigerians, especially the youths."

If you think getting a paid job is difficult these days, starting a new business or expanding your current one can be described as herculean. Either way, you require much more than luck to make a success of your choice. To grow a business successfully for instance you require more than technical skills, you need a vision! Many businesses have been observed to fail because owners do not match technical capability with vision or innovation if you like. They are lacking in entrepreneurship and unable to demonstrate entrepreneurial character as well as fail to observe basic business management and development practices. This is because they see business ownership as an unskilled task or sufficient to be executed on the basis of apprenticeship.

Generally, reliance on traditional process of apprenticeship to acquire business management knowledge has proved inadequate for present business environment because most business owners in this regards, still depend on the traditional method of doing business. At some instances, apprentices are used to run errands that are clearly unrelated to the business and therefore, unable to leverage on the opportunities provided by the business environment.

This may suggest why the concept of entrepreneurship development becomes critical to the Nigeria socio-economic environment not just for the purposes of job creation but for the development of entrepreneurial skills amongst Nigerians.

The Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) Lagos, one of three Centres established by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) is initiated for this purpose. The EDC helps you acquire skills to start and run a business efficiently. The centre's specialists guide you through the process of basic business management and business development principles as well as leadership principles.

In addition there is a follow-up through monitoring visits. These visits provide the opportunity for the assessment of your business performance. Such findings show the differences between male and female businesses, and their varying responses to established business classification. Agreed that both male and female share the Nigeria 'can do' spirit their responses to the business environment however, differs. Largely male business owners were able to demonstrate clearer vision in terms of their business goals than their female counterparts. A gender assessment of business ownership shows that more females operate at the subsistence level than males, using the criteria of business registration, business premises, job



To grow a business successfully...you need a vision!

creation, and entrepreneurial skills acquisition as well as funding.

Business Registration

A common complaint amongst business owners is lack of access to credit; interestingly most of these business owners do not have their business registered and as such have no banking relationship. These business owners, especially females, remain insular and as a result fail to differentiate between business and personal life. For this singular purpose most businesses remain at the informal level, outside of legal and regulatory purview. Lesson do not think make the mistake to think you are the business, it does have a life of its own!

Business Premises

There is nothing wrong with starting small but when starting small is interchangeable with tax evasion there is a problem. I agree most business owners will want to operate from home to cut cost but this measure has been identified as a potential source of stunted growth for some business, except of course they find a way to utilize and dominate on-line transactions. The choice of your home as a business premises may inadvertently lead to the demise of your business since in most cases due to inability to optimally maximize market opportunities from a private residence.

Job creation

In a well planned business, job creation is synonymous to growth! However, most business owners sacrifice growth in the guise of being 'master of all!' There are three components of an enterprise visionary, technical and management skills. No one focused on growth has the capacity to functional optimally in all of these three areas combined! Incidentally, the number of employees in a firm determines the categorization of a business as micro,

small, medium or large.

Capacity building

Lastly, you need to define the growth of your business through learning. In addition to having a sound vision and excellent technical skills, you need to strengthen your management capabilities. Poor management skills can have such devastating effect on a lifelong vision and a load of technical experience.

Sources of Funding

Personal and family sources remain the quickest access to fund for start-ups, due to their classification as high risks, by funding agencies. Incidentally, there is a gender perspective to this as observed by the EDC. In a sample of 200 business owners, it was discovered that while sources of funds for male business owners are 70% personal and 30% family, female business owners rely on 10% personal and 90% family source to fund their businesses. The implication of this funding arrangement for female business owners therefore, is loss of leadership and management control in their businesses.

It is not wrong to rely on a spouse or other family members for funds but the most reasonable consideration for this type of arrangement is to treat such as a loan and repay as scheduled. One common reason of failure for females in trade is funding ties with a spouse or family members who do not share their business goals. Just as financial support by family members are considered commonplace, so are there instances where commodities have ended as gift items for a 'side dish' of a philandering spouse! Lesson make a distinction between personal/family and business funds!!

Foluke Ademokun is a development specialist and certified trainer. She is currently the Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, Entrepreneurship Development Centre, Lagos.

10 Best Networking Practice

1. Present yourself well. Business networking is often about first impressions, and first impressions are often about presentation.
2. Don't bombard - interact. If you approach business networking solely as an opportunity to talk about yourself and your business, you'll bore people. Make networking more enjoyable by strategically limiting how much (and how repetitively) you talk and by increasing your chances to listen to and interact with the business networking group.
3. Exploit all media. Traditional networking takes place in physical locations. In the age of social networking websites like Facebook and LinkedIn, however, a lot of networking takes place online. Be aware that opportunities to network span several media; take advantage of all of them.
4. Business networking groups. People define themselves as members of groups such as one's profession, religion, race, gender, language and even favorite sports team. List the affiliations that matter to you, then consider them as networking possibilities.
5. Be selective and diligent. Thousands of official networking events take place every day, and the Internet offers access to millions more. Identify and act on the highest-value opportunities rather than pitching to every possible audience. Narrowing down opportunities will allow you to focus more.
6. Consider family and friends. Look to your existing social networking groups to enhance business opportunities. Chances are that your family and friends already know plenty of people who could help you in some way.
7. Always network. Without turning yourself into someone who is prepared to collar all passersby with your spiel, treat social events - a party, a ball game, a play - as an opportunity to meet new acquaintances who can later become part of a more formal network.
8. Every group has a center of influence; your business networking efforts should focus on this individual.
9. Help others. While your ultimate goal may be to find investors or customers or to otherwise improve your own business chances and conditions, you are also in a position to help others. Offer whatever resources you can in order to increase your value to the business network.
10. Take a Zen approach. To borrow a principle from Zen Buddhism, the best way to network is to be unconscious of the fact that you are networking.



Mrs Craig interacting with an EDC trainee

"I am not afraid of competition, I have my style, it marks my business and it stands out any day"

None of the 35 participants of the mentoring session organised by the Monitoring and Evaluation unit of the EDC, Lagos had doubts that the Centre did a good job by inviting Mrs. Susan Craig. The Afro-American inspired her audience with her experience of doing business in Nigeria.

Mrs Craig, the CEO of Tropic Décor & Design, leaves her mark on everything she does. Her attention to detail, giving her clients every moment just as they dream, gives her an edge in the business of decoration.

aspect of business you are going to develop and so on. Second is the question of time. When do you intend to start? And thirdly, at what stage will you feel you have attained your goal?" She mentioned finance as a critical issue. "How is your financial plan like? Do you intend to get a loan, or use your personal income?" She asked. These, to Mrs Craig, "are fundamental in venturing into a sustainable business."

Working with Nigerian team, which she trains, Mrs Craig has in her own way, employed some people who have something to offer. "I hire staff depending on the contract but I have a team of five with some on call" moving on to say, "they are doing well and can now stand on their own." In other words, they can create ceremonies and receptions to remember, because "they can provide unmatched romantic stage decorations, good balloon decor, enviable floral arrangements, eye catching bridal train flowers, state-of-the-art Limousine car services and excellent video/TV monitors."

Speaking on likely competition, she revealed that "I am not afraid of competition, I have my style, it marks my business and it stands out any day". Like most entrepreneurs, Mrs Craig's outfit started small but has grown big over the years. "I started very small but today, I have a measurable success." She explained that she did not just jump into décor business. "I did some research on décor and talked to people who know."

She has indeed paid the price. Her successful business is run on her diligence and expertise added to her staff dedication. This explains why the eminent in the society always patronise Tropic Décor & Design for their numerous occasions.

Mrs Craig has decorated for Aero Contractors, British Airways, the US marines and many Embassies. She has done that for over twenty years.



Business ethics require that you not only follow obvious moral laws such as not stealing from the company or lying, but that you conduct yourself with absolute integrity in daily actions.

Nothing is as important as your reputation! While ethics are a code system of moral principles, integrity refers to the adherence of your individual principles of honest and moral character. For example, accepting gifts from your clients may be legal and even acceptable under the ethical code of your office, but your own sense of integrity may not allow it or you may be faced with a situation where your supervisor say it is okay to omit certain information, but you may consider the omissions to be lying and the action would not fit in with your sense of moral character or integrity.

Having integrity and business ethics means you are honest, aboveboard, and straight with people. You don't lie or stretch the truth just to make a sale or impress others. You keep your word and honor your agreements. You admit when you are wrong and never blame others or cover up when you make a mistake.

Ethical people take responsibility for their actions and behaviors. They never intentionally hurt other people and are aware of the consequences of their decisions. They are critical thinkers who make decisions based on fact but also consider the human factor.

Like ethics, civility is the cornerstone of a supportive and productive climate. Treat everyone with respect and kindness. Profanity, sexual or racial remarks, gossip, one-upmanship, and tactless behavior do not belong in the workplace.

Assess your personal qualities and make a commitment to follow the highest ideals in all areas of your life. But truthful, reliable, responsible, and diligent in the effective use of company resources.

Before you make a remark or a decision, ask yourself these questions:

- Is this action legal?
- How would I feel later?
- How would others see me?
- Is this action fair?
- Is this action true?

EDC People: Adeoba Ojekunle

Adeoba Ojekunle, 45, completed his undergraduate studies in English/American Political Science and International Relations (Asia and Africa) at Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany in 1997, having studied earlier at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife (1990-1992 and Konstanz University, Konstanz (1992-93). In the same year, he proceeded for his graduate studies in the same institution, bagging his *Masters degrees* in English/American Studies, Political Science and International Relations in 2000. Ojekunle has participated in a number of local and international training programmes, including Training of Trainers course in Project Management/Strategic Planning (African Capacity Building Foundation, 2005), Training Workshop on Project Management for NGOs conducted by Africa Leadership Forum, June 2001 and International Firearms and Explosives Identification and Small Arms Trafficking Training (United States Department of the



Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms/the United States Customs Service, 2003.) amongst others. He is currently the Training Manager at EDC Lagos. He joined the Africa Leadership Foru. He thereafter served as Special Assistant to Former President Olusegun Obasanjo from 2007-2008 before joining the ALF-EDC as Training Manager. His major professional concern is in the area of leadership development and capacity building. He has coordinated several local and international seminars, training and conferences on a range of development issues, including ALF Annual Parliamentarians Meetings (Accra and Kampala), Capacity Building Workshops for Parliamentary Support Staff, Citizen Oriented Development Community Development Initiative, Decentralised Economic Development Workshop, and Improved Service Delivery Workshop amongst others. He has also worked on several local and international projects.



Agbolade Funmi, displays her work



Ayinla Latif (in native), with the pupils of his school



Durojaiye Oluwaseun, in the line of duty



Ex-EDC trainee, Imoke Emmanuel poses in his computer/phone accessories shop



Ex-EDC trainee, showcasing his product



EDC facilitators and artisans before a training session

Fighting to Win in an Established Market

Richard Branson

DETERMINATION
Young, aggressive businesses have surprising advantages when taking on large, cumbersome competitors

For every entrepreneur who has the courage to take on a Goliath with the equivalent of a slingshot and a couple of stones, there are a hundred others who'll say, "You must be kidding! There's no way I can ever compete with that monster!"

For much of my business career, I've played the role of David -- and loved every minute of it. You see, I've always believed that small is beautiful. Young, aggressive businesses have surprising advantages when taking on large, cumbersome competitors. All they have to do is figure out what the giant's weaknesses are and how best to leverage them.

For instance, in 1984, when tiny Virgin Atlantic first picked a fight with the mighty British Airways, the odds certainly appeared stacked against us. In fact, my bankers were so unenthusiastic about my prospects that they refused my loan application at the last minute!

But our inexpensive arsenal was loaded with some pretty surprising and highly unconventional weapons. Perhaps the most effective of these was our agility, which was integral to our corporate culture, in large part because of our small size. British Airways was weighed down by bulky, hierarchical decision-making processes that made any change very difficult, whereas we were able to change direction or stop on a dime.

My mentor in those early days was the legendary aviation entrepreneur Sir Freddie Laker. He once told me, "Richard, never forget that only a fool never changes his mind." Not wanting to be foolish, I took his good advice. At Virgin, when our customers or crew told us they didn't like something, we'd drop it and quickly move on to the next idea.

Our small size -- we had only a few planes -- allowed us to give our customers an experience the bigger players simply couldn't afford to match across their large fleets. For instance, our Upper Class passengers (the equivalent of business class; we do not offer services in a "first class" category) are provided with free door-to-door limousine service, both to and from the airport. Our competitors would have to offer this service on every global route, not just the few routes competing with Virgin -- a much more expensive proposition for them.

And consider this: if we provide limos for our business class customers, what should our competitors do for their first class customers -- send them a Rolls Royce? It didn't take them long to decide not to try to match our limo service, and 25 years later it remains a unique selling point for Virgin.



Sir. Richard Branson, CEO Virgin

This may seem like a peculiar boast for a chief executive, but I don't think a Virgin company has ever become the biggest player in any sector we have entered.

In the late '80s, Virgin Records was certainly the industry's biggest independent label, but we were far from being the biggest label overall. I made sure to keep splitting the company into smaller companies, ensuring that we kept our sense of competition and urgency.

It seemed to work. We were influential enough to attract big names like The Rolling Stones, who knew that with Virgin they'd never be just another super-band on a roster of super-bands. At the same time, we were still small enough to be totally tuned-in at street level and highly adept at discovering exciting new artists.

Now that I think of it, the one area where we probably are the biggest player is in commercial space travel. Virgin Galactic doesn't quite fit the pattern, though. Our choice to go "To infinity and beyond!" as Buzz Lightyear of "Toy Story" would say, is more about being sufficiently courageous, visionary or just plain crazy enough to establish a brand new business sector. In fact, that attitude just about sums up our brand name.

While I believe that small is beautiful, I'm not implying that there aren't many very good companies that are very big. If you look closely, however, some of the best of them, like Apple, got where they are by focusing on great products, being nimble and competing with much bigger competitors. Apple's amazing success has brought tremendous growth -- these days, those battles to survive seem a distant memory. So Steve Jobs must now fight hard to retain all the cultural elements that will keep his company as nimble as its competitors.

11 Time Management Tips

1) Realise that time management is a myth.

No matter how organised we are, there are always only 24 hours in a day. Time doesn't change. All we can actually manage is ourselves and what we do with the time that we have.

2) Find out where you're wasting time.

What are your time-bandits? Do you spend too much time 'Net surfing, reading email, or making personal calls?' explains how to track your activities so you can form a accurate picture of what you actually do.

3) Create time management goals.

A good place to start is by eliminating your

personal time-wasters. For one week, for example, set a goal that you're not going to take personal phone calls while you're working.

4) Implement a time management plan.

The objective is to change your behaviors over time to achieve whatever general goal you've set for yourself.

5) Use time management tools.

Whether it's a Day-Timer or a software program, the first step to physically managing your time is to know where it's going now and planning how you're going to spend your time in the future.

6) Prioritise ruthlessly.

You should start each day with a time management session prioritising the tasks for that day and setting your performance benchmark. If you have 20 tasks for a given day, how many of them do you truly need to accomplish? For more on daily planning and prioritising daily tasks,

7) Learn to delegate and/or outsource.

No matter how small your business is, there's no need for you to be a one-person show. For effective time management, you need to let other people carry some of the load.

Continued on the back page

11 Tips on How to Stay Focused

Depending on the type of business that you have is going to determine if some of these are workable for you, but in general purposes, everyone should be able to do these things.

1) Make customer service calls. What does that mean? Stay in touch with your customers. Call someone to check and see if they are enjoying X product they bought from you.

2) Send your Thank You notes. Send out Birthday cards, if you keep track of your customer's b-days. How about Thinking of You cards to those you haven't heard from in a while? Offer a small discount on their next order.

3) Send out flyers for a special sale or Open House. Are you

doing a booth at a local craft show or festival? Here is another reason to send out a quick flyer. Again, offer them a little discount or free gift if they mention the ad and then show up at the function.

4) Get on the phone to past hostesses and book parties, shows or whatever your business. Make yourself make 2-3 calls per day. Put it on the calendar.

5) Go in the internet and research your industry. Find articles that you can learn from.

6) Go to sales seminars, read sales books and how to books.

7) Get all of the training that you can from your company. If they run out or you have taken it all, find other sources.

8) Get on the internet and take

advantage of all the free advertising avenues out there. Join groups and free WAHM sites. The more you get your name out there, the better your sales will increase.

9) Join Twitter or Face book and learn to network your business. Look for message boards that are in your niche and network on those.

10) Work on your calendar. Log everything like we talked about before. You need to do this every day. If you log it, you need to do it.

11) Join local groups where you can network. Again, getting your name out there is crucial for name recognition.

Doing these types of things for even a few minutes a day will keep you in the Work At Home mode.



Sniffing Out a Good Business Opportunity

We are all a little vulnerable right after the holidays. After so much good cheer, our defenses may be down a little, especially if we have been unemployed for a while. All of a sudden, some of those spam e-mails offering "The Greatest Homebased Business...Ever" or "Raise Chinchillas in Your Backyard for Big \$\$\$\$" start to look just a wee bit attractive.

Many of these "come on" offers are actually quite legal. They are known to lawyers as "Business Opportunities" (note the capital letters). A Business Opportunity is like a franchise, except that you don't operate under someone else's registered trademark that has a recognised value in the marketplace. Common examples of Business Opportunities are:

□ "Distributor" deals in which you help the seller find local buyers for their merchandise, or you find locations for the use or operation of vending machines, racks, display cases, other similar devices or currency-operated machines for the seller's merchandise on premises that neither you nor the seller owns or leases.

□ "Supply" deals in which the seller agrees to buy any products you make, produce, fabricate, grow, breed or modify using the stuff that the



seller sold you (remember those chinchillas?). Just because they're legal doesn't mean that Business Opportunities are always good deals.

As with a franchise, the burden is on you to research a Business Opportunity and make sure it's on the level. Many states require Business Opportunities, as well as franchises, to register with a state government agency (usually the state's Bureau of Securities or Attorney General's office) before they may legally offer their program to state residents. Call or e-mail the appropriate agency and find out if the Business Opportunity that interests you is registered.

Then ask the Business Opportunity to furnish a list of people in your area who have bought into the program, with home addresses and telephone numbers. Get into your car, visit each one of them in person, and view their operation with your own eyeballs. Do not just call or e-mail them--many unscrupulous Business Opportunity promoters have "boiler rooms" of people sitting in cubicles pretending to be satisfied customers. Some even encourage these employees to

bring their kids to work so that it sounds as if they are working from home.

Let Your Business Plan tell a Story

Some of the most important parts of a business plan are the sections in which you simply tell your story to outsiders. These parts don't require as much research or analysis as many of the other sections--just an explanation of who you are and what you do--although they do take a lot of thought. So work on these easier parts first, particularly if you're having trouble getting started on your plan: They can be a cure for writer's block, and the thinking involved can be vital to producing a top-notch plan.

Use starter topics to get going--these can help you break the inertia. Starter topics are shorter bits of text that will help you generate thoughts. When you get started with these shorter sections, you'll begin to put your plan into words.

Three of these starter topics are part of what I call the "kick start" concept and will end up being included in the executive summary section of your plan:

Keys to Success. Like an artist squinting to see the landscape, take a look at your business from a distance and name the three or four most important elements. Most people would say location is a key to success for retail, for example, and my experience shows that repeat business is vital for consulting. One restaurant lives or dies on easy parking; another needs top-quality food. What are the keys to your success?

Objectives. Objectives must be concrete and measurable, never vague. Use bullet points and write down a few important objectives, such as sales targets for the first year, margins you need to make, when the next version of your product will be released, or how many customers per day you need. If you can't measure later whether or not you've achieved an objective, then it shouldn't be there. Objectives are a good place to get



started, even though you're likely to refine them towards the end of the process.

Mission Statement. Every company should develop a mission statement in the startup phase and then review and refine that mission statement at least once a year. The mission statement defines what a business does for each of its three target groups: customers, employees and owners. The mission for customers is an early chance to look at your business in terms of your customer benefits, why they bother to purchase and why they don't go elsewhere. Although most mission statements end with that one thought, a good mission statement also describes the company's benefits to its employees and owners. Profit, for example, is a legitimate purpose for a business, and owners should recognize they need profit to survive.

Although not part of the kick-start concept, your company chapter is equally important. Normally the second chapter of your plan, the company chapter also involves using simple text that tells your story. How did you start your company? What's happened since then? How and why did the management team get together? Where are you located, and why did you choose that location? For a brand-new, startup business plan, the company chapter will take some research on legal forms and a great deal of thought on ownership shares. The text itself, however, is fairly simple.

Before you go into detail on your products or services, take the time to describe the benefits behind the purchase. This important topic can be

too easily lost in the shuffle--we get lost in our product or service because we're so close to it. So we need to step back and see what people get. People buy drills to get holes, not drills. Why do they buy from you? What do you give them for their money? Purchasing a product or service is often a matter of status, security, assurance, health, luxury and many other factors. This topic can start the discussion on what you sell, which is normally the third chapter of the plan.

Tell about your competitive advantage, too. What sets you apart from the your competitors, what are your core strengths and how do these affect the market? Maybe you have a product business with great new technology. Maybe you have Web traffic that sets you apart. Maybe you have a great location with a lot of real traffic. What do you have that makes it hard for a competitor to take your business away from you? What do you have that they can't get? That's competitive advantage, and it belongs in the Strategy and Implementation chapter, usually the fifth chapter of a plan.

What all these topics have in common is that they all involve telling your story. They're easy to draft, they generate thought, and you can use them to get started on your plan and then revise them with details later.

Benefits of bringing in an Advisory Board



I'm starting a new business. Do I need an advisory board?

Short answer: Absolutely. Silicon Valley startup guru Cynthia Kocialski says just about every company can benefit from retaining a group of advisors with pertinent expertise in the company's product, service or industry. The sooner, in fact, the better.

"They should establish them right out of the

chute," says Kocialski, who has started three companies, advised others and written *Startup From the Ground Up: Practical Insights for Transforming an Idea into a Business*. "Early on, they simply don't have the resources to hire every possible job function that they need."

But entrepreneurs need a sound strategy when choosing advisors who can guide them through their launch and into profitability. You'll want enough advisors, but not too many. You'll want advisors who are proficient in individual facets of your business and those who know the industry's big picture. And you'll want to make sure your advisors know exactly why they're being brought onboard.

How many? About six, Kocialski says--not 62, as one entrepreneur she spoke to recently retained.

"How do you keep the names straight, much less keep them all up-to-date on what they need to know?"

Kocialski says. "She had more advisors than she had employees. That's not a good equation."

Likewise, Kocialski advises, vet your advisors so you can be confident that they're not overburdened. If you learn that a would-be advisor also serves that role for two dozen other companies, you might think twice about whether he or she will be available to focus on your needs when the time comes.

When recruiting advisors, look for the holes in your business. Kocialski says to focus on the jobs not already being done by an expert on your payroll. "Advisory boards are for whatever you don't have," she says.

Be aware that the wrong advisor could doom your venture. If you retain an advisor for her connections to potential customers, be sure she's willing to reach out to them on your behalf. "It's important to let advisors know exactly why you want them," Kocialski says.

Worst-case scenario? You put a high-profile venture capitalist on your advisory board and the big-shot VC opts not to take a stake in your next round of financing. "That's going to send off little warning bells to the other guys," Kocialski says.

Finally, once you've retained your advisors, don't feel obligated to keep them around forever. As your business evolves, Kocialski says, so should your advisory board: "The early stage advisory board is not the same one you'll need five or six years from now."

Feedback

What We Gained At the EDC, Lagos

EDC training has opened my eyes to business, I'm glad I attended. It is worth the while. No training would have impacted on my business more.
James Muya

I am more confident now running a business after EDC training. I am indeed grateful for the efforts of the facilitators. It was a down to earth training.
Onwi Edet Job

I have been able to plan very properly, pay myself a salary and I now enjoy a cordial relationship with my clients. All of these I learnt at the EDC training.
Ehigie Eghosa Rose

I was unemployed and a dependant before the EDC training, but now, I can create ideas and actually make things happen.
Anyawu Onyinyechi

EDC made me really see that I don't need to wait till there's so much money before one's business can kick off. The training has direct impact on my household as I can now take care of the family because my business is doing well.
Imoke Emmanuel

The training has opened my eyes on how to do business, manage income and finances.
Olugbuyi Abiodun

I have learnt that in a business like mine, there must be constant communication between the school and the target audience. Decision making skills have helped me to improve the school management.
Ayinla Ayo

My record keeping and relationship with my employees and customers have improved since the EDC training as I have applied the skills learnt in my business.
Showunmi Oluwatoyin

I don't do business like a layman anymore, I keep records of income and expenditure. The EDC training has broadened my knowledge.
Abolarinwa Eytayo

I now understand the importance of proper packaging. My business has really improved. I appreciate the EDC.
Lawal Adebola
The EDC has taught me to be confident in myself and I am able to stand alone without depending on my family for financial support.
Agbolade Funmi

The EDC training has enhanced my business as I now enjoy a good relationship with my customers. I also keep all records now.
Suzan Eboh

The training taught me to make adverts and ever since I started the adverts, I have been getting more jobs. In fact, I have made not less than ten cakes within a very short period of time. The EDC is one of the best thing that has happened to me.
Oboh Victoria

'I can now Manage Customers'

Using his house as a collection centre and a laundry operation outfit, Ebere Paul is at home with dry cleaning and laundry services.

A part-time student of Lagos State University (LASU), he explained that what started as a seed has grown into a cedar in Lebanon. "Like play, like play, I started the laundry business after a series of training I attended in order to boost it and today, I can say that my business has been able to stand the test of time."



Paul Ebere

Paul is grateful to the EDC as the knowledge he acquired during the training has helped him

The happy businessman is indeed having a field day. He said that before his training in the EDC; he had incomplete records, which no doubt, affected his internal control system. "My book keeping was never complete but after my training in the EDC, my financial transactions are now on the right track," he explained.

Equipped by the EDC, Paul stated that "I now have good knowledge of how to manage my customers and I have a better leadership style that works. No doubt, the application of the knowledge acquired has brought a lot of dividends as there are many cloths to be washed. I sometimes reject some because of space and lack of labour.

He said that "the EDC training has in no small measure, boosted my laundry business in the area of customer relations, record keeping and mapping out business plan."

WORDS ON THE MARBLE

'Business opportunities are like buses, there's always another one coming'

Richard Branson, *British Entrepreneur*

Continued from page 6

11 Time Management Tips

8) Establish routines and stick to them as much as possible.

While crises will arise, you'll be much more productive if you can follow routines most of the time.

9) Get in the habit of setting time limits for tasks.

For instance, reading and answering email can consume your whole day if you let it. Instead, set a limit of one hour a day for this task and stick to it.

10) Be sure your systems are organised.

Are you wasting a lot of time looking for files on your computer? Take the time to organise a file management system. Is your filing system slowing you down? Redo it, so it's organised to the point that you can quickly lay your hands on what you need.

11) Don't waste time waiting.

From client meetings to dentist appointments, it's impossible to avoid waiting for someone or something. But you don't need to just sit there and twiddle your thumbs.

Always take something to do with you, such as a report you need to read, a checkbook that needs to be balanced, or just a blank pad of paper that you can use to plan your next marketing campaign.



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4	Feb 21 - Mar 15	Feb 17
5	Mar 7 - April 1	Mar 3
6	Mar 21 - Apr 15	Mar 17
7	Apr 4 - Apr 29	Mar 31
8	Apr 18 - May 13	Apr 14
9	May 3 - May 27	Apr 28
10	May 16 - Jun 10	May 11
11	May 30 - Jun 14	May 26
12	Jun 13 - Jul 8	Jun 9
13	Jun 27 - Jul 22	Jul 13
14	Jul 11 - Aug 5	Jul 7

Target Beneficiaries:

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Non-Graduate - 6 Weeks

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