

## **Ah-ha Moment Can Lead to Business Success**

Awareness of the world around you has been the start of many businesses.

“The business world is filled with examples of people who started a business based on watching, reading and listening to things around them,” says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county).

“Being aware may lead in many directions. Sometimes the product is already around, but it just takes the right person to see the opportunities such as 3M’s Post-it note.”

Such awareness can arise from focused research to random chance. The key is to always be attuned to your surroundings. Small business owners often acknowledge their success came as they drove through other communities and made mental notes of what they saw and what was working.

However, developing an opportunity from an observation is more than just luck. Awareness of the present is just one part. A second element, imagining the opportunity, also is part of finding a good idea. This second part often is much harder than the first part, though.

“How often have you said when a new product or idea comes out, ‘I could have done that!’?” says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service’s rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. “Just think of the invention of the Popsicle. How many of us have let a drink freeze accidentally? An 11-year-old boy, Frank Epperson, did. But he saw the opportunity.”

The third piece to this process is envisioning the future.

“This is what Ray Kroc saw in McDonald’s,” said Muske. “Here is an example of imagining where an idea, if successfully developed, might go. We also see that these moments come at any age, from the 11-year-old boy to Kroc, who was over 50 years of age when he started.”

All three pieces - the idea, the opportunity and the vision - need to be part of a business owner’s effort as he or she explores business ownership. Realizing that these three elements can happen almost instantaneously or be part of a long, drawn-out process is important.

Even when all three elements come together into a perfect plan of what might be, owners must remember that solid opportunities do not connect automatically with the consumer in the marketplace. Hard work still remains.

Yet the first step in the process is that ah-ha moment. Probably the best advice for the person searching for opportunities is to be aware. In every situation, think about what might be. When you find one that makes your mind whirl with possibilities, it is time to do some further exploration.

For more help, check with your local Extension Service office at [insert phone number and email address]. Also visit NDSU’s small-business support website at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness) and sign up for the monthly newsletter. Or check out Facebook at

[www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz](http://www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz) or Twitter at @gmuske. Another online resource is [www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship](http://www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship).

Joining groups such as your local chamber of commerce can be helpful. The Small Business Administration and its related organizations, such as the Small Business Development Centers and Service Corps of Retired Executives, also can be valuable resources.

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