

NDSU Offers Tips on Finding a Business Idea

Finding an idea for a business often is difficult for potential business owners.

They may have the desire to “be their own boss” but do not know what business will be successful.

“Having the passion to be a business owner is not uncommon,” says (Insert name) of (Insert title and county). “Finding the business idea that will be successful, though, requires some effort in exploring the possibilities and the market.”

The question of what type of business to start is a common dilemma, according to “Business Startup: The 5 (+1) Most Frequently Asked Questions,” an NDSU publication available at www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/agecon/market/ec1517.pdf. Some individual have an area they are interested in but may need help determining the specific business they want to start.

For example, an interest in public speaking could be translated into a business as a motivational speaker, instructor, speech writer, or even a radio or TV broadcaster. This individual even might turn this passion into becoming someone who portrays historical figures.

But what about a prospective owner who does not have any solid ideas? A step some individuals take is to drive to several towns and look around to see what businesses seem to be doing well. Once you do that, you need to ask these questions: Would this business do well where I live? What makes this business thrive here?

While on this road trip, you might come up with the “accidental idea.” That is seeing a need and thinking of a way to meet that need. The idea can arise at any time, so let your mind wander, then translate those thoughts into possible ideas.

Another idea generation tool is digging into data. For example, the population in North Dakota and across the country is aging. What opportunities does that offer? Also, a generation of young adults who have needs is on the horizon. Would you have imagined a demand for learning skills such as canning and cooking? Finally, think about how technology is creating new global opportunities. Census data, at www.census.gov, is a great place to start.

A simple method of idea generation is reading.

“Take advantage of every possible source of news,” says Glenn Muske, the NDSU Extension Service’s rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. “What trends are being discussed? The difficulty here is finding the trends, as opposed to the fads. Trends are the ideas that will last and you can build a business around.”

“The real question and concern for the prospective business owner is actually bigger than the ‘What business can I start?’ question,” he adds. “What most individuals need to know is what idea will result in a sustainable, profitable business.”

To determine that, you must do your homework. Here are some questions to help you with your research:

- * Can the idea be translated into an opportunity?
- * Does a market exist for my idea, and will that market continue to grow?
- * Can I make a profit by meeting the need of the market?
- * Is my opportunity ahead of its time?
- * Who is my competition and what unique advantages do I have over the competition?
- * Will I be able to maintain those advantages?

“Owning a business is a dream that can be achieved,” says (Insert last name). “By looking over the landscape and then doing some research, a person can find that business opportunity that is successful and meets one’s personal needs.”

For more information and tips about starting a business, contact 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 and sign up for the monthly newsletter, or visit www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship.

The North Dakota secretary of state has a website at www.nd.gov/sos/businessserv/registrations/index.html that provides the steps to get your business started. Other state and federal resources, such as the Small Business Administration and Small Business Development Centers, also are available.

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For more information, contact glenn.muske@ndsu.edu or call (701) 328-9718. You also can visit our website, www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness.