

Is Starting a Business for You?

Did you make any New Year's resolutions? Did you include, "This is the year I start my own business"? But are you hesitating because you wonder if you have the skills you need?

"Certain skills are needed by the small-business owner," says Glenn Muske, rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist for the North Dakota State University Extension Service. "However, the great thing is that you can learn all of these skills. There is nothing out there that you can't overcome. Nor do you need a certain level of expertise in any area."

Some of the skills the small-business owner needs are:

- * Passion, perseverance and persistence: Call it what you want, but you need to keep going when things look bleak. Some might say you are just being stubborn, but that is often what small-business owners are about.

- * Empathy: You need to understand what people want and then provide that service or product. When you discuss your business with others, you need to do so in terms of the benefits to them and not just the features of what you have to sell.

- * Fairness: Successful small-business owners are known for how they treat customers, vendors and employees. They also are noted for what they give to their communities.

- * Willingness to work hard: Starting and operating a business is work. The statement "build it and they will come" is not reality. Success in business is the same as success in anything one does; it requires lots of work.

- * Vision: Not only must the small-business owner focus on the present, but he or she must see what tomorrow might be.

"There is no single mold for the successful business owner," says (insert local name, title and county office). "Successful small-business owners come from a variety of backgrounds and hold a variety of thoughts toward risk, leadership, passion, goals and work-life balance. So if this is the year you want to start your business, do your homework. Find those resources that can help you develop your business."

The NDSU Extension Service has resources to assist business owners and communities in developing this relationship. Contact your local Extension office to learn what assistance is available.

Information about some of Extension's programs also is online at www.ag.ndsu.edu/ccv/. eXtension, an educational partnership of 74 universities, including NDSU, that provides objective and research-based information and learning opportunities to help people improve their lives, is another resource. Visit www.extension.org/entrepreneurship.