

## Establishing a Business Identity Is a Key to Success

In order for your business to be legitimate and viable, you must establish a proper business identity. This involves obtaining all the necessary permits, licenses, and insurance your local government may require. Doing so will satisfy the powers that be and allow your business to be viewed as credible in the eyes of the public.

Failure to fulfill these obligations could subject you to possible fines and other legal actions. Most government offices will provide you with a business check list that outlines their particular demands. All too often, people starting out in business for the first time take short cuts only to be confronted by the consequences later on!

### Not Securing the Proper Business License,

When applying for a license, your service or occupation usually falls under a particular description. In some cases, certain services may require a separate permit or additional insurance. Be very specific when describing your business activities, especially to your insurance carrier. Failure to do so could result in your policy being voided and you being held directly liable for any claims.

### Using Your Home Address as a Business Address

Throughout many areas of the country, this practice could be in violation of local zoning laws, even if you do not place a sign on your property or generate foot traffic in to your home. This also includes the use of your home address on business cards, advertisements, or other printed materials. All it takes is one phone call from a neighbor with an attitude or an unsatisfied customer, to bring this to the attention of the authorities. You could receive a fine and bear the cost of having all your printed materials changed.

A simple solution for this situation is to use a mail receiving service or P.O. Box as your legal business address. If you choose a P.O. Box, be sure to include a street address along with your box number, since nothing looks more fly-by-night than a P.O. Box number in a business address all by itself! (Check with your local post office for details.)

### Not Setting Up a Proper Business Phone

Do not use your home phone as a business line. Nothing sounds more unprofessional to a potential customer than having your 5 year old daughter answering the phone or a radio blasting in the background. Doing so will benefit your image and be more convenient for you in the long run.

In addition, using a residential phone number for business purposes will put you in a less than desirable situation with the phone company. Today, it is fairly inexpensive to use voice-mail or a live answering service.

### The Use of Poor Quality Printed Materials

This is by far the most damaging area in which to cut costs. In many cases, potential customers will derive their first impression of your business by the quality of your promotional materials. Items such as business cards, flyers, and mailers should be designed and printed in a way that will enhance your image. It makes no logical sense to try and save a penny or two on a flyer that you expect to generate business worth a \$100 or more! You only get one chance to make a good first impression.

### Unprofessional Appearance

Human nature being what it is makes people feel more comfortable and confident when dealing with someone in a uniform. Uniforms are functional, impressive, denote success, are relatively inexpensive, and a legal business deduction. A good looking, practical uniform can be nothing more than a T-shirt and cap printed with your business name. Heat transfers can be made on just about any computer for only a few dollars. The local T-shirt shop is also a good source for creating a uniform. If you are professional in the quality of your service, why not be professional in the quality of your appearance!

### Lack of Establishing a Credible Business History

If you are just starting out in business, this is an area that presents a bit of a problem. Consumers like to know who they're dealing with and whether or

not your business has a solid reputation. If possible, it is a good idea to join your local Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce. Doing so will automatically provide your business with an air of credibility, and potential customers with a feeling of security.

If this is not possible, then the next best suggestion is to have several satisfied customers (friends, relatives, etc.) that you did work for act as references. Always keep their names and phone numbers handy in the event a potential customer questions your experience or capabilities. If you are established, make it a point to include the number of years in business, or the number of satisfied customers you have in all your advertising and promotional materials.

If you already belong to the B.B.B. or Chamber of Commerce, or plan to become a member, it's a good idea to call them every so often and act as an inquiring consumer. This will eliminate the possibility that any mistaken information is on file regarding your business.

## Summary

Taking the time to establish or develop a solid business identity will guarantee a more effective and profitable relationship with the public. It is what the law requires, the public expects, and a goal worth achieving. Operating a business any other way will only plant the seeds that guarantee the growth of problems and expenses in the future.

## About the Author

Millennium Services Group, run by R.T. Markovsky, hosts an informative web site with a wealth of free information on starting your own Work-From Home Business.. Check out <http://www.A-Business-From-Home.com> to see more.

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