

ACTION GUIDE

**BUSINESS &
TECHNOLOGY
STARTUP**

BY INTERACTIVE PLANET

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Business & Technology Startup

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This Action Guide is designed to be used as a compliment to our “[Business and Technology Startup Bootcamp](#)” & [Workshop](#). The Bootcamp is an intense 60 day coaching & tech training program that helps entrepreneurs and small business owners step into the aspects of their business that will allow growth. We also use this guide for our mini-bootcamp - a very intense 3 hour workshop that covers some of these things at a high level.

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1.

THE IDEA

All businesses start with an idea. If you are in this course, we'll assume you already have yours. (If not, Sign up for our next "[Step Into Your Life!](#)" Challenge.)

What is your offer?

The type of offer you have will, in some ways, dictate your systems as well as your marketing.

Service: _____

Product: _____

Getting people to your offer is a whole other topic. Most of which we will cover in the marketing segment. You'll want to develop a free "lead magnet"—something to entice folks to come to you. This is what you will be offering in your marketing.

Next Steps...

List all of the possible products and services you are ready to offer. Then, beside each one, list all of the benefits that product or service provides.

<u>Product/Service</u>	<u>Benefits</u>
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What is the name of your business?

Once you have an a service or product to offer, you have some choices to make regarding how you want to set up your business. You'll learn about business entities next. If you want to operate as yourself, skip this step. However, if you want to create a business entity, you'll need to come up with a name for the business.

Think of some business name ideas. Run them by supportive friends or colleagues. Come up with a list - you will need this later. Hop on Google and search for your name ideas. Cross out any that are already being used.

Notes

2.

THE LEGALITIES

There are several ways you can set up your business. Determining the type of business has as much to do with your tax situation and needs as any just about any thing else. As such, this choice should be made in consultation with a tax/business accountant. Talking to an attorney couldn't hurt either. The information I present here is to provide awareness of your options.

Business Entities

You can choose to operate as yourself or as a formal business entity. Within some of these are several more choices...

Sole proprietor

Limited Liability Corporation

S-Corp

Corporation

REGISTRATION STEPS:

1. Checking for your name:

Search your state business listings.

For example in Virginia: <https://sccefile.scc.virginia.gov/NameAvailability>. For Tennessee: <https://tnbear.tn.gov/Ecommerce/NameAvailability.aspx>

Google “business name search for ‘your state’ to find the link. Make sure the link you choose is the state .gov site.

There are 4 states that you can register out of state businesses in. This can be handy for tax and other purposes. Check with an accountant.

You must have your EIN before registering your business with your state. So after you verify your name is available move on to the IRS step.

2. IRS

Apply for EIN

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online>

You will get a response immediately and a document to download. Keep this - it’s very important! There is no fee for this.

Notes:

3. Create the required paperwork

Different types of paperwork is required for state filing depending on the entity you choose.

Research your entity type. What paperwork will you need to submit to your state when you register? Your state website will also have this information.

3. State

Register your business with your state.

Go back to the State page you searched the business name on and register your business. You will upload your paperwork and pay a fee when filing.

4. Localities

Check with your County and Town.

Both the County AND your town (If you live in an incorporated township). You may or may not need to register your business with them as well.

Also, check at the state and local levels for tax licenses for actual products.

Call your Town/County offices. What do they require?

There are extra steps for non-profits!

3.

BRANDING

This /s the User Experience!

This is the foundation for all of your marketing and on-line efforts! When a customer comes to your site this is what they want to know:

- What do you offer? (Part of your mission, right?)
- How will it help me? (Your message)
- What do I need to do to buy it? (Your market)

Mission

RESOURCE: <https://fitsmallbusiness.com/mission-statement-template/>

USE the steps on this website and note your mission here in the notes section. If you do this right, it is your tagline.

And, they recommend you think of your mission statement as a haiku or tweet. What you **offer** should directly relate to this mission. If it doesn't, don't offer it or adjust your mission.

Market

Now that you know what you are selling and why (your mission), take a look at your customer base. Who are these people? Are they moms? Dads? Teens? Where does your ideal client live? What do they read? Where do they hang out - both on-line and off? Why do they need to buy from you? These are the people who's problem I need to solve. This is **my Market**.

Here are some questions you need to be asking and research you need to do.

Who is your ideal client?

- Who are your current customers? Be as specific as possible. Male/female, age, income, etc.

- What do they buy from you?

- Why do they buy from you? What problem are you solving for them now?

- Which ones bring in the most business? (Hint: more people like these could probably benefit from your product/service.)

What other problem(s) do they have that you can solve?

Remember that list you made at the beginning of this with your offerings and their benefits? If you did that step, this should be easy. Those benefits you listed solve problems. What are they?

Where do they get information?

What are they reading for news and info? The newspaper? Facebook? What kind of groups are they in?

Where do they hang out?

Physically and on-line. Are they in 4-H? At the library with kids? Participating in sports themselves or with their kids? 5k's? Do they volunteer? If so, where?

As you discover more and more about your ideal client, do more Google searching until you can really narrow down this market segment.

Message

This is the way you connect your offerings to your ideal clients.

So, now you know what you are selling, right? And you know who you are selling it to. You should know what their needs and desires are and where they hang out. Take a look at your message - if you have one.

Does it match? Does it address the needs of your target market? Does it solve their problem? Are they finding you where they hang out? If you don't have an aligned message, now is the time to get it done.

- Address how you will provide a solution to their pain points or emotional needs.
- Be succinct.
- Don't focus on your products or services. Instead, focus on your customer and their needs.
- Show how your offer will help solve their problem(s).
- Be consistent! This is your brand identity you are building. Keep this message consistent so your brand strengthens.

4.

SYSTEMS SETUP

Management Systems

There are a ton of tools and systems to use for managing your service or product sales & client connections. We'll go over some of the primary ones here to get you started. This section does not include websites for funnels and is designed to give you an easier, cost effective method to get started with your offer.

Marketing tools include the many social media platforms, Youtube, websites/funnels, and the wide variety of systems that exist to help manage your client interactions. We'll cover some basic categories and tools. As always, if you know or hear of a tool, you can research it and compare it to others to find the features you need for your specific business.

Onboarding systems

Onboarding systems include any and all of the huge number of websites and apps out there to collect customer emails. They would also provide a methodology for reaching out to your clients as well. The more automated, the better it is for you. Following are some tools used by us and many other entrepreneurs we know.

Contacts

Contacts can be collected in a variety of ways, but collection is integral to your business growth, so don't leave it out. Here are some examples of collection systems:

- Zoom.us - use zoom meetings with registration enabled to create a cost effective method for collecting names and emails of folks that you know are interested in you and your content.

- A variety of email marketing clients are available on the market. Many have heard about Constant Contact, MailChip, Aweber, etc. Engaging one of these is important to your success.
- Eventbrite - Allows you to schedule free and paid events and collects client info and funds.
- Websites & funnels - build forms that are connected with an email marketing provider and collect in the email client.

Communication tools

These are tools that allow you to connect to your client without giving our your personal phone number.

- Zoom - setup actual meetings as well as provide your personal meeting room to folks (usually through a scheduling app) to call in for connection.
- Free Conference Call provides a phone number for scheduled meetings that can be recorded.
- Sideline and other apps exist for your phone that add a second line to your phone that you can use for voice and text communication while keeping your private number - private.

Calendars

There are a number of calendars out there, including Yahoo, but none of them have the integration capability that Google Calendar does. Google isn't my favorite company, but they have a good, stable, incredibly integrated calendar. Use this as your main calendar, it's easily integrated right into your phone calendar and dozens of platforms across the internet. Start at [google.com](https://www.google.com) and create an account - your calendar is accessible once you login with your gmail.

Scheduling

Scheduling is different than your calendar. Scheduling tools let you create "office/working" hours (availability) and put out a link to folks to choose a date/time that works best for them. Scheduling is different than your calendar. Scheduling tools let you create "office/working" hours (availability) and put out a link to folks to choose a date/time that works best for them.

Customer journeys

The better email marketing systems are more than a contact collection and email campaign manager. They have gone the extra step and built in customer journeys. When a form is filled in, an email is auto-generated to welcome them, thank them, fill them in with meeting or event details, etc. But it doesn't have to end there.

Think about some email automation that would be beneficial to you or your business. List them here.

Payment collection systems

Most of the payment systems out there integrate with the other applications for seamless automation. Two of the most prominent ones I've seen in integration are Paypal and Stripe.

Connecting these systems for automation

5.

BUILDING YOUR WEB/FUNNEL

What's the difference?

Technically, there isn't one. A funnel is simply a web page with text that leads to a call to action which usually consists of a form that captures information - like the name and email address of the interested party.

Domains

Domains (yourwebsite.com) are purchased through domain registration companies like GoDaddy.com. You can register your domain for a single year and renew annually or purchase up to 5 years and not worry about it for a while. You can go to GoDaddy.com, enter your first choice for a name and see if it is available. Consider that Search Engines like to see something of your business name or offering in that URL so you rank higher if there is a relationship. Alternatively, we can help you with your domain and hosting at a considerable cost savings over Godaddy!

Brainstorm/research some domains:

Hosting

There are literally thousands of website hosting providers. An email account may or may not be included with your hosting. Make sure you get an email account! This is very important for your branding.

Themes

Content managers provide the building blocks and with it's newest release, Wordpress has gotten even easier to use. However, its the thousands of ready made, paid and free themes that ride on these engines to give you the best tools for developing your online presence.

My favorite by far is the unbelievably flexible, WYSIWYG, drag and drop editor, Divi, sold by elegantthemes.com is well worth the yearly licensing fee. Or, you can find a host like ia-planet.com that includes the Divi theme in it's hosting plan.

Plugins

What are plugins? They are small, add-on apps that run inside the Wordpress engine to bring you additional features and functions. There are 50,000+ WordPress plugins that help you do just about anything including setting up a store, collecting payments or donations, managing a membership driven site, compressing photos and, obviously so much more. If you can imagine your website doing something to make your business run better, there is most likely a plugin for it.

Best practices

Structure

Use this checklist to gauge where your website stands now and to ensure a new site meets these goals.

- Is your primary value/offering front & center on the homepage? Throughout site?
- Can a visitor determine what you offer in 15 seconds?
- Is content engaging?
- Is it a multi-page site? (*Single page sites are NOT recommended*)
- Is navigation clear?

(Have someone outside your organization look at your site and give you feedback)

- Is it responsive or mobile ready?
- Is there a call to action in the top right navigation area? If you don't have a primary call to action (to be covered next), this is where your "shop" or "contact us" or similar *action* button should go.

Look what are you competitors doing? (get inspiration - don't plagiarize!)

SEO

Becoming Discoverable

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the ongoing process of making your website discoverable in search engines to increase “organic”(non-paid) traffic from search engines.

Some ways to get audience engaged & increase SEO

GET LISTED! Start with Google, Bing & Yelp

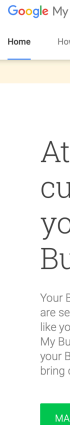
Google My Business Listing

1. google.com/business => click on start button. Search for your business in your city.
2. Make sure you only have one! Delete duplicates (setup by old employee that you don't have access to)
3. Make sure you categorize your business
4. 2 weeks to get the mailer - very important to complete steps on the mailer
5. Basic profile is setup - click edit, add photos, hours, and other info - as much as possible.

- You **can** hide your address from the public
- Delete any personal Google Plus Profile listings you did for your business
- support.google.com/business for help with any issues

REPEAT this for Bing & Yelp!

Eventually get listed on industry specific like Angie's List, WeddingWire, Trip Advisor



6.

MARKETING - ONLINE

Marketing Systems

Online marketing involves all of the components we have talked about already with the addition of social media. This is how everything comes together. Basically, you use social media and email to attract visitors to your [store] offer. You use those tools to automate as much of that as possible and to assist in the outreach. Following are some guidelines and information that can help you get started with your marketing.

Email Campaigns

We talked about this one already and hopefully, if you didn't already have one setup - you do now! Do you use a list manager now? *Why email?*

Email helps you stay in your customer's mind! You can use it in a myriad of ways. Maybe send a newsletter at the beginning of the month and a coupon later in the month?

Social Media

For every social media post or email, you should establish a Goal. Do you want to move inventory? Gain more clients? Offer a coupon to get more newsletter signups? Have this goal firmly in mind when starting your campaign.

Reach Out

Engage social media

Best Practices: Social Media

7.

TAPPING INTO LOCAL MARKETS

Join Your Local Community

Realize we are talking about the digital realm here, but believe it or not, your off-line relationships and community involvement are very beneficial to your on-line success! Following are some on-line and off-line suggestions to become part of the community you wish to enhance with your service or product.

- **Start relationships**
- **Reach out to**
- **Participate** in local events.
- **Host** your own events whether they are online or on the farm.
- **Leverage** existing partnerships with new off line opportunities:
