



11 Steps to
Starting A
Home-Based
Business

By Brandi J Roberts

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I want to congratulate you on entertaining the idea of starting your own home-based business. By exploring your passions, skills, and talents and creating a product or service you will be contributing to your family, your community, and your sense of self and purpose.

We all possess some sort of unique talent or skill. We all have different stories and backgrounds – yet we all have the human desire to contribute and make difference in our lives and the lives of others. And often, we just want a little more comfortable life. By opening a business – you can gain more control over your financial future.

Now is your chance. Here is an 11 Step Process to set your creative wheels in motion and get that home-based business off the ground. I wish you the absolute best and please drop me a note with your business adventures.

You can do this.

Step 1: What Kind of Life Do You Want?

I want you to explore this because your “WHY” will get you through the hardest times. Is your desire to travel more? Does your ideal life involve owning a cabin in the mountains or a condo in the big city? How about being able to easily put your kids or grandkids through college? How about building schools or water wells in villages in a third-world country? Do you just want to end the daily grind of the sleep/eat/work cycle? Do you envision more time freedom? Or do you simply just want to make a few extra bucks so you don't have to live paycheck to paycheck anymore?

Whatever your ideal lifestyle is – FEEL IT. Close your eyes and feel what it would feel like to actually live in this way. Bring yourself back to this feeling when times get challenging or overwhelming. Make a vision board. Write this ideal life down and post it in a visible place so that you are constantly reminded of the life you will create for yourself and your loved ones.

I saw an interview with Olympic Medalist Michael Phelps where he said when he has a goal, he writes it down and carries it in his pocket at all times. He is never far from the reminder of that goal. Find a tool that works for you and use it.

This reason may change over time. Give yourself permission to dream big and Go Big. You deserve it.

Step 2: How Are You Going to Create This Lifestyle?

“Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment.” – Jim Rohn

What is the product or service that your business is going to offer? This is another fun step. What are you passionate about and how can you turn that into a profitable business? Dig Deep here. Do you have a hobby you would like to see grow into a money generating activity? Do you have a solution to a common problem?

You have unlimited options here. You can join an existing business as an independent consultant for direct sales companies like Visalis, Arbonne, Herbalife, Scentsy, and the list goes on and on. These are sound business models with a strong emphasis on relationship marketing. If you chose this path – be picky when choosing a sponsor. A good sponsor/leader can make all the difference.

Other options include writing, speaking, coaching, teaching, training jobs in whatever field you are knowledgeable about. People are hungry for information and are constantly seeking out someone or something to solve their problems.

You can create and sell products such as gift baskets, homemade crafts, jewelry, photography, art, food products like bakery items or salsa! (I have a friend that does this and she is doing well for herself.) I also know a lady who has opened a home organizing business and backbends a cleaning product line to her clients giving her multiple streams of income. Brilliant!

Think pet sitting, house sitting, gardening services, personal assistant, secret shopper, or blogger. And then think of how you could offer training to the people that want to also enter these fields. Take your passions and see how you can fit it into a strong business model. Think outside the box.

You can also work completely online if that is attractive to you. Sell other people products or services through a website or advertising and make a commission off each sale. This is called affiliate marketing (feel free to contact me if you are interested in this type of business).

Remember – you do NOT need to reinvent the wheel here. Your product will be attractive if it is cheaper, faster, better, or of a higher quality than your competition – or you have better marketing!

Narrow your ideas down and commit.

Step 3: Create a Brand

So now that you know exactly what product or service you are going to offer, it is time to come up with a name. Most likely you will want a web presence so checking out related domain names is an easy way to see if your business name is available. Just Google your ideas and see what pops up.

It is best to come up with a name you can purchase a domain with, easy to remember, easy to spell.

Once you have this established. Think of a logo, tag lines, and signature line. Websites where you can hire others for logo creation: www.fiverr.com and www.99designs.com

Don't go too crazy in the beginning – (but if appropriate) order business cards, logo materials, signs, banners, car magnets, and give-away items. You don't want to break your budget here. The quality of your product or service is more important to focus on if your funds are tight.

Step 4: Get Legal

“The law is reason, free from passion.” Aristotle

I am not an advisor on this – so I will simply point you in the right direction. Here is a site that explains what the different options are as far as defining your business structure.

<http://money.howstuffworks.com/biz-structure.htm>

When beginning a business, you must decide what form of business entity to establish. Your form of business determines which income tax return form you have to file. The most common forms of business are the sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, and S corporation. A Limited Liability Company (LLC) is a relatively new business structure allowed by state statute. Legal and tax considerations enter into selecting a business structure.

- Sole Proprietorships
- Partnerships
- Corporations
- S Corporations
- Limited Liability Company (LLC)

Here is the IRS website that will help you further:

<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=98359,00.html>

Step 5: Know your Tax Benefits and Incentives

“An income tax form is like a laundry list – either way you lose your shirt.” Fred Allen

Having a home-based business is an excellent way to cut down your tax bills. It is your responsibility to keep proper, organized records of your income and expenses. Please check with your tax professional for your specific needs.

Here is a list of some of the expenses that may be deducted in whole or as a percentage of your home-based business:

- *Startup and expansion costs
- *Advertising
- *Automotive Expenses – mileage deductions, parking fees, and tolls
- * Professional expenses, legal expenses, and association dues
- *Home Office Space if it is a true dedicated office
- *Telephone, Internet, and cable bills if appropriate
- *Entertainment and Travel Expenses
- *Gifts and Charity Contributions
- *Insurance, bad debt, and loan interests if applicable
- *Education, Trainings, Publications, Software, and Subscriptions – if applicable
- *Equipment, Furniture, and Supplies
- *Security Systems

For more information from the Small Business Administration – Please visit <http://www.sba.gov/content/small-business-expenses-and-tax-deductions>

Step 6: Set a Budget

"A budget tells us what we can't afford, but it doesn't keep us from buying it."

William Feather

We have all heard 'it takes money to make money' – and in most all cases this is very true. We spend money on setup, products, training, advertising, traveling, and the list goes on and on. We love to buy, to learn, and to give. But we have to put it all into perspective because no one wants to spend themselves out of business. Establish a monthly budget (how much you are willing to spend, or even go into business debt). And while you are having a conversation about this – determine your bailout number. This means how far are you willing to go before you are willing to call it quits. We never want to think our idea will fail, but we also understand that the odds can be stacked against us. What is your threshold? Are you willing to risk your family money for this dream?

If you do not have an idea of what an appropriate budget would be – don't be afraid to contact a few people in a similar field and see how they budget their business. Also, look at where your competitors are advertising and see how much they are paying. Compare these numbers to your needs. Use all the resources available to you. You can always change and flex as time goes –you just don't want to find your self a few months down the road with debt up to your eyeballs and not realizing how you got there. Do what is best for you in your particular situation. If you have little to no money ~ dig deep, get scrappy and find a way to make it happen.

This is always a good time to set up a business checking, savings, and credit account at your local credit union (or bank). Keep your spending streamlined and well organized so that when tax time comes around you are less stressed and ready to go.

Step 7: Have a Business Plan

“When defeat comes, accept it as a signal that your plans are not sound, rebuild those plans, and set sail once more toward your coveted goal.” Napoleon Hill

A business plan is a written description of your business's future. This document describes what you plan to do and how you plan to do it. A business plan conveys your business goals, the strategies you'll use to meet them, potential problems that may confront your business and ways to solve them, the organizational structure of your business (including titles and responsibilities), and finally, the amount of capital required to finance your venture and keep it going until it breaks even.

To break it down more – here is a suggested structure to follow:

- **The first is the *business concept***, where you discuss the industry, your business structure, your particular product or service, and how you plan to make your business a success.
- **The second is the *marketplace section***, in which you describe and analyze potential customers: who and where they are, what makes them buy and so on. Here, you also describe the competition and how you'll position yourself to beat it.
- **Finally, the *financial section*** contains your income and cash flow statement, balance sheet and other financial ratios, such as break-even analyses. This part may require help from your accountant and a good spreadsheet software program.

Step 8: Define Your Target Market

"Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising."
Mark Twain

Who do you want as customers? Who is your ideal client? It is easy to say. "Well, everyone needs my widget!" But when you go to market your business to everyone – it may be more difficult to get the attention of anyone. Find a niche – is it stay-at-home moms? Is it over-worked parents? Is it someone in the military community? Are they health conscious? What do they read? What kind of entertainment do they like? What are the age and income ranges of your target market? What do these people like to do? Where do they go to buy a similar product or service that you are offering? Find them. Market to these people specifically. And grow!

Step 9: Choose Your Marketing Plan

"Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." Chinese Proverb

The way you market your business represents your brand, your product or service, and you. Choose ways to market that fits your budget, is trackable, and sustainable. Measure your results and tweak your marketing to squeeze out the best returns. Drop the methods that are not working.

Accentuate the positives of your product. Highlight the benefits. And don't forget to appeal to the customer's emotions. It works.

Find out where your target audience is at – and go market there – with a vengeance.

Various ways to market include:

Word of mouth

Newspaper ads

Magazine Ads

Text Advertising

Yellow Pages

Google Advertising

YouTube Advertising

Facebook Advertising

Social Media Marketing

Email Advertising

Robo-Calling Advertising

Blog

Billboard Advertising

Ugly (but effective) Street Corner Signs

Pepper Business Cards around town

Postcard/ Mail based advertising

Coupons

Coupon Sites (such as [Groupon](#), [Moolala](#), etc.)

Ad Swaps/ Cross Promote with similar – but not competitive businesses

Step 10: Let's Talk Social

“People do Business with those whom they Know. Like, and Trust.” Bob Burg

Social Media is a relatively new field to most brick -and-mortar businesses. And it is also where people are jumping way ahead of their competitors if they understand how to use social media. When I am talking about Social media, I am talking about sites like Pinterest, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc. It may not be necessary to be ever-present on all these sites –

but if your target market is on them – you need to reach them. The beauty of social media is that it has a viral effect. When people love a product or service – the talk about it! They share it over and over. This is leveraging your time and energy.

By establishing a Facebook Fan Page, you can engage your customers and potential customers with dynamic photos, special offers, and simple customer/client interaction. LinkedIn is a professional network-listing site where you can list your previous and current professional experience and then link back to your other social media sites. Twitter is still really popular and can broadcast specials, up to date news and happening about your business. YouTube is the #2 Trafficked site on the web. People are searching for solutions and how-to's on YouTube. Videos are a free and effective medium to engage your audience. And welcome to Pinterest. This is a unique beast. Pinterest is a photo sharing site whereby you can link the photos to a website and also provide a description about the photo. People can upload their own photos or 'pin' from an active website. This is extremely viral. People are able to like, share, and 'repin' your pins. This means if you have a fitness business – you can show before and after photos, the equipment you use, the facility you use, some of the workout moves you teach – and all attached back to your unique website or contact information. Please don't underestimate these sites.

You will want to capture the information of your target audience. You can do this by setting up an auto responder account (such as Aweber). Here people would 'optin' by giving you their contact information in exchange for more information about your business. This may take a little time to master if you have never used online marketing methods before. But I promise, it is worth it. By collecting this information – you can email at will to keep engaged with your customers and potential customers. Therefore building a personal relationship with them.

Step 11: Take Massive Action

“Move Fast and Break Things.” Mark Zuckerberg’s motto for Facebook

Do this – and never look back. Set your mind right to know that you will succeed no matter what. If friends and family are judging you – let it go. Do not let anyone step between you and the lifestyle you defined in Step 1. Better yourself everyday by setting a schedule and sticking to it. Read success stories. Surround yourself with successful people. Find a mentor. If you want to grow fast ~go fast. Lack of sleep is sometimes okay. The dedication you have to the success of your business will be transparent. If you ‘sometimes’ work it - how is it any different than a hobby?

Give yourself total permission to succeed. Work through whatever barriers you find are holding you back. Do this with a purpose. I want to see you succeed beyond your wildest dreams. I want you to see the beauty within and I want others to envy to you!

Do not be afraid of success. Have gratitude for those who have succeeded before you. And Celebrate Every Single Success no matter how small or trivial it may seem at the time. You created this business from scratch. Celebrate it.

Take Massive Action.

To Your Success,



Brandi J Roberts
<http://brandijroberts.com>
Tel: 208.283.9122

Connect with me on these social media sites –

<http://pinterest.com/brandijroberts/>

<http://www.facebook.com/brandijroberts>

<http://www.facebook.com/workwithbrandi>

<https://twitter.com/#!/brandijroberts>

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/brandi-roberts/31/221/718>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/brandijrobertscom>

Important Resources:

* I encourage you to back-up all your computer data. I use [CloudZow](#). It is cheap (\$5/month unlimited data storage) and it's easy.

*[Aweber](#) is the auto responder series I use to keep in touch with clients/customers.

*I am a proud member of the [Empower Network](#). This company offers viral blogging system whereby you can promote anything (besides pornography) and get ranked on Google much faster than if you were trying to do it on your own. It also offers an excellent online training and marketing system as well as a lucrative affiliate program. Feel free to check it out. This is one way I make money online, part time, while having fun.

*To outsource some of your needs [Fiverr](#), [Odesk](#), [99Designs](#)

*I use [GoDaddy](#) for my domain names and wordpress web hosting. They have excellent customer service to help you set up your website.

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