

TAKING THE LEAP TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A guide to help BC women make the transition



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Start. Grow. Succeed.*

Women's Enterprise Centre is the leading business resource for BC women who are starting, growing or purchasing a business. Our team of professionals provides business loans, skills training, advice, mentors, resources and a supportive community to help women start, grow and succeed in their business.

With offices and business advisors throughout the province, we provide essential resources and services designed to build business capacity and fuel success. Our professional team understands and relates to the unique circumstances of women business owners, providing tools and confidence through a supportive, individual and practical approach.

From our offices in Kelowna, Vancouver, and Victoria, we serve the 143,000 women business owners across the province, most of whom have fewer than 20 employees. For more information on Women's Enterprise Centre services for BC women, other resource guides and learning guides on specific business topics such as market research, business financial management, marketing, or growing your business please visit www.womensenterprise.ca or call us at 1.800.643.7014.

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ENTERPRISE
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CONTENTS

Taking the Leap to Entrepreneurship.....	5
The Turning Point: Why Self Employment?	6
What's In It For Me?	11
What Is It Going To Take?	13
Personal Characteristics Assessment	15
Who Can Help?.....	21
Are You Ready?	23
Taking The Leap	28
What Are You Waiting For?	30

Transition



TAKING THE LEAP TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

What would it be like to set out on your own—to become an entrepreneur? Maybe you're retired and have the desire to put a dream into reality through a small business. Perhaps you are unemployed and wondering what's next. Or, maybe, you're a stay-at-home mom who needs income and flexibility. Maybe there's just something else you've always longed to do. You are not alone.

Self-employed women have a strong presence in Canada, according to a report released by the CIBC, "Women Entrepreneurs: Leading the Charge". There are now over 800,000 women business owners in Canada, and the number of women-owned businesses is growing 60 percent faster than those headed by men. The 2012 BC Small Business Report states that over 37 percent or approximately 143,000 of BC's small businesses, are self-employed women.

The statistics are impressive, but they don't tell the story of the internal struggle women often grapple with as they start out in business. Becoming an entrepreneur can mean confronting the unknown, giving up financial stability, and accepting full responsibility for your future.

When you look at a successful woman business owner, it may seem as though they have some special gene that sets them apart. Were they born to be entrepreneurs, or did they have to work at it? Were they ever afraid?

And how did they know they were ready and able to take that leap and go it alone?

About this guide

This guide is meant to lend support to women who are making a choice to transition to self-employment. We'll give you a sense of what being an entrepreneur is all about through the stories of successful BC women business owners.

This guide is not meant to cover the 'nuts and bolts' of starting a business—there are other tools for that; instead, it is meant to educate and support women. There is a list of resources which supports each section; but don't limit yourself to these.

We have shortened some of the long URLs in the resource sections to wec.ca/. Clicking on or typing in these shorter URLs will link you directly to the resource. The URLs are not case-sensitive.

Women's Enterprise Centre knows how important it is for women to be prepared for their journey into entrepreneurship as we've done intensive research to discover the issues and barriers that women face when starting a business.

We hope that you will feel supported and know that you are not alone as you explore the leap to entrepreneurship.

Enjoy the journey!

THE TURNING POINT: WHY SELF-EMPLOYMENT?



Cindy Hamilton
MOM'S GRILLED
CHEESE TRUCK
Vancouver
momsgilledcheesetruck.com

Cindy Hamilton was looking for a change in 2011 after being in the movie catering business for twelve years. Street food was emerging as an exciting business opportunity after the City of Vancouver decided to provide diverse culinary options on the city's streets.

Cindy was one of the vendors chosen for a permit to operate a street food truck. Women's Enterprise Centre provided start-up funds to help buy her mobile truck from which she provides freshly made soups, chili and gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches to tourists and the downtown work force.

Cindy was attracted to entrepreneurship

because of her young child. "I had a child in 2010 and couldn't go back to the long film hours. I needed to come up with a solution, where I could do what I loved to do (feed people) and still have time to spend with my daughter. I saw street food as a growing business in Vancouver and it would also give me the freedom to work the hours that I wanted to work."

What can be better than following your passion to own a business and making a success of it? Cindy has enjoyed every day of her business journey and learned from it. "As an entrepreneur, I have confidence in myself and in what I am doing. I believe in, 'Leap and the net shall appear.'"

Why are you at the turning point?

What are your reasons for exploring self-employment? Quite often, it is your life situation that starts the ball rolling. Are you like Cindy, needing a business that fits your schedule? Are you a young self-starter with a strong desire for autonomy or perhaps a woman at mid-life dealing with new challenges that make self-employment a desirable option? In each case you're looking at change, and change can be scary and exhilarating at the same time.

If you were to take a philosophical approach, why exactly are you thinking of doing something entrepreneurial?

- Do you constantly think about doing something on your own?
- Do you have a passion that you'd like to turn into a profession?
- Do you dream about a better, more flexible lifestyle?
- Are you tired, frustrated or bored working for someone else?
- Have you had difficulty finding a new job?
- Does your current position feel like a "dead end"?
- Is it time to reenter the workforce after...?

You may not be committed to a clear career path as often exists in the medical, legal, financial and academic professions. Or you may be in a profession with a rather rigid trajectory and want to explore new opportunities.

Allison Wager's business, New Energy Wellness, in Cranbrook, has had a steady flow of clients coming to her over the years for yoga, nutrition counselling and massage. Many elements play a part in keeping business up, but mostly it's Allison's genuine passion for helping people that brings her clients back time and time again.

"All aspects of my business are who I truly am, and it comes from my heart," says Allison.

Allison was a storyteller at a Women's Enterprise Centre event in Cranbrook. She talked about how New Energy Wellness might not seem like the most obvious business for her because she holds a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and spent 25 years as a practising professional forester. Along the way, though, she

was also teaching group fitness classes at a gym. When she decided to go into business for herself, it was her zeal for fitness and her eagerness to help people that led her to turn her 2-car garage into a yoga studio.

"I've added Reiki healing and Raindrop Massage in the last couple of years too," she said. Continuing to follow her heart, Allison purchased a Cranbrook hotel spa business in September 2012. With 3 part-time estheticians and an expanded massage practice, Allison's heart is beaming with pride.

"Energy and wellness is my true passion and has always been a large part of me. I truly love being able to bring some calmness and peacefulness to people in the hectic lives we all lead."



Allison Wager
NEW ENERGY
WELLNESS
Cranbrook
newenergywellness.ca

Maybe you don't have the option to work part-time, flexible hours or job share. Have you questioned what it takes to sustain that successful career in the corporate world? Is there another way to work and balance your life, have independence, and a flexible work schedule?

Following your heart

Often your decision to start your own business may be spurred on by heart factors (an internal pull force), such as a desire to fulfill a dream or to gain control; or by some other possible reasons, (external push force) such as job loss, relocation, or health concerns.

Heart Factors: Heart factors are often what draw us towards change—they can be as loud as a church bell or as quiet as a whisper. They're insistent enough that we can't ignore them, though we may try.

On the journey to self-employment, more than one heart factor can be in play at the same time. They may include:

- **Passion and self-fulfillment:** Many of us "fell" into jobs that we can do but that don't exactly make our heart sing. Passion gives us a zest for living and being able to turn our enthusiasm for what we do into a thriving business may be a life changing turn-around.

I truly love being
able to bring some
calmness and
peacefulness
to people in the
hectic lives we
all lead.

”

THE PULL OF \$\$

Some of us measure success in purely financial terms.

If money is a strong pull factor for you, take the time to examine exactly how much you need and talk to others to find out realistically what you might make in the first years of your business. At the start, money can be slow in coming.

Remember that you may end up working long hours at your own business. It is the passion, excitement, and satisfaction that will make those hours fly by.

- **Challenge:** The desire for "more" is often the primary motivator for those who have found their skills under-utilized at work or who need added creativity in their daily lives. In self-employment, there are opportunities to make your own choices, explore niche markets, or build a loyal client database.
- **Greater independence/autonomy:** Some women are independent-minded from childhood. For others, the need for more autonomy grows with age, experience, and learning to trust their instincts. The need for independence is a classic heart factor for many highly successful entrepreneurs.
- **Flexibility:** Many women cite flexibility and/or the freedom to work from home as their reason for starting a business. Flexibility exerts a strong pull for those seeking work/family balance or who don't otherwise fit the nine-to-five job demands.
- **Finances:** The challenge and satisfaction of creating your own relationship with money, (not necessarily getting rich, per se), can be a powerful motivator for getting into business. For some women, especially those who've had the experience of earning good salaries, self-employment is less about "big money" and more about creating a comfortable "work style".

Because they are positive and empowering, heart factors can keep you going when things get rough or you temporarily question your own reasoning about going into business. The draw may be so strong that you won't want to go back to working for anyone other than yourself.

A change in your life?

Change may become necessary when we feel we have no control over a situation and often the outcome initially appears negative and bleak. Some possible external factors that may bring us to consider self-employment might include:

- **Job dissatisfaction:** There are many reasons women experience dissatisfaction at work, including poor relationships with colleagues, boredom, lack of advancement, compromised ethics or priorities, low pay—even a company relocation that affects your commute. Whatever the reason, you're not happy where you are, and something needs to change.
- **Job loss:** Circumstances may force you out of your employment. You could be on the "wrong" end of a company reorganization or downsizing. Or you might be fired...it happens.
- **Changes in life circumstances:** A job transfer for your spouse/partner may find you in an entirely new location without employment opportunities readily available.

At mid-life and beyond, changes to your health or energy levels could make you feel that you can no longer withstand your existing employment. Divorce, aging parents, or a death in the family may cause you to re-evaluate your life. The result is a shift in goals, values, and priorities.

We tend to forget that we've encountered major changes throughout our lives and for the most part, we deal with them. Some changes may be the best things that ever happened to us, though they may not have seemed like it at the time. Even when you're pushed from the branch you've been sitting on, there's no reason you can't fly.

Is there something in your way?

If you're seriously looking at self-employment, you've likely begun to add up some strong reasons for embracing the change that's beckoning you.

From the wrong angle, that little crevasse in your way begins to look like the Grand Canyon. You can get stuck on the wrong side trying to find a job that will give you security. If you want to start a business but can't seem to make that final decision, try answering these questions:

- What's blocking your way?
- Where can you find help?
- How can you mitigate risk?

What's blocking your way? Usually when we have trouble making a decision, we're afraid of a particular outcome from making the wrong choice, and, more important, we're afraid we won't be able to deal with the consequences. You may have an inner voice that is reinforcing: Stay where you are, it's safer.

But is it? What will it do to you to stay put? How will you deal with those consequences?

If you have a recurring dream, you probably owe it to yourself and to those close to you to bring that dream to life. Staying status quo is not going to make you happy, or you wouldn't be looking for change. And in depriving yourself of purposeful work, you are also depriving your community of a business it may need or could use!

What's your greatest fear? Is it how you feel about security or scarcity; not having the right skills to succeed or just deep down not feeling you deserve to have what you want? Are you afraid your family routine will fall apart? Do you feel it's too late in life to start learning new skills? Or is it that you don't trust yourself to commit to this life changing transition?

How can you mitigate risk? Take a moment, right now, to anticipate the worst that could happen—then consider how you would handle it. If it helps, think of this happening to a good friend and list all the ways that she might cope. If you can find solutions for her, then most likely, they'll work for you too.

Are you better off sticking with your job? Some of us may agonize over the decision to become self-employed, especially if it means leaving a "stable" job, with health benefits and paid holidays. Even if you are restless and bored with the status quo, leaving your comfort zone is never easy.

It is now apparent that there is no longer as much of a gap, in terms of either security or risk, between employment and self-employment. Layoffs and contracting out by larger firms are almost a given. Some of us actually find self-employment less risky because we feel in control; it's the difference between being a passenger and being in the driver's seat.

WISE DOGS CAN LEARN NEW TRICKS

A CIBC study found that, during the last decade, the 35 to 55 year-old age group represented the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs, followed by people over the age of 55.

(Canadian Entrepreneurs and Retirement. CIBC, 2004. wec.ca/CdnEntrepreneursRetire)

"More than 70% of Canadian women who run a business are married and nearly one-third of them have children under the age of 12."

Women Entrepreneurs:
Leading the Charge.
CIBC, 2005. Wec.ca/LeadingTheCharge

Are you looking for change at mid-life? How are mature women perceived in your industry and your workplace? It may well be that you will have more opportunities for development if you strike out on your own. A business can give you that chance to apply your knowledge and expertise creatively, with authenticity and with pleasing results for yourself.

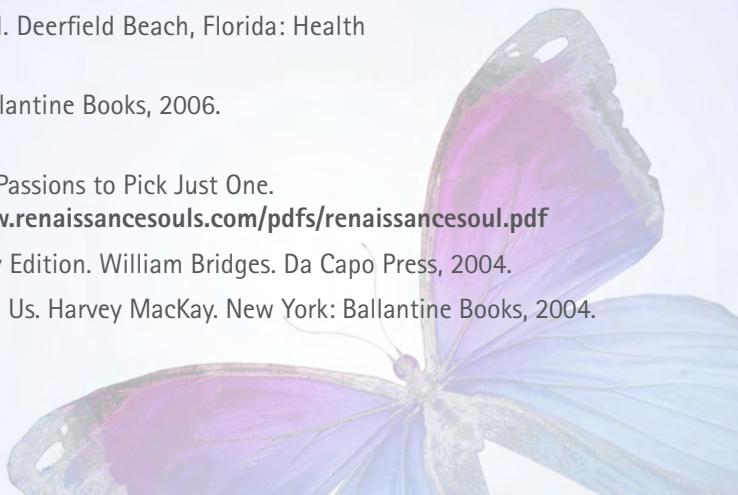
Are you considering retirement? If you are close to retirement, and feel far too young to think about gearing down, self-employment can help to not only carry you through those later years but also ensure that they are productive and rewarding. Of course, some businesses will be easier than others to mold around your retirement lifestyle. Over time, you may be able to downsize a service or consulting business, for example, keeping the clients you prefer while enjoying some personal flexibility.

According to the 2012 CIBC Report on Start-ups, women over the age of 50 are nearly 40% of all start-up businesses. Once they decide to start a business, women stay in business longer than men. The CIBC report also notes that "seniorpreneurs" are a key driver of small business growth.

Can you be comfortable with being uncomfortable? If you choose to become an entrepreneur, you will find that it will often bring up whatever you need to learn in order to grow and reach the next level. You will have to make peace with this as it is an ongoing process. It helps to think of it as an exciting learning curve and that's good, isn't it?

RESOURCES

- Small Business Profile 2012: a Profile of Small Business in BC. Small Business BC. wec.ca/SmallBusinessProfile
- Chicken Soup for the Entrepreneur's Soul. Jack Canfield et al. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc., 2006.
- Feel the Fear And Do It Anyway. Susan Jeffers. New York: Ballantine Books, 2006.
See www.susanjeffers.com for additional resources.
- The Renaissance Soul: Life Design for People with Too Many Passions to Pick Just One. Margaret Lobenstine. New York: Broadway Books, 2006. www.renaissancesouls.com/pdfs/renaissancesoul.pdf
- Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes 25th Anniversary Edition. William Bridges. Da Capo Press, 2004.
- We Got Fired!...And It's The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Us. Harvey MacKay. New York: Ballantine Books, 2004.



WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Elise Savard was planning to be a ski instructor in Whistler for only one season but she fell in love with the Whistler lifestyle and decided to realize her dream of opening a ski shop in the area.

With WEC's start-up loan, Elise was able to start the first Canadian franchise of Peak Performance, an active lifestyle store which started in Åre, Sweden in 1986. Her store sells innovative ski, outdoor, golf and training apparel and casual wear.

Elise has always enjoyed being an entrepreneur. "Growing up in a family business I always knew that I wanted to open my own store one day. I was living and working in Baie-Comeau, Quebec for

over 15 years but my love for the great outdoors and leading an active life inspired me to move to Whistler. What better place to live and work combining my two passions than Whistler!"

One of the reasons she loves being an entrepreneur is the constant learning experience. "I like things to happen instantly. Through my experience, I realized that the only way to get through different obstacles is to stay committed and work even harder."

Her love for the outdoors inspired her to start her business. Her goal is to build the Peak Performance brand in Whistler and throughout Canada.



Elise Savard
PEAK PERFORMANCE
Whistler
peak-whistler.com

It's about making a difference

The irony for many women entrepreneurs is that we start our businesses not so much for tangible rewards—lots of cash, a big house, designer clothes—but because women, like Elise, believe that the product or service or solution they are creating will make a big difference in the lives of others; whether other women, families, communities, or the world.

Reasons to love entrepreneurship

There are many benefits to owning and operating your own business. Many people won't take the risk, but if you can visualize what it is you want, you can make it happen.

Keep in mind, not all small businesses fall into one category. There is a distinction between small business owners who employ other employees and self-employment or one-person operations. One of your decisions is which business model is right for you.

The positive side of self-employment:

- Less rigid, bureaucratic, and informal
- Located anywhere – even at home
- Flexible work hours
- Results matter – face time doesn't
- To survive you must be profitable – that's the baseline
- Decisions are made by you in your self-interest

"Through my experience, I realized that the only way to get through different obstacles is to stay committed and work even harder."

- Niche business is good
- Set your own pace to grow or not
- No pre-requisite to entry

Freedom to choose – you're in charge

We tend to think that it's genetic, but in reality, success is an attitude you can cultivate. Within us, there is an aspect that is built for bold, decisive action – it is instinctual. Successful women aren't shy about sharing their vision and dreams with the world. Begin by creating the right frame of mind.

- Visualize yourself in a position of power. Carry yourself with confidence, even if you don't feel it at first. In other words, 'fake it till you make it!'
- Do your homework and be prepared. For example, write, review, and follow your business plan. Once you've made a decision, try not to waste time second-guessing whether it's right. Learn to trust yourself and your abilities.
- As much as possible, don't take things personally. A setback is just a setback, not an indication that you can't make it in business.
- Give yourself enough time to get things done right. Rushing will often be the reason you make mistakes – and they can make you crazy. If you're going to do something, do it right the first time.
- How do you measure success? When you're starting out in business, your answer to this question is critical because that awareness may just give you the motivation you need to keep moving, growing and learning as an entrepreneur.

How do you get to saying YES?

How do you move from thinking, exploring, researching and questioning to commitment? You will hear this advice again and again because it works: act as though you are already on your way. Do anything you can to get your dream out of your head and into concrete form. Counter the inner negative voice by saying, "Yes, I am creating the business I love."

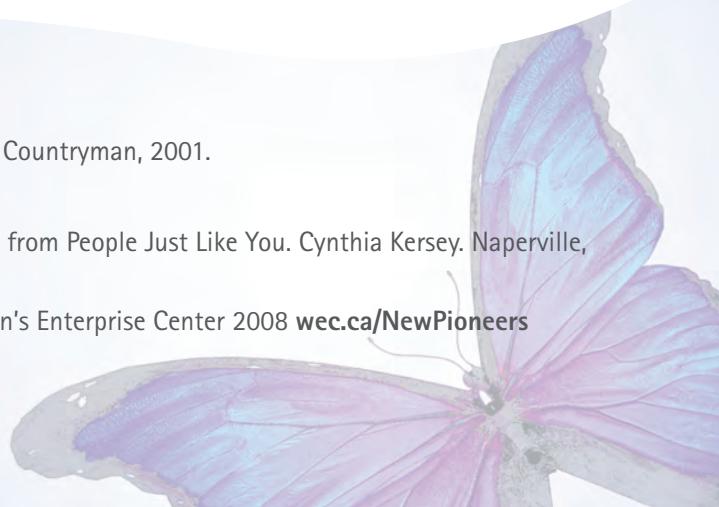
One of the most powerful things you can do to create your business is begin a business plan. Writing your ideas down, researching your market, talking to potential customers, and refining your concept with goals and milestones are very powerful activities that draw you forward. Actually spending time on your business plan will bring it to life.

Career ambition vs. life ambition (flexibility)

Even though there is a lot of hard work involved, self-employment means you are in control of your day. No one tells you what to do or when to do it. You gain tremendous autonomy and freedom, along with responsibility and accountability. How gratifying you find this depends, in part, on the parameters you set and how well you stick to them. It will take time, but as you focus and establish priorities, you may discover, as many women have, that you can't imagine doing anything else.

RESOURCES

- Success: One Day At A Time. John C. Maxwell. Nashville, TN: J. Countryman, 2001.
- The Secret. Rhonda Byrne, ed. Beyond Words, 2006
- Unstoppable: 45 Powerful Stories of Perseverance and Triumph from People Just Like You. Cynthia Kersey. Naperville, IL: 1998
- New Pioneers: Stories of 100 BC Women Entrepreneurs, Women's Enterprise Center 2008 wec.ca/NewPioneers



WHAT IS IT GOING TO TAKE?

Kalpna Solanki's business, FX-Foods Inc., produces Martin's Marvelous Naturals, a line of high-end gourmet, gluten-free, nut-free, Crisps and Granola that are all made in her own manufacturing facility in Burnaby, BC.

An avid entrepreneur, Kalpna has always believed in her business and stuck to the core values of her business providing:

- exceptional quality healthy foods
- support for sustainable agriculture
- a profitable entity that generates shareholder value

Kalpna firmly believed in entrepreneurship as the right career choice for her. "I come from a family of entrepreneurs. It wasn't a matter of 'if', but more of matter of 'when' I would take the leap and start my own business."

With a start-up loan from Women's

Enterprise Centre, Kalpna was able to launch her business. When she made strategic choices to grow her business WEC again provided financing to help her develop new markets. "It is rare that things go as planned. As an entrepreneur you have to be able to think on your feet and change direction as the market dictates."

Innovation has been a key to her business growth. "It took a year of R&D, but at the end I was able to launch a brand of gluten-free and nut-free products. We launched Martin's Marvelous Naturals in April 2011 and in less than two years we have products in more than 400 stores. Our goal is to grow that to 600 stores this year."

Focused on exploring new markets, within a few months of launching Martin's Marvelous Naturals, Kalpna started exporting her products to the US with help from a Women's Enterprise Centre export loan. Now the products are sold in Singapore and United Arab Emirates.



Kalpna Solanki
MARTIN'S MARVELLOUS
NATURALS
Burnaby
martinsmarvelous.com

What's going to happen?

What can you expect once you've decided to take the leap? Creating a new business takes time. Feelings of frustration and doubt along the way are normal, although it may not always seem that way. Once you know what it's going to take, you can prepare yourself emotionally and mentally. Women who start their own businesses may struggle with:

- Emotional highs and lows
- Balancing business demands with personal, home, and family needs
- Recognizing that there is a significant learning curve
- Staying motivated

*It is rare that things go as planned.
As an entrepreneur you have to be able to think on your feet and change direction as the market dictates*



Tasha Moodley
TASHA MOODLEY
COACHING AND
CONSULTING
Prince George
tashamoodley.com

Tasha Moodley, the founder of "Tasha Moodley Coaching and Consulting", is a Certified Professional Coach in Prince George. She brings together her coaching skills and experience in business and human resource management, to empower individuals and organizations.

Helping to find creative solutions, take meaningful action and produce extraordinary, sustainable results is the focus of Tasha's coaching. She is passionate about helping her clients improve and enhance their personal effectiveness and realize their full potential.

As an entrepreneur, Tasha realizes that staying motivated when her business occasionally slows down can be challenging. She has created systems for herself to stay motivated and moving forward.

"I choose an "outer" inspired environment

for imagination and creativity. For example, I go to the library, an art gallery, or simply take a walk here in beautiful Northern BC."

Working with a Women's Enterprise Centre mentor has also played a key role as her mentor holds her committed to her vision and is a great source of inspiration. Creating a 3-month plan of activities with timeframes and accountability has helped Tasha tide over tough times. "I usually mind map my action items and make it colorful as a visual reminder to take action and stay focused."

Celebrating small achievements helps her keep on track. "I remind myself of my successes and my gifts. I spend time in reflection and take notes about who I need to be in order to accomplish my goals and actions. I take time out to reconnect with my vision and passion. This re-energizes me and reminds me of the impact I want to create in the world."

“
*To stay
motivated
I choose an 'outer'
inspired environment...
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”

The business mind-set: key to entrepreneurial success

Some women dream of having a home-based business with visions of working in their jammies in front of the computer until noon or being able to have their young children at home while they try to run their business. The realities of owning and operating a small business, whether at home or not, are very different than those dreams.

What exactly is a business mind-set?

The truth of the matter is that if you don't have a business mind-set there are many good reasons why your business can fail – and this may be the most critical one. One of the easiest ways to start being positive and believing in your business is to truly know who you are, what you do well and what your core values are. Your business will reflect this every day.

1. **Having a business mindset means knowing that the end result of having a business is to make money.** Sometimes your hobby is just a hobby. Either you're going to have a hobby that makes you a little extra money or you're going to have a business that requires a higher level of commitment in order to acquire a higher level of income.
2. **Having a business mindset means thinking for yourself vs. letting other people think for you.** Don't allow the experts to control your destiny or your dreams. Take some time to think, document, and research on your own.

Continued on page 19

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS ASSESSMENT

Researchers have studied the qualities of successful entrepreneurs extensively over the years with the hope that the knowledge gained could be used to reduce the number of business failures. Although it helps to have certain character traits, success depends both on who you are and on having a strong business idea. A perfect entrepreneur can't make a fundamentally flawed business work, and a perfect business won't go anywhere without the right person behind it.

This assessment is meant only to give you an idea of your strengths and weaknesses; your responses won't dictate whether you will succeed or fail.

Personal Characteristics Questions		Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1	I hate being in a position of having to do things; I prefer to act before I am forced to.	4	3	2	1
2	I keep looking for different things I can do.	4	3	2	1
3	If I am faced with a problem I try to solve it.	4	3	2	1
4	I find out for myself what I need to know.	4	3	2	1
5	When I am working on something I often check its quality to make sure it is good.	4	3	2	1
6	I treat family, friends and my own convenience as less important than getting a job done.	4	3	2	1
7	I like to find ways of doing things less expensively than before.	4	3	2	1
8	I think logically about what I am doing and what I am going to do.	4	3	2	1
9	If there are several choices, I think carefully about each one of them before taking action.	4	3	2	1
10	I believe I can overcome obstacles.	4	3	2	1
11	When someone disagrees with me, I try to deal with the disagreement instead of pretending it doesn't exist.	4	3	2	1
12	I am good at convincing people to buy things.	4	3	2	1
13	I learn useful facts from people "in the know".	4	3	2	1
14	If I see a problem coming, I do something about it now rather than waiting for it to happen.	4	3	2	1

HOW TO COMPLETE THE ASSESSMENT

On the following pages are 52 situational questions. Read each of the questions carefully and circle one of the numbers beside the statement, depending on whether or not you believe that you behave according to the statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Respond based on what you believe to be true for you.

- Always (4),
- Usually (3),
- Sometimes (2), or
- Never (1)

Personal Characteristics Questions		Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
15	I try to view my problems as opportunities.	4	3	2	1
16	My work is better than other people's.	4	3	2	1
17	When things are difficult, I find it very hard to give up.	4	3	2	1
18	When I am going to do something, I first ask questions to find out how to do it.	4	3	2	1
19	I am willing to work hard long hours to do what I said I would.	4	3	2	1
20	I try to minimize the time it takes to do things.	4	3	2	1
21	I try to foresee possible obstacles when I am making plans.	4	3	2	1
22	I find ways around problems that other people failed to find before.	4	3	2	1
23	I know I can do what I set out to do.	4	3	2	1
24	I try to confront differences of opinion openly, not to pretend they don't exist.	4	3	2	1
25	If I want somebody to do something, I can persuade them to do it.	4	3	2	1
26	I try to build networks of contacts in order to find out what I need to know.	4	3	2	1
27	I can see for myself what action needs to be taken; I do not depend on others to tell me.	4	3	2	1
28	When I run into obstacles, I see it as a chance to learn something new.	4	3	2	1
29	I do not ignore difficulties; I try to overcome them.	4	3	2	1
30	I make extensive, systematic inquiries about how to do things.	4	3	2	1
31	I want to produce the best product of its type.	4	3	2	1
32	I will do almost anything to finish a task on time.	4	3	2	1
33	I look for ways of working more quickly.	4	3	2	1

Personal Characteristics Questions		Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
34	I do not plan on the assumption that all will go well. I anticipate problems and I plan for them.	4	3	2	1
35	I find innovative solutions to problems.	4	3	2	1
36	When I start a task, I am confident I can complete it.	4	3	2	1
37	I do not like to ignore interpersonal problems. I would rather admit to them and try to solve them.	4	3	2	1
38	When I need people to do a task for me, I can get them to do it.	4	3	2	1
39	I try to develop friendships because they are a fundamental resource for success.	4	3	2	1
40	I do not like to wait until I must take action. I act before I have to.	4	3	2	1
41	If an opportunity arises, I act on it immediately.	4	3	2	1
42	If one solution doesn't work, I try to find another.	4	3	2	1
43	If a problem needs to be analyzed, I analyze it myself.	4	3	2	1
44	I want whatever I do to be of higher quality than anyone else's is.	4	3	2	1
45	If a job has to be completed, I am prepared to sacrifice my personal convenience in order to do it.	4	3	2	1
46	I try to reduce costs.	4	3	2	1
47	I try to plan how I will get over difficulties before I actually meet them.	4	3	2	1
48	I develop new ideas.	4	3	2	1
49	If I meet a challenge, I can overcome it.	4	3	2	1
50	If I am having a problem with somebody else, I like to face up to it openly with that person.	4	3	2	1
51	I can persuade people to do things for me.	4	3	2	1
52	I look at my friends as part of my strength for the future.	4	3	2	1

PERSONAL CHARACTER ASSESSMENT SUMMARY: HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF YOUR RESPONSES

To make sense of your responses transfer the numbers you have circled for each of the statements 1 to 52 into the appropriate space on this sheet and total each row. The highest total score for any category is sixteen (16) and the lowest total score is four (4).

Answer Values				Total	Category
1. ____	14. ____	27. ____	40. ____	= _____	Initiative
2. ____	15. ____	28. ____	41. ____	= _____	Sees and acts on opportunities
3. ____	16. ____	29. ____	42. ____	= _____	Persistence
4. ____	17. ____	30. ____	43. ____	= _____	Information seeking
5. ____	18. ____	31. ____	44. ____	= _____	Concern for high quality work
6. ____	19. ____	32. ____	45. ____	= _____	Commitment to work contract
7. ____	20. ____	33. ____	46. ____	= _____	Efficiency orientation
8. ____	21. ____	34. ____	47. ____	= _____	Systematic planning
9. ____	22. ____	35. ____	48. ____	= _____	Problem solving
10. ____	23. ____	36. ____	49. ____	= _____	Self-confidence
11. ____	24. ____	37. ____	50. ____	= _____	Assertiveness
12. ____	25. ____	38. ____	51. ____	= _____	Persuasion
13. ____	26. ____	39. ____	52. ____	= _____	Use of influence strategies

As you look through your scores, remember, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. This is a measurement of where your skill set is now. If some of your scores are low, don't despair; it is beneficial to identify the areas you need to work on, so you can build your skill base. If you have some low scores, you may consider taking courses or reading some books to build those skills. For example, if your self-confidence or assertive skills are low, you may want to enroll in a business communications or negotiation course.

Use this assessment as an opportunity to utilize your top skills and work on developing your weakest skills prior to setting out on your new business venture.

- 3. Having a business mindset means being more strategic about your business activity.** Don't just go to any networking event or take on any job; know what results you want before taking on a business activity. (e.g., do you know how much it really costs you to attend a training session or a networking event - money, family, time, babysitter, gas, etc.?) In order to recoup your investment, your reasons should align with your business goals and vision.
- 4. Having a business mindset is planning ahead so you can work towards getting there.**
- 5. Having a business mindset is about being able to take risks.** You might want to ask yourself; "What is my tolerance for risk?" Can you continue to be committed to the business knowing that the results may not be worth the risk?

Characteristics of successful women business owners

Successful women business owners share a number of characteristics. When you read Kalpana's story at the beginning of the chapter, you may remember how many of the characteristics below are also her characteristics!

- 1. Self Belief**
You have a firm belief that you are destined to succeed. Business is a game that thrives on uncertainty, so you need to believe in yourself and your business, even in the face of uncertainty.
- 2. Reach beyond your Comfort Zone**
Unless you reach beyond your safe harbor you will start to feel a sense of underachievement or stagnation. You may feel the fear of rejection, the fear of failure, the fear of needing to be more than you thought you were or simply the fear of the unknown. What could possibly keep you in your comfort zone?

It is easy to slip into self-defeating chatter and this can stop you from moving out of your comfort zone. Being self-employed isn't for the faint-hearted; it often means you simply have to take action and just DO IT.
- 3. Developing Your Personal Skills**
Can you reach your business potential with your current personal skills? Self-employment offers an opportunity to use your full range of skills (transferable skills included), to be creative, develop and showcase your strengths, and to continually grow. You can also tap into areas that you want to test or into ones you never even dreamed you had. Stretching yourself will bring a feeling of being stimulated, fulfilled, appreciated and vital.
- 4. Creative Problem Solving**
Women are great problem-solvers. Owning a business offers challenge and the need for ongoing, creative problem-solving. It can be scary, but it can also be exhilarating and tremendously gratifying. Challenges become rewarding when the solutions you find profit your business and you learn something in the process.

PEAKS AND VALLEYS

If you learn to recognize your highs and lows, you can use the highs as motivators to keep the lows from dragging you down.

Excitement is built on:

- doing what you love
- the chance to create something new
- making your own rules
- taking a new path
- doing something for yourself

Fear comes from:

- realizing the immensity of what you've begun
- results coming slower than expected
- being confronted with unanticipated challenges
- wondering if you're doing it all "right"
- doubt that you can actually pull it off
- moving outside your comfort zone

Creating work life balance

Having your own business can give you the flexibility to be available for your kids (or parents) when you need to be. However your business will, at times, demand your undivided attention. There's a fine line you walk between balancing the demands of home and work.

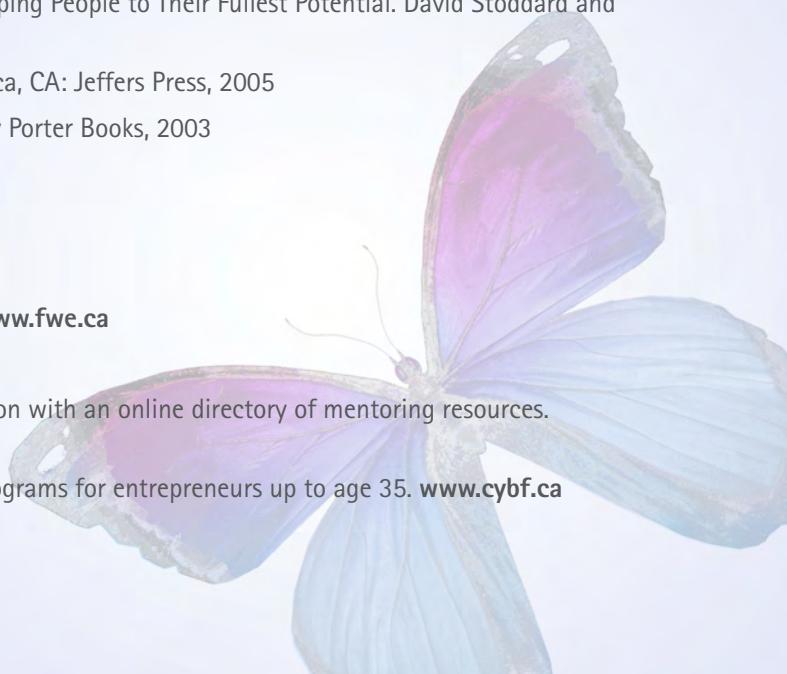
- Build downtime into your schedule. When you plan your week, make it a point to schedule time with your family and friends, and activities that help you recharge.
- Drop activities that sap your time or energy. Take stock of activities that don't enhance your business or personal life, and minimize the time you spend on them.
- Rethink your errands. Consider whether you can outsource any of your time-consuming household chores or errands. Even if you are on a tight budget, you may discover that the time you'll save will make it worthwhile.
- Get moving. It's hard to make time for exercise when you have a jam-packed schedule, but exercise may ultimately help you get more done by boosting your energy level and your ability to concentrate.
- Remember that a little relaxation goes a long way. You don't need to make big changes to your life to bring more balance. Find the little things that help you relax: a cup of tea, a walk outdoors, listening to your favorite song. Relaxing will help you restore balance to your life.

RESOURCES

- Creative Visualization: Use the Power of Your Imagination to Create What You Want in Your Life. Shakti Gawain. San Rafael, CA: New World Library, 2002
- How to Run Your Business Like a Girl: Successful Strategies from Entrepreneurial Women Who Made It Happen. Elizabeth Cogswell Baskin. Adams Media Corporation, 2005
- The Entrepreneurial Parent: How to Earn Your Living from Home and Still Enjoy Your Family, Your Work, and Your Life. Paul and Sarah Edwards and Lisa M. Roberts. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2002
- The Heart of Mentoring: Ten Proven Principles for Developing People to Their Fullest Potential. David Stoddard and Robert J. Tamasay. Navress, 2003
- The Little Book of Confidence. Susan Jeffers. Santa Monica, CA: Jeffers Press, 2005
- The Little Book of Stress Relief. David Posen. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2003
- Visioning. Lucia Capacchione. Tarcher, 2002

Mentoring Resources:

- Forum for Women Entrepreneurs. Mentoring Program. www.fwe.ca
- Get a Mentor/Be a Mentor. www.womensenterprise.ca
- Peer Resources. Online non-profit educational organization with an online directory of mentoring resources. www.peer.ca/mentor.html
- Canadian Youth Business Foundation. Peer mentoring programs for entrepreneurs up to age 35. www.cybf.ca



WHO CAN HELP?

Katy Suik started her Prince George based coaching business, that aligns who you are with who you could be, through personal transformation and empowerment. She soon realized that feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed could make self-employment a challenge and decided to look for a mentor.

"Like many mothers in business, I struggled to get KMS Life Coaching off the ground with so many other commitments and such little time. I needed guidance, emotional support, tips/ advice and, most of all, I needed to see that I was NOT alone.

Mentorship was exactly what I needed and the experience remains with me. Working with a Women's Enterprise Centre mentor

has been a game changer. My mentor is an extraordinary woman of tremendous leadership and passion. She has identified the deep passion within me and continues to inspire me as I pursue this path. Even in the difficult moments, I can keep moving forward knowing that I have such incredible support. My mentor believes so strongly in me - even when I fail to believe in myself."

Katy firmly believes that a mentor's experience and help is a major factor in a woman's entrepreneurial success. "My mentor's professional experience is paramount to my business development but it is her caring demeanor and willingness to be there for me that truly makes her remarkable."



Katy Suik
KMS LIFE COACHING LTD
Prince George
katysuik.com

Don't ride alone: find a mentor

Feelings of isolation often make self-employment challenging, especially if you are used to the bustle of people in your workplace. Your family and friends, however sympathetic, may not understand what you're going through if they are not entrepreneurs themselves.

Someone who can relate directly to your experience is more likely to offer useful input on running a business. Many women business owners say that having a mentor or belonging to a peer mentoring group are the best resources a fledgling entrepreneur can have.

How does mentoring work?

Whether you work with an individual or as a member of a peer mentoring group, your mentors are there to share their knowledge when it comes to creating business strategies, marketing, useful contacts, hiring; anything that might help you to run your business more efficiently and avoid common pitfalls.

Mentors who work one-on-one with you volunteer their time so they can share their experience(s); you may find them in similar businesses within the same market or in the same business serving a different market. Perhaps you'll have access to a retired entrepreneur or business expert.

“
Mentorship
was exactly what I
needed and the
experience remains
with me...
”

SUPPORT OPTIONS

- *One-to-one mentors* act as teachers, giving you advice and asking questions so that you make informed decisions.
- *Peer mentoring groups* made up of fellow entrepreneurs and a facilitator allow you to share advice and resources and help defeat those feelings of isolation.
- *Business coaches* and advisors can provide specific advice on issues from registering your business to staying motivated. Business coaches in private practice charge a fee; you might want to try a business association first.
- *Personal counsellors* can help you with issues of fear and doubt; their services are also available for a fee. They can provide important emotional support if your budget allows.
- *Networking groups* don't involve direct counselling but can provide a forum of support and feedback. Many different groups exist; try to attend as a guest to find one that fits.

If you feel you need help, be open about it - you may be surprised at the results.

In peer mentoring groups, entrepreneurs working at the same level as you along with a qualified facilitator, discuss their own experiences and everyone learns from each other. The benefits can be timely, practical advice from others who are going through the same or similar situations; empowerment for you when you are able to help in turn; and the enjoyment of meeting with other women who may well become friends and allies.

Keep in mind that there are many different business service providers that offering mentoring resources. Women's Enterprise Centre offers both Peer Mentoring and One-to-One Mentoring. Also check out your local Women in Business Network, Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDC), the Chamber of Commerce, Small Business BC or Business Development Bank of Canada for other possible referrals.

Creating balance

Taking the first steps in your business can give you an incredible rush. This is the life! On the other hand, you're still learning, so doubts about decisions you've made or your ability to do the work can cause you to panic. What was I thinking may come to mind often! The trick is to remember that you are in charge and to devise strategies to help yourself stay level.

As head of your own business, you will need to create balance for your #1 employee—you. Both sides of your life will pull at you—your family and friends when work encroaches into their time and your business when personal demands prevent you from focusing there. Here are some ideas for finding balance:

- Set up a business-like working environment: if you're working from home, create a separate office for yourself; if you share the computer with the family, invest in another one that is just for work; get call display on your phone so you can screen for important calls (and screen out personal calls); and establish a "signal" that advises others you are working.
- If you have young children, plan for daycare. You'll need time to work on your business without your children being in the same space.
- Set boundaries. Explain the rules concerning your work time and environment to friends, family, and clients—be firm when you need to be.
- Be firm with yourself as well. If you have been the primary homemaker, plan to do housework at specific times outside your business hours.
- If working at home is too much of a distraction, explore the possibility of working in another location. If budget is a concern, maybe a shared space is right for you.
- Practice time management techniques. You cannot work 24/7, and neither you, nor your clients, should expect it. Learn to prioritize both the work you need to do and your family/personal commitments.
- Get help if you need it. As your business becomes established and you are surer of your finances, consider which tasks you can delegate to others, including hiring an accountant, office assistant, or house cleaner!

ARE YOU READY?

Peggy Thompson, Okanagan Poultry Processing, found a steady demand for her business in her niche market. Rural and semi-rural farmers in the Okanagan Valley with small backyard flocks of chickens and turkeys needed help to process their livestock in a safe and humane manner.

With a Women's Enterprise Centre start-up loan Peggy was able to launch her business. She ran a mobile processing facility that visited the farmyard and provided custom on-site processing of non-industry raised chicken and turkey.

As her business grew, she transitioned from being a "mobile" processor to a fixed business location. Customers now bring their birds to her business to process.

Before starting her business, Peggy took stock of her own strengths and

weaknesses. "Being exceedingly stubborn certainly has helped me get where I am today. I had to have the ability to think outside the box. I negotiated my ideas with people who had the power to make a difference and allow me to start something new."

Peggy realized that she needed to build a team to carry out her ideas. "I can't do it all by myself, the hardest thing I had to deal with is that I needed help, and to learn to rely on others to help me get this happening."

Trust in her own business skills and creativity helped Peggy become a confident entrepreneur. "I'm much stronger than I thought. Funny thing is, none of my friends are surprised at what I've been able to accomplish. I guess they knew what I could do all along. I'm glad I know it now too."



Peggy Thompson
OKANAGAN POULTRY
PROCESSING
Kelowna
okpoultryprocessing.com

First: Take inventory of yourself

Just like Peggy, the very first inventory you need to take is of yourself. Be honest, clear, and practical; envision yourself at the helm of your business and get ready to answer these questions in detail:

- Do I have the personal characteristics to be an entrepreneur?
- What if I don't have all the skills I need to run my business?

The first step that may help you do a more in-depth exploration of how suited you are to being in business is to complete the **Personal Characteristics Assessment** in the middle of this guide. The results from that exercise will show you your strengths and weaknesses commonly attributed to entrepreneurs. Spend some time focusing on your strengths.

Common Concerns

If you feel panicky after doing some self-reflection or examining your business skills, don't be alarmed. This is an excellent time to question your capabilities. Your fears will make you look more closely at what you need to do, not just what you want to do. You'll have an easier time if you are realistic. As an entrepreneur, you'll have to commit to doing some hard but satisfying work. Confidence can help, but it should be informed confidence.

“
Being exceedingly
stubborn
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”

WHAT IS A LEARNING CURVE?

A learning curve is a graph that shows the progress you make in learning a skill against the time it takes you to do so.

The more often you perform a task, the less time it will take you on each subsequent repetition—and the less stressful it becomes!

Let's look at some common concerns:

- **You have a great business concept but feel that you aren't the one to bring it to life. You may not feel capable but you really want to start your own business and can't drop the idea.**

This kind of conflict can stop you from taking any steps forward. What do you need to feel capable? If you decide that you have a personal weakness (e.g. you're disorganized or are scared of numbers or networking), take one initial step that will boost your confidence. What suits you? The information and support provided by Women's Enterprise Centre's Creating Your Business Plan Workbook may help you feel more capable and prepared.

- **You haven't yet taken a hard look at your dream business because you're afraid it won't hold up. What if your vision has to change or won't work at all?**

Sometimes we're afraid to take something apart in case we can't get it back together again. But finding one or more aspects of your business that might not work means you have a chance to make positive adjustments at the drawing board. Trust in your own creativity and problem-solving skills. Talk to someone close to you to get their reaction - and don't be afraid of their suggestions.

- **Maybe you feel you aren't really the entrepreneur 'type' or that you'll seem foolish to others who have more experience.**

Remember that many successful entrepreneurs felt this same way early on. It may help you to know that at almost every event Women's Enterprise Centre has hosted, a successful woman entrepreneur has said she feels like an "impostor" - even though she was already successful in her business. So you're definitely not alone in feeling the fear and wanting to do it anyway!

- **This is too much like work!**

Well, yes. You will need to learn and develop skills and put them to work. If you have chosen a business that is well-suited to you, the rewards you are hoping for will be there as well.

Are you a born entrepreneur?

Some of us are, but many aren't. Our communities are full of entrepreneurs who are made, not born—people who love what they do, have confidence in their own ideas and enjoy calling the shots.

But aren't we talking about personalities? To some extent, yes. Know yourself; both your strengths and your weaknesses. Improving your skills, handling day to day challenges and personal growth are rewards that keep self-employment interesting and exciting.

Here is a brief list of entrepreneurial strengths:

- **Independent self-starter:** You don't like working for others; you are self-motivated and you like to make your own decisions.
- **Hard worker:** You are willing to put in long hours to get where you want to go.
- **Achiever:** You are driven to do well.
- **Problem-solver:** You can handle, and enjoy tackling, a range of challenges.
- **Risk-bearer:** This doesn't mean that you will bet the bank; more that you will take calculated risks and are comfortable with some degree of uncertainty.
- **People person:** You don't have to be an extrovert, but you will need to maintain good relationships with many different people: suppliers, employees, clients, partners, and/or lenders.

If you have significant others, from spouses to children, you will also need to consider how your business will affect them. You can have all the right traits to succeed but you won't get out the door if your family is not on board.

Keeping yourself motivated

It can be hard to stay motivated during transition, even when you know you're heading in the right direction. As you start your business you will make mistakes. There will be times when you can't see much progress, are worried about finances, or you and/or your support team wavers, thinking it might be easier for you to just go out and get a job.

What can you do to stay motivated?

- Everyone has bad days. Even at relatively stable times you may want to hide out in bed. Find the real source of what's troubling you and then work through it. Keeping a journal can help.
- It's easy to temporarily lose motivation, especially when you're working alone. Talking with a mentor or a member of your support group may be all you need to do to feel positive again.
- Know and remember what is important to you in having your own business. For some, the thought of going back to the way things were can be reason enough to push forward. Build your motivators into your business and stay true to them.
- Create a mission statement for your business or just for this period of transition. Write why you are here, where you are going, and how you will accomplish what you've set out to do.
- No matter how you got to this place, you can create success by building what you are passionate about into your business. If you don't do this, if your commitment is half-hearted, it will affect how secure you feel in your decision and your ability to move forward.

NURTURE YOURSELF NOW

As an entrepreneur, you will be dealing with:

- uncertainty
- changes to your routine and finances
- long hours
- learning many new skills

When you consider your personality traits, make sure you also look at how well you deal with stress.

Learn what you need to energize yourself, and make that a vital part of your plans.

TRUST YOUR PASSION

What's your main motivator? If you want to be in business, you will need the passion that keeps you learning—to become expert at what you provide, to run your business and to make good decisions.

This is an ongoing process; it won't come all at once, but it will become more and more rewarding.

Second: Make sure you have the business basics

There are some skills you may need to work on, depending on your previous experience.

What about business skills?

It is important to prepare for this job – after all, it's all yours, not someone else's. Even a self-employed, working-at-home sole proprietor should have basic bookkeeping skills, know how to market her business, and understand income tax requirements.

What do you know about cash flow management, marketing, regulations that might affect your business, or how to apply for a loan?

Don't panic if your answer is 'nothing!' If you don't have a background in business some of this will feel very intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. You don't need to be an accountant to understand your financial statements; this is just a skill that you don't have yet. And, since this is your business we're talking about, you may find acquiring the skills you need both fascinating and empowering.

One way to begin is to:

- Make a list of the skills you are lacking and absolutely must have to start
- Find out how you can obtain them
- Create a learning schedule that fits your life and learning style

Fortunately, many different resources exist to help you, from self-help books and online courses to training from community education centres, colleges and business resource centres like Women's Enterprise Centre and Small Business BC. Once you know what you need you can go out and find the best resources to help you.

What are your transferable skills?

You may have been a sales person and now you want to start a business doing specialty paint treatments for walls. Or a stay-at-home mom who volunteered on the school's Parents Advisory Council and now wants to start a grocery delivery service for seniors. What skills do you bring to your new business?

A former sales person knows all about how to communicate clearly with her customers. After years of fundraising, the PAC mom knows how to set goals and organize people. Both are probably superb at multi-tasking.

You may, for example, already have a great deal of experience in active listening, building relationships, scheduling or negotiating. Revisit your résumé and review your day-to-day activities. You'll likely find that you have transferable skills you can use right away.

Skills development and the learning curve

We talked about creating a learning schedule for obtaining business skills. You simply won't know everything at the beginning and you shouldn't expect to. Patience, curiosity and an upbeat attitude will go a long way to getting you where you want to go.

These are some suggestions that may assist you in planning your next steps:

- Accept that excelling at anything requires practice. Most people can't ski down a ski hill the first time they go up a mountain. Create learning milestones and build in a reward when you reach them.
- The only way to improve at something is to make mistakes and learn from them. You are better off to slip-up, recognize the lesson and make positive adjustments so that it becomes a learning opportunity.
- Try to address the 'red flags' before they happen. For instance, you find that an extra set of hands are needed to grow your business so you hire your family or friends. Typically, your family and friends don't have the skills, experience or dedication you need to really grow your business and if and when it doesn't work out—it can harm and/or ruin the relationships.
- A business plan can help you to identify the areas where you need learning, forcing you to consider potentially unfamiliar concepts such as marketing, positioning, pricing, and cash flow. Writing your own business plan opens your eyes and lets you take responsibility. Approach it step-by-step, give yourself time to complete it, and get critical support from advisors and mentors. The key to a strong business plan is to back it up with your research and document the details of how you are going to implement your business concept!

INERTIA, (NOUN).

"The resistance an object has to a change in its state of motion."

Newton's first law of motion applies to people as well. A moving object tends to keep on moving. One at rest will stay at rest, unless some external force is exerted.

Action is power. One step is all it takes....

RESOURCES

- Creating Your Business Plan Workbook Women's Enterprise Centre, 2013. Available at wec.ca/CreatingYourBusinessPlan
- Raising Your Business: A Canadian Woman's Guide to Entrepreneurship. Joanne Thomas Yaccato with Paula Jubinville. Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall Canada, 1998
- Smart Women: Canadian Entrepreneurs Who Make Money. Barbara L. Thrasher. CDG Books Canada, 2000
- Starting Your Business: A Guide to Resources for BC Women. Women's Enterprise Centre, 2004. Available at www.womensenterprise.ca/resources
- The E-Myth Revisited. Michael Gerber. New York: HarperBusiness, 1995. See www.e-myth.com for additional resources
- The Martha Rules: 10 Essentials For Achieving Success As You Start, Build Or Manage A Business. Martha Stewart. Rodale, 2005
- The Seed Handbook. Lynne Franks. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2000. See www.lynnefranks.co.uk



TAKING THE LEAP



Shelly Plaxton
DRAUGHT WISE
Victoria
draughtwise.com

Becoming an entrepreneur was a major lifestyle choice that Shelly Plaxton made when she decided to be her own boss.

Her deep interest in the wine and beer industry led her to the Okanagan in 1997. In 2000 when she moved to Victoria and started working as a bar manager in Victoria, she found her market niche. She noticed that poor maintenance of some of the beer dispensing systems was reflecting poorly on the craft breweries products. She started Draught WISE to provide draught line services, gas delivery, refrigeration and temperature advice to her clients.

"I realized that the high craftsmanship of beer was not being represented properly. This is when I saw an opportunity to start researching my business idea." She is now looking into franchising her business model.

When Shelly approached Women's Enterprise Centre to secure financing for expanding her business, WEC provided her with a loan for business growth.

Entrepreneurship can be a roller coaster ride. Shelly has made sure she takes time for her personal growth so that she can remain fully invested in her business. "It has been tough at times but it is a very rewarding experience. I am always learning and teaching myself, whether it is computer programs or lessons from my field experiences."

Shelly learned that running a business takes a lot of work and tenacity. "I have learned to believe in myself, take charge and always put my best foot forward. With the help and support of my husband, I have grown a successful company."

“
It has been tough at times but it is a very rewarding experience. I have learned to believe in myself, take charge and always put my best foot forward.
”

Define your next steps: from thinking to action

Taking the leap into entrepreneurship is a major life change; it's not just planning the business – it is planning your life too.

The following are some considerations that may assist you in preparing to take the leap.

- First of all, like Shelly, believe in yourself... especially if you've done enough work to know both you and your business are ready. The more you believe in you, the more others will believe in you and what you are doing.
- Begin by creating support for yourself and your business concept:
- If you are married or living with a partner, take the time to discuss your business idea in detail. You may be surprised how easy it is for your partner to say 'just go for it!'
- Talk it through with someone whom you respect. Choose someone with a positive, can-do attitude who will ask helpful questions and give you real feedback.
- Talk to other entrepreneurs and role models. If you don't know any personally, consider asking a business owner you admire for an information interview. People generally are very willing to give advice.
- Read books by or about successful women entrepreneurs.

- Create your business from your core values; the values you believe in will secure the foundation on how you perform and conduct yourself in your business.
- Define your vision and how you will make it come alive.
- Use resources especially designed for someone in your position such as the Creating Your Business Plan Workbook available through Women's Enterprise Centre.

Look before you leap

You can make the leap to self-employment less risky by packing yourself a parachute. Consider the following strategies for managing risk:

- If you are currently employed, save money before you quit. Realistically estimate the amount of time it will take to get your business up and earning money and try to put aside enough cash to cover this timeframe. This might mean enough money to support yourself for the next year or even longer. You may still need financing for start-up. Talk to a Women's Enterprise Centre business advisor about your options.
- Consider starting your business part-time, allowing for a continued source of income from your employment while you do the groundwork before and during start up. Alternatively, if you can, use paid leave or a sabbatical to research, prepare, and start your business.
- If you are receiving employment insurance or social assistance, consider a Self-Employment Program that will allow you to continue collecting benefits. Different programs have different rules; check with program advisors to determine if you are eligible.
- Take courses to develop your business skills. Many colleges and business organizations have courses available for reasonable fees.
- Build and expand your network in advance. As you plan your business, consider the people who could actively help you move forward and think of ways to connect.
- Recruit your support team early. Contact business organizations such as Women's Enterprise Centre, your local Community Futures office, and/or Small Business BC to explore their services. Find out who is available to help you.

Lifestyle choice: getting to YES!

Taking Care of Yourself

This should go without saying, but try not to let your personal needs drop off your list of priorities. If you're going to deal well with the emotional upheaval of transition, you'll need to put aside some quality time just for you. If you occasionally feel overwhelmed by doubt, create a method for dealing with this. Acknowledge your misgivings and determine whether they are reasonable. Create plans to address them. Your support team are good people to turn to when you're feeling overwhelmed by doubt.

Be Careful

There is ALWAYS something else to do in your business so remember to 'close the door' and avoid spending all your waking moments on your business! Procrastination and distractions can end your hopes and expectations of a successful business. Do what you say you will and keep your vision and focus on your business.

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?



Minna Van
THE NETWORK HUB
Vancouver
thenetworkhub.ca

Minna Van and a group of college friends started a web development business so they could put into practice the theories they were learning in the classroom. Being students on a budget, they ran the business from their bedrooms, held client meetings in coffee shops, and received their business mail through a rented P.O. box.

Eventually, the challenges of running a business this way became more and more evident. Their clients would voice their discomfort in holding meetings in cafes. "I struggled to be heard over the espresso machines and trying to make a professional presentation while balancing my laptop on a tiny coffee table."

"As a small business just starting out, we knew that we were not alone in dealing with such challenges and we felt that there had to be a better alternative to address the problems that we were facing. This was our main motivation when we took the leap to launch The Network Hub."

"We made sure we were mindful of what a small business person just starting out would need, and would be able to afford in order to put them on solid ground, to launch their company to that next level."

Keen to help other entrepreneurs, Minna is now volunteering as a mentor with Women's Enterprise Centre.

Taking the leap to entrepreneurship!

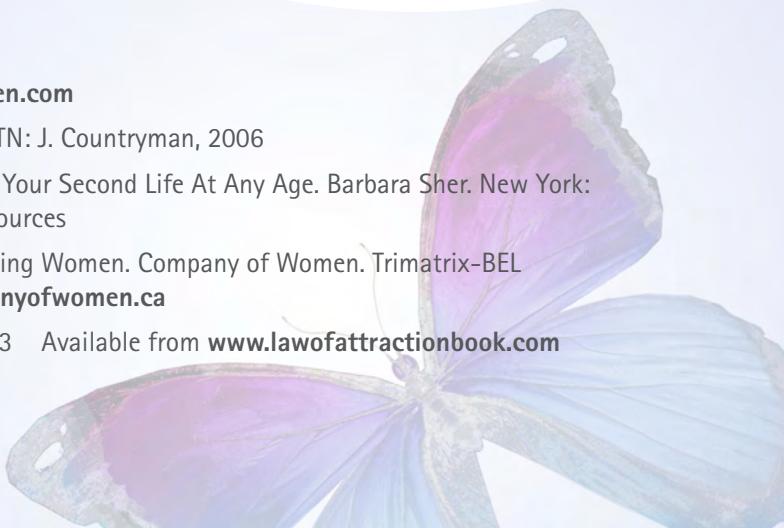
You are poised on the brink. When your desire to be self-employed is strong, you've done your homework, and you've received good advice and encouragement to back you up, there's nothing really holding you back. No matter what the reason you're exploring self-employment, many of us decide that we'd rather try being our own boss and risk failure than look back and regret not having tried at all.

Self-employment isn't for everyone, but the rewards can be huge if you prepare well and are clear about what you want and why you want it. It may be unsettling at first, but that sense of being adrift will subside as you move forward, gather what you need, build your support system, develop new skills and bring what you envision to life.

And remember, Women's Enterprise Centre is here to help!

RESOURCES

- Canadian Women's Business Network. www.cdnbizwomen.com
- Dare to Dream....Then Do It. John C. Maxwell. Nashville, TN: J. Countryman, 2006
- It's Only Too Late If You Don't Start Now: How to Create Your Second Life At Any Age. Barbara Sher. New York: Dell, 1998. See www.barbarasher.com for additional resources
- The Courage to Succeed: Inspiring Stories From Enterprising Women. Company of Women. Trimatrix-BEL Learning Publications, 2005. Available from www.companyofwomen.ca
- The Law of Attraction. Michael J. Losier. Victoria, BC 2003 Available from www.lawofattractionbook.com



TAKING THE LEAP TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A guide to help BC women make the transition

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After considering all the information in this guide, if you think you've got what it takes to be an entrepreneur, Congratulations! The next steps are to research your idea and write your business plan. To help get you going, check out our "Creating Your Business Plan" workbook and other workbooks and resources available through our online library at www.womensenterprise.ca/resourcelibrary



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wec.ca/TakingTheLeap