

start up catering business plan

Start Up Catering Business Plan: Your Guide to Launching a Successful Catering Venture

start up catering business plan is the foundation that can transform your passion for food into a thriving enterprise. Whether you're dreaming of catering elegant weddings, corporate events, or casual parties, having a well-thought-out plan is essential. This plan not only guides your initial steps but also helps you navigate challenges and scale your business effectively over time. In this article, we'll walk through the key components of a start up catering business plan, sharing practical tips and insights to set you on the right path.

Understanding the Basics of a Start Up Catering Business Plan

Starting a catering business involves more than just cooking delicious meals. It requires strategic planning, market research, financial management, and operational logistics. A start up catering business plan acts as a roadmap, outlining your business goals, target audience, services, and financial projections. It's a document that can also attract investors or secure loans, so clarity and detail are crucial.

Why a Business Plan is Crucial for Catering Startups

Many entrepreneurs underestimate the importance of a business plan, jumping straight into the kitchen without a clear strategy. However, a comprehensive plan helps you:

- Identify your niche and target market
- Understand your competition
- Forecast expenses and revenues
- Set realistic goals and milestones
- Develop marketing and sales strategies
- Plan for growth and potential challenges

In essence, it minimizes risks and maximizes your chances of success.

Key Components of a Start Up Catering Business Plan

Every start up catering business plan should address several core areas. Let's break down what each section entails.

1. Executive Summary

Although it appears at the beginning, the executive summary is often written last. It provides a snapshot of your catering business, including the mission statement, the services you offer, your business model, and a brief overview of financial projections. This section should capture the reader's interest and convey what makes your catering service unique.

2. Company Description

Here, you explain what your catering business does and what sets it apart. Are you specializing in vegan cuisine, ethnic foods, or gourmet meals? Will you cater small gatherings or large-scale events? This section also outlines your business structure—whether it's a sole proprietorship, partnership, or LLC—and provides details on your location and facilities.

3. Market Analysis

Understanding your market is critical. This part involves researching your target customers, such as corporate clients, wedding planners, or private party hosts. Analyze trends in the catering industry, including popular menu types and customer preferences. Investigate competitors in your area to identify gaps you can fill or advantages you have.

4. Organization and Management

Detail your team structure, including key roles and responsibilities. For a startup, this might be just you initially, but it's wise to outline plans for hiring chefs, servers, or marketing personnel. If you have business partners or advisors, this section highlights their expertise and contributions.

5. Service Line or Menu

Describe your catering offerings in detail. This includes sample menus, pricing strategies, and any customizable options you provide. Emphasize what makes your food appealing—whether it's locally sourced ingredients, unique recipes, or dietary accommodations like gluten-free or paleo options.

6. Marketing and Sales Strategy

How will you attract and retain customers? This section outlines your marketing channels—social media, local advertising, partnerships with event venues—and your sales

approach, such as direct outreach or online booking. Include plans for building a brand presence and leveraging customer testimonials.

7. Funding Request and Financial Projections

If you're seeking funding, specify the amount needed and how it will be used, whether for kitchen equipment, marketing, or staffing. Provide detailed financial forecasts, including profit and loss statements, cash flow projections, and break-even analysis. These figures demonstrate that you understand your business's economics and have realistic expectations.

8. Appendix

Include any supporting documents such as menus, permits, contracts, or supplier agreements. This section can reinforce your professionalism and preparedness.

Tips for Crafting a Winning Start Up Catering Business Plan

Creating a business plan might seem daunting, but keeping certain tips in mind can make the process smoother and more effective.

Focus on Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

What makes your catering service stand out? Highlight your USP clearly in your plan. It could be exceptional customer service, specialized cuisines, or eco-friendly practices. Your USP will be central to your branding and marketing efforts.

Research Local Regulations and Licensing

The food industry is heavily regulated. Make sure your plan includes compliance with health codes, food safety certifications, and any necessary permits. Understanding these requirements upfront saves headaches down the line.

Create Realistic Financial Projections

Avoid overly optimistic revenue estimates. Base your projections on market research and competitive pricing. Consider all costs, including food supplies, labor, transportation, insurance, and marketing expenses.

Plan for Seasonality and Demand Fluctuations

Catering demand can vary by season, holidays, or local events. Your plan should address how you'll manage slow periods and capitalize on peak times, perhaps through promotions or diversified services.

Leverage Technology

Incorporate plans for using technology to streamline operations. This could be online ordering systems, accounting software, or customer relationship management (CRM) tools. Technology can improve efficiency and customer experience.

Marketing Strategies Tailored for a Start Up Catering Business

Marketing is a vital part of your start up catering business plan because it drives customer acquisition and growth. Here are some effective approaches:

- **Build a Professional Website:** Showcase your menu, services, testimonials, and contact information. Include high-quality photos and an easy booking system.
- **Utilize Social Media:** Platforms like Instagram and Facebook are ideal for sharing mouth-watering images, behind-the-scenes videos, and client feedback.
- **Network with Event Planners and Venues:** Establish partnerships that can lead to referrals and exclusive catering contracts.
- **Offer Tastings and Promotions:** Hosting tasting events can attract new clients and allow them to experience your offerings firsthand.
- **Collect and Display Reviews:** Positive customer reviews build trust and encourage repeat business.

Operational Considerations for Your Catering Startup

Beyond planning and marketing, daily operational efficiency is key to a successful catering business.

Choosing the Right Location

Your kitchen setup can range from a home kitchen (where legal) to a rented commercial kitchen space. Consider proximity to suppliers and your target market to reduce delivery times and costs.

Managing Inventory and Suppliers

Reliable suppliers and proper inventory management ensure you have fresh ingredients when needed without overspending. Establish relationships with vendors who can provide quality products consistently.

Staffing and Training

Even if you start solo, hiring skilled staff becomes essential as you grow. Training ensures consistent food quality and excellent customer service.

Transportation and Equipment

Invest in appropriate vehicles and catering equipment to handle food safely and efficiently. Insulated containers, portable cooking stations, and serving utensils are critical components.

Scaling Your Catering Business Over Time

A start up catering business plan should not only address the launch phase but also long-term growth.

As your reputation and client base expand, consider diversifying your services. This might include corporate meal plans, cooking classes, or specialty catering like holiday-themed menus. Monitor customer feedback and industry trends to adapt your offerings.

Expanding your marketing efforts, investing in better equipment, and hiring experienced staff will support growth. Additionally, explore catering software solutions to manage bookings, payments, and schedules more effectively.

Crafting a start up catering business plan is an exciting step toward turning your culinary dreams into reality. With thoughtful research, clear objectives, and strategic marketing, your catering business can carve out a niche in a competitive market and delight clients with memorable dining experiences.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key components of a startup catering business plan?

A startup catering business plan should include an executive summary, company description, market analysis, organization and management structure, service offerings, marketing and sales strategies, funding request, financial projections, and an appendix.

How do I conduct market research for a catering business plan?

Conduct market research by analyzing local demographics, identifying target customers, studying competitors, understanding industry trends, and gathering feedback through surveys or interviews to determine demand and pricing.

What should I include in the financial projections section of my catering business plan?

Include projected income statements, cash flow statements, balance sheets, break-even analysis, and assumptions about sales volume, pricing, costs of goods sold, operating expenses, and capital expenditures.

How can I define my target market in a catering business plan?

Identify specific customer segments such as corporate clients, weddings, parties, or special events, considering factors like location, budget, preferences, and event types to tailor your services effectively.

What marketing strategies are effective for a startup catering business?

Effective marketing strategies include building a professional website, utilizing social media platforms, networking with event planners and venues, offering promotions or tastings, and leveraging customer testimonials and referrals.

How important is a competitive analysis in a catering business plan?

Competitive analysis is crucial as it helps identify your competitors' strengths and weaknesses, market positioning, pricing strategies, and gaps you can exploit to differentiate your services and attract customers.

What legal considerations should be addressed in a catering business plan?

Address obtaining necessary permits and licenses, food safety regulations, insurance requirements, health inspections, and compliance with local, state, and federal laws related to food service and business operations.

How do I estimate startup costs for a catering business?

Estimate startup costs by listing expenses such as kitchen equipment, vehicles, initial inventory, licenses, insurance, marketing, staff salaries, and rent or facility costs, ensuring to include a buffer for unexpected expenses.

What role does a SWOT analysis play in a catering business plan?

A SWOT analysis identifies your business's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, helping you develop strategies to leverage advantages, address challenges, capitalize on market opportunities, and mitigate risks.

Additional Resources

Start Up Catering Business Plan: Navigating the Roadmap to Culinary Entrepreneurship

start up catering business plan serves as the foundational blueprint for aspiring entrepreneurs aiming to break into the dynamic food service industry. Crafting a strategic and well-researched plan is critical to transforming culinary passion into a profitable venture. Beyond simply outlining the menu or service style, a start up catering business plan encompasses market analysis, financial projections, operational logistics, and marketing strategies that collectively define the trajectory of the business.

In a highly competitive market that includes everything from boutique event caterers to large-scale corporate providers, a comprehensive business plan not only identifies unique selling propositions but also anticipates challenges and opportunities. This article delves into the essential components of an effective catering business plan, explores industry trends, and highlights key considerations to maximize success potential.

Understanding the Importance of a Catering Business Plan

A start up catering business plan acts as both a roadmap and a communication tool. Internally, it guides owners through critical decisions such as menu design, staffing requirements, and equipment investments. Externally, it functions as a persuasive document to attract investors, secure loans, or establish partnerships.

Without a clear plan, many catering startups face operational inefficiencies, budget overruns, and marketing missteps. The catering industry is unique in that success depends heavily on reputation, reliability, and the ability to deliver consistent quality under varying conditions. Therefore, anticipating logistical challenges—such as food safety regulations, venue coordination, and supply chain management—is crucial.

Market Analysis and Target Audience Identification

A core section of any start up catering business plan is the market analysis. This involves researching the local demand for catering services, competition landscape, and consumer preferences. For example, urban areas with a dense corporate presence may favor office lunch catering or event-specific services, while suburban regions might offer more opportunities in private celebrations such as weddings or birthdays.

Key factors to address include:

- **Competitor profiling:** Understanding who the competitors are, their pricing, service scope, and customer reviews.
- **Customer segmentation:** Identifying target demographics based on age, income level, and event preferences.
- **Market trends:** Incorporating popular food trends such as organic menus, dietary accommodations, or ethnic cuisines.

Accurate market insight shapes the menu offerings and marketing approach. For instance, a start up catering business plan focused on vegan or gluten-free menus can tap into a growing niche, potentially commanding premium pricing.

Financial Projections and Funding Strategies

Financial planning is often the most scrutinized aspect of a start up catering business plan. Entrepreneurs must outline startup costs, ongoing operational expenses, revenue forecasts, and break-even analysis. Typical startup expenses include commercial kitchen rental or purchase, licenses, equipment, initial inventory, and marketing campaigns.

Revenue streams can be diverse: event catering, corporate contracts, meal delivery services, or partnerships with venues. Projecting cash flow accurately involves considering seasonal fluctuations—wedding season versus corporate quarters—and potential cancellations.

Funding options range from personal savings and bank loans to angel investors or crowdfunding platforms. A detailed financial plan with realistic assumptions increases credibility and investor confidence. Moreover, contingency plans for unexpected costs or lower-than-expected sales demonstrate business acumen.

Operational Planning: From Kitchen to Client

Operational planning within the catering business plan addresses how the company delivers its service efficiently and safely. This includes sourcing ingredients, hiring skilled staff, managing food preparation, and orchestrating event logistics.

Menu Development and Food Safety Compliance

Menu development is both a creative and strategic task. The menu should reflect the brand identity, cater to target customers' tastes, and maintain operational feasibility. For example, offering dishes that require similar ingredients can streamline inventory management and reduce waste.

Adherence to food safety regulations is non-negotiable. A start up catering business plan must detail compliance with local health codes, staff hygiene training, and protocols for transportation and storage. Failure to meet these standards can result in legal penalties and damage to reputation.

Staffing and Equipment Considerations

Successful catering operations depend heavily on competent staff, from chefs and kitchen assistants to delivery personnel and event coordinators. The business plan should specify recruitment criteria, training programs, and scheduling methods to ensure smooth service delivery.

Investment in the right equipment—commercial ovens, refrigeration units, transport vehicles—is also essential. Decisions between leasing versus purchasing can impact cash flow and tax considerations. Additionally, technology integration such as order management software can enhance operational efficiency.

Marketing and Sales Strategies

In an industry driven by word-of-mouth and client trust, marketing strategies must balance traditional approaches with digital innovation. A start up catering business plan should outline tactics for brand building, customer acquisition, and retention.

Brand Positioning and Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Defining a clear USP helps differentiate the business in a crowded marketplace. Whether it is farm-to-table sourcing, themed catering, or exceptional customer service, the USP should resonate with the identified target audience.

Digital Marketing and Networking

SEO-optimized websites, social media presence, and online review management have become indispensable for catering startups. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook serve as visual portfolios and engagement tools, while search engine optimization increases visibility when potential clients search for catering services locally.

Networking with event planners, venues, and corporate clients can generate valuable leads. Participating in food festivals or hosting tasting events can also build community awareness.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Catering Industry

The catering business is not without its challenges. High competition, fluctuating ingredient costs, and dependence on event calendars can affect profitability. However, emerging trends such as sustainable catering, virtual event services, and customized meal plans offer new avenues for growth.

A start up catering business plan that incorporates flexibility and innovation stands a better chance of adapting to market shifts and client expectations.

By systematically addressing each of these elements, prospective catering entrepreneurs can develop a robust plan that supports sustainable growth and positions their business for success in a demanding yet rewarding industry.

Start Up Catering Business Plan

start up catering business plan: How to Start a Home-Based Catering Business, 6th Denise Vivaldo, 2010-01-06 Those passionate about parties or cooking can now realize their dream of working from home at something they enjoy. Denise Vivaldo shares her experiences and advice on all the essentials and more, including estimating start-up costs and pricing services, finding clients, outfitting one's kitchen, and honing food presentation skills.

start up catering business plan: *How to Start a Home-based Catering Business* Denise Vivaldo, 2014-07-01 Catering continues to be an expanding industry. The author is an experienced chef with extensive knowledge of the hospitality industry. She has updated information and expanded on the role of social media.

start up catering business plan: How to Start a Catering Business Maxwell Rotheray, If you host dinner parties of any kind (wedding, birthday, or other anniversaries) for your family, friends, and business associates at the slightest opportunity, you're probably up on food trends and there is an entrepreneurial spirit in you; consider starting a catering business. You can take the advantage of starting on a relatively small scale with low overhead and growing your business as you garner more experience and clients. By the way, the catering business is the provision of food service at a distant site or a location such as a hotel, hospital, wine bar, aircraft, cruise ship, motor park, filming site,

entertainment venue, or event site. Just think about you preparing a chicken Kiev or creating an especially awesome wedding cake? Even the people around you would begin to convince you to consider starting your own catering business. But just because you're a very good cook or baker doesn't mean you will be great at running a successful catering business. Following the steps laid out in this book; you can determine in advance how likely it is that you'll be able to pursue your dream of starting your own catering cake business and doing it successfully. You will discover a step-by-step catering business plan and how to execute the business according to your budget, and turning the business into a million-dollar company. You will also discover: - Commercial Catering Business Checklist - How to Target the Right Client - Marketing Your Catering Business - How to Expand/Establish Your Cake Brand - Best Locations for Catering Business - Internet Marketing Strategies for Catering Business - How to Turn Your Small Business into a Company - And lots more... If you want to succeed and avoid start-up pitfalls, follow the blueprint laid out in this book for a guaranteed breakthrough in the world of food business. Tags: digital marketing, business analysis, cake business uk, technical/strategic writing guide, effective networking, sales guide, fast food joint, food truck business, food service establishment, fast food business ideas, home bakery business plan, sales and marketing management

start up catering business plan: How to Start a Thriving Food Truck Business Simple Startup Media, 2024-07-30 Start a Thriving Food Truck Business Have you ever dreamed of combining your love for food with the freedom of being your own boss? How to Start a Thriving Food Truck Business is your ultimate guide to turning that dream into a reality. This comprehensive manual takes you through every step of launching and running a successful food truck business, from concept to profitable enterprise. Inside this Essential Guide, You'll Discover: The Entrepreneurial Mindset: Learn what it takes to be a successful food truck owner and assess if you have the right qualities and motivation. Choosing the Right Truck: Understand the pros and cons of different types of food trucks, including trailers and rentals, and how to select the best one for your needs. Finding Profitable Locations: Master the art of selecting the best locations to maximize your sales and navigate the rules and regulations around where you can park. Crafting Your Business Plan: Develop a robust business plan that covers all aspects of your food truck operation, including budgeting, financing, and marketing strategies. Menu Planning: Create a menu that not only delights your customers but also ensures profitability and operational efficiency. Health and Safety Compliance: Navigate the complex world of health regulations and licenses to keep your food truck compliant and safe. Marketing and Promotion: Learn effective marketing techniques to build a loyal customer base and make a splash on your grand opening day. Financial Management: Get practical tips on managing your finances, pricing your menu items for profit, and scaling your business for long-term success. Whether you're a culinary novice or an experienced chef, this book provides the essential knowledge and tools you need to start, operate, and grow a profitable food truck business. With insights from industry experts, real-life case studies, and practical checklists, How to Start a Thriving Food Truck Business is your go-to resource for making your food truck venture a resounding success. Ready to take your culinary passion on the road? Click the "Buy Now" button and start your journey to becoming a thriving food truck entrepreneur today!

start up catering business plan: The Professional Caterers' Handbook Lora Arduser, Douglas Robert Brown, 2006 Do you need a comprehensive book on how to plan, start and operate a successful catering operation? This is it--an extensive, detailed manual that shows you step by step how to set up, operate and manage a financially successful catering business. No component is left out of this encyclopedic new book explaining the risky but potentially highly rewarding business of catering. Whether your catering operation is on-premise, off-premise, mobile, inside a hotel, part of a restaurant, or from your own home kitchen you will find this book very useful. You will learn the fundamentals: profitable menu planning, successful kitchen management, equipment layout and planning, and food safety and HACCP. The employee and management chapters deal with how to hire and keep a qualified professional staff, manage and train employees, and report tips properly in accordance with the latest IRS requirements. The financial chapters focus on basic cost-control

systems, accounting and bookkeeping procedures, auditing, successful budgeting and profit planning. You'll also master public relations and publicity, learn low-cost internal marketing ideas, and discover low-and no-cost ways to satisfy customers. One section of the book is devoted to home-based catering entrepreneurs. With low startup costs and overhead, a home-based catering business can be an ideal do-it-yourself part-or full-time business. Another section is for restaurateurs that wish to add catering to their restaurant operation. A successful restaurant's bottom line could be greatly enhanced by instituting catering functions in slow hours or down time. For example, many restaurants are closed on Saturday afternoons, so this would be an ideal time to create a profit by catering a wedding. This book is also ideal for professionals in the catering industries, as well as newcomers who may be looking for answers to cost containment and training issues. There are literally hundreds of innovative ways demonstrated to streamline. The companion CD-ROM is included with the print version of this book; however is not available for download with the electronic version. It may be obtained separately by contacting Atlantic Publishing Group at sales@atlantic-pub.com Atlantic Publishing is a small, independent publishing company based in Ocala, Florida. Founded over twenty years ago in the company president's garage, Atlantic Publishing has grown to become a renowned resource for non-fiction books. Today, over 450 titles are in print covering subjects such as small business, healthy living, management, finance, careers, and real estate. Atlantic Publishing prides itself on producing award winning, high-quality manuals that give readers up-to-date, pertinent information, real-world examples, and case studies with expert advice. Every book has resources, contact information, and web sites of the products or companies discussed.

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start up catering business plan: Success In the Food Catering Business Vincent Gabriel, 2015-11-19 This book marks the fact that food catering has gone mainstream. At one time associated with organizers of seminars and conferences as a means of bonding the attendees of the event or to provide convenience so that each person who attended did not have to look for his own food. The food catering business is very closely connected with the industrial economic development of the Asian economies that underwent transformation in the late 1940's and continues up to today. The food provided at the seminars were arranged in three groups. A coffee break was held in the morning with a range of light snacks that included a major starch like fried rice or fried noodles. The lunch menu was clearly more extensive with a soup, a vegetable dish, a meat dish, a fish dish and a dessert. Care had to be taken to avoid offending anyone. Pork was not allowed nor was beef. The only meat served was chicken and it came in different forms: fried, roasted, boiled, with sweet and sour sauce, or with black pepper sauce or simply hot and spicy. The last meal was the tea break. In a way this meal was a milestone because the people of the Asian economies never had an afternoon break as they were expected to go home at 5 pm and have a meal at home at 6 pm. With the tea break it became a custom to have dinner or the evening meal later at 7 pm. The food provided at seminars went beyond the training room because it was convenient to have meals provided for,

cooked by someone else. The idea that developed was called parties brought to you. Today sixty years after the introduction of the first seminar catered meal food catering is the norm for people wanting a party at home to celebrate a major feast or a personal milestone event like the birth of a baby or a wedding. Food catering has also become an event related to hospitality and appreciation. The mourners at a funeral wake are grateful to those who come to pay their respects and food is now catered to provide for these guests. In this book the author takes the approach that food catering must grow beyond its present roots and move out to become more mainstream in the form of a meal for a social gathering like that around a steamboat. Food catering has also the responsibility to maintain the health of a community by observing the rules of being: Less salty Less oily Less sweet Free of trans fats Free of gluten Free of MSG And other Chemicals. Food catering becomes a mainstream food by being available and by being healthy.

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start up catering business plan: *The Beginner's Guide to Catering* Barrett Williams, ChatGPT, 2024-11-10 Unlock the doors to a thriving career in wedding catering with *The Beginner's Guide to Catering*. Designed for aspiring caterers, this comprehensive eBook offers the pathway to establishing and growing a successful wedding catering business, capturing the romance and excitement of truly unforgettable events. Begin your journey by diving into the enchanting world of boutique wedding catering. Explore the power of special events and understand why weddings present such a valuable niche. With detailed guidance, craft a solid business plan and navigate the essential legal foundations to set you up for success. Branding is key in this industry, and you'll discover how to craft an irresistible brand and unique selling proposition that sets you apart. Develop delicious wedding menus that captivate clients while accommodating allergies and dietary needs. Learn effective pricing strategies, including package deals tailored for brides and grooms. Supplier relationships are crucial, and this guide teaches you how to source quality ingredients and build strong vendor partnerships. Expand your reach with expert marketing strategies, and master the art of presentation to leave lasting impressions with stunning catering displays. As you prepare for the big day, this guide provides you with comprehensive checklists and team organization strategies. Ensure seamless event execution by coordinating with vendors and learning on-the-spot troubleshooting. Maintain strong client relationships with lessons on handling inquiries, tastings, and communication. Scale your business with insights into expanding offerings and managing larger events. Gain financial control with savvy budgeting and cash flow management. Embrace the future of catering by utilizing technology for booking and operations, and commit to sustainability with eco-friendly practices. Learn from industry success stories and let them inspire you to find your own unique path. *The Beginner's Guide to Catering* is your essential roadmap to success in the vibrant world of boutique wedding catering. Start your journey today!

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Guide Entrepreneur magazine, 2013-04-11 Cash in, One Load at a Time The problem with most high-profit businesses is that you spend so much time on the job that you have little free time to enjoy the fruits of your labor. But coin-operated laundries are different. They're low-maintenance, recession-proof, and you can make as much as \$200,000 a year working only part-time hours. But you have to know what you're doing. And with our guide, you will. You'll get an in-depth overview of the industry (where it's been and where it's likely to go) and learn everything you need to know before launching your own self-serve laundry business including: New ideas for marketing your laundry An expanded section on hiring and training attendants Updated information on card systems Recent advances in laundry equipment The latest on laws and regulations concerning laundries More ways to combine a laundry with other businesses You'll also get first-hand advice from successful coin-op laundry owners on how to create an inviting atmosphere that will draw customers in and keep them coming back. Clean clothes are a necessity, not a luxury. People are going to use laundromats no matter how the stock market is performing. So if you're looking for an easy-to-run business that will keep the cash flowing no matter how the rest of the economy is doing, you've found it. And while you're at it, why not order our Vending Business guide, too? It makes an ideal companion business and it's a great way to augment your income. This kit includes: • Essential industry and business-specific startup steps with worksheets, calculators, checklists and more. • Entrepreneur Editors' Start Your Own Business, a guide to starting any business and surviving the first three years. • Downloadable, customizable business letters, sales letters, and other sample documents. • Entrepreneur's Small Business Legal Toolkit.

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