

Checklist for Starting a Business

Please be advised that there may also be additional steps specific to your industry, which are not mentioned below.

- Choose your business idea and identify your product or service.
- Conduct in-depth research on the industry and the market.
- Write a business plan.
- Write a marketing plan.
- Check with a domain registry service to see if the business name is available for use as an Internet domain name.
- Register the domain name even if you aren't ready to use it yet.
- Choose office space to lease if you are not going to be operating as a home-based business.
- Check zoning laws and deed restrictions especially if you are going to operate as a home-based business.
- Decide on a form of legal structure for your business.
- If you will operate as a sole proprietorship, register your Assumed Name Certificate or d.b.a. (doing business as) in the county where you will conduct business.
- Call the Texas Secretary of State's office to search your business name to see if it is already registered.
- File partnership, corporate, or Limited Liability Company papers with the Texas Secretary of State's office.
- If you will operate as a corporation or LLC, obtain filing requirements for the state franchise tax. Note: the tax will change 1/1/2008.
- Apply for an employer identification number from the IRS.
- File the appropriate tax election with the IRS such as the entity classification and "S" election.
- Contact the Internal Revenue Service for information on filing your federal tax schedules.
- Obtain tax information such as record keeping requirements, facts about estimating taxes, etc.
- Apply for a sales tax permit with the State Comptroller of Public Accounts if necessary. Find out when you will need to remit the taxes.
- Investigate local business tax requirements such as reporting tangible personal property used to produce income on tax rendition forms.
- Investigate business insurance needs.
- Obtain the required city, county or state business licenses and/or permits.
- If you will have employees, look into other insurance or government requirements:
 - Unemployment insurance
 - Worker's compensation
 - OSHA requirements
 - Federal, state and local tax information

- Self-employment tax
- Payroll taxes such as FICA, federal and state unemployment taxes
- Get tax information on hiring independent contractors
- Set up your business accounting system. Look into the available small business accounting solutions software packages.
- Register or reserve your federal trademark/service mark and register appropriate copyrights.
- If you will be marketing an invention, investigate a patent.
- Order any required notices of your intent to do business in the community.
- Identify communication equipment needs such as a business land line, cell phone, Blackberry or PDA.
- Open a business bank account.
- Purchase furniture, equipment and/or supplies.
- Order inventory, signage, and fixtures.
- Get an e-mail address.
- Identify a web hosting company.
- Have your web site designed and placed online.
- Develop your business marketing materials. Have business cards and stationery printed.
- Prepare any sales literature.
- Explore your financing options such as self financing, debt or external equity financing.
- Call for information about Yellow Pages advertising if appropriate.

A word of caution: There are frequent policy and legislative changes so some of the above steps may be different for you or may not apply to your business or industry. We advise you to seek professional advice or counsel to verify that you have met all legal requirements before starting and operating your business.