

Entrepreneur



**QUICK
GUIDE**

Launching Your **SIDE HUSTLE**

**Your Step-By-Step Guide To Starting
A Successful Side Gig And Earning More**



**EARN
MORE
MONEY**



**WORK ON
YOUR
SCHEDULE**



**BE YOUR
OWN
BOSS**

BY JASON RICH

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Entrepreneur Press, Publisher

Cover Design: Andrew Welyczko

Production and Composition: Mike Fontecchio, Faith & Family Publications

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Rich, Jason, author.

Title: Launching your side hustle : your step-by-step guide to starting a successful side gig and earning more / by Jason R. Rich.

Description: Santa Ana : Entrepreneur Press, 2025. | Series: Entrepreneur quick guide | Includes index. | Summary: "Take control of your financial future and start making extra money today. Launch your side hustle and unlock new opportunities for income and independence"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024053114 (print) | LCCN 2024053115 (ebook) | ISBN 9781613084892 (paperback) | ISBN 9781642011791 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Entrepreneurship. | Small business.

Classification: LCC HB615 .R53 2025 (print) | LCC HB615 (ebook) | DDC 338/.04--dc23/eng/20250212

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024053114>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024053115>

Printed in the United States of America

OceanofPDF.com

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About the Author

Jason R. Rich (www.JasonRich.com) is a highly accomplished author who has worked with Entrepreneur Press to write and publish a wide range of books targeted to entrepreneurs and small business operators. Some of his works include:

- *The Remote Worker's Handbook: How to Work Effectively from Anywhere*
- *The Ultimate Guide to Shopify*
- *Start Your Own Airbnb Business*
- *Start Your Own Virtual Assistant Business*
- *Start Your Own Podcast Business*
- *Start Your Own Etsy Business*
- *The Ultimate Guide to YouTube for Business*

As a consumer technology journalist, he's written for CBS Essentials (CBS News), U.S. News 360 Reviews (U.S. News & World Report), Forbes Vetted, AARP *The Magazine*, and numerous other websites and publications.

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Introduction

Are you stuck in a dead-end job that you don't find financially or emotionally rewarding? Do you have a hobby that could become a way to earn some extra cash? Perhaps you love your full-time job, but it doesn't allow you to earn the income you want or need. Or maybe, you have other obligations that are keeping you from pursuing a traditional job working a 40-hour week. Whatever your personal circumstances, right now could be the perfect time for you to pursue a side hustle.

Should You Pursue a Side Hustle?

What's a side hustle, you ask? Well, it means different things to different people. The core idea is that, during your free time, you pursue a revenue-generating project that you have a passion for, and that does not interfere with your current professional obligations. The best side hustle will allow you to tap your existing skill set, potentially develop new knowledge and skills, and open new opportunities for you—all without having to answer to a boss.

Does this sound intriguing? Let's begin by making one thing very clear—a side hustle is *not* a get-rich-quick scheme. If this is something you choose to pursue, it is going to take time, dedication, some sort of initial financial investment, and the need to sacrifice some (or all) of your free time so that you can achieve something amazing.

A side hustle can involve discovering how to transform a hobby you love into a moneymaking venture. For example, if you love to knit, make your own jewelry, or paint, you could set up an online business on Etsy to sell

your creations. If you excel at a particular sport or activity, you could acquire the certification or license required to teach that sport or coach others as a personal trainer, yoga instructor, or even a pickleball coach.

A side hustle might entail creating a blog, YouTube channel, or podcast with the goal of making money by sharing your knowledge and expertise related to a topic, or leveraging social media to become an influencer who builds a large audience and earns money from promotional partnerships. Or it might involve sitting down to write, self-publish, and sell that novel you've always dreamed about.

Perhaps there's a product or product category you've become passionate about and that's somehow enhanced your life. And now you believe that by sharing your experiences using that product and selling it, you could help others and make some money in the process. Your side hustle might involve tapping into a specialized skill set you've developed, and that other people or businesses could benefit from by hiring you as a paid consultant, workshop host, trainer, or enrichment speaker.

The side hustle you choose could also involve starting some type of formal business—either online or in the real world—or helping others with tasks they can't handle themselves. Whatever you decide your side hustle will be, it should involve something you love, that you're good at, you're knowledgeable about, and that there's a demand for. Ideally, it should also be something that's somewhat unique, or at least be a new twist on something that already exists, so you stand out from any competition.

At least initially, you want your side hustle to be something you can do part-time, around your existing schedule (i.e., on the side), so it won't interfere with your job, schooling, or personal responsibilities. In other words, the time you'll invest in your side hustle, at least initially, will be taken from what's currently your personal or leisure time.

Whatever you decide your side hustle will be, it should also be something that allows you to earn extra money, supplement your existing

income, provides you with a way to improve your lifestyle, or that gives you the financial means to do things that are not currently possible in your present circumstances. And if things go extremely well, there's always the chance that your side hustle could become a full-time job—allowing you to pursue a new career path.

Side Hustle Pros and Cons

As you begin to pursue the concept of a side hustle, it's important to set realistic expectations about what's possible and what you can get out of the experience. This is a topic we'll delve into much more throughout this book. However, let's begin by focusing on some of the pros and cons related to pursuing a side hustle.

The Six Key Benefits of a Side Hustle

Many people discover that pursuing some type of side hustle transforms many aspects of their life in positive ways. Here are six key things you'll likely experience upon achieving success with a side hustle:

1. You'll earn extra income, potentially doing something you love.
2. You'll develop a more flexible schedule and learn how to expertly manage your time.
3. You'll have the opportunity to expand your skill set and experience new things.
4. You'll become your own boss and take responsibility for your own success.
5. You'll learn more about yourself, your goals, and your passions.
6. You'll discover new ways to use your education, skill set, past work experience, your network of contacts, and your personal experiences to your utmost advantage.

The Potential Drawbacks of a Side Hustle

There are also some challenges and obstacles to overcome and potential drawbacks related to pursuing any type of side hustle that you should consider. Five of the most common include:

1. It takes time, money, and effort to get started.
2. There's a lot of planning and then hard work that goes into achieving success.
3. Having to potentially make sacrifices in your personal life. The amount of free time you have now will diminish, especially if you're also holding down a full-time job.
4. You'll probably need to take on a bunch of new responsibilities and learn how to master skills like multitasking and time management.
5. You'll discover that on your path to success, you will make mistakes. Everyone does. However, proper planning and research will help you foresee potential pitfalls and create a plan for how you'll overcome any potential challenges. And then moving forward, you'll always need to learn from your mistakes, and try to avoid repeating them.

Six Key Traits and Skills That Will Help You Achieve Success

What's required of you will vary greatly based on the side hustle you to choose to pursue. However, six traits and skills that will benefit you the most include:

1. Having good written and verbal communication skills.
2. Your ability to multitask efficiently.
3. Possessing good time management skills.
4. Being able to make decisive and well-thought-out decisions quickly.

5. Having the motivation to take your side hustle and cater it to the wants, needs, and expectations of your customers or clients in a way that sets what you're offering apart from your competition.
6. Possessing a true passion about what it is you're doing for your side hustle. This means you're emotionally connected to it in a positive way, and you understand why you have this passion. It's this passion and emotional connection to your side hustle that'll keep you motivated, even when things get tough, you're having a bad day, or something does not go as planned.

If you don't have some of these skills, don't worry. However, it's to your utmost advantage to be brutally honest with yourself to pinpoint your shortcomings as you get started, so you know what areas you will need to focus on and the types of skills you'll need to develop to achieve success. Based on the side hustle you pursue, the more relevant real-world experience you already possess, the bigger the advantage you'll have as you get started.

And for the skills you know you don't yet have, there are all sorts of ways you can obtain them—by reading books, taking classes (in person or online), participating in workshops, or by accepting help from mentors. Remember, there are no shortcuts to success. If you want to succeed, you'll need to work hard to achieve it.

Throughout this book, you'll be encouraged to participate in short activities designed to help you achieve success and clarity. For this first activity, think carefully and write down five things you're truly passionate about.

These five passions can include a subject matter (such as art, animals, movies, or food), a skill (such as writing, creating, cooking, public speaking, or problem-solving), an activity (such as crafting, travel, driving, biking, playing an instrument, knitting, hiking, skiing, camping, or any other type of hobby), or anything else that's important to you. As you're writing down your five passions, think about why each is

being added to your list and how each makes you feel.

By knowing what you're already passionate about and what you truly enjoy doing, when it comes to whatever your chosen side hustle will entail, you'll have things to compare it to when evaluating your passion for what that side hustle requires. And by understanding your level of passion for whatever you choose to pursue, you will find it easier to determine if whatever personal sacrifices will be required to achieve success are worth making.

Success Starts with a Vision

Knowing you want to pursue a side hustle is a good first step. Now, you need to develop a clear and well-defined understanding about *what* you want to achieve, *how* you plan to achieve it, *when* you want to get started, and *why* you want to pursue whatever side hustle you choose.

Spend some time visualizing your objectives and clearly define *why* you want to pursue whatever side hustle you're considering. The next big step is to write down your vision, objectives, and overall plan. As you do this, be as specific and detailed as possible.

For this activity, go someplace quiet where you can be alone with your thoughts—away from any distractions. Next, sit down and close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths and try to clear your mind.

Now, pretend it's the future and visualize that you have already achieved success with your chosen side hustle. Being as specific as possible, pay careful attention to what you see in your mind's eye. What comes to mind when you think about being successful? How does what you're visualizing make you feel? Keep in mind, when you're able to visualize an outcome or action, you are more likely to achieve it. So, right now, visualize exactly what you want.

Once you understand how you define “success” related to what you're trying to achieve by pursuing a side hustle, start doing some research.

Determine exactly what it'll take to achieve the success that you've just visualized.

As you think about a potential side hustle and what it means for you to be successful, ask yourself these questions:

- Have you developed a clear vision for what you're hoping to achieve?
- Are you able to articulate your objective to others in a clear and meaningful way?
- Why is your vision meaningful or important to you?

Once you've defined your vision, determine if it's right for you, based on you overall objectives, knowledge, skill set, lifestyle, current resources, and passion. This is something we'll focus more on a bit later.

If your vision hasn't been fully flushed out yet, don't continue until it is well defined and clear in your mind. Take whatever time you need for this important step, because if your initial vision and objective is not crystal clear to you, nothing you do next will be as effective in helping you achieve success.

Once you've come up with a concept for a side hustle and have a clear vision about what you want to pursue (which are steps we will delve deeper into shortly), the next big step is to determine what could potentially get in the way of you achieving your vision. Write down any pitfalls or obstacles that come to mind and consider what you'll need to do to overcome them.

Knowing that whatever side hustle you choose will take time to get started and then manage moving forward, look carefully at your current lifestyle and schedule. Make sure you'll have the time and resources needed to achieve your vision, without taking shortcuts.

If you're still motivated to move forward, and once you're 100 percent satisfied with the clarity of your vision, make sure it's written down so you can refer to it often. This written document will help you stay on track and

focused on your core objectives—and the reasons why you're trying to achieve them.

What This Book Offers

The goal of *Entrepreneur Quick Guide: Start and Launch Your Side Hustle* is to help you determine if pursuing a side hustle is the right move for you at this point in your life. And if it is, use this book to provide you with the information needed to get started and make your venture a success. From this book, you'll discover how to:

- Create a plan for yourself and your side hustle.
- Determine if your idea for a side hustle is actually viable.
- Develop realistic expectations about what will be required to achieve your vision of success.
- Learn how to avoid common pitfalls associated with pursuing a side hustle.
- Figure out what core skills you'll need to transform your idea into reality in the most efficient way possible using the resources that are at your disposal.

As you'll discover, the type of side hustle you choose will determine how much time, investment capital, knowledge, skill, and equipment you'll need to get started. Ultimately, if your idea is viable, and it has the potential to generate a profit, you should be able to acquire what's needed to make your idea a reality

At this point, you may be concerned about whether you have what it takes to create and pursue a side hustle that will allow you to earn the revenue you want or need. For most people, the answer is *yes*. People from all walks of life, with varying levels of education, and with vastly different

skill sets, experience, and resources at their disposal have already achieved success pursuing a side hustle. This includes people in almost all age groups.

A 13-year-old who goes to school full-time, but mows lawns, walks dogs, or babysits in the evenings, on weekends, or during their summer break is pursuing a side hustle (as opposed to working a traditional job with a boss). There are also plenty of high school and college students, adults, and even retired folks who currently enjoy the benefits of pursuing a side hustle. So, chances are, you can, too.

In fact, the book you're reading right now is an example of a side hustle. I work full-time as a journalist for well-known media outlets, but during some of my free time after my workday is over (and on weekends), I am further pursuing my passion for writing by working as an author. I am using the skill set I have developed over the years, but in this case, also doing something I love—which includes writing about a topic I am passionate about, while earning some extra income in the process.

What you'll hopefully discover by reading this book is that you, too, have the foundation for what it takes to pursue the side hustle you're interested in. Let this book be your road map to success. Think about what you'll need to sacrifice in your everyday life to allocate the time needed to pursue your side hustle. And before you proceed further, make sure you're willing to make the sacrifices that will likely be necessary in your personal life, especially when it comes to giving up personal and leisure time.

Starting in Chapter 1, the focus is on performing an honest self-assessment of yourself to help you define your personal and professional strengths, and any potential weaknesses you'll likely need to overcome. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to help you brainstorm the ideal side hustle for yourself, based on your strengths, passion, and personal circumstances.

Keep in mind, the word *passion* is used often throughout this book. The best reason to pursue a side hustle, as opposed to a traditional part-time or

full-time job, is because it allows you to do something you love and that you're good at, with the bonus of being able to earn some extra cash.

After you've figured out what you want to do for your side hustle, the focus will be on defining who your target customers or clients will be, and on figuring out exactly what you'll offer them, such as a product or service. That's the focus of Chapter 3.

Then, once you know what you want to do and who you want to do it for, in Chapters 4 through 6, the goal is to pinpoint your potential competition, define how what you plan to offer will set you apart, and discover why whatever it is you choose to pursue will appeal to your target audience. While you don't want to reinvent the metaphorical wheel, offering something that's unique and that's priced fairly will be beneficial to the success of your side hustle.

Before launching your side hustle, you'll learn why soliciting feedback from others, including potential customers/clients, mentors, and others who you trust, is extremely important. You want to make sure that what you envision is realistic, something that's in demand, and that your plan of action is viable (and makes financial sense). By bouncing your ideas and plans off other people, you'll benefit from their knowledge, expertise, and guidance.

Once you've created a strong foundation for your side hustle and have all the pieces in place to launch it, Chapters 7 through 9 will help you develop a plan that'll include finding customers or clients, promoting your venture, creating an online presence, and setting yourself up for success moving forward.

At this point, if you're not sure what type of side hustle you're interested in pursuing, there's nothing to worry about. You can always refer to the Appendix at the end of this book, where you'll discover more than 100 ideas for potential side hustles that have proven successful for other people. You can use any one of these ideas for inspiration, or based on your own passion

and skill set, combine two or more ideas to offer something that's more specialized and unique.

Throughout this book, you'll also receive in-depth advice from Kim Perell. She's an angel investor, entrepreneur, and the creator of the *Side Hustle Accelerator* online course published by *Entrepreneur*. You'll learn about the nine key steps required to start a successful side hustle, while obtaining a road map that'll help you go from the brainstorming stage and choosing a side hustle, to ultimately launching, managing, and achieving success in whatever it is you decide to pursue.

So, if you're intrigued about how your life can be enhanced by taking on a side hustle, you've come to the right place. Let's get started with this potentially life-altering adventure. All you need to do now is turn the page.

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CHAPTER 1

An Honest Self-Assessment Can Help You Choose the Perfect Side Hustle

The fact that you're reading this book is a clear indicator that some part of you already has an entrepreneurial spirit. Now, you need to cultivate that spirit and focus it on a side hustle that'll tap your skill set, encompass your interests, and provide unlimited success potential—based on how much time, energy, and resources you put into your endeavor.

The big question remains, what is the ideal side hustle for you to pursue? Unless you already have a strong vision for what it is you want to do and accomplish, first focus on yourself and really consider what you have to offer. This is the time when performing a self-assessment can be extremely beneficial. It'll help you define your interests, determine your strengths, understand your potential weaknesses, and develop a better understanding of what you'll need to sacrifice to pursue any type of side hustle.

The purpose of this self-assessment is to help you better understand yourself. Remember, there's no need to share the information you're about to document with anyone else. And for this reason, it's imperative that you be honest with yourself, particularly when it comes to identifying your weaknesses, gaps in your knowledge, and the lack of any skills you may need to achieve success with your side hustle.

Five Key Tasks That'll Help You Succeed

When it comes to starting a side hustle, five essential tasks you'll need to accomplish early on include:

- Developing your *vision*.
- Understanding your *passion*.
- Creating a clear *action plan*.
- Becoming *resilient* when pursuing your venture.
- Adopting the ability to *cultivate professional relationships and network*—both online and in the real world.

In the Introduction, the importance of developing a clear vision was touched on. This is your ability, within your mind's eye, to clarify exactly what you want to accomplish and how you define success. Part of having a vision is considering what type of side hustle you want to pursue, and how you'll potentially benefit from this venture personally, financially, and professionally.

To give yourself a tremendous advantage as you kick-start your venture and build it into something that's sustainable and profitable, you'll want it to involve something you're interested in and passionate about. Your side hustle should not always feel like work. It should involve something you love to do and that has some importance in your life.

Pursuing a side hustle just for the paycheck is a mistake. When you do this, you'll quickly find yourself bored with your chosen venture, lose interest and motivation (especially when you encounter some type of challenge or obstacle), and find it difficult to forfeit your free time to pursue something that doesn't make you happy or feel rewarding.

So, in Chapter 2, when you begin to seriously consider what type of side hustle to start, you should already have a clear vision for what your success will entail, and then only consider the opportunities you're truly interested in and already have (or could develop) a passion for.

Next, it'll be necessary to create an action plan. While this will contain some of the same elements as a traditional business plan, it'll also serve as a road map to keep you focused on what you need to do to achieve success. Your action plan may be an elaborate to-do list, but it should also include a timeline (with deadlines for yourself), a budget, and an outline of clear objectives. How to create your action plan or business plan is covered in Chapter 2.

No matter what type of side hustle you select, one personal trait that'll serve you extremely well and prove to be an asset is resilience. No matter how carefully you plan and how clear your vision is, not everything will always go as planned. You'll have bad days, make poor decisions that lead to unfavorable outcomes, make mistakes, have to deal with difficult people, and find yourself having to complete tasks that you don't find either fun or interesting. This is all part of pursuing your side venture and should be expected.

It's how you handle these potentially negative things that will require a strong resilience, which includes developing the mindset and the motivation to pick yourself up and keep progressing forward, while dealing with any setbacks in an efficient manner. Being resilient also means learning from your mistakes, so you don't repeat them, and knowing how to set yourself back onto your path for success if you temporarily find yourself deviating from that path.

Another skill you'll find useful—no matter what type of side hustle you pursue—is the ability to develop, maintain, and utilize strong professional relationships with anyone you're working with, including mentors, customers, clients, suppliers, and anyone else you're required to interact with. In fact, one of the most powerful ways you'll grow your side hustle is through networking online and in the real world. As you'll discover from Chapter 9, two of your most cost-effective tools for finding and attracting new customers or clients is word of mouth and networking.

Thus, skills needed to cultivate relationships are having strong written and verbal communication skills, along with strong interpersonal skills. The level to which you'll need these skills will depend on your chosen side hustle, but you'll likely find that being able to communicate clearly and professionally will be a huge asset as you're building various types of relationships associated with your side hustle.

SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Even if you're not a good test taker, you can still perform a worthwhile self-assessment to help you prepare for your side hustle—that is, as long as you're willing to be honest with yourself. Take as much time as you need to answer the following questions, and then consider how your responses can impact your ability to achieve success.

There are a bunch of questions being posed here, so don't feel like you need to answer all of the questions in one sitting. Also, even if five responses are requested, if you can only come up with three or four right now, that's fine. The main goal here is to make you think about your strengths, weaknesses, current situation, and what you want your future situation to be.

Start by answering these questions:

- Based on the required skills you just read about, how equipped do you feel right now with your ability to utilize each of them?

- What do you feel is lacking?

- What are you the most insecure about?

- Based on all of your previous life and work experiences, what are your five biggest strengths, and how will each of them help you

achieve success with your side hustle?

- Strength #1:

- Benefit:
-

- Strength #2:

- Benefit:
-

- Strength #3:

- Benefit:
-

- Strength #4:

- Benefit:
-

- Strength #5:

- Benefit:
-

- Based on your previous life and work experience, what do you perceive as being your five biggest weaknesses, and how will each pose a potential obstacle that could keep you from achieving success?

- Weakness #1:
-

- Potential obstacle it poses:

- Weakness #2:

- Potential obstacle it poses:

- Weakness #3:

- Potential obstacle it poses:

- Weakness #4:

- Potential obstacle it poses:

- Weakness #5:

- Potential obstacle it poses:

- What are your five most useful skills?:

- Skill #1:

- Skill #2:

- Skill #3:

- Skill #4:

- Skill #5:

- What are your five most useful personality traits?
 - Trait #1:

 - Trait#2:

 - Trait#3:

 - Trait#4:

 - Trait#5:

- What are five skills or personality traits you're currently lacking and that you're concerned could hamper your chances of success as you pursue your side hustle?
 - Missing skill #1:

 - Missing skill #2:

 - Missing skill #3:

 - Missing skill #4:

 - Missing skill #5:

- What are five ways you feel your past education will help you pursue success in your side hustle?
 - Education-related benefit #1:

- Education-related benefit #2:

- Education-related benefit #3:

- Education-related benefit #4:

- Education-related benefit #5:

Based on the following skills and traits that trend to be important among people pursuing a side hustle, which do you already have, which need work, and which are you completely lacking right now?

	Important Skills and Traits	Highly Skilled	Needs Work	Lacking
1	Ability to Focus	☐	☐	☐
2	Adaptability Skills	☐	☐	☐
3	Analytical Skills	☐	☐	☐
4	Bookkeeping / Money Management Skills	☐	☐	☐
5	Computer Literacy and Data Analysis Capabilities	☐	☐	☐
6	Creativity (Thinking Outside of the Box)	☐	☐	☐
7	Critical Thinking Skills	☐	☐	☐
8	Customer Service Skills	☐	☐	☐
9	Delegation Skills	☐	☐	☐
10	Leadership and Team Management Skills	☐	☐	☐
11	Maintaining a Professional Appearance	☐	☐	☐

12	Marketing Skills	☐	☐	☐
13	Multitasking Abilities	☐	☐	☐
14	Negotiation Skills	☐	☐	☐
15	Networking and Relationship Management Skills	☐	☐	☐
16	Organizational Skills	☐	☐	☐
17	Patience with Yourself and Others	☐	☐	☐
18	Problem-Solving Skills	☐	☐	☐
19	Project Management Skills	☐	☐	☐
20	Resilience	☐	☐	☐
21	Resource Management Skills	☐	☐	☐
22	Salesmanship	☐	☐	☐
23	Setting and Managing Deadlines	☐	☐	☐
24	Social Media Sales, Networking and Marketing Skills	☐	☐	☐
25	Being Able to Stay Calm in Tense Situations	☐	☐	☐
26	Teamworking Skills	☐	☐	☐
27	Telephone and Telemarketing Skills	☐	☐	☐
28	Time Management Skills	☐	☐	☐
29	Verbal Communication Skills	☐	☐	☐
30	Willingness to Seek Help from Others When Needed	☐	☐	☐
31	Written Communication Skills	☐	☐	☐

For the skills and traits that you believe need work (or that you're lacking), think about how you can gain or enhance them. For example, could you take classes (online or in the real world), work one-on-one with a mentor, or read how-to books? Can you outsource the responsibilities that require special skills or knowledge that you're not currently equipped to handle right now (like bookkeeping, or creating an advertising campaign)?

- Based on your current life situation, what are the five things that could hold you back from achieving success with your side hustle?
 - Obstacle #1:

 - Obstacle #2:

 - Obstacle #3:

 - Obstacle #4:

 - Obstacle #5:

- How do you describe your ability to manage each of the following?
 - Self-Motivation:

 - Ability to Manage Stress:

 - Ability to Focus:

 - Ability to Handle Conflict:

 - Ability to Multitask:

- Ability to Create and Stick to a Plan:

- In your past work experiences, what are the five tasks or responsibilities you liked the most or that you found the most rewarding?

- Responsibility #1:

- Responsibility #2:

- Responsibility #3:

- Responsibility #4:

- Responsibility #5:

- In your past work experiences, what are the five tasks or responsibilities you liked the least?

- Responsibility #1:

- Responsibility #2:

- Responsibility #3:

- Responsibility #4:

- Responsibility #5:

- Outside of work, what are your five favorite ways to spend time?
(This includes activities you enjoy and your hobbies.)

- Activity #1:

- Activity #2:

- Activity #3:

- Activity #4:

- Activity #5:

- If you could spend your days doing your absolute favorite thing in life, what would that be and why?
- What are the five most important priorities in your life right now, and how will taking on a side hustle potentially impact each of them? This can include people, pets, other work responsibilities, or other life-related obligations.

- Responsibility #1:

- Responsibility #2:

- Responsibility #3:

- Responsibility #4:

- Responsibility #5:

- Right now, in your everyday life—on weekdays, evenings, weekends, and during holidays—what are the five activities that take up the most time?

- Activity #1:

- Activity #2:

- Activity #3:

- Activity #4:

- Activity #5:

- If you had to cut the amount of time you spend each day or week doing the previously listed activities, how would it impact each of them, and the other people involved with those activities?

- Who are the five most important people in your life, that you spend the most time with, and who provide you with the most support?

- Person #1:

- Person #2:

- Person #3:

- Person #4:

- Person #5:

- How will your relationship with each of these people be impacted by your side hustle?

-
-
- Who are the people in your life that bring you down, are a burden, or that could keep you from achieving success in your side hustle? Specifically, why are you listing these people?

- Person #1:

- Person #2:

- Person #3:

- If you need help with something or require emotional support during a difficult time, who are the top three people you typically reach out to? Why are you naming these people? What do they do for you that other people in your life don't or can't offer?

- Person #1:

- Person #2:

- Person #3:

- As you get started with your side hustle, who are five people you could reach out to for help or to serve as a mentor? The people you list here could be friends, family members, past or present coworkers, past professors, industry leaders, industry experts, or anyone else (even if you don't yet know them in real life) who could potentially be a mentor or resource for you moving forward.

- Person #1:

- Person #2:

- Person #3:

- Person #4:

- Person #5:

Understand Your Why

The previous worksheet was designed to help you better understand your overall strengths and weaknesses. This is information that'll prove valuable when choosing your side hustle, establishing it as a part-time business venture, and then growing it into something successful.

While your full-time job should be something you love, this isn't always the case, as we all have bills to pay and financial commitments to meet that often supersede the importance of seeking employment that's fun and enjoyable. However, your chosen side hustle should be an entirely different story. After all, this is a part-time gig of your choosing and that allows you to be your own boss—potentially pursuing whatever venture you believe will be fulfilling emotionally *and* financially.

Remember, to pursue a side hustle, you'll potentially be giving up some of your free time, so while it's something you're doing to earn additional money and supplement your income, it should also be something you're truly passionate about. As you contemplate what sort of side hustle to pursue, think carefully about *why* you're choosing it, *why* you're passionate about it, and what you want out of the experience (besides some extra cash).

Knowing why you want to accomplish something and how that objective will ultimately benefit your professional, personal, and financial life will help you stay focused and motivated. Hopefully, your *why* will also push you to

work that much harder and make it easier to justify the sacrifices you'll need to make to achieve your success.

Ideally, your side hustle should allow you to focus on your strengths and experience, tap your existing knowledge, and utilize the talents, interests, and passions you already have. As you make important decisions relating to your side hustle pursuits, refer to the previous worksheet often when you're thinking about what it'll take to start your side hustle, and the plan you will implement to achieve what you define as success while pursuing it.

If you ask yourself, "Why am I doing this?" or someone in your personal or professional life asks, "Why are you doing this?" you should have a well-thought-out answer that you believe to be 100 percent honest.

Common Pitfalls

Regardless of the side hustle you choose to pursue, you're going to face problems and obstacles along the way. The best way to overcome these potential pitfalls is to plan for them, understand that they will occur, and be ready to face them head-on when each situation arises.

How do you do this? The answer is simple. Preparation, planning, and persistence. As you're creating the business plan for your side hustle, refer to the previous worksheet and consider your potential weaknesses and what essential skills you lack. Develop a plan for acquiring the skills or knowledge you know you'll need to proceed.

During the side hustle planning stages, do your research and anticipate what types of problems you're likely to encounter. Then, in advance, create a plan of action to handle those problems in a timely and well-organized manner as soon as they arise. Proper preparation and planning related to all aspects of your side hustle will go a long way toward helping you overcome pitfalls and challenges.

And since solving problems, overcoming obstacles, and having to deal with unexpected situations won't always be easy—no matter how prepared you are—persistence will be essential, so stay focused on your goals and what needs to be accomplished, without getting discouraged or giving up.

The 12 Most Common Side Hustle Pitfalls You May Need to Handle

Depending on what type of side hustle you choose, the potential pitfalls will vary greatly. But when you look at the big picture and what's involved with establishing and managing a side hustle, the 12 most common pitfalls you might face relate to:

1. **Improper Time Management**—Finding the time needed to pursue your side hustle while juggling the responsibilities of your full-time job and your family/personal obligations. Learning how to better manage your time and making the most out of every minute of every waking hour will help you a lot. Don't forget, over the long term, maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential.
2. **Lack of Research and Planning**—Taking shortcuts early on and not doing an ample amount of research relating to your side hustle and what will be required of you is a huge mistake that you'll wind up paying dearly for down the road. Lack of preparation will lead to costly mistakes. Also, not having the knowledge and skills you need, and having to deal with negative situations you should have anticipated but failed to plan for, can be a big setback.
3. **Financial Problems**—As you're planning your side hustle, think about how much money you'll need to get started. This includes the costs associated with acquiring all of the skills, equipment, and inventory (if applicable) needed. You'll also need a marketing and advertising budget, and the ability to cover whatever expenses may

arise. In this case, proper financial planning is essential. However, you also need to set appropriate rates for your products or services, plan for unexpected expenses, and be able to generate enough revenue to keep your personal and business finances separate. Plan on having enough cash on hand to keep your side hustle going for at least six months before you start generating a profit. And, however much you calculate will be needed, add an extra 20 percent as a cushion.

4. **Bookkeeping Issues**—No matter what side hustle you pursue, if you'll be earning money, it's a business. This means you need to keep proper financial records, obtain the proper types of insurance, and pay your taxes accurately and on time. You need to be able to maintain accurate paperwork pertaining to all aspects of your business—including your inventory, expenses, and income. Not maintaining accurate and up-to-date records will lead to costly problems. Plus, not paying appropriate taxes will eventually get very expensive when the state and IRS start imposing late fees and penalties.
5. **Lack of Knowledge**—A key part of your side hustle planning should be to determine exactly what skills, knowledge, and experience you'll need. Figure out what you're lacking and find ways to acquire what's needed in advance. Don't wait until it's too late to learn a skill or obtain knowledge you knew would be needed but were too lazy or unorganized to acquire in advance. Again, research and planning are essential.
6. **Taking On Too Much, Too Fast**—No matter how excited you are to launch your side hustle and make it a huge success, pace yourself. Start small and grow it slowly over time. Trying to take on too much, too fast, especially if you already have a full-time job and personal responsibilities, is a formula for failure.

7. **Not Having a Business Plan and Refer to It Often**—Your business plan is your road map to success. It should be a written document that includes your core mission and vision statement, a list of all your objectives, and that also includes a compilation of your research, incorporates all of your financial projections, provides a summary of your anticipated expenses, and includes your step-by-step plan for establishing, marketing, and managing your side hustle. Yes, you'll need to tweak your business plan over time, but especially early on, refer to it often and make sure you're sticking to your plan. Don't treat your side hustle as a hobby. As soon as its objective becomes generating revenue (and profit), it becomes a business venture and should be treated accordingly.
8. **Setting Up Unrealistic Expectations**—A side hustle is not going to make you a multimillionaire quickly (or potentially ever). Based on your research, projections, and experience, develop realistic expectations related to your time and finances. Your side hustle is going to take time to grow and become successful. It could take weeks, months, or even a year or more before you start earning any significant revenue. If you start off with unrealistic expectations, you'll quickly become frustrated and disappointed, which could cause you to lose motivation and quit before your goals are achieved. Focus on achieving realistic goals that are manageable (based on your available time and resources).
9. **Taking On Too Much Responsibility Yourself**—In all the excitement of starting a side hustle, it's easy to become overconfident, too eager, and adopt the belief that you can do anything and everything. Being confident and excited is awesome, but if it results in you taking on too much responsibility, adopting unrealistic deadlines, and trying to juggle too much at once, this could easily backfire and end with you becoming burned out and frustrated.

Again, start off slow, build up your side hustle over time, and seek out any assistance you need when you need it.

10. **Getting Caught Up in the Mundane and Forgetting About Your Passion**—Running a business requires a lot of busywork, some of which is boring and repetitive. Yet, these are tasks that are often important and need to be done—and done well. By properly managing your time and taking an organized approach to everything you do that’s related to your side hustle, you can find ways to get the boring aspects of the work done faster and more efficiently, which will give you more time to focus on the aspects of your side hustle you’re truly passionate about. And don’t forget, if you take on a partner, hire employees or freelancers, or work with interns, there will be some tasks you can delegate to others. When this is the case, focus on what you do best and enjoy doing the most, and then seek out people who possess skills, knowledge, and experience that you lack.

11. **Forgetting to Properly Advertise and Market Your Side Hustle**—Just because you start a side hustle does not guarantee its success and that you’ll automatically attract customers or clients. In fact, the opposite is true. While you should focus on personal networking, word-of-mouth advertising, grassroots marketing, and social media marketing that you can do yourself, it’s essential to develop and implement an ongoing marketing and advertising plan for your side hustle. Make sure you have the finances and resources to enact that plan. Depending on the type of side hustle you pursue, the techniques and media vehicles you use to market and promote it will vary. However, your initial business plan should include a detailed and well-researched advertising and marketing plan, along with an ongoing budget for it. We’ll focus more on this within Chapter 9, “Get Customers and Clients,” but keep in mind that spending a few

hundred dollars to promote the launch of your side hustle is not enough to drive a continuous flow of business. You'll need to take an ongoing and multifaceted approach to your advertising and marketing efforts, and then keep those efforts going for as long as you're operating your side hustle.

12. **Neglecting Your Full-Time Job**—Being excited about your new side hustle is great. And while you'll probably want to invest a lot of your time and resources to make it a quick success, make sure that whatever you do doesn't impact your existing job and its responsibilities. The last thing you want is for your current boss to think you've lost interest in your job. Do not start showing up late, leaving early, and not focusing on your real job when you're being paid to do that job. If you wind up getting fired before your side hustle is a huge success and you're able to support yourself financially, you could wind up unemployed with not enough income, in debt, and without the resources you'll need to get your side hustle off the ground and running smoothly.

Yes, a lot can go wrong when starting a side hustle, but properly planning, effective goal setting, and having realistic expectations will help you overcome many of the biggest challenges you'll potentially face.

Dedicating the Time to Your Side Hustle

How much time you'll need to dedicate every day, in the evenings, and on weekends will depend entirely on the type of side hustle you choose to pursue. But if you don't adopt a well-organized schedule and plan, finding the time to do everything that's required will be difficult—especially if you have a full-time job and other personal responsibilities.

The best approach to take, right from the start, is to adopt a clearly defined routine for yourself. Determine what tasks and responsibilities you

need to complete each day, and then allocate specific times to accomplish them. For example, if you opt to run an online business, every morning at 7:00 a.m. (before starting your full-time job), you might need to fill orders received the previous day and drop them off at the post office, FedEx, or UPS on the way to work.

During your lunch break every day, you may need to spend time responding to incoming emails and making follow-up phone calls. And then at night, after work, between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., could be when you fine-tune your e-commerce website, plus work on your advertising and marketing efforts. Then, during a specific time frame on Saturdays, this could be when you do all the bookkeeping, invoicing, and bill paying associated with your side hustle.

Each key task or responsibility related to your side hustle should be scheduled into your week and have a specific time set aside for it. Plus, you want at least a few hours per week that's not pre-allocated, so you can catch up on anything that still needs to be done and that wasn't originally planned for. All this needs to be scheduled around your full-time work schedule, in a way that the two sets of responsibilities are kept separate. This is where having top-notch time management skills and the ability to focus on whatever task is at hand will prove valuable.

Before you choose your side hustle and start pursuing one, analyze your current daily and weekly schedule. Figure out exactly how much time you can dedicate to your side hustle, and how you can better manage all your time to be more productive and efficient at whatever it is you need to do. Determine how technology and automation, delegation, and proper scheduling can be used to ensure you have the time to accomplish everything that'll be required of you, while still finding time for sleep, occasional relaxation, and being able to maintain some type of personal life.

If you don't already use a scheduling or time management tool that syncs between your computer(s) and mobile device(s), now's a good time to start

using one that will cater to your lifestyle and help you utilize your time more efficiently.

Juggling Your Full-Time Job and Side Hustle

There's no easy way to do this without giving up some (or all) of your personal time, at least initially as you get your side hustle off the ground. It can, however, be done. Again, it all comes down to effective time management and understanding the best ways to utilize your time, streamline your workflows, and focusing more time on the most essential tasks. Try to avoid bogging yourself down too much with less important, ancillary tasks that contribute little or nothing to your success on the job or to your side hustle.

Set proper priorities for your responsibilities, and then determine the fastest and most efficient ways to handle each of them within the time you can allocate. It will often help if you have a comfortable, distraction-free space (such as a home office) from which you can work on your side hustle. Creating and maintaining a schedule that you update daily, having clearly defined goals or to-do list items each day, and developing a routine are all strategies you should implement to make it easier to juggle your full-time job and side hustle.

Four Easy Steps to Overcome Your Trepidations

Nobody likes change, or having to deal with the unknown, but starting a side hustle requires you to deal with both. The good news is, when you preplan, do your research, and set proper goals, you'll be able to adapt to the changes in your life easier and you'll understand what to expect, so it won't be a surprise.

Starting and managing a side hustle will force you to step out of your comfort zone, potentially often. But if you're properly prepared and have

confidence in yourself and your abilities, it will be easier to overcome any trepidations you may have. Instead of fearing the unknown, embrace the challenge. Arm yourself with the research, knowledge, the proper skill set, and preparation you will need to face each challenge head-on.

Remember that saying “knowledge is power”? Well, this is a true statement. If you have the information you need and you’ve done your homework or research to prepare for whatever tasks you’ll be handling, the confidence you think you’re lacking will come naturally. On the plus side, your confidence will increase with time and as you gain real-world experience.

Instead of fearing what’s to come, consider it a challenge that you can face head-on, if you enter it with the right knowledge, preparation, and a well-thought-out plan.

15 Ways to Cultivate Your Entrepreneurial Spirit

People are not born entrepreneurs. They develop the mindset, work habits, and skill set to become entrepreneurs. To help you develop and fine-tune your entrepreneurial spirit and think more like an entrepreneur as you take on the responsibilities related to your new side hustle, consider adopting some or all of these 15 key strategies:

1. **Find Mentors**—The best way to learn the habits of an entrepreneur and develop the proper mindset is to spend time with already successful entrepreneurs you can learn from and rely on as a role model or mentor. There’s a difference between studying how something should be done from a book or through online research, and getting a real-world perspective from someone who’s already become successful doing something like what you hope to achieve with your side hustle.

2. **Meet and Network with Other Entrepreneurs**—Tap your professional networking skills, become active on LinkedIn, and spend time at places where you can meet, spend time with, and learn from entrepreneurs who you admire. Surround yourself with people you can learn from, and who will challenge and support you professionally.
3. **Always Keep Learning and Expanding Your Knowledge and Skill Set**—As an entrepreneur who will be making decisions on an ongoing basis, it's important to stay informed. Get into the habit of staying on top of current events—particularly news that impacts your side hustle and your customers/clients. Understand how what's happening in the world around you impacts your life and the lives of others, and if it becomes necessary, be willing and able to adapt. At the same time, stay active when it comes to learning new things.

Reading books, listening to audiobooks, participating in in-person or online classes and workshops, attending trade shows, and working with a mentor are just a few of the ways you can obtain new knowledge and learn new skills on an ongoing basis. And since technology plays such a vital role in all our lives, make a point to stay current when it comes to understanding and adopting new technologies that can benefit your side hustle. This includes learning how to use the latest AI tools now integrated into computers and mobile devices to your utmost advantage.
4. **Set Realistic and Achievable Goals**—Having clearly defined goals gives you something to work toward and will help you stay focused and on task. Making sure those goals are realistic and achievable will ensure you're not overextending yourself or wasting time and resources on something that simply is not possible for whatever reason. As you're putting together a business plan and setting goals for yourself and your side hustle venture, consult with people you

trust and that have real-world experience. Obtain their feedback and insight. Utilize the information you deem appropriate and applicable. While you're the ultimate decision-maker when it comes to your life and side hustle, the insight of others can help you stay grounded as you create your goals.

5. **Think Long-Term**—While we don't always know what tomorrow will bring, it's important to think about the short- and long-term. Every night before bed or first thing in the morning before officially starting your workday, create and review your schedule for the day ahead and understand what your short-term goals are. At the same time, you want to have a clear understanding of what you want to achieve over the next month, six months, year, five years, and even ten years. Having defined long-term goals in writing is as important as having short-term goals. Sure, you'll likely need to tweak your long-term goals over time, but knowing what you're working toward—and why—will be essential to your success.
6. **Always Have a Plan B**—As you work toward achieving goals or overcoming challenges, the approach you plan to take may not always turn out to be the best one. Always be willing and able to adapt based on the unexpected. Have a fallback plan to follow when it becomes clear that your current approach to something is no longer viable. In your mind (or on paper), play the “what-if” game and develop contingency plans. For example, if plan or approach A does not work, you'll know what plan B is and can fall back on it without having to rethink your strategy and then make up for lost time when something doesn't go as planned.
7. **Engage in Actionable Thinking**—This involves not just having a brilliant idea, but knowing how you'll implement that idea in a practical, concrete, and organized way. Actionable thinking means determining how you'll utilize your time, energy, and resources in

the most impactful way to achieve something. This is different from thinking in terms of hypotheticals or being abstract in how you'll approach something, which is useful when brainstorming, but not when trying to accomplish something.

8. **Pursue Your Passion and Purpose, Not Just Profits**—The difference between starting a new side hustle and pursuing a hobby is that your goal is to make money doing something you love. That's a given. So, when it comes to determining what you want to do for your side hustle, focus on your passions and your life's purpose—not on how you can get rich. If you're doing something you love and that has value to others, the money will likely follow.

If all you're trying to do is make some extra cash, go get a second job working for someone else—where you take direction from others and have little or no decision-making power, or the ability to think and work like an entrepreneur. By doing this, you'll earn the money you need, without taking on the responsibilities or risks of pursuing a side hustle where you're in charge.

9. **Never Make Rash Decisions Based on Fear or Raw Emotion**—When something doesn't go as planned or an interaction with someone else doesn't result in a positive outcome, it's easy to get emotionally caught up in the situation and become anxious about it. When you're angry, upset, scared, or experiencing any type of heightened emotion, this is the absolute worst time to make important decisions or take actions that could impact your own future or the potential success of your side hustle. All important decisions and actions should be made based on facts, logic, and common sense.

Your feelings should play a role when making important decisions, but those emotions can't be allowed to cloud your judgment. If you know you're not in the proper headspace to make an important,

time-sensitive decision, seek out advice from someone you trust and who is impartial.

10. **Learn from Your Mistakes**—As an entrepreneur, you're going to make mistakes. That's a given. However, being a good entrepreneur means knowing how to compensate for those mistakes in the most efficient way possible—without wasting a lot of time, money, and resources.

Once a mistake has been made, consider how and why it was made, what should have been done differently, and what you could do in the future to avoid making a similar mistake. Making a mistake is not always bad, especially if you learn from the situation and you're able to prevent something worse from happening in the future.

Based on the mistake and the outcome from it, this may be an indicator that you need to change a policy, procedure, or approach to something. Analyze the situation, learn from it, and move on. Don't dwell on the negative, cast blame onto others, or allow yourself to get into a negative emotional state as a result of the mistake.

11. **Think Creatively**—It's easy to keep doing things the way they've always been done, handling the same tasks in the same way, and following the same routine day after day. However, this approach could prevent you from achieving new and more exciting things. Whatever you're doing, try to think creatively and look at things from different perspectives. Remember, as the operator of your side hustle, you're in charge of your own destiny. If you brainstorm a better way to do something or come up with an improvement to a product or service you offer, consider how that new idea can lead to progress. That age-old saying "think outside the box" certainly applies. And learning to think creatively is a skill set unto itself that you'll want to learn, practice, and implement in all aspects of your life.

- 12. Treat Everyone with Respect**—There are two types of entrepreneurs. One type, everyone loves, admires, and respects. But the other type is someone people don't like or trust. Which do you want to be? Whether you're dealing with coworkers, subordinates, customers, clients, suppliers, or anyone else, your day-to-day interactions with people should involve compassion, forethought, and a positive attitude, even when the person you're dealing with is difficult, uncompromising, or downright rude and unprofessional. Taking the high road in your interactions with others will benefit you in the long term, help you develop a stellar reputation, and make it easier to generate positive reviews and word-of-mouth endorsements when it comes to marketing your side hustle. Your reputation matters. It should be protected and something you're constantly working to enhance.
- 13. Take Full Advantage of the Tools and Resources at Your Disposal**—Once you've created an operational budget for your side hustle, as a skilled entrepreneur you will constantly look for ways to streamline various processes, cut costs, and work more efficiently—without compromising on quality, customer service, or whatever it is that makes your side hustle desirable to your customers or clients. For example, instead of paying high fees for traditional advertising, you could focus on more affordable opportunities, like social media, word of mouth, and ways to generate repeat business from past or existing customers. Likewise, an experienced entrepreneur will seek out ways to fully maximize (not waste) their time, money, and resources.
- 14. Don't Give Up Too Easily or Put Yourself Down When Something Does Not Go as Planned**—Again, mistakes and things not going as planned when pursuing a side hustle are common. Instead of dwelling on the negatives, focus on innovative ways to turn things

around. Try to avoid taking failures personally, and be forgiving toward yourself, your coworkers, or subordinates when something doesn't go perfectly.

15. **Fake It Until You Make It**—As you start pursuing your side hustle, it makes sense that you're nervous. Since you should have already created goals for yourself and your venture, and have envisioned how you define success, you hopefully know what needs to be done and how you plan to do it (or you should by the time you launch your side hustle).

Until you have the confidence you want and need, refer back to your vision of success and adopt the mindset that you're already there—even when you're far from achieving those objectives. Even if you don't feel confident, this doesn't mean you can't convey a sense of confidence to those around you (especially your customers and clients). As long as you're not truly misleading anyone in an illegal manner, faking it until you make it might be a good approach for yourself.

What Type of Side Hustle Should You Choose?

Between what you've read thus far and the soul searching and self-reflection you've done (or will be doing) as you completed the worksheet earlier in this chapter, hopefully you have a better understanding of what you're personally cut out for and what type of side hustle you'd be passionate and excited about. Now, it's time to do some research and then make some important decisions about the specific side hustle you want to start. That's the focus of the next chapter.

Within the Appendix, you'll discover an extensive list of potential side hustles that others have achieved success pursuing. This roundup should serve as fodder for your brainstorming session when it comes to figuring out

what opportunity you'd like to pursue—based on your passion, knowledge, experience, available time, and the resources that are at your disposal.

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CHAPTER 2

Deciding What Side Hustle to Pursue

Once you've determined that a side hustle might be exactly what you're looking for to earn more income and become self-employed, the next obvious question is what type of side hustle should you take on? Unfortunately, there's no cookie-cutter answer that guarantees success for everyone.

Since your side hustle is going to require a significant time commitment to launch, keep operational, and ultimately make successful, it's important that what you choose to pursue has two key components.

1. It should involve something you're passionate about and something you're good at.
2. It needs to be a viable business opportunity that involves a product or service that's in demand, that you can provide, and that has profit-making potential.

In a nutshell, finding the best side hustle for yourself is going to take some serious soul searching, an honest assessment of yourself and your capabilities, a bit of number crunching, and research (potentially a lot of research). Don't just jump into something because you initially think it's a great idea and you're excited to get started.

Your Strengths and Passions

Again, choosing a side hustle that brings together your strengths, passions, skill set, and experience is important. Since you'll likely need to make some personal sacrifices (and perhaps make a financial investment) to pursue your chosen side hustle, if it's something you enjoy and are passionate about, you'll find it more personally fulfilling to pursue.

Explore Your Income Needs

Ultimately, you'll need to do some number crunching and develop a detailed budget before you launch your side hustle, and moving forward, maintain a clear understanding of all the finances related to your business venture. And if this is something you're financing yourself, you'll need to determine if you're willing and able to take on the personal financial risk.

Next, considering your current financial situation and your long-term goals, ambitions, and fiscal needs, determine how much profit you need to earn on a weekly, monthly, and annual basis to make your side hustle venture worthwhile. As you do your number crunching and budget planning, don't forget that you'll need to pay taxes on this income. Based on how much you'll eventually be earning, the additional income could put you into a higher tax bracket, so this is an important financial consideration.

Determine the Demand for What You Plan to Offer

Assuming you're able to come up with what you believe is the perfect side hustle to pursue, and it checks off all the boxes in terms of it being something you're passionate about, have the time to pursue, and potentially offers the income opportunity you're seeking, there are a few more things to consider before moving forward.

Most importantly, based on the type of side hustle you plan to pursue and the target audience/customer base you've identified, is there enough demand for what you plan to offer to make your side hustle viable?

If you plan to operate a localized, service-oriented business, it's essential that you do the necessary market research to ensure there's enough localized demand for what you plan to offer. Be sure to consider the current competition, as well as the potential size of your target audience, and how much you project it will grow in the future.

For side hustles that are based online or that have more of a regional, national, or global reach, the geographic location of your target customer/client base is less of a factor, but you still need to ensure that the demand for whatever you plan to offer exists. Will you be able to win over enough market share to make your side hustle viable, considering your established competition and potential future competitors?

Not only do you need to understand the amount of competition you'll be facing, and who those competitors are, you also need to determine how loyal the competition's customers or clients are, and what it'll take to capture some of the market share away from your competitors.

Building your own customer/client base is going to be challenging and potentially costly. You need to go into your side hustle venture with a clear understanding of what you'll do differently or better from your competition, plus have a clear and well-thought-out mission statement.

While a particular side hustle idea may seem viable to you and the people you share your plans with, be sure to perform proper research to ensure there's a real-world demand for what you plan to offer. This is something you want to figure out early on, during the planning stages for your side hustle—not after you've launched your side hustle and need it to succeed to recuperate your initial time and financial investment.

Time Considerations

Even if you think you've come up with the perfect side hustle that fits your personality, skill set, and interests, and determine there's a demand for what

you plan to offer, think carefully about the time it'll take you to establish your side hustle and then manage it on an ongoing basis.

Obviously, there are only 24 hours in a day and 7 days in a week. That's not going to change. Right now, before you take on the responsibilities and time commitment required for a side hustle, consider your existing schedule during a typical day and week.

TIME MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

As you complete this questionnaire, focus on your personal, family, and current professional/work obligations. Don't forget to include time you spend with family members, pets, socializing with friends, watching TV, pursuing hobbies, eating, and sleeping. Anything and everything that requires your time needs be considered.

To help you understand how you spend your time throughout your day, so you can figure out how much time you can potentially dedicate to your side hustle, write out how you spend your time on a typical weekday and then on a typical weekend. Of course, your day begins as soon as you wake up each morning.

Wake-Up Time and Early Morning Routine

Typical Wake-Up Time: AM

List the tasks you typically need to accomplish from the time you wake up and as part of your early morning route. This includes getting dressed, eating breakfast, getting your kids ready for school, walking your dog, etc.

	Task Description	Time Requirement
Task #1		HoursMinutes
Task #2		HoursMinutes
Task #3		HoursMinutes
Task #4		HoursMinutes

Approximate amount of free or discretionary time you have during in this time frame:
.....HoursMinutes

Morning Responsibilities: AM until 12:00 p.m.

List the key tasks you typically need to accomplish between when your early morning routine is completed and noon.

	Task Description	Time Requirement
Task #1		HoursMinutes
Task #2		HoursMinutes
Task #3		HoursMinutes
Task #4		HoursMinutes

Approximate amount of free or discretionary time during in this time frame:Hours
.....Minutes

Early Afternoon Responsibilities: 12:01 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

List the key tasks you typically need to accomplish between noon and midafternoon.

	Task Description	Time Requirement
Task #1		HoursMinutes
Task #2		HoursMinutes
Task #3		HoursMinutes
Task #4		HoursMinutes

Afternoon Responsibilities: 3:01 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

List the key tasks you typically need to accomplish in the late afternoon.

	Task Description	Time Requirement
Task #1		HoursMinutes
Task #2		HoursMinutes
Task #3		HoursMinutes
Task #4		HoursMinutes

Approximate amount of free or discretionary time during in this time frame:Hours
.....Minutes

Early Evening Responsibilities: 5:01 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

List the key tasks you typically need to accomplish in the early evening. This might include commuting home from your full-time job, preparing dinner, or spending time with family and friends.

	Task Description	Time Requirement
Task #1		HoursMinutes
Task #2		HoursMinutes
Task #3		HoursMinutes
Task #4		HoursMinutes

Approximate amount of free or discretionary time during in this time frame:Hours
.....Minutes

Nighttime Responsibilities: 7:01 p.m. to Bedtime

List the key tasks you typically need to accomplish later in the evening until your typical bedtime.

When is your typical (desired) bedtime:PM

	Task Description	Time Requirement
Task #1		HoursMinutes
Task #2		HoursMinutes
Task #3		HoursMinutes
Task #4		HoursMinutes

Approximate amount of free or discretionary time during in this time frame:Hours
.....Minutes

Now that you've outlined how you spend your time during a typical weekday, repeat this exercise for how you spend a typical weekend. Based on your current daily and weekend

schedule, what's the total amount of free or discretionary time you typically have every morning, early-afternoon, afternoon, evening, and night?HoursMinutes

Also, based on the schedule you just outlined, what activities can be shortened or eliminated altogether to free up more time in your day?

	Task Description	Time Requirement
Task #1		HoursMinutes
Task #2		HoursMinutes
Task #3		HoursMinutes
Task #4		HoursMinutes
Task #5		HoursMinutes
Task #6		HoursMinutes

Total amount of time you can free up in your daily schedule that you could potentially allocate to working on your side hustle:HoursMinutes

What sacrifices will you need to make to free up some of your time? Will this require spending less time with family and friends, cutting down on the amount of time you spend watching TV or web surfing, or reducing how much sleep you get each night? Are these time sacrifices sustainable?

Understanding how much free time or discretionary time you currently have will be a major determining factor when it comes to choosing a side hustle. If whatever side hustle you ultimately choose to pursue requires more of a time requirement than you're willing or able to commit, unfortunately, this is a side hustle opportunity that's not suitable for you.

How to Find the Right Idea for Your Side Hustle

There's no perfect side hustle that caters to everyone's needs, skill set, and passions. Some opportunities require minimal time per day to operating. Some involve little interaction with customers or clients.

Other potential side hustles require a much more significant time commitment, have higher startup costs, have many different types of responsibilities associated with them, and involve a lot of interaction with customers or clients—either in person, on the phone, through email, using instant messaging, or even via video calls or virtual meetings.

Later in this book, you'll discover an extensive listing of popular side hustles. However, the opportunities listed only scratch the surface of what's possible. Use your creativity and ability to think outside the box to pinpoint and develop your own opportunities. This could easily provide a much more enjoyable and lucrative opportunity than simply replicating what others have already done.

But, if you choose to take on a side hustle that's been done many times before, focus on what you bring to the table and what will set what you have to offer apart from your competitors and what your potential customers or clients will find appealing.

Again, pinpointing the best side hustle opportunities will involve a lot of self-reflection and self-assessment, research, creative thinking, and a lot of tapping into your entrepreneurial spirit. Part of your research should involve learning from mentors with real-world experience in whatever you choose to pursue.

It's essential that upon pinpointing a potential side hustle opportunity that might be perfect for you that you develop realistic expectations about what to expect. You should know exactly what you're getting into, what will be required of you, and what your customers/clients will be expecting from you.

Once you've reviewed the listing of proven side hustle opportunities featured at the end of this book, take advantage of online research, trade shows, and personal networking to help pinpoint additional opportunities. You should also brainstorm ideas with family members, friends, current or

past coworkers, and other people who know and understand what your interests are and what you're capable of achieving.

Types of Side Hustle Opportunities

As you consider potential side hustles, focus on how much interaction you want to have with other people and what forms you want that interaction to take. Think about where you want to work from, if you're more interested in something that involves your mind or more manual tasks, and how much structure you need the side hustle to have in terms of work hours and time commitment. Also think about the types of deadlines you'll be required to meet and whether, based on your current life situation, you'll have the wherewithal to consistently meet them.

There are many types of side hustles you could pursue—the possibilities are truly limitless. For example, you could:

- Craft and sell items.
- Sell any types of products online.
- Perform in-person or virtual consulting, freelancing, or tutoring.
- Provide a service related to your skill set or areas of expertise.

How to Efficiently Start a Side Hustle While You Have a Full-Time Job

Based on the information about your schedule that you compiled within this chapter's Time Management Questionnaire, you should have a general idea of how much time you need to dedicate to your full-time job, commute, and other work-related responsibilities. And, you should have a good idea of what your typical workweek schedule already entails.

Knowing this, you can pinpoint how much time and what times on weekdays and weekends you can dedicate to your side hustle. What you'll

ultimately discover is that being able to juggle a full-time job, family and personal responsibilities, and a side hustle comes down to becoming an expert at time management, organization, and being able to focus on whatever task is at hand so you can maximize your productivity.

Slacking off on your full-time work responsibilities, especially in favor of a side hustle, is a sure way to get yourself fired, or at the very least, passed over for a raise or promotion. And since you're probably relying on your full-time job for its salary and potentially its benefits, it's not something you want to lose until you are 100 percent sure your side hustle will be successful and could generate a full-time income.

So, since you can't take time away from your job or commute, you'll need to find other time periods in your daily schedule that you can dedicate to your side hustle. To accomplish this, you'll likely need to sacrifice other things, like your free time, time spent with family and friends, time spent at the gym or participating in hobbies, or how much time you spend sleeping. Again, before committing to any of these sacrifices, make sure it's something you're willing and able to do, and that it's sustainable over the long term.

Chances are, you can't function on minimal sleep for more than a few nights in a row, and if you spend considerably less time with your spouse, partner, or children, this will put a strain on your family relationships.

Go back and review the Time Management Questionnaire. Calculate how much time you can realistically dedicate to a side hustle. Determine when during weekdays and weekends you can focus on your side hustle. And then, based on this information, make sure the time commitment requirement is in line with the time you actually have available. Remember, when it comes to launching and managing a successful side hustle, cutting corners and shirking responsibilities is not an option.

SET ASIDE SPECIFIC TIMES FOR SPECIFIC TASKS

Once you're engaged in your side hustle and know what your day-to-day responsibilities are, set aside specific times each day to handle those tasks and develop a regular routine. For example, schedule a specific time each morning to return phone calls or respond to emails related to your side hustle. If you need to fulfill and ship orders, schedule a certain time each day to process and pack the orders, and then drop them off at whatever shipper they need to be delivered to.

Having a routine will make demands on your time easier to juggle and manage. However, be prepared for things to not always go as planned. Have a backup plan in place, so you can allocate time to put out fires related to your side hustle and deal with emergencies. If this is not something your daily schedule allows for, due to your full-time job responsibilities and family responsibilities, have someone you trust available to whom you can delegate tasks in a pinch. This should be someone able to handle the various tasks or situations that arise with both efficiency and professionalism.

Think About Your Future Needs, Too

The Time Management Questionnaire should help you accurately calculate or make accurate predictions about how much time you can realistically invest into a side hustle right now. But what about the future?

Do you have any major life events coming up that could dramatically alter your schedule or available time? For example:

- Are you getting married or planning to get into a serious romantic relationship?
- Are you planning to become a parent?
- Are you considering adopting a pet?
- Will you need to dedicate time in the future to caring for elderly parents?
- Do you anticipate earning a promotion at your current job that will require an additional time commitment?

- Do you anticipate experiencing any personal, medical, physical, or emotional issues that could take focus away from other personal and professional obligations?

While you obviously can't see into the future, you can consider future life events you know have a high probability of interfering with your existing lifestyle and schedule. There's no point in starting a side hustle now, only to figure out six months or a year down the road that you'll need to give it up because of a major life event.

Likewise, based on your anticipated plans and goals for the future, is starting and managing a side hustle part of your solution for becoming financially independent, paying off debt, or raising the additional money you'll want or need in the future?

So, What's Next?

Knowing what you want out of your side hustle is, of course, necessary. It's equally important to identify your target customers/clients and cater to their wants, needs, and expectations, starting from day one (and then every day thereafter), if you want to achieve long-term success. How to identify, learn about, and promote your side hustle to your target audience is the focus of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

Identify Your Ideal Customer

Before choosing your side hustle, focus on how much interaction and the type of interaction you want to have with your clients or customers. If you're not a "people person," there are certainly plenty of side hustles you could pursue that will minimize (but not eliminate) your need to communicate with others. As a business operator, at least some interaction with others—whether in person, on the phone, via email, or using text messaging / live chat—will be required.

If you don't already have them, developing written and verbal communication skills will serve you well. In fact, it's pretty much necessary. If you'll be interacting with customers, clients, suppliers, or service providers via email or text messaging, for example, the latest AI tools that are being integrated into smartphones, tablets, and computers can help you compose error-free messages and emails.

However, it's always your responsibility to determine how, when, and at what frequency you'll communicate, as well as what will be communicated. You'll need to choose the proper verbiage and tone to clearly communicate key points, without accidentally being offensive or being perceived as annoying. For example, just because a customer or client provided their email address or cell phone number to receive text messages does not mean you should be sending them sales and marketing messages every day, or even every week, for that matter.

There's a fine line between staying in communication with your customers or clients and harassing them with too many messages, sent too

frequently, or that wind up being perceived as annoying. This will quickly alienate the people you're trying to impress and do business with.

Determining the communication method you'll use and what information you'll share (and when) will come down to one thing—getting to know your target customer or client. Regardless of who you're communicating with or how, always be respectful of their time and share only information the person you're communicating with will perceive as useful.

Who Will You Serve and What Problem Will You Solve?

If you want to operate a successful side hustle, in addition to truly understanding what you're offering (the product or service), absolutely everything you do must always cater to the people you're serving. This means using the proper tone, verbiage, and communication method that your target customer will easily understand and respond favorably to. Always put your customer or client's needs first.

To accomplish this, it's essential to know as much about your target audience as possible. This includes who they are, what's important to them, and what challenges they're facing.

First, you'll need to carefully define your target audience. And then, it's your responsibility to get to know all that you can about that audience. This is done through market research, various types of interaction, and studying how your audience responds to your products, services, and all your sales and marketing efforts. Only by getting to know your target audience will you be able to provide them with top-notch customer service, as well as products or services that they want and need.

After carefully defining your target audience and what products or services you will offer as part of your side hustle, the next step is to put this

information together and develop a clear understanding of what problems your side hustle will solve and what needs it fulfills for your target audience. This is information you'll need to clearly communicate in all your sales, marketing, and advertising efforts. This understanding is also something you'll need to continuously demonstrate as part of your customer service efforts, and as part of your communications and interactions with your customers or clients.

Based on the wants, needs, and financial resources of your target audience, one of your ongoing responsibilities will be to showcase how whatever it is you're offering will help to solve their problems, fulfill their needs, help them achieve their desires, or somehow enhance their lifestyle. If you can't communicate the value that you're bringing to the table clearly and in a way that resonates with your target audience, your side hustle is doomed to fail.

Defining Your Target Audience Demographics

There are many ways you can define your target audience—and it all comes down to demographics and having a clear understanding of who makes up this audience. Before you can define your target audience, make sure you have a clear understanding of what you plan to offer through your side hustle.

Only by knowing what you have to offer—whether it's a product or service (or both)—can you determine who you should be trying to reach with all your sales, marketing, advertising, and customer service efforts. And if you're somehow customizing or creating a product for this audience, you need to know what they want and why, so you can cater to their wants and needs. Ultimately, whatever your side hustle offers, it must be perceived as worthwhile and valuable to its target audience. So, to be able to showcase this value, knowing all you can about your target audience is an absolute must.

CUSTOMER PROFILE WORKSHEET

There are many ways to create a detailed customer profile and define your target audience. Ultimately, in just one sentence, you should be able to define your target audience or customer.

An example might be, "My target audience is comprised of males, between the ages of 18 and 34, who are married, earn at least \$75,000 per year, are college educated, employed, who do not yet have children, and who enjoy playing golf." The more specific you can be when creating your customer profiles, the better.

To help you create a customer profile, start by answering these questions. While you might not know or care about all this demographic information, the more you know, the better you'll be able to cater to that audience. As thoroughly as possible, provide the requested information about who you perceive your target audience to be.

Customer Profile Information

Gender: _____ Male _____ Female _____ Other

Age Range: _____ to _____ years

Physical Attributes:

Race / Nationality:

Education Level:

Annual Income:

Credit Rating:

Marital Status: _____ Single _____ Married _____ Divorced

Sexual Orientation:

Physical, Mental, or Emotional Challenges:

Religion:

Occupation and Employment Status:

Professional Licenses or Accreditations:

Average Work Schedule:

Where They Live (Geographic Location, City, State, Country):

Type of Housing (Home, Apartment, Condo, TV, etc.):

Own, Rent, Living with Parents:

Number of People in the Household:

Pets:

Hobbies:

Number and Type of Vehicle(s) Owned or Leased:

Forms of Public Transportation Frequently Used (including Uber and Lyft):

Vacation and Travel Habits:

TV and Media Consumption Habits:

Social Media Habits:

Level of Computer Literacy:

Types of Computers and Mobile Devices Used:

Political Affiliation:

Club or Association Memberships:

Preferred Payment Method(s) for Purchases (Cash, credit card, check, debit card, PayPal, Apple Pay, Google Pay, etc.):

Preferred Shopping Method (In-person retail, online from computer, online from mobile device, mail order (yes, this is still a thing):

Preferred Communication Method (In-person, phone, email, text message, live messaging):

Biggest Personal Challenges or Concerns:

Biggest Professional Challenges or Concerns:

Additional Profiling Questions Related to Your Target Customers

What will your target customer find most appealing about your product or service?

What need will your side hustle be filling for your target customer?

Which of your competitors do your target customers currently rely on?

What do you perceive as being the main reasons why your target customer will switch to your products or services?

What do you anticipate will be the biggest obstacles when it comes to educating your target customer about your side hustle and what it offers?

Now, in one sentence, summarize your target audience.

My target customer or client is:

If necessary, go back and consider whether what you're offering through your side hustle has a secondary target audience. If so, complete this questionnaire for that audience as well.

Keep in mind, as you pursue your side hustle, you may discover your customer profile will evolve over time. Every three months or so, based on your research and firsthand experiences, go back and fine-tune your target customer profile as needed.

Communicating with Your Target Customers

Now that you've developed a core customer profile, everything you do moving forward should cater to that audience.

When creating your sales, marketing, and advertising materials, product or services descriptions, owner's manuals, correspondence, customer service messaging, logo design, website design, product packaging, etc., it should all be written or presented in a way that will directly appeal to your target audience—using vocabulary they'll understand, as well as text, visuals, and related content they'll relate to.

How, where, and when you communicate with your target audience should also cater to their wants and needs, without being intrusive or off-putting in any way. All communications and interactions with your target audience should be perceived as valuable to them, and not self-serving for you (although both goals can be achieved at once using a bit of creativity).

Strategies for Enhancing Your Written Communication Skills

Not everyone is a good writer, whether it comes to writing product descriptions, marketing or promotional materials, product manuals, emails, text messages, or any other text that your customers or clients will be reading. That's okay, if you're aware of your shortcoming in this area and take steps to address it.

We're living in a time when people running a side hustle who have poor written communication skills have many tools and options available to them. This includes the use of artificial intelligence, as well as word processors with spelling and grammar checkers.

Currently, all the newest Windows PCs that support Microsoft's Copilot+ PC technology have access to tools that can help you compose error-free text within documents, emails, and text messages, for example. Similar technology is also available for Android device users that have Google's Gemini AI technology integration. And Apple has recently integrated Apple Intelligence AI tools into all Apple computers and mobile devices.

There are also countless tools you can use with your computers or mobile devices that take advantage of ChatGPT and other OpenAI technology to help you edit text you've composed or create text from scratch based on prompts. In addition to generating errorfree content from a spelling and grammatical standpoint, AI can also use vocabulary and a tone that's appropriate to specific readers.

What's possible using AI tools when it comes to composing or editing any type of text is incredibly powerful, but the technology is still in its infancy. Always proofread content yourself before allowing it to be seen by customers and clients. Also, use AI as a tool, not as a crutch. You still want to take steps toward improving your own written communication skills. This can be done by taking online or in-person business writing and content creation classes, for example.

Tools for Enhancing Your Written Communication Skills

The following classes and resources can help you develop and enhance your written communications skills:

- **Grammarly for Business: The Ultimate Guide to Business Communication**—<https://go.grammarly.com/business-communication-ebook>
- **Management Concepts Business Writing**—<https://www.managementconcepts.com/course/id/4317>
- **Skillsoft Written Communication**—<https://www.skillsoft.com/channel/written-communication-e25b4610-e719-11e6-9835-f723b46a2688>
- **UCLA Extension Written Communication Classes**—<https://www.uclaextension.edu/writing-journalism/written-communication>

AI-Based Writing Software and Tools

The following software can be used with your Windows or MacOS computer and your mobile devices to enhance writing using artificial intelligence, along with advanced spelling and grammatical checking:

- **ChatGPT-4**—<https://openai.com/index/gpt-4o-and-more-tools-to-chatgpt-free>
- **DocGenius**—<https://docgenius.app/en-US/l/business-proposal-writer>
- **Google Gemini**—<https://gemini.google.com>
- **Grammarly**—<https://www.grammarly.com>
- **Microsoft Copilot**—<https://copilot.microsoft.com>

- **ProWritingAid**—<http://prowritingaid.com/lp/discover>

Strategies for Improving Your Verbal Communication Skills

Unless you plan on using an AI-based chatbot to communicate with your customers or clients, as opposed to speaking with them directly (which is not something you should do), it's important to develop strong verbal communication skills. This means being able to communicate clearly, politely, and professionally in person, during video calls, when participating in a virtual meeting, and on the telephone.

Becoming a skilled verbal communicator takes practice, since, like writing, it's a skill set unto itself. If you don't consider yourself to be a strong verbal communicator, negotiator, or public speaker, this will impact your salesmanship and customer service capabilities.

There are all sorts of how-to books, videos, online courses, in-person classes, and organizations you can take advantage of to help you develop and enhance all aspects of your verbal communication skills. There are also technology-based, real-time language translation tools that allow for easier conversations when communicating with people who speak other languages.

Being able to communicate easily and clearly with your customers and clients is essential, so once you understand who your target customer is, determine what you'll need to do to enhance your verbal communication skills to best be able to communicate with this group in the most efficient ways possible.

Tools for Enhancing Your Verbal Communication Skills

The following tools and resources can be used to help you develop and enhance your verbal communications skills:

- **American Management Association Communication Skills Classes and Seminars**—<https://www.amanet.org/training-topics/communication-skills>
- **Dale Carnegie Presentation Skills and Public Speaking Training**—<https://www.dalecarnegie.com/en/presentation-skills-public-speaking-training>
- **Harvard University Communication Skills Courses**—<https://pll.harvard.edu/subject/communication-skills>
- **Master Class: Robin Roberts Teaches Effective and Authentic Communication**—<https://www.masterclass.com/classes/robin-roberts-teaches-effective-and-authentic-communication>
- **Toastmasters International Your Speaking Voice**—<https://toastmasterscdn.azureedge.net/medias/files/department-documents/education-documents/199-your-speaking-voice.pdf>
- **Udemy Effective Verbal Communication Skills for Professionals**—<https://www.udemy.com/course/effective-verbal-communication-skills>

12 Strategies for Being an Active Listener

Hearing and listening are two different things. No matter how you'll be communicating with others when operating your side hustle, being a good listener—an active listener—is as important (if not more important) than being a skilled writer and verbal communicator.

To become an active listener takes practice and requires more than just paying attention to what someone else is saying. It also involves:

1. Avoid interrupting with your own opinions or solutions until it's your turn to speak.

2. Demonstrate your understanding by paraphrasing what's just been said or explained to you, and validating what was said, when appropriate.
3. Face the speaker and maintain eye contact when in person.
4. Listen with an open mind, even if you don't agree with what's being said. Try to understand the other person's point of view and respect their opinions.
5. Never interrupt the person who's speaking. In other words, stop talking.
6. Do not jump to conclusions when someone else is speaking.
7. Pay attention and pick up on someone's nonverbal clues.
8. Put the speaker more at ease by demonstrating that you're listening with your body language, facial expressions, and nonverbal responses. This can include nodding your head, slightly leaning toward the person speaking, and using other appropriate body language.
9. Remove all potential distractions during phone calls, video calls, and virtual meetings.
10. Stay focused on the person who's speaking. Pay attention to the overall meaning of what's being said and the speaker's tone—not just the words they use.
11. Try to avoid focusing on what you should say next, or how you should reply while someone else is still speaking. It's okay to pause periodically to consider what you're about to say.
12. When appropriate, ask plenty of questions to show you're paying attention.

The following tools and resources can be used to help you develop and enhance your listening skills:

- **Center for Creative Leadership's How to Practice Authentic Communication in a Virtual Space Through the Power of Listening**—<https://www.ccl.org/webinars/leaders-practice-authentic-communication-in-virtual-space/>
- **Dale Carnegie How to Be a Better Listener**—<https://www.dalecarnegie.com/en/daledalecarnegieprinciples/how-to-be-better-listener>
- ***Listening: Learn to Really Listen and Develop Active Listening Skills*** (audiobook)—<https://www.audible.com/mk/t/title-3?asin=B01BZBTBO8>
- **Udemy The Power of Deep Listening**—<https://www.udemy.com/course/the-power-of-deep-listening>

Making Yourself Available to Customers and Clients

You are only human, and your customers and clients will understand that, as long as you create the proper expectations. If you promote that you're available 24/7 to address their wants and needs, you'd better follow through on that expectation and promise.

However, if you're operating a side hustle and clearly state how and when you're available, and you're still able to meet the needs of your customers or clients, this, too, is acceptable, as long as you're transparent. It's okay to promote your hours of operation and make it clear that, after hours, calls, correspondence, or meeting/appointment requests will receive a priority response or callback at the start of the next business day, or at a time that's most convenient to your customer or client.

Clear, honest, and timely communication between you and your customers/clients, on an ongoing basis, is key for building trust and developing a strong, long-term relationship. It's also essential for generating repeat business and positive word-of-mouth advertising

Overcoming Misunderstandings and Communication Failures

Especially when communicating with people whose native language is not your own, or if you wind up using a lot of technical jargon or buzzwords as you communicate, it's all too easy to cause a misunderstanding or fail to communicate important information in the best way possible. The meaning behind your words could be misconstrued in a way that someone takes offense to.

The better you get to know your customers and clients, the easier it'll be to communicate with them on a level they'll understand and appreciate. However, if you discover that something you've said or written was misunderstood in any way, immediately apologize and carefully clarify the message you were trying to communicate.

Is the Customer Really Always Right?

No, of course not. But in their minds, they are always right. No matter how amazing your product or service is, there will be some people, at some point, who won't be happy. So, how should you deal with these people?

This comes down to a personal decision and what you hope to get out of the situation. If your goal is to make the customer happy and stand by your product or service, there will be times when you need to concede to the customer. Most "difficult" customers just want or need to be heard. Listen carefully to what they have to say and demonstrate a clear understanding (even if you don't agree with it).

If you've legitimately made a mistake, or for whatever reason your product did not perform as advertised, acknowledge this, show remorse, apologize, and try to remedy the situation—even if it means offering a full refund, replacing the product, offering the service again (at no charge), and ultimately taking a financial loss. By keeping each customer or client happy,

you're more apt to receive a positive rating or review, repeat business, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations—all of which are needed to help you grow your business.

When dealing with a situation where you did everything right and your product performed as it was supposed to, but the customer or client still has a complaint, always maintain a professional demeanor. Do not refer to the customer as a liar or insinuate that they're stupid or flat out wrong. If your goal is to maintain the business relationship, try to make the customer happy. Determine what they want and how they believe you can remedy the situation, and then decide if that's something you're able and willing to do.

Understand that anytime you do not live up to a customer or client's wants, needs, and expectations, you run the risk of disappointing them. This could not only result in a financial loss, but also in negative reviews and word-of-mouth publicity. Be sure to weigh the possible long-term cost of this, compared to the financial loss of making the customer happy by meeting their demands, or issuing a refund (even if it's not deserved).

Even if you have a clearly stated return policy, warranty, or guarantee for your product or service, treat each customer service issue on a case-by-case basis and always be flexible, especially if it'll mean retaining a customer, generating repeat business in the future, or potentially receiving positive word-of-mouth advertising.

For example, if you clearly state you offer a 30-day product return policy, but a customer approaches you on day 40 with a legitimate reason why the product needs to be returned and refunded or replaced, in most cases, you'll want to honor their request. Remind them of your return policy, but state that you're willing to make a onetime concession due to their unique situation. This is part of what offering top-notch customer service is all about.

So, while your customers or clients might not always be in the right, be creative and find amicable solutions that allow both parties (you and the

customer) to come out as winners. But when needed, put the needs of your customers before your own whenever possible.

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CHAPTER 4

Study Your Competition

No matter what type of idea you have for a side hustle, realistically, there's a 99.9 percent chance that there's already at least one other company, perhaps many, that are already doing what you plan to do. And those companies have a competitive advantage. They're already established and have a base of customers or clients already in place.

This does not mean you should not proceed. In fact, what competition you have can serve as an informational resource to help you determine what to do, and what not to do, as you proceed. Now that you know who your target customer is, the potential size of your marketplace, and what your potential customers want from you and your business, the next step is to determine if they're already working with one or more of your competitors.

But who are your competitors? What lured their customers or clients to them? What does each of your competitors offer? Where do they operate? What type of resources do they have? Why are they successful? If they are struggling, what aren't they doing right or what have these competitors misunderstood about their target customers that's keeping them from achieving success? These are all questions you'll need to find answers to through research.

Before you move forward, make sure you clearly understand the side hustle you plan to pursue. You also need to know what products and/or services you plan to offer, and who the target audience is for what you plan to offer.

Next, determine how to establish and then operate your side hustle successfully—you don't want to waste time reinventing the wheel, so to speak. Instead, figure out who your competition is, how and why each of these competitors is achieving success, who the target audience is for these competitors, and what resources each has and can utilize.

This chapter is all about figuring out who your competition is, studying those competitors, discovering how to learn from their business practices and successes, and determining what mistakes each competitor has made or is making, so you can avoid them. It's also the time during your early planning stages that you need to develop an understanding for the industry you're about to enter into.

As you uncover this information, focus on what you plan to offer through your side hustle, how you can do things better than your competitors, what will allow you to differentiate yourself from your competitors, and perhaps most importantly, what you'll need to do to lure customers or clients away from those competitors as you attempt to grow your business.

Start by Learning All About Your Industry

Once you know what industry you will be working in, learn as much about that industry as you can. How large is it globally, nationally, and locally? Who are the biggest players? How competitive is the industry as a whole? How large is the target customer base?

Based on what you learn about the industry, what do you perceive the biggest barriers to entry will be? What will be your biggest hurdles to overcome to achieve success? How is the industry forecasted to perform over the next year, five years, and ten years?

How will advancements in technology potentially impact the industry? These are just some of the questions you will need to acquire answers to

through research. Start by reading industry-oriented publications and websites, join industry organizations, and attend industry trade shows. Also, become active on industry-specific groups on social media (particularly on LinkedIn and Facebook). You can also purchase or subscribe to industry research and reports.

A few excellent sources of industry-specific information include:

- **Dunn & Bradstreet:** www.dnb.com/marketing/media/dnb-hoovers-free-trial-industry-insights.html
- **International Trade Administration:** www.trade.gov/industries
- **MarketResearch.com:** www.marketresearch.com
- **Statista:** www.statista.com/studies-and-reports/industries-and-markets
- **The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:** <https://www.bls.gov/iag>

Identifying Your Competition

By definition, a *direct competitor* is a business that offers the same or similar services as what you plan to offer. A competitor might operate in the same geographical location, target the same customer base, and operate using a similar business model to what you will be using. A direct competitor is one that could steal away a customer or client, and that offers similar or lower prices than what you plan to charge.

Meanwhile, as you do your research, invest the time to also identify your *indirect competitors*. These are businesses that might offer the same products or services, but to a slightly different target customer, or offer slightly different products or services to the same exact target customer that you plan to cater to. An indirect competitor may also be operating almost the same business, following a very similar business model, but focusing on an entirely different geographic region.

You should also consider an indirect competitor as a business that might not be doing exactly what you are doing, but that has the potential to compete for the same customers or clients.

Another type of competitor to be on the lookout for as you conduct your research are *potential competitors*. These are established businesses or other potential startups that are not currently doing what you plan to do, but that could enter the market at any time in the future simply by expanding their target customer/client base or adding to their product line or service offerings.

Now that you know that as part of your research you need to uncover the companies that are your direct competitors, indirect competitors, and potential competitors, it's time to start doing the required research to learn about each of these companies.

Ways to Identify Your Competitors

The steps you are about to take to learn about your competition are called market research. There are many ways to conduct this research on your own, by hiring others to help with these efforts, and by relying on reputable market research studies that have been conducted by various other organizations.

Once you know what industry you will be working in, gather as many current industry reports and market research studies as you can get your hands on. In many cases, these are reports you will need to purchase outright or subscribe to in order to gain access. Before investing hundreds or even thousands of dollars on these independently created industry reports, make sure each was created and published by a reputable source and offers current information, data, and statistics. Depending on the industry you'll be working in, things might change very quickly, so a report that's more than one year old could turn out to be outdated and worthless to you.

Do not, however, just rely on information gathered by others. The best way to gain a better understanding of the industry you plan to be a part of, and at the same time learn about your competitors, is to conduct your own research. This can be accomplished in many ways, such as:

- Conduct in-person or phone interviews with customers who do business with your competitors or who are familiar with your competitors.
- If you have the resources, gather a group of people who fit into your target customer base and host a formal focus group. Use this as an opportunity to ask about your competitors, their hiring/purchasing decision-making processes, and learn more about their needs, expectations, and budget. When hosting a focus group, be prepared to compensate each of the participants.
- Interview industry experts.
- Perform online research to find your competitors, and then learn as much as you can about each of them by visiting their respective websites, reading reviews about them, and reading any articles written about them in mainstream or industry-oriented media. Also, pay careful attention to the online presence of your competitors on social media and what others on social media are saying about your competitors. To learn more, see the upcoming section “Performing Online Research About Your Competitors.”
- Send out questionnaires to potential customers and people who are working in or familiar with your industry. Try to assess how and why customers or clients of your competitors made their purchasing or hiring decisions.

How to Host a Productive Focus Group

The eight key steps required to host a productive focus group include:

1. Select the topic(s) for discussion.
2. Compile a list of questions or prompts to be used by the host.
3. Find and gather qualified and appropriate participants.
4. Choose a convenient location for the focus group.
5. Decide on a format and process to follow.
6. Ask your questions in an organized way, and in a manner that will solicit honest and open responses from participants.
7. Record all the collected information.
8. Analyze and interpret the results. You want to use the information you acquire to help your side hustle prosper.

Performing Online Research About Your Competitors

Start by figuring out who your competitors are. If this is not something you don't already know, use your favorite search engine and enter keywords or phrases related to the type of business you plan to operate.

Once you discover the names of potential competitors, visit each of their websites. Start by learning as much about the company as possible from the "About Us" (or equivalent) section, and then focus on the company's products and services. Pay attention to what promises or guarantees are being offered to potential customers or clients. Try to ascertain the company's value proposition, mission statement, overall objectives, marketing messages, leadership team, history, and its current position in the marketplace, along with anything else you can learn..

If the competitor is selling products, focus on the number of products and product variations being offered, approximate shipping times, whether free shipping is offered, what type of return policy is offered, and whether a warrantee or guarantee comes with the products. Does the company offer customer support or technical support? If so, how and when is it available?

What type of payments does the company accept? How and where are the products sold? How competitive is the pricing?

Also determine what sets each competitor apart from others. To really get to know about each competitor, consider becoming a paid customer. See firsthand what the overall customer/client experience is like working with that competitor.

If the competitor is offering a service, learn as much about the specific service offerings as you can, including when and where they're available, how much they cost, what's included, how easy it is for a customer to hire the competitor, and how quickly the service is provided. What promises or guarantees is the competitor making to potential clients?

As you evaluate each competitor's website, pay attention to all the details, from the information included on each page, to the overall layout and design, how easy the website is to navigate, how informative it is, and how information is conveyed. As you explore the competitor's website, put yourself in a potential customer or client's proverbial shoes. Determine what the site does well, and where it's lacking. And, of course, brainstorm ways your company's website could be better.

These days, as important as a company's website is as a sales, marketing, and customer service tool, it's a company's presence on social media that potential customers or clients really pay attention to.

Head over to each competitor's Facebook page, follow its Twitter (X) feed, follow the competitor on Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, and any other social media services it is active on. Determine what information and types of content the competitor is posting, how engaged it is with its followers, in what ways the competitor is using social media to its advantage, and what it could be doing better.

Is each competitor's content well produced and professional? Is it timely? Are updates posted regularly? Is the information informative and engaging? Again, put yourself in a potential customer or client's shoes and try to

determine what each competitor is doing well in terms of its social media presence, and what it could be (and should be) doing better.

How is the competitor using SEO, images, marketing messages, storytelling techniques, and methods of engagement as part of its social media strategy? There are free and fee-based tools you should use to track a social media account's success, followers, activities, and overall online presence that you might find useful.

A few of these tools include:

- Brandwatch Benchmark—www.brandwatch.com/p/competitor-analysis
- Hootsuite—www.hootsuite.com/lp/social-media-analytics
- Rival IQ—www.rivaliq.com/l/social-media-competitors
- Semrush—www.semrush.com
- Similar Web—www.similarweb.com
- Social Blade—<https://socialblade.com>
- Social Status—www.socialstatus.io/competitor-analytics

Learn About Each Competitor's Products and Services

As part of your research about each competitor, learn as much as you can about each product and/or service it offers. Focus on key features and benefits, selection, options, customizations, and other ways the competition is differentiating its products or services. And, of course, pay attention to pricing.

At the same time, consider how a competitor's offerings compare to what you plan to offer. What is the same? What is different? What is better? What is worse? How is the competitor positioning itself in the market?

Focus on Each Competitor's Marketing and Advertising Strategies

By doing your due diligence and online research, you should be able to determine what each competitor is doing to market and advertise its offerings, both online and in the real world. Pay attention to advertising campaigns, the target audience these campaigns are targeting, and what forms of media are being used.

As part of each competitor's online presence, what forms of online advertising are they using, in addition to having a website and social media presence? Does the company take advantage of public relations to get media attention? Are they using email marketing or search engine advertising? What messages are they trying to convey, and how are they conveying those messages?

Keep in mind, marketing can also include a company's use of promotional discounts, promo codes, special offers, loyalty programs, referral bonuses, and other ways customers can save money or be rewarded.

And while you might not consider customer service or technical support to be a marketing tool, it is. For each competitor, determine what type of customer service is offered to potential customers and clients, as well as to people or businesses that pay to become customers or clients. Is the customer service and/or technical support readily accessible? Is it available in person, through a website, via online chat, by phone, or through email? During what hours is it available?

Do not just look at the star-based ratings a competitor has received. Take the time to read as many customer reviews as you can to discover what the company is doing right and what each is receiving the most complaints about.

Finally, pay attention to each competitor's ratings and reviews, not just on their own website, but on independent websites, like Trustpilot, Yelp!,

Reputation, Verified Reviews, or the Better Business Bureau. If products are sold through third-party sellers, like Amazon, Google Shopping, Etsy, Walmart, Shopify, or on social media, what types of reviews have the products and the sellers received?

Perform a Competitive SWOT Analysis on Each Competitor

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. For each competitor, write down or maintain a database of what you learn, by filling out this worksheet.

COMPETITOR SWOT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Competitor Name:

Website URL:

Product(s) and Service(s) Offered:

Geographic Area Covered:

Target Audience:

Company Mission or Philosophy:

Overall Strengths

Product and Service Strengths:

Marketing, Advertising, and Promotion Strengths:

Online Strengths:

Customer Service Strengths:

Resource Strengths:

Management Team Strengths:

Geographic Strengths:

Other Strengths:

Overall Weaknesses:

Product and Service Weaknesses:

Marketing, Advertising, and Promotion Weaknesses:

Online Weaknesses:

Customer Service Weaknesses:

Resource Weaknesses:

Management Team Weaknesses:

Geographic Weaknesses:

Other Weaknesses:

Based on your research about the competitor, what opportunities have you identified in terms of capturing some of its market share, expanding your own product or service offerings, or luring away their customers/clients?

Once you launch your side hustle, what specific threats does this competitor pose to your immediate and long-term success?

Complete this worksheet for each of the companies you identify as a competitor.

Learn and Benefit from Your Research

Spending time and money to do industry research and then learning about your competition is only helpful if you gather the information, make sure you fully understand it, and apply the knowledge as you make decisions pertaining to the establishment and ongoing management of your own side hustle.

Do You Need a Business Plan?

A traditional business plan is used to help a company attract investors and to assist banks or financial institutions to understand your business when making decisions about loans. However, a business plan is also a valuable tool for creating a road map for your business. It can help you determine what's needed to establish a strong foundation for your side hustle up front, and then help you stay focused as you launch and initially grow your business. This is a document that will help you stay focused on short- and long-term objectives.

A business plan is a document that should be created during the very early stages of setting up your business, once you've identified the side hustle you plan to pursue. Consider your business plan as an ever-evolving document. Over time, you'll want to add to or modify it as needed. There's no strict format that a business plan must follow, but in general, a thorough business plan contains these elements:

- **Mission Statement:** This is a single sentence or short paragraph that clearly and succinctly describes your company, what it does, and what its core values and objectives are.
- **Executive Summary:** This section describes the company overall. It provides a description of its leadership, employees, operations, locations, and goals. Part of the executive summary should be a more

in-depth explanation of your mission statement. What sets your business apart, makes it appealing to your target customers, and why you believe it'll be successful are all details that should be included. You'll discover more about how to identify what makes your side hustle unique in Chapter 5, "Identify What Makes Your Side Hustle Unique."

- **Products and Services:** Provide a detailed list and description of the products and/or services you'll be offering, including information about pricing, customer benefits, what sets your offering apart, information about research and development (if applicable), information about manufacturing and production (if applicable), and details about wholesalers/suppliers (if applicable).
- **Market Analysis:** This should be a summary of the industry you plan to work in, the state of that industry, how your company will fit into the industry, the size of your target customer base, and a plan for how your business will capture market share from competitors. A summary of your target customer base, as well as key information you discovered from your industry research and your research about competitors, should be included.
- **Marketing Strategy:** In this section, focus primarily on how you plan to attract customers or clients. Include an overview of your marketing, advertising, sales, promotions, and public relations plans, budget, and strategies. Next, describe how you plan to sell, distribute, or provide your products and services.
- **Financial Plans and Projections:** This is where the number crunching comes in. You'll want to create detailed financial statements, a balance sheet, and gather other relevant financial information. The business plan should include projections and financial targets for the first month, six months, one year, three years, and five years of your business's operation.

While you can create a business plan from scratch using any word processor and spreadsheet application, it's much easier to use a business plan application. These are tools that will walk you through the business plan creation process, prompt you for what information needs to be gathered, and help you properly format this document in a cohesive way.

Some of the free and fee-based tools that can help you create and update a business plan include:

- **Entrepreneur:** www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/how-to-write-a-business-plan-entrepreneurcom/247575
- **FormsTemplates:** www.formstemplates.com/business-plan
- **LivePlan:** www.liveplan.com/ppc/number-1
- **ProAI:** <https://proai.co/custom-plan-2>
- **QuickBooks:** <https://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/starting-a-business/business-plan-template>
- **SCORE:** www.score.org/resource/template/business-plan-template-a-startup-business
- **U.S. Small Business Administration:** www.sba.gov/business-guide/plan-your-business/write-your-business-plan
- **Venturekit:** www.venturekit.ai

This Is Not Just Busywork

Chapters 3 through 6 are all about establishing a strong foundation for your business and helping you gather the information and resources you'll need to achieve success. The questionnaires, worksheets, and recommendations in these chapters are not designed to provide you with irrelevant and time-consuming busywork. What's been included is a road map that'll help you better understand all aspects of your industry and your side hustle before you launch your business.

Again, knowledge is power, and preparation is an essential key to your long-term success, regardless of the side hustle you choose to pursue. Arm yourself with plenty of research about your own goals, the industry you plan to work in, your target customer base, your competition, and the products and/or services you plan to offer. By doing this, you'll find yourself with a clearer pathway to proceed, be able to avoid potentially costly mistakes, and have the wherewithal to overcome any unexpected challenges or obstacles that get in your way.

How much time, effort, and resources you invest in doing this recommended research and preparation is entirely up to you. However, know that the more you invest now, the smoother your path to growth and success will be as you move forward with your side hustle. There are no shortcuts and no alternatives to hard work.

The more of this research you conduct yourself, the more you'll learn. While you could pay someone else to do this research and spoon-feed you the important information, this could prevent you from developing the in-depth understanding you'll need about your business venture, products and services, target customers, the industry you'll be working in, as well as your competition.

Moving On to the Next Step

Every person on this planet is unique, and so is every business and side hustle. While you may be pursuing the same type of business or offering the same types of services as countless businesses or individuals that have come before you, your side hustle will somehow be unique. And it's that uniqueness in your values, offerings, and practices that'll set it apart from the competition and that could help you lure in new customers and clients, take over market share, and ultimately allow you to achieve your goals.

The focus of Chapter 5, “Identify What Makes Your Side Hustle Unique,” is on pinpointing what you bring to the table, and what will set your side hustle apart in a positive way, even if you’ll be operating on a shoestring budget and with limited resources.

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CHAPTER 5

Identify What Makes Your Side Hustle Unique

Regardless of the side hustle you choose to pursue, you can count on facing some competition. And chances are, at least some of those competitors will be better established and have more resources than you. Thus, what will allow you to stand out from the competition will often be what makes you and your side hustle unique.

To take advantage of the uniqueness you have to offer, you must truly understand what you're offering and what sets it apart, in a positive way, from your competition.

Understanding the Importance of Uniqueness

In today's competitive marketplace, being able to stand out is good business strategy and an essential one. How you differentiate yourself from your competition will help you attract customers and clients.

This uniqueness can be based on a variety of factors, such as how and why your company's mission statement, company culture, and philosophy appeal to your target audience and the audience you choose to cater to. It could also be based on the selection of products and/or services you choose to offer, a specialized area of expertise that your competition lacks, any innovation you bring to the table, the reputation you earn for providing superior customer service, or the way you position yourself in the marketplace.

Do some brainstorming and planning when it comes to discovering ways you can set up your side hustle to be different (and better) than your competition. Be sure to back up your theories and ideas with research until you're able to prove, based on real-world operational experience, that your ideas and approach work and are appealing to your target audience.

Research What It Takes to Be Unique

To set up your side hustle as being unique, step one is to figure out what you need to be different from. Hence, it's once again necessary to conduct market research and learn as much as you can about your competition.

Start with the top five biggest competitors you uncovered based on your research from the last chapter. This should include the companies you perceive to be your top competitors, and perhaps one or more indirect competitors.

For each competitor, figure out what you believe they're doing wrong, what they could do to improve, what they're doing right, and how each has obtained the market share and success it has in your industry.

Now, for each competitor, determine what you'll do differently to improve upon each competitor's offerings, whether it's their individual products, product selection, individual services, or the entire selection of services each offers to its customers and clients. You want to know why each competitor has attracted the customers or clients it has, and then figure out why each competitor does not already have a larger market share.

Based on what you uncover, figure out ways you can fill in the gaps and take advantage of opportunities that your competitors have not yet tapped. And when it comes to luring customers away from your competitors, determine how you plan to do this in the easiest and most cost-effective way possible. Understand exactly what value proposition, return on investment,

or solutions you can provide that, for whatever reason, your competitors cannot.

Part of determining what your competition is doing right and wrong, and what you can do differently and better, is to understand your customer needs. This comes back to what was covered within Chapter 3, “Identify Your Ideal Customer.”

Again, based on what you plan to offer to your customers or clients, clearly be able to spell out what you can do better, what you can do differently, how you can help your customers or clients save time and/or money, and what problems you can solve for them.

WRITE DOWN WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE

Whether it's your passion, expertise, education, experience, ethics, abilities, understanding of your customers/clients, your product(s), your service(s), or other things altogether, write down five key things that set you and your side hustle apart from your competition and that your target audience will relate to and find appealing.

As you fill in these five blanks, think about why people should hire you, buy from you, rely on you, trust you, and ultimately choose you over your competition.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Understand Your Unique Value Proposition

In a nutshell, a value proposition quickly communicates to potential customers or clients the key reason(s) why your product or service is best suited for them. This should be a short, easy-to-understand, and specific statement that communicates what you provide and that promises the best quality products or highest level of service in an honest and believable manner.

Keep in mind, your mission statement is created to help *you* understand what you're trying to achieve and to summarize your goals and objectives. A value statement should be customer/client focused and cater to them.

Your value proposition should include a comprehensive collection of features or benefits of your product, how you leverage unique technologies, and what overall experience you can provide to your customers or clients.

Your customers or clients must easily be able to identify and understand the value proposition you're offering, and how and why it's better (or different) from your competition. It's also essential that your value proposition aligns perfectly with your customer or client's needs and wants.

The value proposition of your company should also align seamlessly with your brand's identity and brand story, along with its goals and values. And since you and your side hustle will be closely aligned, your own personal brand, passion for what you're doing, and personality should also resonate with your target audience or customers and pique their interest.

Part of being able to showcase a strong value proposition is presenting yourself and your business as being highly professional. This means having a logo, image, and overall branding (including product packaging, if applicable) that's cohesive, relatable, and appealing to your audience. From your business cards to your website and social media presence, all messaging and branding always needs to be consistent—online and in the real world.

Once you determine for yourself what makes you and your side hustle unique and your value proposition is clear in your own mind, this all must easily be conveyed to potential customers and clients through printed materials, your online presence, your marketing, advertising, and any other ways potential customers or clients might initially discover you and your business.

As you develop your brand, every decision you make should be focused on your target audience. Ideally, you want to be perceived as a business that promotes inclusivity, diversity, acceptance, trustworthiness, creativity, and professionalism, along with the ability to address the needs and solve the problems of your customers or clients, whether it's through your products, services, or a unique combination of the two.

Every potential customer or client should clearly see that you and your business prioritize customer satisfaction and are able to provide personalized customer service. Ideally, you want to establish and then

maintain a clear and open line of communication, while making it clear that you and your business are up to date with all the latest technological or industry trends that could impact a customer or client's use of your product or service.

Once you identify and establish a value proposition that you see resonates with potential customers and clients, incorporate it into your company's sales, marketing, promotional, and advertising activities. And if possible, build it into your company slogan or even your company's logo and overall brand identity.

Use the following worksheet to help you develop your company's value proposition.

VALUE PROPOSITION WORKSHEET

Answer the following questions and use these responses to help formulate your company's value proposition.

What benefits do you offer to your customers/clients?

What features do you offer?

What are the core needs of your customers/clients?

What are the wants of your customers/clients as they relate to what you offer?

What fears or obstacles are your customers/clients facing that you can address?

How will your product or service fix a customer/client's problem, save them time, save them money, or help them succeed?

Based on how you responded to the above questions, write down five key concepts about your business that you believe should somehow be incorporated into your value statement.

Learn as Much as Possible from Your Customers or Clients

Once you start generating leads, pay attention to your client and customer habits, behaviors, trends, happiness, and loyalty. Every decision you make and action you take should be seen by your customers or clients as something that's somehow helping them.

Ideally, once you acquire new clients, you want to create and maintain a long and profitable relationship. And if you're selling products to customers, you want those people to become repeat customers and help you grow by sharing positive word-of-mouth advertising on your behalf—whether this is done in person or online.

Stay in close contact with your customers and clients. Provide them with periodic surveys to gather constructive feedback so you can figure out what you're doing right and what needs improvement when it comes to keeping your customers or clients happy.

This is not something to do just at the beginning, as you're establishing your business. Staying informed about and in touch with your clients and customers is an ongoing responsibility and necessity, especially as changes happen in the marketplace and new innovations or trends change the way customers and clients do things.

Based on what you discover from and about your customers and clients moving forward, maintain flexibility and be able to pivot, if necessary, when it comes to policies, procedures, strategies, and your offerings.

Only by staying informed about market changes, trends, and industry developments, as well as the evolving wants and needs of your customers and clients, will you be able to stay aligned with their wants and needs when it comes to offering your products and services.

And as you try to grow your business, again, focus on what you're currently able to offer, versus what you should be offering to meet your client or customer's needs, wants, and expectations.

If you're too limited on resources and time, or too short staffed to provide the attention that your customers or clients require, it'll ultimately be your job to determine when you need to invest in more infrastructure to support growth, expand your talent pool, and potentially expand into new markets and customer segments to discover and harness growth opportunities.

CHAPTER 6

Get Clear on Your Product or Service Pricing

As you launch your side hustle, one of the biggest challenges you'll face, at least initially, is pricing your products or services in a way that will appeal to your target customer, but at the same time, cover all your expenses and allow you to generate a profit. While you may think that the easiest way to quickly get customers or clients is to undercut your competition when it comes to pricing, this is not typically a good strategy.

If you offer an incredibly low price, and then your competitors match or beat that price, you'll be forced to go even lower. After one or more rounds of these price adjustments, you'll find yourself losing money with every sale or interaction with a client.

Instead, there are two other pricing strategies that make more sense. One is to go premium. Offer something at a premium price and make it better than whatever your competition can offer. This could mean more personalized and better service or a better-quality product with more features, a better guarantee, or providing something that's perceived as being more valuable than whatever your competition is offering.

A different pricing strategy is to position yourself in the middle, so there are competitors offering similar products and services that are less expensive and more expensive than what you're offering. In this case, you need to promote that your customers are getting good value for their money, and that they're getting a high quality and reliable product or service.

Create Your One-Liner

Before you can start selling your product or service to anyone else, you need to have a very clear understanding of what you're offering. If it's a product, you need to know absolutely everything there is to know about it, including why it will appeal to your target audience. You should know its features, functions, drawbacks, and limitations inside out, so off the top of your head you can answer absolutely any question about the product in a way that will be understandable and interesting to your customer.

This understanding and passion for your product will then need to resonate across all of your advertising, promotional, marketing, and public relations materials, as well as your product packaging and across your entire online presence.

This same concept also applies to selling services. Not only do you need to understand what you're offering and to who, you also need to be able to quickly communicate the benefits and advantages of what you're offering in a way that will be relatable to prospective clients. Someone needs to understand exactly what you're offering and how it will benefit them before they even think about what you're charging for your services.

Whether you're selling products or services, there will be multiple ways you'll initially communicate and share your message with potential customers and clients—through a website, blog, YouTube video, podcast, brochure, advertisement, social media posting, or an in-person meeting, for example.

One of the first tools you'll need is a one-line summary that clearly explains what you're offering, who you're offering it to, and what the benefits are to whatever it is. This one-liner must be easy to understand, relatable, and include the core information someone needs to take the next step. It should be both informative and intriguing enough so the potential customer/client wants to immediately learn more.

The well-written one-liner might also identify a problem, offer a solution, and focus on how the customer/client will feel after using your product or service—the result.

Whether someone is reading this one-liner or hearing you speak it, you should require no more than 10 to 15 seconds of their time to get your initial key points across and pique their interest.

After composing a one-liner that works for your side hustle, use it as a promotional tool on your website, in your social media feed, on your letterhead and business cards, on product packaging, in brochures, on signage, and anywhere else you're able to reach potential customers/clients.

Compose Your One-Pager

The next step is to compose a one-pager. This can be several paragraphs of text (approximately 250 words) that's perhaps accompanied by photos, graphics, or other visual content. It should offer a more detailed explanation of your product or service. This content might appear in a printed brochure, on a website, or as a social media post, for example. It also might become the launching pad for an in-person or phone conversation with a potential customer or client.

Obviously, the one-pager will delve a bit deeper into what you're offering. It should be targeted to your intended customers or clients, be easy to understand, relatable, and address the wants, needs, and questions that the potential customer or client will have—even before they know enough to formulate those questions in their own minds.

In your one-liner or one-pager, you could refer to your pricing, using words like “premium,” “affordable,” or “competitive.” Ideally, you want to pique a potential customer or client's interest before you share pricing information.

Key Elements of a One-Pager

The key elements of a one-pager include:

- Your company's logo.
- A quick summary about who you are and what makes your offerings unique.
- A concise summary of the key problem you're able to solve with your product or service.
- A summary of the key features and benefits of your offerings.
- Social proof that quickly supports your claims, such as a quote from a reputable person, an industry statistic, or a list of awards you've won.
- A clear and simple call to action that'll encourage the prospect to take the next step immediately. This might be calling your toll-free phone number, visiting your website, subscribing to your social media feed, or placing an order.
- Your contact information. Include all applicable information, including your address, phone number, email address, website address, and all social media details.
- You might want to include a QR code that someone can scan using their smartphone that leads directly to your website.

Your one-pager needs to be visually appealing, easy to understand, avoid the use of meaningless or excessive technical jargon, and (of course) be targeted to your core audience. Colorful and relatable images, simple diagrams, an easy-to-read font, and plenty of white space on the page should be used to make the one-pager more accessible. Of course, also make sure your one-pager contains no grammatical or spelling errors.

Once you've written a draft of your company's one-pager, you can use an AI writing tool, like ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google AI, or Apple AI to

help polish it up.

Pricing Your Products or Services

Once you choose to pursue any type of side hustle, among the most important decisions you'll need to make is how to appropriately set your pricing. Goal number one is to set pricing that your potential customers or clients will perceive as being fair and competitive, based on what you're offering. Goal number two is to set your pricing so that you're able to cover *all* your expenses and earn some money for yourself. In other words, your pricing should be set to a level where you can earn a profit.

The right pricing strategy can help you attract customers and clients, cover *all* your costs, and ultimately achieve profitability. At least initially, finding the perfect pricing strategy will require research, as well as some experimentation, especially as you're deciding how you want to position your business in the marketplace.

Seven Factors That Impact Pricing

As you prepare to set pricing for your products or services, take the following factors (or those that are applicable) into account:

- **Customer Perceptions:** Do potential customers/clients consider you to be a low-cost, mid-priced, or premium brand?
- **Fluctuations in Demand:** If overall demand for what you're offering is lower than usual, are you offering discounted pricing or special offers to better appeal to your target customers?
- **Geographics:** What is the demand for your product/service in your immediate geographic area? If you're selling online to a potentially global audience, this does not apply.

- **Inventory Availability:** If inventory is low and demand is high, customers/clients will expect to pay more. This is especially true if you and your competitors are experiencing supply/inventory shortages.
- **Operating Costs:** Be sure to amortize your overall operating costs, applying the appropriate percentage to each product or service sold.
- **Shipping Costs:** If you plan to offer free shipping for products, these expenses (for packaging, shipping fees, etc.) need to be calculated into your overall costs.
- **Your Competitors and What You Do Differently:** If what you're offering is better than your competitors—and you can easily prove this—you can often charge a premium for the products or services you're offering. The higher price must be justifiable, however.

First, Understand Your Costs

Before you can set pricing that'll work for you and your customers/clients, you need to acquire accurate information. This starts with calculating and understanding all the costs associated with your product or service.

There are several types of costs you must consider and take into consideration, including:

- **Direct Costs:** The costs directly associated with the production/creation of your product or service. This includes the cost of raw materials, labor, and all manufacturing expenses. It could also be the wholesale price of the product you're selling.
- **Indirect Costs:** These include your overhead costs that are not directly tied to production, but that are necessary to run your business. Examples of indirect costs include rent, utilities, equipment, and administrative expenses.

- **Variable Costs:** These costs vary, based on several factors, including the level of production or sales volume. Examples of variable costs are production supplies / raw material costs, commissions, shipping and packaging of your products, transportation costs to visit clients, credit card processing fees, and commissions. This is often referred to as costs of goods sold.
- **Fixed Costs:** Some of the costs associated with your side hustle's operation will remain constant, regardless of production levels, for example. This includes things like salaries, insurance, business licenses, certain types of taxes, and equipment lease payments.

Depending on how you plan to operate your business, expenses related to advertising, marketing, and public relations can either be fixed or variable costs. These activities are a fixed cost if you plan to spend the same amount of money every month or every year, regardless of the company's revenues. But if you plan to adjust your advertising, marketing, and public relations spending based on performance, sales, and revenue, these would be considered a variable expense.

As you'll discover in Chapter 9, "Get Customers and Clients," it will almost always be necessary to spend money—on an ongoing basis—on advertising, marketing, and potentially public relations, as well as various types of promotions (online and in the real world) to find and land a steady flow of customers and clients.

COST WORKSHEET FOR PRODUCTS

Use this worksheet to help you understand all the costs associated with obtaining or creating the product(s) you plan to be selling and your overall costs.

If you're using bookkeeping or accounting software, such as QuickBooks, there are modules within these applications that will help with cost calculations. You can also create a spreadsheet using an application such as Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets, or Apple Numbers to help with this task.

Category		Labor Hours	Rate	Units	Cost per Unit	Fixed Cost	Budget	Actual
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Category								
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$

Category		Labor Hours	Rate	Units	Cost per Unit	Fixed Cost	Budget	Actual
Task							\$	\$
Category								
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
Task							\$	\$
TOTAL							\$	\$

SIDE HUSTLE EXPENSE WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to determine and calculate the direct, indirect, variable, and fixed costs associated with operating your side hustle. Keep in mind, not all the expense types listed in this worksheet will apply to all side hustle businesses.

If you're using bookkeeping or accounting software, such as QuickBooks, there are modules within these applications that will help with cost calculations. You can also create a spreadsheet using an application such as Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets, or Apple Numbers to help with this task.

Expense	Expense Type (Direct, Indirect, Variable, Fixed) or Category	Budget	Actual
Accounting		\$	\$
Advertising (Online)		\$	\$
Advertising (Real-World)		\$	\$
Association Dues		\$	\$
Banking Fees		\$	\$
Cell Phone Service		\$	\$
Cleaning Fees		\$	\$
Computer and Equipment Purchases		\$	\$
Contractor Wages		\$	\$
Credit Card Merchant Account Fees		\$	\$
Email Service Expenses		\$	\$
Employee Salaries		\$	\$
Equipment Depreciation		\$	\$
Equipment Purchases / Leases		\$	\$
Furniture		\$	\$
Improvements		\$	\$
Insurance		\$	\$
Interest Expenses		\$	\$
Internet Expense		\$	\$
Inventory		\$	\$

Legal		\$	\$
Licenses		\$	\$
Logo Design		\$	\$
Maintenance		\$	\$
Manufacturing Supplies		\$	\$
Marketing		\$	\$
Office Supplies		\$	\$
Postage and Shipping Fees		\$	\$
Printing (Business Cards, Letterhead, etc.)		\$	\$
Printing Costs (Business)		\$	\$
Product Packaging		\$	\$
Promotional Expenses		\$	\$
Promotional Materials		\$	\$
Public Relations		\$	\$
Rent/Mortgage		\$	\$
Software/Application Subscriptions & Purchases		\$	\$
Subscriptions		\$	\$
Taxes		\$	\$
Telephone		\$	\$
Travel		\$	\$
Utilities		\$	\$
Vehicle Expenses		\$	\$
Vehicle Fuel		\$	\$
Web Hosting & Domains		\$	\$
Other		\$	\$
Other		\$	\$
Other		\$	\$
Other		\$	\$

Other		\$	\$
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Second, Research the Marketplace

You already know that to be successful it's necessary to pinpoint and study your competitors. When it comes to setting your pricing, it's essential that you understand how each competitor is positioning itself in the marketplace, and then study each competitor's unique pricing strategy. For example, you need to determine if each competitor is using cost-plus pricing, value-based pricing, or competitive pricing.

Cost-plus pricing means your competitors add a markup to their costs to ensure a profit. *Value-based pricing* means your competitors are setting prices based on the perceived value to the customer, rather than just on their cost. For this to work, a thorough understanding of a business's customers/clients and their needs is required.

Meanwhile, *competitive pricing* means a business is setting its prices based on what its competitors are charging. Matching the pricing of competitors can ensure a business remains competitive in the marketplace, but it can also lead to a price war, which means companies keep lowering prices to match the competition. This can quickly lead to a financial loss.

As you study pricing strategies, you might also discover your competitors have used a *penetration pricing* strategy, and this could be something you want to try as well. It involves setting low prices when you first enter the market to attract customers quickly, but then steadily increasing pricing over time. The biggest risk with this strategy is that you might not initially be able to cover your costs and generate a profit. And later, when you try to increase your prices, you could lose customers/clients who are not willing to pay more for what you're offering.

Geographic pricing means charging different amounts based on location and the demand for what's being offered in that location. For example, if

you're selling swimming pool supplies, demand will probably remain steady in states with continuously warmer climates, but in states that experience fall and winter, demand for pool supplies diminishes, so in those areas, discounted pricing might be offered during the off-seasons.

Alternatively, your competitors might have adopted a *skimming price* strategy. This means they entered the marketplace with extra-high pricing to establish themselves as a premium brand or product, but then they use a variety of sales and promotional strategies to offer their products/services at lower pricing over time. When a company is offering a unique product or service that has little competition, for example, this could be a viable strategy.

If you'll be operating a service-based business, you might charge by the hour, but offer a discount if a client prepays for blocks of time, or you could charge flat-rate pricing for specific projects or tasks.

Before you choose a pricing strategy and lock in pricing for your products and services, focus on your customers. It's essential that you understand how they will perceive the value of your product or service, especially in comparison to your competitors.

Invest some time to perform information surveys or more in-depth focus groups to help you better understand the spending mentality and habits of your target customers/clients. And, based on the knowledge you acquire, try to determine what the perceived value for your products/services is to them. Consider your value proposition, the customer/client problems you're helping to solve, and the benefits your product/service offers.

Part of understanding everything you need to know about your target customers/clients is determining how much they're able and willing to spend on whatever it is you're offering.

By studying basic sales and marketing techniques, you'll discover there are also a handful of pricing tricks companies often use to make their

pricing seem more palatable. For example, *psychological pricing* can involve setting prices below a round number, such as \$99.99, instead of \$100. Or you can purposely use a prestige pricing model to set your prices extra high to create a perception of premium quality or exclusivity. Think brands like Louis Vuitton, Porsche, Rolex, Gucci, Prana, Dior, Hermès, Ferrari, Tiffany & Co., Bulgari, and Rolls-Royce.

And depending on what you're selling, whether it's a product or service, your competitors might use *bundle pricing*. This means offering a discount when a customer purchases two or more products or services at the same time. Or, when offering services that are charged by the hour, a discount might be offered when a client prepays for 5, 10, or 25 hours up front.

Once you understand the pricing strategies your competitors are using, you can determine the success each is achieving, and then do some of your own number crunching to determine how much money you need to earn to be profitable. It's then your responsibility to choose a pricing strategy—and specific pricing—that'll work for your side hustle.

Pricing Is Never Set in Stone

Many factors will impact what you can charge for your products and services, including the overall strength of the economy, the amount of competition you're dealing with, the size of your target customer base, and the financial stability of your target customers/clients.

As market factors change, your costs rise or fall, your competitors change, and the size of your target customer/client base increases or decreases, you'll need to adjust your pricing. However, you want to avoid major price hikes or drops, as these can impact your company's reputation and how customers/clients perceive its stability.

On an ongoing basis, always be monitoring your sales numbers and try to solicit honest feedback from customers/clients about your pricing and the

perceived value of what you're offering. As you do this, understand that customers/clients will always want lower prices. However, if they perceive the value of what they're getting as being more than what they're paying (and you're able to generate a profit), chances are your pricing model is working.

One common strategy for helping a business find the ideal pricing model is to use what's called *A/B testing*. This means the company simultaneously tests different prices to see which work best.

And obviously, based on market conditions, customer feedback, and changing costs, be prepared to adjust your pricing as needed.

Your Company's Image Can Impact What You Charge

When you go to a dollar store, you don't expect to spend \$10 or more for a single item. And if you shop at Joe's Discount Furniture, you don't expect to pay a premium price for a new bed or couch. The brand and image you create for your side hustle will impact the expectations of your customers/clients in terms of the quality of what you're offering, and what they're willing to pay.

So, even if you plan to offer highly competitive pricing or undercut your competition, when it comes to creating a brand and image for your company, always focus on communicating value. You can rarely go wrong having your customers perceive they're receiving a premium product or service that's value-priced and competitive.

That said, in all your advertising, marketing, promotional, and sales efforts, promote that your business offers value, as well as something that's unique or better than your competition. Through your messaging, you should easily be able to justify your pricing.

If you're at a loss about how to properly set your pricing, seek out help from a sales and marketing expert who understands your industry. An

accountant can also help you accurately calculate all your costs and expenses. Depending on the product or service you plan to sell, there may be online or software-based pricing tools that can help, too. These applications can often provide insights about competitor pricing, customer behavior, and marketing trends.

Eight Pricing Applications and Online Services

Depending on the types of products and services you'll be offering, and in the case of products where you'll be doing your selling (such as specific e-commerce platforms), the following applications can help you set pricing.

After researching several options, choose an application or service that best meets your needs and business model, as well as your budget.

- **BlackCurve**—www.blackcurve.com
- **Minderest**—www.minderest.com
- **Price Beam**—www.pricebeam.com
- **Price2Spy**—www.price2spy.com
- **Prisync 2.0**—www.prisync.com
- **Relex**—www.relexsolutions.com/solutions/price-optimization-software
- **Skuuudle**—www.skuuudle.com
- **Wiser**—www.wiser.com/price-intelligence

Again, Think Like Your Target Customer

Regardless of the type of decision you're making related to your side hustle, before making that decision final, consider your target customer's perspective. The only way to do this properly is to develop a thorough understanding of your customers, including their wants, needs, objectives, budget, and problems. You also need to understand your industry and the

marketplace as a whole—on a global, nationwide, and local/regional scale, based on the scope of your business.

Armed with this information, you can properly brand and market your business and set pricing that'll be acceptable to your customers/clients. And to stay on top of trend and market changes, part of your ongoing research should always involve maintaining a connection with your customers/clients and soliciting honest feedback whenever possible.

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CHAPTER 7

Create an Online Presence for Your Side Hustle

Regardless of what type of side hustle you choose to pursue—whether it's online-based, or you'll be selling products or providing services in the real world—your business must have an online presence that's informative, sales-oriented, professional, and that serves the needs of your business while catering to the wants and needs of your customers or clients.

Your side hustle's online presence should start with a website. The functionality, purpose, and appearance of the website will be discussed shortly, but understand that having a website with an easy-to-remember and reliable domain name is an absolute must.

Part of your online strategy should also involve becoming active on social media. The approach you take with this, which social media platforms to focus on, how much time you invest creating social media content, and the overall goals of using social media will vary based on the type of side hustle you plan to pursue, what resources you have available, and who you perceive your target customers or clients to be.

This chapter will help you create an online strategy for your side hustle, establish a website for your business, create a social media plan, and provide an overview of why and how you can use your company's online presence to grow your business.

Why Your Side Hustle Needs a Website

Back in the day, a business promoted itself with business cards, brochures, and printed catalogues. Today, the primary sales, marketing, customer service, and information disseminating tool available to any type of business is a website. Based on the type of business you'll be running, your target audience, and main objectives, there are many ways you can use a website to your utmost advantage.

Six Reasons to Establish a Website for Your Side Hustle

While there are many, let's start by focusing on six key reasons why you should establish a professional-looking and easy-to-navigate website for your side hustle.

Credibility and Professionalism

A professional-looking and informative website that's designed to cater to your target audience quickly lends credibility to your business. A website demonstrates that you are serious about your side hustle and committed to providing professional products or services. Your website should provide a quick introduction to your business, communicate its core objectives, and convey valuable information to potential customers and clients.

Accessibility

Your company's website makes your business accessible 24/7. This means that potential customers or clients can quickly learn about your products or services, contact you, discover your company's story and philosophy, make purchases (if applicable), and learn how what you're offering can benefit them. A well-designed website can significantly increase your reach and

potential sales. And best of all, you can create and manage a website starting with a minimal investment.

Marketing and Visibility

Your company's website can serve as a central hub for all your online marketing efforts. This includes online advertising, marketing, and promotions. There are many ways to promote your website and use it as a powerful and informative tool that can implement nicely with your social media activities. When you use SEO strategies in conjunction with your website, it can help you increase your visibility and attract more customers—and this can be supplemented by paid online advertising that drives targeted traffic to your website.

Customer Engagement

One of the most powerful aspects of a website is its ability to provide an easy way to engage with your customers and clients more effectively and anytime—day or night. Through your website, you can provide valuable and informative content, establish an online community around your products or services, answer frequently asked questions, and provide customer support. You can also use your website to sell products to customers directly or allow clients to schedule and pay for your services in a way that's convenient to them.

Through your website, you can publish a blog, digital newsletter, offer instructional or promotional videos, and provide contact forms that can help build a relationship with your audience and keep them informed about your business and its offerings. You should also use the About Us section of your website to showcase your expertise, passion, and values as a business operator.

Competitive Advantage

Based on how you use your website, it can give you a competitive edge. Many small businesses and side hustles take full advantage of social media and word of mouth as a promotional tool, but a website offers the opportunity to share more content with your potential and existing customers and clients using formal and targeted approaches that you know they'll appreciate and that will resonate.

You also get more creative control over your website than you do using many social media platforms, so you can use it to provide a more comprehensive and controlled platform to showcase your brand and your company's offerings. Your website can also be used to tell your story using any combination of text, graphics, photos, audio, video, and animations that you deem appropriate to best reach your target audience.

Data Collection and Analysis

Your company's website can be used as a powerful information and data gathering tool, allowing you to learn more about your potential and current customers and clients. In conjunction with your website, you can easily use free or inexpensive tools like Google Analytics. These provide insights into your audience's behavior, preferences, and demographics. Armed with this information, it's possible to make better informed decisions and to better tailor your offerings to meet customer and client wants and needs.

What Equipment Is Needed to Create an Online Presence for Your Side Hustle

Even if you're not a website designer or programmer, if you know how to surf the web, you have the core skill needed to create a basic, but professional looking website for your side hustle business. However, if

budget allows, you can easily hire experts to help you design, create, manage, and promote your website.

Ultimately, establishing and then maintaining a website for a side hustle business requires a combination of essential equipment and resources, including:

Windows or Mac Computer

While it does not need to be the most current or highest-end computer available, you will need access to a reliable computer—either a Windows PC or Mac—to design, create, manage, and promote a website. A reliable computer is fundamental. Whether it's a desktop or a laptop, ensure it has sufficient processing power, memory, and storage to handle tasks like web design, content creation, and social media management.

Since you probably don't want to be tied to your desk to manage your side hustle's online presence, seriously consider investing in one of the latest Windows Copilot+ PC laptops or an Apple MacBook Pro.

High-Speed Internet

A stable and fast internet connection is crucial. You need to be able to upload and download content quickly, access and manage your website, and engage with customers (potentially in real time) through your website and via social media. Based on how you plan to use your website, you may opt to offer a live chat feature to allow visitors to easily make contact.

If you work from home or have an office, equipping it with highspeed Wi-Fi will certainly be beneficial. However, based on your needs and budget, you can often get away with using a personal hot spot device or the personal hot spot feature offered by your smartphone, providing it offers at least 5G connectivity.

Smartphone

A smartphone has become an indispensable tool for managing your online presence while on the go. Whether you opt for an Android smartphone or Apple iPhone, it can serve as a versatile communications, productivity, and scheduling tool. For example, a smartphone will allow you to respond to emails, create and publish social media posts, monitor your website's performance, and potentially interact with your customers from virtually anywhere.

With a smartphone, you can make and receive voice calls or video calls, participate in virtual meetings, send and receive text messages or instant message, engage with people through your website or social media, and so much more. And thanks to the cameras and microphones built into the latest smartphones, they can be used to create, edit, and publish all sorts of social media content from virtually anywhere.

Web Hosting Service

Every website must be hosted on a server. The least expensive and easiest way to do this is to use a reliable web hosting service. These services provide the necessary infrastructure to store your website's files and make them accessible on the internet. There are many web hosting services to choose from. Here are a few popular options:

- **Bluehost**—www.bluehost.com
- **DreamHost**—www.dreamhost.com
- **GoDaddy**—www.godaddy.com/hosting/web-hosting
- **HostGator**—www.hostgator.com
- **Hostinger**—www.hostinger.com
- **Ionos**—www.ionos.com
- **SiteGround**—www.siteground.com/web-hosting.htm

- **WordPress**—<https://wordpress.com/hosting>

Pricing for website hosting services varies greatly. Keep in mind, these services typically do not provide website design or programming services, and you'll typically need to acquire your own domain name(s).

Domain Name

Your website's domain name is its unique address on the internet. You can acquire domain names from registrars like GoDaddy (www.godaddy.com) or Namecheap (www.namecheap.com/domains).

Your website's domain name should be easy to spell and remember, directly relate to your company or product name, or be directly related to your brand. See “Seven Steps for Registering Your Website's Domain Name” later in this chapter for more information about how to choose and register one or more domain names for your side hustle.

While there are now literally hundreds of domain name extensions available, the average web surfer will automatically add a dot-com to the end of a domain name (i.e. *www.[YourCompanyName].com*, so you definitely want your company's primary domain name to end with .com. You can also register other domain names with different extensions, like .biz, .wow, .free, .read, or .shop, but to ensure all of your intended traffic winds up at your website, also own the .com extension for your domain name.

Website Building Application or Service

A website builder or content management system (CMS) is required to create and maintain a website, unless you plan to program one from scratch. These platforms offer user-friendly interfaces that require no programming whatsoever. Instead, you select a template (of which there are typically hundreds to choose from), and then you customize it with your logo and

content—using the fonts, color scheme, artwork, graphics, animations, and other content that you create or provide.

Most of these services allow you to create your own professional-looking website for little money and in a matter of hours or days. And with the use of optional plug-ins, you can add specialized functionality to your website based on your needs and objectives.

For a traditional website, many small businesses rely on the tools and services offered by WordPress. However, if you're looking to create a website that can handle e-commerce transactions, you may find Shopify's offerings more suitable.

Here are a few popular website building tools and applications, many of which are affiliated with website hosting services:

- **Canva Website Builder**—www.canva.com/website-builder
- **GoDaddy Website Builder**—www.godaddy.com/eng/sg/websites/website-builder
- **Shopify**—www.shopify.com
- **Squarespace**—www.squarespace.com/website-design
- **Wix**—www.wix.com
- **WordPress**—www.wordpress.com

Graphic Design Tools

While the website building applications and services provide a template from which you can design your own website, it's still up to you to gather and create original content for your website. This can include graphics, illustrations, photos, video clips, audio clips, music, and animations. To create these assets that'll be valuable additions to your website (and your social media content), you'll need access to and proficiency using one or more graphic design tools. And once again, there are many to choose from.

Services like Canva (www.canva.com) or Adobe Creative Cloud (www.adobe.com/creativecloud/campaign/pricing.html) can be invaluable tools for creating visually appealing graphics, logos, and website or social media content.

And when it comes to composing original text for your website, you can write it yourself, hire a professional writer, or tap the power of artificial intelligence tools, like ChatGPT-4, Microsoft Copilot+, Google Gemini, or Apple Intelligence. However, AI is better used as a tool to improve your writing, not compose your original content from scratch.

Social Media Management Tools

As you'll discover in Chapter 8, "Become Active on Social Media," your online presence should include becoming active on one or more social media services so you can reach new customers and clients, build your brand, and interact with your target audience in a more informal way. Managing multiple social media accounts can become time-consuming. However, tools like Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com), Buffer (<https://buffer.com>), and Later (<https://later.com>) can help you schedule posts, track engagement, and analyze performance across multiple social media platforms.

Email Marketing Software

When used correctly, email marketing can be a powerful and inexpensive way to connect with your audience. Services like Intuit Mailchimp (<https://mailchimp.com>), Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com), Zoho Email Marketing (www.zoho.com/campaigns/ecommerce-email-marketing.html), or GetResponse (www.getresponse.com) allow you to create and manage email campaigns, track open rates, and segment your audience.

These tools are relatively easy to use, but before you start sending out hundreds or thousands of email messages, make sure you understand how to best use email marketing so you don't annoy or alienate your potential audience. Email marketing is a skill set unto itself and one that you may find very useful. We'll focus more on email marketing as a sales and marketing tool a bit later.

Analytics Tools

Building a website and using social media as a sales, marketing, promotional, advertising, and customer service tool is all well and good, but to use these tools effectively, you must start out with very specific goals for how you plan to use these tools, and then develop a well-thought-out implementation plan and overall strategy that's custom-tailored to your specific side hustle and intended audience.

Once you dedicate time, money, and resources toward your website and online presence, it's important to be able to monitor and accurately measure how well your efforts and strategies are working.

Thus, understanding your audience and measuring your online performance on a continuous basis is essential. Luckily, there are several free and low-cost tools and services, like Google Analytics (<https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/analytics>), that provide comprehensive insights into your website traffic, user behavior, and conversion rates. Social media platforms also offer built-in analytics to track engagement and growth.

Invest the time, money, and resources to become proficient using the tools that will best help you create and maintain a robust online presence for your side hustle business.

Five Steps for Registering Your Website's Domain Name

You already know having a dedicated website for your side hustle business is important. There are many ways to promote your website and drive traffic to it, but one of the easiest and most obvious strategies is to use a website domain name that's easy to spell and remember, and that directly relates to your business name, product name, or services.

Again, your primary domain name should end in .com. However, you can register and use multiple domain names—all of which drive traffic to the home page or specific web pages of your website. Here are five steps to help you brainstorm and then register the ideal domain name for your business.

Brainstorm the Perfect Domain Name(s)

Selecting the ideal domain name(s) for your side hustle business is going to take some serious thought, a bit of brainstorming, and a touch of creativity. After all, it needs to be unique, easy to remember, easy to spell, include relevant keywords, relate to your business, appeal to your target audience, and not interfere with another company's trademarks or copyrights.

The most obvious approach is to use the name of your business as your domain name—www.[YourCompanyName].com. However, based on your objectives, you might find it more useful to somehow incorporate what your company does, or the name of a product you'll be selling into your domain name.

Start the process by brainstorming potential domain names, while keeping these strategies in mind:

- **Avoid using numbers and hyphens:** These can be confusing and are often mistyped by web surfers. The goal is to make it easy for someone to remember and type your domain name into their web

browser, whether they see the domain name printed, hear it spoken, or wind up clicking on a hyperlink.

- **Check for negative connotations:** Before settling on your domain name, make sure it does not have an unintended meaning outside of your target audience, such as in other languages or cultures.
- **Ensure it fits with your brand:** Select a domain name that stands out in a positive way. Avoid using a generic name, word, or short phrase that could easily be confused with other brands.
- **Keep it simple:** Aim for a domain name that is between 6 and 15 characters long. Shorter names are easier to remember and type. Keep in mind, at least when it comes to the .com extension, most very short domain names are already taken.

Starting with domain names that have a .com extension, brainstorm 10 potential ideas that could be viable, assuming they're not already taken and do not interfere with someone else's trademarks or copyrights.

1. www.....com
2. www.....com
3. www.....com
4. www.....com
5. www.....com
6. www.....com
7. www.....com
8. www.....com
9. www.....com
10. www.....com

For each of your favorite potential domain names, consider how someone might get confused hearing it spoken or reading it in print. Think about common typos or alternate spellings someone might use by accident. If this list of possible mistakes is too long, choose a domain name that's simpler or more straightforward.

If you need help coming up with some creative domain names, there are free, AI-driven domain name generators that can help. Here are a few worth trying:

- **Atom**—www.atom.com/domain-name-generator
- **Business Name Maker**—<https://businessnamemaker.com/domain-name-generator>
- **Domain Wheel**—<https://domainwheel.com>
- **GoDaddy**—www.godaddy.com/domains/domain-name-generator
- **Nameboy**—www.nameboy.com

Check Each Potential Domain Name's Availability

Once you have a list of potential domain names, one at a time, check their availability. Again, start by ensuring the .com extension of your desired domain name is available. Here are several online domain registrars that offer a free tool to determine if a domain name is available or already taken:

- **GoDaddy**—www.godaddy.com/offers/domain-airo
- **Name.com**—www.name.com/domain/search
- **Namecheap**—www.namecheap.com/domains/domain-name-search
- **Squarespace**—<https://domains.squarespace.com>
- **Whois**—<https://who.is>

Even if a domain name is listed as available, before registering it, perform a trademark search to ensure you won't be infringing on someone else's trademarks or copyrights, which could lead to a lawsuit.

You can start by visiting the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office website (www.uspto.gov/trademarks/search), or hire a fee-based online service like Trademarkia (www.trademarkia.com/comprehensive-trademark-search) to perform a more comprehensive search on your behalf. This is also something a copyright and trademark attorney can do for you (for a fee, of course).

Select a Domain Registrar

To obtain a domain name, you'll need to access a domain registrar, which is a company that manages the registration of internet domain names. There are many independent domain name registrars in cyberspace. Each charges a different amount for its services. Ultimately, you'll pay an annual fee for each domain name you register. You can often save money by paying for multiple years up front.

A few of the more popular domain name registrars include:

- **Bluehost**—www.bluehost.com/domains
- **Domain.com**—www.domain.com
- **GoDaddy**—www.godaddy.com
- **Namecheap**—www.namecheap.com
- **Register.com**—www.register.com

Choose a Domain Extension

The domain extension, which is also referred to as a Top-Level Domain (TLD), is the suffix at the end of your domain name. The three most popular domain name extension are .com, .net, and .org.

Extensions that end in .com are often the best choice for businesses, and this is the one that most web surfers are familiar with. The .net extension was originally created to identify network services, while .org was the extension used by nonprofit organizations and various types of associations.

There are, however, now literally hundreds of other domain name extension options. Some represent specific countries where the website is based (like .ca for Canada, or .mx for Mexico), while others are considered vanity or niche extensions, like: .tech, .online, .store, .biz, .shop, or .design, .pictures, .expert, .finance, or .tips.

Start by choosing and registering your side hustle business's domain name that ends with .com, and then consider adding others that have alternative extensions, if you believe they can be good marketing tools.

Register Your Domain Name(s)

After you've selected one or more domain names and have determined they're available, follow these steps to registered them:

1. Create an account with a domain name registrar.
2. Search for your desired domain names, one at a time. If the registrar says it's available, select it and add it to your shopping cart.
3. Choose how long you want to register the domain name. You can typically choose anywhere from one to ten years. You'll pay an annual fee for each domain name you register, but if you prepay for multiple years, a discount is typically offered.
4. Select from the available add-ons. Each domain name registrar offers a selection of add-on services or features like domain privacy protection. This is a way to hide your personal information from the public when someone tries to track down the person or organization a domain name is registered to. There are website designers, graphic artists, SEO specialists, and others who seek out newly registered domain names and try marketing services to those individuals or companies that registered them. Without adding domain privacy protection, you could get bombarded by sales calls and spam emails within hours after registering a domain name.
5. Checkout. Once you've selected your domain name and the add-on services you deem necessary, check out from the domain registrar's website. Pay the required fee for each domain name you've registered. Within minutes, that domain name will be yours.

6. Associate your newly registered domain name with your actual website. After this is done, anyone who types your domain name into their web browser will be able to visit your website. If you're using a web hosting service, it typically provides easy integration directions to link your actual website with your domain name.
7. After registering your domain name(s), be sure to verify your ownership. This usually involves clicking a verification link sent to your email address.

OBTAIN CUSTOM EMAIL ADDRESSES THAT MAKE YOUR DOMAIN NAME

After you register your domain name, the domain name registrar or your website hosting service will offer the opportunity to pay an additional fee to get custom email addresses that use the same domain name. If you register `www.[YourCompanyName].com`, for example, you'll be able to set up one or more email addresses that follow this format: `[UserName]@[YourCompanyName].com`.

You can also set up more generic email accounts for your side hustle business, like `info@[YourCompanyName].com`, `press@[YourCompanyName].com`, or `support@[YourCompanyName].com`.

Having custom email addresses gives your business a tremendous amount of additional credibility, as opposed to using email addresses that end in `@gmail.com`, for example. Most people know these are free email addresses offered by Google Gmail.

Determine the Purpose of Your Website

Having a website for your side hustle business is important, but to get the most out of this online tool, you need to develop a clear understanding of your business goals, target audience, and the value you want to provide to web surfers via your website.

Start by identifying the primary goals for your website. For example, are you looking to sell products, generate leads, disseminate information, or build an online community? Your goals will shape the content and features you will ultimately be adding to your website.

An e-commerce website contains product listings, a shopping cart, and a payment gateway. It's designed to sell products (or services).

Companies can use a lead generation website to gather information about visitors and to provide prospective customers or clients with the information they need about their side hustle business. This can be done through online contact forms, a live chat feature, landing pages, call-to-action buttons, a "Contact Us" feature, and other functions integrated into your website.

If your goal is to disseminate information, this, too, can be done in several ways, based on your target audience and the type of content you wish to share. For example, you can offer an informative, primarily text-based blog or online newsletter, offer a database of FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) documents, or provide a resource library of how-to articles or instructional (or informative) videos.

Knowing what you want your website to offer is the first step. Next, figure out the best way to provide the content and features in a manner that will appeal to and engage your target audience.

As you determine the types of content you want to include as part of your website, as well as the features and functions you want it to offer, keep two strategies in mind. First, keep it simple. Make sure text is easy to read and understand, and that you're not overly using graphics, animations, or other visual or audible content in a way people will find confusing or distracting. If you study the websites from well-established brands, you'll see most rely on a lot of on-screen white space and are very easy to navigate.

Second, understand that visitors to your website have a very short attention span. You'll have maybe 15 seconds at best to initially attract the

attention of a first-time visitor to your website. If you don't grab their attention and provide the relevant information they're seeking, in a format that they find intuitive, those visitors will simply click away from your site and most likely wind up visiting your competition's website.

All Websites Should Offer Basic Information

No matter what you decide the goal or purpose of your side hustle website should be, plan on adding the core elements that every website should provide to visitors. These include:

- An **About Us** section. This is where you can tell your story.
- A **Products/Services** section. It's here you can describe all the products and service you offer to your customers or clients.
- A **Contact Us** page. On every webpage of your website, the visitor should have no trouble figuring out how to contact you by telephone, text message, live chat, or email, based on the communication methods you choose to provide. The Contact Us page should also offer links to all your social media accounts.
- Website visitors who will hopefully become your customers or clients want assurances that your website is safe and that any information that's provided will be kept private. Nobody wants to share their email address or phone number with one company, only to discover their contact information has been sold to dozens of other companies and organizations, which results in unsolicited calls and spam messages. Your website's **Privacy Policy and Terms of Service** section or page is where you'll assure visitors of your website's security, and your company's policy of not sharing their information.
- A website's **FAQ section** is where you can answer the most frequently asked questions from your website visitors, using short, easy-to-understand, text-based answers.

- **Customer reviews, testimonials, and ratings.** If used correctly, this information can give your side hustle business a tremendous amount of credibility. Consider adding a section of your website that provides text-based customer reviews, in-depth testimonials, or star-based ratings from customers or clients. A service like Trustpilot (<https://business.trustpilot.com>) can help with this.

Focus on Your Website's User Experience (UX)

Loading up your website with a ton of valuable information and resources that will appeal to your target audience is great. However, to capture and then keep the attention of website visitors, it's necessary to present this information in a concise, easy-to-understand, and visually appealing way.

Focus on simplicity when it comes to your website's navigation menu and search function. Make sure that the website loads quickly on all popular web browsers, and that it looks good on desktop computer monitors, laptop computer screens, and on the displays of mobile devices, including smartphones and tablets.

Based on the website hosting service and website template you select, you will likely have the option of adding a wide range of interactive features to your website. Pursuant to the "keep it simple" strategy, only add interactive features and functions that will appeal to your target audience and that will not distract web surfers from the messaging you're trying to convey.

Interactive features that can be added to a website include forms, live chat, social media integration, or quick interactive games that can reward a new customer with a discount. Avoid interactive features that result in annoying and distracting pop-up windows, or that will pull attention away from the core messaging your website is being designed to convey.

Develop an Online Content Strategy

By understanding your target audience, what products and services you plan to offer, and how a website could potentially benefit your side hustle business, develop a comprehensive content strategy that includes what information you plan to share, how you plan to share it, and how frequently you'll update the content on your website and on all your side hustle's social media feeds. As you do this, always focus on your core messaging and cross-platform continuity.

Use Analytics and Feedback as a Learning Tool

Take advantage of the free and low-cost analytics tools, like Google Analytics, to help you track visitor behavior and gather insights. Use this data to better understand what's working and what needs improvement in terms of your website's design, appearance, user interface, features, functions, and the content that's being offered. You can also perform informal surveys or solicit feedback from your website visitors.

Make Sure Your Website Is Secure

One of the biggest challenges related to having a website is ensuring it offers the maximum level of security for yourself, your business, and your visitors—especially if it's an e-commerce website. Your website hosting service will provide the necessary SSL certificates, regular website backups, and the security plug-ins needed, but you need to activate them, and in some cases, pay a subscription fee to use them.

Seven Key Steps for Creating Your Side Hustle's Website

Especially if you're not a professional website designer or programmer, designing, creating, publishing, and then managing a website for your side hustle business may seem like a difficult and time-consuming task. But it does not have to be.

All the website hosting services offer free tutorials and how-to videos that will guide you through the process, step-by-step. You can also find free tutorials on YouTube. If you have the budget, consider hiring a freelance website designer or graphic artist with website design experience to help you design and publish your website and then teach you how to manage it moving forward.

The entire website creation process can be narrowed down to these seven key steps:

Define Your Purpose and Audience

Before diving into the technical aspects of designing your website, clarify its purpose. Identify your target audience and determine what key features and functions you want to add. To help you brainstorm ideas, spend a few hours visiting the websites operated by your key competitors. Pay attention to what you like about each website, as well as what you don't like, what you find confusing, and what you believe your website should do better.

Ultimately, knowing the website's objectives and who it will cater to will make many of the website-related decisions moving forward a lot easier.

Select a Website-Building Tool or Service

Select a website builder that suits your needs and skill level. These platforms typically provide user-friendly interfaces and customizable templates. This makes it easier to create a professional-looking site without extensive coding or graphic design knowledge.

Secure Your Domain Name(s) and Website Hosting Service

Remember, your domain name is your website's address on the internet. Choose a name that reflects your brand and is easy to remember. You'll need to register your domain name with a registrar. You will then need a hosting service to store your website's files. Many website builders offer hosting as part of their respective packages.

Keep in mind, registering a domain name involves paying an annual fee. A separate fee is required to use a website design tool or service. And then you'll need to pay a monthly or annual fee for the website hosting services you need.

On the plus side, many website hosting services can handle all these tasks on your behalf for one monthly or annual fee.

Select a Website Template to Customize

If you'll be selecting a website template that you'll then customize, choose one that offers the appearance, features, functions, and intuitive interface your target audience will respond favorably to.

Remember that it's essential to select a template that aligns with your brand's aesthetic. You'll then be able to customize it by adding your logo, changing colors, choosing fonts and typestyles, adjusting the layout, and adding additional types of content, such as photos, graphics, animations, and video clips (if you deem this necessary).

Since many people do their web surfing from their smartphone or tablet screen, which has a much smaller display than their desktop or laptop computer, make sure every aspect of your side hustle's website is mobile-responsive and automatically formats to the size of the display the web surfer is using.

Add Web Pages and Custom Content

Most websites are comprised of individual web pages. These often include a Home page, About Us page, Contact Us page, a FAQ page, and a product or services page (or pages).

Across your entire website, be sure to compose clear and engaging content that communicates your value proposition and encourages visitors to act. Again, every word and sentence you use should be written specifically for your target audience.

Consider accompanying your text with high-quality images and videos to enhance your site's visual appeal. However, either create this content yourself or license it. You do not want to accidentally use someone else's copyrighted or trademarked content.

Optimize Your Website for SEO

Understanding what Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is and how it works is a skill set unto itself, but it's something you should have a basic understanding of as you create content for your website. After all, you want the various search engines, like Google and Yahoo!, to be able to drive relevant traffic to your website and help you reach your target audience.

If you don't have the time to learn the basics of SEO, which is something that's continuously evolving, consider hiring a freelance SEO expert who can help you edit your website and use appropriate SEO tools and content creation practices. This includes using relevant keywords throughout your website, creating accurate and targeted meta descriptions, and ensuring your site loads quickly.

Test and Then Publish Your Website

Creating a website for your business can theoretically be done in a few hours. However, realistically, plan on it taking several days or even weeks. After all, you need to gather or create all the content that will be featured on your website, design each page of the website, test it, and then tweak it as needed before you publish it on the internet.

Before initially publishing your website, thoroughly test it to ensure all links work, all forms function correctly, and the site looks exactly as it should on Windows laptop and desktop computers, Mac desktop and laptop computers, smartphones, and tablets. Also, test the website using all the popular website browsers. This can be done using a tool from Applitools (<https://applitools.com/solutions/cross-browser-testing-ppc>), DatadogHQ (www.datadoghq.com/dg/apm/synthetics/cross-browser-tests), or SmartBear (<https://smartbear.com/ppc/testcomplete>).

Once you're satisfied with how the website looks and functions, when the time is right, publish your site and start promoting it through social media, email marketing, and other channels. Keep in mind, just because you build an amazing website does not mean web surfers will immediately come flocking to it.

Plan on using a multifaceted and ongoing approach to promoting your website and building its audience. One of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to do this is to use social media. However, if you have the budget, search engine and social media advertising works very well, too. This is the focus of Chapter 8, "Become Active on Social Media."

CHAPTER 8

Become Active on Social Media

As of mid-2024, there are more than 3 billion active Facebook users, 2.4 billion Instagram users, 335.7 million X (Twitter) users, 1.56 billion TikTok users, 522 million Pinterest users, 1 billion LinkedIn users, and 2.49 billion YouTube users worldwide. In other words, there are a lot of people who actively and regularly use social media.

There are many reasons why social media has become a growing media format around the world, while TV viewers, newspaper readers, magazine readers, and radio station listeners are quickly on the decline. One key reason is that people can share aspects of their lives and keep tabs on friends and family whenever it's convenient, directly from their mobile devices.

Social media users can also follow their favorite online influencers, news organizations, celebrities, athletes, authors, and anyone else they're interested in, plus learn about products and services they rely on every day. As a result, businesses of all sizes and in all industries now use social media as an informal way to communicate and share content with prospective and existing customers and clients.

Plus, advertising on social media has become a relatively low-cost way for businesses to quickly reach extremely targeted audiences with their marketing messages. In fact, on many of the social media platforms, it's now possible to sell products directly to consumers. They can place and pay for an order without having to leave the social media service they're currently using.

So, it's not a matter of whether you should have a social media presence for your side hustle business. You should. It's a matter of which social media services you should become active on and dedicate resources toward, to best reach your target audience.

Choose Which Services to Create a Presence On

Here are six strategies that can help you determine which social media services to become active on to promote your side hustle business.

Identify Your Target Audience

Once again, the key to choosing which of the popular social media services can be most beneficial to your side hustle business comes down to knowing your customer and becoming acquainted with their social media usage habits. Start by considering their demographics, interests, and online behavior. Understand that the different social media platforms attract different user bases, but all of the popular social media services are constantly evolving. Some are quickly growing, while others are on the decline in terms of their popularity and the amount of time people spend using them.

Each Social Media Platform Reaches a Specialized Audience

As of mid-2024, Facebook continues to reach a very broad audience. This platform is good for community building and targeting specific audiences. Companies of any size can create and manage their own Facebook page for free. This is one way you can start building an online community around your side hustle venture and its products or services.

Instagram continues to be popular among younger users, although the audience is expanding quickly to include a broader demographic. This service is ideal for creating and sharing visual content that's accompanied by text-based captions.

If your side hustle is more business-to-business, as opposed to business-to-consumer in its offerings, LinkedIn is one of the services you want to become active on. This is the social media service business professionals from all industries use for professional networking and more.

X (formally known as Twitter) was once a dominant force in social media, but this service's popularity is on the decline, at least as of mid-2024. It's a useful platform for sharing short tidbits of text-based content that can be accompanied by a photo or video clip. Many X users rely on this service to stay up to date on news headlines, to follow companies they do business with, follow the posts of celebrities and public figures, and to participate in online conversations about currently trending topics.

Pinterest's focus is on creating and sharing visual content. It has a predominantly female audience, and it's often used for sharing lifestyle and DIY content.

TikTok is one of the most popular social media services among a younger demographic. It's a useful platform for creating and sharing short-form videos. YouTube, on the other hand, is ideal for sharing long-form video content with the public, or a highly targeted audience. This can include promotional or how-to videos related to your company, your brand, and its products and services.

Analyze How Your Competitors Are Using Social Media

One of the easiest ways to figure out how to best reach your target audience with interesting, informative, and timely content that your audience will

perceive as valuable is to pay attention to what your competitors are doing and how they're using the various social media platforms.

As you review the online activities of your competitors, determine ways you can present new and original content in a fun, interesting, and attention-grabbing way. Most importantly, brainstorm ways you can use social media to outshine your competitors. People will only follow your social media feed if they perceive your content to be entertaining, valuable, and informative to them. Social media posts (as opposed to social media paid advertising) should not be used for string sales pitches.

Define Your Goals

Just as you did when thinking about creating a website, determine what you want to achieve with your side hustle's social media presence. This might include boosting brand awareness, using social media as a tool for lead generation, finding innovative ways to enhance customer engagement, or attract new customers/clients. Social media can also be used as a powerful and highly targeted sales tool (but only if you use the right soft-sell approach).

Develop Your Content Strategy

Before you start randomly posting content on the various social media platforms, first determine what types of content you should create and share. Then determine which social media services your target audience uses.

As you do your research about each social media platform, you'll discover each follows its own content format, has its own set of tools, and is useful for sharing different types of content. The trick is to determine the best types of content to create and share with your audience on the platforms you deem are the most worthwhile to achieve your objectives.

Then, once you establish your presence on each service, it's important to maintain a regular and ongoing content creation strategy to keep your followers engaged. This might mean posting content several times per month, per week, or even per day, depending on your target audience and goals.

Measure and Adjust Your Social Media Strategy

There are all sorts of free and fee-based analytics tools, including some provided by each social media platform, that allow you to track your engagement and performance, as well as the traffic and attention each of your posts receives. Pay attention to metrics like engagement, reach, and conversion rates. Based on this data, adjust your strategy to continuously try to improve your results.

There's a common misconception that to be successful using social media, your posts need to go viral—meaning they're seen by millions of people around the world. When it comes to promoting your side hustle business, instead of trying to make your content go viral, focus on reaching your core target demographic with information they deem relevant and valuable. And within your social media content, include an easy call to action.

If you're able to teach 100, 500, or 1,000 people who are within your target audience and who are interested in your product or service, and you can get those people to click on a link to visit your website or place an order, for example, this will be far more beneficial to your business than reaching tens of thousands or millions of random people who have no interest whatsoever in your business or what you're offering.

Whatever You Do, Stay Consistent

All your social media content should always stay consistent and include the same branding and messaging that's featured on your website and through every other aspect of your business that customers or clients see or hear.

Once you determine what your social media following is interested in, keep providing that type of information and content, but find creative ways to package it differently, so it stays fresh and unique.

Create Consistent @Usernames for All Social Media Services

Part of being consistent on social media is making yourself easy to find. Try to use the same username across all social media platforms you're active on. And when possible, keep your social media username(s) consistent with your website domain name, or at least consistent with your brand and its core messaging.

Keep in mind, selecting a good username for your startup side hustle on social media is crucial for building a recognizable and memorable brand. When brainstorming potential usernames, focus on the following:

Simplicity and Memorability

Just like a website domain name and your company name, a good social media username should be simple and easy to remember. Avoid using complex words, numbers, or special characters that could potentially confuse your audience. A straightforward and catchy name is more likely to stick in people's minds.

Relevance to Your Brand

Your social media username must be unique. It should also reflect your brand's identity and what your business is about. You want it to provide

potential followers with an idea of what they can expect from your content. Try to incorporate relevant keywords when possible.

Avoiding Trademark Issues

Just as you did when choosing a website domain name, ensure that your chosen social media username(s) does not infringe on any existing trademarks or copyrights.

Future-Proof Your Social Media Username

When choosing social media usernames for your side hustle, think long-term. Avoid using trendy terms or phrases that can quickly become outdated. You want your username to be timeless and adaptable to any future changes in your business's goals, especially if you'll likely branch out to expand your product line or service offerings.

Keep It SEO-Friendly

An SEO-friendly username can help improve your visibility on search engines. This means incorporating relevant keywords that your target audience might use when searching for businesses, products, or services like yours.

Try to Be Unique

All usernames on social media must be unique. After all, this is how you're identified on each social media platform. It's like a phone number for your business. A unique username can help set you apart from your competition. Make it distinctive enough to avoid confusion with other brands.

Be Mindful of Character Limitations

Each social media platform has a maximum length (number of characters) that a username can be. Ensure your chosen name fits within these constraints.

Eight Proven Ways to Grow Your Online Network

Once your website is online and your social media presence on various platforms has been established, here are some strategies that can help you continuously expand your online network. Only by continuously working to drive traffic to your website and building your social media following will these tools become a viable sales, marketing, and promotional vehicle for your side hustle business.

Publish Consistent and Quality Content

Regularly posting high-quality content—preferably on a set schedule—is important. And the content you publish should always be relevant, engaging, and valuable to your audience. Be sure to use a mix of formats such as images, videos, infographics, and text-based content to keep your feed interesting. Also, avoid taking a hard sell approach with your social media. Use this as a platform to communicate informally with current and potential customers/clients. Remember, consistency helps build trust and keeps your audience engaged.

Always Try to Engage with Your Audience

Speaking of keeping your audience engaged, interaction is a key to building a loyal following. Respond to comments, messages, and mentions promptly and professionally. Show appreciation to your followers by liking and commenting on their posts. Engaging with your audience makes them feel valued and encourages them to interact more with your content. Beyond

using your regular posts, ask questions, take polls, and seek feedback from your audience. Also, draw followers into the story behind your side hustle.

Leverage Relevant Hashtags and Keywords

Using relevant hashtags and keywords will help to increase your visibility and reach on social media. Research popular and trending hashtags directly related to your niche. Be creative when it comes to incorporating them into your posts. The keywords and hashtags used must be relevant to your posts and not used for clickbait. Using hashtags and SEO-friendly keywords will help your content reach a broader audience beyond your immediate followers.

Collaborate with Influencers

While this can get expensive, since many high-profile influencers want to be paid for mentioning, showcasing, or including products in their posts, partnering with relevant influencers can give your side hustle's popularity and brand recognition a significant boost. Social media influencers have already established trust with their followers. As a result, their endorsement can introduce your brand to a larger and targeted audience. Choose influencers whose values align with your brand for authentic collaborations.

There are many agencies that match up companies of all sizes and in all industries with appropriate social media influencers, but these firms typically charge a fee for their services.

Host Contests and Giveaways

Contests and giveaways can be effective ways to increase engagement and attract new followers. If a follower wants to participate, encourage them to

like, share, and tag friends in your posts. This will not only boost your visibility, but also create excitement around your brand.

Take Advantage of Paid Social Media Advertising

Investing in paid social media advertising can help you reach a targeted audience quickly. This also puts you in 100 percent control over your messaging and reach. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn offer robust advertising tools and services that allow you to target specific demographics, interests, and behaviors. The best thing about social media advertising is that it's affordable (compared to other forms of paid advertising). You can start with a small budget and expand your campaigns based on the performance of your ads.

Encourage Your Followers to Share Their Own Content

One of the ways you can build a loyal online community around your social media content and website is to encourage your followers to create content related to your brand and share it on their respective feeds. Then, repost the user-generated content using your own social media account(s). Be sure to find fun ways to reward your followers for doing this.

Continue to Analyze and Adjust Your Activities

Don't just post, post again, and then post some more without taking advantage of analytics tools that show you exactly what people are relating to and engaging with. Use this information to better target your intended audience and determine what types of content resonate best with your followers.

How to Stay Current with Online Trends

Social media platforms and the way people use them is continuously evolving. Plus, over time, well-known services expand their reach, while others become less trendy and favorable. Staying current on the latest online trends is crucial for a startup side hustle operator if you want to remain competitive and relevant.

Here are some easy ways to stay informed about current social media trends, how your target audience is using social media, and the overall online habits of your intended audience:

Follow Industry Leaders and Influencers

Focus on what industry leaders and social media influencers in your niche are doing. These experts often share insights and updates on the latest trends.

Join Online Communities

Participate in online communities, including relevant Facebook groups and LinkedIn groups pertaining to your industry. Keep in mind, these groups are useful for networking, sharing ideas, and discussing emerging trends.

Subscribe to Industry Publications

Subscribe to industry-specific publications and blogs. These resources can keep you informed about new developments and up-and-coming trends.

Attend Webinars and Conferences

Take the time to attend webinars, virtual conferences, and industry events. These gatherings often feature expert speakers who discuss current trends and future predictions. They also provide excellent networking opportunities.

Be Flexible

Remember, the digital landscape, especially when it comes to social media, is constantly evolving. Stay flexible and be willing to adapt your online strategies as relevant new trends emerge. Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of your current tactics. Be ready to pivot when necessary, but don't feel the need to adopt the latest trend too quickly, especially if it's not something your target audience may have caught onto yet.

The Five Biggest Mistakes Small Business Owners Make When Creating and Managing Their Online Presence

You already know that creating and managing an online presence is crucial for small business owners, but there are common mistakes that can hinder your success. Here are the five biggest mistakes and how to avoid them:

Not Having a Mobile-Friendly Website

These days, most internet traffic comes from mobile devices—smartphones and tablets. These have smaller displays than laptop and desktop computers. Thus, having a mobile-friendly website and creating social media content designed to be seen on a smaller-size display is essential.

Pay attention to the readability of text on smaller-size screens and the amount of scrolling that's required to read your content. Keep your text concise, so minimal scrolling is required. Also, make sure detail in photos or videos can be seen clearly on smaller screens without the viewer needing to constantly zoom in. This is particularly important when showcasing the nuances of a product.

If your website is not mobile device friendly, it will provide a poor user experience for smartphone and tablet users. Remember, your site should be

easy to navigate, load quickly, and display correctly on *all* devices. Be sure to use responsive design techniques to test your site on various devices to ensure it works flawlessly.

Neglecting Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is critical for improving your website's visibility on search engines like Google. Small business owners often neglect SEO. This can lead to lower search rankings and reduced traffic.

Big mistakes include not using relevant keywords, publishing low quality content, and failing to optimize meta tags and descriptions. Be sure to invest the necessary time in learning basic SEO practices. Either that, or hire an expert to help improve your site's overall search engine performance.

Ignoring Customer Reviews

Customer reviews are a powerful tool for quickly building trust and credibility. Ignoring feedback from your customers and clients can quickly tarnish your reputation. Plus, you'll miss opportunities for improvement. Meanwhile, sharing positive reviews can boost your business's image and overall credibility. Respond to all reviews promptly and maintain a professional tone, even when the feedback is negative. Demonstrating that you value customer feedback and strive to provide top-notch customer service is important.

Inconsistent Branding

Make sure that your branding is consistent across all online platforms and on all your materials distributed or showcased in the real world. This is important for creating a strong and recognizable brand identity. If you're inconsistent when using your logo, brand colors, brand fonts, and

messaging, this will often confuse customers. Inconstancy will also weaken your brand and could inadvertently demonstrate a lack of focus.

Especially if you'll be working with outside agencies or freelancers, consider developing a brand style guide. Share this guide with anyone who will be creating content for your website, social media feeds, or printed content related to your business. Your branding should also be incorporated into your emails.

Ignoring Analytics

Many small business owners don't understand how analytics tools work, so they fail to use them when it comes to tracking online performance and the traffic received to their website and social media feeds. Without accurate data, you can't develop a clear understanding of what's working and what needs improvement. Tools like Google Analytics provide insights into website traffic, user behavior, and conversion rates.

Use the tools that are available to you from Google, your website hosting service, and the various social media platforms. There are also more powerful, fee-based analytics tools you can take advantage of if you want more advanced information.

Now Go Find Your First Customers or Clients

All the elements for your side hustle business' strong foundation should now be coming together. There are no shortcuts. If you're not comfortable with any aspects of what you've done so far to brainstorm, establish, and launch your side hustle, you're not yet ready to proceed.

Go back and invest the time and resources to ensure everything is properly in place—that you have a clear objective and a detailed plan for how you'll achieve your objectives. Now is the time to identify where and how things could go wrong and develop plans to deal with mishaps or

setbacks when they occur. There is no substitute for having done your research and preparation.

Only when you are 100 percent confident that everything is ready should you open for business. At this point, your primary objective is then to attract customers and client as quickly, cost effectively, and efficiently as possible. That's the focus of Chapter 9, "Get Customers and Clients."

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CHAPTER 9

Get Customers and Clients

So, you've done the brainstorming; invested the necessary time to do in-depth research; composed your business plan; defined your target audience; identified and have become thoroughly acquainted with the products/services you plan to offer; gathered the financing and resources you need; established an online presence; and have cut no corners laying the rest of your foundation for a successful side hustle business ... Nice job!

But now is when the fun—and the hard work—really begins. Once you're ready to open for business, it's time to start the ongoing process of finding and attracting loyal customers or clients. Even if you've done everything else correctly up until now, your ability to identify potential customers/clients, capture their attention, and transform them into long-term paying customers/clients is a whole separate challenge and process unto itself.

Of course, once you've transformed prospects into customers/clients, it's then your responsibility to address their wants and needs, cater to their interests, keep them happy over the long term, and hopefully get them to help you market your business by sharing positive word-of-mouth referrals, sharing details about your business with their online and real-world network, and by providing you with positive ratings and reviews that'll help boost your credibility and further expand your customer base.

Starting from day one, how you achieve this will come down to:

- Offering top-notch products/services.

- Providing personalized and attentive customer service.
- Developing successful and multifaceted marketing, promotions, public relations, advertising, and sales campaigns.
- Creating an all-around positive experience for each one of your customers/clients.

Assuming you're up for this challenge, or you have the financial resources to hire experts who are, it's time to start attracting customers who are willing to pay for your products/services.

As you start this process, understand that it most likely will not happen overnight. You need to have realistic expectations and understand that you're going to face challenges, and potentially a lot of rejection. This is all part of the process, so be prepared for it, determine how you'll cope with it, and come up with a plan to overcome it. What will it take? Well, it all starts with hard work, a steady focus to your goals, and plenty of persistence.

First, Don't Fear Rejection ... Learn from It

You've probably figured out by now that launching a side hustle can be an exciting, yet extremely daunting endeavor. Most people are faced with the ongoing fear of failure. It's crucial to understand, however, that being afraid is normal, but that it should not deter you from pursuing your entrepreneurial goals.

Here are several reasons why you should embrace the possibility of failure, not fear it, as someone who is starting a side hustle business. For starters, when and if you do fail, it can be an opportunity for learning and growth.

Every individual experience you have as you start your side hustle venture will provide some type of valuable lessons that can potentially help you grow—both personally and professionally. Knowing and believing this is true, every time something goes wrong, whether it's a minor setback or

something more significant, be sure to analyze and develop a clear understanding of what went wrong and why.

Gain as much insight as you can about the cause of the failure, what led up to it, what could have been handled differently, and what you will do in the future to prevent similar problems. Based on the failure, figure out what you need to do to improve your business strategies, refine your product or service, better understand your target market, or handle specific situations differently moving forward.

Even if you're already an expert in your field, you do not know everything and you're not perfect. Mistakes and oversights could lead to challenges and failures along your path to success. Instead of getting bogged down on what's already happened, after you've learned everything possible from the failure, move on, and don't look back. This is where focus and persistence will pay off in a big way.

Developing Resilience Is Part of Entrepreneurship

Nobody said launching your own side hustle was going to be easy. It's certainly not something for the fainthearted to pursue. Launching and running a successful side hustle requires plenty of resilience—the ability to efficiently bounce back from setbacks without allowing them to have a long-term emotional impact.

Part of becoming a successful entrepreneur in any field is learning how to face and overcome failure, and ultimately being able to build resilience so you can stay motivated and focused on your core objectives. Yes, this sounds a lot easier than it actually is, but becoming resilient and maintaining a positive mental state as it relates to your side hustle is certainly possible. The good news is that the more often you're forced to confront challenges and failures (most of which will hopefully be minor), the better you'll become at efficiently dealing with them.

Failure Can Lead to Innovation and Greater Creativity

Having to deal with some type of failure will often force you to be creative and efficiently come up with innovative solutions. Anytime things don't go as planned, you will be more motivated to explore new ideas and approaches to whatever challenges are at hand. Having to be creative and try new approaches to things can lead to positive (and potentially profitable) breakthroughs that you might not have otherwise discovered.

Lower Your Financial Risk

One of the advantages of launching your own side hustle is that it allows you to test your business idea at your own pace and with relatively low financial risk. For most people, the stakes are not as high as they would be if you were relying solely on your side hustle for financial support. Having this safety net can provide the freedom to experiment a bit and take calculated risks without the fear of devastating financial consequences. At least initially, make sure you do your research and number crunching before taking any significant financial risks, however.

Failure Can Help You Discover Helpful Resources

Failure can provide the opportunity for you to build and strengthen your professional network and force you to uncover new resources that can help guide you toward success. Don't be afraid to seek out advice and support from others, including people you know in the real world, online connections, and by reaching out to other experts who can share knowledge and experience that you don't yet possess.

By seeking out new people to work with and help you, you might discover new mentors, potentially uncover interesting and mutually

beneficial collaboration opportunities, and even find potential business partners. If you don't know who to turn to for help, become active on LinkedIn. It's here you'll discover a vast community of fellow entrepreneurs and online groups where people are willing to share experiences, insights, and assistance (often for free).

LinkedIn is a great resource for finding mentors and seeking assistance from experienced experts. SCORE (www.score.org) is also a free resource that, among other things, pairs up retired business leaders with up-and-coming entrepreneurs. You also discover online courses and workshops you can participate in.

Since 1964, SCORE has worked with more than 17 million entrepreneurs to help them start and grow their business. The organization has enlisted more than 10,000 volunteers who provide free, expert mentoring, resources, and education in all 50 U.S. states and territories.

Failure Can Lead to Personal Growth

Many people who start a side hustle are driven by some type of passion or desire to pursue something meaningful. If you're launching a side hustle just for the cash, this can hamper your chances of success.

Keep in mind, even if your side hustle does not achieve immediate success, the journey toward success can be fulfilling and educational. After all, the process of creating something from scratch, and then working on a side hustle you are truly passionate about, can provide a tremendous sense of personal accomplishment. The successes you achieve will help you build more personal confidence. And with more confidence, you'll be more apt to be persistent when it comes to pursuing your goals.

Think Long Term, but Focus on the Short Term

While focusing on the day-to-day process of starting and launching your side hustle, adopt a long-term thought perspective. Whatever success you achieve will not happen overnight (unless you're extremely lucky).

If you study the history of some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs, you'll discover many of them have experienced multiple failures before achieving their goals and their current success. Thus, you should view failure as a potential stepping stone rather than a setback. By adopting this mindset, you'll find it much easier to maintain your motivation and perseverance.

So, as a startup side hustle operator, do not fear failure. Instead, when and if it happens, embrace it. After all, it's an important part of your entrepreneurial journey. If necessary, work toward shifting your mindset to view failure as an opportunity for both growth and learning.

Now Take a Brave Step Forward

Once you're able to get your fear of failure and rejection under control, and you understand how to work with it, start the process of finding and landing customers and clients. Again, this won't be an easy process initially, but it all starts by getting your proverbial foot in the door as you start making contact with prospects.

Five Steps to Get Your Preverbal Foot in the Door

Once you've compiled a prospect list (a task you'll learn how to do shortly), you'll need to establish communication with those potential customers or clients. And it all starts with effective communication. Here are some strategies to ensure your communication skills are up to the task:

Become Good at Active Listening

Active listening is the foundation of good communication. Being an active listener is a skill unto itself that involves concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what the other person is saying whenever you're engaged in any form of communication with someone else.

Being a good active listener will help you build strong relationships with clients, partners, and customers (plus it can work well in your personal life, too). Practice active listening by maintaining eye contact, nodding when appropriate, providing feedback during conversations, and by asking relevant follow-up questions.

Clear and Concise Messaging

Once you get in front of any prospect, you'll have mere seconds to capture their attention and get them interested in what you're offering. To achieve this, make sure your messages are clear and to the point. Skip the jargon and any overly complex language. Whether you're writing an email or speaking with a client in person or during a virtual meeting, clarity is key. Structure your messaging logically so it specifically targets the person or people you're communicating with. And make whatever information you convey easy to understand.

Continuous Learning

Having top-notch written and verbal communication skills is essential. Again, continuously invest in improving all your communication and listening skills. You can do this by participating in courses or workshops, reading books, or by using online resources. The better communicator you become, the easier it'll be to sell your products or services when you're interacting with prospects. Remember, perfecting your communication skills will require a lot of practice and persistence.

Take Advantage of Technology

Leverage communication tools and technologies to enhance your interactions. Tools like Slack, Zoom, and Trello can streamline communication and collaboration with your team and clients. Familiarize yourself with these tools to ensure you're efficient using them.

In today's business world, there's nothing more frustrating than logging into a video call or virtual meeting and having to wait while someone tinkers with their webcam, conferencing software, or microphone to get everything working properly. This is always something that should be done *before* your virtual meeting, not at the start of it.

And when it comes to written communication, take advantage of the latest AI tools to help you compose and edit text so that it's error free, well written, and highly targeted to its intended audience.

Showcase Your Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Focus on developing your empathy and emotional intelligence so you can better understand, relate to, and respond to the emotions, fears, challenges, problems, and needs of others. This will help you to build rapport and trust with clients and colleagues faster. Always consider the perspectives of other people, and then respond thoughtfully and appropriately.

Create a Targeted Prospect List

Creating a targeted prospect list is essential for the success of your side hustle startup. By doing this, you will create a detailed listing of individuals or companies that you can target to sell your product or service.

As you'll discover, there are several ways to create a prospect list. Whichever methods you choose, make sure you wind up with a list that only

includes people, companies, or organizations that fit directly into your target audience.

Here are some steps for building a prospect list:

- **Define Your Ideal Customer Profile**—Start by identifying the characteristics of your ideal customers. Consider factors such as demographics, industry, company size, location, and specific needs or pain points your product or service addresses. This helps you focus on prospects who will be most likely to benefit from what you offer. Refer back to Chapter 3, “Identify Your Ideal Customer,” for more guidance on how to do this.
- **Research and Identify Prospects**—Use the free and fee-based resources at your disposal to gather information about potential prospects. LinkedIn, industry directories, business databases, and social media platforms are valuable tools for finding relevant contacts.
- **Take Advantage of Lead Generation Tools**—Tools like Seamless.AI (<https://seamless.ai>), Lusha (www.lusha.com), Apollo.io (www.apollo.io), and Hunter.io (<https://hunter.io>) can help you automate the process of finding and verifying contact information. These tools can also help you gather email addresses, phone numbers, and other relevant details about your prospects, and then organize this data efficiently.
- **Personalize Your Outreach**—When reaching out to prospects, always personalize your messages to address their specific needs and interests. Highlight how your product or service can solve their problems and potentially add value to their business. Focus on how you and your side hustle business can cater to the wants and needs of each specific prospect. And as often as possible, address your prospects by name, and always in a professional tone or manner.

Keep Your Facts Straight Using a CSM Application

A Customer Success Management (CSM) application is a software or online-based platform designed to help a business manage and enhance its relationships with customers. Unlike a traditional Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which primarily tracks sales and customer interactions, CSM applications also emphasize customer satisfaction, retention, and long-term success.

A CSM is not ideal for all side hustle businesses, but if you'll be operating the type of business that could benefit from easy, organized, and comprehensive information about your prospects, customers, and clients, seriously consider adopting the use of this type of application.

Benefits for Startup Side Hustle Operators

Here are just some of the ways a CSM or CRM application can help your side hustle business:

- **Data-Driven Insights**—A CSM or CRM application can offer valuable insights into customer behavior and preferences. By analyzing this data, you can make better informed decisions about future product improvements, marketing strategies, and customer support practices. This data-driven approach can help you better tailor your products and services to meet the wants and needs of your customers.
- **Enhance Customer Retention**—Retaining customers is crucial. A CSM or CRM application can help you monitor customer satisfaction and engagement and help you to address issues proactively. By ensuring your customers are happy, you increase the likelihood of repeat business, good reviews, and referrals.
- **Improve Customer Onboarding**—In many cases, effective onboarding is essential for customer success. A CSM or CRM application can provide a structured onboarding process. This type of tool can reduce churn and increase customer satisfaction from the start.
- **Increase Overall Efficiency**—Automating routine tasks and workflows with a CSM or CRM application can save time, save money, and reduce the risk of human error.
- **Increase Revenue**—By identifying opportunities for renewals and upsells, for

example, a CSM or CRM application can help you maximize revenue from your existing customers and clients. Remember, satisfied customers are more likely to purchase additional products or services, provide positive ratings and reviews, offer favorable word-of-mouth promotion, and ultimately help you grow your business.

- **Provide Better Customer Support**—With features like customer health scoring and feedback collection, a CSM or CRM application can help you identify and address potential issues before they become major problems. By being able to provide proactive support, you will build trust and loyalty that can lead to long-term customer relationships.

How to Implement a CSM or CRM Application

There are many CSM and CRM applications to choose from. This is again a situation where understanding your needs and doing research are essential. It all starts by choosing the right CSM or CRM tool based on your needs and budget.

When it comes to CSM applications, here are a few popular options:

- **ChurnZero**—<https://churnzero.com>
- **Gainsight**—www.gainsight.com
- **Totango**—www.totango.com
- **Vitally**—<https://try.vitally.io>
- **Zendesk**—www.zendesk.com

A few notable CRM application worth investigating include:

- **Act! CRM**—www.act.com
- **Freshworks CRM**—www.freshworks.com
- **HubSpot CRM**—www.hubspot.com/products/crm
- **Pipedrive CRM**—www.pipedrive.com
- **Salesforce**—www.salesforce.com
- **Zoho CRM**—www.zoho.com/crm

Based on your type of business, you could easily wind up using both a CSM and CRM application. If this is the case, you want tools that will seamlessly integrate, share data, and work together.

Once you choose the most appropriate CSM and CRM tool to adopt, make sure you properly train yourself and your entire team on how to use it effectively. Proper training on all applications you and your team members will be expected to use is essential.

Then, after you've begun using the CSM and CRM tools as part of your everyday workflow, continue to monitor and adjust how these applications are being used based on their effectiveness.

Locate the Decision-Maker for Your Services

After you've compiled your list of prospects, step two is to determine who the decision-makers are. This is crucial for generating sales for your business-to-consumer or business-to-business services. You can figure out the right people to approach and communicate with by performing research. For this, LinkedIn can be a valuable tool. While using LinkedIn, seek out individuals with titles that suggest they have purchasing power or influence over decisions related to your product or service.

Of course, you can also pick up the phone and ask for the name and title of the decision-maker. As you contact prospects, be prepared to interact with gatekeepers, including receptionists and administrative assistants. These people can become valuable allies if you treat them with respect and simply ask for their assistance in connecting you with the appropriate decision-makers.

Once you're able to communicate with a prospect, be sure to ask qualifying questions during your initial conversation to confirm you're in fact speaking with someone who has decision-making power. Simply asking a question like, "Can you explain your company's process for making a purchasing decision?" can help you determine the people you need to be speaking with.

Introduce Yourself and Get Right to the Point

Having already done your research, so you know something about the prospect, once you initially make contact, introduce yourself and get right to the point. Assume the person you're speaking with is extremely busy and has a very short attention span.

As part of your initial conversations—whether they happen via email, during phone calls, or in person—ask questions and then use your active listening skills to acquire any additional information you need to be able to properly customize and personalize your sales pitch to the person you're interacting with.

Once you identify the company's wants and needs, and how what you're offering can be beneficial to the prospect, focus on communicating those benefits in the clearest and most efficient way possible. This might include using charts, graphs, photos, animations, or other sales-oriented tools to help you get your key points across.

Demonstrate Your Passion and Share Your Story

As part of your initial communication with a prospect, be sure to share your passion about your business, as well as its products or services. By sharing your story in a compelling and heartfelt way, you can quickly enhance your connection with a prospect. To achieve this, start by crafting a compelling narrative. Tell people about yourself, your journey, the challenges you've faced, and the inspirations behind why you launched your side hustle business. If you tell your personal story in a heartfelt way, it will resonate deeply with people. Focus on what you and your prospect have in common and use that connection as the foundation to build the relationship.

Be Authentic and Genuine

Most people do not initially trust salespeople. If you want to win over someone quickly, authenticity is crucial. Always be honest about your

experiences, knowledge, skill set, and passion. Your prospects will greatly appreciate your transparency and be more likely to trust and support your business.

Highlight Customer Success Stories

Another way to quickly build trust is to share testimonials and success stories from your existing customers or clients. By doing this, you help to validate your product or service, and at the same time, you can easily demonstrate the real-world impact of your business and its offerings. Be sure to showcase exactly how your side hustle has positively affected others. This can be a powerful way to attract new customers or clients.

Showcase Your Expertise

You can quickly help prospects build confidence in you and your business by positioning yourself as an expert in your field. One way to do this is to share valuable insights, tips, and advice related to your industry or to the prospect's specific business. This strategy will help you build credibility, plus demonstrate your commitment to providing value.

WAYS TO POSITION YOURSELF AS AN EXPERT IN YOUR FIELD

Positioning yourself as an expert in your field can significantly enhance your side hustle's credibility and attract more customers. Here are some ways to achieve this:

- **Create High-Quality Content**—Regularly publish blog posts, articles, and videos that showcase your expertise online, particularly on your own website and on social media services. Share valuable insights, tips, and industry trends.
- **Engage on Social Media**—Use platforms like LinkedIn, X (Twitter), and Instagram to share your expertise. Participate in relevant discussions, answer questions, and provide valuable information for free as you interact informally with people on these services.
- **Write Guest Blogs and Be a Guest on Podcasts**—Contribute guest posts to reputable industry blogs (or blogs that your target audience reads) and be a guest on podcasts that cater to your target audience. These activities will expose you to new audiences, help to enhance your credibility, and allow you to expand your popularity. Choose platforms that align with your target audience or industry niche to maximize the impact of these activities.

Finding relevant blogs is easy using a blog directory, such as:

- **BD Blog Directory**—www.blog-directory.org
- **Blog Catalog**—www.blogcatalog.com
- **Blogarama**—www.blogarama.com
- **Feedspot**—https://blog.feedspot.com/blogs_directory
- **Technorati**—<http://technorati.com>

You can also easily find podcasts based on category or subject matter by searching Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Audible, TuneIn Radio, Pandora, iHeart Radio, and other podcast directories.

- **Become a Public Speaker or Host Webinars**—Speak at industry conferences, host webinars, and participate in local events. Public speaking engagements can position you as a credible business leader and allow you to share your knowledge with a broader audience. It also provides networking opportunities with other experts and potential clients.

- **Publish a Book or E-book**—Writing a book or e-book on your area of expertise can significantly boost your credibility. It positions you as an authority and provides a tangible resource for your audience. Self-publishing a book or e-book is a lot less expensive and time-consuming than you might think. And, once published, you can sell your publication to the public, plus use it as a marketing tool by giving copies away for free to highly targeted prospects.

Keep in mind, there's a fine line between showcasing your credentials in a positive way and coming off as someone who's conceited or arrogant. To keep this from happening, here are some easy strategies to follow:

- **Avoid Overstating Your Credentials**—Be honest about your qualifications and experience. Exaggerating them, however, can damage your reputation.
- **Avoid Taking a Hard Sell Approach**—Focus on providing value and building your credibility, rather than constantly trying to sell or upsell your products or services.
- **Don't Ignore Feedback**—Engage with your audience and be open to feedback. Ignoring or dismissing this feedback can harm your credibility.

Present Your Unique Value Proposition

Creating and communicating a compelling value proposition is essential for a side hustle startup when it comes to attracting and retaining customers. Start by identifying and promoting your unique value. Once you truly understand what makes your company philosophy, products, or services unique, you can share this information in creative and compelling ways with your prospects. Be sure to consider the specific benefits and solutions you offer—especially those that set you apart from your competitors.

Be sure to create a clear value proposition statement. It should be concise and easy to understand. It should also communicate the unique benefits of your product or service in a way that is quick and easy to understand.

This is also an opportunity where you can leverage case studies and customer/client testimonials to your utmost advantage. This information

can demonstrate the real-world impact of your product or service. It can also enhance your credibility and help prospects see the tangible benefits they can expect by buying your products or using your services.

Simple Ways to Get Customers

Based on the type of side hustle business you plan to pursue, there are many ways to go about finding and landing customers. Here are some proven strategies to help you get started.

Ask for Referrals

Seeking out referrals is a powerful way to quickly grow your side hustle. After receiving a referral, be sure to follow up with a thankyou note or small token of appreciation to the person who provided it. Doing this shows gratitude and encourages future referrals.

There are many types of people in your personal and professional life who could provide you with valuable referrals. Here are some worthwhile options to pursue:

- **Offer Incentives**—Create a referral program that rewards both the referrer and the new customer. Offer discounts, freebies, or exclusive deals as incentives. This encourages people to spread the word about your business.
- **Personal Networks**—Reach out to friends, family, and acquaintances. Ask if they know anyone who might benefit from your products or services. Be sure to explain how their referrals can help your business grow, and show your sincere gratitude for their help.
- **Request Referrals from Satisfied Customers**—Your existing customers are a valuable source of referrals. After a positive

interaction or purchase, ask them if they know anyone who might be interested in your offerings. Make it easy for them to refer others by providing referral cards or links to your website and social media feeds.

- **Seek Out Referrals from People in Your Community**—Attend local events, join community groups, and participate in online forums related to your industry. Building a presence in these spaces increases your chances of receiving referrals from people you interact with regularly. Religious leaders, hairstylists, doctors, dentists, and any other people who interact with large numbers of people on a regular basis as part of their job (and who are trusted by those people) can potentially provide valuable referrals to your business.
- **Take Advantage of Social Media**—Encourage your network to share details about your business on social media. Create shareable content, such as testimonials or special promotions, that they can easily re-post. This expands your reach and can attract potential customers.

Offer Free Trials and Discounts of Your Products or Services to New Customers

One of the best ways to land a new customer or client is to allow them to see firsthand how good what you're offering really is. You can do this by offering a free trial or a generous introductory discount to your new customers or clients.

Add a Free Bonus or Giveaway with Each Product or Service Purchase

By giving something extra away for free, you can often entice someone to become a customer or client. Be creative when choosing what the giveaway will be, and make sure it's something your prospect will want, appreciate receiving, and can immediately benefit from.

Focus on Targeted Online Advertising

If you have the financial resources, one of the fastest and easiest ways to find and land new customers or clients is to use paid online advertising—especially search engine advertising on services like Google or Yahoo!, as well as social media advertising on platforms you know your target audience regularly uses.

Learning how to use online advertising is a skill set unto itself, so you if you don't want to teach yourself all the nuances of online advertising, hire someone who's already a specialist to help you. Otherwise, you could wind up spending a lot of money, but not generating the results you desire.

Here are some links to help you get started with social media and search engine advertising:

- **Amazon Advertising**—<https://advertising.amazon.com/lp/build-your-business-with-amazon-advertising>
- **Facebook Advertising**—<https://business.facebook.com/business>
- **Google Advertising**—https://ads.google.com/intl/en_us/start/overview-ha
- **Instagram Advertising**—<https://business.instagram.com/ad-solutions>
- **LinkedIn Advertising**—<https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions>
- **Microsoft Advertising**—<https://about.ads.microsoft.com/en/h/a/microsoft-advertising>

- **Snapchat Advertising**—<https://forbusiness.snapchat.com/advertising/why-snapchat-ads>
- **TikTok Advertising**—<https://getstarted.tiktok.com/ttvalue>
- **X (Twitter) Advertising**—<https://business.x.com/en/advertising.html>
- **Yahoo! Advertising**—<https://www.advertising.yahooinc.com>

Network Online and in the Real World

Networking is essential for the growth of a startup side hustle. Here are some of the best ways to network online:

- **Use Social Media Platforms**—Utilize platforms like LinkedIn, X (Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and other services to help you connect with industry professionals, potential customers, and influencers. Join relevant groups and be sure to participate in discussions that allow you to showcase your expertise. One focus of your online activities should be to build relationships.
- **Online Communities and Forums**—Engage in online communities such as Reddit, Quora, and various Facebook Groups. Be sure to share your knowledge, answer questions, and participate in conversations to establish yourself as an expert in your field.
- **Participate in Webinars and Virtual Events**—Attend webinars, virtual conferences, and online workshops. These events can provide opportunities to learn from industry leaders and connect with prospective customers or clients in a more informational setting than a one-on-one sales meeting. Be sure to participate by asking intelligent and insightful questions, and then engaging with speakers and attendees.

Real-World Networking

Besides all the ways you can network online, there are some highly effective things you can do in the real world, too. These include:

- **Attend Local Business Events**—Participate in local business events, such as chamber of commerce meetings, industry conferences, and trade shows. These events provide opportunities to meet potential clients and others who can become valuable resources.
- **Join Networking Groups**—Attend local networking groups or business associations. Regularly attending these meetings and events can help you build relationships with other local business leaders and professionals.
- **Participate in Workshops and Seminars**—These events provide valuable learning opportunities, and at the same time allow you to connect with others who share your interests.
- **Visit Coworking Spaces**—Consider working at least parttime from a coworking space. These environments foster collaboration and networking with other entrepreneurs and freelancers. Many coworking spaces also host events and workshops that can help you expand your personal and professional network.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE NETWORKING

Not everyone finds networking—especially when it's done in person—to be easy. Start by perfecting your communication skills. Then, follow these guidelines to help make your efforts more effective:

- **Always Be Genuine:** Authenticity is essential. Be yourself and demonstrate an interest in others.
- **Follow Up:** After meeting someone, always follow up with a personalized message or email to keep the connection alive. Thank the person for their time, and come up with viable and mutually beneficial reasons to interact further in the future.
- **Provide Value:** Offer free help to others and share your expertise without

expecting immediate returns. This can help you build trust and goodwill, which will often lead to long-term benefits. If it doesn't lead directly to landing that person or company you helped as a customer or client, it could encourage those people to provide valuable referrals.

- **Always Remain Consistent:** Regularly engage with your online and real-world network to maintain and strengthen your relationships. You never know when someone you meet could potentially help you in the future.

Cross-Promote with Related, but Non-competing Businesses

Opting to cross-promote your business and its products or services with other businesses that are not competitors, but that target the same audience, can be a powerful marketing strategy for your startup. Here are some strategies to help you do this efficiently:

- **Bundle Your Products or Services**—Create special offers that bundle your products or services with those of the partner business. This adds value for customers and encourages them to try what both businesses offer, and perhaps get a generous discount from both companies.
- **Develop Joint Marketing Campaigns**—Collaborate with businesses on marketing efforts, including social media campaigns, producing and distributing email newsletters, or creating joint blog posts. This strategy can help you reach a broader audience and attract new customers.
- **Host Real-World Events Together**—Organize joint events, such as workshops, pop-up shops, or webinars. By doing this, you can split the cost of producing these events yet enjoy the full benefit of hosting them while drawing in new customers and clients.

- **Identify Complementary Businesses**—First, seek out businesses that offer products or services that complement yours, but that are not in direct competition.
- **Launch a Referral Programs**—Set up a referral program where you and your partner business refer customers to each other. Offer incentives, like discounts or free trials, to further encourage the referred customers.

Take Advantage of Email Marketing

Creating an email marketing campaign can be a game changer for a side hustle business. This strategy only works if you take advantage of an opt-in email list and avoid sending spam emails to recipients who didn't request to receive them. Building your own, targeted email list may take a bit of time, but it can be a valuable resource if the list is comprised of recipients who have an interest in your product or service.

Six Steps for Creating an Email Marketing Campaign

Using well-planned and expertly composed email campaigns that target your intended audience can be an inexpensive but highly impactful marketing and sales tool, if you don't abuse it. Because it costs so little (if anything) to send out a ton of emails, many businesses send way too many emails to each prospect or customer. This results in the recipient unsubscribing from the list or blocking the sender's email account altogether.

If someone voluntarily gives you their email address and agrees to receive your promotional emails or digital newsletter, tell them in advance how many emails they can expect to receive per month, and do not exceed that number. Also, assure the recipients that your business will not share or sell their email address.

1. **Build Your Email List:** Start by collecting email addresses from your website visitors, social media followers, and customers. Offer incentives, like discounts or free content, that your audience perceives as being valuable to encourage sign-ups.
2. **Segment Your Audience:** Divide your email list into segments based on demographics, purchase history, or engagement levels. For example, prospects should receive different emails than existing customers.
3. **Compose Compelling Content:** Create engaging content that people will perceive as being valuable and informative, and that resonates with your audience. This can include informational newsletters, how-to articles, promotional offers, or product updates.
4. **Focus on the Design of Your Emails:** Use specialized email templates to design visually appealing emails that cater specifically to your target readers. Ensure your emails are mobile-friendly and always include clear calls-to-action that are repeated at least twice. A call-to-action is a directive for what you want the prospect to do immediately after reading your email. You want the call-to-action to create a sense of urgency.
5. **Automate Your Campaigns:** Set up automated email sequences for different customer journeys, such as welcome emails for new subscribers, or emails that follow up each customer's recent purchases.
6. **Analyze and Optimize Your Campaigns:** Don't just create and send emails and hope for the best. Always track the performance of your email campaigns using specialized metrics like open rates, click-through rates, and conversion rates. This data is often provided for free by the email marketing service you use to distribute your emails. This data will help you fine-tune your strategy to improve the effectiveness of future campaigns.

Benefits of Email Marketing

Using email marketing has several major benefits. It allows you to directly communicate with the recipients with a personalized and highly targeted message that allows you to build a more personal connection and earn the loyalty of those who subscribe.

Meanwhile, compared to other forms of marketing and advertising, email marketing is very inexpensive, but it has the potential to offer a high return on your investment. Well-planned and -executed email campaigns can drive new sales, encourage repeat business, encourage referrals from the email recipients, and build loyalty and a sense of community around your business. Email marketing can also keep your brand, products, and services top-of-mind among prospects, as well as existing customers/clients.

The Best Email Marketing Applications and Services

There are many fee-based email marketing services (many of which are cloud-based applications) you can use to manage your email list, compose and design email campaigns, send out the emails, and then track their results. Here are a few of the most popular options:

- **ActiveCampaign**—www.activecampaign.com
- **Brevo**—www.brevo.com
- **Constant Contact**—www.constantcontact.com
- **Mailchimp**—<https://mailchimp.com>
- **MailerLite**—www.mailerlite.com
- **Maropost**—www.maropost.com
- **Twilio SendGrid**—<https://pages.twilio.com/emailmarketing.html>

Each of these services offers a different assortment of features and has a variety of pricing tiers that makes it affordable to different types and sizes of businesses.

Launch a PR Campaign to Generate Media Attention

Creating, launching, and managing a successful public relations campaign can significantly boost the public visibility of your side hustle. Like so many other aspects of running a business, successful public relations efforts require a unique and well-practiced skill set.

If you don't yet have the skills and experience to interact properly with the media, consider hiring a public relations firm or a freelance PR consultant to help you formulate a campaign and compose your press materials.

You want to start by defining your story in a way that'll capture the media's attention. Be sure to highlight your company's mission statement, values, and what makes it unique. Also, explain your products or services in a way that's newsworthy and that potentially ties in with a holiday or newsworthy event.

Once you've defined your key messaging, create a well-crafted media kit that tells your business' story and that includes detailed product information, high-resolution imagery, and your contact details. You want to provide journalists, podcasters, bloggers, and influencers with the information and resources they need to easily profile your business and include details about your company's products or services in their editorial content.

The next step involves approaching and building relationships with appropriate journalists, bloggers, vloggers, podcasters, and influencers who cover the industry or subject matter that relates to your business and what it offers. You'll then need to individually contact these media representatives with targeted and personalized story pitches that concisely explain why what you're offering will appeal to the media outlet's readership, viewership, or listeners.

Part of your media kit should include well-crafted, text-based press releases that follow a specialized format and that share newsworthy information about your business to the media.

Consider public relations to be a more long-term marketing strategy, since you have no control over when or if you'll receive coverage by the media outlets you pitch story ideas to. The best uses of a PR campaign can be to generate profiles about your company or its leaders, as well as to have reviews of your products or services featured in the media.

LEARN HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

A press release must be well written, follow a specific format, and provide newsworthy information. These two articles published on Entrepreneur.com explain how to write an effective press release: www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/how-to-write-a-press-release-reporters-will-actually-read/369550 and www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/the-essentials-of-an-effective-press-release-media-strategy/374705.

To help you compile a targeted press list to distribute your press releases to, there are a variety of services that can help you, including:

- **Cision**—www.cision.com
- **Media Contacts Pro**—<https://www.mediacontactspro.com>
- **Muckrack**—<https://muckrack.com/media-pitching-personalized-outreach>
- **PR Newswire**—www.prnewswire.com/products/all-products
- **Prowley**—<https://prowly.com/get-media-list>
- **S&P Global**—www.spglobal.com/en/press/social-media-directory

Produce, Publish, and Promote Video Content to Educate Your Prospects

Using YouTube videos as a promotional and marketing tool can significantly boost the growth of a startup side hustle. While it costs more to produce pro-level videos than it does to create a blog or podcast, if you have the wherewithal to produce promotional, how-to, informational, and sales videos that you can publish on your company's own YouTube channel, this can be a powerful sales and marketing tool.

When you start learning about Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and how to boost your company's website listing on Google and other search engines, you will learn how to get your website listed on the search engines to make your business easier to find by web surfers.

Because YouTube is owned and operated by Google and is the world's second largest search engine (Google is the most popular), anytime you publish a new video on YouTube, within minutes, it automatically gets listed on Google and within YouTube's own search engine. So, when you publish YouTube videos on a regular basis, or publish a series of videos, this increases the number of search engine listings your company can benefit from.

To do this effectively, you must produce professional content that viewers will perceive as valuable, informative, and entertaining to them. The videos need to be well produced, with professional-looking and -sounding content. With the right skills, you can create excellent YouTube content using a smartphone that's equipped with additional videography equipment, but if you have the resources, you're better off using a higher-quality camera and microphone to record your content, and then use the best possible tools to edit your content.

YouTube videos can include tutorials, product demonstrations, behind-the-scenes looks at your company, customer testimonials, product comparisons, and more. The more creative you are when producing your content, the better. However, consistently posting valuable content will help you build trust and authority in your niche and at the same time build a loyal following of viewers.

In addition to simply producing high-quality content, it's important to encourage engagement with your viewers. You want viewers to post comments, like, and share your videos, and respond to the call of action that you include at least two or three times in each of your videos.

The best YouTube videos do not have to be long. In fact, you'll find it easier to capture the attention of viewers if you keep the length of each video to less than three to five minutes. And once each video is published on YouTube, you should cross-promote it on your website, via email marketing, and through all your company's social media feeds. This will help to expand

the audience for each video. However, a quick way to do this (if you have the financial resources) is to pay for YouTube ads to promote your videos to a highly targeted audience.

Participate in a Charity That Fits with Your Brand

Whether you donate a small portion of your profits to a specific charity, donate products or services to a charity to auction off, or help sponsor specific charity events, this can greatly help to boost awareness and the reputation of your business.

If you choose to do this, be sure to select a charity that you have a personal connection with, or that you're already passionate about, but that won't be perceived as controversial.

Add Your Location-Based Business to Google Maps, Apple Maps, etc.

If your business has a physical address for an office or retail shop, get it listed on Google Maps, Apple Maps, Yelp!, and related services. This is free and can significantly increase your visibility and attract more customers. You can do a Google search to discover easy-to-follow directions explaining how to get your business listed on these services for free.

Accept Multiple Forms of Payment and Offer Instant Gratification

Accepting a variety of payment methods is crucial for a side hustle business. This allows you to cater to different customer needs and preferences. These days, it is easier than ever for a small business to set up a merchant account and be able to accept debit and credit card payments, as well as payments

from multiple electronic payment services. Additionally, you need to accept and process payments online, over the phone, or in-person.

As a small business operator, you'll want to shop around for a merchant account provider that offers the services you need, and that offers affordable rates with no long-term contracts or monthly minimums. With a little bit of research, you'll find there are many options to choose from.

Before you select one of these merchant account providers, determine what forms of payment you want your business to accept from customers or clients. Some of the most popular forms of payment, along with their pros and cons, are listed here:

Credit and Debit Cards

Pros: Widely used and convenient for customers. Payments are processed quickly, and funds are typically available to you within a few days.

Cons: Transaction fees can range from 1.5 to 3 percent per transaction, plus there's often a fixed transaction/card swipe fee. Chargebacks and fraud risks can also be a concern.

PayPal—www.paypal.com/us/business/accept-payments

Pros: This is a popular and trusted online payment method. It's easy to set up and use, plus it offers both buyer and seller protections.

Cons: Fees can be higher than other methods, especially for international transactions. Funds may also take a few days to transfer to your bank account.

Mobile Payment Apps (e.g., Venmo, Cash App, etc.)

Pros: This option offers convenience for peer-to-peer financial transactions that small businesses can take advantage of, too. Money can be transferred instantly between users using smartphones running the appropriate app.

Cons: To accept payments from any of these app-based services, both you and your customer must have an active account with that app. Plus, some of these apps limit the dollar value of individual transactions.

Bank Transfers (ACH)

Pros: This process involves low fees and is secure. It's best suited for larger transactions and recurring payments.

Cons: Processing times can be between three to five business days. Also, your customers need to provide you with their bank account details.

Apple Pay

Pros: This is a secure and convenient payment method for Apple device users. There are no additional fees for merchants to accept Apple Pay. It uses a tokenization method to protect a user's card/payment information.

Cons: Limited to customers with Apple devices. It also requires the seller (merchant) to have an NFC-enabled terminal to accept Apple Pay payments.

Google Pay

Pros: This is a similar service to Apple Pay, but it's run by Google and is compatible with both Android and iOS devices. Secure transactions are done using tokenization. Google Pay offers easy integration with most existing credit and debit card payment systems.

Cons: Not as widely accepted as credit cards. It's limited to customers with compatible devices.

Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) Services (Affirm, Afterpay, Klarna, etc.)

Pros: This offers a way to attract customers who prefer to pay in multiple, zero-interest installments over time. This often allows customers to increase their order value and can help you (the business operator) boost your conversion rate.

Cons: Using one of these services often involves the merchant having to pay higher fees, compared to traditional payment methods.

Create A Value-Added Experience Around Your Product or Service

Regardless of what your company does, or the selection products or services it offers, you can achieve happier clients or customers by creating a value-added experience around what you offer. Doing this can help set your side hustle apart from competitors and foster a higher level of customer loyalty.

If you're selling a product, one way to create a value-added experience is to offer specialized packaging. You can enhance this if you ship your products to customers by packaging them in a way that the recipients feel like they're opening a gift every time they receive an order. You want to create a sense of excitement when someone receives their order from your company.

Other ways to create a value-added experience for your customers or clients include offering:

- **Personalized Customer Service**—Providing personalized customer service can significantly enhance a customer's experience and attitude toward your business. Address customers by their name, remember their preferences, and tailor all of your interactions (online, on the phone, or in the real world) to meet their specific needs. Providing a higher level of personalization makes customers feel valued and appreciated.
- **Provide Educational Content**—Offer educational content that helps customers get the most out of your products or services. This could include how-to guides, tutorials, webinars, or blog posts. By providing valuable information, you position yourself as an expert in

your field and can assist customers in seeing the full potential of what you offer.

If you sell a product that requires any type of setup or assembly, be sure that you offer well-written, easy-to-understand, step-by-step instructions that include professional-looking photography or illustrations. You're always better off over-explaining something than not providing enough information, so your customer gets frustrated trying to put together or set up your product.

- **Create Loyalty Programs**—Implement a loyalty program that rewards repeat customers. This can be a points-based system, involve providing repeat customers with exclusive discounts, or offering loyal customers early access to new products. These can all incentivize customers to continue doing business with you. Loyalty programs add value and help bolster long-term relationships. Be creative when developing your loyalty program but keep it simple for your customers to benefit from it. Offer small, but frequent rewards to keep customers engaged.
- **Provide Superior Product Packaging**—Invest in high-quality and aesthetically pleasing packaging for your products. This will add perceived value to your offerings. Unique and thoughtful packaging will enhance the unboxing experience and make the experience of opening your product more memorable for your customers. This attention to detail also helps to demonstrate that you truly care about the customer experience from start to finish.
- **Build a Community Around Your Business**—Create a community around your brand by engaging with customers on social media, hosting events, or starting a Facebook page for your business. Building a community fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty among customers. It can also provide a platform for customers to share their experiences and connect with others.

- **Encourage Customer Feedback**—Actively seek and act on customer feedback. Demonstrate to customers that their opinions matter by making improvements based on their suggestions. Doing this will enhance your products or services, plus help you demonstrate your commitment to ongoing customer satisfaction.
- **Try to Surprise and Delight**—Find creative and targeted ways to occasionally surprise your customers with unexpected perks, such as free samples, handwritten thankyou notes, or special discounts. These small gestures also help to create a positive and memorable experience.
- **Maintain Consistent Quality**—Starting from day one, ensure that all of your products or services consistently meet high standards of quality. Your goal should be to exceed the expectations of customers or clients, not just meet their expectations. Providing reliability and consistency can help to build trust and make customers more likely to recommend your business to others.

How to Overcome Challenges

Regardless of how much research and preparation you do, and how knowledgeable you are, as a startup business, you will face numerous challenges—from financial constraints, having to work with difficult customers/clients, to being challenged by aggressive competitors.

Being able to deal with these challenges comes back to being prepared and persistent. When faced with any type of setback, persistent entrepreneurs don't give up. Instead, they find and implement alternative solutions to problems and obstacles. They do their best to keep moving forward. This resilience is crucial for navigating the unpredictable landscape of running a startup business.

It's important to predict the types of challenges and obstacles you may face, and then develop strategies in advance for how you'll deal with them.

Demonstrate Your Gratitude: Send Follow-Up and Thank-You Letters (or Emails)

Demonstrating gratitude to customers and clients is essential for building strong relationships and fostering loyalty. Here are some effective ways a startup side hustle operator can show appreciation:

- **Offer Exclusive Discounts**—Reward your loyal customers with exclusive discounts, offers, or early access to new products. This shows appreciation and encourages repeat business.
- **Present Surprise Gifts**—Sending small, unexpected gifts can pleasantly surprise your customers. It could be a sample of a new product, branded merchandise, or a simple token of appreciation. These gestures show that you value their business and are willing to go the extra mile.
- **Send Personalized Thank-You Notes**—Sending personalized thank-you notes can make a significant impact. Whether handwritten or digital, a sincere message expressing your gratitude for their support can leave a lasting impression. Mention people by name and include specific details about their purchase or interaction to make your communications even more personalized.

Your Future Is Now in Your Hands: Let's Recap

Starting a side hustle can easily become an exhilarating journey and life-altering experience from a mental and financial standpoint. If handled correctly, becoming an entrepreneur and launching a side hustle will lead to personal growth, financial freedom, and the fulfillment of your passions.

As you embark on this professional adventure, stay motivated and focused so you'll be prepared to navigate the many challenges that lie ahead. Of course, along the way you'll also experience many personally and professionally rewarding experiences, develop new skills, have some fun, meet new people, and grow as an individual. Among other things, you'll discover how to become a better communicator, independent thinker, self-starter, and enhance your multitasking skills.

Be Sure to Embrace Your Passion

The foundation of a successful side hustle should be passion. Without a true passion for whatever you choose to pursue, you're starting at a major disadvantage. Make sure you choose an endeavor that involves something you genuinely love and are excited about.

It will ultimately be this enthusiasm that will keep you going through the tough times and make the work feel less like a chore. In fact, if you're doing something you love every day of your life and making money at the same time, you'll find the experience that much more rewarding.

Be sure to consider your hobbies, skills, and interests as you decide what type of side hustle to pursue. Remember, there's no one-business-fits-all option. Aligning your side hustle with your passions will make this journey more enjoyable and sustainable. It will also keep you motivated to grow your side hustle and improve your own skill set at the same time.

Make Sure You Properly Plan, Do Research, and Are Prepared

Once you know what you want to do, create a well-thought-out, well-researched, and detailed business plan. A solid plan will ultimately become your road map for long-term success. As part of this process, be sure to flush

out and properly outline your goals, your side hustle's target market, and your core business strategies.

There will be many times during the planning and prelaunch phases of your side hustle when plenty of research will be required. After all, you need to arm yourself with plenty of accurate information about your industry, market demand, your target audience, who your competition will be, and the products/services you'll be selling.

By doing the proper research (and not cutting any corners), this can help you refine your overall business idea and ensure there's a large enough market for it. During the early brainstorming stages for your side hustle, a well-thought-out plan doesn't have to be perfect, but it should be clear enough to provide direction to move forward in an appropriate way.

Having timely and accurate information at your fingertips will also allow you to make well-educated decisions about how to utilize your time and resources in the most appropriate ways possible.

Learn How to Manage Your Time

Time management is an essential skill to possess before you embark on your side hustle. Balancing a side hustle with your full-time job and personal life will be challenging. This is something you should expect and prepare yourself, your family members, and your friends for.

While this won't always be possible, since unexpected things will always come up, try to set aside specific hours to pursue your side hustle during the week (and on weekends, if necessary). Do your very best to stick with that schedule or routine. Be sure to rely on calendars, to-do lists, and productivity apps to help you stay organized.

Ideally, you want to have as much consistency in your schedule as possible. Even small, regular efforts can lead to significant progress over

time. If your time is limited, start your side hustle off as a small endeavor and grow it over time.

Be Sure to Leverage Technology

Technology can be a game changer for your side hustle, but having technology at your disposal does not require a huge financial investment. Most of the latest computers and mobile devices now have powerful AI-driven tools that can help you manage and streamline many aspects of the work associated with your side hustle.

At the same time, heavily use social media to market, promote, and advertise your business. You'll also need to create a website that nicely showcases your products or services. Also, be sure to use tech-based tools for project management and communication. Embracing technology can help you reach a wider audience and streamline your day-to-day operations.

Focus on Building Your Support Network

Start during the brainstorming and planning stages of your side hustle business to surround yourself with supportive people who believe in your vision. This can include family members, friends, past coworkers, and people you meet by becoming active in online communities. You can also expand your network by attending networking events and finding ways to connect with other entrepreneurs.

Creating a support network for yourself and your business can provide you with valuable advice, encouragement, and potential collaborators. The goal is to avoid having to do everything entirely on your own and to have experts on hand who can help you make important business and financial decisions.

Always Be Persistent and Adaptable

Be prepared by knowing that every entrepreneurial pursuit has its unique ups and downs. You will experience moments of doubt and setbacks. Especially during more challenging times, it's important to stay persistent and keep pushing forward. This means staying adaptable, open to feedback, and learning how and when to adapt or pivot your focus and resources when it's needed.

Always try to learn from your mistakes and improve your approach so you can achieve success faster and more efficiently. Success will require perseverance.

Never Stop Learning and Expanding Your Skill Set

Understand that the entrepreneurial landscape, technologies, and every industry is constantly evolving. Thus, it's important for you to keep learning and to stay up to date on the latest trends. The more knowledge and skills you acquire, the better equipped you'll be to navigate the many challenges and opportunities you will encounter. And for those skills you already have, there's always room to expand or perfect them—especially when it comes to communications, sales, and interpersonal skills that you'll likely use daily.

Final Thoughts

What you are about to experience as a side hustle business operator will hopefully evolve into a rewarding endeavor that can lead to personal and professional growth. Be sure to embrace the journey with an open mind and a positive attitude.

Whatever you experience, stay focused on your goals. Try to leverage your strengths and continue to be adaptable. With persistence and passion, you can potentially turn your side hustle into a successful venture, but do not expect this to happen overnight.

Congratulations on making the decision to pursue a side hustle. You're making a brave decision that will no doubt bring some excitement into your life. Remember to stay motivated, plan wisely, do plenty of research, set yourself apart from your competition, and always keep pushing yourself and your side hustle business forward. Understand your hard work and dedication can and will likely pay off.

Good luck!

[OceanofPDF.com](https://oceanofpdf.com)

APPENDIX

100+ Side Hustle Opportunities

Listed alphabetically, the following is a listing of more than 100 potential side hustle ideas and opportunities, and the core requirements needed to pursue each of them.

Depending on where you live or will be working from, not all of these opportunities may be viable, or additional training, certifications, or licenses may be required to pursue some of them on a part-time or full-time basis.

Of course, this is not a comprehensive list of potential side hustle opportunities. Based on your interests, skill set, experience, research, and available time, use your creativity to come up with your own potential opportunities, too.

Side Hustle Opportunity	Required or Recommended Qualifications
Airbnb Host (Short-Term Rental Host)	Own a house or apartment, affiliation with short-term rental service, interpersonal communication skills
App Developer	Coding skills, knowledge of app development platforms
Babysitter, Nanny, or Childcare Provider	Experience with children, CPR certification (optional)
Baker and Cake Decorator	Baking skills, creativity
Blogger	Writing skills, knowledge of SEO
Brand Ambassador	Marketing skills, social media presence, interpersonal communication skills
Business Consultant	Expertise in business, consulting skills, interpersonal communication skills
Buy and Sell Antiques or Collectables	Knowledge of what you'll be buying and selling and familiarity with the collectible market/community

Calligrapher (For Signs and Invitations, Etc.)	Artistic ability and calligraphy skills
Captioning	Typing skills, attention to detail
Car Flipper	Knowledge of cars, sales skills, technical knowhow, interpersonal communication skills
Career Coach	Coaching certification, knowledge of career development
Closet Organizer	Detail-oriented, creativity, organizational skills, interpersonal communication skills
Clothing Line Creator	Artistic skills, design skills, a sense of fashion, creativity, interpersonal communication skills
Computer Repair	Tech knowledge, problem-solving skills
Consumer Tech Setup Service Specialist	Basic tech knowledge, problem-solving skills
Content Writer	Writing skills, knowledge of SEO
Custom Art Commissions	Artistic skills, creativity
Custom T-Shirt Designer	Graphic design skills, knowledge of printing processes, creativity
Customer Service Representative	Communication skills, problem-solving skills
Dance Instructor	Expertise in dance, teaching skills, interpersonal communication skills
Data Entry Specialist	Typing skills, attention to detail
Deliver Groceries	Valid driver's license, knowledge of local area, affiliation with a supermarket or food delivery service
Digital Product Sales	Graphic design skills, knowledge of digital marketplaces
Dog Groomer	Completion of a course, license
Dog Walker	Physical fitness, love for dogs
Drone Pilot (For Commercial Photography)	Owning a drone with an integrated high-definition camera, commercial drone license, drone piloting skills
E-Commerce Reseller	Knowledge of e-commerce platforms, sales skills
eBay Seller	Full understanding of the eBay platform, how to create and manage product listings, customer service skills
Elderly Care Provider	CPR/first-aid certification, compassion, communication skills, time management skills, attention to detail, patience, understanding, physical stamina, problem-solving skills. License may be required.
Event Coordinator	Organizational skills, creativity

Event Disc Jockey	Love of music, music knowledge, DJ equipment, interpersonal communication skills
Event Photographer	Photography skills, camera equipment, interpersonal communication skills
Event Planner	Organizational skills, creativity, interpersonal communication skills, multitasking abilities, leadership and decision-making skills
Financial Coach	Knowledge of personal finance, coaching skills, interpersonal communication skills, accreditation/license
Fitness Instructor / Personal Trainer	Fitness certification, knowledge of exercise science, interpersonal communication skills
Food (Restaurant) Delivery	Valid driver's license, knowledge of local area, association with Uber Eats, Instacart, Grubhub, DoorDash, etc.
Food Truck Operator	Food truck, cooking skills, interpersonal communication skills, creativity
Freelance Marketer	Marketing skills, creativity
Freelance Photographer	Photography skills, portfolio of work, interpersonal communication skills, creativity
Freelancer (Writing, Graphic Design, etc.)	Relevant skills in the chosen field, portfolio of work
Furniture Flipper	Basic carpentry skills, creativity
Game Developer	Coding skills, knowledge of game development platforms
Gardener and Lawn Maintenance	Basic gardening skills, physical fitness, training, interpersonal communication skills
Graphic Designer	Graphic design skills, portfolio of work, creativity, communication skills, specialized tools/equipment
Handmade Jewelry Creation and Sales	Crafting skills, creativity, specialized tools/equipment, interpersonal communication skills
Haul Junk	Physical fitness, access to a vehicle, interpersonal communication skills
House Cleaner	Basic cleaning skills, attention to detail, interpersonal communication skills, cleaning tools/equipment
House Painter (Interior/Exterior)	Working with materials, climbing ladders, working with paints, drywall, etc.
Housesitter	Interpersonal communication skills, reliable, responsible
Influencer Marketing Specialist	Social media presence, marketing skills, interpersonal communication skills
Interior Decorator, Home Stager	Bachelor's degree in interior design is useful, but not required, artistic creativity, communication skills,

	organizational skills
IT Support Specialist	Tech knowledge, problem-solving skills
Language Translator	Fluency in multiple languages, translation skills, interpersonal communication skills, detail-oriented
Life Coach	Coaching certification, communication skills
Local Handyman	Basic repair skills, tool knowledge, interpersonal communication skills
Makeup Artist for Events	Completion of cosmetology school, interpersonal communication skills, license/accreditation
Marketing Consultant	Expertise in marketing, consulting skills
Meal Prep Service Provider	Cooking skills, knowledge of nutrition, license/certification
Meditation Coach	Knowledge of meditation techniques, teaching skills, interpersonal communication skills
Mobile Car Washer and Detailer	Basic car cleaning skills, attention to detail
Mock Juror	Time management and listening skills
Model or Acting Extra	Personality, good looks, time management skills, interpersonal communication skills
Music Instructor	Musical talent, expertise with instrument, teaching skills, interpersonal communication skills
Mystery Shopper	Attention to detail, observational skills
Notary	Notary public certification
Online Course Instructor and Coach	Expertise in subject matter, teaching skills, communication skills, personality, public speaking skills, self-confidence
Online Moderator	Communication skills, attention to detail
Online Survey Taker	No specific qualifications needed
Personal Assistant	Organizational skills, time management, interpersonal communication skills
Personal Shopper	Fashion sense, knowledge of trends, interpersonal communication skills
Pet Sitter	Love for animals, basic pet care knowledge
Podcaster	Audio production skills, content creation skills, creativity, specialized equipment
Pool Cleaner	Specialized knowledge and equipment, interpersonal communication skills

Power Washer	Power washing equipment and basic training on the use of the equipment
Proofreader and Editor	Attention to detail, knowledge of grammar
Public Relations Specialist	Communication skills, PR knowledge
Real Estate Photographer	Photography skills, knowledge of real estate markets, creativity, communication skills
Resume Writer	Writing skills, knowledge of resume formats, communication skills, creativity
Rideshare Driver	Valid driver's license, clean driving record, association with Uber, Lyft, etc.
Sales Specialist	Sales skills, communication skills
SAT/ACT Preparation Tutor	Expertise in test subjects, teaching skills, interpersonal communication skills
Seamstress, Sewist, Tailor	Sewing, clothing design, clothing repair skills
Self-Publisher E-Books	Writing skills, knowledge of self-publishing platforms, sales/marketing skills
Self-Publisher Print-on-Demand (POD) Books	Writing skills, knowledge of POD platforms, sales/marketing skills
Sell Artisan Products	Crafting skills, creativity, interpersonal communication skills
Sell at Local Markets and Festivals	Crafting skills, sales skills, interpersonal communication skills
Sell Class Notes Good	note-taking skills, knowledge of subject matter
Sell Goods via Drop-Shipping	Knowledge of drop-shipping platforms, sales skills
Sell Print-on-Demand (POD) Products	Graphic design skills, knowledge of POD platforms
Sell Private Label Products	Knowledge of private labeling, sales skills
Sell Products Using Retail Arbitrage	Knowledge of retail markets, sales skills
Sell Proprietary Goods	Product development skills, sales skills
Sell Stock Photos	Photography skills, knowledge of stock photo platforms
Senior Sitting and Companion	Patience, empathy, basic caregiving skills, interpersonal communication skills, time management skills, reliable, license/certification
Social Media Consultant	Expertise in social media, consulting skills, communication skills, creativity, content creation skills
Social Media Manager	Social media skills, marketing knowledge, content creation skills, creativity

Software Tester	Tech knowledge, attention to detail
Substitute Teacher	Varies by school district and state
Survey Taker or Research Study Participant	Interpersonal communication skills, reliability
Tax Preparation Specialist	Knowledge of tax laws, certification/license
Telemarketer / Telephone Sales Representative	Good phone voice and verbal communication skills
Tester of Apps and Platforms	Basic tech knowledge, attention to detail
Thrift Flipper	Knowledge of thrift markets, sales skills
Tour Guide	Geographic and historic knowledge, interpersonal communication skills, license
Transcriptionist	Typing skills, attention to detail
Turn Your Car into a Moving Advertisement	Valid driver's license, clean driving record
Tutor	Expertise in subject matter, teaching skills, interpersonal communication skills
Video Editor	Video editing skills, knowledge of editing software, specialized equipment, creativity
Virtual Assistant (VA)	Administrative skills, communication skills
Voice-Over Actor	Good voice, recording equipment, interpersonal communication skills
Website & App Testing	Basic tech knowledge, attention to detail
Website Developer	Coding skills, knowledge of web development platforms
Window Screen Repairer	Specialized skills and equipment, interpersonal communication skills
Yoga Instructor	Yoga certification, teaching skills, interpersonal communication skills
YouTube Channel Operator	Video production skills, content creation skills, creativity, specialized equipment

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 SWOT analysis worksheet [ref 1](#)
 time management questionnaire [ref 1](#)
 value proposition worksheet [ref 1](#)
workshops, networking [ref 1](#)
writing press releases [ref 1](#)
written communication skills [ref 1](#)

X

X (formerly known as Twitter) [ref 1](#)

Y

Yelp! [ref 1](#)

YouTube [ref 1](#)