

HOW TO START A NEW BUSINESS

Success Begins by Taking the Next - Imperfect - Step.

In the early years of owning my own advertising business, I had my own clients, but I also freelanced for advertising agencies. This was back in the days before email, so I actually delivered my work in person. During those visits I would run into agency copywriters that I knew. Frequently some of them would say to me, "I wish I could be self-employed like you. If I could just get one good client, I could quit my job and freelance too." I would reply, "You won't find that client until you quit your job, because then you'll be motivated by making your monthly mortgage payment."

When I first started I did not have any published writing samples with which to create a portfolio that I could show prospective clients. So, I wrote a couple of articles on current events to demonstrate my journalism skills. And, I created some mock-up advertisements of well-known products to show my copywriting ability. My articles were typed on plain white paper, and my ads... well, they just looked fake. I cut out pictures from magazines and pasted them onto poster board, and used Letraset transfers (alphabet stickers) for the copy.

My homemade samples didn't get much attention from the big ad agencies and newspapers from whom I was hoping to get work. Then I got the idea to work pro bono for non-profit organizations. They still wanted to see samples of my work, but

those I had created from scratch satisfied them. In just over two months, I had a portfolio with several published articles and advertisements. Slick paper, printed words, and four-color graphic design gave my portfolio the professional look I needed to call on marketing directors at local firms.

Those marketing directors didn't know I had done the work for free. They were impressed, and hired me to do their advertising and public relations. Within a year, I had a portfolio fat with ads and articles for which I'd been paid.

If you are spending a lot of time writing a business plan for the business you wish to start, then you are afraid. Getting all your ducks in a row before you can start is a problem with perfectionism. And, perfectionism is procrastination. You are procrastinating because you have a fear of failure. You are looking at the big picture, when all you need to look at is the first step or next step that you need to take.

My philosophy about starting a new business is "Take Imperfect Action." Start by taking the first step (even if you find out later that it was not the correct first step - the important thing is that you began). Second, focus only on the next step (whatever you determine that to be), then continue one step at a time. Tweak - correct the problems - as you go along. Starting is much better than never starting.

Quitting a full-time job and starting a new business is a bold move. Being

bold will make you feel awesome. It forces commitment, and there's something amazing about committing to something - it creates opportunity! It's like the planets line up to make it work for you. People who can help you and resources that you need seem to appear out of nowhere. I've actually written about this phenomena in my article *The Magic of Commitment* is No Mystery (article 38).

I have started nine businesses. A few of which failed immediately or within a year or two. The good news is that I learned things I was able to use later on to make other businesses succeed. It doesn't have to be a business that you are hesitant to start. Maybe you want to write a song, or a book, or paint a picture, or ride a horse, or go scuba diving or snow skiing. Whatever it is, there is a first step - go ahead - take it!

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