

## Inmates to Entrepreneurs

### Organizational Background:

The Inmates to Entrepreneurs program was formally founded in 2008, but has been in existence in varying capacities since the late 1990s. The mission of the program is to assist formerly incarcerated individuals in starting their own businesses and engaging in entrepreneurship by providing resources, mentorship, and hope. The vision of the program is to reduce the rate of recidivism by providing an alternative path to financial stability and success. Our program provides entrepreneurship training for both individuals who are currently incarcerated as well as individuals who have been recently released in order to create a well-rounded support system. Our operations are currently based out of Raleigh, North Carolina, and we plan to build a network of chapters across the country in the coming year.

For currently incarcerated individuals, we offer a course that is taught in correctional institutions. We also respond to letters from individuals who are currently incarcerated and wish to start businesses by providing them with the resources and the information that they need in order to be successful. For individuals who have been released, we match them with a mentor who has already started their own low-capital business and we provide monthly meetings to create a network of support. Finally, we provide free resources, including approximately 50 educational videos, on our website so individuals across the country can access some of our course information. The founder of Inmates to Entrepreneurs is Brian Hamilton ([brianh@sageworks.com](mailto:brianh@sageworks.com)), a highly-regarded expert in entrepreneurship. He is also the founder of Sageworks, a financial information company. The current director of the program is Jackie Parker ([Jaclyn.Parker@sageworks.com](mailto:Jaclyn.Parker@sageworks.com) O: 984-242-2526). She manages day to day program operations.

### Background of Management Team

**Brian Hamilton, Founder:** Brian Hamilton is the founder of the Inmates to Entrepreneurs program. He is also the chairman and co-founder of Sageworks. He is the original architect of Sageworks' artificial intelligence technology platform that is used by thousands of financial institutions and accounting firms across North America for analyzing private companies.

**Jackie Parker, Director:** Jackie Parker is currently serving as the Director of Inmates to Entrepreneurs. She has a Bachelor's Degree from East Carolina University in Public Health with a concentration in Community Health, and will be completing her Masters of Public Administration at North Carolina State University in May 2017. She previously worked for the NC State Institute for Nonprofits, where she coached students who had social entrepreneurship ventures.

**A.J. Ware, Lead Mentor:** A.J. Ware is a member of Inmates to Entrepreneur's Board of Directors and has been an integral part of the organization since 2009. Ware's entrepreneurial experience started at the age of 15 when he co-founded Mobile Radio Communications Company (MRC), which was later sold to Cellular One. Later, Ware ran a successful painting company for many years, A&N Painting, and a motorsports park. Today, Ware is owner of Majestic Sports Marketing.

**Scott Jennings, Lead Mentor:** Scott Jennings is a member of the organization's Board of Directors and has been involved with Inmates to Entrepreneurs since 2008, first as a student and later as a mentor and speaker. Today, Jennings is the founder and owner of FitTech & Assembly, a full-service fitness equipment company serving the Mid-Atlantic region. FitTech & Assembly services, maintains, installs and sells fitness equipment.

## **Part 2**

### **Recruitment of Participants:**

We recruit program participants in two key ways- through our work with those who are presently incarcerated as well as through working with community partners, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety and local re-entry councils. We are currently targeting our educational talks to correctional institutions that are within North Carolina and to groups of individuals within those institutions who will be released in the next twelve months, as that is the population that needs to begin to think about what their next steps will be after they are released. At the time of the course, individuals are encouraged and given information on how to contact and keep in touch with us so they can receive our post-incarceration resources upon their release.

We also get many program participants via word of mouth. Inmates to Entrepreneurs has a large and growing network of individuals who are aware of the program and refer individuals to participate (and be mentors or volunteers) in the program. As we start new chapters throughout the country, we will teach them the same model and help them to connect with like community partner agencies in their local areas that will help to bring participants to their local program.

### **Classroom Instruction:**

In addition to the regular classroom instruction the program provides inside correctional institutions throughout the state, Inmates to Entrepreneurs offers a monthly session at its headquarters (and at other locations as more chapters are formed). This includes instruction on entrepreneurship from experts who are established business owners (the majority of whom also have criminal backgrounds), followed by a question and answer session where individuals can voice the business challenges that they are facing and gain assistance from the entire group. This curriculum addresses the topic areas of reasons to start a business, thinking through what types of businesses to start, how to get the business started, marketing, sales, customer service, and accounting and finance. In addition, we regularly teach an overview of dos and don'ts of starting a low capital business in order to stop program participants from making common mistakes. Participants have access to worksheets and resources that guide them in thinking through their business idea and creating a tangible business plan. Business plans are reviewed by an Inmates to Entrepreneurs staff member or mentor who provides feedback and guidance on how to proceed and move forward. If the program were to receive additional funding, we are looking to add additional in-person courses taught by experts moving forward.

Inmates to Entrepreneurs is also in talks with Wake Technical Community College (Wake Tech), the largest community college system in North Carolina, about building a partnership to connect our mentees with free ancillary education on related business topics as desired. Mentees of the Inmates to Entrepreneurs program can attend these courses in order to receive training in many of the basic skills that are needed in order to start a small business including social media, productivity, finding grant money, types of business models, and starting a home-based business.

Online resources and videos are also available (open source) on our website:

[www.inmatestoentrepreneurs.org](http://www.inmatestoentrepreneurs.org). This information is not only geared to those who participate in one of our in-person programs; it also provides resources to those who were formerly incarcerated and wish to start their own business but do not have an Inmates to Entrepreneurs chapter near them. For these individuals, as well as for individuals who are currently incarcerated, we provide individualized support over snail mail, email and phone in order to ensure the successes of everyone (even if we cannot

directly reach them through our in-person programming). Inmates to Entrepreneurs views each and every one of our mentees and program participants as a client, and we strive to provide them with the best quality instruction and information possible so their small business can ultimately be a success.

### **Mentoring**

Mentoring is a very large part of the success of the Inmates to Entrepreneurs program. Mentors commit a fairly substantial amount of time to the program, and provide their services on a pro bono basis. The only mandatory requirement for an individual to become a mentor is that they have successfully started their own low capital business. This is important so that the mentors have the technical skills they can pass on and to ensure they provide “real life,” accurate advice to their mentees. Although it is not a requirement, several of our mentors have been formerly incarcerated themselves which allows them to better understand and anticipate the unique challenges that individuals face when starting a small business with a criminal record.

Mentors aid in giving presentations at both chapter meetings as well as correctional institutions, which helps greatly with program recruitment, retention and cohesiveness. However, the most important role mentors play is being a 1:1 advocate and support system for their mentee. Once a potential mentee expresses interest in the program, an Inmates to Entrepreneurs staff member reaches out to them to better determine their needs and will match them with the mentor who is the best fit for them based on factors such as interests, personality type and geographic location. At a minimum, participants and their mentor have a monthly meeting in-person or via phone with the program director to ensure that the mentor/mentee pairing is effective and rewarding for all parties involved. In the event it is not a good pairing or the pair is unable to effectively communicate with one another, the mentee will be matched with a different mentor who is better suited for their individual situation.

Mentors are the main point of contact for the mentee on a day to day basis- guiding the mentee through the process of starting their own business and being there as a resource for them should there be bumps in the road. Mentees also all have access to the director and the founder (both of which have experience in entrepreneurship and coaching future entrepreneurs) should they need any additional help or assistance along the way.

### **Community Partners**

In the past few months we have been actively working on building out our community partner base. Inmates to Entrepreneurs recognizes the immense value that working with other agencies can have on the potential impact of Inmates to Entrepreneurs. We understand there are many indirect resources that formerly-incarcerated individuals need that Inmates to Entrepreneurs and Sageworks cannot provide directly to our program participants. We rely heavily on our community partners to be a provider of these goods and services.

We partner with everyone from local community colleges and re-entry councils to social justice organizations to the Department of Public Safety in order to help our program participants have the best program experience that they possibly can. We have a database of community partners that we have personally interacted with. Our program mentors have access to this database so they can better refer their mentees to services they may need to grow professionally and as individuals.

Community partners are also helpful in referring program participants to us. Often, community partners have direct ties and connections with the inmate and former inmate populations. If community partners

come across a currently or formerly incarcerated individual, they know our contact information as well as how to access our virtual resources. Community Partners serve as “ambassadors” for Inmates to Entrepreneurs, helping the program to be marketed to many more people than our small staff could.

We host launch events and interest meetings throughout the year that community partners are invited to and encouraged to attend. The Inmates to Entrepreneurs director is currently in charge of the vetting process to determine what organizations are eligible to partner with us. The main criteria for an organization to become one of our community partners is that they provide a service to the former inmate population that complements the services that are currently provided by Inmates to Entrepreneurs. We currently work with over twenty different community partners in the greater Triangle area. If we were to expand our program into other geographic areas, we would aid the “leaders” of each of the new chapters in finding a similar base of partner organizations that are local to them.

### **Part 3**

#### **Access to Capital- Micro-lending**

Our organization encourages individuals to start low-capital service businesses that do not require loans to get started whenever possible. However, Inmates to Entrepreneurs understands that there are going to be times where an individual needs a micro-loan in order to get their business started.

Through our website and through dialogue with our program participants, we refer our mentees to the SBA and its approved lenders as well as to local Small Business Development Centers to help them access capital (<http://inmatestoentrepreneurs.org/related-resources/>).

As the program expands and starts to open other chapters nationally, chapter leaders will be trained on micro-lending resources that are available to their program participants. In addition, we plan to partner with other community agencies to help to ensure that our program participants make intelligent financial decisions when it comes to both their business and personal finances.

#### **Access to Capital- Other Resources**

Currently there is a large start-up community in the greater Triangle area. When appropriate, Inmates to Entrepreneurs staff and mentors connect program participants with information on networking events, grants/fellowships and pitch competitions that can help them raise capital for their business. As we expand chapters to other areas, we will help train chapter leaders to identify local entities that may be interested in funding the businesses that have formed in their chapter.

Additionally, Sageworks ([www.sageworks.com](http://www.sageworks.com)), our parent organization, provides commercial loan analysis and risk management software to more than 1,000 community banks and other financial institutions across the United States. As a result, our organization is able to provide our mentees free access to people with significant expertise on preparing proper documentation for capital providers.

## Appendix A: Course Outline

### **Starting & Running Your Own Business**

AJ Ware, Owner, Majestic Sports Marketing

Brian Hamilton, Co-founder and Chairman, Sageworks

Lawrence Carpenter, Owner, SuperClean Professional Janitorial Services

Scott Jennings, Owner, Fit Tech & Assembly

#### ***Outline***

- I.** Reasons for starting a business
- II.** Thinking through the kinds of businesses to start
- III.** Getting started
- IV.** The basic things you need in order to run a business:
  - a. Marketing – the basics
  - b. Sales – the basics
  - c. Customers and service – the basics
  - d. Accounting and finance – the basics
  - e. Employees – the basics
- V.** Rules and guidelines for running a business
- VI.** Resources
- VII.** Attachments

## **I. Reasons for starting a business:**

1. Independence.
2. A fresh start. You are judged by the marketplace on what you provide.
3. Creativity.
4. Ownership.
5. Building something.
6. Money and wealth.

## **II. Thinking through the kinds of businesses to start:**

1. Find something you like to do or something that interests you.
2. Find something that is really needed in the marketplace.

- Something that people don't want to do.
- Something that you can do that people need to do and cannot do themselves.
- Examples.

3. Find something that is easy to start:

### **III. Getting started:**

1. Types of structures:

- Sole proprietorships.
- Partnerships.
- Corporations.

2. Registering the business.

3. Price the product or service.

- How are you going to price your product or service to make money?
- How will you compare with the competition regarding price, quality, and service?

4. Promoting the product or service. Ways to promote the business:

- Web ads.
- Business cards.
- Social media.
- Flyers.
- Brochures.

**IV.** Examples of starting a business with little or no money (audience involvement). Please participate.

- Realistically, what you can and can't do.
- What you need to start a business: a phone and your hand to knock on a door.

**V.** What not to do.

1. Start a business that requires a lot of capital.
2. Start with employees
3. Start with partners.
4. Focus on anything other than getting your first customer.
5. Spend a lot of time writing a business plan.
6. Apply for a loan or look for investors. It is usually a big waste of time.
7. Have overhead. Your expenses should be very low.

**VI.** The basic things you need in order to run a business:

**1. Sales & Marketing – the basics:**

- Sales is a learned skill.
- You need to sell.
- Who are you going to sell to?
- Sales is a matter of volume of contacts. You need to contact many people to get sales.
- Develop a unique selling feature. What is this and why is it important?
- Your customer is your best advertisement—keep them very happy.
- You cannot have one, single dissatisfied customer. The absence of great feedback is bad feedback. 80% of unhappy customers won't even let you know because they don't want to hurt your feelings.
- Have a system to get feedback.
- Follow through on feedback.

**2. Accounting and finance – the basics:**

- Hire a bookkeeper or accountant—when?
- Necessary tax documents.
- Stay on top of your payroll taxes.





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Home > Starting a Business > Business Ideas > 105 Service Businesses to Start Today

## 105 Service Businesses to Start Today

Service with a smile--and a profit

By Guen Sublette | October 25, 2005

At your service: Convenience-craving consumers are always looking for a way to do things better, faster and cheaper. Often, that means turning to a specialty-services entrepreneur who knows how to get the job done right. Here, we provide some inspiration for aspiring service providers--from adventure-tour leaders to window washers. With 105 ideas to choose from, you have no excuse not to get started today with your own service business.

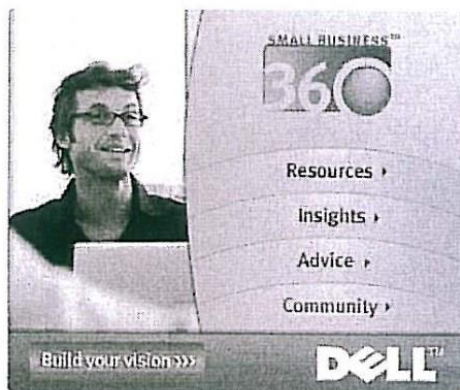
Once you've scrolled through our ideas and gotten a taste of what's out there, read "How to Start a Service Business" to learn how to get started.

### Personal Services

#### Mobile Pet Grooming

Snip, clip and brush your way to success as a mobile pet groomer. Fido and his owner will both appreciate the convenience of a "doorstep" doggie-grooming service. With the proper training and experience, a van and some grooming tools, start barking up the right tree by marketing your business in your neighborhood and others.

Content Continues Below



### Collectibles Search

Collectibles searchers, who carefully canvas swap meets, thrift stores and garage sales, can collect a bundle locating objets d'art for clients. Once you've found your niche--be it antique lunch boxes, dolls or grandfather clocks--advertise your services in hobbyist publications, at collectibles stores, in specialty forums on the internet, or on eBay. Soon you'll be taking

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up a collection of your own.

### Diaper Delivery

Whoever said cloth diapers couldn't be convenient--and user-friendly? Velcro diaper "wraps" replace awkward pins, and pickup and delivery take the dirty work out of diapering. Equipped with a "clean," propane-fueled delivery truck and some washing machines, you can provide an environmentally friendly alternative to disposables. Talk about a change for the better!

### Dry-Cleaning Pickup & Delivery

Are you clothes-minded? Then try on the dry-cleaning pickup-and-delivery business for size. Provide pickup and drop-off at a place that's convenient for busy professionals, then follow suit by arranging with a local dry cleaner to do the actual cleaning.

### Mobile Locksmith

You hold the keys to success as a mobile locksmith. For best results, be ready for 24-hour action with a cell phone and van. With some training and basic equipment, you'll have this business mastered--lock, stock and barrel.

### Graffiti Removal & Abatement

Equipped with some paint and other preventive treatments, you're set to serve residential as well as commercial clients with your own graffiti-removal-and-abatement business. City governments and schools can also benefit from the removal of unsightly "tagging" in their districts.

### Golf-Club Cleaning

Take your best shot with a golf-club cleaning service. Not only will you be offering golfers a clean edge to improve their game, but you'll be offering a way to protect their investment from the rusting, pitting and discoloration of dirty clubs.

### Self-Defense Instructor

You can never feel too safe or secure. People of all ages and backgrounds can benefit from the self-defense skills you can teach them. Get your business jump-started by training others in the disciplines you've learned--Aikido, Karate, or simply basic safety-awareness skills.

### Adventure Tours

Got a taste for adventure? Whether it's exploring South American caves or touring English teahouses, you're sure to find a fanatic following . . . so long as you do all the footwork first. Put your service on the road to success by coordinating transportation, food and lodging. Your clients only need to worry about one thing: having fun.

### Pet Sitting

When it comes to creature comforts, most canines would choose their own backyard over a kennel any day. Thanks to pet sitters--who take care of pets while their owners are out of town or busy--Fido can have his kibble at home. This business isn't just for the dogs, however; gear your services toward all creatures great and small for maximum profits.

### Mobile Massage

Success is close at hand for mobile massage providers. Advertise your stress-relieving services at local workout clubs, spas and physical therapists' offices. Then bring your trained hands--and a portable massage table--to clients' homes or places of work.

### Personal Chef

Cook up tasty profits as a personal chef. Those with culinary competence can likely find a hungry clientele among the ranks of America's busy working families. Or, market your business to clients for those special occasions when they prefer to dine in--complete with restaurant-quality food and service.

### Mobile Mechanic

As a mobile mechanic, a good knowledge of automobile repair techniques and a list of referrals help you rev up sales. Put your business in the fast lane by bringing your service directly to clients' homes or places of business.

More Resources »

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**Seamstress/Tailor**

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**Court-Paper Serving**

You can't beat the legal system . . . as a great resource for business, that is. Private attorneys, who lack the time to do much footwork themselves, often turn to registered court-paper processors to serve their summonses. Come judgment day, you'll be courting success.

**Porcelain Repair**

Rub a dub, dub, a porcelain-repair entrepreneur in the tub: Fixing unsightly chips and cracks in tubs and other porcelain accessories puts entrepreneurs in business. With a porcelain-repair kit in hand, sinks and tubs are made like new again.

**Cover Letter/Resume Service**

Not everyone knows how to look good on paper. With your editing and basic layout skills, a laser printer, and some high-quality stationery, you're set to start showing clients how to put their best foot forward in their resumes and cover letters--and how to get in the door of potential employers' businesses for an interview.

**Mystery Shopping**

Now, you can shop till you drop . . . and get paid for it! Just put on your shopping shoes and put service personnel to the test as a "mystery" shopper. Rate local retail stores' employees on attitude, friendliness, and overall quality of service, then report back to your store-owner clients, helping them to ensure their service really is number one.

**Tax-Form Preparer**

One thing is certain: There will always be a need for tax preparers. Come tax season, businesses and individuals alike need help preparing numerous tax forms and understanding the latest tax regulations. Equipped with some specialized computer software, start scheduling your career as a tax preparer this fiscal year-and get ready for some returns on your time and investment.

**Wedding-Guide Publishing**

For photographers, bakers, caterers and florists, wedding bells mean big business. Help them get a piece of the action by publishing a wedding guide with space for local advertisers. Include some basic wedding-planning articles, and you'll find June brides aren't the only ones to benefit from your premarital publication.

**Mobile Car-Wash and Detailing**

Take your business on the road, and clean up on profits as a mobile car-wash and detailing pro. Let a little soap and water do wonders . . . along with a few rags, brushes, and elbow grease; then drive home sales by marketing your services to car dealers, rental fleet owners, and corporations.

**Used-Car Inspection**

Sometimes, it takes a little more than a kick of the tires to evaluate a used car. With some basic diagnostic equipment and mechanical know-how, however, used-car inspectors can help steer clients away from "lemons." Developing a roster of appreciative customers puts you on the road to referrals--and success.

**Professional Organizer**

Neatniks need apply: If you're got a knack for neatness, why not help the organizationally challenged? Messy closets, home offices and commercial offices alike could benefit from a more efficient setup. Put some order into others' lives, and arrange yourself some pretty profits.

**Tutoring**

Thought your proficiency in high school algebra was all for naught? Think again: As a tutor, you could help others bone up on their studies. Whether



it's reading, writing or arithmetic, help your students reach the top of their class with a little experienced guidance and support.

#### Power Washing

Oily driveways, mud-caked semi trucks, or barnacle-ridden boats . . . You name it, and entrepreneurs equipped with specialized power-washing equipment can probably clean it. For spotless results, target commercial as well as residential customers.

#### Windshield Repair

To find potential clients for your windshield-repair business, simply canvas local parking and used-car lots for cars with cracked, chipped windshields. A basic repair kit enables you to offer clients what is clearly a better alternative to costly glass replacement.

#### Private Investigation

Blaze your own entrepreneurial trail while following others' footsteps-literally. As a private investigator, make your mark in the industry by keeping a keen "eye" on other people's activities. Clients include attorneys gathering evidence for a case, or individuals seeking information about a significant other.

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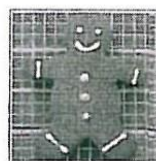
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1. Why do you want to start a business?
  
2. Briefly describe the type of business you intend to start and why you have chosen this business.
  
3. Describe in detail the product/service you will sell.
  
4. Why will customers want to buy your product/service? What is unique about your product/service compared to your competitors'?
  
5. How much will you charge for your product/service?
  
6. Describe the group of people (market segment) to whom you will sell. What do they have in common? For instance, think about age, gender, education, location, etc.
  
7. How will you reach your customers to motivate them to buy?
  
8. How do you plan on keeping your customers?
  
9. How will you get your product or service to your customers? Will they come to you, or will you deliver to them?

10. List and describe your direct competition. How will you compare with them regarding price, quality, and service?

11. Describe your experience related to this business, if any.

12. What are your goals for this business? (Sales & Profit for year 1, 2, 3)

13. What aspects of your personality will help ensure the success of the business?

14. How much cash will it require to start this business?

15. Will you need to hire anyone to help you run the business?

16. What will you name your business?

If you are interested in working with an entrepreneur-mentor upon your release, please give us a call or email us at that time. If you have any questions in the mean time or would like us to review your questionnaire, feel free to write to us.

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