





**A Successful Woman's Handbook:**

# **30 Steps to Starting your Green Business**

**Conscious Choices  
for Successful Women**

**Monica S. Flores**

A Successful Woman's Handbook:  
30 Steps to Starting your Green Business

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# Preface

This third book in the “A Successful Woman’s Handbook” series is a step-by-step look at the tasks involved in starting a green business.

The purpose of this book is to provide an easy-to-follow roadmap to help you plan, launch, and grow your green business. Use the thirty tips to guide you through your work of building a thriving, sustainable, eco-friendly, 21st-century company.

I invite you to move forward with your big idea. Our community of women-owned green businesses becomes stronger when you make an individual choice to “work for green.” Our shared planet also benefits from the organic, fair trade, holistic, and long-term sustainable solutions that you bring to the table through your new green company.

Monica S. Flores  
April 29, 2010



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# Introduction

Women-owned businesses are the fastest-growing segment of the United States market, and globally proactive consumers know the value of “going green.” More and more women are using their knowledge and resources to start up a new business.

By adopting a more sustainable mindset and by implementing green business practices into our day-to-day routines, we all work together to make a difference.

If you are thinking of starting a new business, consider making it a green business. The benefits are many. You will find resources in this book to help you down that path.

If your business is not yet “green,” this book gives you ideas on how to integrate sustainable practices into your work.

If you already own or operate a green business, find useful tips on how to sustain, grow, and strengthen your company.

## **Business Information**

Year Established:

Company Name:

Company Address:

Key Staff:

Why we choose to go green:

# Section 1.

## Getting Organized

- A Green Business: Is it Right for You?
- One Hundred and One Green Business Ideas
- 1. Prioritizing
- 2. Creating a Timeline
- 3. Budgeting
- 4. Planning
- 5. Building Relationships

### *Thought Exercises:*

- ✓ How do you make priorities?
- ✓ What is your timeline?
- ✓ How much in startup funds do you need?
- ✓ What is your plan for your new business?
- ✓ Who will help you start the company?

## **A Green Business: Is it Right for You?**

My coach Rob Seidenspinner always reminds me that all of us are creative, resourceful, and whole. If you're reading this book, you have the makings of a successful green entrepreneur. Believe in your skills, talent, and knowledge: you have an opportunity to better your own personal situation, your local community, and our shared planet Earth.

Take the next steps. If you are considering starting up a green business, but don't know how to start, or if you have a green idea and want to implement it, or if you already have a company and want to choose greener options, this book gives you thirty step-by-step tips on how to set up shop.

Your business is like a child: it takes nurturing, planning, and ongoing maintenance. It takes preparation, hard work, and reaching out to others to help you. However, you have an opportunity for a fantastic payoff when your business grows up and starts "bringing you a plate," and when you establish a supportive community of clients that are all working together to choose more sustainable options.



I won't sugarcoat the risks and potential losses involved. Ask any established businessperson and they'll tell you about major ups and downs in any new endeavor. The work takes a toll on you and your family. You decide your personal level of risk tolerance for starting or growing the business. When you decide it makes sense for you, it is best to start at the beginning. Try it out with a side job or a consulting practice along with your day job. If you are ready and have a plan and support, consider leaving your existing job to dive right into the launch of your new business.

In my experience, I've found that the individuals who work smarter and who fully commit to their business are the ones who find a way to make their business work for them. Your main decisions to make in terms of starting a green business include:

- ▶ your ability to commit to your new business
- ▶ how "green" you want to make your business
- ▶ your overall planning and goals for the business
- ▶ what a successful business looks like

"Going Green" means many things to many different people. For this book, we consider "green" to refer to a business that incorporates sustainable practices into its ongoing process and systems. We

also consider green businesses to be those that offer organic, fair trade, eco-friendly, repurposed, recycled, and/or sustainable products and services.

Everything you see or experience as a consumer is either created, manufactured, or reengineered in the global marketplace. You have an opportunity to fulfill consumer demand and participate in this marketplace by providing a green option.

If you're still thinking about your company's overall purpose and "fit," I invite you to go on this thought exercise.

### **Think Global.**

Imagine yourself looking at the Earth from space. Six and a half billion people are working, playing, sharing, living, and being a part of our global community.

Each of us has an impact on our world. The global economies are measured at tens of trillions of dollars.

### **We make a difference!**

We choose to be conscious about our decision-making, especially when it comes to who we support. When we support someone through our purchase of their goods and services, we allow them to continue doing business.

- What do you believe in?
- Do you buy based on your values?
- Are you a conscious consumer?
- Do you take the time to learn more about your purchases and who you choose to support?
- Do you believe you can make a difference?

### **Be Conscious.**

Your actions **do** make a difference. Your choices make a difference. When you launch and grow your green business, you participate with authenticity and passion, and you share your values with the world.

Let's support one another!

# **One Hundred and One Green** **Business Ideas**

## **Creative and Consciously Successful**

“Green” businesses that incorporate sustainability, recycling, energy efficiency, a focus on reusable materials, and eco-friendly practices are growing. Here’s a quick list of 101 “Green” business ideas.

Review the list and see if any of them apply to your current profession. You may be able to provide a green alternative in your existing business. As an added bonus, consider applying for green certification for your state or county if such a program is offered.

### **Services:**

- Eco-friendly cleaning or janitorial service
- Handyman or handywoman services
- Window washing with natural products
- Carpet cleaning with natural products
- LEED-certified design for architects
- Interior decorator specializing in sustainable materials
- “Green” painter and painting supplies
- “Green” dry-cleaning
- Gardener specializing in native plants

- Plant supplier specializing in organically grown seedlings
- Xeriscape specialist
- Landscape designer
- Florist
- Pest management using natural products
- Pet care with all-natural products
- Construction using best green practices
- Automotive care
- Auto repair

**Food:**

- Healthy Organic Restaurant (high-end)
- Healthy Organic Salad Bar
- Organic produce delivery
- Organic fair trade coffee sales
- Organic chocolate
- Organic line of children's snacks
- Cooking demonstrations for raw foods
- Gluten-free pastries, desserts, or cakes to supply to bakeries
- Kiosk or cart with organic drinks, snacks, or smoothies
- Personal chef
- Meal planner/organizer
- Catering company specializing in "slow food"
- Organic baby food
- Ready-to-microwave meals or salads-to-go
- Meal preparation stations

**Consulting (using green practices):**

- Green business consulting: showing other businesses how to go green
- Website designer/developer
- Graphic Designer, green-certified
- Computer training
- Computer one-on-one tutoring
- Software training
- Software one-on-one tutoring
- Digital photographer
- Notary Public
- Educator/consultant on sustainability for small businesses
- Do demonstrations of how to “green” a home
- Coach for personal development
- Image consultant with a “green” focus
- Marketing/branding consultant with a “green” focus

**Products:**

- Bamboo and other sustainable floor installation
- Bamboo clothing
- Jewelry made from natural materials like nuts, seeds, and leaves
- Green blog selling ads to green businesses
- Recycled paper products
- Handmade cloth

- Antiques scout
- Organic cotton clothing design and sales
- Organic cotton diapers design and sales
- Toys made of natural materials
- Sustainable furniture design and sales
- Sustainable accessories design and sales

**Personal Services (receive green certification):**

- Fitness Trainer
- Over-50 Fitness Trainer
- Beauty Products
- Dentist
- Naturopath
- Chiropractor
- Massage Therapist
- Acupuncturist
- Nutrition Advisor
- Martial Arts Teacher
- Yoga instructor
- Senior caregiver
- Hairstylist
- Makeup Artist
- Gift baskets with organic products
- Day Spa Services

**Children:**

- Childcare with a focus on providing organic foods
- Birthday party setup and cleanup using potato- or sugarcane-based utensils and recyclable supplies
- Birthday party entertainment

**Professional Services (incorporate a “green” focus into business practices):**

- Attorney
- Accountant/bookkeeping
- Tax preparation/Enrolled agent
- Insurance
- Health Insurance
- Long term health care insurance
- Financial advisor
- Real estate agent
- Mortgage agent
- Environmental consulting
- Facilities manager
- Property manager
- Solar energy consultant
- Space planner
- Office organizer
- Moving and storage services
- Green business broker
- Green printer representative
- E-bay business/E-bay consigner



The reality of the marketplace is that we are planning for jobs that do not even exist at the time of this writing. If you sense a need in your community that people are willing to pay for, you may be seeing the beginning of a new industry. Ask around and get a sense of what your potential customers need, and establish if people will pay for the green service or product you intend to provide.

- ▶ Green America (formerly Co-op America) offers a well-known national directory  
<http://www.greenamericatoday.org>
- ▶ The Institute for Green Business Certification  
<http://www.gbcertified.com>.
- ▶ Consider the U.S. Green Building Council  
<http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CategoryID=19>
- ▶ Integrate an initiative like 1% for the Planet  
<http://www.onepercentfortheplanet.org>
- ▶ Network with other professionals at EcoTuesday  
<http://www.ecotuesday.com>
- ▶ Green Chamber of Commerce  
<http://greenchamberofcommerce.net>.

Consider starting up a Sustainable Business Committee or a Green Business Working Group within your existing networking or business connections group. You and your peers will learn from each other's efforts.

Checklist:

- Do you serve a local, state, national, or international base?
- What does “green” mean to you?
- What is your overall idea for the business?
- What makes your business sustainable and eco-friendly?
- Will you have a brick-and-mortar presence or a virtual or mobile presence? Or both?
- Are there certification programs nearby?
- Are there other green-certified or green businesses in your area?
- What's your timeframe for launching?
- What is your honest assessment of your personal skills, particularly your strengths?
- What skills do you lack?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Who else do you need to have on your team?

## **Step 1**

### **Prioritizing**

Do you want more time with your family? Do you want to set up a passive income stream on the side? Do you want to join someone else's work or do you want to start your own project?

Once you figure your priorities for what you want, set up goals and identify your "benchmarks" for success. I recommend you go into business only if you have:

- ▶ A) the courage to succeed,
- ▶ B) the tenacity to make your business work, and
- ▶ C) the desire to make a difference

If you do not believe that you are capable of starting your green business, then you're probably right. If you believe you will do it with help from others, now is the time to consider who is a good addition to your team, as a partner, consultant, shareholder, or board member.

Why do you want to start a business? Understand your motivation. When you make a choice, things tend to fit into place, but you must first make that choice.

## **Step 2**

### **Creating a Timeline**

What's your timeline? You can set up an online affiliate program in as little as a day, but if you're building a new business, you're looking at a goal that may be three to ten years down the road before you exit.

How much time do you have available and what time are you willing to put into building your business? The answers to these questions suggest your expected timeframe.

Expect the organizing process to take weeks or months. If you are distracted by other priorities, expect the organizing and launch period to take longer. If you're making the business your "priority A," expect the launch to take a shorter time.

Consider how much time you have in a week, after calculating for existing needs such as child care, sleep, meal preparation, commuting, and leisure time. Commit to a fixed schedule of when you will pay attention to your business. Start out with at least 3-5 hours a week to simply plan and research. This will increase as you get closer and closer to formulating your idea and your plan.

During the startup phase of planning, marketing, and building your business, expect to put in as much (or more) time as you put into a regular job. If you already have a part-time or full-time job, consider how your new business fits into that schedule. You may not have the capacity to do everything all at once. You may have to find additional partners or teammates to get specific tasks completed.

Your main task is to set up a timeline. Stick to it.

Checklist:

- ▶ How much time do you realistically have available in a typical week?
- ▶ Can you carve out time on a daily or weekly schedule?
- ▶ Do you have someone who can help you get organized?
- ▶ Are you willing to work with an outside service to accomplish those tasks you cannot do yourself?
- ▶ What kind of support do you need (childcare or daycare provider, family, in-laws, grandparents, friends)?
- ▶ What kind of accountability partner or plan can you use? Consider hiring a coach, setting up meetings with a partner, or joining a mastermind group.

## **Step 3**

### **Budgeting**

Starting up a new business requires capital. This may come as a startup loan from friends or family, it may require you dipping into your savings, it may mean you increase your tolerance for credit card debt, or it might require you to get a part-time job to pay for the expenses of your new endeavor.

If you are going into business for yourself, figure out how much you can realistically afford to support the business. Note that the road to profitability takes time, and even your best scenarios will require paying customers for you to make your business work for you, pay you back your investment amount **and** pay you a salary or draw.

- How much do you currently need to make?
- How much do you expect to sell your base product or service for?
- Do you anticipate any repeat business?
- Do your expenses outweigh your startup costs?
- If so, how do you make up the difference?

Typical startup costs include the following. This is not an exhaustive list:

- Website, business cards, brochure, and/or other marketing materials
- Photography for products or people
- Capital expenditure on equipment (first batch of products, computer, cell phone, van or delivery truck)
- Telephone
- Internet
- Business license fees: city, state, local
- Consulting fees to subcontractors
- Fees to other providers
- Advertising expenses
- Dues to member organizations
- Postage
- Mailing lists or customer lists
- Staff or subcontractors
- Insurance, taxes, emergency funds

Find creative ways to pay for the startup costs involved. You may need to bootstrap, you may need some free or low-cost solutions to begin, or you may consider adding teammates.

## **Step 4**

### **Planning**

I'm not a big fan of “analysis paralysis” but you do need a plan to help you organize your overall thinking. Create at least a three-page draft of your “big idea” whittled down into basic items such as:

- ▶ a) The need: what is the need that your business fills?
- ▶ b) The market: who is going to buy your product or service? Specify, specify, specify.
- ▶ c) Price point: how much do you need to sell to break even? How much do you need to sell to make a profit?
- ▶ d) Distribution: how will you get your product or service into the hands of your customers? Are you going after your local market, a national market, or the international marketplace?
- ▶ e) Marketing: how will you promote your business? How will people know about your product and service?



## **Step 5**

### **Building Relationships**

You may have your business plan written, your brochure printed, your website ready, and your e-mail, phone, and virtual mail set up and ready to go, but we must also cultivate and connect with people in real life as well as online.

Schedule in time for meetings with others in your location. We pick up many more nuances in body language then we are able to communicate through e-mail, phone, and fax. When you really “vibe” with the right person, you find a great sense of community and the realization that we all work together towards a similar goal.

Let’s do our social networking online but also schedule ongoing time for live, in-person networking, preferably with others who have the same agenda (fair trade, organic, sustainable, eco-friendly, progressive, and in business to make a difference for the world).

Green business women naturally get together regularly for scheduled events. Here are some additional examples of how to connect with other individuals and groups.

- Attend any of the multitude of conferences or seminars in your specific field or industry.
- Create an informal meeting with Twitter or Facebook friends.
- Organize a charity drive and work with others in your social networking sphere to promote a local nonprofit or community-based organization.
- Join a board or leadership group around one of your areas of interest. Invite the support of others in your network.
- Promote an event that you plan to attend and invite people from your social networks. Share with others who are interested in your specific topics.
- Take someone out to coffee or lunch to get to know them better.
- Consider offering a seminar, panel presentation, or group review of a specific topic you'd like to explore.
- Book clubs are great ways to meet others and come up with stimulating discussion.
- Work parties are great ways to get together and support one another. Join with others to work collaboratively on a special project.
- Party time means hosting cocktail hour, supper club, or an intimate breakfast.
- Choose your own.

## Section 2:

# Focusing on Basics

- ▶ 6. Fine-tuning your Mission
- ▶ 7. Developing your Keywords
- ▶ 8. Finding Customers

### *Thought Exercises:*

- ✓ What is your stated mission?
- ✓ Which values and principles do you live by?
- ✓ Which keywords or key phrases define your company?
- ✓ Who benefits most from your service or product?
- ✓ How will you build your community of clients?

## **Step 6**

### **Fine-tuning your Mission**

Why are you doing what you do? Why does a customer choose you over all your competition? What is your niche offering that you do well, or the specific need for which your company has the best solution?

When you are able to identify the reason for your company's existence in a ten-second sentence, you have the beginning of your mission statement.

For example: "My focus as a web developer is to create websites that build community and foster a feeling of connectedness. I commit to the success of women entrepreneurs, progressive organizations, membership groups, and fair trade, organic, holistic, sustainable, and green businesses. My specialty is building highly functional Drupal and custom Content Management System websites that make it easy for business owners to reach out to their customers."

Live your business principles and post them prominently. Your identity as a company gains great strength from the mission. Focus on the basic principles of why you are in business and embody your principles on a daily basis.

## **Step 7**

### **Developing your Keywords**

What top twelve words and phrases explain your company, your business philosophy, and your offerings?

This keyword list will drive your language when you talk, write, and blog about the company, and it will drive your focus when you reach out to potential and current customers.

Consider fine-tuning your list to be a niche, specified list of keywords and key phrases that capture in great detail the items you offer, or the types of customers your business supports.

My full list of keywords: conscious collaboration, community-building, coalitions, community development, strategic relationships, social enterprise, social justice, education, business development, environmental sustainability, green business, green thinking, green practice, philanthropy, web development, web design, membership directory, blog, calendar, e-commerce, database integration, social networking, non-profits, Drupal, Wordpress, content management systems.

What is your keywords list?

## **Step 8**

### **Finding Customers**

Business exists because of customers. Clients and users are the people who contribute to your bottom line. You are in business to make money and grow the company to be a real resource to your customer base.

You find customers online and in person. If you are predominantly online, develop a website and a social networking presence. If you are predominantly local, develop business cards, a 30-second elevator pitch, and start meeting people in your community.

- What does your customer need?
- What pain does your service help lessen?
- How do you entertain your customer?
- What solution does your product offer?

Figure out what your customer needs and understand how you will deliver value through fulfilling those needs. By focusing on your key phrases and meeting targeted people in your specific area of interest, you'll generate a potential customer base. Ask for references, referrals and testimonials to grow your client list.

# Section 3:

## Building Infrastructure

- ▶ 9. Creating your Website
- ▶ 10. Committing to Success
- ▶ 11. Incorporating
- ▶ 12. Getting Licensed
- ▶ 13. Filling out the Checklist
- ▶ 14. Accounting Basics
- ▶ 15. The Numbers
- ▶ 16. Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss
- ▶ 17. Taxes

### *Thought Exercises:*

- ✓ How organized are you?
- ✓ Do you need help?
- ✓ Which types of paperwork do you need?
- ✓ What kind of reporting works for you?

## **Step 9**

### **Creating your Website**

As a website developer, I have a strong bias, but my belief is that with an effective, functional, content management system-based website, you receive exceptional results.

Do it right the first time and hire the best you can afford.

- ▶ a) Get a content management system (Drupal, Joomla!, and Wordpress are all good solutions).
- ▶ b) Consider the main five pages you want to put online (usually Home, About, Products and Services, Mission/Vision/Values, Contact) as well as any additional pages. With a content management system, you will be able to add more pages later.
- ▶ c) Hire an effective web producer that you trust and who expects to be in business as you grow your company. Get a design and an installation done within your budget. Shop around for quotes and go with a team that feels right to you.
- ▶ d) Focus on content, content, content. It's important to fill your website with engaging



and search-engine friendly page content about your business, about your industry, about trends and policies, about what you offer, and about you and your team. These items personalize your company and make it easier to find you when someone does a search on your keywords or key phrases.

- ▶ e) Budget for most of your web outreach to go towards content. You can always update your design but you first need website traffic to build awareness about your brand.
- ▶ f) Analyze your data. How many people are visiting? What can you offer to get more people to come into your web pipeline?
- ▶ g) Reach out: there are many ways to build your community of clients online. Offer social networking links and bonus offers to people who express interest in your company.
- ▶ h) Offer a “call to action” on every page of your website. Understand what you need to measure. Track your results daily, weekly, and monthly.
- ▶ i) Work with others. Cross-link and cross-promote your work with others in your community. Generate high quality links going in and out of your site to reach the most targeted users.

## **Step 10**

### **Committing to Success**

It's time to take a stand for your business. It's impossible to worry and to have faith at the same time. It's impossible to be thinking through a solution at the same time you're fretting about a potential outcome. It's impossible to be focused on success at the same time you're imagining all the terrors of failure. Now is the time to commit to the health and strength of your business.

Put worry aside, even for a half-hour block each week, so you can focus on your biggest and best dreams for your business. Find a coach or accountability partner to help you articulate your business and map out the steps to reach your goals.

In your "high dream," you have a fantastic idea, a solid plan, a steady and talented team, customers who show you their love, and an ability to use your company to create a better, greener world. In your best dream for your business success, your company is profitable, the business is a leader in being environmentally responsible, and you are able to grow, expand, and be a part of making the world a better, healthier place. Stick to your high dream and keep yourself positive about what you want to achieve.

## **Step 11**

### **Incorporating**

If you're in startup mode with your business (meaning, you have a part-time job, a consulting gig, a set of products you're selling online, or you're doing affiliate marketing), one of the first things to consider is how you will incorporate.

Decide if you'll be using a sole proprietorship, S-corporation or C-corporation, limited liability company, or partnership. Some resources to help you decide the best structure to match your goals are available at [Nolo.com](http://Nolo.com) or [LegalZoom.com](http://LegalZoom.com).

Many people start out as a sole proprietor. While this is fine for small consulting jobs, you will want to consider incorporating to protect your personal assets and to shield yourself from potential litigation.

When you incorporate, you may open up a business account at your bank in the name of your business, where you and/or your partners cosign on the account. If you're a sole proprietor, consider opening another bank account specifically for the business income and expenses.

When income comes to you from your business, for example a check written out to you for services rendered, put it into your business banking account. This could be for PayPal payments, for Google AdSense checks, for any kind of cash from products you sell, or for events where you collect a fee. You'll make any payments related to your business from the specified account.

By keeping business income separate from your “personal” money (money you receive from a regular job/paycheck/salaried job), you maintain a good summary of your business cash flow. When it's tax time you'll deduct your business expenses from your overall income.

Your sample register for your very first endeavor may look like:

+4250		<i>CONSULTING INCOME: first payment from client A</i>
	-54.71	<i>EXPENSE: TRANSPORTATION train tickets</i>
	-78.35	<i>EXPENSE: CELL PHONE SERVICE</i>

	-45.72	<i>EXPENSE: Business lunch -- discuss details with potential client B</i>
+2750		<i>CONSULTING INCOME: first payment from client B</i>
	-65.42	<i>EXPENSE: Dues to professional organization</i>
	-22.05	<i>EXPENSE: POSTAGE</i>
		<i>etc.</i>

Continue to keep track of all the expenses that you are incurring through your business. Solutions like QuickBooks, Quicken, Microsoft Money and online tools are available to help you track and categorize.

Remember to keep track of draws (money you take out of the business to pay yourself). You'll use this information and your record of income and expenses to create profit and loss statements for tax purposes and to gain clarity about how your business is doing on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.

For sole proprietorships, your main point to remember is to keep your personal income and

expenses separate from your self-employment or business income and expenses.

Consult with a tax advisor as you start to incur expenses: she or he will inform you of other potential deductions. You may be able to deduct:

- ▶ Mileage (keep track of your beginning odometer and end odometer, the destination, and the reason for your trip)
- ▶ Travel (for plane, bus, auto rental, and train tickets to your business meeting)
- ▶ Dues and subscriptions (for industry groups or magazines in your core focus area)
- ▶ Meals/entertainment for meetings with potential clients (keep track of the guests, what was discussed, and the amount paid)
- ▶ Cell phone/Internet (for business use)
- ▶ Portion of your rent or mortgage that is set-aside for your home office
- ▶ Capital expenses like a computer or software

I encourage you to set up your tracking software from the very beginning. Ask around for qualified advisors and choose well, as you intend to work with these professionals for many years.

## **Step 12**

### **Getting Licensed**

Your county may require you to be licensed to conduct business in your community. To find rules and regulations for your particular county or city, search your local government website for “doing business in the county.”

Also take care of your federal filing information. This involves checking your company or business name against existing copyrights or trademarks, setting up a formal structure and name for your organization, and applying for a tax identification number if needed.

If you start an online business, like running a blog or starting up a website with digital delivery, consider the steps involved with converting the website into an organization. As your initial website traffic grows, you’ll want to be prepared with a structure to proactively deal with tax, filing, and licensing requirements.

When you take care of these important steps at the very beginning, you’ll be in good shape as you move forward.

## **Step 13**

### **Filling out the Checklist**

- ▶ a) Identify which incorporation structure will be best for you and your business.
- ▶ b) File your business name with your county and state.
- ▶ c) Apply for any relevant city or county license.
- ▶ d) Fulfill licensing requirements for your industry.
- ▶ e) Advertise in a newspaper of record to notify the general public of business ownership.
- ▶ f) Prepare bylaws, articles of incorporation, and amendments as needed.
- ▶ g) Apply for a Federal Employee Identification Number for tax purposes, if needed.
- ▶ h) Prepare a planning document for your first 12 months.
- ▶ i) Identify benchmarks you intend to reach.
- ▶ j) Open a bank account for your business.
- ▶ k) Find commercial or general liability insurance as needed.
- ▶ l) Make photocopies or electronic copies and store in a secure place.
- ▶ m) Schedule regular checkins to review your data, identify trends, and take care of ongoing issues.



## **Step 14**

### **Accounting Basics**

In the past I have personally used Quickbooks, Quicken, Account Edge, and Excel spreadsheets. Whichever tool you use, you will need a basic accounting system for you to track reports about the financial health of your company.

A bookkeeping service will be helpful for you as you grow your list of accounts. Someone must keep track of accounts receivable and accounts payable. You also additional tools to help you track time, deliverables, partial payments, and product sales.

Consider what support you need as you fulfill the requirements of your new company's manufacturing, distribution, advertising, and sales alongside your required record-keeping. Many businesses fail while they still have paying customers, so it is vital for you to understand your cash flow.

Companies that arrange payment terms (net 15, net 30, net 60, etc.) must deal with the difference in time between completing a project and getting paid for it. Your weekly report on your aging accounts (payments that are due to you) gives you an indication of your current cash flow.

## **Step 15**

### **The Numbers**

Keep your documents in electronic format and in paper format. Store your records securely and set up your system in advance so it is easy for you to look up information. Collect receipts and build in time to categorize your information on a regular basis.

As the owner, you'll want to review profit and loss statements and balance sheets: these give you a "snapshot" into the viability of your business. By scheduling regular reporting, you'll receive the best information to make decisions about your company.

One important piece of information to keep on hand is your company's federal employee identification number (separate from your own personal Social Security number). This number is important for identification purposes.

Additional organizing documents typically include: a state certificate of organization, your articles of organization, your bylaws, an operating agreement, a company information sheet, a list of officers, and a ledger of members, partners, or shareholders.

Keep tax related records (annual state and federal returns) forever. Keep receipts and documentation of any self-employment income for at least 6 years, and keep those records in as secure and weather-proof place as possible.

When you've collected these documents and made them accessible, you're ready to use the information. Record-keeping relates to time and payroll, expenses (itemized lists of what was spent to pursue new business), income (what the business takes in like cash, barter, checks, credit card payments, notes, etc.), and equity (additional partner investment or debt).

Your goal is to receive as much information as possible about your emerging business. As you grow, you'll find additional investors, clients, and customers. You'll also work with a core team of bookkeepers, accountants, tax preparers, and financial advisors to help you and your staff make the most of the revenue your company earns.

## **Step 16**

### **Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss**

The typical business has assets, liabilities, and owner's or shareholder's equity. The statement that shows the relationships between these three is the "balance sheet" and this is a statement that shows the "net worth" of a business at any given time. Learn how to read your balance sheet to get a sense of your company's position over time.

The balance sheet gives you an instant picture of your current business financial situation, from the perspective of an outside party. Think of it as a document you offer to someone who wants to buy your company. Do you know how much money you've invested in your business? Do you know your current situation for your incoming payments? How much debt have you taken on? How much equity do you and your partners have in the company? Your balance sheet tells you all of this information and more.

You and other stakeholders' equity in the business is everything from the business cards you personally printed to spread the word about your business, to the new checks your partner ordered or brochures you printed up, to all investors' initial capital investment.

Assets are items the company owns that may be exchanged for cash. Some examples of assets include cash on hand, checking accounts, savings accounts, money market accounts, invoices that you've sent and are waiting for payment on (accounts receivable), loans that you've given out that you're receiving payments on (notes receivable), physical property such as cars, computers, buildings (capital), and any other item that you could liquidate.

Liabilities are what the company owes to creditors. Samples include personal or bank loans, credit card debt, car loans, mortgage loans, and other payments for which the company is responsible.

A typical balance sheet displays the equity, assets and liabilities of a company. Print one out regularly and review it on a monthly basis.

A profit and loss statement gives you a sense of cash flow, or how money is moving out of and into the company. Your profit and loss statement shows you the financial situation of the company over a specific time period, such as a calendar or fiscal year, or a quarter, or a week. The P&L shows the total income that came into the business within a

certain period less the total expenses that the business incurred during that time.

For example, in any month, a business typically receives money (accounts receivable) from customers, projects, or product sales. The business also pays money out (accounts payable) for expenses like staff, contractors, and vendors. In any given time period, you will want to understand how much money you have on hand (cash, liquid assets), how much money you have coming in (accounts receivable) and how much money is going out (accounts payable). The profit and loss statement gives you this information.

When dealing with banking or reporting to your investors, shareholders, or outside advisors, your profit and loss statement and your balance sheet are powerful information tools. Part of your evolution as a business owner is understanding how to read and understand these documents to get a good feel on a company's current financial situation.

## **Step 17**

### **Taxes**

Tax time goes smoother if you originally set up your accounting software using generally accepted accounting categories.

My recommendation is you find a tax preparer (an “enrolled agent” or a certified public accountant) to give you a checklist on how to set up your accounting system so that everything is categorized in a way that makes it easy to report on your business income and expenses.

If your tax preparer properly sets up your categories, you can send them e-documents or spreadsheets from your records.

Your company has a higher chance of triggering an IRS audit by displaying information that is statistically outside the range of your peers. For example, if you declare spending much less or much more than others in your income level, you have a higher chance of getting audited. Something as simple as filling in a handwritten form may increase your chances of audit, because a human being needs to read your writing rather than a computer reading an electronic filing.

Consider your income, your expenses and deductions, and monitor your paperwork from year to year. Keep state and federal filings, and include any very important information like capital expenditures, mortgage information, loan notes, medical bills, and insurance information.

Developing a system to handle all of this information is part of your job as the business owner. When you build in a process for handling mileage, or meals and entertainment, or reimbursement requests, or any other form related to income and expenses, you help organize the company's internal structure.

By developing your tax procedures and practicing sufficient record-keeping, including quarterly payments, you'll build up a straightforward and reproducible system to help you and your advisors make tax time stress-free, year after year.



# Section 4:

## Increasing your Customer Base

- ▶ 18. Speaking and Presenting
- ▶ 19. Meeting People
- ▶ 20. Helping Others

### *Thought Exercises:*

- ✓ Can you convert your knowledge into a product, presentation or mini-course?
- ✓ Which types of people do you want to meet?
- ✓ What is the best way for your company to offer services to your community?

## **Step 18**

### **Speaking and Presenting**

Those who speak in their industry make more money than those who do not speak in their industry. As a speaker, presenter, panelist, or media advisor, you'll gain exposure to your target market through multiple channels. Develop and practice a 7-second, a 30-second, and a 2-minute talk about you and what you offer, and attend training or seek assistance on how you'll represent your brand.

The groups I recommend for interaction in a business setting include Business Networking International <http://www.bni.com>, a weekly networking group with people in different industries in your local area, the public speaking group Toastmasters <http://www.toastmasters.org>, where you increase your abilities to give extemporaneous and prepared speeches, and any women's groups or green business groups in your local community.

Find a chapter near you and meet others. There are more eco-conscious and sustainably-oriented business owners in your area every day. A quick search will help connect you to them.

To increase your panel and speaking opportunities, prepare a series of talks that fill some

need in your potential target market. The format of your talk may include 30-45 minutes of lecture, followed by a question and answer period. Prepare slides and workshop materials to help inform and educate your audience. Then, go find the audience: connect with local women's networking groups, community colleges, alumni groups, trade groups, schools, industry associations, chambers, libraries, or other groups who require speakers on a regular basis. Remember to identify some talk titles and have e-versions of your video clips, slideshows, and resource lists.

- ▶ Consider finding a green business group and offering your talk for one of the meetings. You'll meet other local merchants.
- ▶ Consider joining other green business owners to create a panel on your topical area. Host an event. By creating engaging, relevant, and interesting presentation material, you build your audience and reach more people who are interested in buying your services and products.
- ▶ Consider advocating for "green" by writing to your local newspaper or trade publication.
- ▶ Consider offering introductory training courses in your field to increase the potential market for your services and products.
- ▶ What are other ways to spread the word?

## **Step 19**

### **Meeting People**

Customers are people. You require customers to thrive in your business, so one of your main tasks is to meet more people who will help your business grow. Establish quality relationships, consistently expand your circle of trust, and find ways to help others in your network.

Any time is a great time to network. Most “connector types” set aside at least 5-10 hours every week to connect with and meet with others in person or over the phone. Coffee talks, lunch dates, and office visits all work effectively. Consider increasing the overall “level” of the people in your network and target successful people.

When attending events, go with a specific objective in mind.

For example:

- ▶ If you’re attending a local business event, like a chamber meeting, plan on circulating and meeting people from a perspective of getting acquainted with others in your local community.

- ▶ If you're attending a conference, plan on meeting with a large amount of people, collecting contact information, and following up afterwards. Build in time for intimate, informal gatherings with people In Real Life from your online network.
- ▶ If you're attending an intimate gathering, plan on enjoying and solidifying your connections with the other participants.
- ▶ If you're attending a seminar or workshop, plan on learning as much as you can and identifying key players in your industry who speak or lead activities at that event.
- ▶ If you're attending a social event, like a dinner or party, consider spending time with a smaller amount of people but getting a real sense of who's who.

Do not blanket a big hall full of people with business cards, as afterwards you'll run into the issue of not remembering who's who. Instead, let yourself flow naturally, seek out and speak with people who pique your interest, keep calm, and arrive at any new event with the attitude that the right people for you will show up when you're ready.

## **Step 20**

### **Helping Others**

A leader finds out what's important to their followers. A leader also empowers others to become leaders in their own right. As a woman with a green business, you are a leader in your community. Remember that you have an opportunity to create a lasting legacy through your efforts.

As you're establishing a base of readers, clients, connections, volunteers, and supporters, consider what you will do to help those who need your assistance. Consider these ways to help others in your network:

- ▶ Pass along articles, advice, links, and leads.
- ▶ Offer links to white papers, news, or information that directly has an impact on people, such as new litigation or regulation.
- ▶ Forward specific articles to people who will be interested in them.
- ▶ Establish a forum (like a discussion group, e-mail newsletter, or social network) where you reach out to those who have expressed an interest in your work.
- ▶ Incorporate the spirit of sharing into your corporate mission statement.

- Adopt a local community organization, nonprofit, or charity that aligns with your mission.
- Host others in an ongoing brunch or coffee gathering focused on a topical area.
- Create a lending library of helpful books, CDs, and other resources.
- Teach a class in your subject area.
- Volunteer as a board member.
- Mentor a young person.
- Get active with your local alumni group.
- Get involved with the local schools: these are great places to meet parents in your community.
- Encourage your staff to volunteer: offer bonuses or points to those who work at a local community-based organization.

Connect with other green business owners in your community and do one of the following to focus on the sustainable aspects of your business:

- On your website, create a list of resources to green companies, recycling services, and relevant community-based organizations.
- Sponsor a booth at the local Earth Day celebration.

- Encourage a local elementary school to take on a class project around sustainability.
- Use biodegradable utensils instead of plastic at your next company function.
- Host a Saturday recycling drive.
- Do a beach cleanup.
- Participate in Bike-to-Work day.
- Organize carpooling lists for your company.
- Start a tree-planting day.
- Offer a swap meet and invite your customers to participate with gently used items.
- Host an event to introduce your eco-friendly vendors and suppliers to each other.
- Plant a vegetable garden on the grounds.
- Make positive memories that sustain you.

As you communicate and connect with those in your community, you increase your opportunities and you share in the bounty that your business brings you. By spreading a message of sustainability, you increase your triple bottom line of accountability to people, profits, and the planet.

For additional ideas, join a local group where you swap stories on a regular basis. You can learn from others and teach from your own experience.



# Section 5:

## Interacting Online

- ▶ 21. Social Networking
- ▶ 22. Blogging
- ▶ 23. Making it Members-only
- ▶ 24. E-mailing

### *Thought Exercises:*

- ✓ What is working or not working with your social networking presence?
- ✓ Does social media make sense for your business?
- ✓ How will you monetize your website?
- ✓ What type of messaging do you want to offer to your customers?

## **Step 21**

### **Social Networking**

“Be there” through social networking. This legitimate and growing avenue allows you to reach your friends and allies, narrow your focus, and provide direct information about your company. You create conversations about your green business through social media, the most cost-effective and authentic way to reach out. Your transparency and availability on these sites give you a way to fit in with ongoing consumer discussions on your topics of interest. Use these tools as additional channels to build your community of clients online.

Samples of “being there” include creating a Facebook Groups page, creating a Facebook Fans page and embedding the badge on your website, setting up Twitter accounts, organizing a LinkedIn group, and adding your RSS feed, your Amazon reading list, or your latest SlideShare.net presentations to your website.

Your key focus in social networking is to enable genuine interactions with other people, many of whom will turn into your fans and biggest advocates.

## **Step 22**

### **Blogging**

Why create a blog? Your blog is an excellent way for you to control your message. Four inherent properties of a blog make its use helpful in controlling the content published about your business: timeliness, the ability to offer a behind-the-scenes perspective, the ability to host multiple writers, and the ability to publish your information to other channels.

Your blog may be a hosted Blogger or Wordpress.com account or a self-hosted Wordpress.org installation. It may be a Tumblr.com or Posterous.com account, or it may be a Drupal site with complex functional elements.

Whichever format you choose, your blog establishes a presence that shares your unique perspective on topics and issues relevant to your company. Typical blog topics include industry news, information about your business, key players in your industry, upcoming events, original research you've published, and general musings on your company's growth.

As you interact with readers, demonstrate graciousness, calm, steadiness, and support. By

doing so, you contribute to the growth of an expanding network of fans, friends, followers, and connections. You also provide a window into what it is like for a customer to do business with you.

Treat your community with respect and value your connections with others by operating your blog with respect, gratitude, and integrity. Your blog is an excellent way to maintain ongoing posts to update friends, associates, and customers.

Consider inviting your website and blog visitors to join your opt-in mailing list. Options like Google Groups, Constant Contact, Vertical Response, PHPList or other solutions allow you to send targeted messages to people who demonstrate interest in your work. Consider developing a Feedburner.com feed from your blog posts - people may subscribe in a reader or via e-mail to access your posts whenever you publish them.

Your goal with blogging is to find others who resonate with you and your message. Invite these targeted users to join your community contact list. You want to have 10,000 fans who love your product, instead of a 100,000 people who won't open your e-mail. Your blog readers provide a window into your customer base and they provide an excellent first point of contact for building your community list.

## **Step 23**

### **Making it Members-only**

You have an opportunity to reach out directly to your web visitors. Cultivate a “members-only” approach by using a solution like Drupal to offer members-only content.

For example, I offer a green business directory for public use, but those who’d like to list their business must first join as a member:

<http://www.greenbusinesswomen.com>

Consider offering members-only tools to create revenue streams. You may choose to offer certain web-based, digital delivery content for free, but more specialized content will be available to those who pay a small monthly fee. You may only offer digital downloads. You may offering special information or access to fans who pay an annual fee. Users receive specific, niche content, and your organization receives an ongoing stream of income to continue creating the content.

The cost of digital delivery is approaching zero. If you have an e-version of a publication, such as a book, presentation, software tool, or music, this is the time for you to share that through digital downloads on your website.

## **Step 24**

### **E-mailing**

For e-mail list management, try Constant Contact, Vertical Response, Google Groups, AWeber, or PHPList, or ask around for a recommendation. If you are e-mailing directly from your mail program, convert to one of these solutions. Offer an “opt-out” for people who do not want to receive your e-mail. As you narrow your focus, you reach targeted people who are interested in hearing from your company. I recommend sending e-mail only a few times a year. With each message, offer a specific call to action by inviting the recipient to participate in the next step, such as buying your seasonal product, scheduling the next appointment, attending your event, or upgrading.

Consider the aim of your e-mail list, the quality of messaging you’ll offer, and your privacy policy. Build a base of subscribers who buy your products, share their experiences, and invite their friends. To build your base, offer high-quality, curated content.

Increase your list one subscriber at a time by focusing on specific topics that benefit your customers, provide added value to them, help them free up more time, or solve one of their pressing problems.

# Section 6:

## Reviewing your Data

- ▶ 25. Tracking Data
- ▶ 26. Reviewing Reports

### *Thought Exercises:*

- ✓ What is your “magic number” to determine your company’s success?
- ✓ How do you find and track the numbers you need?
- ✓ Which reports help you best understand your business?
- ✓ Which reports help you maintain accountability?

## **Step 25**

### **Tracking Data**

Whatever number you measure tends to improve. For green women in business, one of our biggest tasks is to identify “the number” we want to track. Besides your monthly revenue, or the number of unique visitors to your website, you’ll want to identify the number that correlates with the health of your business.

For example, is your number:

- Number of visitors who make a purchase after visiting your e-commerce store?
- Returning website visitors?
- Number of customers who are repeat customers?
- Average sale per customer?
- Average number of items in a shopping cart?
- Total number of purchases in a year?
- Average shipping and handling cost?
- Time between signup and final payment?
- Number of new signups for your e-newsletter?
- Number of new Facebook fans?
- Average number of comments per post?
- Number of affiliates who sign up per month?



- Percentage of visitors who buy from an e-mail blast?
- Number of referrals generated per customer?
- Number of customer complaints?
- Average time on the phone, per transaction?

Any one of these, or a combination, might be the number that allows you to understand your business and keep track of how to improve your business.

For example, for my website design and development company, at first we thought our number to track was the average sale per customer, but over time this only gave us an idea of how much it costs to develop a website. The **better** number for us is the number of referred clients. We're growing organically and we screen the clients with whom we do business, so it's important to us to know how our potential customers find us. When we complete a project, our customers tend to refer new customers (which is how we've grown the business so far), so we always want to know where a new client heard about us.

What is your magic number? What report will you use to track that number?

## **Step 26**

### **Reviewing Reports**

By understanding your numbers, you gain better insight into your company's progress. Schedule some time every week to review your important reports. By understanding your reports, you undertake some of the most important work needed in your business. For example, you might regularly review website visitor reports, profit and loss and balance sheet information, open invoices, and scheduling. You may review ongoing trends in your industry for hints and potential products or new markets.

By understanding your basic information, you gain a broader sense of trends and overall needs. What will your company offer to create value and provide something useful to your clients? Your next big idea might come from the information in your reports, so track and reassess frequently.

Albert Einstein said that if he had an hour to solve a problem, he would spend fifty-five minutes defining the problem and then five minutes finding the solution. If you have a particular problem that is challenging your business growth, take time to understand which data and components will help you pinpoint your best solution. Then solve it!

# Section 7:

## Refining your Process

- ▶ 27. Managing Business Processes
- ▶ 28. Automating Systems
- ▶ 29. Refining your Model

### *Thought Exercises:*

- ✓ What is your exit strategy for your involvement with the company?
- ✓ Which pieces of your business can be turned into a turn-key process?
- ✓ How do you continuously improve your services and products?

## **Step 27**

### **Managing Business Processes**

Your “big-picture” task as a green business is to find ways to save money and allocate resources towards creating a sustainable, profitable, and beneficial company. Take advantage of many different automated systems to make your work easier and to be more efficient.

For example, a way to reduce time on incoming customer service calls is to offer an online frequently asked questions section with explicit instructions on how to address common issues.

Some other ways to make your business more “green” include:

- ▶ 1) Offering e-versions of payments:  
Instead of sending a stamp and an envelope, offer electronic payments online.
- ▶ 2) Digital delivery:  
Do some of your products sell over e-mail?  
Consider delivering PDFs or zipped files instead of sending a CD or printed copy.
- ▶ 3) Bundle your products:  
Offering bundled items to save on shipping

costs and to integrate complementary products for a better customer experience.

- ▶ 4) Convert your packaging to recycled materials:  
Choose sustainable and recyclable packing options.

- ▶ 5) Use effective phone services:  
For example, RingCentral offers a toll-free number, call forwarding, and voice messages as e-mail.

Consider scheduling phone conferences through a service like Skype or Webex to take advantage of web-based tools.

- ▶ 6) Handle postal mail digitally:  
For example, EarthClassMail.com gives you a postal address. They'll scan your snail mail, e-mail you a PDF version, ship you the original mail, and shred, recycle, or store your original piece.

- ▶ 7) Telecommute:  
Offer web-based training, online videos, and shared online workspaces so you cut down your company's carbon footprint. Reduce travel time for your staff and partners.

- ▶ 8) Share your commitment:  
On your marketing materials, make note of the fact that you are going green. Invite your partners, customers, and affiliates to do the same.
- ▶ 9) Purchase from other green companies:  
Set up ongoing green maintenance and supply and consciously support other green businesses in your community.
- ▶ 10) Partner locally with green and sustainable organizations:  
A nonprofit organization may be an excellent local partner for your efforts to benefit your community.
- ▶ 11) Work nationally to advance the green economy:  
Join with other green businesses to increase awareness of eco-friendly options.
- ▶ 12) Educate your customer.  
Many consumers make choices based on the company's values. Find more ways to promote green choices by sharing your sustainable actions with your customers.

Thousands of opportunities exist for us to “think sustainable” and still turn a profit. Be creative and get started with ways to tie your green efforts into your messaging and branding.

## **Step 28**

### **Automating Systems**

Your task as owner of a green business is to find a product and/or service and to “widgetize” it so it runs without your involvement. The classic example of this is royalties, where the creator has converted their creativity into an invention, song, book, film, play, publication, or other item from which they receive ongoing payments.

Find ways to fulfill processes in your business so that typical tasks becomes routine. In an ideal mass-production situation, you reduce “bottlenecks” by taking the burden of responsibility off any one individual’s involvement. By creating automated systems, you increase the ability for the business to create passive income.

For example, if you have an item that is an e-delivery type of product, such as an e-book or a software package, set up your system so that someone can pay for and download that item without external involvement. A download or a pay-for-access tool will assist with this setup.

As you define your business processes, you’ll organize and systematize your company so that

your process runs without relying on a specific person.

Those in management and business founders often think of themselves as essential to the process. However, the quickest way to increase your company's success is to **find a way to automate your systems and processes**. In the best situation, the founder works their direct, personal involvement out of the equation. With adequate systems in place, you allow staff to focus on their specific area of functionality and you allow time for fine-tuning the business process and expanding the “big picture” for the company.

Samples of automation:

- Convert to a service to store and release your digital properties.
- Find a distributor for your books and CD's.
- Convert your brochure website to a Drupal site with Ubercart to manage members-only content.
- Create a page that processes payments and sends a payment received notification back to “release” a members-only product.
- Convert your paper form and upgrade to a downloadable PDF. Better yet, convert the form to a web-based form that goes directly



to your customer relationship management system.

- ▶ Convert your mailing list to a version that offers an unsubscribe button or a “manage my subscriptions” page, instead of having all e-mail questions go through an administrator staff person.
- ▶ Offer a pay-by-phone option to process accounts.
- ▶ Offer a “drip” system to allow customers to choose which messages they wish to receive.
- ▶ Find a virtual assistant to handle all incoming schedule requests or ongoing research projects.
- ▶ Use a manufacturer and distributor to produce your patented invention in exchange for a royalty fee on each unit sold.

Whatever the option, constantly find places in your business process where the “flow” comes to a halt because of a bottleneck. Turn that stopping point into an automated system, which will save you money, free up staff time, and make your business more profitable. By factoring in more automation, you can focus your company’s efforts on developing new and better solutions and products.

## **Step 29**

### **Refining your Model**

Your task as the owner and founder of your business is to work your way out of your job. Find room for improvement. A company that is 100 years old can still find ways to innovate, create, refine, and reengineer. Create a legacy that persists beyond your active involvement by focusing on these new topics and processes.

The next step out of your business is your “exit strategy.” There are three major exit strategies: selling shares through an initial public offering, finding a new owner (includes employee stock ownership plans), or passing the business to the next generation. Each strategy has benefits and disadvantages, so do additional research on what works best for your company. Whichever exit strategy you envision, the best way to work yourself out of the equation is to create a green business made up of a mission, products, services, processes, and systems that do not depend on your personal enforcement.

Dedicate at least 10% of your budget to ongoing research and development. Use this time to fine-tune your model and identify new opportunities to broaden and strengthen your customer base.

## Section 8:

# Maintaining Course

- 30. Keeping a Focus on your Customers
- Sample Green Metrics
- Goal Setting
- Building your Team
- Thriving
- Old School versus New School
- Staying in Business
- Making Connections
- Five Final Principles

### *Thought Exercises:*

- ✓ How do you plan to grow the company?
- ✓ Which reports and metrics help you define your success?
- ✓ Who helps you strengthen your green business?

## **Step 30**

### **Keeping a Focus on your Customers**

Your customers will tell you what they need. Listen to them for more opportunities to improve your service, create new ways to help, and engage with your community.

When a customer (or potential customer) speaks about a typical problem they have, think of solutions. An idea from one unhappy customer may turn into a new product line. A suggestion from a happy customer may turn to an improved service offering. When you have dedicated staff participating in new product research, finding holes, errors, bugs, or problems, and soliciting suggestions for improvement, you build a company wide commitment to increasing your customer service.

Customer service makes the biggest difference for your business growth. Increase communication with exit surveys, customer suggestion boxes, an anonymous web form, a call-in number, a response team, or focus groups.

Understand how to make your customer's experience better. Receive the freshest perceptions by asking for feedback directly after a client completes their transaction with your company.

## **Sample Green Metrics**

### **Tracking your Green Efforts**

As a green company you abide by sustainability metrics to determine the overall company success. Track your metrics over time to understand the impact of your company's efforts. Samples include:

- Amount of waste produced weekly?
- Amount of recycled waste?
- Size of your facility in square feet
- What kinds of permits does the building hold?  
(e.g. Air Permit, Hazardous Materials, Wastewater, etc.)
- Shared building space with other tenants?
- Presence of parking? Public transport support?
- Landscaping and maintenance routine?
- Print/copier paper used?
- Eco-friendly cleaners used?
- Organic foods offered in the kitchen/cafeteria?
- Biodegradable utensils and plates offered?
- LEED certification for the building?
- Telecommute policy?
- Flex-time policies?

Proudly display these metrics and call them your “metrics for success.” Money is not the only way to define your company. You have an opportunity to define your green business success based on human and environmental factors, such as:

- Being a real resource to people who need your assistance
- Fostering a green mindset in your community
- Providing volunteer and charitable support for needy people in your own city
- Being able to support causes you care about
- Being able to donate to philanthropic and charitable organizations
- Reducing solid waste in your landfill
- Saving energy and being more efficient
- Being able to share your knowledge
- Quality time with family and friends
- Creating a change in the world based on the way you run your business
- Connecting your customers with each other

By increasing the variety and availability of these types of sustainability metrics, we have a way to measure how much we as individuals, companies, and communities are changing the world.

## **Goal Setting**

### **Setting Attainable Goals**

Goals exist to give you something to head toward. How do you make your goal realistic and achievable? Experts recommend you make SMART goals, which are:

- ▶ Specific
- ▶ Measurable
- ▶ Attainable
- ▶ Reasonable
- ▶ Timely

Is your goal specific enough? “Make more friends” is a fuzzy goal. “Take one new person out to lunch every month” is a specific goal.

Is your goal measurable? “Get healthy” is somewhat measurable, but “Go for a twenty-minute walk every day” is a measurable goal. So is “eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.”

Is your goal attainable? Sometimes the most impossible-sounding goals are the ones that move us and inspire us the most. Build your goal incrementally. Instead of declaring “I’ll have 1000

customers in six months” when you currently have none, consider building your list in stages: “I will build my mailing list to 100 committed people in the next three months. During month three, I will request each person to refer two other trusted individuals to me...” and so on, and so forth.

Is your goal reasonable? Your goal makes sense if you truly believe you can reach it. You want to aim high, but you don't want to give yourself the disappointment of not reaching a goal. Set a goal that seems reasonable and realistically achievable to you and make sure it keeps you inspired.

Does your goal have a timeframe? If you anticipate being a multimillionaire in the next ten years, create a schedule. By creating a plan with a timeline for achieving your status, you stay on target. Which benchmarks mark your progress? Define your “stopping points” on the pathway to your goal.

SMART goals get you to your destination. List your goals for your green business in your marketing materials. Commit to your goals in a public place. Ask for accountability and support in reaching your company's goals and encourage your staff, customers, and partners to join in your efforts.



## **Building your Team**

### **Finding the Right People**

Your green business requires deep thought about what you personally bring to the table and which other individuals help “fit” the company’s needs. Use these needs lists to create a job description for new personnel.

For example:

- ▶ You're a numbers person but you need a creative, artistic person on board.
- ▶ You're a social butterfly or marketing guru but you need help with product development, engineering, or packaging.
- ▶ You're a graphic designer but you're looking for an illustrator, printer, or web developer.

By making connections, fostering collaboration, and doing more as a group, we accomplish more than what we do as individuals.

Create an organizational “roles and responsibilities” chart in the very beginning of your planning process, so you identify who is needed to make your green business a success. Identify core

skills needed, as well as experience and personality attributes desired for each role.

- Who holds you accountable to staying “green” in your business practices?
- Who is your tax advisor?
- Who is your attorney if intellectual property is involved?
- Who’s your in-house mediator or ombudsman?
- Who is your project manager?
- Who keeps track of accounts and bookkeeping?

In the very beginning, there may be one person who fulfills all these roles. However, as the business grows, the staff flowchart of project management helps display the company’s needs. Offer a point person to be available from the customer's initial query to order fulfillment and tracking, to final feedback and the potential for repeat business.

As your company becomes more specialized, hire staff or find equity partners to fulfill specific roles. Your task is to develop the entrepreneurial mindset and do your best to plan the overall flow for your business.

Many startups narrowly focus on this month's cash flow issue or next month’s impending

deadlines. If your company has no long-term planning, build it into your ongoing schedule. If you're a green business, your planning process is even more important because many external factors impact your company such as government policies, legislation specific to green business, trends in consumer habits, and your competitors' tactics.

If you're in a position of leadership in your company, now is the time to consider how you plan to expand your abilities by creating a mastermind group with others who help you. Find other green business women in your area and network to identify who helps you grow personally and who helps you grow your green business.

To find a mastermind group, ask for referrals, or do a search for individuals who share your interest in green business development and sustainability. Work with a mastermind group for ongoing, built-in accountability and regular feedback. Establish an ongoing response and course correction mechanism to review how you accomplish each goal. You gain insight, knowledge and additional opportunities by meeting regularly with like-minded individuals.

We all deserve "a little help from our friends." As you achieve success, reach out to express gratitude to those who challenge you, and consider creating a new group to share your knowledge.

## **Thriving** **Strategies for Success**

It's time to relax a little bit, stop, and think. What is valuable to you? What do you find soothing, relaxing, energizing, entertaining, or engaging? What inspires you to be green? How do you share your respect and care for the planet with others in your community?

If you're interested in starting up your business, which unique green idea do you believe in? Is this belief strong enough and inspiring enough to build a new company around creating, distributing, and sharing your belief?

Delivering value is what your business is all about. As you build your green business, what unique experience, product, or service does your company offer that's valuable to your customers?

The more you create systems for your business, the more you sell, because your entire enterprise is no longer dependent on just a few people. As a green businessperson, you create valuable systems to deliver your goods. Convert your time and unique knowledge into a physical or digital item that makes the world more green and keeps your customer entertained, engaged, and effective.

“Big picture” work requires dreaming, thinking, believing, and envisioning. What does your successful green business look like, at a very detailed level? Use meditation or visualization to envision what makes you happy about participating in our global economy. What do you feel good about buying? What do you feel good about selling? Do these items contribute to the health and well-being of our planet? Use your green business to advance the cause.

As your business grows, you continue to work “on the business” as much as you work “in the business.” Just because you’re a good electrician, or baker, or child care provider, or gardener, does not mean that you automatically grow your electrician, or bakery, or child care, or gardening business into something beyond your personal self. Create a pathway to developing tools, content materials, or membership plans to sell to a wider audience. Your company’s “widget” sells regularly: it may be an instructional video, a recipe book, or a franchise. It may be as easy as a set of digital landscaping plans or as complex as a piece of heavy machinery. Your widget is anything that takes your team’s knowledge, experience, and skills, and distills these qualities into a reproducible, distributable format.

Figure out your underlying set of business metrics and think about how to increase your numbers. If you currently serve 10 people, what does it take for your company to serve 100? If your current market is 1,000 core customers, what will a marketplace of 10,000 customers find valuable?

Think like an entrepreneur. Understand what creates value to your customers, then create systems to serve more and more people with the same level of detail and attention offered to your company's individual client. You have a successful business model when your ideas convert to realities and your company's growth and ability to serve customers expands. By "keeping it green," your company's long-term sustainability ultimately benefits our planet.

What do you do to reach more people in your own business? There are many different solutions. Pick at least one answer and start fine-tuning it, measuring your numbers, improving your strategies and moving forward.

Remember to share your knowledge and experience with other green businesswomen in your community. Other interested entrepreneurs gain exposure from your lessons learned, setbacks, obstacles, and successes.

# Old School versus New School

## Finding Green Alternatives

Here are additional ideas to think about when you're "retooling" your business to be more sustainable, more "green," and more environmentally friendly.

Old School Process	New School Idea
Disposable plastic bags	Reusable bags made from recycled plastic bottles: <a href="http://www.520nmbags.com">http://www.520nmbags.com</a>
Land line and fax	Toll free number with voice message to e-mail + e-fax <a href="http://www.ringcentral.com">http://www.ringcentral.com</a>
Press packet	Twitter <a href="http://www.twitter.com">http://www.twitter.com</a>
Chamber meetings	Social media conferences <a href="http://www.socialmediacub.org/">http://www.socialmediacub.org/</a>
Bond paper	100% recycled paper + e-documents
Paper	PDF <a href="http://get.adobe.com/reader/">http://get.adobe.com/reader/</a>
In-person meetings	Webex <a href="http://www.webex.com">http://www.webex.com</a>

Old School Process	New School Idea
Document sharing with physical files	Document sharing online <a href="http://docs.google.com">http://docs.google.com</a>
Snail mail	Digital mail <a href="http://www.earthclassmail.com">http://www.earthclassmail.com</a>
Commuting	Telecommuting
Reference books	Google <a href="http://www.google.com">http://www.google.com</a>
Plastic utensils and Styrofoam cups	Biodegradable supplies <a href="http://styrophobia.com/">http://styrophobia.com/</a>
Eastern/ Central/ Mountain/ Pacific	24/7 <a href="http://www.timeanddate.com">http://www.timeanddate.com</a>
Catalog shopping	Online shopping Eliminate unwated paper catalogs: <a href="http://www.catalogchoice.org/">http://www.catalogchoice.org/</a>
Checks in the mail	E-payment options <a href="http://www.paypal.com">http://www.paypal.com</a> <a href="http://checkout.google.com">http://checkout.google.com</a>



Old School Process	New School Idea
Large publishing houses or large record companies	Independent artists and authors releasing self-published books, DVDs, mp3s and online communities <a href="http://www.createspace.com">http://www.createspace.com</a>
Bookstores	Kindle <a href="http://www.kindle.com">http://www.kindle.com</a>
Credit	Barter <a href="http://www.businesshelpingbusiness.com">http://www.businesshelpingbusiness.com</a>
Shipping overseas	Shopping local
High interest rates	Social Lending: <a href="http://www.prosper.com">http://www.prosper.com</a>
Outside entertainment	Creating your own entertainment <a href="http://www.youtube.com">http://www.youtube.com</a>
Big Box	Local, mom-and-pop, family owned, nearby vendors
Lawsuits	Mediation
Conflict diamonds	Conflict-free, sustainable, and ethical <a href="http://www.c5company.com">http://www.c5company.com</a>
Hoarding	Sharing <a href="http://www.lendaround.com">http://www.lendaround.com</a>

Old School Process	New School Idea
Single use, disposable	Freecycling <a href="http://www.freecycle.org/">http://www.freecycle.org/</a>
Straight to the landfill	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
Buy it	Make it
Paper plates, plastic sporks	Bamboo trays, cloth napkins and metal cutlery
Brick and mortar businesses with high startup costs	Work at home on the internet with low startup costs
Journaling	Blogging <a href="http://www.posterous.com">http://www.posterous.com</a> <a href="http://www.tumblr.com">http://www.tumblr.com</a> <a href="http://www.wordpress.org">http://www.wordpress.org</a>
Long hours, no falling asleep on the job, give us everything	Automated systems, naps when needed, work-life balance
Monocrop agribusiness	Local organic farmer's market
Hidden GMO	Labeled and researched GMO products

Old School Process	New School Idea
Milk chocolate	Single-origin, fair trade dark chocolate
Commercial coffee from the store	Home-roasted, organic, farmer's gate <a href="http://www.sweetmarias.com">http://www.sweetmarias.com</a>
Trade secrets	Transparency
Proprietary	Open-source
Only a few Industry experts	You are an expert in your niche market <a href="http://www.helpareporterout.com">http://www.helpareporterout.com</a>
Members-only	Facebook Connect <a href="http://www.facebook.com">http://www.facebook.com</a>
Mass-produced	Unique, handmade, artisanal, limited edition
Plastic	Non-petroleum-based products
Single owner	Employee-owned, equity partnerships, cooperative arrangements
Bottom line	Triple bottom line
Insular behavior	Community engagement

## **Staying in Business**

### **Envision your Success**

As you promote your company, establish guidelines to navigate between the personal parts of your involvement with the company and the company's structure as its own entity. Incorporate these ideas into your company policies:

#### **1) Share yourself.**

Through your business, you and your team fulfill the statement "Work is love made visible" by Kahlil Gibran. You share your work with others who truly benefit from your knowledge and skill. Approach your networking and outreach with this spirit of cooperation by reaching out and working with others. Share freely of your gifts: you'll find many opportunities returning to you.

#### **2) Your journey begins with your first step.**

Going into business might be overwhelming because of the myriad of details and all the ongoing tasks needed, especially during the startup phase. It's important to move forward.

Get help when needed, and learn early how to delegate. A key component of your business success is simply to get started. After that, all that remains is for your team to take the next step, then the next

step, then the step after that. Invite others to join you on your path. Tasks get accomplished quicker when you find the right people to participate.

### **3) Your values live in your business.**

What do you value? What do you place on your “About” page for your website or brochure? What do you look back at with nostalgia when you compile your tenth anniversary package or your fiftieth anniversary memorabilia? Your values infuse your company’s overall plan, purpose, and ongoing reason for existence.

Many successful women mention how important it is to use their business endeavors to fulfill their values. For example, some companies invest in women's entrepreneurship by micro-lending through Kiva.org, a program which increases women entrepreneurs around the world.

Increase your social and environmental responsibility by recruiting partners and customers. Let’s envision a safe, clean, prosperous future for all of us on the planet. Lean on your values to get you through your startup phase and into your growth phase.

### **4) You have the opportunity to reach out.**

Because of your business networking and because of the types of people that your company

serves, you expand your personal reach and you communicate with, connect with, and inspire many individuals locally, statewide, nationally, and around the globe. You can touch others both online, through mass media, and in person, so prepare your company and yourself with your best ways to interact.

Consider how your products and services impact the planet by literally making a list. Your list includes the company values and mission statement, as well as a list of green “metrics” that demonstrate how you are going green. Use this list to attract other customers interested in the same mission, vision, and values.

Encourage your customers to consider the net effect of their purchase with you, not only in cost but also in long-term effects. Consumers feel good about supporting green values through purchases. Share stories about your sustainability policies.

### **5) Keep hope always in your heart.**

Many businesses fail by their second year because of cash flow issues. The big challenges to startups include cash flow, growth, and the need to develop systems to make the company run smoothly. Reach out to others who help you. You can create a successful green business, and you do create a successful green business.

## **Five Final Principles**

### **Succeed with your Green Business**

Grow your green business into a thriving, profitable, and valuable member of our community of green companies by following these principles:

#### **1) Responsiveness**

Be available. Respond to feedback. When someone posts a thoughtful comment about your products, thank them on your own blog, and invite more feedback. When someone reviews your product or service, link to them with followup. When someone posts a negative critique, participate in the discussion.

Always identify ways to invite more customer feedback. Do as much as possible to respond to your clients in a timely fashion.

#### **2) Collaboration**

Prominently post ways to share and collaborate with others around your company's mission. Your people, including your staff, partners, and customers, want you to succeed, so build your community of clients around your stated mission.

Be consistent about inviting people to participate. For example, make sure your marketing

message engages, interests, and pulls in your visitors. Talk about the "story behind the story" when mentioning your startup process. Use a "hook" phrase to remind people about your green business. On your website and in person, identify a "call to action" to help customers get involved. Post events like seminars and panels where your company has a presence. Identify additional creative ways to meet directly with your customers.

### **3) Connection**

Strive for authenticity. As you engage with customers, be as honest as possible. Share your feelings about your product and service lines. Talk about the need for your company. People resonate with your message when you stay true to your vision and values. Identify what you want to talk about, stay on topic, and invite your customers to share their own opinions.

Remember to express gratitude often, in print and in interviews. Share as much time, treasure, and talent as possible with your community-based partners.

### **4) Sustainability**

Maintain a focus on greening your company. Avoid "greenwashing" and keep ongoing records about your company's green purchases, solid waste



production, energy efficiency, and conversion to recycled and biodegradable materials.

Publish a “sustainability report card” with green metrics to hold your company accountable to owners, staff, customers, and interested parties.

### **5) Flexibility**

Prepare for the times ahead. New industries rise out of new knowledge and opportunities. To prepare for your company's evolution, use a flexible approach. A product today may be obsolete tomorrow. Yesterday's necessary service might be outdated by next year. Companies that survive and thrive always consider their next steps.

Anticipate trends. By building flexibility into your ongoing product and service development, your company remains ahead of the curve and continues to integrate new information into existing business practices.

Build principles of responsiveness, collaboration, connection, sustainability, and flexibility into your company's ongoing structure and your business will thrive. Add on other important principles that you've identified. Your company brings a unique contribution to the marketplace. Own it, live it, and share it!

## **Making Connections**

### **Meet with Green Business Women**

Connect with us by searching for “A Successful Woman” online.

#### **Green Business Women**

<http://www.greenbusinesswomen.com>

<http://www.womenonbusiness.com>

<http://www.asuccessfulwoman.com>

<http://www.thegreengirls.com>

#### **News Alerts**

<http://www.google.com/alerts>

(to set up an alert specific to your interest)

#### **Content Management Systems**

<http://www.drupal.org>

<http://www.joomla.org>

<http://www.wordpress.org>

#### **Domains and Hosting**

<http://www.nexcess.net>

<http://www.10khosting.com>

<http://www.godaddy.com>

## **How is My Company Green?**

Company Name:

Green certifications, if any:

Mission:

Vision:

Values:

## **Sustainability Report Card**

Green Metric #1:

Green Metric #2:

Green Metric #3:

Green Metric #4:

Green Metric #5:



