

## So You Want to Start a Business?

Okay, it's the start of a new year and perhaps you've decided this is the year you are going to do it. Start a business that is. You've had enough of being a slave to a 9 - 5 job and you're ready to strike out on your own. Well, you aren't alone. Some of the research I've seen says about 72 million Americans are dreaming about starting their own businesses. No more office politics or unreasonable bosses to put up with. How great is that?

So you chuck the job and the steady paycheck and voila - you're ready to rock and roll. You wake up the next morning with no more corporate safety net. Do you have the right stuff to survive the culture shock of being your own boss?

When you work for someone else, typically, you never have to worry about whether or not there's toilet paper in the office restroom. As an entrepreneur, you do. I remember when my husband took an early retirement package and started looking around for another position. He drafted his resume (something he hadn't done for years) and handed it to me to type. I did it once. Then I told him in no uncertain terms that I wasn't going to be his secretary and I proceeded to teach him Microsoft Word. He had been a high level executive with a Fortune 100 company and he wasn't use to doing administrative tasks himself. But when you become an entrepreneur you do it all. You are the sales force, the marketing

department, human resources, the receptionist, the accountant and the janitor. That's why a lot of corporate dropouts and entrepreneurial dreamers have difficulty adjusting.

So if you've resolved to go it on your own, here are some tips to help you make a smooth transition.

*Don't go cold turkey.* Make sure you have a plan about how you are going to manage your new business venture before you jump ship. You should consider starting your business on a part-time basis before you leave your job.

*Understand Your Motives.* Are you running away from a job or are you really following a passion? Many people erroneously believe that being in business for yourself means having more scheduling flexibility. The truth is that you'll work harder and longer than you have ever worked before so you better truly love what you do.

*Test Your Idea.* Too often would-be entrepreneurs dream up what they consider to be great business ideas only to find out there's no market for their product or service.

*Do your homework.* Make sure you know how and to whom you'll be able to market your business.

*Don't Bet the Family Farm.* If you have been working in corporate America for a while you have most

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