



Profitable Start Ups
*Helping you Build a Profitable
Home Based Business!*

Table of Contents

PROFITABLE STARTUPS INTRODUCTION 3

HOME BASED CLEANING SERVICE 5

CAKE DECORATING BUSINESS 12

BOOKKEEPING BUSINESS SERVICE 23

DAYCARE SERVICE 26

PET SITTING SERVICE..... 29

HAIR AND NAIL SPECIALIST 32

MEDICAL BILLING SERVICE 36

GIFT BASKET BUSINESS..... 41

MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTION SERVICE..... 46

WHOLESALE AND AUCTION BUSINESS..... 51

Profitable Startups Introduction

Starting a home-based business is an exciting and rewarding adventure. No longer must you deal with inner office politics, work hard to please a boss or stay in line with co-workers. And never again will you have to suffer the long commute, as you'll wake up in your place of business!

But there's a more important reason to consider developing your very own home based business.

With the shaky economy and thousands of people out of jobs without notice, creating your home-based business can provide you with the stability you've been searching for.

You will be in control of your own financial future, be able to make decisions for yourself and spend time building a business that can withstand economical changes, as well as the test of time.

For many, building a home-based business remains a far fetched dream, as they believe that it's not only costly, but a risky endeavor.

The truth is however, that if you focus on building a business within an evergreen market, where customers will consistently purchase your goods and services despite economical changes, you will never have to worry about whether your business has what it takes to survive.

Imagine the possibilities of being able to dedicate yourself to building a profitable business. Every hour you put into it goes towards solidifying an asset that belongs entirely to you.

No more late night shifts where you're barely able to pay the bills, and never again will you be working to build someone else's financial future, but instead, you'll be focused on working for the one person who truly matters - yourself!

The "Profitable Startups" guide is a comprehensive handbook featuring some of the easiest and most affordable home based business start-ups.

While there are a multitude of high-end franchises and expensive storefront options, this guide focuses only on the easiest and most cost effective home based startups that you can explore, even on a shoestring budget.

So without further delay, let's get started!

Home Based Cleaning Service

Starting a home based cleaning service is not only affordable, but requires very little set up time, as you can develop a series of services for your local area, purchase supplies and set up shop in a matter of a few short weeks.

With busy parents struggling to keep their homes tidy, to the elderly who need a bit of extra help around the house and garden, you could easily tap into an ever growing market right in your local area.

In regards to the legalities of starting a home based cleaning business, you'll want to consider getting licensed and properly bonded. This provides customers with assurance that you are a professional, and will provide them with the protection they need. After all, odds are that you'll be in their homes while they aren't present.

You also have two primary options when setting up your home based cleaning service. You can choose to cater exclusively to residential areas or include commercial properties in your marketing message.

Keep in mind that in order to service commercial areas you will require bonding and additional insurance (along with licensing depending on your local area, as well as individual commercial requirements including security clearances and personal security checks).

The commercial arena is usually far more competitive than residential with larger cleaning services catering to businesses, so you might want to consider targeting residential areas first, and later when you've gained experience, expanding your service to include businesses and retail outlets.

The equipment needed for a home based cleaning service will vary, depending on the types of services you are willing to provide.

You will need an industry grade vacuum cleaner, dust clothes, mops and cleaning clothes to get started, but you should also consider the different types of polishes and cleaners available to you.

Many people aren't fond of strong, scented cleaners being used in their homes due to how abrasive these cleaners are on furniture, but another thing to keep in mind is whether there are people with allergies in the home.

An alternative is to purchase "green" cleaners that are both effective at cleaning even the toughest spots, but also environmentally friendly to both pets and animals.

You can also use this to your advantage via your marketing message as well, by highlighting the fact that you only work with all natural, toxin free cleaners, so potential clients are given extra incentive to hire you.

As for your service list, you could start off with a basic service listing that includes common cleaning services such as:

- ✓ Washing Floors, Sweeping
- ✓ Dusting
- ✓ Washing Windows
- ✓ Replacing light bulbs
- ✓ Washing Walls
- ✓ Vacuuming

- ✓ Waxing Floors
- ✓ Cleaning specific rooms (bathrooms, attics, organizing, removing trash, etc)

And you can later extend your services to include all of the little things like laundry, dishes, making beds and even a bit of yard work.

One of the most important aspects of developing a home-based cleaning business involves careful planning.

You want to write down your ideas, including the types of services you are interested in offering and thoroughly evaluate all options, including how much time it will take per household to fulfill your obligations.

Since it's likely that you will start out on your own without the help of a team, you will want to be careful with the number of clients you take on, so that you can spend the needed time on each clients home without ending up overwhelmed.

As someone who has operated a home based cleaning service for many years, I recommend taking on 2-4 clients, getting a feel for what the business involves and then slowly grow your business to include additional clients.

It's important that each client is fully satisfied so that they refer other people to you, and you want to be able to retain your clients over a long period of time, so give each client the attention they deserve and take it one day at a time!

As your business grows, you can then expand your service offer as well as consider hiring help, creating a professional home cleaning team for your local area that offers a wide variety of services at affordable rates.

It's also important to spend time evaluating existing competition, so that you are able to determine what price range is acceptable, so you can stay competitive.

Depending on the level of competition in your area, you can expect to earn up to \$50 per hour based on the services you provide and the number of clients you take on.

You can also offer to clean homes on a "per project" basis, where your clients pay a weekly fee for a series of cleaning options, or for larger homes, you could charge on an hourly basis, billing clients each week for services rendered.

Tip: When evaluating your price structure, make sure to calculate the costs of cleaners and supplies, as well as the cost to travel to each clients residence!

In order to properly manage your business, you will want to purchase a home computer along with a database and invoice program such as Excel.

This way, you can keep on top of what each client is interested in, as well as develop an organized system and schedule to help you stay focused. Your clients will expect to receive an invoice and a receipt for your cleaning services so make sure to purchase paper stock, a printer, ink, and a program to help you create and maintain invoices for future reference.

One of the best ways of to build a successful home based cleaning service is to choose a specific niche market and cater to it. For example, there are different categories of clients involved in offering residential cleaning, including:

Senior homes

Family homes

Single person homes (bachelors, etc)

Daycares

Creating your cleaning business so it's tailored towards a specific segment of the market will help you gain the necessary experience while being able to effectively target your customer base. Then, you can expand your outreach once your business is up and running.

When advertising your business, consider contacting local apartment buildings, senior care facilities, as well as placing classified ads in your local newspaper. You could also contact day care services, and anywhere else that you can think of that would require regular cleaning services.

Consider printing business cards and distributing them everywhere you go. From local gas stops, shopping malls, hair salons to restaurants, you can effectively get your message out without spending a lot of money in advertising.

You should also print out half page advertisements rather than just business cards and post your flyers throughout your neighborhood. You could consider hiring a couple of teenagers to distribute your marketing message by posting them on signs, public service boards, on car windshields and on bulletin boards.

Take a grassroots approach to marketing your business and you'll be able to build a solid client base while saving a lot of money along the way!

You should also consider listing your new business in the local yellow pages and other business directories that will help maximize exposure and build a client list.

If you have the marketing budget, you could purchase air time via your local radio station, or take out an advertisement in your classifieds (which is often more affordable).

Make sure to highlight the benefits of your cleaning service as well as provide a direct contact line so potential clients can easily contact you with questions. Your ad doesn't have to include a listing of all of your service options but instead, the most important (and popular) ones.

Do not include your rates within your advertisements!

Let people call you to discuss what they need and base your prices on a per-client basis, as each home will be different and every client will require different services.

The cleaning service isn't a "one size fits all" business, and you need to communicate your message to potential clients that you are willing to create an affordable cleaning service plan, just for them!

Last minute tips:

Contact your local Chamber of Commerce for licensing information regarding your home based cleaning business. You should be able to get started with a simple business registration, which can cost anywhere between \$50-\$120 per year.

Shop at wholesale distributors like Costco, as well as janitorial supply centers so that you can save money by purchasing cleaners and supplies in bulk. Keep an eye on weekly flyers, looking for discounts and savings wherever you can!

While being "bonded" isn't usually required for residential cleaning, if you plan to

include commercial buildings in your cleaning service, you will want to become registered and bonded.

Contact your local business center for information on how to proceed as well as overall costs involved. You want to leave yourself plenty of time to take care of everything before launching your new cleaning service to the public!

Purchase a cell phone and pager (unless your cell phone has texting service) and include the number on your business cards and flyers so that interested parties can contact you quickly. You want to make it as easy as possible so that you can cater to busy families and professionals.

Set up a voice mail system to collect calls when you are not available, and return calls promptly, even if you are full and are not accepting new clients, you should still follow up with everyone who calls, offering to place them on your waiting list. It's a great way to secure clients for when your business expands!

Spend time creating a quote spreadsheet that can be easily adjusted based on a client's requests and preferences.

You want to include your business name, contact information, and service outline when submitting bids for client work. Attach a business card to your quote sheet when distributing to potential clients.

Cake Decorating Business

The cost of starting your own cake decorating business is a lot less than you might think, especially when compared to more traditional brick and mortar businesses. Since your first step should be to create a service from your home you can save on overhead costs, such as rental space, larger equipment and of course, staff.

To start your business from home you will just need the essentials including basic equipment, baking supplies and of course elbow room! You should also designate an area that you use for your baking supplies.

Extra storage space goes a long way in this business, believe me!

How should you begin?

My first step was decorating birthday cakes for families in my community. I placed a few ads in the local classified and put up some bulletins on the shopping mall entrance boards.

Within a few days I had calls from potential clients, and within a week I had over 11 orders. I catered to baby and bridal showers as well.

These cakes will be the main source of your income at first, however as you grow and take on the wedding industry you will see your business really soar!

Personally I focused on birthday cakes at first, until I honed and improved my skills.

While every cake is very important wedding cakes tend to be the center point of the event, since it is a very large part of the reception process. In addition, wedding cakes are highly photographed especially as the newlyweds cut into it.

For this reason I treaded carefully and only focused on wedding events after I had been in business for a couple of months.

As a cake decorator you must realize your responsibilities are enormous.

If you are confident in your craft, I encourage you to accept wedding clients right from the start, however if you aren't, do as I did and start off catering to smaller events because once word gets out that people enjoy your cakes, you will be stunned at how many orders you will receive!

Please don't be intimidated by the importance of a wedding cake. Every single baker in our situation is nervous as heck at first. I can't tell you how many cakes I destroyed attempting to get it perfect the first few times.

Skill comes with time and if you believe in yourself and your abilities, you will develop a style that is unique and just as good as some of the most world renowned in the industry.

In addition if practice makes perfect, you will have lots of that soon enough! =>

Without a doubt there is a huge market for beautifully decorated cakes however in the early phase of your career you will be required to do a great deal of self advertising.

This can be time consuming and in some cases, you might get bored of the

repetitive aspect of it all but once this footwork has been done, it will be so much easier to continually market yourself.

Developing your own brand (and reputation) is the first step in introducing your new service to your community.

A good promotional strategy will help you focus on your current market, get the most out of your advertising efforts and ensure that a consistent, high quality image is maintained.

You want to get the word out quickly and as affordably as possible while ensuring you are still effectively targeting your potential customers properly, right?

Perhaps you have heard that marketing your product is the key to success in any business, cakes or otherwise.

So, to create the best advertising campaigns that you can you have to put yourself in the shoes of the customer you are targeting. This is the very fundamental of marketing regardless of what industry you are in.

You must ask yourself a few important questions such as:

Why would a customer come to me and not a competitor? What am I offering that is unique?

What discounts, coupons, special incentives can I offer my potential customers to jump start my business by having them give me a chance, rather than continuing to go to the local bakery?

How can I stand out? What can I do differently that a customer would appreciate? (faster turn around times perhaps, free birthday card package if it's a birthday cake you are decorating, etc).

Your promotional package should highlight the benefits of using your service, and showcase why you are different. You have to stand out in order to gain as many new customers as possible.

Simple things can make a huge impact on how your customers view you. As suggested above, if you are decorating a birthday cake, throwing in a free package of candles or a bag of balloons is low cost but different.

Put your own personal touch on your packages and you will see incredible results.

I took the “grass route” method when marketing my business because I didn't have a huge advertising budget to work with.

I had to be innovative and figure out how to reach as many people as possible the most affordable way that I could. It would have been far easier if I had the ability to broadcast on the radio, or set up ads on our local community channel but in my case, that wasn't possible when I first started.

Since I had such a restricted budget I paid particular attention to **every single method** I used to ensure that I didn't waste resources on the things that weren't really yielding any new sales.

Here are some of the ways that I advertised my cake decorating business.

Local Newspaper Advertisements

It cost me \$40 to run an ad for two months in my local newspaper. I then branched out to cover newspapers in other communities because my ad was so effective that I was then generating revenue from my decorating business to cover the cost of additional ads.

The first step is to create a list of every newspaper in your area (and surrounding areas if you are in a smaller city or town).

Find out if they have a website if possible because if so, it makes the process even easier and faster.

Once you have your list, find out what their ad prices are. Target the ones that are more affordable at first, because even though they may have a smaller readership, you can see how effective your ads are (and if they need tweaking) without spending a lot of money.

When you advertise choose the longest available campaign that you can to make sure it runs (and it seen) by as many people as possible.

One ad, one time will not yield nearly as much as if people see your ad multiple times, a proven strategy that Internet marketing gurus have tested throughout the years. In fact, they say it takes the average person four times viewing an ad before they remember it.

My Ads Went Zoom Zoom

I know it might sound tacky but because I was on a shoestring budget I decided

to try out the car magnet idea. It worked like a charm and didn't cost me that much at all.

Just make sure that you have a website before you try this technique because people will NOT remember your phone number. They are far more likely to remember your website address instead.

The company I used was Iprint, and their website is available at <http://www.iprint.com/>

Refrigerator Magnets

Turn your business card into a refrigerator magnet.

The magnets can be given to each customer when they pick up their cake (along with other "plain" business cards to give to the guests at their party).

See: <http://www.4imprint.com>

Bridal Gown and Tux Shops

Visit bridal gown and tuxedo shops in your area and request permission to display your business cards on their counter top or bulletin board. Purchase inexpensive, clear cardholders in which to display your cards.

Ask the shop owner for permission to display a beautifully decorated dummy wedding cake in their store.

Other Wedding Vendors

Speak to the owners of other shops in your area that cater to the wedding and special events industry.

Ask about placing your business cards in a prominent location in their shops and possibly creating a display similar to the one described above, using their items along with a bridal cake. Also ask about collaborative advertising in the newspaper.

Other businesses to consider include hair salons, nail salons, day spas, jewelry stores, etc.

Other Places for Cards and Displays

Below are other businesses and groups that you might consider asking for permission to display business cards:

Children's party places and hosted events

Sports Events

Craft Stores

Daycare Providers

Beauty Salons (I got a lot of business from these)

Baby stores (baby showers always have cake!)

Lingerie Shops (or anywhere else that brides-to-be go)

Just remember there is no shop that has customers that won't need your services.

If you are a baker regularly you probably already have most of these baking tools in your kitchen, however if you don't, rest assured that most of the baking supplies are relatively inexpensive, and some of them can be purchased at a

later date whenever you receive a custom order that requires them since otherwise they aren't used that often.

Here are the tools that I made sure I had when I started my cake decorating business.

A heavy-duty mixer is a must. This will quickly become your new best friend. It's an essential piece of equipment for the cake decorator and something you can not avoid buying.

The Kitchen Aid 5 quart Artisan stand mixer is perfect for the job. They are not cheap however they will save you a lot of time, so it's well worth the investment. If you shop around you can usually find them on sale, so be sure to hunt down a bargain for this item before you buy one.

Cake Turntable

Sturdy turntables are a necessity. There are several styles and designs available for the sugar artist.

From the basic small plastic version, to a reversible one side rectangular and the other side round with an elevation of about 6 inches, to the motorized elevated turntable. There are many sizes, designs and prices to choose from.

A better quality turntable is best since that way when you get into heavier tiered cakes you will not have to purchase a new turntable.

Baking Pans

Good quality basic shaped pans.

As you are acquiring your equipment buy the best quality pans you can afford.

Buying good pans does make a difference. Don't buy the bargain versions if you plan on using them for a long time. Multiple sets of the basic shape pans will allow you to bake in a shorter amount of time. One 14" pan must cool after baking before you can wash it, refill it and bake again.

Note: Measure the inside of your oven before buying the larger size pans. The other shapes such as hexagon, square, rectangular and etc. are not requested as often in the wedding cake business so I only keep 2 sets of each of those.

Versatile Shaped Pans - The ball, petite doll pan, horseshoe, and others can be used for many things. The ball pan can be used for all kinds of balls, soccer, basketball, baseballs, and etc.

Half of the ball pan can be used for a baseball cap, a domed top on a building, or maybe even rounded top on a wedding cake. That little pan is very versatile.

Make sure the pans you purchase have 90-degree sides and corners. If you will be doing cheesecakes, purchase pans with removable sides.

Cooling racks

Large heavy duty cooling racks are a necessity.

Separators

As your business grows and you start to create wedding cakes you will need separators.

Choose wisely in deciding on the type of separators you want to use. The most stable of set ups is the type that the legs go through the cake and rest on the plate below. Again storage space is important along with the look you want.

Angled spatula - For applying and smoothing icing.

Piping (or pastry) bags –

For creating borders and other decorations.

Couviars - For changing tips easily.

Digital Camera

A really good camera. Learn to take really good close up pictures of your cakes. When you are trying to establish yourself in your community as a sugar artist these pictures will show your customers just what you can do.

Other Items to remember:

Greaseproof paper

Tissue paper

Foil

Icing scraper or comb

Icing ruler or comb

Serrated knife

Decoration for top of cake

Pillars (if required)

When you are really ready to make a go of cake decorating as a business, you need to determine exactly what you can afford to invest and stay within your

budget.

Typically the biggest investment you will need to make is in an electric mixer.

Once you complete your research and purchase a mixer, you will probably also realize that there are a host of other wonderful items that could be used in your decorating business.

When getting started with a cake decorating business, there are so many things to remember and so many documents to keep track of. Be sure to set aside space in your house in addition to your kitchen, specifically for the business.

The tax advantages may be significant when operating a home Office. A cake decorating business really isn't the kind of business that requires a storefront, at least in the early stages. As you grow, you may want to consider that route.

A home office does not have to be glamorous, but it does need to be exclusively used for business and it does need to be comfortable.

Bookkeeping Business Service

With a bookkeeping business, you'll have no shortage of potential clients as so many people dislike bookkeeping and are willing to hire a professional to take care of it for them.

Better yet, bookkeeping services are always in demand, even in a shaky economy, as businesses require additional help managing their finances and evaluating budgets.

Successful bookkeepers need to be reliable, precise, thorough and willing to review their work for accuracy. Your clients will depend on you and so you'll need to be willing to commit yourself to fulfilling your obligations, and in taking great care to handle their business and personal bookkeeping with the upmost professionalism.

In order to set up a home based bookkeeping service, you will need to be experienced in accounting and utilizing spreadsheet software, so this business is best suited for those who have had previous experience working in financial and accounting departments for companies or employers.

If you don't have the experience needed, you could consider taking a short-term accounting course through your local community college. You could also take a distance training course from home through online colleges and training facilities to gain the knowledge and experience needed to run a successful bookkeeping business.

I recommend purchasing "QuickBooks Pro" (retail \$200-\$240) which is the most popular accounting software on the market today and also the easiest to use,

even if you have no experience bookkeeping.

The overall profits of a bookkeeping service is absolutely phenomenal as your start up costs and business operation costs are minimal once you have the software and management tools that you need. You can expect to earn anywhere between \$30-\$50 per hour based on the services you offer and the types of clients you accept.

In order to determine your price structure, you will want to evaluate existing bookkeeping services in your area, as well as the level of work you do, ranging from basic book keeping to extensive preparation of financial statements and business accounts.

Bookkeepers often include tax returns in their service listing each year as a way of making extra money on a seasonal basis.

A great way to get started in bookkeeping is by targeting brand new businesses. There are over 500,000 new start-ups each year within the United States alone and many of these people require help in managing and maintaining their business records, because they are new to the world of commerce!

Consider targeting these start-up businesses by offering them an overview of the services you offer, along with your business card.

If you have experience and training, you will want to highlight that on your service sheet by attaching an "Credentials" page to the pamphlet.

A home-based bookkeeping business carries a very low start up cost. In fact, you can build your business for less than \$1,000, and if you already own a personal

computer and accounting software, your costs are tremendously cut down even more!

In fact, all you will really need is a business registration unless you intend to do business using your own name.

Other benefits of a home-based bookkeeping business include:

- No zoning requirements

Since you will be completing your work from your home office, there is no traffic to and from your home, eliminating the need for business zoning or licensing.

- No Special Equipment Needed

Other than a personal PC, accounting software and a fax machine, there is little involved or needed in starting a home based bookkeeping service.

- Work On The Side

Many bookkeepers start their business to supplement their existing income, and since you can set your own hours and take on only a few clients, this business is something you can do while keeping your full time job.

- No Inventory

You never have to purchase, manage or maintain inventory reducing your expenses and eliminating overhead!

Daycare Service

If you enjoy children and have the patience and creativity needed, a home based childcare and day care service might be the perfect business for you!

Child care providers play an important role in the lives of busy parents who need a reliable and honest person to care for their children while they are working or away. If you can demonstrate your ability to properly care for children, you'll find it very easy to build your client base with little advertising involved.

The first step is to take a good look around your home. Are you prepared to make significant changes in order to accommodate room for playtime as well as to ensure that the environment is safe?

When it comes to parents evaluating a childcare provider for their children, one of their greatest concerns is whether their children will be adequately cared for while being free to roam and play without potential danger.

You will also need to secure a business license in order to watch children in your home and in certain areas, you may also be required to complete a background check in order to demonstrate that you are a responsible person who is able to care for small children.

One of the most decisions you'll make will be in choosing the age demographic for your childcare service. It's always best to focus on a specific age group rather than accept children of all different ages so that you can develop a routine and schedule that effectively accommodates the needs of children in a specific age group.

For example, caring for toddlers requires a great deal more effort and energy than caring for pre-teens who don't require as much room to play.

Furthermore, the age demographic will also play a factor in the number of children you can adequately care for, with younger children requiring more attention and monitoring than older children.

The start up costs associated with running a daycare service is minimal.

Apart from safety precautions, you will only need to purchase supplies to keep children occupied, as well as develop a healthy meal plan and daily snacks. It's important that you demonstrate your commitment to providing a safe and fun environment for children by developing an activity schedule that provides the fundamental building blocks that helps prepare children for school, as well as to bolster their creativity.

It's important to parents that their children are able to learn throughout the day, to get exercise and fresh air rather than being kept indoors watching television, so the more you focus on developing an activity schedule that offers them the opportunity to evaluate what their children will be doing from day to day, and the more enjoyable you make their time with you, the easier it will be to retain long term clients who know that their children are in good hands!

The cost of supplies should be factored into your daily rates, and to accommodate short-term daycare sessions, you should create a price plan that caters to parents who require day-to-day childcare as well as parents who only need childcare every so often.

You need to be reasonable with the number of children that you can adequately care for and again, pay special attention to age groups. It's often easier to care for a larger number of children who are close in age than to care for children whose ages are very different.

You also want to check in with any local regulations that restrict the number of children that you are allowed to care for at any given time, and make sure that your home can handle the number of children that you are considering caring for.

Consider hiring a helper or assistant who can take over when you need to step out. This is very important if you plan on caring for a larger number of children.

You could also consider developing an after-school program where you can pick up children from school and care for them until their parents are home from work.

This is a very high demand service and if you are able to demonstrate your ability and commitment to properly care for children, you will find it very easy to secure enough clients to go forward with your business.

Resources:

<http://www.childcarelaw.org/index2.shtml>

<http://www.nafcc.org/include/default.asp>

<http://www.naccp.org/>

<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/>

Pet Sitting Service

Pet owners are a great market to cater to because they're willing to do just about anything to make sure that their pets are adequately cared for.

Going out of town? They need a pet sitter to attend to their beloved friend, and a home based pet sitting business is often more appealing than dropping their pet off at a kennel where their pet is often boarded without personal care or exercise, while being crowded in with other animals for days on end.

So, how can you start a successful pet sitting home-based business?

It's easy! If you have a love of furry creatures and you don't mind long walks, a dog sitting business might be your true calling.

When creating a pet sitting business, you can choose to offer "in house" sitting where you visit your clients home and care for their animals while they are away at work or on a trip, or you can offer to care for their pets at your own home, which is often the more preferred option.

Pet sitting involves a number of services including:

- ✓ Overnight care
- ✓ Walking
- ✓ Grooming And Bathing
- ✓ Feeding
- ✓ Playing
- ✓ Giving pets medications and creams

The start up costs are minimal as the only supplies you'll need will be a leash, collars (in multiple sizes), food and play toys, although most pet owners will prefer to provide all of this to you as they'll want their pets to stay on a consistent meal plan with certain brand name foods that they are used to.

Furthermore, for safety precautions it's always best to ask the pet owners for play toys, chains, collars and walking leashes so that you are using their own supplies and equipment, suitable for their pet.

When developing your business, you will want to thoroughly evaluate your options, keeping in mind that there are many different types of pets you could offer care for.

For example, if you are fond of cats, you could offer a cat sitting service instead. There are also people looking for someone to drop by and feed and care for their birds, rabbits, and fish as well!

Whatever you decide, be careful not to offer sitting services for different animals on the same day. Certain breeds don't play well together, and you need to keep this in mind when developing your business.

If you plan to attend to pets at your home, you may want to consider investing in proper fencing so that you are able to let dogs run and play without concern of them getting out into traffic or being lost.

And finally, make sure to communicate with local pet owners who are your potential clients. You want to know what is most important to them, what type of services are in most demand as well as what they don't want you to do (certain owners may not want you to provide treats, walk dogs in certain areas, etc).

Pet owners are very protective of their furry friends and they want them to be cared for by service providers in the same way that they would personally care for them, so it's important that you understand the mindset of your clients by taking the time to discuss their concerns and questions before developing your business.

If you listen to what future clients want before going too far into preparing for your home based business, you'll be able to use this valuable information to create a tailor-made pet sitting business that is bound to be a hit!

Note: If you keep pets in your own home, your local area may require some sort of licensing. Be sure to check your local laws before you begin to see if you need any type of special licensing.

Hair And Nail Specialist

The hair and nail salon industry is booming with reports of over \$4.2 billion dollars in sales predicted for the upcoming year!

Regardless of the economy, people continue to have their nails and hair done so this is not only a profitable market to get involved in, but also an evergreen market.

The cost of a haircut and manicure will vary depending on the area so your first step is to evaluate the competition to determine an appropriate price structure for your hair and nail salon.

You want to make sure your prices are reasonable so that you don't turn away potential clients, while being careful not to limit your profit potential. Of course, your pricing will depend on a number of factors including:

Your local area – Do you live in a high end area of the city where people are more accustomed to paying \$50 for a hair cut?

Your specialty – Are you able to offer additional services or extended features such as hair straightening, hair relaxants and treatments?

Competition – What is the competition in your area charging for similar services? How can you take a new approach to your business to highlight your services and optimize pricing?

Your Hours – You can charge more per session if your business offers “after hours” or “in house” sessions where you travel to your clients home or business to complete the treatment.

Determining your price structure requires careful research and market evaluation. Setting your prices too high will minimize business while setting your prices too low will hinder your ability to generate a healthy profit.

When setting your pricing consider all overhead costs, including supplies, travel expenses, labor costs and overhead. It’s reasonable to estimate that your overhead costs will be from 30-40% of your labor and cost of supplies.

You also want to check with your local business office to determine what business zoning, licenses or guidelines may affect your ability to run a home based business.

In addition, since you will be offering services in your home, you will need to set up an area of your house devoted to your business.

Not only will this help you develop a professional presence in your area, but a percentage of all costs associated with running your business will be tax deductible, and it’s important to properly manage and maintain a separation between your household and the area in which your business takes place.

You could also consider renting space in an office building or local shopping mall if you feel it’s affordable and easier to set up. There are advantages to having an actual storefront including the fact that you’ll have “built in business” from traffic and customers who discover your business when at the mall or shopping plaza.

While there is no requirement that you complete training in order to offer hair cutting and styling services, you will need a license in order to perform manicures.

When it comes to making money in the hair and nail business, it's all about the numbers. You need to carefully consider your hours of operation so that you can maximize the number of clients that come through your doors, but you should also consider "extended" services to cater to those who work longer shifts or are unable to book in sessions throughout the day.

Not only will this help you establish yourself as a flexible service focusing on your client, but you will be able to generate business just by including customers that traditional business hours leave out.

You should also keep in mind that the more specialized your services, the better. While the hair and nail salon will always be in demand throughout the year, there are seasonal influences that you need to include in your business plan. For example, during the summer months you're likely to receive bookings for weddings, and in the winter months, people are often interested in more frequent cutting and styles for the holiday season, concerts and festive events.

When setting up your home based business, you'll need proper equipment in order to run your hair and nail salon, including:

Dryers

Straighteners

Brushes and Combs

Curling Iron

Color services (dyes, glazing, highlights, streaks)

Hair treatments (scalp treatments, relaxers etc)

If you are planning to include nail and foot care into your service menu, you'll also need:

Nail wrapping

Acrylic nail applications

Polish and lacquer

Paraffin treatment supplies

Sculpted nail applications

Appointment books and receipts are also a necessity. Finally, getting a business telephone number is a necessary step in setting yourself up as a professional in your field.

Depending on the extent of your services you may require additional supplies and equipment so it's important to carefully plan out your service menu to determine what supplies you will need as well as what kind of services are currently in demand in your area.

Resources:

<http://www.dermascope.com/>

<http://www.abbies.org/>

<http://www.ahbai.org/>

<http://www.salonprofessionals.org/>

Training:

<http://www.goldwellusa.com>

Medical Billing Service

As a medical billing specialist, you'll be responsible for issuing invoices on behalf of a physical or medical office. In many cases, doctors struggle to get paid by patients or insurers and it would be your job to secure payment on their behalf.

Your job may also include mailing patient statements, entering in patient information into online databases, posting payments, handling billing inquiries and even following up on all unpaid invoices.

As a medical billing specialist, your tasks will also include submitting invoices online, including sending insurance claims directly to the insurance companies such as Medicare.

Since insurance agencies give priority to claims filed electronically, you can maximize your ability to secure payment for your clients while minimizing your workload through eliminating the need to personally mail invoices or collect payment.

There are very few skills required in order to start a home based medical billing business, however you will want to brush up on medical terminology so that you understand the different references made within the medical industry.

You will also be required to use medical terminology if you offer extended services that include completing patient records or explaining to patients what the invoice involves.

You will want to learn the basic medical billing and claim process as well, such as how to bill patients and insurance companies, how to file claims, follow up with

invoices and how to report diagnoses and trace claims.

The key to building a successful home based medical billing business is to build relationships with your clients so that you can gain the trust and confidence needed to secure projects over a long term period.

Billing is incredibly important to doctors and they'll rely on you to make sure they are paid for services rendered, so you need to demonstrate your ability to effectively follow claims and follow up on a regular basis.

To get started, you will want to develop a business plan that highlights your road to success. Include the tools and resources you need, any training or resource sites that you can use to expand your knowledge, and how you plan to market and manage your business.

Through careful planning and preparation you will be able to build a viable business set up for long term success.

You will also want to choose the type of business that is most appropriate based on your marketing outreach and client base. You can register a business as either a sole proprietorship, as a partnership or even a LLC (Limited Liability Company), and later expand your business into a Corporation.

It's important to understand the differences between each business license so that you are fully protected, so contact your local business center for assistance before registering your business.

You also need to make sure that you have any required permits or registration requirements taken care of before you begin to secure clients.

While it's unlikely that you'll need to obtain any special licensing to run a home based medical billing business, it's always best to be fully prepared by talking with a small business specialist.

As for setting up shop, you'll require very little other than a computer, fax machine, HCFA 1500 forms, additional phone line dedicated to your business, office supplies and the most important tool, your medical billing software.

Medical billing software can run anywhere between \$200-\$500, depending on the features and flexibility of the software application, so make sure to research different software options before purchasing.

In addition, whenever possible ask for a demo of the software prior to purchase so that you can personally evaluate the software paying attention to ease of use and available features. You want to purchase software that can grow as your business does, avoiding unnecessary expenses later on if you are required to purchase upgrades or additional software components.

Make sure that the software developers are willing to provide training and support should you encounter problems with the software, or need additional help learning how it works.

Start up costs should not exceed \$2000, depending on the resources and equipment you already have, as well as the extent of the services you plan to offer.

Marketing your home-based medical billing business is important in order to secure enough clients to maintain your business. You can market your business

a number of different ways, including by contacting local doctors and medical centers offering your assistance.

Ask for referrals from doctors that may know other physicians that are looking for a personal medical billing specialist and always be on the lookout for ways of maximizing your business exposure through local business centers and advertising channels.

You could also create an introductory packet that includes your business card as well as a summary of your services and distribute it directly to medical centers and physicians in your local area. And don't forget, you can also offer your services to doctors in other areas as well, by advertising your service online!

Join the Chamber of Commerce for additional business support and direct referrals, and consider finding a business mentor to help guide you along.

And finally, continue learning about the medical billing industry.

The more you know about it, the more you work towards networking with others who are experience in the business and the more you work towards building brand awareness, the easier it will be to secure clients and building a profitable and long term business of your own!

Resources:

Business Advice and Mentoring:

<http://www.score.org/index.html>

Medical Billing Training:

<http://www.smallbizbooks.com/c/s/00025.html>

Gift Basket Business

One of the easiest and most affordable home based businesses ever revealed, the gift basket service!

Gift baskets are always in demand, regardless of the season and this business requires very little start up costs and absolutely no experience.

To begin, you will want to evaluate the different gift basket services in your local area to get an idea as to what they offer as well as their overall pricing. Since gift baskets can be aimed towards a variety of audiences and special occasions, you will want to create a gift basket service that encompasses the most important holidays and events.

Consider the different baskets that you could create and develop a “service theme” that offers a wide variety of baskets for all lifestyles, personal moments, holidays and special occasions.

For example, you could create gift baskets themed towards:

- ✓ New Baby & Baby Showers
- ✓ Major Holidays (Christmas, Easter, Valentine’s Day)
- ✓ Just Married
- ✓ Birthdays
- ✓ Get Well
- ✓ Sympathy
- ✓ Love Affair
- ✓ Green Thumb Baskets
- ✓ Sports Fanatics

✓ Gourmet Baskets

Each basket would include items focusing on the theme. For example, if you were to offer a “Private Moments” gift basket for lovers, you could fill it with heart candies, a teddy bear or chocolates.

Many of the items used in specialized baskets can be used across the board with just a few special items or trinkets included to symbolize the specific event or occasion.

This will also help you save money, as you can purchase a base "stock" of items and then customize each basket according to the event.

Creating a gift basket business takes a bit of creativity but if you're up for the challenge, it can be one of the most enjoyable businesses to create!

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- You need to be willing to work closely with clients. Since people have their own ideas as to what should be in their gift basket, you want to be willing to customize their baskets based on the recipient's personal tastes and lifestyle. *One basket doesn't fit all!*

- You need to be creative. You want your gift baskets to stand out from the competition so think of ways that you can really add a personal touch to your baskets, such as including free gift cards, extensive wrapping with ribbons and bows, and if you are catering only to local customers, you could even offer a gift basket delivery service as part of the package or as an upgrade option!

- You need to refresh your themes. While you always want to cover the popular holidays and regular events and occasions, consider expanding your basket collection to include other ways that your customers can present your baskets to loved ones. Remember, in the gift basket industry no occasion or event is too small for a love-filled basket!

Ideas:

Birthday baskets based on specific ages (outside of the traditional 16, 21, 40 and “over the hill”.)

Baskets aimed towards specific fan bases! Look for areas where segments of the market may be overlooked including baskets for ‘gamers’, ‘single moms or dads’, movie lovers, and sporting events.

Baskets aimed towards those with allergies. You want to make sure that your basket items are purchased separately from your usual stock so that there is no ‘cross-over’. By offering gift baskets that include items safe for those who suffer from specific allergies, you’re including a demographic that is usually left out of the gift basket industry!

Start off small and simple. Cater to local residents who are always looking for that perfect gift, and then later you can expand your gift basket business by expanding to include corporate clients.

Local businesses have lengthy lists of events where gift baskets could easily be included, and not just during traditional holidays either. Businesses often offer employee reward programs as well as promotional events, retirements and staff birthdays.

And finally, keep on top of your stock! It's important that you buy in bulk to save money, and so you'll want to define a list of "base stock" that can be used throughout many different baskets.

This includes:

Variety of candy and chocolate

Silk flowers

Teddy bears and trinkets

Photo frames

Ribbons

Sugar free candy

Wine and Champagne

Also keep in mind that you will want to make sure that you properly store specific items like wines and gourmet foods. Remember to keep an eye on expiration dates so that your items are always fresh.

Consider presentation items as well, such as gift boxes, shopping bags, sales tags and a variety of stock cards that can be included as an upsell or bonus item with the gift baskets.

You will need shipping boxes, shipping labels, tape, cushioned mailers and other packing supplies to get started, but these are all very affordable and by developing an online gift basket business you can easily cut the costs by purchasing your gift basket items on demand, as each sale comes in rather than having to stock items or worry about inventory.

Your revenue will be limited only by how hard you want to work and how much you want your business to grow. Home based gift basket businesses can make as much as \$150,000 a year by offering local businesses and customers with specialized gift baskets or by developing an online presence.

And to make sure your business is profitable, choose a niche market!

While everyone is potentially your customer, in order to communicate with your customer base and be able to build a brand as a quality gift basket provider, you need to evaluate the market, research ideas and choose a segment of your market! You can always expand your gift basket business later on to include additional markets and niches.

Keep in mind that most gift basket business operators expect to net 15 to 30 percent of their gross revenue, and they typically reach this goal by applying a 100-percent markup to the cost of the items in the basket.

Research industry standard pricing for the gift basket business in your local area and expand your business by developing an online gift basket service where you handle fulfillment and shipping!

The costs to advertise your business online are reasonable and you'll be able to maximize your outreach and profits, instantly.

Resources:

<http://www.nsgaonline.com/>

<http://www.festivities-pub.com/>

Medical Transcription Service

Medical transcription is an exciting career. Not only can you work from the comfort of your own home, but you can consistently advance your training to open up the doors to new opportunities, including building your own home based MT business.

For the most part, medical transcriptionists will be responsible for converting patient records and medical files into typewritten documents, rather than handwritten to avoid misinterpretation.

All transcripts must be grammatically correct and free of errors as the medical industry requires specific guidelines be met when transcribing audio files into patient records.

The medical transcription industry does not require training or specific accreditation in order to secure employment, however the majority of new transcriptionists seek out online training as a method of gaining hands-on training and experience prior to entering the job market.

Not only will training help equip you with the knowledge you need, but it will also provide you with specific skills necessary in the MT job market, including typing, processing, and medical terminology.

Here are some of the things every medical transcriptionist needs to know (and is trained to understand via a MT course):

Knowledge of disease processes

Knowledge of anatomy and physiology

Basic understanding of medical terminology and punctuation used

Above average typing skills

Ability to work independently, taking direction.

Knowledge of medical writing style, and overall grammar.

Ability to work with audio recordings, voice manipulations and translation.

When it comes to medical transcription, there are a few things you will need to equip your office with in order to be able to complete projects for hospitals and physicians.

To start, you will want to purchase word processing software, such as MS Word or WordPerfect. Make sure that you install and configure your word processing software so that you are familiar with the settings, and if possible, learn to use macros which will help automate repetitive tasks, speeding up your productivity.

You will also need a transcriber machine in the event your clients are using dictation tapes when creating their audio files. Transcriber machines play back audiotape files making it possible for you to transcribe and translate as you listen to the recording.

Transcriber machines also offer the ability to slow down the speed so that you can keep the pace as you type, as well as offer "stop points", where you can temporarily pause the audio at a specific point to return to it later on.

These days, you can usually purchase transcriber machines that will effectively play multiple size recording tapes, however depending on the size of the tapes that your clients use, you may need to purchase multiple transcriber machines.

Certain clients will request that they dictate via the telephone and in those cases,

you will want to look into setting up a voice system line that will compress voice files so you can transfer them to your computer.

Other equipment that may be required can include a copy machine, fax machine, dedicated phone lines, email addresses, FTP client to upload and download files, and printer.

There are an incredible number of MT jobs available, and with health care facilities continuing to expand, the number of medical transcription jobs available in the market continue to multiply as well.

There are however, different variations of the MT job opportunity with in-house positions being offered (where you work at the physicians office or directly in the hospital) as well as telecommuting based positions, where you are able to work from home on your own schedule.

One thing to keep in mind is that when you work as a MT freelancer, you are responsible for your own taxes and are not offered the same employee benefits, as you would be if you worked directly for a company, on-site. In addition, pay scales will also vary, depending on the amount of work you take on and the actual company or doctor hiring you to complete their projects.

For the most part, MT opportunities offer very lucrative pay options, ranging anywhere from \$12-25.00 per hour. You can also choose to take on projects that pay per line, rather than per project, although the majority of online companies and employees hiring telecommuting based freelancers seem to prefer a "per project" basis.

Another incredibly beneficial aspect of becoming a medical transcriptionist is in

your ability to consistently expand your business, eventually offering MT training yourself, consulting, coaching and online-courses.

You could make money providing personal help to new medical transcriptionists, or in building a freelance team of MTs where you are responsible for managing incoming projects and client requests.

The world of medical transcription is a profitable and exciting one, and can be very rewarding if you have been interested in becoming a home based worker, or in building a business of your own.

One of the easiest ways to land projects is by signing up to medical transcription community forums, and job boards where you will be able to communicate with other MT professionals, as well as keep a pulse on upcoming job offers and opportunities.

You will also want to create a resume that showcases your skillsets, experiences and abilities and upload it to the Internet so that's accessible to potential clients who may want to evaluate your overall potential.

Here are the top forums and job boards for medical transcription job offers:

<http://www.MTGab.com>

<http://www.MTetc.net>

<http://www.MTBot.com>

<http://www.MTStars.com>

<http://www.MTheald.com>

Job Directories & Databases:

<http://www.medicalworkers.com>

<http://www.MTJobs.com>

<http://www.MTAtHome.com>

Categorized Job Searches:

<http://www.CareerBuilder.com>

<http://www.Guru.com>

As you become an experienced medical transcriptionist, it's likely that you will reach a point where you are receiving more client requests and project offers than you can handle. When this happens, it's time to consider expanding your business by developing your own freelance team of MT professionals.

Outsourcing work to medical transcriptionists is easy. You don't have to worry about in-house meetings, rent out office space, health benefits or even employment benefits. You can easily form a complete team of MT freelancers in a matter of days just by following a very simple strategy.

To start, you will want to place your listing on the reputable freelance marketplaces, including www.ELance.com and www.Guru.com

Be very specific with the types of projects you are offering so that those interested in bidding on your projects are aware of your expectations, minimizing wasted time responding to applicants with no real knowledge of the industry.

When you find a few freelancers that you are interested in, consider setting up an online interview prior to hiring them.

Ask them a series of questions relating to medical transcription, review work references, and spend some time communicating with each potential applicant so that you can get a good feel as to whether they are a good fit for your newly found team.

When it comes to payment, consider paying them in a similar way that you are used to being paid, either by project, or by line. You will also have to consider offering payment so that you are able to generate a profit from each project you outsource.

For example, you could offer them a few cents less per line than your clients are paying you. After all, you will still have to proof read their work prior to submitting it to your client.

Apart from online freelance marketplaces, one of the easiest methods of finding trustworthy, reliable transcriptionists is by contacting online courses and offering placement for new graduates, or by contacting your local community college or training program and offering jobs to new members.

Not only will you be able to hire medical transcriptionists at lower rates than you would more seasoned freelancers, but you are directly helping them gain hands-on experience necessary for them to eventually go out on their own.

Wholesale And Auction Business

Online auctions are places where you sell items to the highest bidder via a community style marketplace. It works just as a real auction. A product is showcased to the audience and its features and benefits are highlighted, giving

potential buyers the chance to bid on the listing or in some cases, to purchase it instantly via a BIN (buy it now) button.

You could easily become a member of an auction site and buy and sell products for a profit either by selling products you already have, products you can create (scrapbook layouts, crafts, etc), or by purchasing products through a wholesale or drop shipping service who will handle all delivery and fulfillment on your behalf.

Drop shipping services include:

<http://www.UrbanLoad.com>

<http://www.Shopster.com/dropshippers>

<http://www.GoWholesale.com>

There are many online auction sites online including the leading marketplace found at eBay (<http://www.ebay.com/>)

Some other popular auction sites include:

→ WeBidz (<http://www.webidz.com/>)

→ EBid (<http://www.ebid.net/>)

→ uBid (<http://www.uBid.com/>)

→ CQout (<http://www.cqout.com/>)

Those who sell consistently via online auction sites are referred to as **“powersellers”** and are able to build very profitable businesses online while establishing credibility within auction marketplaces.

Becoming a powerseller is relatively easy if you are committed to consistently researching new markets, evaluating what products are in demand and adjusting your product inventory to satisfy overall demand, keeping in mind that what is popular today can quickly change tomorrow.

There are really only a few things that you need to become a powerseller on marketplaces like eBay:

- Quality (popular) products to sell
- A digital camera so that you can take pictures of the items that you're selling.
- A computer
- The enthusiasm to become an eBay powerseller and increase your annual income

You'll want to make sure that you have enough room in your house to accommodate the items that you're going to be selling. You'll need to have room set aside not only to store these items but also a space set aside where you can manage the shipping of these items.

Getting started selling at eBay is as simple as registering your name, or your business name. There are some details that you'll need to include in your registration as a seller, such as where you are located and how you plan on shipping your sold items.

Your goal as an eBay powerseller should be to look as professional as you can so that buyers take you seriously and learn to trust your reputation.

Setting up an “online” shop is one way that you can gain a more professional outlook among the many sellers that can be found on eBay.

There are several different options available at eBay that will help you to make a good impression on buyers. You don’t want buyers to think of you as just another eBay seller and pass you by for a more professional seller.

When you first start selling your items on eBay you’ll find that there is a learning curve as you find out what works for you and what doesn’t. The important thing is to be flexible so that you can make changes to the way that you sell in your favour.

Getting Started

There are many benefits to selling on eBay. Some of these legal and financial benefits include:

- The low cost of registering at eBay.
- The ability to have fast and secure transactions with your buyers.
- Tax laws that are clearly defined.
- Accounting advice that even an amateur can follow.
- Low advertising costs.
- Free advertising tools.

The first thing that you will have to do in order to sell on eBay to is register.

There are several reasons why you first have to register on eBay. These include:

- eBay requires a certain amount of personal information from you. This is to keep the eBay site secure.

- eBay requires that you register with them before you can begin selling an item or bidding on other saleable items.
- Registration will provide you with updates on the latest eBay information and deals.

You will be required to provide your name, address, phone number, and a valid e-mail address. Many eBay powersellers choose to use a business name for their online transactions. You'll want to include this business name in your eBay registration.

The next step needed for registration is your online user ID. This is the ID by which you will be known as both a buyer and seller.

Make sure to choose an ID name that sounds businesslike and professional.

There are some simple basics that you should know about listing your items for sale on eBay. The more items that you list the more experienced you'll become in knowing how to write descriptions to entice buyers to take a longer look at the item that you're selling than the items of other sellers.

The first thing that you need to do is find items that you want to sell. For your first few selling attempts choose items that you yourself like so that you can create a listing that you can relate to.

Find similar items that are for sale on eBay so that you get a good idea of how much the item is worth, what other sellers are selling it for, and what category it best fits into. To find items that are similar to the one that you're selling use the following steps:

- Use the “Search” button at the top of the eBay webpage.
- Select the “Advanced Search” and type in key search words.
- Choose the “Completed Items Only” option.

You’ll quickly have a listing of items that were for sale on eBay but are now ended so that you can see what items are popular and what didn’t sell.

Once you have your item ready to sell you’re ready to begin listing it. The steps that you’ll need to complete, in the following order, are:

- Select the format that you want to use to sell your item.
- Choose the best category for the item.
- Write a title that catches the eye of buyers.
- Write a complete description of the item making sure to include all the specifics such as measurements and condition.
- Include photos of the item that you’re selling in the listing.
- Let buyers know where you live.
- Use some of the promotion tools available at eBay to promote the item.
- Include the payment that you’ll accept for the item as well as information about shipping and packaging.

Be creative and step outside of the box. You need to establish new ways of marketing the items that you’re selling. Take time to examine your competitors on eBay so that you know what they’re doing and what you have to do better.

Writing Descriptions that Sell the Item

The title that you give your listings and the description that you provide are going to make all the difference when it comes to the sale of your products. The title and the description are your form of advertising in the eBay community.

Without solid titles and strong descriptions you stand the chance of losing buyers to other sellers who stand out in the crowd. Your goal should be to become one of these sellers that stand out in that crowd.

Creating a strong title: Buyers at eBay will notice the product that you're selling from the title that you write for the item. You want to create a title that is immediately eye catching so that buyers want to linger for that crucial extra minute to read your description.

Following are some guidelines for writing a strong, eye-catching title:

- Try to use words that are highly descriptive and that fully describe the item that you're selling.
- If appropriate include the key words in the title such as (1) brand names, (2) artist name, (3) designer names, or (4) any other identifying words that you know buyers will recognize.
- You need to precisely say what the item is. Don't be afraid to include the category name in the item title since it never hurts to emphasize this.
- Try to choose words in the title that buyers might use to search for items. This will bring more buyers to your item page.
- You only have so much space for a title so make the most of the words that you use. You don't want to use words that have no meaning, such as "incredible", which really tells the buyer nothing about the item that you're selling.

- Take a look at similar items that sold for a good price. See what titles those sellers used to encourage buyers to read through the description of the item that they were selling.
- There are some types of titles which eBay prohibits the use of. This includes titles that (1) use profane language, (2) use words that lead a buyer to believe the product is “illegal”, (3) titles that include phone numbers, email addresses, or URLs, (4) titles that don’t adequately describe the item that you’re selling in any way.

When you follow these tips you’ll be well on your way to creating titles that catch the eyes of buyers.

Creating a strong description: The more time that you put into writing a good description for the items that you’re selling, the better chance you have of getting a lot of bids and selling at a high price.

A description that is strong and filled with a lot of information will (1) give buyers all that they need to know to want to place a bid on your item, and (2) leave buyers with the impression that you care about what you’re selling.

Sellers are always trying new techniques when it comes to item descriptions.

Some of the more interesting things that you might want to include in the description are telling the buyer why you personally like the item that you’re selling, letting the buyer know what appeals to you about the item, and what use the item might have to anyone who is considering placing a bid.

Including Photos in your EBay Listing

To achieve any degree of success as a seller on eBay you'll need to include a picture of the item that you're selling. Buyers are drawn to those listings that have a good, clear photo of the item.

When you're taking a picture of the item there are some basic guidelines that you should follow to make the most of this photo opportunity:

- Make sure that the lighting is good so that you get pictures that are clear and natural. If you're taking a picture outside make sure to use a flash if you need to increase the brightness of the picture.
- Use a backdrop of some kind for smaller items. Try to avoid using a white backdrop as this put too much contrast into the picture.
- Remove other objects from the picture that have no relevance to the item that you're selling.
- Get as close as you can without losing focus.
- Take pictures of sections of the item that you're selling so that buyers can see all sides.
- Take pictures of any distinguishing marks on the item, such as manufacturer stamps on the bottoms of vases.

After you've taken the picture eBay will walk you through the process of uploading the photo to your listing page. When you download the "eBay Picture Services Application" it will be easy for you to manage and upload all your pictures.

eBay Store Fronts

eBay Store Fronts are another way that you can sell items on eBay. The products that you choose to sell will have a front row seat to eBay buyers who are looking for the items that you're offering.

It costs very little for you to open an eBay Store. For just a low cost each month you can start to boost your Internet presence, increase your sales, and add to your customer database. When you start an eBay Store you'll have these tools at your disposal:

- An online Store Front that is completely yours to develop and create to fit your business needs.
- Tracking methods and a way to analyze how your business is doing within the eBay community.
- Easy tools to manage the running of your eBay Store.
- Tools at hand for marketing and merchandising your product.

What Sells and What Doesn't Sell

EBay listings include all kinds of items for sale, from the plain and ordinary to the wild and amazing. You will have to determine what types of items you want to sell.

There are some things you may want to consider before you make your decision.

Are you going to be selling items that you already have around your home? Or are you going to find products in your local area that you are going to purchase with the intent of reselling the item and making a profit?

To give you an idea of what is being sold at eBay here are a few of the items offered for sale today:

- Collectibles: There are a wide range of collectibles that are sold every day on eBay. From the traditional fare of stamps, coins, and comic books to

the more specialized items such as Beanie Babies™, Zippo™ lighters, and PEZ™ dispensers, eBay is by far the number one place on the Web to find the widest range of both popular and hard-to-find collectable items.

- **Electronics:** eBay is an excellent source to sell both new and used electronic items. Whether you are selling individual items or lots that have been purchased in bulk, there are always buyers for electronic goods of all shapes and sizes. Cell phones, stereo equipment, computers, and video games are just a few of the millions of high tech gadgetry that can be found across many sections of the eBay community.
- **Antiques:** Items in this category include everything from Asian vases to antique maps. If you are considering selling an antique make sure you know the value of the item so that you can verify the item's worth.
- **Books:** Books are a very popular sale item on eBay. Sub-categories include children's books, poetry, reference books, and the latest fiction. If you are thinking about selling books at eBay you will have to do your research very carefully to make certain that you are selling at a competitive market value.

One of the best things about selling books is that they are easy to package and ship to the seller. Books are relatively difficult to damage during mailing and shipping costs will be minimal compared to the shipping expenses of larger, more fragile items bought on eBay.

- **DVDs and Movies:** DVDs and movies are a great item to sell on eBay. Be sure to include information such as media format (DVD/VHS/Beta/Laserdisc/etc) and encoding information (such as

PAL/NTSC). When dealing with box sets, be sure to include bonus items and packaging details.

- **Arts and Crafts:** On eBay you will find many examples of the modern “cottage industry” with individuals and small “mom and pop” operations who create arts and crafts of every flavor imaginable.

From homemade candles to home fired ceramics to hand strung beads and artwork, eBay has no shortage of merchandise that caters to those who desire items with that “personal touch”. In addition to offering the final products of many creative individuals, eBay also hosts many vendors of arts and crafts supplies.

Finding Items to Sell

Here are some suggestions for where to begin searching for merchandise for sale on eBay which can result in the highest profit margins and therefore more money in YOUR pocket:

- ***Flea markets.*** It is possible to find many hidden treasures at flea markets in your local area. It is common for attics to be cleared out and surplus stock from a variety of retail outlets to be emptied into the flea market ecosystem in the hopes of making at least some amount of money from what is considered to be “surplus” or “salvaged”.

It is here that you can find the best deals, but you can also uncover hard-to-find collectables, electronics, and many other categories of merchandise that are ripe for the picking for resale on eBay.

- **Swap meets/conventions.** It can also pay to take note when your local area is hosting special interest conventions and swap meets, such as gun shows, comic book conventions and the like.
- **Buying in bulk.** This is less of a “where” and more of a “how”, but it’s definitely applicable: It seems like a lot of powersellers find something they get a good bargain on locally and sell it to a wide market that doesn’t have that same access. For instance, you might discover that computer desk shelves are selling on eBay for quite a bit more than your local bulk retailer charges. This is an excellent opportunity for you to profit from your location and what you have access to.
- **Clearance racks at malls.** Try searching the clearance racks in your local shopping malls for great deals on clothing. Many people live in areas that are not serviced by shopping malls and therefore don’t have access to the types of merchandise that you do. It’s a good idea to visit these stores during big sales, especially right after the holiday period or at the turn of seasons when retailers will be trying to get rid of their old stock to make room for the new.

Particularly focus on trendy stores that deal in expensive brand name items. Often you will be able to find very popular, trendy labels for a fraction of their retail cost, sometimes even below cost.

- **Garage Sales.** Don’t forget to check your local paper for garage/lawn sales. Usually you can find great deals if you are willing to dig and sift through a few garage sales every weekend.

Finding a Wholesaler

There are several ways that you can find the right wholesaler for you:

- Wholesale lots: You can find wholesale lots on the eBay website so that almost all the searching for products is done for you. There are many categories that are listed featuring almost any type of product imaginable.

This includes electronics, books, collectibles, music, clothing, and household items. Take some time to do your own buyer search on eBay to find out what items that are listed are popular. Then you can focus on a similar product so that you can sell at competitive prices. When you find a wholesale product that you want to sell you can sell it for a considerable profit on eBay. The important thing to do is thoroughly research the market on eBay before you decide on what products to sell.

- Storage unit auctions: Another great way to find products to sell on eBay is by finding out when storage unit businesses are having an auction.

Most storage unit businesses will auction several times each year to get rid of unwanted items that have been unclaimed for a certain period of time.

- Search the Internet: The Internet is a great way to find wholesalers that have some great products for you to sell online at eBay. Type a keyword such as wholesaler, liquidator, or wholesale trading into any search engine and you'll be rewarded with a huge listing of wholesalers from around the world.
- Wholesale directories: You can find wholesalers by looking in a wholesale directory. You'll be able to find lists of distributors, manufacturers, and

wholesalers in well formatted categories that make it easy for you to find what you're looking for.

- Exporters and importers: If you're looking at the big picture, and plan on selling a wide variety of items on eBay, you may want to contact those companies that specialize in imports from overseas.
- Local wholesalers: Look for wholesalers where you live since there are usually many sources available locally. You want to find one or more wholesalers from who you can purchase the items that you know you can sell on eBay. A local wholesaler will save you money on shipping costs and you'll be able to supplement your inventory at any time without the wait of shipping.

When you're looking for a wholesaler it's important to find one or more that specialize in the products that you're interested in. If you've done your research on eBay you should already know which items are current hot sales and which ones aren't.

Another thing to remember when you're looking for a wholesaler is that the fewer people are already buying from the wholesaler the more unique your product will be when you sell it on eBay.

Take some time to find products that are one of a kind, such as a craft item that is rare to find.