

carter & gray

STEP TOWARDS

START

Creating a Solid Foundation for Your Small Business

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Creating a Solid Foundation for Your Small Business

While you're focused on planning the most important pieces of your business, make sure you don't forget the little things that can make or break your dream. Mistakes are a part of entrepreneurship, but you'll want to avoid them if possible. We are sharing some of the strategies our team used in hopes you will find them helpful. Also be sure to engage professionals as you plan your business, as we are not attorneys or accountants.

1. Unique Selling Proposition

The beauty of small businesses is that they are far more than the goods or services they provide. One of the most rewarding and important parts of being a small business owner is connecting with your audience. They're choosing to support *you* instead of what might be a cheaper, faster, easier, or more accessible alternative. Embrace this and make sure that the benefits you provide to your audience are centered around what makes your business special.

A simple framework to use is:

I help [a specific audience] [solve a problem] by _____.

If you aren't sure about your USP, the following comparison table will help you determine your unique factors in relation to your competitors. We recommend filling it out even if you were able to complete the USP with ease because this is a great chart to refer back to when considering expanding your business.

Analyze the unique selling propositions of your top three competitors and how they both differ and compare to your business. Think of this as a Venn diagram in table form.

Competitor Name	Competitor's Business	Similarities	My Small Business

2. Business Plan

Your company should be built to scale. Create a sustainable business model and make a plan for growth. Whether yours is a single owner, partnership, or family run business, smart planning starts now.

Our favorite way to implement this begins with our dreaming sessions. We think it's important and invigorating to take the time to imagine what our wildest dreams could look like. We then choose one to be our Ultimate Goal. Reminding yourself that the Ultimate Goal can change but to be the most effective, you need to have a clear cut idea of success is super important to this process. The challenge is to be decisive while thinking big enough.

Once you have your Ultimate Goal, break it down into levels you would need to reach before moving forward. If you're currently on Level 1 and your ultimate goal is Level 10, what would Level 5 look like? Then go smaller. If we know what Levels 1 and 5 are, what might Level 3 be? Fill in the blanks this way. Keep in mind it's okay if not every level is of the same intensity. Once you know what the next level looks like, it's easier to know what will be needed from you, potential partners, potential employees, etc.

Write all of this down and refer back to it when planning next steps in your business. Creating a goal-setting system that works early on will save you so much time and money when your small business starts taking off.

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:

Level 4:

Level 5:

Level 6:

Level 7:

Level 8:

Level 9:

Level 10:

3. Organizational Set-up

Efficiency is everything to a small business owner. Since you have to do every job in order to make your business run, it's important to set yourself up to accomplish these tasks with ease. Making sure that you have an organizational plan that works for you—your schedule, your work habits, your skill sets—can help you avoid getting tripped up.

Setting time aside in your calendar once a day, week, and month for important tasks related to running your business is a great start. Some entrepreneurs also commit to short meetings with themselves every morning or night to prepare for the next day's work.

Use the information you outlined in the Business Plan to detail what is necessary for you to do to grow your business to your next level. Break this down into categories of work like Sales, Customer Interaction, Financial Planning, Operations, Project Work, Content Creation, Marketing, Social Media, Website Building/Maintenance, etc. From there, schedule time to work on that specific aspect of your business.

4. Communications Plan

The language that you use with your business heavily affects your subconscious and your audience's perception of your company. Professionalism is key. Use appropriate terminology: calls, meetings, scheduling, planning, goals, etc. Decide how you will refer to your audience, your employees, work processes, and products/services..

Take the time to set up proper communications channels, document organization, and other business systems in the beginning. Be consistent in your communication cadence, word choice, tone and message so that your audience, partners, employees, etc. know what to expect from interactions with you and your business.

5. Digital Clean-up

Google search your name, the name of your company, and any related names (names of partners, close family members, etc). Search by:

Full Name

Social Media Handles

Business Name

If you would not want a business contact to see what you found in your search, try to remove the content from the Internet. Go to the source and delete, archive, or unpublish it. Keep in mind that not all of the content that you discover will be removable. Just do the best you can to clean up and maintain your digital footprint moving forward.

Searches similar to this should also be done on potential business partners, employees, etc. before contracts are signed.

6. Social Clean-up

Clean up your social media accounts. Anyone interested in you and your services *will* look you up. Political and religious statements and connections to personal groups should be hidden if you wish for that information to stay private.

A good test is if something you post could lead to firing or a conversation with Human Resources in a 9-5 job, then it should probably go. Anything content kept up should be an intentional choice because part of having a small business is selling yourself.

Below is a list of social media applications to check. Write your handle(s) and cross off when you're confident the account is ready for public viewing.

Instagram	_____	_____	_____
Facebook	_____	_____	_____
Twitter	_____	_____	_____
YouTube	_____		
TikTok	_____		
Tumblr	_____		
Pinterest	_____		

Businesses are taken more seriously when their social media accounts look professional. Having quality branding (logos, color schemes, language, etc.) as well as few public personal ties makes your small business feel more established. While starting a platform on social media means interacting with other accounts to get traction, a general rule of thumb is to follow half the number of people following you and slim that margin as you grow. Consider removing accounts who are not potential customers, partners, or supporters of your business.

Public vs. Private Accounts

You might want to establish business social media accounts and make your personal ones private. You may consider deleting unnecessary social media accounts. Or you might decide to do a mix of both.

Your Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok accounts can be privatized and will only be viewable to those you specifically allow. This request to follow setting does not apply to your existing followers as all will carry over to your private following. To remove followers from your now private account, you must do so individually. More information on taking these actions can be found by searching “[Social Media Application Name] account private”.

If you decide that deleting your account(s) might be a better option for your situation, learn more by searching “[Social Media Application Name] account delete”.

Removing Content on Public Accounts

To remove certain posts from being viewable to your following, Instagram has an “Archive” feature which allows you to keep them on your account, in a separate folder, for only you to access. These posts can be later returned to public viewing status.

Pinterest allows you to have private boards, which can only be seen by you and anyone you invite to the boards, however your account profile will still remain public.

Facebook allows you to change your setting and create custom groups with different privacy settings, which means that certain posts can be shared to Friends Only while others are made public.

All other content on social media must be permanently removed to no longer be public..

There are internet services that can wipe both your tweets and your liked tweets (which are also public) from your Twitter account permanently.

We are wishing you the very best of luck with your small business. Contact us at [**hello@carterandgray.com**](mailto:hello@carterandgray.com) to share your story. We would love to hear from you and support you in reaching your dreams.