Business Start Up
Ask SCORE

Businesses Licenses and Permits

Last week’s column stirred up a lot of comment and this sample represents a common theme. “What an eye-opener to see all the regulations about which small businesses need to be aware. I had no idea how much exists. But you didn’t tell us how to get the licenses and permits!” OK, so I will try to give some sources for finding what business licenses and permits you may need.

As we discussed last week, almost every business needs one or more federal, state or local licenses or permits to operate. Licenses can range from a basic operating license to very specific permits.

Regulations vary by industry, state and locality, so it's very important to understand the licensing rules where your business is located. Not complying with licensing and permitting regulations can lead to expensive fines and put your business at serious risk.

I suggest that you search both the federal and a state websites. The federal site found on the Small Business Administration’s website is my favorite because it is quite comprehensive and I would suggest that you start there. It is found at [http://www.sba.gov/content/search-business-licenses-and-permits](http://www.sba.gov/content/search-business-licenses-and-permits). This site has a search tool in the center of the page that allows you to get a listing of federal, state and local permits, licenses, and registrations you'll need to run a business by inserting your zip code and choosing from a list of common small business types. Click "Search" and you'll get a results page showing federal, state and local licenses you'll need along with links to web pages, application forms and instructions.

For local permits, links to local government websites and contact information are provided. If your type of business is not listed, select "General Licensing" and follow the links to your state and local licensing agencies to find licensing requirements for your specific businesses.

Remember that if your business is involved in activities supervised and regulated by a federal agency, you may need to obtain a federal license. Likewise, many types of businesses need to obtain some type of business or professional/occupational license or permit from a state government.

Minnesota has a very helpful site for getting information on licensing. I suggest that you use the following web site and do the search for your business: [http://www.license.mn.gov/index.jsp](http://www.license.mn.gov/index.jsp) Also note that on the right side of this page is the access for getting your Minnesota Sales Tax ID number for retail sales.

To learn more about permits, laws, and regulations that may impact your business contact America’s free and confidential source of small business mentoring and coaching, SCORE, on our website: [www.score-SEMinnesota.org](http://www.score-SEMinnesota.org).
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