Creating Your Own Space for your New Small Business

One of the many considerations for folks that are starting their own business is “where should I start”. As I ended my last column, “location” is a vital planning point. Here are some considerations.

Many businesses begin from humble home offices, but one important question to ask is this… is your community zoned for home-based businesses?

Many communities restrict or prohibit:

- Changing your home’s structure
- Adding signage
- Doing business outside your home, such as in the yard or driveway
- Using excessive street parking for deliveries, customer/employee cars, etc.
- Storing hazardous materials
- Creating nuisances, such as odors, waste or noise

After you determine that you are allowed to run your business from home, make sure your office space fits your needs. Separating business and personal space can help you and your family see your startup as a business, not just a hobby. But if you don’t have a separate office, maybe you can screen off a part of your bedroom or other room. Buying a separate desk and shelves dedicated for your startup also helps mentally and psychologically.

Think about these factors when creating your office:

- Do you need to meet clients? If you need an area for meetings but don’t have a spare room for an office, search online for co-working spaces where you can rent conference rooms as needed.
- Will you have inventory or materials? You’ll need a secure place to store them.
- Will you need to make products or package items for shipping? If you don’t have room, consider outsourcing your shipping services.

Business equipment: You may have a computer, printer and smartphone, but consider using a separate computer just for business. An all-in-one printer can be an affordable...
printing solution, or you can use a business service center to handle your printing and copying needs.

If you need more specialized equipment, talk with a SCORE mentor about finding affordable equipment sources, such as equipment leasing companies. While you’re there, ask your mentor for advice on other aspects of starting your business.

Consider Your Address: You may want to consider establishing an alternate address for your business. For example, the UPS Store offers mailbox services with real street addresses, providing more credibility than a box number, which eliminates the risk that comes with sharing your home address with all your customers. The UPS Store also offers additional small business support, including packaging and shipping, printing, document finishing, notary and more.

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