

Starting and Running a Small Business

18th Edition

Stephen Fishman, J.D.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 – Which Legal Form Is Best for Your Business?	3
Learning Objectives	3
Introduction.....	3
Sole Proprietorships.....	5
Personal Liability.....	6
Income Taxes	6
Fringe Benefits	7
Routine Business Expenses.....	7
Partnerships	8
Personal Liability.....	8
Partners' Rights and Responsibilities	9
Income Taxes.....	10
Fringe Benefits and Business Expenses	11
Corporations	11
Limited Personal Liability	11
Income Taxes	13
Attracting Investors	17
Limited Liability Companies.....	19
Limited Personal Liability	19
Number of Owners.....	19
Tax Flexibility	20
Flexible Management Structure.....	21
Flexible Distribution of Profits and Losses	21
Choosing Between a Corporation and an LLC.....	21
Special Structures for Special Situations	23
Limited Partnerships	23
Choices for Professionals	24
The Benefit Corporation	27
Nonprofit Corporations	27
Cooperatives and Cooperative-Type Organizations.....	28
Review Questions.....	29
Review Answers	30
Chapter 2 – Structuring a Partnership Agreement.....	33
Learning Objectives	33
Introduction.....	33
Why You Need a Written Agreement.....	33
An Overview of Your Partnership Agreement	34
Name and Term.....	34
Purpose.....	35
Contributions	35
Profits, Losses, Draws, and Salaries	36
Management Responsibilities	38
Partners' Outside Business Activities	39
Departure of a Partner—Buyouts	40
Continuity of the Partnership	42
Noncompetition of a Departing Partner.....	42
Control of a Partnership Name	43
Resolving Partnership Disputes	43
Changes in Your Partnership	43
Review Questions.....	45
Review Answers	46

Table of Contents

Chapter 3 – Creating a Corporation.....	47
Learning Objectives	47
Introduction.....	47
The Structure of a Corporation.....	48
Incorporators	48
Shareholders	48
Directors	49
Officers.....	49
Employees.....	49
How It All Fits Together.....	50
Financing Your Corporation	50
Funding Your Corporation with Equity	50
Funding Your Corporation with Debt	50
Leasing Property to the Corporation.....	50
Compensating Yourself.....	51
Salary and Bonuses.....	51
Interest on Loans to the Corporation	51
Fringe Benefits	51
Dividends.....	51
Do You Need a Lawyer to Incorporate?.....	52
Overview of Incorporation Procedures.....	52
Eleven Basic Steps to Incorporate	53
Step 1. Choose a Name.....	53
Step 2. Prepare and File Articles of Incorporation.....	54
Step 3. Elect the First Board of Directors.....	56
Step 4. Adopt Bylaws.....	57
Step 5. Hold a Directors' Meeting.....	57
Step 6. Set Up a Corporate Bank Account.....	58
Step 7. Issue Stock.....	59
Step 8. Complete Any Initial Financial Transactions	59
Step 9. Set Up a Corporate Records Book	59
Step 10. Follow Through on State Government Requirements	60
Step 11. File S Corporation Election.....	60
After You Incorporate	60
Safe Business Practices for Your Corporation.....	60
Put Adequate Capital into Your Corporation.....	61
Insure Against Obvious Risks	62
Observe Corporate Formalities	62
Separate Your Personal Finances from the Corporation's	63
Use the Correct Corporate Name.....	63
Sign Documents as a Corporate Officer	63
Assign Existing Business Contracts to the Corporation.....	63
Review Questions.....	65
Review Answers	66
Chapter 4 – Creating a Limited Liability Company.....	67
Learning Objectives	67
Introduction.....	67
Number of Members Required	68
Management of an LLC.....	68
Financing an LLC.....	68
Capital Contributions (Equity).....	68
Loans (Debt).....	69
Compensating Members	70
Choosing a Name	71
Paperwork for Setting up an LLC	72
Articles of Organization.....	72

Table of Contents

Operating Agreement.....	73
After You Form Your LLC.....	75
Set Up an LLC Bank Account.....	75
Complete Any Initial Financial Transactions	75
Inform the IRS If Your LLC Chooses Corporate Taxation.....	76
Safe Business Practices for Your LLC.....	76
Put Adequate Capital into Your LLC.....	77
Insure Against Obvious Risks	77
Separate Your Personal Finances from Your LLC's Finances.....	77
Use the Official LLC Name.....	77
Sign Documents as an LLC Member or Manager	77
File Annual State LLC Reports.....	78
Assign Existing Business Contracts to Your LLC.....	78
Record Keeping.....	79
Review Questions.....	80
Review Answers	81
Chapter 5 – Preparing for Ownership Changes with a Buyout Agreement.....	83
Learning Objectives	83
Introduction.....	83
Major Benefits of Adopting a Buyout Agreement	84
Controlling Who Can Own an Interest in Your Company.....	84
Providing a Guaranteed Buyer for Your Ownership Interest.....	85
Setting a Fair Price and Providing a Workable Method for a Buyout	86
Where to Put Your Buyout Provisions	87
Corporations	87
LLCs and Partnerships	88
When to Create a Buyout Agreement.....	88
Review Questions.....	89
Review Answers	90
Chapter 6 – Naming Your Business and Products.....	91
Learning Objectives	91
Introduction.....	91
Business Names: An Overview	92
Mandatory Name Procedures	93
Corporations	93
Limited Liability Companies.....	95
Assumed and Fictitious Names.....	96
Trademarks and Service Marks.....	97
Strong and Weak Trademarks	98
Strong Trademarks	98
Weak Trademarks	98
Weak Trademarks That Become Strong: Secondary Meaning	98
Before the Trademark: Name Searches	99
Conducting Your Search.....	99
Reviewing Your Search Results	100
How to Use and Protect Your Trademark.....	100
Review Questions.....	102
Review Answers	103
Chapter 7 – Licenses and Permits.....	105
Learning Objectives	105
Introduction.....	105
Federal Registrations and Licenses	106
Tax Registrations.....	106
Federal Licenses and Permits.....	107

Table of Contents

State Requirements	107
Licensing of Occupations and Professions	107
Tax Registration.....	108
Employer-Employee Matters	108
Licensing Based on Products Sold.....	108
Environmental Regulations	108
Regional Requirements.....	109
Environmental Regulations	109
Water Usage.....	109
Local Requirements	109
Local Property Taxes.....	109
Other Local Taxes	110
Health and Environmental Permits	110
Crowd Control.....	110
Building Codes	110
Zoning Ordinances	111
How to Deal with Local Building and Zoning Officials.....	111
Seek Support from the Business Community	111
Appealing an Adverse Ruling	111
Going to Court	112
Review Questions.....	113
Review Answers	114
Chapter 8 –Tax Basics for the Small Business	115
Learning Objectives	115
Introduction.....	115
Employer Identification Number	115
How to Apply	116
When to Get a New Number	117
Becoming an S Corporation	118
Business Taxes in General	119
Income Tax.....	119
Federal Payroll Taxes	121
Self-Employment Tax.....	123
Business Deductions	124
IRS Guidelines for Business Deductions	124
Current Expenses	125
Capital Expenses.....	125
Employees' Pay	127
Employee Benefits	127
Meals and Travel	128
Automobile Expenses	129
Pass-Through Tax Deduction.....	130
Tax Audits	131
How the IRS Audits a Small Business	132
The IRS Inquiry.....	132
Hiring a Tax Professional	132
Preparing for Your Audit.....	132
What Auditors Look for	133
How to Behave at an Audit.....	133
How to Negotiate with an Auditor	134
Review Questions.....	135
Review Answers	136
Chapter 9 – Raising Money for Your Business	139
Learning Objectives	139
Introduction.....	139

Table of Contents

Consider Writing a Business Plan	139
A Description of Your Business	140
Your Marketing Program	140
How You'll Operate the Business	140
The Financial Highlights	140
Just Do It	141
Two Types of Outside Financing	142
Loans	142
Equity Investments	145
Fourteen Common Sources of Money	146
Salary	146
Personal Savings	147
Equity in Your Home	147
Retirement Savings	148
Credit Cards	148
Buying on Credit	148
Leasing	149
Friends, Relatives, and Business Associates	149
Supporters	150
Banks	150
Other Commercial Lenders	151
Venture Capitalists	151
The Seller of an Existing Business	151
Crowdfunding	151
Document All of the Money You Receive	152
Gifts	152
Loans without Security	152
Loans with Security	153
Equity Investments	154
Review Questions	155
Review Answers	156
Chapter 10 – Buying a Business.....	159
Learning Objectives	159
Introduction	159
Finding a Business to Buy	159
What's the Structure of the Business You Want to Buy?	160
Buying from a Sole Proprietor or Partnership	160
Buying from a Corporation	161
Buying from an LLC	163
Gathering Information about a Business	163
Valuing the Business	165
What Are You Buying?	165
Goodwill Can Be a Myth	165
Evaluating the Business's Financial Health	166
Expert Help	166
Other Items to Investigate	167
Title to Assets	167
Litigation	167
Warranties and Guarantees	167
Workers' Compensation Claims and Unemployment Claims	167
Employee Contracts and Benefits	167
Maintenance of Trade Secrets	168
Taxes	168
Leases	168
Other Contracts	168
Patents and Copyrights	168

Table of Contents

Trademarks and Product Names.....	169
Licenses and Transferability.....	169
Zoning	169
Toxic Waste.....	169
Franchisor Approval.....	169
Availability of Credit	169
Scuttlebutt	169
Letter of Intent to Purchase.....	169
The Sales Agreement	171
Names of Seller, Buyer, and Business	171
Background Information.....	171
Assets Being Sold.....	172
Purchase Price and Allocation of Assets	172
Covenant Not to Compete.....	173
Adjustments.....	174
Terms of Payment	174
Inventory.....	175
Accounts Receivable	175
Seller's Representation and Warranties	175
Buyer's Representations and Warranties	176
Access to Information	177
Conduct of Business Pending Closing.....	177
Contingencies.....	177
Seller to Be a Consultant	178
Broker Fees.....	178
Notices	178
Closing Date	178
The Closing	178
Selling a Business	179
Valuing Your Business.....	179
Read Your Lease.....	180
Protect Your Privacy	180
Sign a Letter of Intent.....	180
Draft a Sales Agreement.....	180
Review Questions.....	183
Review Answers	184
Chapter 11 – Franchises: How Not to Get Burned	187
Learning Objectives	187
Introduction.....	187
What Is a Franchise?.....	187
The Downsides of Franchise Ownership	188
The Franchisor Gets a Huge Piece of the Pie.....	189
The Franchisor Can Tell You What to Do	190
The Franchise Contract Will Favor the Franchisor	190
The Government Won't Protect You.....	191
Investigating a Franchise	191
The Franchise Disclosure Document.....	192
The Franchise Agreement.....	198
Franchise Fee.....	198
Advertising Fees	198
Royalty Fees.....	199
Hidden Costs	199
Quotas.....	199
The Franchise Term.....	199
Assignment.....	200
Termination	200

Table of Contents

Competition	200
Resolving Disputes with Your Franchisor	201
Review Questions.....	202
Review Answers	203
Chapter 12 – Insuring Your Business.....	205
Learning Objectives	205
Introduction.....	205
Working with an Insurance Agent.....	206
Property Coverage.....	207
Property Covered.....	207
Perils Covered	207
Amount of Coverage	208
Replacement Cost vs. Current Value	209
Ordinance or Law Coverage	209
Tenant's Insurance	210
Liability Insurance.....	210
General Liability Policies	211
Product Liability Insurance.....	211
Vehicle Insurance	212
Workers' Compensation Insurance.....	212
Other Insurance to Consider	213
Bonds Covering Employee Theft.....	213
Crime Coverage.....	213
Business Interruption Insurance.....	214
Industry-Specific Insurance	215
Saving Money on Insurance.....	215
Set Priorities	215
Increase the Amount of Your Deductibles	215
Initiate Loss Prevention and Risk Reduction Measures	216
Comparison Shop	217
Transfer Some Risks to Someone Else	217
Find a Comprehensive Package	217
Seek Out Group Plans	217
Self-Insure	217
Making a Claim	218
Review Questions.....	219
Review Answers	220
Chapter 13 – Negotiating a Favorable Lease.....	221
Learning Objectives	221
Introduction.....	221
Finding a Place	221
Leases and Rental Agreements: An Overview.....	221
Short-Term Leases (Month-to-Month Rentals).....	222
Written Long-Term Leases.....	223
Who Should Sign the Lease?.....	223
Defining the Space You're Leasing	224
Starting Date of the Lease	224
Ending Date of the Lease.....	225
An Option to Renew a Lease	225
The Right to Expand	226
Rent	226
Security Deposit.....	227
Improvements by the Landlord	227
Making Improvements Yourself	228
Compliance with the ADA	229

Table of Contents

Zoning Laws, Permits, and Restrictions on Use of the Space	229
Required Insurance	230
Subletting Your Space or Assigning the Lease	230
The Landlord's Right to Enter Your Space	231
Signs	232
Canceling Your Lease	232
Mediation or Arbitration	232
The Fine Print	233
Additional Clauses to Consider	233
Option to Purchase the Building	234
The Right to Withhold Rent	234
Shopping Center Leases	234
Percentage Rent	235
Anchor Tenants	235
Competing Businesses	235
Duty to Remain Open	235
How to Modify a Lease	236
Landlord-Tenant Disputes	236
Put Your Complaints in Writing	236
Coping with the Threat of Eviction	237
Getting Out of a Lease	238
When You Need Professional Help	238
Review Questions	239
Review Answers	240
Chapter 14 – Home-Based Business	243
Learning Objectives	243
Introduction	243
Zoning Laws	243
How Zoning Ordinances Are Organized and Applied	244
Investigating Zoning Laws	245
Dealing with Zoning Officials	246
Going to Court	246
Private Land Use Restrictions	247
Insurance	249
Deducting Expenses for the Business Use of Your Home	250
Regular and Exclusive Use	250
Principal Place of Business	251
Meeting Clients or Customers at Home	251
Using a Separate Building for Your Business	252
Amount of Deduction	252
Review Questions	255
Review Answers	256
Chapter 15 – Employees and Independent Contractors	257
Learning Objectives	257
Introduction	257
Hiring Employees	257
Avoid Illegal Discrimination	257
Respect the Applicant's Privacy Rights	258
Don't Promise Job Security	258
Prevent Negligent Hiring Claims	258
Protect Against Unfair Competition	259
Job Descriptions	260
Job Advertisements	261
Job Applications	261
Preemployment Inquiries	262

Table of Contents

Postoffer Inquiries.....	263
Interviews	263
Testing	264
Skills Tests	264
Aptitude and Psychological Tests.....	264
Honesty Tests.....	264
Drug Tests.....	265
Background Checks.....	265
Former Employers	265
School Transcripts.....	266
Credit History.....	266
Criminal History	266
Driving Records	267
Immigration Law Requirements.....	267
Personnel Practices	267
Employee Handbooks	267
Performance Reviews.....	268
Illegal Discrimination	268
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.....	268
Sexual Harassment	268
Age Discrimination.....	269
Pregnancy	269
Citizenship Status.....	269
Disability	269
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.....	270
Wages and Hours	270
The Fair Labor Standards Act	270
Pay Requirements	271
Overtime Pay.....	271
Compensatory Time Off.....	272
Calculating Work Hours	273
Child Labor	273
Occupational Safety and Health	273
Workers' Compensation.....	274
Termination of Employment	275
Guidelines for Firing Employees.....	275
Final Review	276
Unemployment Compensation	277
Independent Contractors.....	278
Advantages and Disadvantages of Hiring Independent Contractors.....	278
How to Avoid Classification Problems	279
Special Categories of Workers.....	283
Additional State Rules.....	284
The Risks of Misclassification	284
Employers' Health Care Insurance Requirements Under Obamacare.....	285
Review Questions.....	286
Review Answers	287
Chapter 16 – The Importance of Excellent Customer Relations.....	289
Learning Objectives	289
Introduction.....	289
Developing Your Customer Satisfaction Policy	290
Telling Customers about Your Policies	292
Review Questions.....	293
Review Answers	294

Table of Contents

Chapter 17 – Legal Requirements for Dealing with Customers	295
Learning Objectives	295
Introduction.....	295
Advertising.....	295
Is Advertising Necessary?.....	295
Legal Standards for Advertising	296
How to Stay Out of Trouble	296
Retail Pricing and Return Practices.....	298
Deceptive Pricing.....	298
Sales Away from Your Place of Business.....	298
Refunds.....	300
Mail Orders	300
Unordered Merchandise.....	301
Warranties	301
Express Warranties.....	301
Implied Warranties	303
What Happens if a Warranty Is Breached.....	305
Consumer Protection Statutes	306
Dealing with Customers Online	307
Why Bother to Post Policies?	307
Policies Worth Posting	307
How and Where to Post Your Terms and Conditions.....	308
Review Questions.....	309
Review Answers	310
Chapter 18 – Cash, P2P Payments, Credit Cards, Checks, and Cryptocurrency	311
Learning Objectives	311
Introduction.....	311
Cash.....	311
P2P Payments.....	312
Credit and Debit Cards	312
Checks	313
Avoiding Bad-Check Problems.....	313
Dealing with Bad Checks	315
Cryptocurrency	317
Tax Treatment of Cryptocurrency Payments	317
IRS Reporting of Cryptocurrency Transactions.....	318
Review Questions.....	319
Review Answers	320
Chapter 19 – Extending Credit and Getting Paid	321
Learning Objectives	321
Introduction.....	321
The Practical Side of Extending Credit	321
Professional and Personal Service Businesses	321
Wholesale and Manufacturing Businesses	322
Extending Credit to Businesses.....	325
References and Credit Checks.....	325
Signatures for Receipt of Goods	326
Laws That Regulate Consumer Credit.....	326
The Truth in Lending Act.....	326
The Equal Credit Opportunity Act.....	326
The Fair Credit Reporting Act.....	326
The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act	327
Becoming a Secured Creditor	327
Sales of Merchandise or Equipment.....	327
Special Rights for Those in the Construction Business	328

Table of Contents

Collection Problems	328
Strategies for Avoiding or Reducing Losses	328
Collection Letters	329
Prohibited Collection Practices.....	330
Collection Options.....	331
Review Questions.....	332
Review Answers	333
Chapter 20 – Put It in Writing: Small Business Contracts	335
Learning Objectives	335
Introduction.....	335
What Makes a Valid Contract.....	335
Negotiations	335
Offer and Acceptance	335
Counteroffers.....	336
Revoking an Offer.....	336
Option to Keep Offer Open	336
How Offers Are Accepted.....	337
An Advertisement as an Offer	337
Unfair or Illegal Contracts.....	337
Misrepresentation, Duress, or Mistake	337
Must a Contract Be in Writing?.....	338
Contracts that Must Be in Writing	338
What Constitutes a Written Contract	339
The Sale of Goods: Special Uniform Commercial Code Rules.....	339
Writing Business-to-Business Contracts.....	341
Checklist of Contract Clauses	341
Additional Requirements for Specialized Contracts	342
How to Design Your Contracts	343
Attachments to Contracts.....	343
Signing Your Contracts	344
Revising a Contract Before You Sign	345
Signatures	345
Witnesses and Notaries	346
Recording	346
Dates.....	346
Originals and Photocopies	347
Revising a Contract after Both Parties Sign.....	347
Electronic Business-to-Business Contracts	347
Electronic Contracts for Online Sales	348
Enforcing Contracts in Court	348
What Can You Sue for?	350
Compensatory Damages	350
Consequential Damages.....	350
Liquidated Damages	350
Injunctions and Other Equitable Relief.....	351
Review Questions.....	352
Review Answers	353
Chapter 21 – The Financially Troubled Business	355
Learning Objectives	355
Introduction.....	355
Thinking Ahead to Protect Your Personal Assets	355
Choice of Business Entity	355
Beware of Penniless Partners	356
Personal Loan Guarantees	356
Having Your Spouse Sign Too	356

Table of Contents

Pledging Collateral for Loans	357
Maintain Adequate Insurance.....	357
Managing the Financially Troubled Business.....	358
Keep Taxes Current.....	358
Don't Lie About Debts	358
Be Careful About Transferring Business Property.....	359
Avoid Preferential Payments to Creditors	359
Protect Your Bank Account	360
Plan for Ongoing Insurance Coverage.....	360
Don't Panic About Utilities or Your Lease	360
Consider Returning Some Leased Property	360
Seeking an Objective Analysis	360
Workouts	362
Selling the Business.....	364
Closing the Business	365
Understanding Bankruptcy.....	366
Different Types of Bankruptcy	366
Liquidating the Business Under Chapter 7.....	366
Reorganizing Your Business Debts	368
Who's Who in Bankruptcy	370
Key Bankruptcy Concepts	371
Review Questions.....	375
Review Answers	376
Chapter 22 – Resolving Legal Disputes	379
Learning Objectives	379
Introduction.....	379
Negotiating a Settlement.....	379
Understanding Mediation	380
Arbitration.....	382
Going to Court	384
The Federal and State Court Systems.....	384
The Litigation Process	385
Getting Speedy Relief Through an Injunction	386
Testifying in Court.....	386
Review Questions.....	389
Review Answers	390
Chapter 23 – Representing Yourself in Small Claims Court.....	391
Learning Objectives	391
Introduction.....	391
Deciding Whether to Represent Yourself.....	393
Learning the Rules.....	394
Meeting the Jurisdictional Limits.....	394
Before You File Your Lawsuit.....	394
Do You Have a Good Case?.....	394
Can You Sue the Defendant in Your State?	395
Can You Settle Out of Court?.....	395
Can You Collect If You Win?	395
Figuring Out Whom to Sue.....	396
Handling Your Small Claims Court Lawsuit	397
File Your Complaint	397
Serve Your Papers	397
Prepare for Court.....	397
Present Your Case at the Court Hearing	398
Representing Yourself If You're the Defendant.....	399
Appealing Small Claims Decisions	399

Table of Contents

Collecting Your Judgment.....	399
Review Questions.....	401
Review Answers	402
Chapter 24 – Lawyers and Legal Research	403
Learning Objectives	403
Introduction.....	403
How to Find the Right Lawyer	404
Compile a List of Prospects.....	404
Shop Around.....	404
Fees and Bills	405
How Lawyers Charge.....	405
Ways to Save on Legal Fees	406
Problems with Your Lawyer.....	406
Do-It-Yourself Legal Research	407
Finding a Law Library.....	407
Federal and State Law.....	407
Primary and Secondary Sources.....	407
How to Begin	408
Online Research.....	409
Review Questions.....	410
Review Answers	411
Appendix: Checklist for Starting a Small Business	413
Glossary.....	417
Index	421