

Running a Business 101



Beginning Steps

- ☐ Have startup capital
 - Do you have funds to start your business? (You will need to be able to pay your bills while you build your business!)
 - Capital can be in the form of cash in the bank, but also it could be commitments from artists who want you to represent them, as well as established contacts with presenters who want to work with you.
- ☐ Name your business
 - Is it original? Google it! Make sure someone else doesn't already have the same name.
- ☐ Decide whether or not to incorporate
 - This is all about taxes. You could be a DBA (Doing Business As) company. For Example: Laura Colby DBA Elsie Management. This means that all taxable income made by the company would be filed under the person's individual social security number.
 - It is advisable to consult an accountant. It is always possible to change the tax structure of your business (Elsie went from being a DBA to an S Corp).
 - Making the decision to incorporate will include applying for an EIN (Employer Identification Number) to file taxes under.
- ☐ Do your research!!
 - If you decide to incorporate, you will have to file your state and Federal taxes for your company. Look into what state to establish your company in—and where you would file your taxes in. Each state is different! You might have the option to establish your business in a less expensive state to operate in than the one you actually live in.
- ☐ Hire employees
 - When hiring people, you MUST have an agreement defining role, hours/days of work, days off, pay, and how they are getting paid (independent contractor, hourly, etc)
 - Depending on which state you file in, certain insurances may be required for employees. Again, do your research!!
- ☐ Make sure to have annual reviews with your employees.



- This is super important as a business owner and is often overlooked!

Overhead Costs

- ☐ Get your employees workers' compensation coverage! This protects your business and your employees (and in most states, it is mandatory)
- ☐ Find a payroll service provider.
 - For us, this was worth paying for because they handle your quarterly and annual personnel tax filings. You could do this on your own, but hey, it's a lot of administration...

Creating a Brand

- ☐ Decide on a logo
 - For Elsie, our logo has changed over the years. We went from a diver flying through the air to our current Elsie "swish". Our color went from fluorescents to our iconic apple green. As your business progresses, it is okay for your brand & logo to change!
- ☐ Be consistent!
 - If you have a logo and have chosen colors, use them consistently!
- ☐ Write your small business plan
 - ☐ What is your Mission?
 - ☐ What is your Vision?
 - ☐ What are your values?
 - ☐ What's your 5-year plan?
- ☐ Who is your competition?
 - You need to know your competition, but also your artists' competition. (Why did that certain company get all the bookings last season?)
- ☐ Complete your SWOT analysis
 - ☐ What are your Strengths?
 - ☐ What are your Weaknesses?
 - ☐ What are your Opportunities
 - ☐ What are your Threats/challenges?



Building a Company

- ☐ Who are you in your field?
- ☐ Where do you fit in the industry you are working in?
- ☐ Decide on your company structure
 - ☐ How is power distributed?
 - Is it top down, with a boss? Are you a collective? Create work parameters and reporting systems.
 - ☐ Who reports to who?

Here are some resources to get your small business started:

[How to Write a Business Plan](#): Video from Chicago BACP

[How to do a SWOT Analysis](#): Video from HelpfulProfessor

[When should you incorporate a business?](#): Video from Creekside Accounting

[Start Small Think Big](#): Free finance and legal services for entrepreneurs who are looking to grow a sustainable business.

[Score](#): Free and expert mentoring to start, grow, or strengthen your business.