TAKING THE LEAP TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
A Guide to Help BC Women Make the Transition
Are you happy with the way you spend your days? Do you use your full range of skills and abilities? Can you be creative, even daring, in your work—or do you yearn for something more?

If you’ve picked up this guide, chances are you’ve answered no to at least one of these questions, and you wonder what it would be like to set out on your own—to become an entrepreneur. Maybe you’re retired and have the itch to broaden your horizons. Unemployed and feeling stuck. A stay-at-home mom who needs income and flexibility. Or maybe there’s just something else you’ve always longed to do.

You are not alone. Women now own about 36 per cent of the small businesses in BC—that’s 137,000 businesses. In the next decade, it’s estimated that over 200,000 BC women will own and operate businesses.

The statistics are impressive, but they don’t tell the story of the internal struggle women often grapple with as they start out in business. Becoming an entrepreneur can mean confronting the unknown, giving up financial stability, and accepting full responsibility for your future. It can be a tough decision and one you might not feel entirely up to.

When you look at the high-profile, successful women business owners around you, it may seem as though they got some special gene that sets them apart. Nature or nurture? Were they entrepreneurs from the get-go, or did they have to work at it? On the outside, you see nothing but confidence and drive. But what about inside? Were they ever afraid?

And how did they know they were ready and able to take that leap and go it alone?

About this guide

This guide is meant to lend support to women who are making the transition to self-employment. We’ll give you a sense of what being an entrepreneur is all about. This guide is not meant to cover the “nuts and bolts” of starting a business—there are other tools for that. Instead, we will explore the internal process and offer inspiration. Each section contains a list of additional resources, but don’t limit yourself to these. This guide is meant to educate and support women who are making the transition to self-employment.

Women’s Enterprise Centre knows how important it is for women to be prepared for their journey into entrepreneurship. Over a nine-month period in 2006 and early 2007, we intensively researched the issues and barriers that women face when starting a business. We know that there are many elements involved in transitioning to entrepreneurship, so we developed this guide and the resources in it to help you. We hope that you will feel supported and know that you are not alone in the experiences you face throughout your journey.
When Theresa McPhillamey’s position with a global cosmetic company was cut due to restructuring, her dreams of working through to early retirement at age 55 were dashed. What seemed like an utter disaster at the time, however, actually led to a lifestyle more suited to her talents and priorities.

“I had become accustomed to a rather rich existence during my employment, but that lifestyle didn’t come without high expectations from my employers,” says McPhillamey. “I was getting worn down from constant travel and often thought of how wealthy I would have become if I had put all my effort into developing my own business.”

With her job gone, McPhillamey had no reason to ignore the opportunity fate offered her. She took the skills she had developed in the workforce, considered what type of business best suited her, and put together a business plan. One year later she opened 24 Karat Salon & Spa, offering hair and esthetic services in Summerland.

“My life has changed for the better in all ways. Now I am home, and my relationship with my grandchildren has blossomed. I have learned to trust myself, and my confidence in being able to make good decisions has grown. I truly enjoy being able to set my own schedule,” beams McPhillamey.

It is almost as if her world has come full circle. McPhillamey grew up on a farm with her self-employed father supporting their family. Now she has combined her entrepreneurial spirit with her career experience and life skills to build her own business. “We are always accountable for our decisions, but I really enjoy being first and foremost accountable to myself for the decisions I make. I really look forward to taking things to the next level.”

What are your reasons for exploring self-employment? Like Theresa McPhillamey, you may have more than one. Quite often, though, it is your life situation that starts the ball rolling. You may be a young self-starter with a strong desire for autonomy, a mother who needs a business that fits her schedule, or a woman at mid-life dealing with new challenges that make self-employment a desirable option. In each case you’re looking at change, and change can be scary and exhilarating at the same time.

How do you build the confidence to deal with change? It’s good to understand exactly where you’re coming from, in order to move forward with the determination you need to succeed. The more you know about why you’ve chosen this path, the more likely you are to accept and even welcome the challenges you’ll face as you redefine who you are and what you want from your working life.
A Force Is a Push or a Pull

Your decision to start your own business may be spurred by some external force, such as job loss, relocation, or health concerns; or by an internal force, such as a desire to fulfill a dream or to gain control or flexibility. In this way, you are no different from any other object on the face of the earth: to move forward, you need a push or a pull.

Ultimately it may not matter which force got you going. What does matter is whether you understand how to harness that force and make it work for you.

Understanding Push Factors

Push factors can seem negative at first. When you feel pushed, it’s usually because you think that you have little or no control over your current situation. Push factors include:

- **Job dissatisfaction:** There are many reasons women experience dissatisfaction at work, including poor relationships with colleagues, boredom, lack of advancement, compromised ethics or priorities, low pay—even a company relocation that affects your commute. For whatever reason, you’re not happy where you are, and something needs to change.

- **Job loss:** Circumstances may force you out of your employment. You could be on the “wrong” end of a company reorganization or downsizing. Or you might be fired…it happens.

- **Changes in life circumstances:** A job transfer for your spouse/partner may find you in an entirely new location without employment opportunities that suit you.

At mid-life and beyond, changes to your health or energy levels could make you feel that you can no longer continue in your existing employment.

Divorce, aging parents, or a death in the family may cause you to re-evaluate your life. The result is a shift in goals, values, and priorities.

We tend to forget that we’ve encountered major changes throughout our lives, in many different guises. Remember what it was like to start high school, leave home, enter college or university, start a new job, move to a new city, or watch your children leave home? Many of these changes are not entirely voluntary. All of them uproot us from what we know, and the discomfort we sometimes feel can initially seem overwhelming.

But guess what? For the most part, we deal with it. Some changes have been the best things that ever happened to us, though they may not have seemed like it at the time. Even when you’re pushed from the branch you’ve been sitting on, there’s no reason you can’t fly.

If you’re seriously looking at self-employment, you’ve likely begun to add up some strong reasons for embracing the change that’s coming at you.

Dealing with transition

William Bridges, a well-known speaker and consultant on change issues, identifies three stages of transition:

1. **Something ends**

We often don’t honour this stage enough. How can we look forward if we don’t let go of and mourn what has passed?

2. **The neutral zone**

This is a little like limbo. We haven’t yet defined our new self and don’t clearly understand where we’d like to go. In reality it’s a time of transformation that we need to experience before we can take on something new. We’re in a place of possibility but without clear steps to follow.

3. **The new beginning**

Gradually we see the path we want to take. The more work we do here to understand our motivations and the things that might hold us back, the more likely we are to succeed.

These three stages happen whether we’ve chosen change or not.

See Resources for information on Bridges’s book Transitions.
Understanding Pull Factors

Pull factors are what draw us towards change—they can be a clarion call or a whisper. They're insistent enough that we can't ignore them, though we may try, out of fear or lack of confidence.

Allison Wager’s fitness and nutrition business, New Energy Wellness, in Cranbrook, has a steady flow of clients. Many elements play a part in keeping business up, but mostly it’s Wager’s genuine passion for helping people that brings her clients back time and time again.

“The majority of my business right now is through word of mouth, so when I get a new client, this tells me that I’m appreciated and that my clients believe in me,” says Wager. “I know that I am doing what I am doing very well, but people’s satisfaction is truly the real test of success.”

New Energy Wellness might not seem like the most obvious business for Wager, who holds a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and spent 20 years as a practising professional forester. Along the way, though, she was also teaching group fitness classes at a gym. When she decided to go into business for herself, it was her zeal for fitness and her eagerness to help people that led her to turn her home into a yoga and Pilates studio.

“All aspects of my business are who I truly am, and it comes from my heart,” says Wager. “I am also more available now, because I’m able to make my own schedule. When my son needs me, I can go pick him up from school. When I want to develop a new fitness class or service, I can fit that in too.”

Wager’s clients can easily see that New Energy Wellness is not just a business; it is the owner’s passion and devotion to overall wellness brought to life.

“I love my business because this is my true passion and has always been a large part of me. Helping others is enjoyable, and being able to bring some calmness and peacefulness to people in the hectic lives we all lead is truly a beautiful thing.”

Allison Wager’s story shows that, on the journey to self-employment, more than one pull factor can be in play at the same time. Pull factors include:

- **Passion and self-fulfillment**: Many of us fell or were pushed by circumstance into jobs that we can do but that don’t exactly make us sing. If you know what you love and are willing to learn the ropes, your passion can lead you to create a thriving business.

- **Challenge**: The desire for “more” is often the primary motivator for those of us who have found our skills underutilized at work or who need added creativity in our daily lives. In a business, we see opportunities to solve problems, explore markets, or deal thoughtfully with our own clients and customers.

- **Greater independence/autonomy**: Some of us are independent-minded from the start. For others, the need for more autonomy grows with age,
experience, and learning to trust their instincts. The need for independence is a classic pull factor for many highly successful entrepreneurs.

- **Flexibility**: Many women cite flexibility and/or the freedom to work from home as their reason for starting a business. Flexibility exerts a strong pull for those seeking work/family balance or who don’t otherwise fit the nine-to-five life.

- **Finances**: The challenge and pleasure of calling all the shots about money, not getting rich per se, can be a powerful motivator for getting into business. You are the mistress of your destiny. For some women, especially those who’ve had the experience of earning good salaries, self-employment is less about “big money” and more about creating a comfortable “workstyle” that feels right.

Because they are positive and empowering, pull factors can keep you going when things get rough or you temporarily question your own judgment about going into business. Their draw may be so strong that they won’t let you go back to working for anyone other than yourself.

### Why Motivation Matters

Whether you’ve been pushed or pulled into self-employment, you can create success by building what you love and want into your business. If you don’t do this, if your commitment is half-hearted, it will affect how secure you feel in your decision and your ability to move forward.

The pull factors listed above are strong motivators, but so are many other influences, from your desire to create positive relationships with customers, to wanting to be known for what you do, to simple pride of ownership. Don’t be afraid to trust your instincts—whether you’ve been pushed or pulled or a bit of both!

In section 5, *What’s In It for Me?*, we’ll talk more about motivation. For now, try to identify exactly why you are at this turning point. Knowing where you’re coming from will help you choose the right way to go.

### Resources


Lorna Romanuik’s business, creating child ID cards for emergencies, faced an emergency of its own when a firestorm hit the interior of BC in 2003. A semi-trailer that lost control when trying to escape the area partially destroyed their garage, and their family home was threatened by fires surrounding it from three different directions. On the same day her husband’s workplace burned to the ground with no hope for rebuilding. Away on vacation at the time, Romanuik and her husband returned home to find their lives in shambles. Eventually they were put in a position where they had to relocate.

Romanuik knew that she wanted to continue with her business, so she made arrangements to transfer her branch for Identification Services of Canada to Prince George, the city she grew up in. In Kamloops she had participated in an Exploring Self-Employment program to investigate what it takes to run a business and to see if she was suited for that lifestyle. Romanuik knew that this business was perfect for her, but she didn’t know if it was perfect for Prince George.

“No matter how strongly I believe in my product, no matter how much I know this is a service that parents want, it is not always easy to convince facilities of the same thing,” says Romanuik. Those facilities are natural sales locations: schools, daycares, and clubs. “A lot of time and energy has to be put into promoting the product, and since marketing is my weakness, it is certainly not an easy thing for me to do. It is quite easy to become frustrated and to want to give up.”

Having identified her weakness, Romanuik took a marketing research course through Community Futures Development Corporation. It involved speaking with parents of young children to see if this was something they would want. After receiving a favourable response—83 per cent—from parents who wanted their children to participate in her program, she knew she was on the right track.

“In preparing for self-employment, I realized that you are only going to get out of it what you put into it,” says Romanuik. “There is an incredible amount of information and resources out there to help entrepreneurs; you just have to be willing to put in the effort.”

How do you know you’re ready to become an entrepreneur? As with Lorna Romanuik, events and inclination may conspire to put you on the road, but it’s your own willingness to put in time and effort that will help you to succeed.

The very first thing you need to look at is you. Be honest, clear, and practical; envision yourself at the helm of your business and get ready to answer these questions in detail:

- Do I have the personal characteristics to be an entrepreneur?
- What if I don’t have all the skills I need to run my business?
Learning to Succeed

Are you a born entrepreneur? Some of us are but many aren’t. We didn’t all have a high-grossing lemonade stand at age 5 or drop out of Harvard, as Bill Gates did, to found a company like Microsoft. Look around. Our communities are full of entrepreneurs who are made, not born—people who love what they do, have confidence in their own ideas, and enjoy calling the shots.

But aren’t we talking about personalities? To some extent, yes. Successful business owners often have similar personality traits, but no one has all the “ideal” traits. The trick is to know yourself, both your strengths and your weaknesses, and to find ways to develop or plan around the traits you need but don’t have.

Five different business experts might come up with five different short-lists of desirable traits for the entrepreneur. It makes sense that you would not need exactly the same traits to launch a home-based daycare as you might to build an international software company. That aside, here is a brief list to start you thinking:

- **Independent self-starter:** You don’t like working for others; you are self-motivated, and you like to make your own decisions.
- **Hard worker:** You are willing to put in long hours to get where you want to go.
- **Achiever:** You are driven to do well.
- **Problem-solver:** You can handle and enjoy tackling a range of challenges.
- **Risk-bearer:** This doesn’t mean that you will bet the bank; more that you will take calculated risks and are comfortable with some degree of uncertainty.
- **People person:** You don’t have to be an extrovert, but you will need to maintain good relationships with many different people: suppliers, employees, clients, partners, and/or lenders.

If you have significant others, from spouses to children, you will also need to consider how your business will affect them. You can have all the right traits to succeed, but you won’t get far if your family is not on board.

**Complete the Personal Characteristics Assessment** For a more in-depth exploration of how suited you are to being in business, complete the Personal Characteristics Assessment at the end of this guide. The results from that exercise will show you your strengths and weaknesses in terms of traits commonly ascribed to entrepreneurs.

Who’s Going to Keep the Books?

You may know all about the services or products you want to offer, but what about running the business itself? Most of us have transferable skills from previous jobs, volunteering, running our homes, or caring for our families, but we may need to learn more about subjects like finances, market research, or purchasing.
What are transferable skills? You may have been a banker and now you want to start a business doing specialty paint treatments for walls. Or a stay-at-home mom who volunteered on the school’s Parents Advisory Council and now wants to start a grocery delivery service for seniors. What skills do you bring to your new business? A former banker knows all about how to communicate clearly with her customers. After years of fundraising, the PAC mom knows how to set goals and organize people. Both are probably superb multi-taskers.

Many of us already have well-developed people and problem-solving skills. You may, for example, already have a great deal of experience in active listening, conflict resolution, scheduling, or negotiating. Revisit your resumé and review your day-to-day activities. You’ll see skills you can use.

What about business skills? There are some skills you may need to work on, depending on your previous experience. Even a soloist working at home has to have basic accounting skills, know how to market her business, and understand GST and income tax requirements.

What do you know about cash flow management, marketing, laws that might affect your business, or how to apply for a loan?

Don’t worry if your answer is “Nothing!” If you have no background in business, some of this can look intimidating, but it doesn’t have to be. You don’t need to be a CGA to understand financial statements; this is just a skill that you don’t have yet. And, since this is your business we’re talking about, you may find acquiring the skills you need both fascinating and empowering.

One way to begin is to:

- make a list of the skills you are lacking and absolutely must have to start
- find out how you can obtain them
- create a doable learning schedule that fits your life and learning style

Luckily many different resources exist to help you, from self-help books and online courses to training from community education centres, colleges, and business resource centres like the Women’s Enterprise Centre and Small Business BC. Once you know what you need, you can go out and find the best resources to help you get it.
Taking Stock

If you feel panicky after doing some self-reflection or examining your business skills, don’t be alarmed. It is good to question your capabilities at this point. Your fears will make you look more closely at what you need to do, not just what you want to do. As an entrepreneur, you’ll have to commit to doing some hard but satisfying work. You’ll have an easier time if you are realistic. Confidence can help, but it should be informed confidence.

Let’s look at some common concerns:

- **You have a great concept but feel that you aren’t the one to bring it to life. You may not feel capable, but you really want to start your own business and can’t drop the idea.**

  This kind of conflict can stop you from taking any steps forward. What do you need to feel capable? If you decide that you have a personal weakness (e.g. you’re disorganized or are scared of numbers or networking), take one initial step that will boost your confidence. What suits you? The information and support provided by the *Creating Your Business* Learning Guide may help you feel more capable and prepared.

- **You love to spend time embellishing your dream business in your head, but haven’t yet taken a hard look at it because you’re afraid it won’t hold up. What if your vision has to change or won’t work at all?**

  Sometimes we’re afraid to take something apart, in case we can’t get it back together again. But finding one or more aspects of your business that might not work is a chance to make positive adjustments at the drawing board. Trust in your own creativity and problem-solving skills. Talk to someone close to you to get their reaction, and don’t be afraid of their suggestions.

- **Maybe you feel you aren’t really the entrepreneur “type” or that you’ll seem foolish to others who have more experience.**

  Remember that many successful entrepreneurs felt this same way early on. If you haven’t already, do the Personal Characteristics Assessment at the end of this guide. Spend some time focusing on your strengths. It may help you to know that at almost every event we’ve hosted in the last couple years, a successful woman entrepreneur has said she feels like an “imposter”—even though she was already successful in her business. So you’re definitely not alone, feeling the fear and wanting to do it anyway!

- **This is too much like work!**

  Well, yes. You will need to learn, develop skills, and put them to work. If you have chosen a business that fits you, though, the rewards and the fun you are looking for will come along as well.

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**Inertia, n.**

“The resistance an object has to a change in its state of motion.”

Newton’s first law of motion applies to people as well. A moving object tends to keep on moving. One at rest will stay at rest, unless some external force is exerted.

Action is power. One step is all it takes....
Resources


After being let go from two different jobs because of company restructuring, Brigetta Baron faced two choices: look for yet another job or start her own business. She decided she’d had enough of the corporate world.

“With so many companies merging or going out of business, I found that the concept of job security had become obsolete. Gone are the days when you can get into a company and stay there until you retire. At least with self-employment, you are in control of your own destiny.”

Baron saw her situation as one that many women find themselves in. “You can really get stuck on that track, and it seems like the most natural thing to go back to another job. It’s hard to break that habit, especially if you don’t have a clearly defined concept of exactly what you want your business to be.”

After assessing the risks involved, Baron felt confident enough to develop the framework for her own Vancouver company, tweak redesign and space staging. She saw that with the right preparation, owning her own business—and doing what she loves—can be a relatively safe path.

Still, Baron was anxious: “I was afraid that I wouldn’t earn enough money for it to be a viable means of employment. I was also afraid of not being successful and looking like a failure. On the other hand, I knew I would never be satisfied pushing numbers and answering emails all day.”

Baron took the leap. Her advice to other women who are considering self-employment: “Life is an adventure; book yourself a trip on the entrepreneur express—it’s a ride you’ll not soon forget!”

It pays to look before you leap. Ironically, though, if you look for too long or from the wrong angle, that little crevasse in your way begins to look like the Grand Canyon. Brigetta Baron was right to think that you can get stuck on the wrong side, trying to find a job that will give you security. If you want to start a business but can’t seem to make that final decision, try answering these questions:

- What’s in your way?
- Where can you find help?
- How can you mitigate risk?

**What’s Blocking Your Way? Dealing with NO**

Usually when we have trouble making a decision, we’re afraid of a particular outcome, like failure or bankruptcy, and, more important, we’re afraid we won’t be able to deal with the consequences. You can spend far too much time listening to a negative inner voice that says No, it’s safer to stay where you are.

But is it? What will it do to you to stay put? How will you deal with those consequences?
If you have a dream that won’t quit, you probably owe it to yourself and to those close to you to bring that dream to life. Staying put is not going to make you happy, or you wouldn’t be looking for change. And in depriving yourself of meaningful work, you are also depriving your community, your world, of a business it may need!

What’s your greatest fear? Is it really bankruptcy, making too many mistakes, or not having the right skills to succeed? Your family routine will fall apart? You’re too old to learn new skills? Or is it that you don’t trust yourself to deal with these things?

Take the time, right now, to anticipate the worst that could happen—then consider how you would handle it. If it helps, think of this happening to a good friend and list all the ways that she could cope. If you can find solutions for her, then likely they’ll work for you too.

What if you just don’t know what will happen? If you haven’t run a business before, there is no way you can anticipate exactly what you’re up against. You may think that events beyond your control could bring you and your business down.

In fact, most businesses fail because of poor management, not external forces. If you are willing to learn and take responsibility for running your business well, you will increase your chances of success enormously.

Are you better off sticking with your job? Some of us may agonize over the decision to become self-employed, especially if it means leaving a “stable” job, with health benefits and paid holidays. Even if you are restless and bored with the status quo, leaving your comfort zone is never easy.

Consider, though, that there is no longer as much of a gap, in terms of either security or risk, between employment and self-employment. Layoffs and contracting out by larger firms are almost a given. Some of us actually find self-employment less risky because we feel in control; it’s the difference between being a passenger and being in the driver’s seat.

How Do You Get to Leaping? Say YES

How do you move from thinking and exploring, to commitment? You will hear this advice again and again, because it works: act as though you are already on your way. Do anything you can to get your dream out of your head and into concrete form. Counter the inner negative voice with Yes, I am creating the business I love.

One of the most affirmative things you can do to create your business is begin a business plan. Writing your ideas down, researching your market, talking to potential customers, and refining your concept with goals and milestones are very powerful activities that draw you forward. Actually spending time on your business will bring it to life.

You may have already done some of the groundwork in deciding whether or not your business idea will work. If you haven’t yet ventured that far and tackling a business plan seems like a huge step, then start small and build up your confidence.
Begin by creating support for yourself and your concept:

- First of all, believe in yourself...especially if you’ve done enough work to know both you and your business are ready. Learn to treat yourself as a friend—be positive and enthusiastic about your plans, with yourself as well as with others.

- If you are married or living with a partner, take the time to discuss your business idea in detail. You may be surprised how easy it is for your partner to say “just go for it.”

- Talk it through with someone close to you, whom you respect. Choose someone with a positive, can-do attitude who will ask helpful questions and give you real feedback.

- Talk to other entrepreneurs and role models. If you don’t know any personally, consider asking a business owner you admire for an information interview. People often enjoy giving advice. Ask friends and family for a referral to entrepreneurs they may know.

- Read books by or about successful women entrepreneurs.

- Use resources specially designed for someone in your position. The Creating Your Business Learning Guide mentioned in the last chapter is one such resource.

**If you are looking for change at mid-life** How are mature women perceived in your industry and your workplace? It may well be that you will have more opportunities for development if you strike out on your own. A business can give you that chance to apply your knowledge and expertise creatively, fully, and for yourself.

**If you are thinking forward to retirement** If you are close to retirement, you may have some concerns about quality of life down the road. You may feel far too young to think about gearing down. Self-employment can help to not only carry you through those later years but also ensure that they are rich and rewarding. Of course, some businesses will be easier than others to mould around your retirement lifestyle. Over time, you may be able to downsize a service or consulting business, for example, keeping the clients you prefer while enjoying some personal flexibility.

### Look Before You Leap

You can make the leap to self-employment less risky by packing yourself a parachute. Consider the following strategies for managing risk:

- If you are currently employed:

  Save money before you quit. Realistically estimate the amount of time it will take to get your business up and earning money, and try to put aside enough cash to cover this time. You may still need financing for start up. Talk to advisors about your options.

  Consider starting your business part-time, to keep another source of income while you do the groundwork before and during start up. Alternatively, if you can, use paid leave or a sabbatical to investigate, prepare, and build your business.
If you are receiving employment insurance or social assistance, consider a self-employment program that will allow you to continue collecting benefits. Different programs have different rules; check with program advisors to see if you are eligible.

Take courses to develop your business skills. Many colleges and business organizations have courses available for reasonable fees.

Build and expand your network in advance. As you plan your business, consider the people who could actively help you move forward and think of ways to connect.

Recruit your support team early. Contact business organizations such as your local Community Futures office, the Women’s Enterprise Centre, and/or Small Business BC to explore their services. Find advisors, contractors, and mentors who can help you.

What Are You Waiting For?

You are poised on the brink. When your desire to be self-employed is strong, you’ve done your homework, and you’ve got good advice and encouragement to back you up, there’s nothing really holding you back. Whether we’ve been pushed or pulled into exploring self-employment, many of us decide that we’d rather try being our own boss and risk failure, than look back and regret not having tried at all.

Resources


Give when you receive

Remember that networking is a two-way street. Showing sincere appreciation for the help of new contacts will make them feel good as well and help to keep communication lines open.

“What Women’s Enterprise Centre doesn’t just leave you after the money has been passed; they continue to be there for guidance, mentorship, courses, and feedback on how my business is doing.”

Theresa Siochowicz
The Welder Chic Fabrications
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Mindi Pettitt knew she wanted to join the ranks of the self-employed, but she didn’t know which business to start. When she found a niche in the Nanaimo promotions market, she was immediately excited.

Pettitt has a background in marketing, and Nanaimo, her new hometown, had no website to promote local events. She came up with a solid business concept by putting the two together to create HarbourLiving.ca. But like many new entrepreneurs, she found her excitement and enthusiasm were in constant battle with doubt and worry.

“I was sure I had the skills to build this business, but I still had anxiety,” says Pettitt. “One day I would feel like what I was doing was making a difference in the community. Then the next day someone would say they had never heard of HarbourLiving.ca, and I would realize that I had such a long way to go.”

Despite the mixed emotions that building her business called up, Pettitt pushed on. “When I was first starting, it was the people around me who knew my plan and goals who helped keep me on track. They were always there to remind me of why I was doing this.”

Having support when starting her business was essential for Pettitt. She recommends that all new entrepreneurs have a sounding board—whether that is a spouse, a mentor, or a women’s group—anyone who knows your plan and goals.

“I still find that I sometimes doubt myself and question my abilities, but having someone in my life who knows me and who can remind me of my goals whenever I start questioning myself has helped me immensely.”

What can you expect once you’ve taken the leap? In the first section of this guide we talked a little about what it’s like to be in transition. Like Mindi Pettitt, you may feel excited one day and downhearted the next. Creating a new business takes time. Feelings of frustration and doubt along the way are normal, though it may not always seem that way. Women who start their own businesses can struggle with:

- emotional highs and lows
- balancing business demands with personal, home, and family needs
- getting over the learning curve
- staying motivated

Once you know what it’s going to take, you can make plans to win.

**Riding the Emotional Roller Coaster**

Taking the first steps in your business can give you an incredible rush. *This is the life!* On the other hand, you’re still learning, so doubts about decisions you’ve made or your ability to do the work can cause you to panic. *What was I thinking?* The trick is to remember that you are in charge and to devise strategies to help yourself stay level.
Building Confidence

We tend to think that it’s genetic, but in reality, confidence is an attitude you can cultivate. Create the right frame of mind.

- Visualize yourself in a position of power. If you think what you’ve started is overwhelming, it will be; instead try saying *This is really complicated, but I can handle it.* Carry yourself with confidence, even if you don’t feel it at first.

- Do your homework and be prepared. For example, write, review, and follow your business plan. Once you’ve made a decision, try not to waste time second-guessing whether it’s right. Learn to trust yourself and your abilities.

- As much as possible, don’t take things personally. A setback is just a setback, not an indication that you can’t make it in business.

- Give yourself enough time to get things done. Rushing, even when it doesn’t cause you to make mistakes, can make you crazy. Know when you’re feeling your best and tackle the tough stuff then.

Don’t Ride Alone: Finding a Mentor

Feelings of isolation often make self-employment challenging, especially if you are used to the bustle of people in your workplace. In the last section we suggested ways to build moral support by enlisting the help of family and friends. But what about support for your “business self”?

Those close to you, however sympathetic, may not understand what you’re going through if they are not entrepreneurs themselves. Someone who can relate directly to your experience is more likely to offer useful input on running a business. Many women business owners say that having a mentor or belonging to a peer mentoring group are the best resources a fledgling entrepreneur can have.

*How does mentoring work?* Whether you work with an individual or as a member of a mentoring group, your mentors are there to share their knowledge of things like creating strategies, staying on track, administration, useful contacts, hiring—anything that might help you to run your business more efficiently and avoid common pitfalls.

Mentors who work one-on-one with you volunteer their experience; you may find them in similar businesses within the same market or in the same business serving a different market. Or perhaps you’ll have access to a retired entrepreneur or business expert. The best mentors are not in businesses that compete directly with yours, but can offer pertinent feedback.

In peer mentoring groups, entrepreneurs working at the same level as you discuss their own experiences and everyone learns from each other. The benefits can be timely, practical advice from others who are going through the same experiences; empowerment for you when you are able to help in turn; and the enjoyment of meeting with other women who may well become friends and allies.
Taking Care of Yourself

This should go without saying, but try not to let your personal needs drop off the map. Our business plans, our families and partners, even our volunteer commitments have a tendency to take precedence over us. If you’re going to deal well with the emotional upheaval of transition, you’ll need to spend time on you.

- If you occasionally feel overwhelmed by doubt, create a method for dealing with this. Acknowledge your misgivings and determine whether they are reasonable. When they are, create plans to address them.

- When things get crazy, take some time for reflection—massage, meditation, exercise, time with friends, even stopping for a coffee at a quiet coffee shop can help.

- Try to counter the effects of the roller coaster with a regular schedule. Set up your office or business hours and stick to them. Keep to your fitness routine or create one. Get your sleep! The ride will seem much wilder if your energy levels are low.

Creating Work-Life Balance

Most corporations nowadays consider the needs of their employees both on and off the job; they recognize that an individual who does not have the right balance of work and family or personal time is unlikely to be productive. Work-life balance programs are designed to prevent work from encroaching too far into personal time.

As head of your own business, you will also need to create balance for your #1 employee—you. Both sides of your life will pull at you: your family and friends when work pushes into their time, and your business when personal concerns prevent you from focusing there.

How will you find balance?

Creating work-life balance can be a struggle when you have six children ranging in age from 3 to 18. Grace Kreykenbohm manages both her family and her engraving manufacturing business, Insignia Engravers & Co. in North Delta, and even has room for a social life. Not that finding the time isn’t challenging.

“As I started the business and it began to grow, I became more consumed by it. I was putting in long hours, trying to do everything and be everything. I was stressed and tired; I let go of the family schedule; I had very little time for myself, the kids and my husband,” she says.

It wasn’t long before Kreykenbohm reached her breaking point. “I was being and doing everything, but things were not getting done to my complete satisfaction. I wanted to exceed the customer’s expectations, but when you try to do everything, this standard becomes difficult to meet.”

In the midst of her hectic life, Kreykenbohm was also neglecting her friends. “I remember just growing frustrated at the lack of social time I had. I missed the support and company of other women. So I decided I was going to make

Grace Kreykenbohm
Insignia Engravers & Co.
North Delta, BC

Business coaches and advisors can provide specific advice on issues from registering your business to staying motivated. Business coaches in private practice charge a fee; you might want to try a business association first.

Personal counsellors can help you with issues of fear and doubt; their services are also available for a fee. They can provide important emotional support if your budget allows.

Networking groups don’t involve direct counselling but can provide a forum of support and feedback. Many different groups exist; try to attend as a guest to find one that fits.

If you feel you need help, be open about it—you may be surprised at the results.

“Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work.”
time to attend a weekly gathering with a group of mothers. I had to hire an employee to carry the workload, but it is so important to me to have that time with those women."

Frustrated by chaos at home, she took further action to reinstate balance. “One thing was to close my office door at 5 p.m., no exceptions. I plan out every day so that the family has a schedule to follow; it is much more effective when we keep to the schedule. I also asked the kids to help in the business. I now have two family members who work as part-time employees.”

In Grace Kreykenbohm’s case, the key to finding balance was identifying her priorities and managing her time effectively.

What to Watch Out For

- Your business consumes you, and you spend most of your waking moments on it—because you can—and there is always something else left to do.
- Alternatively, you work too little because you are easily distracted by friends, family, your pet...even the dishes. What are you hiding from? Are you procrastinating?
- Friends and family don’t take your business seriously and expect you to do things during the day that they would never dream of asking an employed person to do. Is it hard for you to value your time and to assertively protect it? Are you taking your business seriously?

How to Create Balance

- Set up your physical environment: if you’re working from home, create a separate office for yourself; if you share the computer with the family, invest in another that is just for work; get call display so you can screen for important calls (and screen out personal calls); and establish a signal that advises others you are working.
- If you have young children, plan for daycare. You’ll need time to work on your business without your children being there.
- Set boundaries. Explain the rules concerning your work time and environment to friends, family, and clients; be firm when you need to be.
- Be firm with yourself as well. If you have been the primary homemaker, plan to do housework at specific times outside your business hours. Don’t grab a minute to do the wash because you don’t have a client lined up; spend time finding new clients. You will be much more likely to protect your downtime if you’ve been making good use of your working hours.
- If working at home is too much of a distraction, explore the possibility of moving out. If budget is a concern, maybe a shared space is right for you.
Practice time management techniques. You cannot work 24/7, and neither you nor your clients should expect it. Learn to prioritize both the work you need to do and your family/personal commitments.

Get help if you need it. As your business becomes established and you are more sure of your finances, consider which tasks you can delegate to others, including hiring a bookkeeper, accountant, office assistant, or housecleaner! Whatever works....

Skills Development and the Learning Curve

In Are You Ready? we talked about creating a plan for obtaining business skills. If you can lay the groundwork before you start your business, you will find the learning curve easier to handle; however, as with anything you learn, you won’t really get the hang of running a business until you can practice.

When Vera Stark decided to buy the small hairdressing school in Kamloops where she had been working for two years, she didn’t know what she didn’t know.

“I had never owned my own business before, so I didn’t really have any business knowledge. It was challenging but fun in its own way,” says Stark. “There were a lot of things I had no clue about, and the previous owner didn’t stick around long, so I had to learn most things by myself.”

Stark had to acquire new skills, including those she needed to oversee the financial end of the business. “The learning curve was extremely challenging. At one point I became very burnt out. I always felt that I could do it all by myself, so I took a lot more on than I needed to,” admits Stark. “When I started delegating some of my workload to others, it made a huge impact on my business, and I was able to focus on my strengths.”

Stark also profited from the advice and experience of other businesswomen. “I have had many mentors and still do. They have helped me by instilling in me the morals, values, and mindset that it takes to create a successful business. They have given me the knowledge and the support that I need to take my business forward.”

Stark has built the Interior Academy of Hair Design and Esthetics from a small hairdressing school to an award-winning cosmetology training centre complete with a salon and spa that are open to the public.

“Self-employment has brought out my strength, confidence, leadership, and integrity,” says Stark. “My current level of business knowledge is very good, but I am still learning. When I stop learning, I will no longer be in business.”

Like Vera Stark, you will probably find that learning can be both challenging and fun. It is unsettling to trip up against requirements that you didn’t even know about. Then again, you can’t know everything at the beginning and you shouldn’t expect to. Patience, curiosity, and an upbeat attitude will go a long way to getting you where you want to go.

What is a learning curve?

A learning curve is a graph that shows the progress you make in learning a skill against the time it takes you to do so.

The more often you perform a task, the less time it will take you on each subsequent repetition—and the less stressful it becomes!

Vera Stark
Interior Academy of Hair Design and Esthetics
Kamloops, BC

“The process I use for learning, problem solving, and making decisions is:
Listen—first and foremost; listen to learn.
Acknowledge—that a problem exists.
Consult—with my team in order to come up with a solution. Brainstorming is a great tool!”
Accept that excelling at anything requires practice. Most people can’t sit down at a piano for the first time and expect to play Mozart flawlessly. Create learning milestones and reward yourself for reaching them.

The only way to improve at something is to make mistakes and learn from them. You are better off to slip-up and make positive adjustments than to “just get by” from the very beginning.

Try to address the big blunders before they happen. Know what causes them—faulty market information and unnecessary spending are common—and watch for red flags.

A business plan can help you identify the areas where you need learning, forcing you to consider potentially unfamiliar concepts like marketing, positioning, pricing, and cash flow. Writing your own plan opens your eyes and lets you take responsibility: approach it step-by-step; give yourself time to complete it, and get critical support from advisors and mentors.

Self-Motivation

It can be hard to stay motivated during transition, even when you know you’re heading in the right direction. As you start your business, you will make mistakes. There will be times when you can’t see much progress, are worried about finances, or you and/or your supporters waver, thinking it might be easier for you to just go out and get a job.

What can you do to stay motivated?

Everyone has bad days. Even at relatively stable times in our lives, we may want to hide out in bed. Find the real source of what’s troubling you and then walk through it. Keeping a journal can help.

It’s easy to temporarily lose motivation, especially when you’re working alone. Talking with a mentor or another member of your support group may be all you need to feel positive again.

Know and remember what is important to you in having your own business. For some, the thought of going back to the way things were can be reason enough to push forward. Build your motivators into your business and stay true to them. You may even want to start each day checking to make sure that you are on track.

Create a mission statement for your business or just for this period of transition. Write why you are here, where you are going, and how you will accomplish what you’ve set out to do. Put your statement where you can see it, and read it when you are feeling less powerful.
Resources


Mentoring Resources:


Get a Mentor/Be a Mentor. http://www.womensenterprise.ca

Peer Resources. Online non-profit educational organization with an online directory of mentoring resources. http://www.peer.ca/mentor.html


Eryn Griffith was a stay-at-home mother who yearned for some kind of creative outlet. Entrepreneurship drew her for a number of reasons, but most of all she wanted a way to share her strengths and skills with the world while still having the flexibility to raise her two children.

“With self-employment I could create my own hours to facilitate child care and have the autonomy of being my own boss,” says Griffith.

When she opened her vegetarian café, The Artful Cup, in Terrace, Griffith found out that the rewards of being self-employed were great, but so was the amount of work she had to put in.

“In reality, I can be flexible with my hours as long as I work a lot of them. You are running a business but really your new customers are your new employers. If you can’t please them, you are fired.”

For Griffith, self-employment has led to more intrinsic rewards. “It has given me contact with members of the community I live in on a very personal basis. I have a real and solid connection with others, which provides my family with a sense of comfort and support.”

Griffith now lives a life less routine and definitely more satisfying. “All my life has changed for the better. Provided I do my job, I have the promise of future financial gain. I have the ability to spend time with my kids, on their schedule. I also have the confidence to try anything, even if not all my ideas succeed.”

What’s in it for me? The irony for many women entrepreneurs is that we start our businesses not so much for tangible rewards—lots of cash, a big house, designer clothes—but because, as Eryn Griffith found, some areas of our lives don’t fit the traditional models.

So, what is in self-employment for you?

**Defining Success for You**

What will keep you going each day as you move out of transition and into being a full-fledged entrepreneur? At some point you will know that you are succeeding, but the criteria you use to judge success will be very personal and may have little to do with finances.

How do you measure success? When you’re starting out in business, your answer to this question is critical because that awareness may just give you the motivation you need to keep moving, growing, and learning as an entrepreneur.

**Money**

Money is often neither the top priority for women entrepreneurs nor the top motivator. In fact, you may not earn as much being your own boss, at least in the first few years, as you did working for someone else unless you doggedly pursue that goal. On the other hand, you may not need the same level of income since you might have lower costs, many of which are tax deductible. In the end, you decide what it’s worth for you to do what you love.
or to be there for others. You may put a premium on investing in yourself and reaping the non-monetary rewards that are meaningful for you. And, as your business builds momentum, financial rewards could also arrive over the long term.

Developing Your Personal Skills

Can you reach your potential in your current role? Being able to break out and flourish or try something new is a huge reward for many women who open their own business.

Self-employment offers an opportunity to use your full range of skills, to be creative, to provide quality to your customers, and to continually grow. You can set up your business so that it lets you develop and showcase your strengths. You can also tap into abilities that you want to test or into ones you never even dreamed you had. Success may be about feeling stimulated, fulfilled, appreciated, and vital.

Working gruelling 16-hour days as a welder in northern Alberta left Theresa Siochowicz feeling exhausted and empty. It wasn’t until she had her son, though, that the dread of working under a rigid schedule won out over her desire for a regular paycheque.

As a single mom, Siochowicz figured that running her own business would give her the flexibility to raise her child. “I was drawn to self-employment because I would have my freedom, my own hours, and control over all my decisions,” says Siochowicz. “I work better and more efficiently for myself because I’m very self-motivated when it’s for me!”

Now known to many in the Victoria area as The Welder Chic, Siochowicz has run her business as an independent welder and fabricator for just over two years. She has no doubt that self-employment was the right path. “There is no way I could ever work for anyone else ever again. My self-confidence is great and growing all the time.”

The challenge of running her own business and improving her skills keeps Siochowicz on her toes. “I see my challenges as opportunities for growth and make learning lessons in personal growth a big part of my day,” says Siochowicz. “I am always looking for new ways to better myself and my business—ways to excel and create a better life.”

Now instead of being dominated by work, Siochowicz has the control and imagination to make her business fit her lifestyle. The constant challenges of self-employment keep her interested, and the satisfaction of her customers is a personal reward.

Siochowicz’s advice to future entrepreneurs: “Remember that most people’s pessimism about entrepreneurship comes from their own fears, projected onto you. Lots of people don’t take the risk and will sit on the fence about things. Don’t be that kind of person; challenge yourself because it’s you who reaps the benefits of your risks. Visualize what it is you want and just go for it.”

“Sometimes I think the actual work is the easy part and it’s all the other stuff I didn’t anticipate about being self-employed that keeps it interesting. I get to build different things everyday—people bring me a drawing and I make it happen. Like taking a thought and making it real, physical, tangible—there’s a lot of power in that.”
The real mid-life change

RBC indicates that the average age of women entrepreneurs is 45. As more and more baby boomers opt for self-employment over retirement, that average age will likely rise.

What kinds of businesses will older entrepreneurs create?

Carl Jung theorized that, at mid-life, we feel the need to stop and regroup. What's missing? We often want to give rein to the softer, more spiritual side of our being.

This may be behind our desire for change and a reason why so many of us decide to become entrepreneurs later in life.

We trust our knowledge; we feel it's time; we want something different and to make a difference all at the same time.

Women Entrepreneurs. RBC Royal Bank.

Challenge

Women are great problem-solvers. Owning a business offers challenge and the need for ongoing, creative problem-solving. It can be scary, but it can also be exhilarating and tremendously gratifying. Successes are doubly sweet when the solutions you find profit a business that’s yours and you learn something in the process.

Flexibility

Even though there is a lot of hard work involved, self-employment means you are in control of your day. No one tells you what to do or when to do it. You gain tremendous autonomy and freedom, along with responsibility and accountability. How gratifying you find this depends, in part, on the parameters you set and how well you stick to them. It will take time, but as you focus and establish priorities, you may discover, as many women have, that you can't imagine doing anything else.

Taking the Leap to Entrepreneurship

In conclusion, self-employment isn't for everyone, but the rewards can be great if you prepare well and are clear about what you want and why you want it. It may be unsettling at first, but that sense of being adrift will subside as you move forward, gathering what you need, building your support system, developing new skills, and bringing what you envision to life. And remember, Women’s Enterprise Centre is there to help!

Resources


Researchers have studied the qualities of successful entrepreneurs extensively over the years with the hope that the knowledge gained could be used to reduce the number of business failures. Although it helps to have certain character traits, success depends both on who you are and on having a strong business idea. A perfect entrepreneur can’t make a fundamentally flawed business work, and a perfect business won’t go anywhere without the right person behind it.

This assessment is meant only to give you an idea of your strengths and weaknesses; your responses won’t dictate whether you succeed or fail.

How to Complete the Assessment

On the following pages are 52 situational questions. Read each of the questions carefully and circle one of the numbers beside the statement, depending on whether or not you believe that you: Always (4), Usually (3), Sometimes (2), or Never (1) behave according to the statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Respond based on what you believe to be true for you.

Personal Characteristics Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Characteristics Questions</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I hate being in a position of having to do things; I prefer to act before I am forced to.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I keep looking for different things I can do.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. If I am faced with a problem, I try to solve it.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I find out for myself what I need to know.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. When I am working on something, I often check its quality to make sure it is good.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I treat family, friends, and my own convenience as less important than getting a job done.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I like to find ways of doing things less expensively than before.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I think logically about what I am doing and what I am going to do.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. If there are several choices, I think carefully about each one of them before taking action.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I believe I can overcome obstacles.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. When someone disagrees with me, I try to deal with the disagreement instead of pretending it doesn’t exist.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I am good at convincing people to buy things.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I learn useful facts from people “in the know”.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. If I see a problem coming, I do something about it now rather than waiting for it to happen.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I try to view my problems as opportunities.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. When things are difficult, I find it very hard to give up.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. When I am going to do something, I first ask questions to find out how to do it.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. My work is better than other people’s.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. I am willing to work hard long hours to do what I said I would.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. I try to minimize the time it takes to do things.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I try to foresee possible obstacles when I am making plans.</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>I find ways around problems that other people failed to find before.</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>I know I can do what I set out to do.</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>I try to confront differences of opinion openly, not to pretend they don't exist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>If I want somebody to do something, I can persuade them to do it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I try to build networks of contacts in order to find out what I need to know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I can see for myself what action needs to be taken; I do not depend on others to tell me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>When I run into obstacles, I see it as a chance to learn something new.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>I do not ignore difficulties; I try to overcome them.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>I make extensive, systematic inquiries about how to do things.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I want to produce the best product of its type.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>I will do almost anything to finish a task on time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>I look for ways of working more quickly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>I do not plan on the assumption that all will go well. I anticipate problems, and I plan for them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>I find innovative solutions to problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>When I start a task, I am confident I can complete it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I do not like to ignore interpersonal problems. I would rather admit to them and try to solve them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>When I need people to do a task for me, I can get them to do it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>I try to develop friendships because they are a fundamental resource for success.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>I do not like to wait until I must take action, I act before I have to.</td>
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<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>If an opportunity arises, I act on it immediately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>If one solution doesn't work, I try to find another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>If a problem needs to be analyzed, I analyze it myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>I want whatever I do to be of higher quality than anyone else's.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>If a job has to be completed, I am prepared to sacrifice my personal convenience in order to do it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>I try to reduce costs.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>I try to plan how I will get over difficulties before I actually meet them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>I develop new ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>If I meet a challenge, I can overcome it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>If I am having a problem with somebody else, I like to face up to it openly with that person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>I can persuade people to do things for me.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>I look at my friends as part of my strength for the future.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Characteristics Assessment Summary / Making Sense of Your Responses

To make sense of your responses transfer the numbers you have circled for each of the statements 1 to 52 into the appropriate space on this sheet and total each row. The highest total score for any category is sixteen (16) and the lowest total score is four (4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Values</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 14 27 40</td>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 15 28 41</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sees and acts on opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 16 29 42</td>
<td></td>
<td>Persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 17 30 43</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 18 31 44</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concern for high quality of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 19 32 45</td>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment to work contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 20 33 46</td>
<td></td>
<td>Efficiency orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 21 34 47</td>
<td></td>
<td>Systematic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 22 35 48</td>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 23 36 49</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 24 37 50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 25 38 51</td>
<td></td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 26 39 52</td>
<td></td>
<td>Use of influence strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you look through your scores, remember, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. This is a measurement of where your skill set is now. If some of your scores are low, don’t despair, it is beneficial to identify the areas you need to work on, so you can build your skill base. If you have some low scores, you may consider taking courses or reading some books to build those skills. For example, if your self-confidence or assertive skills are low, you may want to enrol in a business communications or negotiation course.

Use this assessment as an opportunity to utilize your top skills and work on developing your weakest skills prior to setting out on your new business venture.

And remember, Women's Enterprise Centre is there to ensure that you're in business FOR yourself, not BY yourself. Good luck!