



DITCH THE BUSINESS PLAN

21 DAYS TO LAUNCH YOUR FIRST BUSINESS

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INTRODUCTION

"Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great."

- John D. Rockefeller

It may be difficult to envision right now but even the most successful businesses had a day one. It can be hard to imagine what your own business could be like, how working for yourself will actually feel or how things will pan out.

My advice? The best way to get started is to just do it.

I promise I'm not quoting Shia LeBeouf.

It's true though.

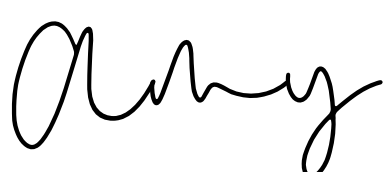
You could plan and plan and plan some more and never actually launch your first business. I don't want that to happen to you.

Included in this guide are 21 steps to getting started. It's probably a stretch to do them in 21 consecutive days, but some of these steps won't even take you a full day.

I've included some links to my favourite products (and - in the interest of transparency - I must tell you that some of them are affiliate/commission links) to help you with getting started.

I can't wait to see what you achieve!

All the best,



DAY ONE

WHAT WILL YOU SELL / WHAT SERVICE WILL YOU PROVIDE?

You've made a decision: you'd like to be your own boss. Maybe you have an amazing idea you can't wait to share... or maybe you have NO IDEA AT ALL but just know you don't want to be running on the corporate hamster wheel forever.

The first step is to decide what you will sell or what service you will provide. If you don't already have an idea, you may well have dismissed the dream of working for yourself by this point - but there is hope!

Writing out a list of your strengths, key work experiences and things you enjoy doing can be a good way to spot ideas you may have simply overlooked. It's also a great way to identify trends or services you could group together to make a viable business. A great step by step guide to doing this can be found in Lindsay Teague Moreno's book - "Boss Up".

DAY TWO

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO GET STARTED?

Depending on the outcome of step one, you now need to consider what tools and equipment you're going to need to make your dream business a reality. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is it something I can do with JUST a laptop?
- Will I need any special programs or licenses?
- Are there any certifications or training courses I need to complete in order to do this?
- How much is it all going to cost?

Once you have considered the above, make sure this is still a viable business for you. Passion projects are wonderful, but the ultimate goal is to make your business profitable! Have a look at the industry you're planning to work in and at others who are doing what you would like to do – what do they charge?

HOW do they charge?

DAY THREE

WHERE WILL YOU WORK?

Once you have your idea in place and have determined whether you're going to need to purchase any equipment, the next step is to look at WHERE you will actually work. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Can I work from home?
- Do I need office space?
- Do I need company premises / warehouse etc?

Depending on your responses, your next action could be as simple as clearing a corner of your home for you to work, buying a desk or even - like me! - investing in a small laptop desk that allows you to work from anywhere (sofa, bed, sun lounger etc).

Alternatively, if your responses indicate you need office space or specific company premises that meet your requirements; you will need to start looking online for suitable options. The cheapest and most practical solution is a managed office space facility such as Regus or WeWork. With locations all over the country (and world!) their accessibility and flexibility is ideal for entrepreneurs and businesses that are just starting out.

If you need something more specialist, consider reaching out to one of your connections in your chosen industry to see if they have any guidance?

As an alternative, Google is always a handy resource to use for local co-working locations and start-up premises.

DAY FOUR

LIMITED COMPANY OR SOLE TRADER?

Now your business has a purpose, equipment, and a location, it's time to consider how you would like it to be structured from a legal standpoint. You may have already given this some thought. There are many articles and videos online regarding the pros and cons of each entity type, but in order to keep this simple, I've summarised a few key differences between the two structures below:

LIMITED COMPANY:

- Revenue taken as a combination of Dividends and Salary.
- Separate entity in the eyes of the law – meaning if you have any business debt, your personal assets are protected.
- Tax efficient – only paying corporation tax and dividend tax.
- More paperwork – relating to annual corporation tax and dividend tax.

SOLE TRADER:

- All revenue taken as income by the sole trader.
- YOU are responsible for the business and its finances – meaning if you have any business debt, your personal assets can be in danger.
- In-efficient from a tax perspective – taxed income is based on all profits over your personal tax allowance.
- Less paperwork – no annual corporation tax or dividend tax paperwork to complete, just a self-assessment.

DAY FOUR

LIMITED COMPANY OR SOLE TRADER?

This decision is a biggie so take your time!

Whilst there is nothing stopping you from becoming a Sole Trader and later a Limited Company, it will involve much more paperwork.

Take the time to think about what you would like to see your business achieve in the next few years: will you need to take on employees in the near future?

If so, it may make sense to start off as a Limited Company that allows you to grow.

DAY FIVE

WHAT DID YOU JUST CALL ME?

Probably one of the most important decisions you can make when setting up your own business is what you're going to call it! Will you choose to simply name your company after yourself - for example, "Joe Bloggs Virtual Assistant" - or will you think of something more creative?

There is no right or wrong here, but if you're thinking you'd prefer to name your business more creatively...

Get a piece of paper and brain dump any words that describe what you'd like to do, how you'd like to do it and any values or messaging you'd like to communicate. Are there any words that go well together? Do these words evoke a company name that is transparent and will tell people clearly what you do?

You can also consider a strap line to make this clearer, but your company name should help to tell the story of your business and its intention.

Once you've found a company name you're happy with, the next step is to Google it. What comes up? Anything controversial? Anything to do with your competition? Anything unexpected?

DAY FIVE

WHAT DID YOU JUST CALL ME?

If anything weird appears in the Google search, or if another company has the same name as the one you've selected, I would recommend changing it. Otherwise, head on over to Companies House for the final check.

Click [here](#) to be taken straight to their company name checker. This will tell you if there are any companies with the same name as yours. Again, if it brings up an active company, I would recommend rethinking the name before moving forward.

DAY SIX

REGISTRATION - COMPANIES HOUSE & HMRC

That's it – you're done procrastinating and you've made a decision between Limited Company and Sole Trader. You've thought about the company name and made sure there are no obvious conflicts. You're happy with the decisions you've made – what next?

If you've made the decision to structure your business as a Limited Company, you now need to register with Companies House and make it official! It's really simple to do and you can find all the information you need [here](#). The cost associated with setting up a Limited Company is £12.

You can also use that link to inform HMRC you are now a Director and set up your PAYE.

If registering as a Sole Trader, you just need to inform HMRC that you are now self-employed. You can find more information on this [here](#).

DAY SEVEN

GET INSURED

Before you start trading as your shiny new business, it's important to make sure you have the relevant insurances in place. There's a whole variety of insurances for small businesses but the three most critical are:

- Professional Indemnity Insurance
- Public Liability Insurance
- Employer's Liability Insurance

The most important of these is Professional Indemnity Insurance. This insurance protects people and businesses who provide specialist services – design, numbers, words, ideas, advice or anything else – for paying clients. In this type of industry, it protects you if one of your clients accuses you of making a mistake that costs them money, and they sue you. I recommend Policy Bee for this type of cover and am able to offer an exclusive 10% discount with the following link here.

Public Liability Insurance covers you, your business and your employees against accidents which result in bodily injury or property damage. I would recommend this cover if you are employing a team of staff, dealing with the general public or operating your business out of any premises other than your home. Policy Bee also offer this type of cover; you can find it here.

DAY SEVEN

GET INSURED

Finally, Employer's Liability Insurance covers you in the event that one of your employees gets injured at work. It is enforced by the Health and Safety Executive and can result in a fine if you are not appropriately covered. It's really important to have this cover in place if you're employing people. Again, Policy Bee offer this cover and you can get a quote [here](#).

There are many other insurances you can purchase, depending on your business' individual requirements. For example, if you are operating out of a business premises, you'll need different cover to if you are working from home, for example. If you sell a product, Product Liability Insurance may also be important.

FINAL POINT TO MENTION: It's around this time I would also recommend you look at contracts and terms of business. How are you planning to legally manage this process to make sure you are compliant and also have formal commitment from your prospective clients?

I'd recommend purchasing any contract templates you need from a reputable source, such as KoffeeKlatch. A template will allow you to swap-out anything not relevant and include your own information, whilst giving you peace of mind that the important stuff is covered.

I'd also recommend using an e-signature platform, such as HelloSign to manage the signing of these; their website will also send reminders for you so you don't need to chase up any unsigned contracts yourself!

DAY EIGHT

PURCHASING A DOMAIN NAME

Regardless of whether you are planning to use the internet to generate new business, you're going to need to establish some kind of web presence. If someone Googles your company name, you want to be sure it's your company that comes up!

How can you do that? By making sure you have a domain registered for your business.

Head over to a website like godaddy.co.uk or 123-reg.co.uk to see how much a domain using your chosen company name would cost (and also enquire about adding email on).

Even if you do nothing with the domain name right now, making sure you own it is really important. You wouldn't want to go to the trouble of building your brand name, reputation and client base, only to find that the domain name for your brand is already taken!

DAY NINE

EMAILS - WHAT PROVIDER SHOULD YOU CHOOSE?

With your domain name purchased, the next step is to look at a branded email address. Sure, you could get a Hotmail or Gmail address, but an email address that is associated with your domain name looks more professional and ties your branding together - it's worth the investment.

There are a few different providers I'd recommend including:

- Directly using the company you have hosted your domain with (if they offer this service)
- **Microsoft Office 365**
- **Google G-Suite**

Personally, I use G-Suite as it's the platform I feel most comfortable with, but any of the recommendations above will work.

DAY TEN

DESIGNING A LOGO

It's time to ditch the technology temporarily and focus on something more creative. Now is a good time to create your logo. Depending on your ability and design skill, this may be something you decide to do yourself, or something that you would prefer to outsource to a graphic designer.

If you're going to do it yourself, I can recommend no better tool than Canva. You can set up an account for Canva [here](#). They have loads of different templates for things like Logos, Business Cards and Social Media graphics to help you get started.

Best of all, they offer a free version for the basics. If you want something more sophisticated (such as including fonts or brand colours) you can pay for a monthly subscription.

DAY ELEVEN

SETTING UP ON SOCIAL

Next step is to go and claim your social media profiles!

You've come up with this great name and branding; it's time to get it out there! Depending on your industry, target audience and confidence with each platform you may wish to use a combination of the following:

- Instagram
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- TikTok

'How-to' guides for setting up social media profiles for each of these can be found here: [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn \(Personal and Company page\)](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#) and [TikTok](#).

Scheduling tools to help you with actually posting content are also a great thing to utilise. Platforms like [Planoly](#) and [Hootsuite](#) allow you to pre-schedule content ahead of time so you don't need to worry about posting at the optimum date and time. They also provide insight and analytics as to how content is performing, taking the guess-work out of social media success.

DAY TWELVE

BUILDING A WEBSITE

A few steps ago, we discussed registering your domain name. Well, now it's time to consider if you'd like to build a whole website so you can start generating traffic and leads this way. If this is something you're not comfortable with, I would recommend speaking to a web developer who can support you with building a fully-optimised website.

If you are happy and able to build a website yourself using a tool such **Wordpress**, you're going to need to find somewhere to host it. I would recommend Brixly, one of the UK's fastest growing independent web-hosting businesses.

Alternative providers include UKFast, 123-reg and GoDaddy.

DAY THIRTEEN

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH BUSINESS BANKING

Back to business for a second: we need to talk about how you're going to get paid! Setting up a business bank account regardless of whether you are a Sole Trader or Limited Company will undoubtedly benefit you in terms of separating your business transactions from your personal ones. It'll also make things much easier when you start to receive payments for your hard work!

There are many different business bank accounts out there with a variety of different offers and incentives. I would recommend looking at your own bank first as it will keep things nice and straight-forward. Alternatively, at time of publishing (January 2020), companies like **Tide**, **HSBC** and **Clydesdale Bank** are offering incentives for small business owners.

DAY FOURTEEN

DO YOU NEED AN ACCOUNTANT?

If you're comfortable with business taxes and understand what needs to be submitted and when, you may be able to skip this step; but for most people, an Accountant is essential. They will help you with compiling your end of year accounts, submitting your tax return, and suggesting ways to make your business more financially efficient. They can also help with things like payroll, which if you've never employed people before (yourself included!), can be a little confusing.

Consider the below tips when looking for an Accountant:

- Cheaper doesn't mean better – look for an Accountant who has experience and can support the type of business you have / plan to have
- Ask people who you trust in business for recommendations
- Make sure you get along with them – they will be helping you a lot in the early days!

DAY FIFTEEN

ACCOUNTANCY PLATFORMS / INVOICING

In addition to your Accountant, investing in an Accountancy platform can help you keep track of invoicing and generally making sure everything business-related is correctly reconciled, saving you time and money. There are plenty of great Accountancy platforms out there and they do not need to cost the earth.

It's good to see what platform your Accountant uses first of all, but I have listed some popular and easy-to-use alternatives below:

- Xero
- Quickbooks
- Sage
- FreeAgent
- Kashflow

A lot of Accountancy platforms offer a free trial or a free account, provided you're below a certain threshold of transactions – so try a few and see which one you prefer using before you commit.

DAY SIXTEEN

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES - DO YOU NEED ONE?

By this point, you've invested a lot of time and energy (and probably a quid or two as well!) into getting your business up-and-running. Now, it's time to start thinking about promotion. Again, depending on your business and where your audience "hang out" online, this will look different for everyone.

A few questions to consider:

- Does your ideal client/customer use social media? Do you think they'd have a preference on platform?
- Does your ideal client/customer use Google – what will they be searching for?
- Where do you want to drive traffic – to your website or your business premises?

Based on the answers to these questions, you will then need to start thinking about a digital marketing or content strategy. There is TONNES of information online regarding marketing yourself online and depending on the nature of your business and your personal expertise, you may need to enlist some external help in the form of a marketing consultant or agency.

Personally, I've always kept it simple. LinkedIn has been a great place for me to generate new business enquiries so I generally "hang out" there, as it's where my ideal client is. Take some time to think about this, as marketing is one area you can spend a hell of a lot of money and get absolutely zero ROI if you get it wrong.

DAY SEVENTEEN

A WATER-TIGHT SALES STRATEGY

Alongside your digital marketing, it is also worth considering what your sales strategy will look like. This includes how you are going to keep track of any prospects and leads you obtain, as well as any proposals or deals you are pursuing.

A CRM is a natural choice for this and there are tonnes out there.

My guidance would be to speak to people within your industry and ask for recommendations – not only may they get something for recommending you, but you also know you'll be able to speak to them later should you run into any difficulties.

If you are looking for something more general (and free!) to get you started, I would recommend HubSpot, which you can sign up for [here](#). HubSpot's CRM has loads of functionality and customisation included with the free version and for something more bespoke, you can pay for a premium membership. What's more, HubSpot has tonnes of integrations with other platforms – making life super easy!

DAY EIGHTEEN

PRINT MARKETING - DO YOU NEED IT?

One of the most exciting days for me when setting up my business was getting my business cards delivered. Call me weird, but that was the day that really solidified the fact I was starting my own business – for real. I designed them myself using **Canva** and sent them to be printed with **moo.com**.

If you think you may be attending a lot of events, then business cards are an absolute must, but it's worth considering other types of print materials too – such as presentation folders, flyers and promotional booklets.

DAY NINETEEN

SIGN UP FOR NETWORKING

A fantastic way to expand your client base and gain access to a new audience is to attend some local networking groups. There are professional organisations such as the BNI (Business Network International), 4Networking and Pathway2Grow who will be running groups in your area, as well as smaller, more niche events which are run independently. You may also find networking events run by your local Chambers of Commerce.

My advice: attend a few and see what works for you.

I've always found networking events quite terrifying. I have, however, found a fantastic local group that I really enjoy attending on a fortnightly basis. It hasn't generated me any business as of yet, but it has improved my confidence and helped me work on my "60-second pitch", should I ever need it.

For some, the larger, more professional groups that require a monthly or annual subscription are better and are more likely to be where your ideal client is "hanging out".

Assess what is right for your business and get signing up!

DAY TWENTY

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF REFERRALS

Once you've completed all of the other steps, it's time to start sourcing some customers / clients. Depending on your chosen industry and product/service, this may be easy or quite challenging. A great way to source leads and new business is by utilising your existing network for referrals.

You may already have quite an established network in your chosen field, which will make this a far easier task, but even if not, it is still beneficial to reach out to "well-connected" people you know. Even if they are not interested in the service or product you're providing, they may know someone who is.

All it takes is one email, one phone call or one meeting to introduce you to a new client and a new stream of income.

DAY TWENTY-ONE

WHAT NEXT? BUSINESS MENTORS AND BUSINESS PLANNING

As you begin to move forward with your new business and settle into the role of CEO, you may start to look to the future and where you can take your business from here. Though this book is all about ditching the Business Plan and just starting, but in order to grow, you do need to start to think about your business moving forward and what success is going to look like for you.

With that in mind, it may be time to consider investing in a business mentor who can help you with a business plan. Reach out to people you admire or whose journeys inspires you and see if they offer mentorship programmes.

If this is something that isn't feasible for you right now, an alternative is to listen to one of the hundreds of business podcasts and audiobooks available.

Some of my favourites include Build Your Tribe, RISE and The School of Greatness but there are so many available!

CONCLUSION

You made it!

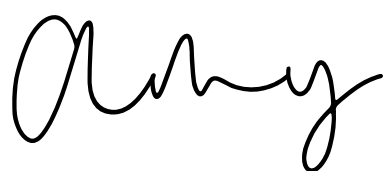
You actually completed all 21 steps and I HOPE you're now on the path to running your first business.

Maybe you're not quite ready yet and you've just been reading through my e-book as a way to determine if you SHOULD give the entrepreneur journey some airtime.

What do you think? I hope I've convinced you!

I'd love to know if this book has helped you, so please do let me know at hello@typingandtasks.com.

Thanks for your support!



THANK YOU

for downloading my e-book

find me on linkedin: www.linkedin.com/in/amyjanelester

to find out more about what I do and how I can help you make the most of your time, follow the link below to my website or contact me at [**hello@typingandtasks.com**](mailto:hello@typingandtasks.com)