

People often ask me when it is the best time to start a new company or launch a new product line. My answer is always the same, “Right now.” It does not matter what time of the year it is, what time of your life you are in, or who you are. The time that you are thinking of starting a business is the time to get started. The following 10 points are lessons learned from starting our own company and supporting thousands of start up companies through Essential Wholesale.

**Make a mess and clean it up later.** Don’t keep getting ready to get ready, just get started. If you keep sharpening your pencils and filing your files then all you will have is an organized office. Too many “would-be” entrepreneurs are stuck in the planning phase and need to just jump in. You can’t grow and learn without the mistakes and lessons of actually doing the dirty work. Yes, there is a place for planning, but eventually enough is enough. So make a mess and clean it up later when the money starts rolling in.

**Use your passions to pick a product line.** If you love lavender, purple or pure products, use your passion to choose your product line. But remember to keep it simple. Start with a minimum number of products. Your focus and your financial commitment should not be too broad. Don’t let all your money get gobbled up getting started. You will need your capital later. Put as much focus as possible into marketing a few great products and not tons of average products.

**Choose to be the Muscle or the Brain.** Some people are born marketers. Some are born to create. Others are super human and can do both. Find what you do best and do it. Focus on your gifts and talents. If your only option is to do it all, then by all means do it all. But be smart. Decide what you want to do; make products or market them. If you want to get out there and sell then you need to be content to buy finished unscented base products that you can simply scent, repackage, slap a label on and call it good. Or if you have the resources, simply use a private label company to do all the work for you.. Have them do all the labor and send you a finished product. That way you can focus purely on bringing your product to market.

**Don’t under sell your product.** Think ahead when setting your price point. Remember eventually you will have employees and other expenses. This is one of the most common mistakes of home businesses. Eventually you can’t do it all, but you are stuck because you did not establish a large enough margin in your price point to hire help and grow. The choice will be either to stay small and do it all yourself, or grow and increase your price point which may result in the loss of some of your customers. It is a terrible position to be in, instead of selling your product \$3.99 to compete with Wal-Mart you should set it at \$8.99 so that you have room to grow and to offer your larger customers extra pricing incentives. Business is all about thinking ahead.

**First impressions will make or break you.** Product packaging followed by product aroma is your first impression. Your product description and marketing will cause the customer to sample the goods. While you think the product itself is the most important part, in reality, to the consumer it is not high on the list. You must have a good product to keep them coming back, but to get them to pick it up in the first place is all about the

marketing. Invest in good packaging from your internet site design, to your brochures and POP displays, right down to your product packaging. Don't skimp on the cheapest bottle or label out there. This industry is saturated with "the best thing since sliced bread" products and the ones that get noticed are those that grab the attention of the consumer.

**Know your product inside and out.** You need to be able to compare and contrast your product for the average consumer and the well educated consumer alike. Translate to the consumer what makes you so passionate about your product. Keep it honest but enthusiastic. If you don't really believe in your product, no one else will. I am a registered and certified Aromatherapist and people insist to me that their product, which smells like a synthetic watermelon, is made with only pure essential oils. If you don't know what's in your product because you buy a bulk base, then contact the company you bought it from and let them teach you. They should be willing to teach and they must provide you with the complete ingredient list. Then learn all about those ingredients. Your customers will appreciate your knowledge and it will make the difference between you and the other guys.

**Know who your market is.** If your price point markets you to the upper end market then don't market to the local drug store just because they saw you at a trade show and wanted your product. First they will require that you discount your product so low that it will only result in losses for you and frustration for them. Keep focused on who you are trying to reach and understand where they shop, what they buy and what motivates them to buy. Know who your product will appeal to, often people waste time marketing to the wrong consumer for their product line. Meet the needs of your consumer group and success will follow.

**Keep your goal in front of you.** If you are creating your own business so that you can be home with your family, keep that in mind. Put photos of your kids and the vacation you want to take with them on your desk and refrigerator. Visual re-enforcement will help you through those long days and nights. And there will be days, lots of them, where you wonder why in the world you are going to all this trouble. Just remember what motivates you during those times and the little things will fade.

**Find a mentor or someone you can count on for sound advice.** Don't have this just be your mom but someone with experience in business development and more. Your local SBA will generally have a SCORE department made up of retired business people that are looking for someone to mentor. Trust me, your family and friends just might think you are nuts starting up a company. But don't let that discourage you, other company owners know and understand what drives you. Don't seek advice from your non-supportive best friend otherwise you could just lose your dream altogether.

**Follow the leader.** There are so many success stories in this industry and room for more. People like Donna Maria of the Handmade Beauty Network and many others have been there. If you see the growing trend towards the mineral make-up industry, or the success of those in the five billion dollar organic products industry, follow them. Don't see competition as a negative, see it as a positive because you can always learn from them.

Kayla Fioravanti, ARC Registered & Certified Aromatherapist, Cosmetic Formulator and co-founder of Essential Wholesale.

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