

How to Set Up Your Business Checklist

Steps Recommended	Comments
1. Choose digital file organization (ex. Dropbox, Google Drive, Slack) to save business documents	In my case I prefer Dropbox as the cloud storage software to save and organize all my business docs. However, I do use a three-ring notebook to file paper docs that are important. It is recommended that you save all paperwork and receipts received from the IRS, the State, Vendors.
2. Determine calendar format to add reminders for filing dates	I use Google calendar for everything. Everything I do syncs to my Google calendar. It's important to use one main calendar so you can manage your time well. Usually income taxes are due as of Dec. 31st. Filing dates for federal income tax return and most state returns are April 15th or April 1st, after the previous year end. City and county business tax is typically due the same timeframe. Sales tax returns can be due monthly, quarterly, or otherwise, depending upon the way you set it up and how much you pay in sales tax. Some states have special taxes due on certain services/products.
3. Identify business name, confirm name availability with secretary of state; then check domain name availability before finalizing	You should decide on the business name and then check availability with the secretary of state to see if it is available. At the same time, also check for the domain name using godaddy.com or namecheap.com so that when you register your business name with the state, you can also purchase the same name as your domain name for your website.
4. Determine address & mailing address (consider option of P.O.Box)	Decide on your mailing address. I suggest using a P.O. Box if you don't have an office address. That way you don't have to disclose your residence, except when a physical address is required.
5. Determine ownership structure, who is going to contribute what and then determine the best legal structure for you.	For an individual to form a small business, you can operate as a sole proprietor using your social security number or using a separate EIN with the IRS. EIN = Employer Identification Number. This is what I did, so that I use my EIN number not my social security number. However taxes are all paid through my personal return, with the business revenue and expenses shown on Schedule C. I am comfortable operating as a sole proprietor because I don't own a lot of property or assets, other than assets held in a retirement account. The more you own, the more important it is to get outside advice as to legal ownership structure. Consult online resources, an attorney or a CPA if you have questions or concerns.
6. Apply for EIN with IRS.org. This is identifying number at the federal level.	Once you apply for the EIN, they will send you a letter with your new EIN which you should keep and use to complete other applications with the state, the city, and/or the county. You will use this letter over and over again.
7. Apply with Secretary of State to organize legal entity. This is where you file LLC or corporate paperwork. If you are a sole proprietorship, no filing is required with the State.	There is a Secretary of State in each state in the U.S. Each state has its own set of rules, typically very similar from state to state but often different deadlines or fee amounts due.

8. Apply for City and County Business License	Each city and sometimes county govern local business licenses. Sometimes certain types of businesses are excluded from needing a local business license. For example, in the state of TN if you are an attorney or a CPA you are not required to obtain a local business license.
9. Determine initial equity contribution - keep copies - \$100 minimum to open bank account. Open bank account to track all business income and expenses. You will need your business name, address, EIN, and legal organizational docs to open bank account.	Open business bank account to use for all income and expenses. Make copies of the initial deposit. If a 50/50 partnership, for example, it is recommended that you make initial contribution in the same way. For example if you open the bank account with \$500, Partner A would contribute \$250 and Partner B would contribute \$250. This is all very important and will be needed by your accountant or bookkeeper to file taxes, track monthly revenue and expenses, set up owner contribution accounts in your chart of accounts. QuickBooks Online is recommended for bookkeeping software and can easily scale with you as your business grows.
10. Explore industry stats; compile research; determine NAICS code applicable to your business	NAICS =North American Industrial Classification System code. This code will be used on your tax return and other forms.
11. Establish social media accounts - LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, NextDoor, Alignable, as applicable	Use the same business name and domain, typically, for all social media accounts.
12. Investigate and complete applications for Duns #, SAM.gov registration, CAGE code, NAICS code; complete Corporate Capability Statement	This information is particularly important if you plan to do business with federal or state government(s).
13. Explore lease of office space or work from home office.	Use a real estate agent who is licensed in tenant representation to review your lease and give you advice on lease arrangements.
14. Contacts and emails sync'd to CRM software (Cloze, Zoho, others), email marketing software, and/or Google calendar.	In my case I use Cloze.com which syncs all of my contacts, my phone calls, my email inboxes and allows me to group message different groups of clients or prospects. I also use Aweber to capture emails from my website. I also like Constant Contact although my tech guy says it does not integrate well with the way I have my website set up.
15. Consider Evernote, Clickup, Trello to organize to do's. Clarify goals and set due dates, using calendar of choice.	I have used Trello in the past and find it useful in some cases, particularly with contracted professionals on a project basis.
16. Organize all marketing materials.	Use the same business name and domain, typically, for all marketing materials.
17. Draft various business document templates, as applicable, such as sales contract, non-disclosure agreement	I have used lawdepot.com in the past and find it very helpful in creating templates for legal contracts and other docs that I need to operate my business.
18. Consider retaining a business consultant who can help you stay on track financially and strategically.	I have an accounting degree and a background in commercial lending and cash flow analysis with 40+ years' experience. If I can help you with basic business tools so that you will be empowered to reach your full potential, please email me to discuss your needs. info@nitablack.com