

Buddies' Guide

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Introduction

You will be supporting clients undertaking the *Business Start-Up* programme. These notes are to give you some information about the programme and some ideas on how best to help your clients.

Business Start-Up is a tool for business development that recognises and develops existing skills and knowledge while being firmly focused on practical outcomes. It can be used by clients to support the development of new small businesses.

The clients may be working through the complete programme or selected parts of it. You can help them decide which parts are most appropriate for their needs.

Who is the programme for?

Business Start-Up is particularly suitable for those who want to work through the process of setting up a business **at their own pace**. Clients on the programme will have a disability so a **flexible** programme with the right kind of support is ideal. It allows clients to study at a time and place to suit them.

The course is designed as a gradual introduction to the different aspects of starting a business so the clients work through the process **step by step**. There are lots of worked examples, case studies and activities to engage the clients and to make sure they've understood what they need to do.

The course materials are supplied to the client as 5 workbooks. However they are also available to download from the password-protected site on www.readytostart.org.uk along with other useful resource material.

What is the purpose of the programme?

The key purpose of the programme is for the clients to have thought through all the issues surrounding start-up and the proof of this will be in the action plans they complete at the end of each unit. There are also assignments at the end of each workbook which the clients send to their tutor as a check that they're on the right track.

The key document, which is one outcome of the course, is their Business Plan. Clients will be developing this throughout the course, but two vital points in the course are at the end of Workbook 2, when they draft their Business Plan, and at the end of the programme, when they finalise it. At this final stage it will contain all the information, including the financial and marketing details they have put together over the programme.

What does the programme contain?

The programme consists of five workbooks and a dedicated website. The workbooks are divided into units, two per workbook. Each unit is written in a simple, practical way to encourage both understanding and action on the part of the user.

The programme helps individuals to:

- ▶ assess the strengths and weaknesses of their business idea
- ▶ understand the stages of setting up a business
- ▶ master specific areas of business activity
- ▶ seek appropriate help and guidance
- ▶ assess their own motivation, skills and abilities in relation to the business.

The five workbooks are:

Workbook 1 – First Steps into Business

Unit 1 – Checking out your idea

Unit 2 – Getting the basics right

Here clients will be checking out their idea in key areas to see if it will really work. In particular they will explore the possible market for the idea. Then they will start thinking about the practicalities involved in getting a business off the ground.

Workbook 2 – Planning and finance

Unit 3 – Drafting your business plan

Unit 4 – Obtaining finance

This workbook combines the essential planning for the business in Unit 3 with the financial issues clients will need to address in Unit 4. As an outcome of this workbook they will have a draft business plan, pulling together many of the aspects of the business in one document.

Workbook 3 – Your business structure

Unit 5 – Types of business

Unit 6 – Legal issues and premises

Here clients will explore the different types of business structure they might operate in. Will they work for themselves or as members of a partnership or group, such as a social enterprise? They will decide which structure is best for them and, in Unit 6, work through the implications of the structure they have chosen in terms of legal issues and obtaining premises.

Workbook 4 – Suppliers and customers

Unit 7 – Finding suppliers

Unit 8 – Customer service

This workbook brings together the key external people involved in any business – those who supply goods and services to the business and those who buy the product. A good relationship with both is essential for any business to thrive and in this book clients will cover ways to develop that relationship effectively.

Workbook 5 – Making it work

Unit 9 – Costing and pricing

Unit 10 – Marketing and selling

In this workbook clients will put together the final pieces of the jigsaw with some detailed advice on getting costing right so that they can market and sell the product or service effectively and at the right price.

At the end of the workbook they revisit their business plan in order to fill in the gaps and revise it in light of the new information they can now confirm.

How to use the programme

Each unit contains:

- ▶ an introduction to the subject
- ▶ the objectives for the unit
- ▶ the main content, with illustrative examples and case studies
- ▶ activities to help generate information or reinforce knowledge
- ▶ a summary
- ▶ factsheets on key issues
- ▶ an Action Plan to help clients formalise the next steps towards their business aim.

Throughout each unit, symbols are included to identify different features.

These help to guide the client through the material.

This symbol indicates that there is an activity to be completed:



After each activity is a feedback section to help guide the client in the right direction:



This symbol indicates that there is another source of relevant information at the end of the unit:



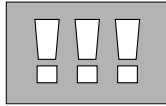
This symbol introduces a relevant case study:



Where they see this symbol, clients should be making a note of relevant issues in their Action Plan at the end of the unit:

Action point

This symbol indicates something that is of particular importance:



Assignments

There is one assignment at the end of each workbook for the client to send to their tutor for feedback.

The role of the buddy

Key role

The buddy's role in supporting clients through this course is to foster their ability both to manage their own learning and to solve their own problems, helping them to move towards self-employment. It's important not to try to solve problems for them but to encourage their independence by supporting, clarifying and questioning their ideas.

You will need to:

- ▶ know something of their background and circumstances
- ▶ know the stage they have reached in terms of thinking about their business venture
- ▶ have an overview of the content of the training course.

You are likely to be working on a one-to-one basis with an individual client. Learning needs will vary from individual to individual, not least because of the different stages they may be at in terms of developing their business idea.

You will support the client by:

- ▶ helping them decide which units are appropriate
- ▶ helping them to make best use of the material
- ▶ talking through how to approach particular activities
- ▶ supporting them to overcome any difficulties they may have

- ▶ discussing and reviewing the learning so that they:
 - have a clearer idea of how to move forward
 - are more aware of potential problems and obstacles
 - know what action to take as a result of discussions.

The role of the tutor

At the end of each workbook is an assignment to be sent to the tutor. The assignments have a practical purpose in providing clients with the opportunity to apply what they have learnt in each workbook. Each piece of work will help the client to set up their business. The assignments are based on the Action Plans which clients complete at the end of each unit.

Clients submit their assignments to their tutor online. They will be able to download the assignment texts and any related documents from the dedicated Student Interest Group on the NEC website as appropriate. These will include Action Plan documents to complete as part of their assignment, which can then be uploaded for the tutor to provide feedback.

Clients can direct any specific queries to their tutor by email via the dedicated Student Interest Group on the NEC website. You may well have solved many of the client's questions yourself and it's likely that the client will want to show you at least some of their assignment work, for example their draft business plan, before submitting it to the tutor.

The client will be able to contact their tutor online at any time or by phone, by arrangement.

The tutor will comment on the work and respond to queries, serving as another authority on questions you may not be able to answer, or on which you want a second opinion. The tutor won't have the local knowledge you have and won't be able to discuss issues with a client face-to-face as you can. But he or she will have a wealth of business experience to contribute.

Clients will receive a Certificate of Course Completion from NEC on successful completion of assignment work.

Further resources

Publications

A guide to help for small firms DTI booklet, from Small Firms and Business Link Division

How to set up and run your own business Daily Telegraph/Kogan Page (1998, 14th edition)

Working for yourself Geoffrey Golzen (Kogan Page, 1998, 18th edition)

The greatest little marketing and sales book Peter Hingston (Hingstons, 1989)

Successful marketing for the small business Dave Patten (Daily Telegraph/Kogan Page, 1998, 4th edition)

What colour is your parachute? Richard Nelson Bolles (Ten Speed Press: USA, 1999)

How to ... plan a new career Judith Johnstone (How to ... Books, 1999)

Croner's Reference book for self-employed and small business Croner Publications, updated annually)

The business plan workbook Colin and Paul Barrow (Kogan Page, 1995)

Useful directories

- ▶ Kompass UK
- ▶ UK Trade Names
- ▶ Key British Enterprises
- ▶ *Directory of British Associations*
- ▶ *Yellow Pages*
- ▶ *Thompson Local Directories*
- ▶ BRAD (to find trade magazines)
- ▶ Mintel.

The Ready to Start Regional Coordinator will have information on other support and expertise available locally. Contact them, or suggest your client does so, if the client needs further help at anytime.

