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THE 50 BEST CITIES FOR YOUR STARTUP





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KNOW YOUR PLACE

“The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.”

—W. B. Yeats



I met this guy in an airport recently who was holding his guitar like a holy vessel; said he carried it everywhere. He was on his way to Seattle, because, he explained, “It’s where things happen.” He didn’t have a plan for stuff like food and shelter and, you know, work. All he had was a ridiculously invincible spirit about where he needed to be.

I understood what he was going through—to be carrying around an entrepreneurial passion like it’s a hot potato, and feeling like you cannot set it free until you’ve reached the ideal ground. Everyone has their ground. Some seek out new ground, traveling great distances to find a community of like-minded creators and an environment that encourages their success. Others alter the ground beneath their feet—creating a business or a community where nothing like it existed before. We are the product of where we put our roots, and these places become a product of us. Symbiosis.

That’s why, for this issue, we went to great lengths to answer this question: Where is *your* ground? To help you find the answer, we crunched a mountain of data—looking at everything from tax rates to commute times—and came up with a list of America’s 50 greatest small and midsize cities for entrepreneurs (pg.30). These are the places full of people like you—who are bold, adventurous and obsessed with building something special.

Of course, Boulder, Colo., tops the list. I lived in Boulder for years, and I completely understand the brilliance of its community, relationship to the University of Colorado, weed smoking and policy melding. Austin is in there—keep it weird, guys. And Fargo is, too, because, well, you have to read on for the excellence that is Fargo. This list has 50 different ways to surprise you.

The entire issue, in fact, is imbued with the entrepreneurial possibilities of place. We look at how artisans build big businesses—like a salt maker in Oregon who was inspired by his local food scene and began plumbing his local seas (pg. 62). We profile a man who launched his startup in Kabul, Afghanistan, and discovered that the harshest cities can become the best testing grounds (pg. 57). Then we shake our sense of place entirely—going inside the strange, dark world of online arbitrage, where a New York cat-toy maker can have no idea who is selling his products, or where in the world they are (pg. 20).

Where *you* are is what you stand for—it is your community, and it is yours to shape and encourage and energize. But if new ground beckons you, then heed the call, like my guitar-carrying friend. He didn’t have a plan, but he had a place that inspired him. The rest will follow.

Amy C. Cospers
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CORRECTED: In the July 2016 issue’s “Ask a Pro” column, the company, Administaff, was incorrectly named. In 2011, the company changed its name to Insperity.

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MATT McCUE
McCue, who wrote “The Artisans Who Made It” (pg. 62), is a senior editor at 99U, a creative think tank for the Behance network. He lives in New York City and writes for *New York, Fortune* and *ESPN The Magazine*.



FRÉDÉRIC LAGRANGE
Twelve years ago, Lagrange took his background in fashion photography on the road to become a travel photographer. That made him the perfect fit to capture “The 50 Best Cities for Entrepreneurs” (pg. 30).



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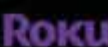

Christa Juhl | Marketing That Gets You Noticed



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OH, GROW UP!



**NOTE TO OLD PEOPLE:
STOP YOUR BELLYACHING ABOUT MILLENNIALS.**

**NOTE TO MILLENNIALS:
LAY OFF THE NEXT GENERATION, WILL YOU?**

By Ross McCammon

IF YOU'VE BEEN a part of the workforce for more than 15 years, you've probably heard some of the following complaints:

- Millennials are disloyal!
- Millennials won't work long hours!
- Millennials feel entitled!
- And they're narcissistic!

And if you were standing anywhere near me on a subway platform during the morning commute, there's a chance I was the one saying

those things. I have rolled my eyes at millennials who have had five jobs before the age of 28. I have wondered why anyone that young cares about work/life balance. (When I was 23, my idea of a healthy work/life balance meant I didn't fall over while walking to my desk due to lack of sleep and the 20 or 30 cigarettes I smoked the night before.) And, yes, I have been dismayed by millennials' nonstop social media action at work..

But I've recently started questioning this attitude (OK, my attitude). Perhaps it was how impressed I've been with the young workers I've shared an office with. Or, it's being old enough now to realize that narcissism does not have an age limit. So I took a look at the data, and the data had an attitude about me, too. It said I've been a raging idiot.

Sure, millennials switch jobs more than any other generation, and more than half say

they're looking for a new job—but their median income, adjusted for inflation, is about \$2,000 less than the boomer generation made in 1980, with less stable avenues up. And recent court decisions have said that “paying dues” in the form of working long hours is illegal. And according to CNBC’s recent All-America Economic Survey, 18 percent of millennials regard work/life balance as most important in an employer, whereas 19 percent of the general public do.

The above facts suggest that most negative assumptions about millennials are wrong. But unfair bias by older workers has happened ever since people started working in large offices together. As Google’s head of human resources, Laszlo Bock, recently told *The New York Times*: “What we’ve seen is that every single generation enters the workforce and feels like they’re a unique generation, and the generation that’s one or two ahead of them looks back and says, ‘Who are these weird, strange kids coming into the workforce with their attitudes of entitlement and not wanting to fit in?’ It’s a cycle that’s been repeated every 10 to 15 years for the past 50 years.”

More research uncovered the following bits of historical office dialogue:

Entry-level worker: Yeah, I’ll be right there. But lemme Instagram this starfruit.

Older worker: You’re kidding, right?
—*Whole Foods, 2016*

Entry-level worker: Am I just gonna be, like, tabulating all day?

Older worker: Seriously?
—*IBM, 1964*

Entry-level worker: Is it salt-P-E-T-E-R or P-E-T-R-E?

Older worker: [Just stares]
—*East India Company, 1674*

Anyway. Here’s how to “deal” with millennials:

1. Stop with “millennials.”
2. There you go.

In fact, disregard all generational differences, says Christian Brucculeri, CEO of Snaps, a mobile platform that creates branded content. “The same basic principles apply to the millennial generation as to any other age group,” he says. “Some people are inspired, excited, hardworking, humble and curious. Some are entitled, unfocused and political. Not everyone is great!”

Chris Paradysz, co-CEO and cofounder of PMX, a digital marketing agency with clients like Wrangler and Steve Madden, agrees: “The millennial generation is stunningly similar to every other generation I’ve led and managed in the past 25 years.”

Though, of course, time has changed one thing. David Reid, CEO and cofounder of EaseCentral, an HR and benefits platform, says the only difference between the new kids and the, um, older ones is the primary medium through which they get their information. For millennials, it’s the mobile internet—which makes millennials, he says, “much more socially diverse and overall more informed about social issues.”

We don’t need to “understand” millennials. We need to understand that the youngest generation is the least experienced but the most idealistic. Know why? Because they’re the youngest generation, and that’s what youngest generations do.

- Can that be irritating? Of course.
- Is irritation a symptom of old age? Indeed.
- Do I still think work/life balance is a pipe dream for unserious people? I do.
- Is someone on my lawn? I’ll go check. □

Ross McCammon is an articles editor at GQ and the author of *Works Well with Others*.



ask a pro

Mind the Gap

Q How can I create a culture of gender equality?

A The statistic is well-known: In full-time work, women make 79 cents for every Washington that men take home. Keep your company from stumbling into the salary gap (and all your staffers happy) with the help of **Elissa Ellis Sangster**, executive director of the Forté Foundation, a nonprofit that provides education and resources for women in business.

- **Hire neutrally.** Sangster recommends using blind résumés, scrubbed of names and other gender identifiers, when screening applicants. Then track whether your company offers plum assignments to equally qualified male and female employees.

- **Create manager-mentors.** Make your senior managers responsible for shepherding junior employees through the promotion pipeline. “Put that gender-neutral advocacy in place so that your top talent, both men and women, has access to those opportunities,” Sangster says.

- **Be flexible.** It’s the 21st century. Life is complicated. Give all your employees the flexibility to tend to their family lives—sick kids, sick parents, soccer games—as long as their work gets done. □
—*Christopher Hann*

PHOTOGRAPH BY DON ROGERS (ELISSA ELLIS SANGSTER)



jargon

Shag 'n' swag (n.)

DEFINITION: A hookup at a trade show, accompanied by some decent merchandise.

USAGE: “I don’t know why my company keeps sending me to these things. The only thing I get out of it is some shag ‘n’ swag.”





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Fine-Tuned Prototyping

HOW A DESIGNER TRIAL-AND-ERRORED HER WAY TO A BEAUTIFUL NEW SPEAKER.

By Margaret Rhodes

WHEN SUSAN TAING left her product marketing job at Google, she went to New Jersey to help run her family's manufacturing business. Taing soon found herself caught up in a belabored transcontinental design process. "I was trying to prototype with the manufacturers, shipping each version back and forth. It was inefficient," she says. "I thought, *What if we*

could 3-D-print all of this?" That idea forms the bedrock of Bhold, Taing's product design company that asks users to play with prototypes and give feedback. It's like beta testing, with accessories. Taing's latest is Bsonic, a \$69 seashell-shaped acoustic iPad speaker that went through 39(!) versions. Here's how the product evolved:



1

"The **horn shape** was obvious at first, because of gramophones and horns," Taing says. "But when you channel sound through a tube, it seems far away. So this telescope-looking one didn't work out."

2

Next, Taing tried mimicking the shape of a **boom box**. "The shape inside it was square, and I found rounded shapes just work better," she says. "A lot of times, sound takes on the shape of the physical object it's in."

3

In pursuit of a rounder shape, Taing thought of a seashell. Put a **shell to your ear** and "you can hear the ambient noise around you, amplified," she says. "The Bsonic needs to do the same, by acting as a resonating chamber for the iPad's speaker."

4

"This one has a **good stand**, and the iPad fits in it well," Taing says. "It's sturdy and doesn't shake." But the sound fidelity needed improving.

5

Taing says her final design is like “**an egg.**” With rounded corners, “the experience is smoother and there’s nothing to run into and bump into,” she says. The finished speaker features a graphic, inside the shell, of an arrow. Adjust the iPad one way for louder sound, another way to view more of the screen. “Now it felt right,” Taing says.

7

“This one gets closer, but we still had to deal with the tab,” Taing says of this version with a **more closely furled tab.** “It had the aesthetics I wanted but wasn’t smooth enough.”

6

With the **rounder shape** in place, the sound was better but wasn’t trapped as well. Taing also had to contend with the tab—the small protruding ledge that supports the iPad—and its tendency to block the screen. That’s bad for Netflix-ers.

marketing

PERFECTING THE PERKS

How one liquor brand impresses its most important customer: **bartenders.**

“Bartenders are our best salespeople and the opinion leaders,” says **Dragos Axinte**, founder of Brazil’s Novo Fogo Cachaça. (Cachaça is a spirit made from sugarcane juice.) That’s why liquor companies typically ply them with contests, free trips, premiums and cash. But as a small player, Axinte couldn’t keep up with that. So he offers yoga classes, 5K runs and softball games. There’s no firm tie to sales, but Axinte says it matters: Revenue in the first quarter of 2016 is up 164 percent over the year prior. So why’d it work? —*Jeffery Lindenmuth*

DID BARTENDERS BUY INTO IT RIGHT AWAY?

Our first event was a 5K run at Portland Cocktail Week in 2011. My wife had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and it triggered my sensitivity about health. I saw bartender friends who were on a tough road of excess and wanted to do something. So we paid a \$20 entry fee to cancer research for any bartender who showed up and finished—we got 50 people and a dog!

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A SUCCESS. WHERE DID YOU GO FROM THERE?

We do Bartender Sweat Sessions for 10 to 150 invitees—SoulCycle classes in New York, or renting an indoor soccer arena on a Sunday. We even had a yoga instructor develop a 90-minute class for hospitality workers, so they can learn how to stretch prior to a long shift.

YOU’VE ALSO HELPED SMOKERS, RIGHT?

Oh, yes! It started with my friend

Casey Robison [beverage director at Barrio in Seattle]. He was trying to quit. I said, “Hey, Casey, if you quit for three months, I’ll take you to a Sounders [soccer] game in Seattle,” because nobody can get tickets. He called three months later and we went to the game and dinner. It was so great, I thought we should do this for anybody, so we offer event tickets and dinner to anyone who quits. We’ve had about three dozen bartenders quit. It’s an honor system, and the stories are very emotional.

AND YOU THINK THIS HELPS SELL CACHAÇA?

Definitely. If bartenders burn out quickly, we have to develop relationships with new bartenders. More important, when we change lives, the reward follows. I know we are on the right track; bartenders from Brooklyn to Sacramento walk up to me and say, “You are the guy who does cachaça and yoga, right? Thank you for what you do for us.” □

PHOTOGRAPH BY LUKE MOKINLEY/NOVO FOGO



A fit bartender is a happy bartender.



Inspiration Anywhere!

**TRAVELING CAN SPARK UNEXPECTED BUSINESSES—
AND LAUREN K. LANCY STARTED HERS AFTER A
COLORFUL TRIP TO THAILAND.** As told to Ashlea Halpern

MY HUSBAND AND I took an “Around the World in 80 Days” honeymoon in 2010. We visited 13 countries in Asia and Oceania, the Middle East, Europe and South America. Then I returned to my career as a freelance fashion designer in New York. But I felt changed.

When you go to design school, you imagine yourself draping fabric and sketching ideas, but the work I was doing for big brands wasn't hands-on. Mass-market American fashion is made overseas, which means you can come up with a color story, fabrics, prints and patterns, but the rest is text and emails with China. Back at work, I couldn't stop thinking about my visit to the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi, where I saw intricate, ethnic traditional dress designs. They weren't made for the runway

or sales; they were handcrafted by a community of women who pass down these garments and skills from generation to generation. It spoke to my heart.

In 2012, I began volunteering for a small ethnology museum in Luang Prabang, Laos—but I was doing it from New York. A year later, my husband and I moved there. We were both freelancers who could work from anywhere, and I wanted to take a yearlong consultancy for the museum. I visited rural villages, and I took my first trip to Chiang Mai, Thailand, where I stood over a vat of natural indigo dye and thought, *This is magic. I have to tell this story.* Chiang Mai had a lot of creative young people making contemporary art in a way that felt more organic than the artisan-style “maker movement” happening in Brooklyn, N.Y., and Portland, Ore. So in March 2014, we moved to Chiang Mai.

That's when I started The Kindcraft. At first, I didn't even have a business model in mind. I just wanted to celebrate the makers of traditional art and contemporary craft, and I knew this would be the way to do it. I began developing products with some of the local makers I met. Being here and building relationships is what makes collaboration possible. There's a mutual respect: “You've got some amazing skills, and I've got some ideas. Let's put our heads together as equal partners.”

But with only a \$5,000 startup fund, I needed to be strategic about money. I learned basic business things like LLCs, bank accounts, production budgets and online retailing. A photographer friend agreed to do all my product and press shots for a reduced fee. Other friends helped me license and edit the music for a video. My mom had just retired and agreed to do order fulfillment, allowing me to offer quick shipping to my U.S. customers. I bootstrapped as best as I could.

In July 2015, The Kindcraft expanded to become an online store, and I posted the first 25 products for sale on a Squarespace ecommerce shop that I built myself. I've since added about 15 more, and I occupy every role in the company—buyer, designer, product developer, writer and editor. I've also set some goals:

In the near term, I want to add staff, grow my audience and increase sales; in the long term, I want to open a brick-and-mortar space somewhere in the States, to function as a design studio, store and workshop venue.

None of this will be easy, I realize. But I stay motivated by remembering why I'm doing it. When I worked for big brands, I didn't know what was going on along the supply chain. Were people being treated fairly? I couldn't tell. But as an independent small-business woman, I know all the hands that touched the thing I am selling. I know how much they got paid, and I know they haven't been working crazy overtime, because we've been working on it together. Sure, I want to make money. But my products have to be made by human hands, and by people who are happy to be making them. I can make that happen. □

*Do you have an ethical dilemma?
Write to the Ethics Coach at ethics@entrepreneur.com
or @MaclOBrien*

the ethics coach

THE WRONG KIND OF HELP

WHEN A CLIENT'S REQUEST GOES TOO FAR.

By Gael O'Brien

Q

A big client is pressuring me to hire his son, a recent graduate, as a "favor." But it feels like a demand. The son made a poor impression and isn't a fit for my business. How do I handle it?

LET'S BE GENEROUS AND assume this client wants his son to succeed—and not, say, just have an easy path in life. And yet, the worried dad has pushed his reasoning and ethics aside. (Hopefully, for everyone's sake, it's a one-time thing.) Hiring a bad fit as a "favor"—or really, hiring at all as a favor—inevitably ends badly. What will you do when employees become frustrated that the son can't do the work, and the golden child complains to his dad that he's being treated badly? Or when the client asks about a promotion for his boy, and dangles additional business to seal the deal? Soon you'll be wondering how much you're willing to sacrifice for this client. And this is why many businesses have anti-nepotism hiring policies—something you might consider going forward.

When the outcomes of an ethical dilemma all seem to lean undesirable, it's time to get creative. Decide what you're willing to invest, both in time and networking, to support the client's goal.

Some ideas: Instead of handing the son a job he isn't ready for, consider offering some coaching to help him

go for one that's a better fit. If you didn't formally put the son through your interview process, perhaps doing so would help him understand and practice preparation for other interviews. Can you learn enough about him to see strengths and interests, and then suggest potential fits in fields where you (or someone in your network) might make some introductions for him? Are there members of your team who've been out of college less than five years, who can chat with him about what they've learned about honing the impression they make? Can someone near his age take him under his or her wing? Is there a short-term project you'd be able to offer him (unrelated to his father's account) that would give him some relevant experience for his résumé? And can you keep him on your radar, checking in periodically and sharing ideas, contacts and useful reading materials?

When you decide what you are able to do for his son, it is time to talk to your client. Let him know why "fit" is so important in your company, the care you take with it and how he and other clients benefit. Carefully indicate why you aren't able to hire his son.

Share the strengths you saw in him and what you learned that gave you an idea how you might be helpful to his job hunt. Be sympathetic: Say that you understand how important it is that his son have a good launch to his career, and that you'd want that for your child as well. Then

spell out what you are able to do to help his son succeed.

There's no guarantee the client will accept your alternative—or, frankly, keep his business with you. But you'll have made the right decision for everyone involved. And by responding with boundaries, compassion, generosity and professionalism, you'll be sending the right message to the people that matter most: your team, made up of people who truly are a good fit. □

GAEL O'BRIEN IS PUBLISHER OF THE WEEK IN ETHICS AND FOUNDER OF COACHING/CONSULTING FIRM STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES GROUP.



[innovators]

The Curse of the Rogue Salesmen

YOU MAKE A PRODUCT. YOU TRY TO SELL IT.
THEN HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS
OF PEOPLE HIJACK THE PROCESS.
WELCOME TO THE WEIRD UNDERGROUND
OF AMAZON AND EBAY.

By Jason Feifer | Photographs by David Yellen



Fred Ruckle at his home workshop, where he makes his cat toys.



FRED RUCKLE was an advertising guy. At 25, he started his own agency, and over 12 years he developed commercials for the Super Bowl, Nike and Pepsi. But he never considered himself a Mad man. “I’ve always been an inventor,” he says. A tinkerer. An explorer. He was a guy with ideas but no time to pursue them. So in 2011, his wife, Natasha, gave him the gift of a lifetime: Quit your job, she said. She’d cover the bills while he built a new career. Ruckle immediately went to his business partner and said, “I’m out. I’m going to go change my life.”

He opened a production studio. He sunk \$30,000 into an app that went nowhere. He experimented. And on Valentine’s Day 2015, as his wife was playing the piano in their tiny Manhattan apartment, he watched their cat, Yoda, discover a new toy: the living room rug. It had become rippled, and Yoda swatted at the resulting funny shapes. Ruckle knew: *This was it.*

He called it the Ripple Rug. It’s stupidly simple, as all great cat toys are: There’s a small rug, you see, and on top of that is another rug. The top rug, attached by Velcro, is full of holes. It’s designed to be a crumpled mess, with bulges and tunnels for cats to explore. Soon hundreds of yards of carpet and Ripple Rug designs cluttered Ruckle’s home. So in June 2015, the

couple made another concession to inventions: They left Manhattan, where they’d lived for 22 years, and moved upstate to a house they bought as a future retirement home. There, Ruckle would truly have space to invent.

Ruckle hired a factory in Georgia and developed a way to make every Ripple Rug out of exactly 24 recycled bottles. The product debuted in September and went live on Amazon in December. Sales quickly spiked to \$2,000 a day, and he became obsessed with the numbers. “Amazon is, without a doubt, Kickstarter on steroids,” he says. “It’s adrenaline. It’s like crack—ahhhhhh, all day long.” There’s another word for this drug: *validation.* He

was finally a successful inventor.

Then his brother-in-law called.

“Did you see that people are selling your Ripple Rug on eBay?” he said.

Ruckle looked. It was true. Lots of people were selling it—and not used, either. They were selling *new* Ripple Rugs. “I’m like, ‘Oh, man, what is that? They copied my stuff!’” Ruckle says. “I’m thinking, *Where are they getting it? Is one of the guys in my factory selling it on the side?* So I called up the factory, and of course I looked like a jackass.”

The factory was innocent. But as Ruckle kept digging, he discovered the true cause. It’s an industry of people who transform themselves into

uninvited middlemen—either as a form of reseller or, depending on your perspective, a parasite. They steal brands' marketing materials and make money off their products, creating all sorts of consequences for small retailers like Ruckle. And yet, these people also represent a difficult new reality for entrepreneurs: In the increasingly complex world of e-commerce, everything about a brand—from its reputation to its pricing—can be up for grabs.



TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING, it's helpful to visit a different site—the place largely credited with launching this middleman army: It's DSDomination.com.

The site, which says it has had more than 140,000 users, launched in 2013 and spawned a universe of copycats. Over a cheery ukulele, a man in a video explains its offering: "DS Domination is the first and only platform of its kind that allows the average person to harness the power of multibillion-dollar companies like Amazon, eBay and Walmart at the push of a button," he says, like an infomercial pitchman. "Using our unique platform, any user can create an income within minutes, simply by copy-and-pasting product information from one company to another."

The internet is, of course, full of promises like this. Work from home! Get rich with no effort! If you have a few years of your life to waste, you can go down the mother of all rabbit holes trying to understand them. Suffice it to say: Most rely on something called MLM, or "multilevel marketing"—pyramid schemes, basically. DS Domination does offer an MLM element, but its main service is something more unique: It's called "Amazon-to-eBay arbitrage." It sells software and strategies to make this possible.

A quick language lesson. *Arbitrage* means to take advantage of price differences between markets: Buy low in one place and sell high in another. DS stands for "drop shipping," which means to sell a product and then have it shipped directly from the wholesaler or manufacturer. In this world that DS Domination sparked, the terms are used somewhat interchangeably. But both play a role in the cleverly complex transaction that enables someone to sell Ruckle's Ripple Rug on eBay—and, occasionally, make more money on it than Ruckle himself does.

To see how this works in real time, I go to eBay and buy a Ripple Rug. There are five listings for the product on this day, and I select one from a seller called AFarAwayGalaxy. The price is \$49.51; on Amazon, Ruckle sells it for \$39.99. So, how'd this listing get here? Almost certainly, the seller is using some kind of software—made by DS Domination or a competitor—that scans Amazon for its best-selling products. (They can also do this on large sites like Walmart's, though most seem to focus on Amazon.) The software found the Ripple Rug, which, on the day in June I buy it, is ranked number 25 in cat toys. Then it copied everything in the Amazon listing and pasted it into an eBay listing—amusingly, right down to the part of the product description that says, "Thank you for viewing our Amazon version of the Ripple Rug."

The price is usually set between 5 and 15 percent over the Amazon price. When I make the purchase, the person behind AFarAwayGalaxy simply goes to Amazon and buys a Ripple Rug—but instead of buying it for themselves, they designate it as a gift and have it shipped to me. Because I

paid \$9.52 above the Amazon price, that's profit, which AFarAwayGalaxy can keep (minus Paypal and eBay fees). This seller has more than 11,000 items listed on eBay. That can quickly add up to real money.

After I place my order, I get an email from AFarAwayGalaxy: "This is to let you know we got it, processed it and have sent it on to the warehouse for shipping," the note says. Of course, that leaves out a few details. The "warehouse" is actually Amazon's fulfillment center, which is where Ruckle stocks his Ripple Rugs.

"That's genius!" says David Bell, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, who studies e-commerce. He'd never heard of this scheme but laughed loudly when I explained it.

As it turns out, retail experts didn't see this coming. In 1997, in the dawn of e-commerce, a New York University professor named Yannis Bakos wrote a well-regarded paper that predicted the internet would change pricing forever. Imagine the old days: You went to a store and had no idea what other stores charged for the same products—which meant the store you were in could jack up the price. But once everyone could comparison shop online, Bakos reasoned, every site would likely have to offer the same price. And yet, it turns out, many shoppers don't do the research. If they like eBay, they buy on eBay. Simple as that. Bell's conclusion: "I think if you're a small guy, you just have to accept the fact that the platform is the place where the product is going to be sold." But which platform, and at which price? That's hard to control.

Ruckle wasn't feeling so *laissez-faire*. The more he understood what was happening, the angrier he got. At first, he was protective of his product. "Brand consistency is primo for me," he says, and the eBay listings were often janky. But then he began seeing an uptick in returns and pieced together what was happening: Someone orders the Ripple Rug on eBay, but the product shows up in an Amazon box. The customer is confused, goes to Amazon, sees how much cheaper the product is there and feels ripped off. "Who are they immediately mad at?" Ruckle says. "The people at Ripple Rug, not some person from nowhere!"

The customer then returns the product, setting off a crazy series of events. Let's say I want to return the Ripple Rug I just bought. I'd push the "return" button on eBay. AFarAwayGalaxy would then go to Amazon, acquire a return label (which is free for Amazon Prime customers) and send it to me. But because eBay sellers can set their own return policies, AFarAwayGalaxy reserves the right to charge customers a 20 percent "restocking fee"—which in this case would come out to about \$9.90—as well as a shipping fee. Meanwhile, Amazon would charge Ruckle a return fee and ship him the product so he could inspect it. Almost always, Ruckle says, returned products have been opened and are covered in cat hair—making them impossible to sell again.



Chillin' in the Ripple Rug.

So, in total: I could have lost more than \$10. Ruckle would lose \$19.51 (that's the \$2.05 per unit it costs him to stock at Amazon's warehouse, \$12.06 in nonrefundable fees for Amazon to process a sale and \$5.40 in return fees). And AFarAwayGalaxy, the only person in this transaction to never spend a dime, just made enough money for lunch.

The fees add up. Ripple Rugs have been returned to Amazon 219 times—that's nearly \$8,000 in losses since December—and while Ruckle

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN BUILDING YOUR CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

Consistently creating and distributing content that people want and value is a great way to heighten credibility, attract new prospects and increase business. In the third of a four-part webinar series presented by Comcast Business, Entrepreneur.com contributor Jill Schiefelbein discusses with experts how to create a plan that gets results. Panelists Ann Handley, chief content officer of MarketingProfs and author of Everybody Writes: Your Go-To Guide to Creating Ridiculously Good Content, and Joe Pulizzi, founder of the Content Marketing Institute and author of Content Inc., share their tips.

1. WHY SHOULD WE DO THIS?

Any marketing plan should have a clear objective. Ask, "Why are we doing content marketing?" "What is our main objective or goal?" Do you want to gain new clients? Get more business from existing clients? It's important to start with the end in mind.

2. WHO ARE WE TRYING TO REACH?

Once you know your "why" it's important to address your "who" – your audience. Who are they? What do they value? What are their pain points...their needs? Identify your audience and find your differentiated story—the story that is yours and yours alone.

3. WHAT VALUE WILL WE DELIVER?

What do you stand for and what does that mean to your audience? How do you provide value in a way that sets you apart from the competition? "An easy litmus test for whether something is valuable is to ask yourself, 'Will our prospects or customers thank us for this?', and, if not, revisit your plan," states Handley.

4. WHERE WILL WE DELIVER IT?

What platform(s) will you use to deliver and monetize your content? Rather than blasting content on every platform, Pulizzi recommends focusing on one. Do one thing really well over time to build an audience, and incorporate social media when it makes sense.

5. HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT'S WORKING?

Once you have a plan in place and have executed that plan, how do you know if it's working? Setting metrics and goals at the onset of a campaign is essential. Once we build a subscriber list of people who know, like and trust us, we can see how they are behaving differently: Do they buy more, close faster, etc.?

"The point is not to get great at content marketing," says Handley. "Rather, the point is to get great at using content marketing to drive your business," and in doing so to embrace the huge opportunity all businesses have.

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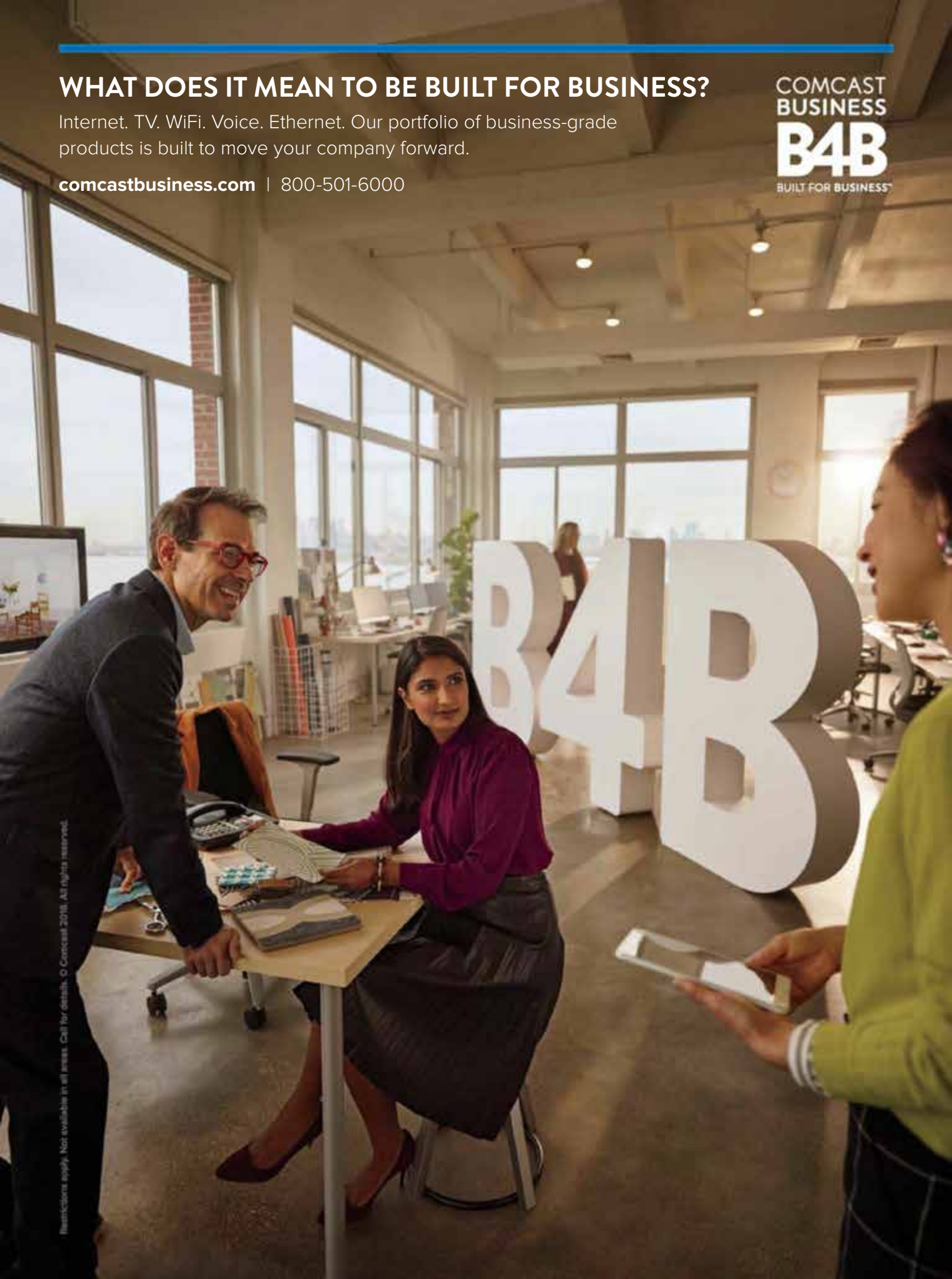
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Fred Ruckle and Yoda, the cat that started it all.

can't prove they were all arbitrage-related, he says that sales through his own website have yielded only one return. That's why this whole thing makes him furious. He has appealed to eBay and Amazon, but arbitraging doesn't appear to violate either platform's rules. Amazon declined to comment for this story. An eBay spokesman told me, "We don't specify where sellers obtain the products they sell." Hitesh Juneja, DS Domination's cofounder, says he has "a very good relationship with eBay."

And so, Ruckle has tried taking his campaign to the arbitragers himself. He's gotten into email arguments with them. He finds other anti-arbitrage sellers and swaps strategies. One of those people, Eric Wildermuth, who sells a line of children's hats called Snuggleheads, came up with a particularly sneaky punishment: He bought his own hat from an eBay arbitrageur for \$27—and then, before the arbitrageur could go to Amazon and make the purchase, Wildermuth changed his Amazon listing price to \$199. Result: The arbitrageur could either lose \$172 on the sale or cancel the purchase, which would damage the arbitrageur's eBay ranking. Wildermuth repeated this about 10 times. "I got these frantic calls [from the arbitrageur]. He said, 'Please don't do this,'" says Wildermuth. "He knew what I was doing. And I let out a string of expletives."

This summer, Ruckle tried a new approach: He put his own product on eBay and titled it "All other eBay sellers are fake." A few weeks later, he stumbled upon an eBay listing with a familiar title. "All other eBay sellers are fake," it said. It wasn't his, of course.

Someone had copied that, too.

THERE IS AN ARGUMENT RUCKLE doesn't like very much, and it goes like this: *Hey, what's the big deal?* Sure, the arbitrageur eBay listings are ugly. And sure, someone else made a buck on your hard work. But returns are the cost of doing business. And ultimately, if 1,000 arbitrageurs sold your product, that's 1,000 more products you sold at the price you set. "If someone was doing that with my book, and I was selling a few more books, I'd be all for it," says Bell, the Wharton professor. (Note to arbitrageurs: It's called *Location Is (Still) Everything*. You're welcome.)

This, you will not be surprised to learn, is also the attitude of the arbitrageurs. "The mentality is, they're making money for these people's products," says Anthony Hull, founder of Profit Scrapper, a company that offers

arbitrage software. "It's that person who's getting paid for that product in the end. For him to say he just wants control is damaging, really, to him, in terms of reducing his potential sales volume."

Hull says he grew up working in controversial businesses, although not initially by choice. His dad was disabled and employed as a switchboard operator, which paid poorly and was unfulfilling, so he was desperate to find a better source of income. That made him an easy mark for work-from-home schemes. The older man signed up to sell supplements, import paintings from Hong Kong and all manner of other odd tasks. Hull, who was a child at the time, became his dad's assistant. "That experience always stuck with me," the younger Hull says, "of seeing my father often conned out of the little money he had."

Hull grew up and eventually got a degree in business information systems. He spent years as a web developer and took a short detour into carpet cleaning. When DS Domination came out, he was intrigued: Could this really work? He tried out the process and was impressed but felt he could build better software. In April 2014, he launched Profit Scrapper.

I ask why he'd even entertain internet schemes, after seeing the scams his dad fell for. "Maybe it's me wanting to do something where, OK, I am promising something, but I'm fulfilling the promise as well," says Hull, who lives north of Manchester, England. Sure, some of his customers are just looking for easy money—but they don't last long, he says. The people who succeed in arbitrage want to work hard but have limited options. He's had users with lost limbs or sick relatives. His customer service adviser works from home, caring for her disabled daughter. He has hundreds of people who pay for his software, and some sell hundreds of items every day. "If I'm able to have a career and help people—people like my dad, who are struggling—it's very fulfilling, and that's why I continue to do it."

Ruckle is deeply skeptical of stories like this. He sees arbitrage companies repeatedly bend the truth, and now assumes that everything he hears from sellers must be untrue. For example, what happens if a customer asks, *Why did my order arrive in this Amazon box?* "Tell them you are environmentally conscious and like to recycle packaging," says the online sales site MarketingBoard.biz. One arbitrageur admitted to me that he tells customers, "I use Amazon as a fulfillment center."

But what's undeniable is that get-rich-quick schemes—whether they're online sales or Trump University—mostly attract people who are down on their luck. And many will stay that way. On the front page of the website for Profit Spy, another arbitrage software company, an animated man dances under a cascade of dollars. "Guaranteed to make it make rain," the site says clumsily, and promises that Profit Spy is "ideal" for people who need a "source of income that will be around forever." But on a separate page, Profit Spy says that "any reliance" on its claims are "strictly at your own risk." The DS Domination and Profit Scrapper websites also carry disclaimers; those say there's no guarantee of profits. I spoke with one woman who has used DS Domination for years, but her best month brought in \$800. She's disabled, divorced and says she has an attention deficit disorder, and she lives with her son and daughter-in-law in Kentucky. "I tend to wind up fiddling around all day and then realizing, eight hours later, I didn't get anything done," she says. She has 50 items listed on eBay. She sold two in the past month.

Not all arbitrageurs have a hard-luck story, though. Some, like Julie Becker, just consider themselves online entrepreneurs.

Becker lives in Georgia and once held a traditional corporate job, but office culture turned her off. "I just thought, *This is my life, and I can*

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choose to live it the way I want to, and I don't have to do this," she says. She discovered those MLM companies—the multilevel marketing, where, pyramid-style, one person recruits another and gets a cut of their sales—and tried out a few with varying success. In 2013, she signed up for DS Domination, paying \$19.95 a month for its arbitrage training sessions. "I really was blown away," she says. "This is very step-by-step, very basic stuff that people can do at the most rudimentary level."

Like many online marketing businesses, DS Domination has multiple buy-in levels. Committed users can pay for more complex training, where they learn revenue-building tricks like generating cash back, using gift cards and optimizing sales tax collection. But DS Domination has also evolved past arbitrage. It now teaches its most advanced users how to produce their own products and sell them on Amazon. Becker tried it, loved it and gave up arbitrage altogether. She developed a brand called Juligo, a niche in camping equipment, and found a particular hit with a headlamp. It's just an ordinary, generic light made by a Chinese manufacturer, which she had stamped with her brand. "I've sold tens of thousands of those buggers, a ridiculous amount," she says. "On those alone, I've done more than six figures of gross sales over the course of a year." Now she regularly invests \$10,000 in new inventory, has it shipped to her home so she can inspect it for quality and then sends it off to Amazon's warehouses—where it's sold just like the Ripple Rug.

The Juligo headlamp has become a top-selling item on Amazon. And we all know what happens to top-selling items: They get arbitrated. Other people—Becker's peers—are now selling her headlamp on eBay and making a few extra bucks off her work. Does it bother her? "I think it's awesome," she says. "I can earn some income, and they can earn some income. It's really fun to watch that."



AT ITS HEART, NONE OF THIS IS NEW. In the Mycenaean period, no doubt, some clever ancient Greeks were arbitrating wine. Ticket scalpers are arbitrageurs. People have accused McDonald's of arbitrating meat, selling the McRib only when pork prices drop. The difference today, however, is the breadth of commerce happening on just a handful of platforms. In exchange for the massive, unprecedented reach companies like Amazon and eBay provide, a product like Ripple Rug must relinquish some measure of control and identity. It is not a box on a shelf, carefully positioned and branded. It is a clickable subject line, a few photos and some text. And in this environment, it wouldn't even occur to most customers to wonder: *Who's actually selling this?*

That's a frustration for brands, who want long-lasting relationships with their buyers. "Amazon's great in a lot of ways," says Ben Hantoot, cofounder of the wildly popular game Cards Against Humanity. "Everyone trusts it, the shipping is incredible, but it's bad in that you don't really have fine-tuned control over the customer experience."

Hantoot's game is regularly arbitrated on eBay. He doesn't care. eBay is also full of counterfeit versions of Cards Against Humanity, so he's happy that the arbitrageurs, who are at least selling his product, will rise to the top. But the big platforms remind him about how much brands crave that fine-tuned customer experience—and how many e-commerce problems, including arbitrage, could be lessened if brands directly reach their fans. So to accomplish that, he has cofounded a fully customizable system called Blackbox. It isn't a platform like Amazon; rather, it powers sales on a brand's own website. Blackbox processes transactions, as well as warehouses and ships product. Brands control everything from the

packing slips to the language in the confirmation email, and could easily block arbitrageurs if they wanted to.

Blackbox is rolling out slowly, and is currently in use by five companies. But Hantoot doesn't expect an instant revolution. "We tell our clients and prospective clients that you also have to be on Amazon," Hantoot says, "just because that's where so many people go to shop and literally won't shop anywhere else. If you don't sell on Amazon yourself, someone else will, and they'll sell it for a marked-up price, or it could be counterfeit."

Three days after I order my Ripple Rug, in fact, I get my own surprise from Amazon. The cat toy arrives at my door inside a plain cardboard box. There's no Amazon logo anywhere. Inside, there's no receipt. The only clue to this box's origin, in fact, is an easy-to-miss note at the bottom of the address label: "Follow Amazon on Instagram!" it says.

This is highly unusual in arbitrage. The game, it seems, has changed.

I send a message to AFarAwayGalaxy. How did you do this? I ask. I get an email back from Drake Leacock, which he says isn't his real name. He won't reveal how he shipped in a generic box; he calls it a trade secret. But he does say he has worked in "various online businesses" for 20 years, started arbitrage about a year ago and has good news for opponents like Ruckle: Arbitrage has become too popular for its own good.

When Leacock started, he says, he was able to make a decent living. But now more and more people are flooding eBay with identical listings. "You have no idea how hard it is to make money at it these days," Leacock writes. "Only the big guys are making money, and not nearly as much as people would think. The attrition rate is sky-high for new people in this business. Very few will make it."



RUCKLE ISN'T WAITING AROUND to see how it all ends.

In June, he raised his price on Amazon by \$4 and included this note in his description: "We have increased our price on Amazon to cover fees, lost inventory, abusive returns and fake eBay sellers." Then he launched the Ripple Rug 2, a redesigned version of the original, which won't be available on Amazon. It's being sold only through brick-and-mortar stores and on his own site, and is now \$4 cheaper than the original. "We're hoping we'll use Amazon for people to see it and go, 'I want it. And wait, there's a better version? But it's not on Amazon? Fine, I'll go buy the better version,'" he says.

He's also stopped using Amazon's warehouses. He worked out a system to do shipping himself—saving on fees, which in turn will allow him to lower his price. It will also avoid odd hiccups where, for example, all his Amazon inventory was suddenly unavailable for a few weeks in June. Ruckle, of course, suspected the arbitrageurs had found some way to reserve it all, though he couldn't prove it.

If his plan works—and given how many customers don't comparison shop, that's a big if—his direct Ripple Rug 2 sales will overtake the Amazon sales of Ripple Rug 1. And as his Amazon sales drop, the original will become less attractive to arbitrageurs. And then he'll be free.

If it doesn't work? Well, he says, then something else will have to give. He sometimes spends three hours a day fighting the arbitrageurs. That's three hours a day he could be inventing, which is the reason he got into all this in the first place. "As my wife says, we'll have to not sweat it the way we do now," he says, "because it's too much anxiety to live with. It's super stressful."

His fallback plan: He'll just sell as much as he can on Amazon, and hope for the best. □



INSPIRATION ON THE GO

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Entrepreneur



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THE

BEST

CITIES

FOR

ENTREPRENEURS



EURS

50 BEST CITIES



Yes, there's life for entrepreneurs outside New York and San Francisco—and we've got the proof! To identify the best places in which to launch and operate a business, we partnered with Livability.com, which studies small and midsize cities. Matt Carmichael, the site's chief trend analyst, developed the ranking, crunching a wide range of data, including the number of businesses and employees between 2011 to 2015; unemployment rates; number of VC deals in the past 10 years; business tax rate; value of SBA and 7(a) loans; percentage of college-educated locals; cost of living; commute time; accessibility of high-speed broadband; projected household income and population increase from now to 2020; "leakage and surplus," which charts whether people spend their money outside a city on goods and services rather than in it; the growth of good jobs and high-income positions: and Livability's own LivScore rating of overall quality of life. The end result: We have 50 of the nation's most livable, viable cities for entrepreneurs to be successful and enjoy life. Come take the tour.

-
1. BOULDER, COLO.
 2. AUSTIN, TEX.
 3. PROVO, UTAH
 4. CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.
 5. CHAPEL HILL, N.C.
 6. ANN ARBOR, MICH.
 7. FARGO, N.D.
 8. COLUMBIA, MO.
 9. FREDERICKSBURG, VA.
 10. STATE COLLEGE, PA.
 11. DECATUR, GA.
 12. SALT LAKE CITY
 13. MINNEAPOLIS
 14. ALEXANDRIA, VA.
 15. ORLANDO, FLA.
 16. SILVER SPRING, MD.
 17. COLUMBUS, OHIO
 18. LINCOLN, NEBR.
 19. KANSAS CITY, MO.
 20. ITHACA, N.Y.
 21. SIOUX FALLS, S.D.
 22. SEATTLE
 23. LAWRENCE, KANS.
 24. WASHINGTON, D.C.
 25. GRAND RAPIDS
 26. DENTON, TEX.
 27. OMAHA
 28. PORTLAND, OREG.
 29. NEWPORT, R.I.
 30. BLOOMINGTON, IND.
 31. CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
 32. MANHATTAN, KANS.
 33. MIAMI BEACH, FLA.
 34. TEMPE, ARIZ.
 35. FORT WORTH, TEX.
 36. NASHVILLE
 37. ROCHESTER, MINN.
 38. CINCINNATI
 39. CORVALLIS, OREG.
 40. MADISON, WIS.
 41. RENO, NEV.
 42. ASHEVILLE, N.C.
 43. IOWA CITY, IOWA
 44. ALBANY, N.Y.
 45. NORMAN, OKLA.
 46. TALLAHASSEE, FLA.
 47. HOBOKEN, N.J.
 48. OKLAHOMA CITY
 49. BOISE, IDAHO
 50. BELLEVUE, WASH.

REPORTING BY CLINT CARTER, JEFF CHU,
MATT MCCUE, KATE ROCKWOOD,
STEPHANIE SCHOMER AND AMY WILKINSON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRÉDÉRIC LAGRANGE

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BOULDER

WHAT MAKES BOULDER SO GREAT

When Livability's Carmichael crunched our data and saw the result, he wasn't surprised to see that Boulder sat at the top. "Boulder always seems to be the perfect storm of everything," he says. It has 300 days of sunshine a year, Flatirons mountain views, a foodie culture with a killer craft beer scene, universities, a tech-savvy government and, according to a 2013 New Engine/Kauffman Foundation research report, the highest density of tech startups in America.

So what's it like to work there? That's what we asked Brad Feld, a longtime resident and cofounder of the \$1 billion investment firm Foundry Group.

DEMOGRAPHICS

"The town is very progressive," says Feld. "It's a highly educated population—30,000 people are affiliated with the University of Colorado and another 5,000 with government and research labs. When you smash together people in college, people with deep technical knowledge and a bunch of creative people doing art and music in a small physical area, crazy, amazing stuff happens."

DENSITY

"Downtown is highly concentrated with startups, so you essentially have an extended campus for businesses. If I walk from my office to the other end of Pearl

Street, about five blocks, I'll pass 10 companies we're investors in. Techstars, which we invested in and was founded here, is across the floor from our office."

DIVERSITY

"Boulder is the origin of the natural food industry, and the lifestyle, outdoors, health and sustainability [known as LOHAS] marketplace started here. And you have stuff with robotics—in 2012 we invested in Sphero, and last year they came out with the BB-8 robot that was front and center in *Star Wars*. Now they are a very profitable, 200-person company."



A HIGH AND MIGHTY INDUSTRY

Karin Lazarus knows how to talk up her treats, and she especially loves her Keylime Kickers: "White chocolate truffles made with key lime oil and rolled in graham cracker crumbs," she says. "It's our most popular product."

Oh, and it's cannabis-infused. But so is everything she makes.

Lazarus owns Sweet Mary Jane Edibles, a wholesale bakery she launched in 2010, and it has since become an industry favorite. "Back when we were just starting, landlords would hang up on me when I told them what I wanted to do," she says. "It took a while to find a landlord who was open-minded to the cannabis industry." But today, Boulder is the go-to spot for entrepreneurs dealing in legal pot. The county government is welcoming ("You feel like they've got your back," Lazarus says), and so is the community.

The industry even has its own local accelerator, called CanopyBoulder, which is laying a foundation for the fast-growing world of weed. Cofounder Micah Tapman is



WHEN THE HOLIDAY SHIPPING SEASON HITS, WHO WILL YOU RELY ON?

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Convenient: Free regular Saturday delivery 52 weeks a year.*
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Let our experts help you get ready for the holidays.
Contact us for a free shipping analysis at usps.com/holidaydelivery

*Except when Saturday is a national holiday.
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Some restrictions apply. For additional information, visit the Postage Calculator at <http://postcalc.usps.com>
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optimistic that the cannabis business can boom; in the past year alone, Colorado saw a 40 percent industry growth rate. The next challenge: He wants to attract people with solid business bona fides, rather than just a passion for the plant. “We need better entrepreneurs, better skills—MBAs, JDs, people with years of experience at Fortune 500 companies,” he says.

Ideally, that will speed up the professionalization of the industry, says Roy Bingham of BDS Analytics, a firm that analyzes cannabis sales data. “This industry will hit \$30 billion in a matter of years, and mainstream business is tuning in,” he says, though he understands their initial hesitation. Bingham is a former investment banker who was first encouraged to work in cannabis by two of his friends (who just happen to be the cofounders of CanopyBoulder). “It took them months to persuade me that it wasn’t career suicide,” he says. “But then I realized the tremendous growth opportunity.”

Other local startups are now carving out old-school niches in this New Age industry. Adistry helps navigate compliant advertising, and Tradiv’s marketplace connects cultivators and dispensaries. (Both are graduates of CanopyBoulder.) “We don’t grow anything,” says Meghan Larson, CEO of Adistry. “But we can help people figure out the topics that aren’t always sexy but are important.”

Why set up shop in Boulder when Denver is just 25 minutes away? “I’ve lived in Boston, London, Chicago, Rhode Island,” Bingham says. “I’ve never known a community as energized around new businesses as Boulder is.” Larson echoes the sentiment: “It’s the Boulder bubble,” she says. “There’s a lot of support for people who quit cushy jobs to try to change the world.” But for all the blue skies, yoga and, well, weed that Boulder has to offer, the city isn’t some hippie utopia—and the business guys here can feel comfortable being business guys. “I’m as boring as I’ve always been,” Bingham says. “People look at me and it’s like, ‘Who’s this stiff?’”

PATRIOT BOOT CAMP WANTS YOU!

Longtime tech and finance guy (and Boulder resident) Taylor McLemore is the grandson of career airmen and got to wondering whether the tech community could do more to help veterans. In 2011, he tweeted his thought to Techstars cofounder David Cohen—and a year later, the first Patriot Boot Camp was held in Washington, D.C. (#24 on our list).

The boot camp is a three-day intensive of education and mentorship, and McLemore believes veterans are uniquely suited to take advantage of its lessons. “They’re dynamic problem solvers,” he says. “They know what risk is. They know how to achieve a mission. And they know that dedication to the team is the only way to be successful.” In just a

few years, vets and their spouses have proven that true: More than 500 have taken the boot camp, collectively raising \$31 million in capital for their tech startups.

The training is valuable, but McLemore says that making it work in any city is also a critical component. The boot camp has also traveled to Chapel Hill, N.C. (#5 on our list), Phoenix (next door to Tempe, #34) and Detroit—giving vets outside Silicon Valley and New York a local network to lean on. “Location can be a competitive advantage,” says McLemore. “Especially if you have a very flexible mental perspective, rely on local advantages and connect nationally.”



FARGO

WELCOME TO THE CRASH PAD

Fargo’s tech renaissance lured native son Miguel Danielson back to North Dakota in 2014, and the attorney wasted no time lending a hand, cofounding the startup resource group Emerging Prairie and launching Fargo’s very own (and rent-free!) startup house.



DRONES? YOU BETCHA!

Once a month, the best minds in drone making gather in Fargo to talk all things airborne. Drones, you say? Yep. Drone Focus is a meeting for everyone interested in the space—from developers to clients—to powwow about the fast-growing industry. And Fargo is just the spot to do it. There are currently 18 drone-related companies in North Dakota, and the state has invested \$34 million

in growing unmanned aircraft operations, research and businesses. “What makes Fargo unique is that the end user sits next to the entrepreneur and they solve the problem together,” says Greg Tehven, cofounder of local networking hub Emerging Prairie, which hosts the get-together.

Joey Schmit, for example, is the founder of the year-old drone services provider Flight Pros, and

he meets directly with Nolan Berg and Adam Spelhaug of Peterson Farm Seeds to hash out how the technology can better aid Peterson’s operation. “It’s pretty much the perfect match to work directly with a customer,” Schmit says. “They’re informing you of exactly what they want in their deliverables.”

Fargo has another thing going for itself: “Unencumbered airspace



Emily Swedberg, founder of Lucid Bakery, uses Startup House as her networking base.



HOME, A LOAN

Funded by Danielson and a small grant from the state of North Dakota, the Fargo Startup House is based on the idea that “working and living with people who have common goals and problems can help solve them,” Danielson says. In addition to covering rent and utilities, Danielson provides mentorship, meeting with the entrepreneurs once a month over dinner to review goals. The house can support four entrepreneurs at a time; when we visited in June, there was one bed available.

IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Minnesota native Matthew Sullivan moved into the house in April to work on his ride-sharing app, Jumpr. “Jumpr connects drivers with riders headed in the same direction for long-distance ride sharing,” explains Sullivan. “Drivers have the opportunity to make money, and riders receive rides that are cheaper than buses, trains and airplanes while still being faster and more direct than buses and trains.” Sullivan has already launched a beta version.

BAKE IT TILL SHE MAKES IT

Danielson aims to admit one nontech entrepreneur each year. Enter Emily Swedberg, founder of the vegan sweet shop Lucid Bakery. (She rents a commercial kitchen and sells her treats to wholesalers.) “Hosting community events and dinner parties at the Startup House allows me to share my love of food and connect with passionate people,” says Swedberg, whose ultimate goal is to open a brick-and-mortar outfit in Fargo.

THE ROVING ENTREPRENEUR

Ask the house's newest tenant, Michael Ryan Norton, about what he's working on and, well, the answer is a little harder to pin down. He's been traveling across the country facilitating Startup Weekends, in which entrepreneurs attempt to launch a business in 72 hours. But his plans for the house are many and varied—everything from drone marketing to songwriting. “I have a hundred ideas,” he admits. “The Startup House provides a stable environment, access to a mentor network and the very real sense that people are rallying around me.”

five minutes outside of town,” says Terri Zimmerman, CEO of Fargo-based drone company Botlink. In other words, it's real quiet out there, which makes the local skies perfect for testing, refining and actual work. “Our users, primarily in agriculture and construction, can collect data on their businesses in real time,” says Zimmerman, whose cloud-based platform allows clients to watch

over extensive acreages, such as oil fields or farms. Now she's looking to build clients beyond state lines, including Europe, Australia and the Middle East.

Sure, Fargo does have some downsides—like its guaranteed annual snowstorms. But after a blizzard hits, city officials might now send a drone out, not humans, to check on downed power lines and unsafe roads.

36 ▶ NASHVILLE

PROJECT RUNWAY: HONKY-TONK

The Nashville Fashion Alliance is giving this honky-tonk town a shake of designer spice. The city has the largest per capita concentration of independent fashion companies outside New York and Los Angeles—seemingly a repeat of when, in the 1980s, music industry rebel types fled the big cities and built Nashville’s scene. “We’re very inspired by that,” says Van Tucker, CEO of the Alliance. Here are three local designers to watch.

ATELIERSAVAS

Designer: Savannah Yarborough

“I picked Nashville to open my bespoke leather jacket studio in 2014. Now everyone comes to me. We work with a lot of musicians, but also Wall Street and tech guys. The hardest thing has been finding another person to help sew—very few people here have the skill to make a leather jacket. We’re going to have to move more here!”

CAVANAGH BAKER

Designer: Cavanagh Baker

“Nashville allows me to be more versatile. I get to design ready-to-wear for the everyday client and also create custom pieces for country music performers. I recently worked with Kelsea Ballerini on a jumpsuit for her ‘Peter Pan’ music video. New York and L.A. are important, but everyone there is doing the same thing, on the same schedule. I wanted to be somewhere where I could be truly hands-on with my clients.”

ELECTRA EGGLESTON

Designer: Andra Eggleston

“I moved here after living in New York and L.A., where people say they want to support you, then disappear. Here, when people said they would connect me with someone, I half-believed them. But an hour later, I’d get an email from them. When people think of Nashville fashion, they think cowboy boots. But people now wear a hip urban dress with cowboy boots. I don’t think that anyone has departed from the old Nashville—they’ve just adapted it into their own.”



KC’s Google Fiber pipeline is the furnace driving the city’s startups.



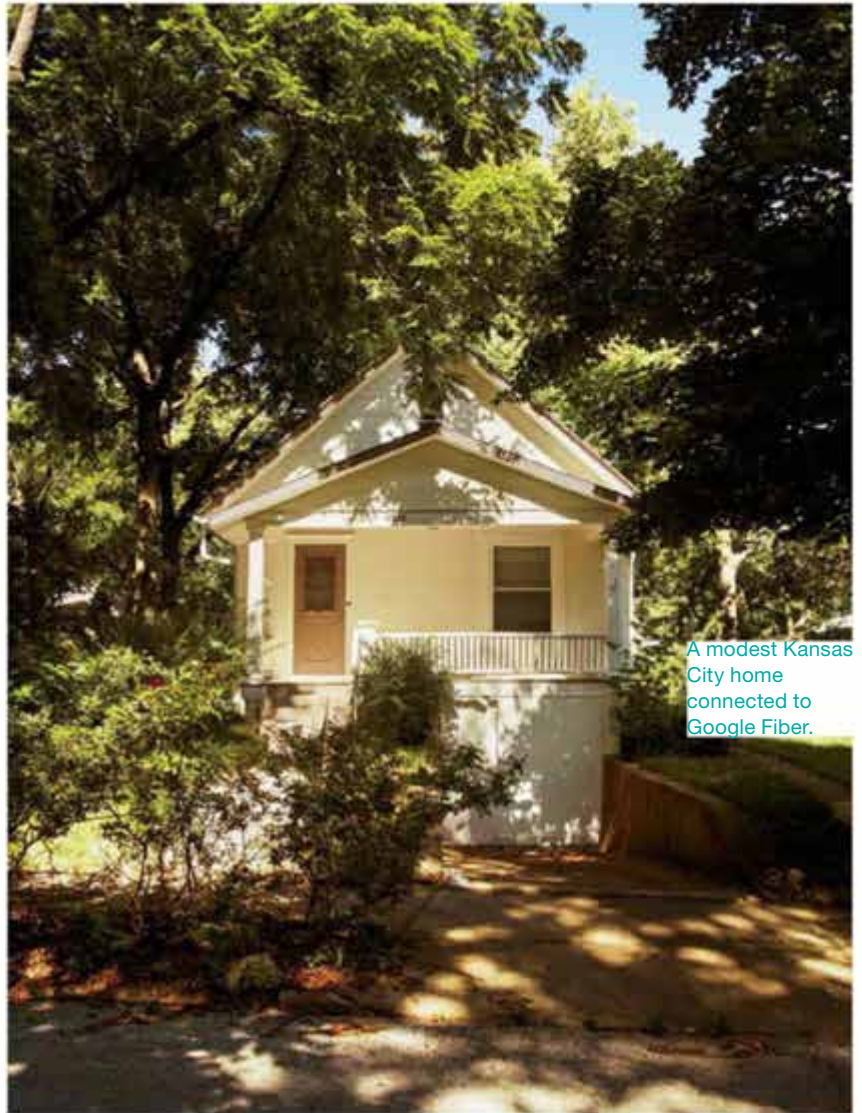
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KANSAS CITY

**FIVE REASONS
STARTUP
VILLAGE COULD
ONLY HAPPEN
HERE**

Startup Village is a residential block that has been home to as many as 32 startups at once. It began with no funding or master plan but has evolved into an incubator and, as of last year, an official 501(c)3 nonprofit. Other cities may try to replicate the magic, but it won’t be easy. Here’s why.

Downtown Kansas City, where the living is easier than on the coasts.



A modest Kansas City home connected to Google Fiber.

1. IT WAS BLESSED BY GOOGLE.

In 2012, Startup Village's street was ground zero for Google Fiber, the tech giant's superfast broadband service that's said to be 80 times faster than the national average. Matthew Marcus, one of Startup Village's co-leaders, owns the house that first received service.

2. HOUSING IS AFFORDABLE.

When Fiber launched, the median listing price for a house in Kansas City was just \$112,000. (That's \$52,000 less than in Austin, Tex., the second city to receive Fiber—and also cheaper than Nashville; Provo,

Utah; and Atlanta, all three of which are now on Fiber's grid.) That made the city a gift to cash-strapped startups. Before Fiber's installation, software developer Ben Barreth purchased a home in Kansas City for just \$50,000 and dubbed it "Homes for Hackers."

3. MIDWESTERNERS ARE NEIGHBORLY.

Barreth and Marcus lived six doors down from each other and hit it off. At the same time, a third house was beginning to harbor startups, which

put about half a dozen businesses on their block. "When we put it all together, we couldn't believe it," Barreth says. "We knew we had to start organizing."

4. THE CITY STRADDLES TWO STATES.

Startup Village covers a mile radius from its focal point on State Line Road, which lies on the border between Kansas and Missouri. Startups can take advantage of whichever state's policies serve them best. "On the Missouri side, they usually have to pay income tax but can deduct losses," says Marcus. "On the Kansas side, they

can't deduct losses, but they can avoid paying income tax and take advantage of angel tax credits."

5. OPTIMISM IS EVERYWHERE.

Kansas City has new public transportation initiatives (like a trolley system) and a general sense of impending greatness—affirmed by the Royals' World Series victory. "Kansas City's time has come," says Barreth. "And that's true with so many aspects of the city—not just the startup community."

PORTLAND TALLAHASSEE

A TALE OF TWO ICE CREAM CITIES

How can something as simple as ice cream be impacted by its city? Salt & Straw's Kim Malek (of Portland) and Lofty Pursuits' Gregory Cohen (of Tallahassee) dish on demographics, local flavors and how hot-weather businesses survive rainy days.

Cohen: Let me start by saying I've never been to Portland.

Malek: I've never been to Tallahassee!

Cohen: Well, it's about one-third the size of Portland, and it's also really isolated, with no big cities within two or three hours. The city was a whole bunch of plantations, and some of them still exist, so we have these long, diagonal roads lined with trees that are hundreds of years old. You can drive for an hour without seeing the sky overhead, just sunlight dappling down through these old oak trees.

Malek: Sounds dreamy. Portland is small, with a very entrepreneurial spirit, but we're also in one of the most incredible agricultural areas in the United States. Of course we were going to work with local dairies and farmers. But after my cousin, Tyler, and I started Salt & Straw, we realized we could take it one step further, and we started partnering with local artisans to make unique flavors. Now we work with local beer brewers and cheese makers and charcuterie houses and tea makers, and our flavors

change every four weeks. Our business model is based on that spirit of collaboration.

Cohen: I noticed on your website that you have dill pickle sorbet. Are you really plating it on top of dill pickle spears?

Malek: No! [*laughs*]

Cohen: I have a jar of pickle juice in my fridge, and after this call I'm going to have to see exactly what pickle juice does to my churn.

Malek: I love it. It's pretty awesome.



Cohen: We have a salted sundae with olive oil and sea salt, in a rotating menu of about 230 flavors. But we keep 12 to 15 flavors constant. Many of our customers are 10 to 12, so it's also important to maintain blue as a flavor.

Malek: I think a lot of kids in Portland are down for ordering something complex. But we keep a good number of core flavors on the menu, too, because some customers want to count on those. The seasonal menu feels more like sand art—it's insane to keep up with, and customers have to see them before they're gone forever.

Cohen: Some of the glassware we use in the dining room dates back to the 1940s. We use a five-gallon wooden churn that was used by the Amish. It's part of the history here, and I like the texture it gives the ice cream, because it's a vertical churn. What kind of churn do you use?

Malek: I'm slipping on the name—brain freeze! Oh, Emery Thompson.

Cohen: That electric churn is probably the best in the country, and the company is based here in Florida.

Malek: I envy your sunshine in Florida. It rains nine months of the year in Portland.

Cohen: My sales drop by almost 30 percent when it rains. So I have a rainy day special—20 percent off. That would bankrupt someone in your location.

Malek: It's definitely busier when it's sunny here. But people still eat ice cream in the rain, too. If you didn't go out and live your life in the rain in Portland, you wouldn't see much.

2 ▶ AUSTIN

THE COUNTRY'S QUIRKIEST BAR DISTRICT

Rainey Street was part of a normal neighborhood until 2004, when the city rezoned it to allow commerce. But instead of bulldozed homes replaced by flashy towers, the 100-year-old bungalows were converted into bars and lounges. That's made the street popular among locals and tourists alike.



Bar 96

"The big money guys always want to do something grandiose, but that's not necessary. I opened my first bar on Rainey Street without a lot of money. I saw the potential in what was already there."

—Bridget Dunlap, owner, Clive Bar, Bar 96, Lustre Pearl, Burn

“There are obvious reasons why entrepreneurs come to Texas: low taxes, low cost of business, favorable weather. But in Austin we also have the whole Keep Austin Weird thing, which started in the early 2000s to encourage small-business growth. While everything else was going global, we were focused on keeping things local.”

—Donny Padda, co-owner,
Bungalow and Parlor Room

“BACK IN THE '90S, AUSTIN HAD LOTS OF MOM-AND-POP SHOPS AND A REALLY GREAT MUSIC AND ARTS SCENE. AS THE CITY HAS GROWN, THE CULTURE HAS SHIFTED, BUT FOR THE MOST PART, WE'VE MANAGED TO HOLD ON TO THOSE OLD IDEALS.”

—Matt Rade, general manager,
The Blackheart Bar

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SEATTLE

MOVING HISTORY FORWARD

Black Dot, a startup resource center nestled in Seattle's historically black Central District, aims to mentor and connect the city's African-American entrepreneurs. Three of the organization's cofounders talk us through their plans.



ARAMIS HAMER



MUJALE CHISEBUKA



K. WYKING GARRETT

How did Black Dot get started?

K. Wyking Garrett: We grew out of Seattle's Africatown Community Development Initiative and Hack the Central District Startup Weekend. We asked, "How does the African-American community reinvent itself in the face of displacement with gentrification?" After the startup weekend, aspiring entrepreneurs really wanted to continue building their ventures, and they needed consistent community, access to resources, networking and a space.

Why was the Central District an important location to you?

Garrett: Twenty-third and Union has been an epicenter of the African-American neighborhood. My grandfather was a cofounder of one of the first black banks west of the Mississippi, and it was right there on that commercial strip. It's also ground zero for a lot of new development, which has been displacing historic African-American small businesses. We're on one of the last large full-block tracts of undeveloped land, so we're part of efforts to acquire, purchase and redevelop that block in a way that is inclusive of our community.

Mujale Chisebuka: We decided to operate Black Dot on a membership

model because it makes everyone feel even more involved. When you come into a place and you're a member and you're paying a fee, it gives you that feeling of ownership.

And your members are far more than just tech startups.

Aramis Hamer: I'm really proud that we give artists opportunities. We'll help them get business cards, establish an appropriate artist statement. We hold events for writers—we had one called Writers Unblocked and had quite a few self-published authors come and speak to members about how to publish their books.

You've been up since November. Any success stories so far?

Garrett: The Seattle Filmmakers of the African Diaspora collective formed through Black Dot—it's a network of film professionals that have come together and are now working on a number of projects, hiring each other for different jobs. Another is a black urban farmers collective, which secured a plot of land in downtown Seattle to create an urban farm and food enterprise. So it's not even just individual entrepreneurs but the connection and creation of communities within the community.

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IOWA CITY

NOT JUST ANOTHER HOMETOWN JOCK

When an NFL player retires, it's not uncommon for him to return to his old stomping grounds and open a sports bar—specializing in cheap beer, memorabilia-littered walls and nostalgia of glory days past.

Former San Diego Chargers kicker Nate Kaeding, however, had more ambition than that. When the Pro Bowler retired in 2013 after nine seasons, he returned to his native Iowa City and enrolled in the University of Iowa's Tippie Executive MBA program. Along the way, he helped start...well, OK, he started a bar. It was Pullman Bar and Diner, a locally sourced joint that uses Iowa farm ingredients. But he also launched Tailgate Clothing's Iowa City store, a vintage T-shirt shop that American Eagle purchased for \$11 million in 2015. Then last fall, he went large—becoming the retail development director of Iowa City's Downtown District.

"I am a big believer in a vibrant, street-level culture," Kaeding says. "The cool coffee shop, the unique, independent retail store—these businesses represent a city." He has a bit of home-field advantage: There are already 280 businesses in the downtown corridor.

Now Kaeding's mission is to convince entrepreneurs outside his hometown that Iowa City is a welcoming place for business. He can make a strong case. "Our local banks are good about taking active risks in small businesses that need a \$50,000 to \$100,000 loan," he says. And he's also gone out of his way to help fund companies himself, by writing seed checks. He did so with Higher Learning Technologies, a mobile study solution platform whose app has been downloaded two million times, and Big Grove Brewery, an area craft brewer setting up shop in the Riverfront Crossings district next year. It's all part of a plan to help the town grow, diversify and, like he did in the NFL, compete against other cities.





10 ▶ STATE COLLEGE

COLLABORATION 101: A UNIVERSITY AND ITS TOWN

Penn State University is the lifeblood of State College, Pa., but its 46,000 undergrads rarely interact with the township that encircles it. In 2010, a group of graduates set out to change that. Here's how coworking space and networking group New Leaf Initiative brings everyone together.

Set Up Shop

The campus and downtown are divided by College Avenue. "Getting students to cross was the first challenge," says executive director Galen Bernard. "But we secured a space downtown and started helping turn student ideas into action. The community downtown saw what we were doing and said, 'Hey, we could use some of that, too.'"

Change the Perception

"The focus here is often on frats, football and finance," Bernard says. "But New Leaf works with students and young adults in the community—and people who move to State College from Philly and Brooklyn—who want to innovate. It's easy for the town to think young people are just here to party, but we're changing that."

Bridge the Gap

New Leaf schedules informal meetings with community organizations to discuss their members' work and ask for support, or a chance to collaborate. "It's a transient town for twentysomethings," says Bernard. "We have to tell residents about our members who are planting long-term roots in State College."

Keep Their Attention

Once New Leaf had proven itself, the city pledged its support—the mayor even invited Bernard to a party at her house. As the organization grew, its staff learned how to let members know of the city's interest. Says Bernard, "Local leaders want to know about any person doing something cool."

Nate Kaeding at downtown's Tailgate Clothing.



BOISE

YES, BOISE HAS A CREATIVE CLASS

The Treefort Music Fest began in 2012 as some music fans' passion project. It's since grown into a massive community event that celebrates Boise-grown technology, yoga, beer, food, comedy and film. Cofounder Lori Shandro Outen (who is also owner of local insurance agency the Shandro Group) explains what makes it so special.

What makes Boise a great place to be an entrepreneur?

The spirit of the people. The size of the community. The ability to effect change. I grew up in large cities, and I never felt there was anything I could do to effect change. A lot of things aren't perfect here, but there are enough of us who love what it is, and if we keep participating and doing what we love, I believe it will get even better.

That's not really the stereotype of Boise.

I think people expect boredom and small minds and a lack of much to do. And instead, it's green and lush and vibrant. There are plentiful things for everyone to do, and it's full of really nice people to do them with.

Treefort began by attracting bands en route to the Pacific Northwest after performing at South by Southwest in Austin. How did it come to include so

many other disciplines?

We kept meeting people who felt the same way as we did about Boise and creativity, except about a different aspect—yoga, film, technology, story. It was easy to fold them into our infrastructure and let them do and curate what they love. My favorite thing about Treefort is the collaboration across the disciplines. There is so much more crossover than we realize.

How has the festival changed Boise?

It's legitimized the creative class here. My father-in-law says that Idaho is for the doers. That's meant in the traditional sense—people who can produce material, money-worthy things. But the creative class adds so much. Typically, creative people here have to work a "real" job before they can be creative. So now the question is, Can we provide opportunities for the creative class to earn a living year-round? □

5 STEPS TO BUILDING YOUR OWN ENTERPRISE

By Michael Glauser

1. START WITH A CLEAR PURPOSE

Having a motivating purpose is a critical foundation for building a successful company. It is not enough by itself, but it is an important starting point. Make sure you get your starting point down before you jump into something that doesn't create staying power for you, your team, or your customers.

2. BUILD ON WHAT YOU KNOW

A strong and motivating purpose is critical to long-term business success, but a variety of opportunities can help you fulfill that purpose. The important thing is to do something you already know a lot about that is consistent with your "Why." Explore experiences and opportunities in your given industry, related industries, and industries you understand as a customer from frequent exposure to the products, services, and pain points. Building on what you know will be critical to your success.

3. LAUNCH OPPORTUNITIES, NOT IDEAS

You need to make sure you launch a true business opportunity, not just an idea. Determine if the five components of

the **NERCM** model are working in your favor.

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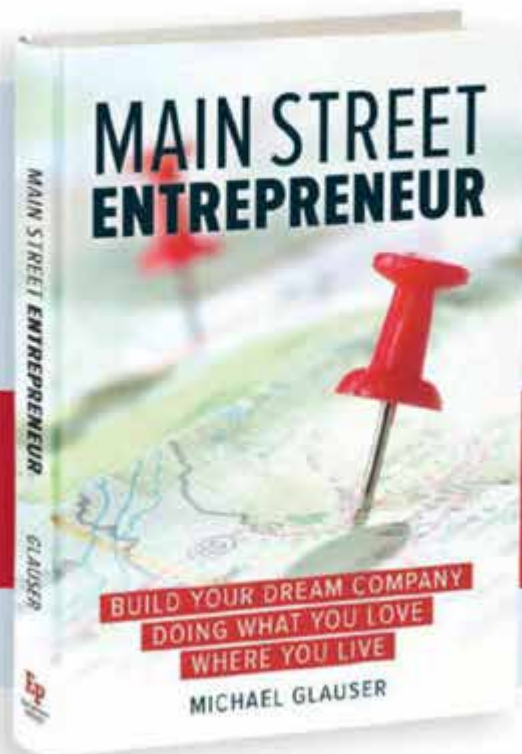
The more these factors are present in your new venture, the greater your probability for success.

4. DEVELOP YOUR SUPPORTING CAST

Successful entrepreneurs build a supporting cast of people around them in three ways: First, they develop a brain trust of mentors who advise them for free. Second, they find passionate team members who believe in their cause. And third, they create strategic partnerships that facilitate the growth of their business. It's all about relationships: The more win-win affiliations you create, the more successful you will be—plain and simple!

5. MAXIMIZE ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Successful business builders don't just start off lean but continue to orchestrate efficiencies while growing their business. This sharp eye for "creating more from less" offers a tremendous competitive advantage. Being the low-cost operator in an industry allows you to: 1. maintain market prices and reap larger margins than your competitors or 2. lower your prices and quickly pick up market share.



Looking to find what it takes to create a successful and thriving business, lifelong entrepreneur, business consultant and university professor Michael Glauser geared up for an adventure. Riding more than 4,000 miles in 45 days, Glauser spent 246 hours on a bike seat, climbed 155,000 vertical feet, visited more than 100 cities across the country, and interviewed 100 small-town entrepreneurs.

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The Right

Tools

shiny object

SHORT-DISTANCE CHAMPION

PROJECT YOUR BUSINESS PRESENTATION (OR BREAK-TIME YOUTUBE CLIPS) ONTO THE WALL—FROM INCHES AWAY.

By Seth Porges

PROJECTORS TYPICALLY NEED to shoot an image clear across a room for you to bask in their high-def glory. The LG PF1000U Ultra Short Throw LED Smart Projector (shown here, upright) needs less than five inches to display a bright 60-plus-inch HD picture—meaning you can literally place it on a surface that's flush against a wall. (The secret to this visual sorcery: an aspherical lens.) The projector also does away with excess cords: Built-in Bluetooth beams sound to compatible speakers; it's wi-fi-enabled, making it easy to connect to a mobile device; and it's even got integrated Netflix and YouTube. And because this unit weighs just five pounds, it can go wherever you need it to. That makes it perfect for presenting a pitch deck—or *Pitch Perfect* on office movie night. (\$1,400; LG.com) □



future tools

CAN YOU TELL THESE SCREWS APART?

Trick question. Now it no longer matters!

By Marty Jerome

YOUR EYESIGHT may be 20/20, but if you can't distinguish a worn 2.5-inch screw with a zinc finish and a thread size of 18 from dozens of similar parts, you'll probably end up ordering the wrong replacement. The solution: Partpic, a visual-recognition technology by the Atlanta-based startup of the same name. It promises to help plumbing companies, auto repair shops, hardware stores and other small businesses save both time and money. Here's how:



1. Take a picture:

When you snap photos of a part (using Partpic's app or forthcoming kiosk), the system analyzes the fine details—the thickness of a hinge bolt, say, or the thread pitch of a screw.



2. Seek a match:

Salient features are run through Partpic's database, which is full of its crisp, 360-degree photos of components that came directly from industrial-parts suppliers.



3. Wait 15 seconds:

In seven to 15 seconds, the system correctly matches the part about 80 percent of the time. "It moves to about 95 percent for the match being in the top five results," says Partpic cofounder Jason Crain.



4. Beyond nuts and bolts:

Partpic is on track to have more than one million parts in its database by the end of the year. But it's looking at other markets, too. "Any object you see that doesn't have a logo or label," Crain says, "our technology can recognize." □

Nonstop to Hackville

THE BEST NEW GADGETS FOR THE FREQUENT FLIER.

By Seth Porges



Energize Your Laptop

Travelers have many choices for juicing gadgets on the go, but there's not much to differentiate one backup battery from another. What sets the **ChargeTech Portable Power Outlet** (\$185) apart: In addition to two USB jacks, it features a full AC outlet, making it the rare roving device capable of powering a laptop—or really anything else you'd need. Plus, its 27,000 mAh capacity is several times larger than a typical battery pack.

Track Your Luggage

Checking luggage can feel like playing airline roulette. The **Smart Unit Luggage Tracker** (\$80) goes inside your bag and uses nearby cell towers to give you a real-time view of its whereabouts as soon as you (and it) land, via an app. It even alerts you if anyone opens your luggage. Built-in Bluetooth pings you if your bag somehow strays from sight, be it by theft or forgetfulness.

Get Unlimited Data

For global nomads, roaming bills can quickly rival a small nation's GDP. **Skyroam** (\$125) is a mobile hotspot that provides unlimited data in more than 90 countries, for a flat fee of as little as \$8 per day. Up to five devices can connect at once, and because it operates using individual day passes (three come included), you pay only when you want it—with no risk of going overboard. □

PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES/ANESSA VAN RYZIN, MINDELL MOTION PHOTOGRAPHY; ILLUSTRATION ICONS BY NOUN PROJECT/ROCKICON; ILVA KOLBIN, JOE PICTOS, ARTHUR SCHLAIN

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*the fix*

Shift Change

HOW A NATURAL-FOODS RESTAURATEUR GOT HER EMPLOYEE-SCHEDULING SYSTEM UP TO CODE.

By David Port

Foodies and critics alike quickly embraced Ellary's Greens, a 3-year-old natural-foods café in New York's Greenwich Village. But in the back of the house, owner **Leith Hill** and her managers were using a very stale (though organic!) approach to scheduling employee shifts. "We were making schedules by hand, on paper," recalls Hill, who in April launched an uptown, quick-serve version of her eatery. "We'd spend hours working on the schedule. Then someone would say, 'I can't work Tuesdays anymore,' and we'd go back to the drawing board."

The Fix

To solve her woes, Hill turned to Planday, a workforce-management platform for shift-based businesses. It was developed in Denmark and introduced to the U.S. market in 2015. For employers, the cloud-based Planday offers schedule making and hours tracking, plus messaging tools to connect with workers. Using the web or Planday's app, employees can request and trade shifts, and bid on open slots posted by a colleague or their boss. "A manager can say, 'Hey, a shift is open in two hours. Who wants to take it?'" says Planday CEO Christian Broendum.

The Results

Getting the system up and running was easy, says Hill, with "virtually zero" learning curve for employees and managers. The base package costs \$2 per employee per month; an enhanced package costs twice that. But, says Hill, "we're easily recouping the cost with what we gain in efficiency." Almost immediately, she sensed an increased happiness among her shift-based staff of 46. "The platform allows us to set a monthly schedule instead of weekly. That helps us plan and gives the team stability. They love it!"

A Second Opinion

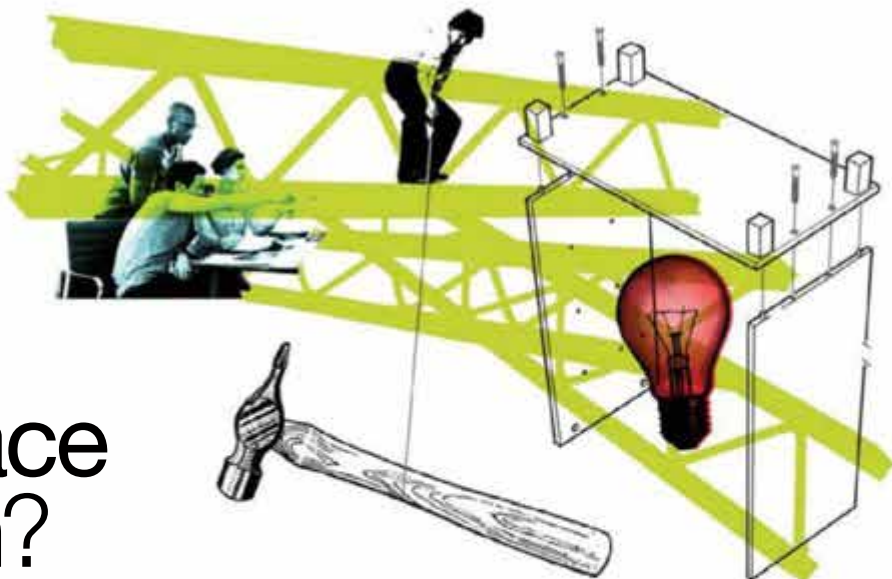
Moving to digital workforce-management processes is a must for shift-based businesses, especially given how inexpensive such systems have become, says John Frehse, managing partner at Core Practice, a New York labor strategy firm. By doing so, businesses can expect to see cost savings of 10 to 15 percent. Frehse says a millennial-friendly mobile app is key, as are functions that allow people to see—and rearrange—schedules at least several weeks in advance, and connect with a supervisor in real time. □



Leith Hill and two of her well-scheduled employees.

ask a geek

Should I Join the Makerspace Revolution?



IF YOU'RE A PRODUCT DEVELOPER WHO IS OPEN TO A COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACE, THEN YES, SAYS VICKI HOLT, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF MAPLE PLAIN, MINN.-BASED PROTOTYPE AND PRODUCTION PART MANUFACTURER PROTO LABS.

IN THE U.S. ALONE, there are now more than 400 “makerspaces”—shorthand for facilities that contain the tools and room you’ll need to design, prototype and manufacture potentially marketable goods. Before you join one of these informal innovation labs, Holt advises, make sure you work well with others. —*Mikal E. Belicove*

What you get:

Makerspaces provide access to a wide array of equipment—power tools, sewing machines, 3-D printers, high-end manufacturing devices and more—and, often, classes for learning new skills. They also offer the opportunity to work alongside like-minded inventors and fledgling manufacturers, many of whom are developing go-to-market plans and are interested in connecting with potential partners.

Factor in costs:

Some makerspaces have membership dues as low as \$40 per month, while others can be three times as much. Most charge extra for raw materials, training sessions and certain equipment use. Some operate like a co-op, with members expected to contribute in kind by purchasing raw materials or financing equipment.

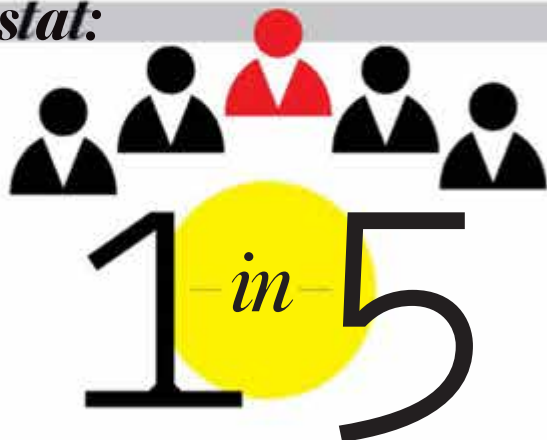
Embrace collaboration:

The maker movement focuses on sharing and collaboration, which is great if you have questions about equipment or manufacturing, or whom to approach about funding your idea. But because other members can see what you’re working on, pay close attention to any intellectual-property clauses before joining. If you’re trying to keep your invention top secret, stick to your garage.

Consider the alternative:

If you don’t have a local makerspace, or the set-up doesn’t suit your needs, try a quick-turnaround manufacturer that specializes in prototypes and low-volume parts. Firms like 3D Systems’ Quickparts, Proto Labs, Rapid Sheet Metal and Stratasys Direct let you upload a design file and receive a quote via email. With express production and shipping options, your prototype will arrive in just one to three days. □

the stat:

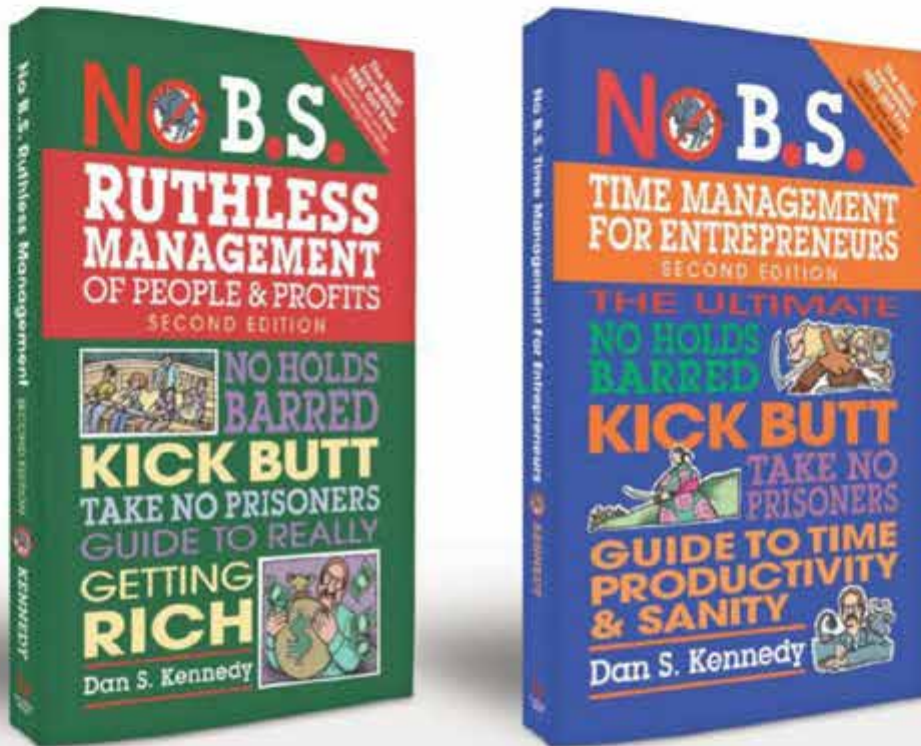


Ignore Yelp at your peril! Nearly **20 percent of consumers** say they won’t frequent small businesses that don’t respond to comments on review sites.

Source: Time Warner Cable Business Class, “Small Business Technology Impact Study”

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I NEED TO RELOCATE.

CAN I AFFORD IT?

By Joe Worth

STOP PACKING FOR a moment, and ask yourself: Do you really need to move your business? Relocations are expensive, disruptive and risky. If they're done poorly, your business can fail—and that new location may turn out to have just as many problems as your current one.

But, OK; let's say moving is the only option. Now start with a systematic look at where to move. Analyze regulatory differences, access to your market, workforce availability and cost, utility and transportation infrastructure and costs and, of course, real estate. A good commercial real estate broker can help gather most, if not all, of this information on your behalf, over and above just locating properties for

If You're Missing This One Thing, It Could Be Catastrophic For Your Business



When unexpected disasters and other unforeseen occurrences strike, business interruption insurance can be an important safety net.

While businesses invest in property insurance in case of fires and other disasters, they're often missing a key piece of the puzzle: how to cover expenses and replace lost income when money isn't coming in.

At least one in four businesses that close after unforeseeable events severely damage their operations never reopen, the Institute for Business and Home Safety says. And this tends to disproportionately affect small businesses.

Liberty Mutual product manager for commercial property, Neal Zonfrelli, says business interruption insurance is often overlooked until it's too late. Yet, this one type of insurance can be the difference between losing and saving your business.

Understand your coverage.





Business interruption can be a key part of an overall insurance program, but only if small-business owners understand how it works and interacts with primary insurance.

For example, a small company purchases both property insurance and business interruption insurance. The property insurance covers losses as a result of fire, but losses as a result of flood are excluded. If a fire destroys

the business's location, the owner would be able to replace the building and equipment as well as lost income. However, if the business suffers damage as a result of a flood and is unable to operate, it would not be able to recoup lost income as these losses are not covered by the property policy.

For many of the businesses destroyed in Hurricane Sandy in 2012, having business interruption insurance and property insurance was not enough because they lacked flood insurance.

Plan ahead by asking yourself these key questions:

-  Is there another location that I can use should my primary facility have to close?
-  Will I be able to make up the loss in sales?
-  Do I have additional inventory in case what I had was destroyed?
-  How long can I keep paying the bills and my employees without generating an income?

When business is out of your hands.

There are also other types of business interruption insurance for specific situations. During the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013, businesses that were shut

down by authorities could have benefitted from civil authority coverage, which protects you from losses as a result of being forced to shut down by local authorities.

Another type covers losses when disaster strikes a key supplier. Contingent business interruption provides protection should a catastrophe prevent a key vendor from providing the goods needed to keep your business running.

You don't need to figure it out on your own.

You've worked hard to build your business and having the right insurance to protect it is critical. That's where an independent agent can be an invaluable resource. Having worked with other businesses in your industry and area that are similar in size, an independent agent knows what you should expect and helps make sure your business stays protected.

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you to consider.

Once you zero in on a potential location, run a cost/benefit analysis with a budget for the actual move. The basics are easy: You know what it'll take to pack, transport and unpack the business. But now come the Big Three:

1. SPACE COSTS

These will be significant, so think through everything. Get a good real estate lawyer to review your next lease—and don't scrimp on one, because a good lawyer can help negotiate the price and any unfavorable terms. Then consider all the related costs—the lease deposits or down payment; the design and renovations; potential improvements to the space, including data wiring and connections; local permits and fees; and the initial costs of hooking up all utilities. All of this needs to be paid while you're also paying overhead on your existing location.

2. STAFF COSTS

Expect your employees to put in for—and be paid!—significant overtime to execute the move while doing their jobs at the same time. You'll also lose some of those employees in the move. Recruiting, hiring and training their replacements will be time-consuming and costly, as will the lost productivity (and business) until the new hires get up to speed.

3. BUSINESS LOSSES

These can be huge—like bankrupt-the-company huge. Make a careful analysis of your customer base and sales, and the likely effect the move will have. Will your current customers stick with you? You may think so, but there's nothing stopping a competitor from snapping up the experienced staff that doesn't relocate, and taking those customers you left behind.

Once you've collected all the figures, do the calculations with a goal of breaking even on the cost of relocation within two to three years. Be brutally honest with your numbers. Entrepreneurs may be all about high risk and high reward, but moves should involve as little risk as possible. If you're going to go, go slow. □

Joe Worth is a partner with B2B CFO.



your money

How Much to Pay Yourself

IT'S NOT A SIMPLE DECISION, BUT THERE IS A RIGHT ANSWER. *By Steph Wagner*

Jacques Spitzer was having a great run. He's the founder of Raindrop Marketing, based in San Diego, which scored triple-digit growth in each of the past four years. And yet, the success worried him. The problem: He had no idea what to pay himself. "Believe it or not, growth became frightening, not fun," Spitzer says. "I was afraid to touch our increasing profits until after each quarter's taxes were filed." And even after the paperwork was done, Spitzer and his partner, **Adam Wagner**, still worried that their own salaries would screw up their company.

So they played it safe, paying themselves the bare minimum to cover their lean lifestyles.

When you start your business, calculating what to pay yourself is simple: Start with your sales and subtract operating expenses and taxes—and that's what goes into your wallet. Most entrepreneurs cross their fingers and hope it's enough to cover the bills. When your business expands, things get trickier. Sure, you could increase your take-home pay right off the top—and pay the additional taxes that go with it. But what if business drops in the next quarter? Will your company have enough in the bank to cover its obligations?

That's why I suggest that owners create something called "a variable component to a compensation structure." Here's what that means in English: You set up a modest, recurring salary, along with an additional monthly payment based on a percentage of your company's earnings. But beware: If you don't have the right business structure, a system like



this can still turn your taxes into hell. Be sure to consult with an accountant.

When Spitzer and Wagner sat down with their CPA, the team drew up a plan to cover all their costs. It's a good one, and can work for almost any entrepreneur. Here it is:

MONTHLY PRETAX EARNINGS:

- 20%** Invested in **employees** through raises, bonuses and team-building events.
- 20%** Build the company's **cash reserves** until there's enough to cover at least six months of operating expenses.
- 30%** Set aside to cover **estimated taxes**.
- 30%** Split between the **two partners**, distributed monthly on top of their base salary, which they've set to equal the median salary of their employees.

This plan accounts for everything: the cost of doing business, taxes and an uncertain future. The guys also have a plan for any excess funds: After they pay estimated taxes, they pay themselves a midyear bonus. It's based on the company's performance to date, as well as a conservative projection for the final two quarters. By doing it mid-year, they have time to make any necessary adjustments by year's end. Now, finally, they're getting paid for all their hard work—and have a reason to work even harder. □

Steph Wagner is a private equity investor and a financial strategist. @StephLWagner

vc viewpoint

WHAT YOUR INVESTORS EXPECT

How to navigate the differences between angels, seeds and VCs. *By Sam Hogg*

I love HBO's **Silicon Valley**—and my favorite characters are (of course) the investors. A quick primer for those who, for whatever insane reason, haven't watched the show yet: There are passive but calculated VCs at a firm called Raviga Capital, and then an ultra-involved angel investor named **Erich Bachman**. Fresh off

an exit of his own company, Bachman has turned his house into an "incubator," and lives, eats and breathes with its primary tenant: the team from Pied Piper, our heroic, hapless startup. Bachman is involved in the business in every way imaginable. It drives everyone a bit nuts, but there's little they can do about it. He fronted the space to launch the business, so he gets to set the house rules—literally.

This setup is hilarious to me because, well, I am that dispassionate form of VC being lampooned on-screen. And I see versions of those hyperactive, early-stage investors all the time. These people had great success and now have a lot of money and time on their hands and don't want to just play the market. They want to get *involved*—and so

they find a promising company to invest in, and then enmesh themselves. This can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the investor. Some will become valued mentors. Others are just, well, bored.

But here's what you



should know about dealing with folks like Bachman or Raviga Capital: Both will be hands-on. The only difference is how.

Keep in mind, no matter how small an angel's investment is in your company, when they wake up that morning checking up on your company might be the most interesting part of their day. As such, they are often anxious to roll up their sleeves and pitch in where they think they should. And a startup needs all the help it can get, so it's often impossible to say no to an angel's whims and desires.

Later-stage investors—the VCs like me—manage more passively. We won't talk daily, or even weekly, and we certainly won't hang out at your home.

Entrepreneurs often mistakenly believe that means we're hands-off. Wrong: We just prefer to exert influence via more defined and traditional board member roles and to direct more of our time to cultivating interest from our VC peers in the next investment round. We know that directing a CEO on day-to-day operations will result in a tense and less than productive relationship. (The exception: If your business is sinking, we will gladly step in to take a more active role if we think it'll help.) Plus, every VC is working with more than a handful of startups at any given time, so we simply don't have the bandwidth to hold a founder's hand on a day-to-day basis.

In *Silicon Valley*, every investor is a cartoon character. But in the real world, there's a pretty easy way to understand investors' expectations: With an angel or a seed investor, your lunch will likely be inside their fridge. A VC will just invite you out to lunch—occasionally. □

Sam Hogg is a partner at Open Prairie Ventures and Huron River Ventures. @SamHogger

startup finance

Where's an Open-Minded Investor?

THEY'RE OUT THERE— BUT YOU'LL NEED TO LOOK HARD.

By Michelle Goodman



Investors love familiarity. “It’s their money, which leads them to play it safe and scour the same homogeneous networks for deals,” says **Ross Baird**, executive director of Village Capital, a nonprofit in Washington, D.C., that trains and funds startups with an altruistic bent, many of them led by women and minorities. Stats tell how rare those companies are: Of U.S. startups that landed an initial funding round between 2009 and 2014, **only 15.5 percent had a female founder**, according to CrunchBase. **Only 1 percent of funded startups have a black founder**, according to CB Insights. So, how to find a more open-minded investor? Baird says to consider these questions.

How do they usually find investments?

Beware those who say, “We like introductions from people we know and trust.” You’re better off with investors who, Baird says, offer “more openings to connect”—say, an application process or direct contact information.

Are they open to hearing your story?

“People make the mistake of pitching their product but not telling their story,” Baird says. “If you’re an outsider, your own story can be an advantage.” Send a note outlining your startup, the market and your personal history. Rather than asking for a pitch meeting, ask for their feedback. If they’re interested in helping or hearing more, they’ll get back to you.

What excites them?

Look for interviews they’ve done with the media. If they tend to highlight their investments’ market potential, rather than the founders and problems they solve, then you should move on. You want an investor who loves supporting people, no matter the category or market size.

What do you need to do to become investment-ready?

If an investor (or their website) doesn’t offer this information early on, there’s no harm in asking during a pre-meeting correspondence, Baird says. If someone has advice on how to grow your team or gain traction before they write a check, they’re more likely to root for you to get there. □

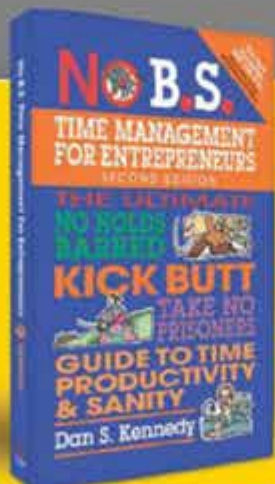
How I Saved \$1 Million

Andy Fathollahi, founder and CEO, Incipio Technologies, Orange County, Calif.

We design and manufacture accessories for smartphones and computers, and ship 11,000 different SKUs. Shipping costs were rising, so I analyzed the expenses with the firms that warehouse and send out our products. Then, armed with my data,

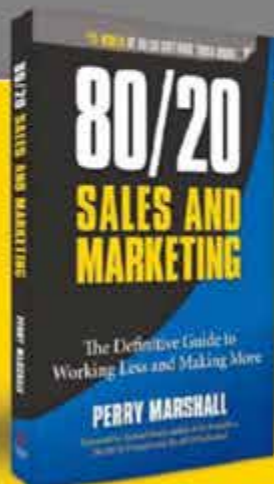
I worked out a deal with UPS. The results were amazing. Even though our business grew 35 percent last year, we were still able to reduce our overall freight spend by 9 percent over the previous year. —As told to Grant Davis

CHALLENGE: TURN PITFALLS INTO PROFITS



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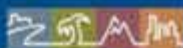
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Aschkan Abdul-Malek on a stopover in Dubai.

profile

THE BENEFITS OF UNSTEADY GROUND

ALEMHEALTH WAS BUILT IN A WAR ZONE. ITS FOUNDER IS THANKFUL FOR THAT.

By Jessica Holland

ASCHKAN ABDUL-MALEK HAD come to Afghanistan to solve problems. He was working for a consulting firm, and in 2013 was helping the World Bank study healthcare constraints in developing countries. One day, as he was home talking to his cook, he learned how personally devastating the healthcare problem could be: The cook was spending six times his annual income to fly his wife to India for medical care, because she couldn't find the doctor she needed at home. Many Afghans were in similar positions: Despite an average annual income of about \$680, locals spend nearly \$300 million

a year on what's called medical tourism.

Abdul-Malek wondered if he could fix this.

Entrepreneurship was new for Abdul-Malek, 34, a son of Iraqi and Iranian parents, who was raised in the U.S. He holds a law degree and an MBA from Vanderbilt University, worked in investment banking and strategic consulting and spent time with an NGO in northern Iraq. But corporate life never suited him, he says: "At no stage was I ever that guy that would just get lost in a crowd." He races cars at 160 mph for fun. When a bomb goes off near the office, he checks that everything's OK and gets back to work. He performs well under pressure. A Kabul startup was his kind of challenge.

In 2014, he launched AlemHealth. If understaffed Afghan hospitals had a reliable way to connect with foreign specialists, he reasoned, patients could be spared the expensive travel. And if it worked in Kabul, it could scale to other developing countries. He hired an office manager and brought in a UAE-based cofounder with telemedicine experience along with his experienced team of Bangladeshi software developers.

Kabul may be one of the world's most unstable cities, but with the local population looking for ways to create jobs, and foreign aid agencies keen to promote entrepreneurship as a road to economic growth, a startup community is sprouting. The past few years have seen the city's first tech accelerator, Startup Weekend and coworking space. "It definitely can be challenging," says Roia Shefayee, a director of the local accelerator Founder Institute, Kabul Chapter. Startups need to deal with security issues, government corruption, unreliable electricity and shaky infrastructure. But, she says, "there are challenges in any country you go to."

As Abdul-Malek built AlemHealth, he discovered that Kabul's

"IF IT STARTS TO FEEL COMFORTABLE, YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES ENOUGH."

challenges came with benefits. "It's like trying to do things in space," he says. "It will test your redundancies in ways that you never planned for, and it allows you to build something that's so robust and flexible that you can take it anywhere." For example, many hospitals weren't set up for telemedicine, so he had messengers shuttle x-rays and MRIs across town to his office, where they were digitized and transmitted to specialists in the U.S. and India. Once the company proved there was demand, it developed

affordable hardware; Afghan doctors could then send the images from the hospitals, and pay only when they used it.

He also learned the local quirks—like documenting everything to avoid any mistakes or disputes. He'd heard a rumor of someone in the medical community clashing with a client and then disappearing soon after. One client accused AlemHealth of breaking a machine and took the dispute to a jirga, or traditional council, which brokered a \$2,000 payment to the client. "You're sitting in someone's living room with a bunch of old guys with beards, trying to explain to them the nuances of a CT machine," says Abdul-Malek. "It's kind of hilarious."

After processing hundreds of patient records and signing up a handful of hospitals in Kabul, AlemHealth scored a \$151,000 angel investment. In early 2016, it expanded to Lagos, Nigeria. Now Abdul-Malek is working with 15 facilities across the two countries and plans to be in Iraq and Sudan by the end of the year. Like Kabul, these new locations, he expects, will challenge him—and make him better.

"You're constantly reacting and learning very quickly, and these are skills that every startup founder needs," he says. "If it starts to feel comfortable, you're probably not pushing the boundaries enough." □

THE SCHOOL OF YOUTUBE ▶

No time for class? These founders learned their craft by watching videos. *By Andrew Parks*

BILL MITCHELL of *Billiam Jeans*

HANDCRAFTED JEANS BASED IN GREENVILLE, S.C.

▶ I started doing something I loved, and it built into a way of life. I didn't have time to stop and think, *Do I want to go to school for this?* You can teach yourself anything if you can pull the motivation together and stomach the mental strain.

▶ At first, I was inspired by simply seeing somebody make a pair of jeans. After watching a video over and over, I began to pick apart the process, and I'd pause on different machines to see what people were using and how they were used.

▶ Patternmaking. Creating an individual pattern for someone's specific measurements is really hard, especially when you're teaching yourself. We've made jeans for big, small and everything in between. At this point, I could write a book on all the things I've seen.

Why'd you go DIY?

How'd you use the videos?

Hardest thing to learn on your own?

CODY GOLDSTEIN of *Muddling Memories*

A BAR AND COCKTAIL CONSULTING FIRM BASED IN NEW YORK CITY

▶ I looked around at my corporate finance job: Everyone was reading *The Wall Street Journal*, and I had the latest *Bon Appétit*. So I quit. You'd be shocked at how quickly you can pick up something if you genuinely care about the field.

▶ Every night after work during my first bartending gig, I'd go to YouTube and search any cocktail I'd been asked for but been unsure of the recipe. The video visuals and watching experienced bartenders was much more helpful than a book.

▶ How to multitask. Your mind can go blank once you get behind the bar and orders start coming in, but you have to remember to do the little things, like filling up water when it gets low, changing out plates and dirty silverware and cursing their meal so they don't feel rushed or impatient.

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expert advice

So, you want to open a **flower shop?**

“Floristry has been glamorized as a luxurious, hobby-like career. But we deal with 4 A.M. alarms, tired bodies, a perishable product and difficult clients. We work weekends and holidays—especially holidays,” says one of our experts, Heather Williams. *By Ashlea Halpern*

THE MARKET

\$31.3 Billion

Amount Americans spent on “floriculture” items in 2015.

\$150,000

What a startup flower shop might expect to make in sales in year one.



WHAT YOU’LL NEED

1. Multiple products or services.

Flower sales are heavily impacted by the economy and trends. **Insulate yourself by diversifying:** offering door-to-door delivery; selling nonperishable goods like cards, candles and ceramics; building out your event portfolio; and hosting flower-arranging classes.

2. A resale certificate.

Depending on your state, it may be required to **receive tax-free wholesale goods.**

3. Relationships with local businesses.

Drop off a **free arrangement once a week at a coffee shop or restaurant** frequented by people you would like to be your customers. Just ask the manager to keep a stack of your business cards next to the arrangement and to pass along your name if guests ask.

4. Regular clients.

“In the beginning, I focused on acquiring weekly accounts with restaurants, hotels, residences and marketing agencies,” says Bess Wyrick. **“It was easier to control my buying when I had standing orders.”**

...AND WHAT YOU WON’T

1. A floristry certification program.

It is not a legal requirement, and many of its teachings—and types of flowers used—are outmoded. You’re **better off apprenticing with a skilled florist.**

2. Lots of equipment, or a retail space.

To start, buy a fridge, a hardwood table, vases and pruning equipment, and **build your brand from home.**

3. A price that beats the supermarkets’.

Not possible. Don’t sweat it. “Supermarkets sell flowers,” says Amy Backman. **“We offer an experience, design, expertise, quality and a range of uncommon flowers.”**

YOUR SOCIAL STRATEGY

You couldn’t have a prettier product to push, so maximize its promotion via visual platforms. A few ideas:



+ Facebook Live

Take your **followers behind the scenes** to a wholesale market.



+ Instagram

Show how to make an arrangement in **15 fast-forwarded seconds.**



+ Pinterest

Offer discounts to **followers who tag your bouquets** in a post. □

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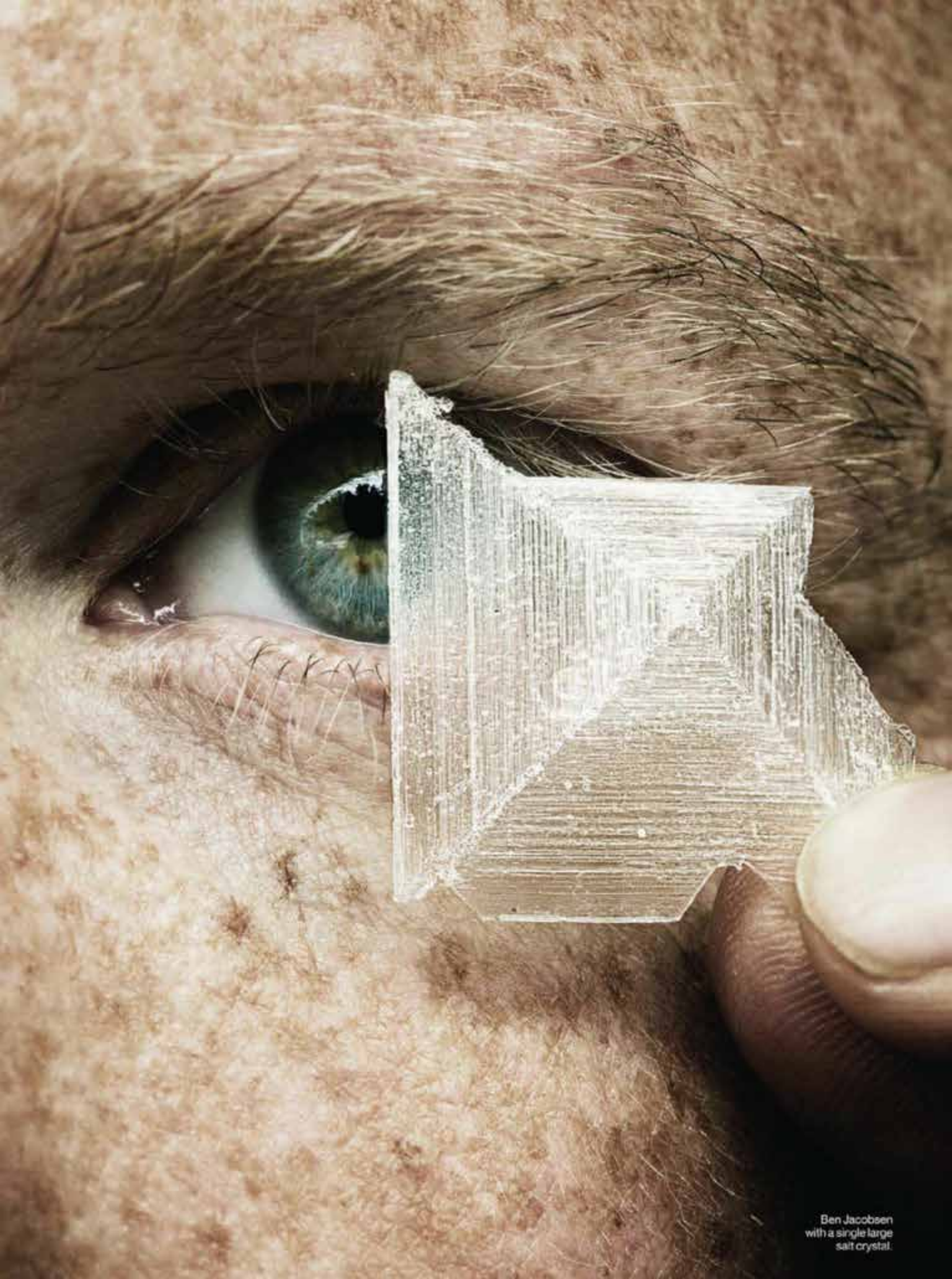


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*Figures reflect averages for twenty-two (22) affiliate-owned restaurants that opened before January 1, 2011, as published in Item 19 of our April 2016 Franchise Disclosure Document. These averages are based on a 52-week annual period from December 31, 2014 through December 29, 2015. Of these twenty-two (22) restaurants, 19 (86%) had higher gross sales, 12 (55%) had higher food and paper costs, and 9 (41%) had higher net profit percentage during the reported period. The financial performance representation contained in Item 19 of our April 2016 Franchise Disclosure Document also includes (1) average and median system-wide gross sales, average and median franchise gross sales, and the number and percentage of restaurants exceeding the averages during the referenced period, (2) average and median gross sales, average and median food and paper cost, and average and median net profit percentage information during the referenced period for fourteen (14) affiliate-owned restaurants that were opened after January 1, 2011 and before January 1, 2015, and (3) other average and median performance information for affiliate-owned restaurants.

A new franchisee's results may differ from the represented performance. There is no assurance that you will do as well and you must accept that risk. This offering is made by prospectus only.

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Ben Jacobsen
with a single large
salt crystal.

The Artisans Who Made It

IT'S BECOME A CLICHÉ—THE ADORABLE LITTLE COMPANY MAKING ITS CUTE, SMALL-BATCH GOODS. BUT FOR SOME FOUNDERS, THAT WAS JUST THE STARTING POINT.

By Matt McCue

Photographs by John Clark

M

ORTON'S SELLS A PERFECTLY suitable box of kosher salt. It's \$2.49 for three pounds. Then along comes Ben Jacobsen from Oregon, whose salt's price is 650 percent higher. But his isn't just any ole salt: It is pulled from a handpicked spot in the Pacific Ocean and run through a complex process of purification. It is not salt to just *salt things*. His is a highlight—a “finishing salt,” the flaky crystals that chefs sprinkle on food right before serving to give it a pop of flavor.

Jacobsen launched his company in 2011 and called it Jacobsen Salt Co. He knew his price would make some scoff—but that plenty of others would be willing to be impressed. “The challenge was to keep the product quality at the highest level possible and continuously improve quality over time,” he says, “and to convey the story of how our salt is made and why it is so special.”

You already know the precious word for businesses like Jacobsen's: *artisan*. As their businesses cross the threshold from hometown maker to national internet fodder, those who make handcrafted, high-quality goods—the kind of pursuit we're seemingly losing in this digital, high-yield manufacturing age—are an inspiration to many: They're living the dream! Following their passion! Sometimes it seems as if everyone stuck

in the rut of a corporate job is ditching it for an artisan pursuit, like bottling soul-cleansing kombucha, hand-making organic mayonnaise or concocting another lowbrow-meets-upscale-meets-esoteric riff on an everyday item like beet horseradish.

But rarely do you hear the other side of the story, about what happens after the burst of publicity fades and a business must stand on its own. Half of these ventures—classified as “microenterprises,” having fewer than five employees—fail within five years, and 90 percent fail within 10 years. (That's according to the International Economic Development Council.) The truth is, it's really hard to make a sustainable living selling artisanal wares. Production costs are high, and profit margins tend to be small because the product isn't being mass-produced. The products are, by their very nature, something consumers *want* a lot more than they *need*.

But there are success stories—many of them, in fact. And although their wares are different, the top artisan entrepreneurs all share a common drive: They weren't satisfied selling at their local market and reaching their 4,250 Instagram followers. Instead, they knew when to set aside their passion-filled creator's cup and guide their business like, well, a business.

That salt? Jacobsen is now harvesting 18,000 pounds of the stuff a



Jacobsen at his salty source: the Oregon coast.

month. He's still selling it at \$5.50 a pound. And he employs 30 people. That's not just an artisan business—it's the real thing.

THE ARTISAN MOVEMENT took shape amid the Great Recession in the late aughts, thanks to an unemployment number that spiked to 10 percent. Many people had lost their jobs and realized they'd have to create their own. The farm-to-table movement coincided with this, with more people prizing local and simple food, and that elevated the value of all things homemade. A generation of young professionals began viewing artisan jobs not as blue-collar service work but as credible and hip. Etsy, Instagram and Pinterest fueled it all, allowing the makers to easily tell their stories and connect directly with consumers.

But not all these new artisans were prepared for the task ahead. Patricia Greene, a professor of entrepreneurship at Babson College, repeatedly saw the same problem. Greene, who is also the national academic director for Goldman Sachs' 10,000 Small Businesses program, which helps startups with access to capital and support, would regularly hear from artisans looking for funding. "So often when I hear pitches," she says, "all I'm hearing about is the product for sale, not the business. They need to say, 'This is what my business can do and how I will make that happen.'"

Put another way: These people are taken with how cool their product is but can't describe how they will actually sell it. Greene says every artisan should ask themselves an important question: Do I have an idea, or do I have an opportunity? Funders want to hear about that opportunity.

Here's how Joe Heron talks about his: "We would never do bourbon," he says, even though he lives in bourbon-soaked Louisville, Ky. "It's a space that is well served, and served well." And so, his new Copper & Kings distillery stands out by making brandy.

Heron is keen at reading the field. In his previous venture, he developed Crispin Hard Cider at a time when very few people were making hard cider. He sold it to MillerCoors in 2012 for an undisclosed (although reportedly large) sum. Now he's filling another void in the American spirits landscape by selling an after-dinner beverage last consumed by your grandfather's grandfather. Over its two-year lifetime, Copper & Kings sales jumped from 10,000 bottles in 2014 to an anticipated 60,000-plus this year.

Heron credits the uptick to how he's selling the spirit as much as to what's in it. He could wax poetic all day long about his brandy being matured in bourbon barrels, without sugar or caramel coloring, but he knows that will only get him so far. "The product story is the start, but it is not the finish," he says. Once a distributor is hooked on the story, and can understand what makes a business so special, they need to see a hardened sales strategy. "Otherwise," he says, "you just have ornamental art, not a consumer product."

At Copper & Kings, Heron pitches distributors a 12-month outlook highlighted by what drinks could be made with his brandy during the different seasons and possible promotions pegged to high-traffic sales periods, like the holidays. He has also perfected the art of making his distributor an ally. "Always remember that distributor management sees your company as an opportunity, and the distributor sales reps see you as more work," says Heron. "Your job is to bridge that gap." How? By making their job easier, from providing all point-of-sales tools to product training. The



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more a salesperson thinks they can sell of your product—and therefore the higher commission they're excited to reap—the more effort they'll put into you. "Distributors support and work for companies that work for them," Heron says. "It's a two-way street."

But as an artisan prepares for that growth, they also need to do some hard math. "To succeed in selling an artisanal product, the owner must figure out how to make production runs, costs, etc., fit the business model," Greene says. Small-batch, high-quality products are expensive—and that's OK, to a point. Consumers will certainly pay more for better products, but they also may see that purchase as a one-off luxury. "The art," Heron says, "is to get quality and price in balance so people buy more than once. That is how you grow."

Andreea Ayers learned this at a pivotal time. In 2006, when she was pregnant, she and her husband moved from New York City to Boulder, Colo. She wanted a change from a career in marketing and became an entrepreneur—launching a T-shirt business and a consulting business. In 2013, she was thinking about how flower-scented soap made her happy, so she decided to enter the soap business. She found a manufacturer to produce organic, handmade soaps, and called her company Soaps to Live By. Each bar was stamped with an inspirational word such as *hope* or *shine*, giving someone a shot of morning motivation as they scrubbed their toes.

She sold 6,000 bars—retailing for \$8 each—through her website in the first nine months. A local real estate agent bought 900 to gift to clients. And with a production cost of \$2 per bar, she made a 300 percent profit

on each sold directly to consumers, and 100 percent margins on bars sold wholesale to retailers. Those were great numbers, she thought. But to truly grow, she knew she'd need to get her soaps into stores. So she sent about 150 soaps to every Whole Foods buyer in every region, and then followed up until she got her first yes. That's when trouble began.

Whole Foods asked Ayers to bring her price down to \$6.50 a bar. It also wanted her to ship the soap for free. Ayers tried to negotiate a new deal with her manufacturer, asking for a lower cost in exchange for a higher order. But the manufacturer said no: Ayers was already ordering 2,880 bars each order, which put her at its lowest cost. "So even if I increased my order, my price would stay the same," says Ayers. "I got locked in with a manufacturer who wasn't very flexible."

Were she to do it again, she says, she'd have found a partner whose terms fit her immediate needs and projected future needs. But now she was stuck. She couldn't find a new manufacturer to make soaps that were both organic and handmade—two of her selling points—and couldn't lower her price and still earn enough money. So she said no to Whole Foods, and, three months later, she closed the business entirely.

Her story has a rare happy postscript: Earlier this year, an investor asked to buy Soaps to Live By. According to Ayers, he has access to friendlier manufacturing costs and is making Whole Foods' needs a priority. "If the new owner can negotiate a price that works for both of them," says Ayers, "I would love to see the soaps there." The brand relaunches this summer.

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“The more a salesperson thinks they can sell of your product—and therefore the higher commission they’re excited to reap—the more effort they’ll put into you.”

SO, BACK TO THE SALT. How did Jacobsen sell a mass commodity for such a high price? The answer: His artisan product was never designed to be a small operation. In 2011, he had just closed his mobile app company, MobSpot; the platform recommended apps to users. He was looking for a new venture and, inspired by Oregon’s local food culture, realized that nobody made local salt. It was there for the taking—freely pulled from the Pacific Ocean.

Jacobsen, then 35, spent two and a half years learning the trade. He tested 25 spots by himself along the Pacific Northwest coast, seeking the best source of saltwater. Then he began the formidable challenge of actually making salt. Harvesting equipment—which runs saltwater through a 10-day process—wasn’t available in the States. “We had to custom fabricate all our equipment, including 600-gallon stockpots that no one else makes,” he says. To fund this, he raised \$28,000 on Kickstarter (all donors received samples) and another \$100,000 from family and friends.

He knew the average foodie wasn’t going to pay \$11 for a two-pound

bag of his unknown salt, so he courted big-name chefs. One of the first to bite was Portland chef Gregory Gourdet (a popular *Top Chef* competitor), whom Jacobsen connected with through a mutual friend. “The first time we met, I provided him a small bag of salt out of the back of my Subaru in the parking lot of the commissary kitchen I was using,” says Jacobsen. Other chefs caught wind of this Oregon salt seller, right at the time Portland was becoming a national sensation for its foodstuffs.

That’s what led to his big break. In July 2013, celebrity chef April Bloomfield was on *The Tonight Show*, and host Jimmy Fallon asked her to name her favorite salt (because, you know, Jimmy Fallon). She said it was Jacobsen’s, and the next day, the salt-maker’s website crashed for a few hours due to high demand. Today Jacobsen has 500 direct chef accounts, including three-Michelin-star chef David Kinch at Manresa in California and Jean-Georges in New York. And where the chefs are, the retailers follow: He’s now in Williams-Sonoma and has added lower-cost products like salted caramels and spicy honey. Just like that, a pricey, precious little company has transformed itself into something lasting. ▣

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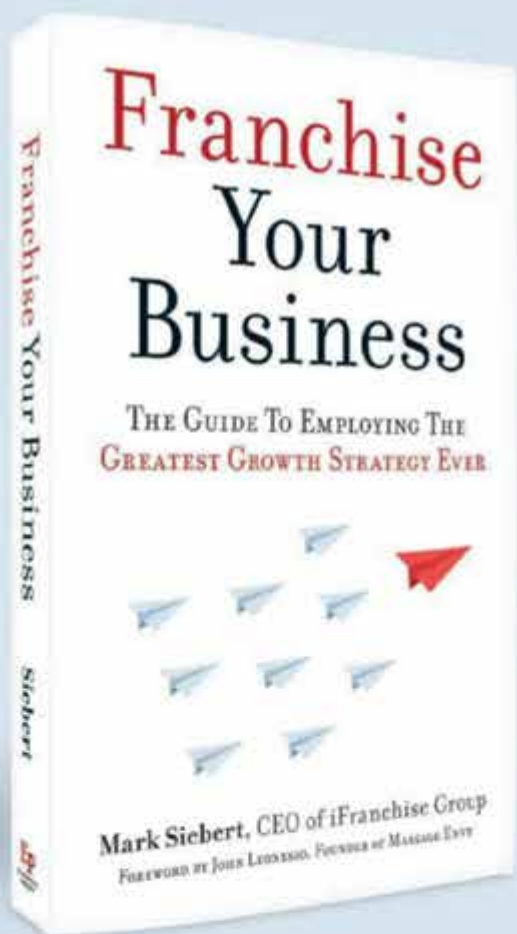
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THE ART OF REINVENTION

TWO ARTISTS FIND NEW CAREERS WITH WINE AND PAINT.

By Jason Daley

Marianne Conti Burt and Craig Burt at their Wine & Design studio in Cary, N.C.



MARIANNE CONTI BURT was a painter. Her husband, Craig, was a freelance digital retoucher. Both have degrees from the prestigious School of the Art Institute of Chicago. But when the recession hit in the late 2000s, their careers fell apart. They were forced to downsize their home in Raleigh, N.C., sell many of their possessions and give away their dog. Marianne began looking for jobs on Craigslist and saw a listing for art teachers from a new studio called Wine & Design; it was part of the then-emerging “paint and sip” trend, where friends or coworkers have a few drinks while painting. “I didn’t think this painting-and-drinking thing would take off,” Marianne says, but she and her husband were low on job options.

When they were hired, they expected it to be temporary—but Wine & Design became popular, and the Burts loved the work. In 2011, they signed on as the company’s first franchisees. Today they own two studios (in Cary, N.C., and nearby Apex) that are open every day and employ 12 art teachers.

Was switching to teaching difficult?

Marianne: It took some time to get used to. At first I did not understand how this concept worked. I’ll never forget the day I looked at someone’s canvas and the lightbulb went off. I thought, *They don’t know how to paint. Their success is based on my step-by-step instructions and giving them something they can do.* I realized this was kind of golden for us. We were both in our 50s, and I thought, *We should do this.*

Can a customer become a real artist?

Craig: This is not an art class, but there are tips and techniques customers pick up through osmosis. It’s really about being social and doing something they’ve never done before.

Marianne: There are those people who have never touched a paintbrush before and discover something in themselves they didn’t know was there. That pleasure and experience is so overwhelming that they can’t wait to do it again.

Is there a customer stereotype?

Marianne: It’s everyone. Saturdays, for example, we’re usually slammed with kids’ birthday parties and bachelorette parties, and that’s just in the studio. We also have classes on wheels; we go to places like wineries, breweries, churches and homes to teach.

How do you explain paint-and-sips’ popularity?

Marianne: We offer a fairly inexpensive night out. It takes people away from their woes. It’s like a two-hour vacation with a little art therapy thrown in. □

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franchisor

Paris, but Not of France

A "French" bakery from Asia rises to take on America.

By Jason Daley

THE SMELL OF FRESH BAGUETTES baking, shelves full of croissants, cream cakes and pastries in shop windows: It's not what Americans associate with South Korea. But that's the unexpected hub of this French-style export. In 1988, businessman Hur Young-in launched the Paris Baguette Café in Seoul and grew it into Korea's version of Starbucks, with 3,300 franchise locations saturating the country. Now this cultural mash-up is preparing for global expansion: It aims to be a brand with more than 12,000 units open worldwide by 2030. France is already taken care of: Paris Baguette's Parisian debut was in 2014.

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The café currently has 43 corporate units and three franchises in the U.S. and plans to open 21 units this year—350 of them by 2020. Can they do it? Larry Sidoti thinks so; he's the company's chief development officer. He helped franchise development for Ruby's Diner and Yogurtland and is in charge of Paris Baguette's American expansion. "So far," he says, "this company has done everything it says it will do."

I've never heard of PBC. How are you going to open thousands of units in 10 years?

The thinking is that the Korean and Asian communities are rapidly expanding in the U.S., and there's strong demand for Paris Baguette in those core markets. We think as the broader consumer market gets familiar with our brand, they will embrace it. We've had tremendous success on the East Coast, where we've already gone mainstream. Once we reach 350, we'll explode from there.

Did you have to change your recipes for the U.S. market?

My initial thought was not to change. Our pastries are lighter and airier than American pastries. They're distinctive. We decided we were going to succeed by not being like everyone else.

What type of franchise candidates are you getting?

Most are coming from the Asian-American community, but as the brand gets more recognition, we expect to see multi-unit guys and area developers with food service and hospitality experience. It's how the



Korean cakes? French cakes? Whatever. Delicious cakes.

cycle goes. It's really mind-blowing: I've met with people who have been waiting to buy a Paris Baguette franchise for six years. It's unusual to have people wait like that; they usually invest elsewhere.

So, do you think of yourselves as challenging Starbucks?

We're not ever going to be Starbucks. Coffee is only 20 to 25 percent of our business, so we don't really compete with them. But we believe strongly in synergistic relationships. Our brand brings more people into an area. So we not only coexist with places like Starbucks but also help each other drive traffic through the door. □



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BY JASON DALEY // ILLUSTRATION BY BEN WISEMAN

PAYOFFS

It's never been easier to
buy into franchising's
hottest categories.





Micah and Tom Nisley wanted to start their own business but didn't want to go into debt to pay for it. The couple were in their 20s and were working in restaurants—and socking away as much as they could. Then they quit their jobs to figure out what business they wanted to start. “We knew that if we put in the work, the returns would come,” Micah says. But despite their savings, the barrier to entry just seemed too high. Then they discovered low-cost franchises. // Even a decade or two ago, people like the Nisleys may not have been so lucky. Traditionally, most promising franchises carried a high buy-in fee and required a ton of overhead. Some were more affordable to launch, sure, but they typically required years of grunt work without much growth potential.

Today, that's all changed. A new breed of low-cost franchises requires minimal investments, because most of the expensive parts of running a business have been stripped away. Call centers and marketing are centralized and automated. Physical stores or offices aren't necessary. Some even allow their franchisees to run their businesses from a laptop or mobile phone.

The Nisleys had many options, but they were most excited by i9 Sports, which organizes and operates youth sports leagues.

The franchise fee was \$32,000, which was within their budget. They signed up and moved from Austin, Tex., to the Dallas–Fort Worth area, which was i9's most desirable territory available. Six years later, they own two i9 territories, run sports leagues for 5,500 kids and employ two full-time employees and a part-time marketing person.

Stories like this one are becoming common. As the cost of franchising continues to drop, motivated and cash-strapped entrepreneurs are paying their dues with sweat instead. Here are four of the year's hottest franchise categories that do more with less.

COMMERCIAL CLEANING

BUY-IN: \$950–\$50K

Cleaning franchises are considered the mother of the low-cost model. They've been at it for decades, long before it became popular, and have endured the hiccups other concepts have learned from. But in that time, they also came to embrace a system you won't find in many other franchises: It's called a two-tier system (also known as a master system),



One more happy i9 customer.

and it provides opportunities for franchisees on big and small budgets.

Here's how it works: A master franchisee buys a territory (which costs primo dollars), then signs up unit franchisees (which cost far less) within that territory. Most of the time, the master franchisee markets the system and signs on new customers and clients, and then farms out the actual jobs to the unit franchisees. Smaller owners can work their way up and eventually build large businesses. “That's the great thing

about it,” says Scott Thompson, vice president of franchise development at Jan-Pro Cleaning Systems. “There are no limits to where someone can go through sweat equity.”

Jan-Pro is one of the oldest and largest cleaning franchises in the world, with 8,000 unit franchisees in 14 countries. Many of Jan-Pro's unit franchisees are first-generation Americans or lower-income citizens looking to build a better life, Thompson says. “They come from all walks of life. In Washington state we have a high proportion of Russian immigrants who are franchisees, and we have a lot of Polish ones in Chicago,” he says. “With us, they make the jump from hourly jobs to something that can support their families.”

Once someone buys in as a master franchise, they're in a position to handle seriously large business. Atlanta, Oklahoma City and Tulsa master franchisee Brad Rush started his Jan-Pro business with members of his family in 2001 and has grown his system's annual revenues to \$24 million. He loves helping his unit franchisees grow. One of them, he says, began her business with a \$950 down payment. Now she does \$400,000

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in business and still has room to bring in more. "If we are good at what we do, we will impact the lives of others," Rush says. "We're trying to teach them to be business owners. That's one steadfast truth: The more we can do and give to our franchise owners, the better our business does on the back end."

HOME INSPECTION SERVICES

BUY-IN: \$23K-\$55K

Almost every time a real estate deal goes down, an inspector is called to check out the place—looking for structural problems, electrical hazards and other important details, right down to how well the dishwasher runs. And as the real estate market has recovered nationwide, that's meant a lot more demand for inspectors...and home inspection franchises.

Getting into the business is relatively straightforward. Most states have strict licensing requirements and stringent training and exams, so once a franchisee goes through that grind, they have a strong grasp of their new business. An inspection franchise often doesn't require an actual office, so owners can launch their business from home and add employees at their own pace (if they choose to do so at all). Equipment such as ladders, tape measures and electrical-wiring testers are all inexpensive.

"I quickly learned to do inspections, and I was able to grow pretty rapidly," says Bob McDonough, who started in 2008 after leaving his job as a regional facilities manager with Target and buying a National Property Inspectors (NPI) franchise in Atlanta. (NPI has 230 units

across the U.S., with room to expand to 400.) It would seem his timing was awful; 2008, after all, was the beginning of the real estate industry's collapse. But McDonough uncovered a way to thrive: An influx of foreign investors descended on the Atlanta market to snap up foreclosed properties, and they needed an inspector on the ground to be their eyes and ears. He has only grown from there—turning an initial \$25,000 investment into a thriving business with seven inspectors on payroll and projected revenues of more than \$1.2 million this year.

"When I first started, I just expected to be a one-man show making enough to replace my previous income, and that was it," he says. "Now I employ people who make a nice income and provide me with a nice income as well."

BUSINESS COACHING AND SERVICES

BUY-IN: \$25K-\$100K

Unlike most franchise categories, this one isn't open to all. A business coach needs a background in, well, running a company or a large division of a corporation. Or they need a résumé that will make other business owners trust them. But the actual *business* of business coaching can look very different, depending on the franchise.

CEO Focus is a roving operation. "This is meant to be a mobile business, so franchisees do put more miles on their cars and minutes on their cellphones," says founder Jim Muehlhausen. The service works like this: A franchisee brings together a group of clients for



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*Including those who NEVER thought they'd buy a fitness franchise. Now they're so glad they did. Find out why.

once-a-month, three-hour group sessions, where they all talk through their opportunities and challenges. These are usually executives from midsize companies with revenues between \$1 million and \$20 million and five to 50 employees, and they pay a monthly fee to participate. (The meetings rotate among their offices.) The franchisee also has monthly one-on-one meetings with each client.

The operation is lean by design. Once the franchise fee is paid, Muehlhausen says, “the only cost to franchisees is marketing and acquiring new members. Most of our 32 franchisees don’t have an office, and most tend to remain a one-person operation.”

That’s not the case with Sunbelt Business Brokers, where franchisees help small-business owners buy a business or sell their company—typically by helping them streamline their books and operations, and then acting as a broker to negotiate the sale. Clients can be anyone from manufacturers to espresso bars. The business usually starts out as a one-person shop, but president Brian Knoderer says that some of the franchisees begin adding more sales brokers as soon as they can to grow their business. The typical unit has four to six, though he says some larger franchisees have 30 or more brokers closing deals.

“Selling a business is one of the biggest decisions an entrepreneur will ever make,” Knoderer says. “I think our franchisees like the idea of working with business owners and buyers and like the reward of helping someone with such a huge event in their life. Quite frankly, it’s a fun business.” And once a franchisee has a strong stable of brokers, he says, they often step back and take a more managerial role.

CHILDREN’S SPORTS LEAGUES

BUY-IN: \$23K–\$70K

This category never runs out of new customers: Kids love running around, and parents love when their kids can burn off energy. But the category is also experiencing a huge boom, because the concept is so affordable and fun to operate.

i9 Sports, the franchise the Nisleys bought into, sets up six kinds of leagues: baseball, basketball, cheerleading, flag football, lacrosse and soccer. (They were chosen based on which have the highest participation levels and easy access to facilities.) And franchisees can get up and running fast. “From the time they sign the papers and buy a franchise, a franchisee could go through training in the next 60 days,” says CEO Brian Sanders. “Our franchisees can usually open within six to nine months, instead of waiting a year or a year and a half, like other franchise models.”

That’s because without a bricks-and-mortar spot or sports fields to operate—events take place at public or rented fields—franchisees can begin marketing and finding staff and referees almost immediately after going through training. “We have very little inventory that a franchisee needs to worry about. They’re not stuck with a warehouse full of burger wrappers and Dixie cups, just enough game balls, jerseys and flag-football belts for the season ahead,” Sanders says.

The Nisleys found that i9’s formula worked perfectly. “You can be profitable pretty quickly,” Micah says. “And that still allows us to prioritize our decisions based on what is most beneficial to the kids in the league and to their parents, and what is profitable for us.” □

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the list

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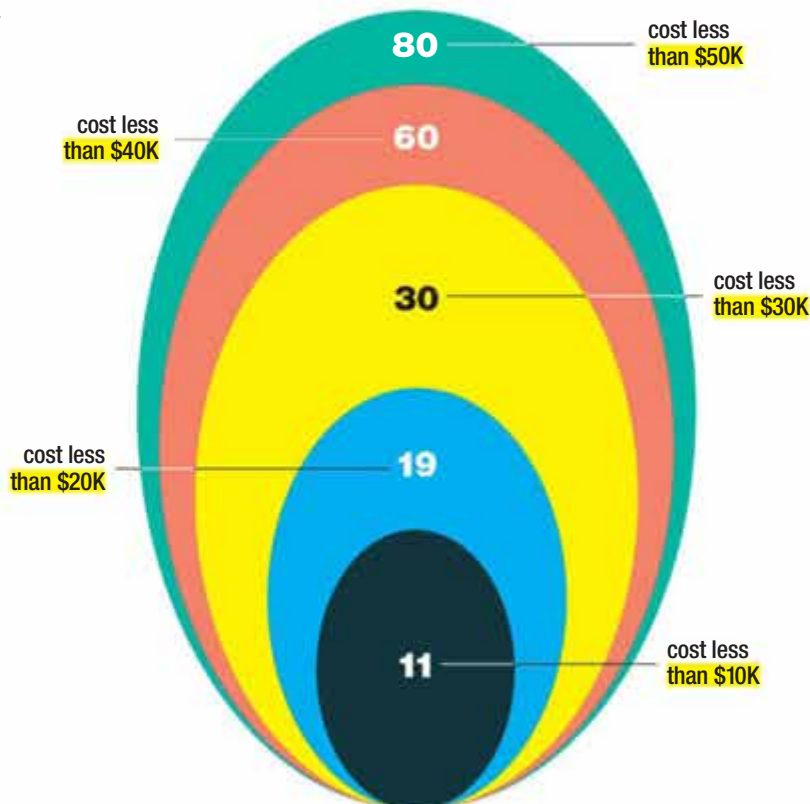
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all for
less than
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THEY SAY IT TAKES MONEY to make money—and, well, they're right. But does it have to take a lot? Not according to our 100 top low-cost franchises **that can be started for less than \$60,000.**

¶ These lower startup costs aren't just a boon to potential franchisees. Offering a more affordable opportunity gives franchisors a larger pool of candidates to choose from, allowing them to be more picky about who gets a franchise, with a focus on attributes beyond mere financials. So what type of person are these companies looking for? People such as Diana Hurtado, who went from a part-time dog-walking job to owning a thriving business (page 90). ¶ These companies are ranked based on their score in *Entrepreneur's* 2016 Franchise 500, which is determined by objective, quantifiable criteria, including system size, growth and financial strength and stability. Keep in mind that this list is not intended as a recommendation of any company. Whether a franchise costs \$1 or \$1 million, do your homework, read the company's legal documents, consult with an attorney and an accountant and talk to existing franchisees.

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- BUILDINGSTARS INTERNATIONAL**
starting at \$2.2K
- CRUISEONE/DREAM VACATIONS**
starting at \$3.2K
- STRATUS BUILDING SOLUTIONS**
starting at \$3.5K
- JAZZERCISE**
starting at \$3.5K
- JAN-PRO FRANCHISING INTERNATIONAL**
starting at \$3.9K
- PROFORMA**
starting at \$4.7K
- MINT CONDITION FRANCHISING**
starting at \$4.9K
- IN HOME PET SERVICES**
starting at \$9.2K
- COFFEE NEWS**
starting at \$9.8K

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*As of 12/31/15, there were 162 UBREAKIFIX locations in operation. As published in Item 19 of our Franchise Disclosure Document dated 4/15/16 these figures represent the actual, average total revenues and net profit (cash basis, before interest, income taxes) for the calendar year ending 12/31/15 of all UBREAKIFIX stores operated by us or our affiliates that met the following criteria: (i) were company/affiliate-operated businesses as of 12/31/15, (ii) had been open for at least two full years as of 1/1/15, and (iii) were still open as of 1/1/16 (16 stores in total). Of the included stores, six (or 38%) exceeded the stated average total revenues and eight (or 50%) exceeded the stated average net profit. A franchisee's results may differ from the represented performance. There is no assurance that you will do as well and you must accept that risk. The figures do not include revenues or expenses for franchisee-operated UBREAKIFIX Businesses as we cannot verify and/or control the level or type of expenditures made by individual franchisees. The net profit figure also does not reflect royalty, advertising and other franchise fees that franchisees pay to us and must be deducted to determine a franchisee's net profit.

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UBREAKIFIX.

Franchise Opportunities

1 RE/MAX
Real estate
Startup cost:
\$37.5K–\$279.5K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 6,986/0

2 Jan-Pro Franchising International
Commercial cleaning
Startup cost:
\$3.9K–\$51.6K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 7,849/0

3 Cruise Planners
Travel agency
Startup cost:
\$2.1K–\$22.7K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 2,257/1

4 Vanguard Cleaning Systems
Commercial cleaning
Startup cost:
\$10.9K–\$35.8K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 3,167/0

5 Anago Cleaning Systems
Commercial cleaning
Startup cost:
\$10.5K–\$65.6K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 2,377/0

6 Chem-Dry Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning
Carpet, drapery and upholstery cleaning; tile and stone care
Startup cost:
\$31.8K–\$155.5K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 3,532/0

7 Liberty Tax Service
Tax preparation, electronic filing
Startup cost:
\$58.7K–\$71.9K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 3,948/314

8 CleanNet USA
Commercial cleaning
Startup cost:
\$14.3K–\$44.7K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 2,547/9

9 CruiseOne/Dream Vacations
Travel agency
Startup cost:
\$3.2K–\$21.9K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 1,013/0

10 H&R Block Tax
Tax preparation, electronic filing
Startup cost:
\$31.5K–\$149.2K
Total franchises/
co.-owned:
4,435/6,365

11 Chester's Chicken
Chicken
Startup cost:
\$21.9K–\$293.8K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 1,116/0

12 Proforma
Printing and promotional products
Startup cost:
\$4.7K–\$50.2K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 676/1

13 Bricks 4 Kidz
Lego-engineering classes, camps, parties
Startup cost:
\$33.8K–\$51.1K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 672/0

14 Jazzercise
Group fitness classes, conventions, apparel and accessories
Startup cost:
\$3.5K–\$75.8K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 8,697/2

15 Buildingstars International
Commercial cleaning
Startup cost:
\$2.2K–\$52.4K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 623/0

16 HomeVestors of America
Home buying, repair and selling
Startup cost:
\$44K–\$347.3K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 711/0

17 Rooter-Man
Plumbing, drain and sewer cleaning
Startup cost:
\$46.8K–\$137.6K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 533/17

18 Pillar To Post Home Inspectors
Home inspections
Startup cost:
\$33.2K–\$42.6K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 512/0

19 Heaven's Best Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning
Carpet and upholstery cleaning
Startup cost: \$55K–\$84K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 1,222/0

20 N-Hance
Wood floor and cabinet refinishing
Startup cost:
\$24.3K–\$147.3K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 410/0

21 Sculpture Hospitality
Bar and restaurant management solutions
Startup cost:
\$43.7K–\$57.4K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 372/5

22 Club Z! In-Home Tutoring Services
In-home tutoring
Startup cost:
\$33.6K–\$57.6K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 393/0

23 Mint Condition Franchising
Commercial cleaning, building maintenance
Startup cost:
\$4.9K–\$45.4K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 326/0

24 Synergy HomeCare
Nonmedical home care
Startup cost:
\$35.4K–\$149.4K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 311/0

25 Cellairis Franchise
Cellphone and wireless-device accessories and repairs
Startup cost:
\$52.4K–\$330K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 594/31

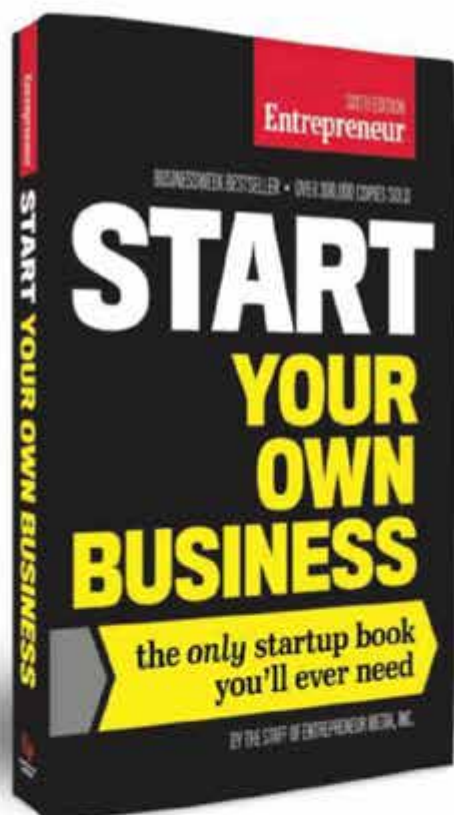
26 Coffee News
Weekly newspaper distributed at restaurants
Startup cost:
\$9.8K–\$10.8K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 834/5

27 U.S. Lawns
Commercial grounds care
Startup cost:
\$32.8K–\$79.3K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 267/0



“More important than money is passion. If someone has that **desire inside them to really get their business going, no amount of money or lack thereof will stop them.**” —Adam Povlitz, president, **Anago Cleaning Systems**

5 CORE STEPS TO STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS



1 START IT. Business startup isn't rocket science; it's not as complicated or scary as people think. Once you have a great idea, product, or service in mind, it's a step-by-step, common-sense process. Here's step one: Figure out what you want to do and *do it*.

2 PLAN IT. If you build it, will they buy it? Determining whether there really is a market for your product or service is fundamental. Consider market research an investment in your future product or service. Make the necessary adjustments now that will save you money in the long run.

3 FUND IT. Figure out where the money will come from. The best place to begin is by looking in the mirror. Self-financing is the number-one source of income for startups—and it creates faith in your company when you need more cash. Get the expert advice on how to approach bankers, venture capitalists, or crowdfund.

4 MARKET IT. It's essential that you spread the word about your company. You can create a brand identity and develop a marketing campaign that works—without spending a fortune. However, an investment of your time is required.

5 PROFIT FROM IT. Make sure you're in love with the profit, not the product. Many people get emotional about their business, which clouds their judgment. Keeping score with basic bookkeeping and financial statements will help you effectively manage your finances and keep the profits coming.

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28 Realty Executives Intl. Svcs.

Real estate
Startup cost:
\$20.4K-\$119K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 516/0

29 SuperGlass Windshield Repair

Windshield repair,
glass scratch removal,
headlight lens repair
Startup cost:
\$9.9K-\$31K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 319/0

30 Unishippers Global Logistics

Shipping services
Startup cost:
\$45K-\$421.4K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 216/80

31 Mr. Sandless/Dr. DeckFence

Interior and
exterior sandless
wood refinishing
Startup cost:
\$26.8K-\$87.7K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 258/11

32 MaidPro Residential cleaning

Startup cost:
\$58.96K-\$203.8K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 202/1

33 Colors On Parade

Mobile auto paint
and dent repair
Startup cost:
\$33.8K-\$441K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 288/8

34 Soccer Shots Franchising

Soccer programs
for ages 2 to 8
Startup cost:
\$31.7K-\$38.5K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 161/9

35 Homes & Land

Real estate
marketing magazine
Startup cost:
\$47.5K-\$116K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 197/17

36 My Gym Children's Fitness Center

Early-learning/
fitness programs
Startup cost:
\$34.3K-\$247.2K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 381/0

37 WIN Home Inspection

Home inspections
Startup cost:
\$36.2K-\$53.5K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 192/0

38 Caring Transitions

Sales of estates and
household goods
Startup cost:
\$55.9K-\$84.5K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 168/0

39 Complete Weddings + Events

Photography,
DJ, video and
photo-booth
services
Startup cost:
\$30.4K-\$48.7K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 198/2

40 HappyFeet Legends International

Soccer programs
for ages 2 to 18
Startup cost:
\$22.5K-\$29.4K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 161/3

41 Kitchen Tune-Up

Residential and
commercial kitchen
and bath remodeling
Startup cost:
\$54.9K-\$64.9K
Total franchises/
co.-owned: 190/0

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42 Oxi Fresh Franchising

Carpet, upholstery, hardwood floor, tile and grout cleaning.
Startup cost: \$38.7K-\$66.6K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 298/3

43 The Senior's Choice

Nonmedical home care.
Startup cost: \$38K-\$55K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 162/1

44 Stratus Building Solutions

Commercial cleaning.
Startup cost: \$3.5K-\$50.4K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 1,390/0

45 Just Between Friends Franchise Systems

Children's and maternity consignment events.
Startup cost: \$32.8K-\$45.4K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 152/0

46 Certified Restoration DryCleaning Network

Textile restoration.
Startup cost: \$45.6K-\$235.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 150/0

47 Fiesta Auto Insurance and Tax

Insurance and tax-preparation services.
Startup cost: \$49.7K-\$107.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 150/0

48 Estrella Insurance

Auto, home and business insurance.
Startup cost: \$49.95K-\$94K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 118/0

49 Fresh Coat

Residential and commercial painting.
Startup cost: \$53.9K-\$81.8K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 128/0

50 Mosquito Squad

Outdoor pest control.
Startup cost: \$15.9K-\$69.6K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 187/0



"We want entrepreneurs—people with both the **courage to start a business** and the drive to develop it." —**Jonathan Barnett, president and CEO, Oxi Fresh Franchising**

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SMALL COSTS, BIG PAYOFFS

51 Engineering for Kids

Math, science, technology and engineering activities
Startup cost: \$26.9K-\$93.6K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 147/2

52 Dale Carnegie Training

Workplace training and development
Startup cost: \$19.7K-\$174.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 204/2

53 The Alternative Board (TAB)

Peer advisory boards, business coaching
Startup cost: \$41.3K-\$91.7K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 179/11

54 Acti-Kare

Nonmedical home care
Startup cost: \$33.7K-\$52.7K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 108/0

55 OpenWorks

Commercial cleaning, facility services
Startup cost: \$17K-\$124.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 347/0

56 TSS Photography

Youth sports, school and event photography
Startup cost: \$35.9K-\$74.2K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 209/0

57 Doc Popcorn

Kettle-cooked popcorn
Startup cost: \$39.5K-\$355.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 100/2

58 i9 Sports

Youth sports leagues, camps and clinics
Startup cost: \$50.9K-\$76.9K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 126/16



"The most important quality we look for is the 'hunter-gatherer' mentality. Our most successful franchisees are powerful networkers. They get out there and build their business."
—Sean Young, director of corporate development, The Glass Guru

59 Sit Means Sit Dog Training

Startup cost: \$50.7K-\$123.9K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 120/1

60 Green Home Solutions

Environmentally friendly indoor and outdoor home services
Startup cost: \$45.7K-\$75.3K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 129/2

61 American Poolplayers Association

Recreational billiard league
Startup cost: \$16.7K-\$19.9K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 326/5

62 The Dentist's Choice

Dental-handpiece repairs
Startup cost: \$54.4K-\$58.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 143/0

63 The Glass Guru

Window and glass restoration and replacement
Startup cost: \$37.2K-\$135K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 83/0

64 Aire-Master of America

Restroom deodorizing and maintenance
Startup cost: \$38.4K-\$138.4K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 105/4

PHOTO: JEFFREY HARRIS



65 Property Management Inc.

Commercial and residential property management
Startup cost: \$20.3K-\$61K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 121/2

66 Jet-Black Franchise Group

Asphalt maintenance
Startup cost: \$42.5K-\$104.3K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 88/10

67 Flower Tent

Flower store
Startup cost: \$25.6K-\$67.2K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 81/16

68 Fetch! Pet Care

Pet-sitting, dog-walking
Startup cost: \$30.9K-\$44.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 105/5

69 Caring Senior Service

Home care
Startup cost: \$58.6K-\$107.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 53/0

70 Brickhouse Cardio Club

Fitness studios
Startup cost: \$22.5K-\$39.4K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 59/1

71 Precision Door Service

Garage-door repairs and installation
Startup cost: \$55.5K-\$347.3K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 82/1

72 The Decor Group

Holiday and event lighting
Startup cost: \$17.6K-\$60.3K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 259/0

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To the Dogs

A new mom finds financial security and flexibility with a pet-care-services franchise.

AS A HOSPITALITY management major, Diana Hurtado landed what should have been her dream job: an internship at the Crowne Plaza at the United Nations, in New York City. “But I hated it, because I had to be in an office from nine to five,” says Hurtado, who was born and raised in Colombia and moved to New York in 1995, when she was 15. “I’m an outdoor person, and my real passion was pets.”

So she quit the internship and followed her heart to a very different gig—working as a dog walker and a pet sitter for In Home Pet Services. Five days a week, four hours a day, Hurtado would walk her charges through Bayside, Queens.

“The income wasn’t that great,” Hurtado admits, “but I loved what I was doing.” That was enough to keep her happily working for owner Robyn Elman for four years. But then Hurtado found out she was pregnant. “I had to find a way to do something I love *and* provide for this new person,” she says. That’s when she learned that Elman was franchising.

For just a \$6,000 franchise fee (it’s since been raised to \$8,000) and a new computer,



Diana Hurtado and a happy client.

Hurtado was able to open In Home Pet Services of Forest Hills, N.Y., in early 2011. In the five-plus years since, she’s built the business up to a seven-employee operation that brings in around \$150,000 a year.

Because “people see their pets as their children,” she feels confident the business can continue to perform well in any economic climate. And the benefits of franchise ownership are more than just monetary for Hurtado. Because her day consists mostly of

responding to emails and phone calls—and occasionally covering for one of her walkers or sitters—she can work just about anywhere and any time. “My dream was to be able to earn enough money to support my son and have the freedom and the time to be with him,” she explains. “This business has given me that.”

Now she wants to get back into the hotel industry—albeit with a much furrer set of guests. She’s looking for a house where she can add pet boarding to her services. —T.S.H.

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74 RSVP Publications

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Total franchises/co.-owned: 80/0

75 Interior Magic International

Auto appearance reconditioning
Startup cost: \$33.1K–\$100.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 47/0

76 Wine & Design

Paint-and-sip studio
Startup cost: \$45.3K–\$92K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 63/1

77 Young Rembrandts Franchise

Art classes for ages 3 to 12
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Total franchises/co.-owned: 104/0

78 You've Got Maids

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Total franchises/co.-owned: 49/0

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—Kim Swanson,
director of franchise development,
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— Scott Kummel,
director of franchise sales,
Touching Hearts at Home

79 Touching Hearts At Home
 Nonmedical home care for seniors and people with disabilities
Startup cost: \$48.4K-\$69.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 48/0

80 Welcomemat Services
 Direct-mail advertising to new movers
Startup cost: \$57.6K-\$85.4K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 51/7

81 Renew Crew
 Environmentally friendly exterior surface cleaning and protection
Startup cost: \$44.3K-\$69.6K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 23/0

82 Happy & Healthy Products
 Frozen fruit bars
Startup cost: \$49.7K-\$92.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 52/0

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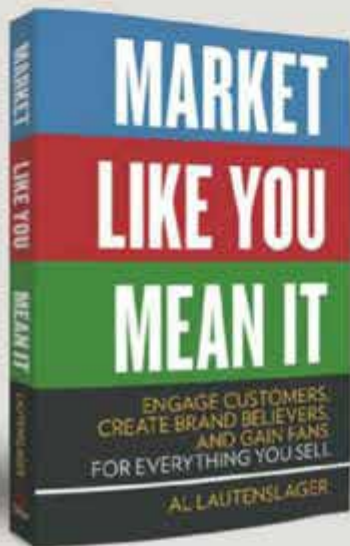
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83 GarageExperts
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Total franchises/co.-owned: 30/0

84 Decorating Den Interiors
Interior decorating services and products
Startup cost: \$55.7K-\$81.7K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 263/0

85 SeekingSitters Franchise System
Babysitting-referral service
Startup cost: \$59.2K-\$91K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 34/68

86 Squeegee Squad
Residential and high-rise window cleaning, building maintenance
Startup cost: \$38K-\$135.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 48/2

87 National Property Inspections
Home and commercial property inspections
Startup cost: \$43.4K-\$47.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 230/0

88 Jantize America
Commercial cleaning
Startup cost: \$50.7K-\$207K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 286/0

89 Window Gang
Window, exterior, dryer-vent and chimney cleaning; deck and fence sealing
Startup cost: \$34.4K-\$81.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 153/35

90 Tippi Toes
Children's dance classes
Startup cost: \$52K-\$62.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 27/0



“We are not looking for franchisees who are solely focused on how much money they can make. We want franchisees who are looking out for their clients’ best interests.”

—Roland Bates, president and founder, National Property Inspections

91 Destination Athlete
Youth sports apparel, equipment and services
Startup cost: \$33.5K-\$139.3K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 29/0

92 Sunbelt Business Brokers
Business brokerage
Startup cost: \$52.5K-\$110.8K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 187/1

93 In Home Pet Services
Pet-sitting, dog-walking
Startup cost: \$9.2K-\$35.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 12/1

94 Assist-2-Sell
Discount real estate
Startup cost: \$24K-\$45.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 183/1

95 TapSnap
Digital photo booths
Startup cost: \$57.4K-\$109.4K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 318/8

96 BlueGrace Logistics
Transportation management
Startup cost: \$39.5K-\$181.3K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 55/2

97 Critter Control
Wildlife management, pest control
Startup cost: \$23.4K-\$89.5K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 107/0

98 Office Pride Commercial Cleaning Services
Commercial cleaning
Startup cost: \$51.4K-\$100.1K
Total franchises/co.-owned: 125/0

99 FranNet
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Total franchises/co.-owned: 69/0

100 ACFN-The ATM Franchise Business
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Total franchises/co.-owned: 237/0

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Resolutely Difficult Advice

By James Victore

Victore



I have an English pal, David, whose dad was an electrician—a “sparky,” as they’re called. As a kid, David occasionally went out on calls with his father. Once, while finishing up work on a large, wired-up fuse box, David noticed his dad signing the inside of the box. “Why’d you do that?” David asked. “Artists sign their work” was his dad’s reply.

These are wise words. Take pride in, ownership of and responsibility for your work. If it’s an excellent job, say “I did this.” And if there’s something amiss, own up to it: Say “I did this.” Our reputation is all we have—and it should be a sign, literally, of our accountability and pursuit of excellence.

Today David runs Hiut Denim out of Cardigan, Wales. Every pair of jeans that comes out of their small factory is signed by the master craftsman who made them—because artists sign their work.

James Victore is a designer for bold believers, an advocate for creativity and an artist whose work has been exhibited at New York’s Museum of Modern Art.



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