



Starting a Business and Hiring Employees in Oregon

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So you want to be your own boss? Tired of having split days off, working nights and weekends, feeling like you are just there to make your employer money? Maybe you've been tired of waiting for the "jobless recovery" to become a job-creating one. Or, possibly, you consider yourself as one of the hard-to-measure "underemployed" in the workforce: maybe you are working in a job that requires a lower skill or education level than you possess, or perhaps you are able to find only part-time work when you'd prefer full-time employment. Ask any business owner, and you'll find that working a 40-hour week would be a bare minimum for the privilege of being your own boss. Still interested? Then this article is just for you. It provides a primer on where to get assistance with – and basic information about – starting a business and becoming an employer in Oregon.

Help is available for those who want to be their own bosses and employ others. This article will help you navigate the circuitous path to becoming your own boss, the maker of your destiny, and an employer of choice who will attract talented workers. Ok, maybe that's stretching it a bit. Will you know all there is to know after perusing these few pages? Absolutely not. But you will have some tools at your disposal to help you make an informed choice about whether striking out on your own is right for you.

There are some things to consider before giving your two-week notice and going it alone. Being your own boss has many benefits. There is no limit placed on your earning potential. But it also takes talent, motivation, research, skill, and planning to be successful. To begin the process, you should prepare a well-constructed business plan. This will help you to ponder the many aspects of running a business that you may have not yet considered. The business plan will be a crucial piece when it comes time to raise capital or secure financing to fund your venture. It can also be used to measure your success.

In researching the options for being your own boss, you must be able to find a niche to fill. Research is necessary to find answers to such questions as who your competition is, what demand exists for your product or service, if there is an unmet need that you may be able to fill, and whether the industry you plan to enter is declining or growing. You should take a realistic look at your strengths, weaknesses, skills, and abilities. You also must assess what business best matches your interests and goals.

Once you have carefully researched and inventoried your skills and the market for the goods or services you plan to provide, the next step is choosing a structure for your business. The most common types of businesses are sole proprietorships, partnerships, limited partnerships, "C" corporations, subchapter "S" corporations, and limited liability companies. Talk to your certified public accountant or attorney for help deciding which type of business structure will be most advantageous to you.

The Holy Grail of Starting a Business in Oregon

The Oregon Business Referral Center (OBRC) is a central stop for finding general information and forms to register a business with these six major state agencies:

- Secretary of State's office
- Oregon Department of Revenue
- Oregon Employment Department
- Workers Compensation Division-Department of Consumer and Business Services
- Construction Contractors Board
- Oregon Economic and Community Development Department

The goals of the center are to streamline access to government services and regulatory requirements. There are also staff available to give you information on whether a business is required to have a state license, permit, or certification to operate. The Business Referral Center offers referrals to business assistance programs available in Oregon. This center at the Corporation Division of the Secretary of State's Office. Its Web site is www.filinginoregon.com.

In addition to its Web site, the ORBC publishes the *Oregon Business Guide*, a consolidated source of information from participating agencies. The guide provides a checklist to guide you through the process of registering your business. It also contains a list of business assistance programs that may be able to provide resources as you begin and continue to run your business. The guide is available in print and can be found online at this location: www.filinginoregon.com/obg. The advantage to the online site is that links are provided to online information from many resources listed in the guide. In addition to details about registering a business, there is a great deal of information on what you need to do to hire workers, including definitions of "employer" and "employee." You'll also find such data as Oregon's withholding tax and unemployment insurance tax. This guide is a must read for anyone contemplating starting a business. The Oregon Business Referral Center is in the Public Service Building, Suite 151, 255 Capitol Street NE, Salem OR, 97310-1327. The phone number is (503) 986-2200.

Small Business Administration Assistance

The Small Business Administration (SBA) offers many forms of assistance to small business including classes, seminars, publications, and information about business financing options. Its Oregon Web site is <http://www.sba.gov>. The Portland district office phone number is (503) 326-2682. One of the most useful tools on the SBA Web site is the Small Business Startup Guide. This interactive Web tool is intended to serve as a roadmap for starting a business. It is comprehensive and easy to use and includes links for additional information on many business start-up questions. This resource can be found at www.sba.gov/starting_business/startup/guide.html.

State of Oregon's New Business in Oregon Website

The state of Oregon has developed a responsive e-government program at <http://www.oregon.gov> to make business information, forms, and payment services available at one place to the business community. All state agencies are now using this system, which allows them to offer their products or services online.

Business Assistance From the Oregon Employment Department

The Oregon Employment Department (OED) considers employers to be one of its primary customers. It offers labor market information online at <http://www.qualityinfo.org> and one-on-one assistance to employers through its workforce analyst program. The program's 14 workforce analysts are located throughout Oregon to help employers access and use such labor market information as local wage data, availability and skills of the labor force, training providers for employee skill enhancement, and economic and demographic information to help employers in their decision-making processes. Contact

the OED field office near you, or go to the "contacts" section on the QualityInfo Web site to find the workforce analyst in your area.

Employers can place job openings with the OED for free and have job seekers referred to them based on the skills and experience employers are seeking. This comprehensive system is called iMatchSkills. Employers can go to <http://www.emp.state.or.us/>, select "iMatchSkills" and automatically be directed to Oregon's newest tool for matching job seekers with employers. If employers prefer, local field office staff can help with their job listings in person. The OED also provides a free Employers Handbook. This resource has information on employment services, tax information, Oregon unemployment insurance benefits, labor market information, and child care. This publication can be obtained at any OED field office. It is also available online at egov.oregon.gov/employ/tax/docs/uipub45_5_01.pdf.

The Oregon Employer Council

The Oregon Employer Council (OEC) is a partnership between Oregon employers and OED. Teams of volunteer employer representatives serve as advisors to OED to identify and address local employment and workforce challenges. They offer many educational seminars to employers around Oregon, as well as an extensive resource library. For more information about the council, contact an OED business representative at the field office in your area, or Marney Roddick, the statewide OEC coordinator at (503) 947-1305, or e-mail Marney.L.Roddick@state.or.us. Explore the OEC Resource Library for more information and resources at findit.emp.state.or.us/oec/library-new.cfm.

Additional Sources of Business Assistance

Oregon's Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) are available to provide many types of information and assistance to businesses. Visit its Web site at <http://www.bizcenter.org/>. Some topics on which it provides assistance include business management, business feasibility, marketing, sources of capital, records management, and government regulations. Free, confidential counseling is available from qualified SBDC business professionals. The SBDCs offer classes, workshops, and programs tailored to meet your needs and are located in regional centers throughout the state. There is also assistance available on importing and exporting through the Small Business International Trade Center. You can link to federal and state trade organizations for market research and trade resources.

In addition to providing these services, the SBDC can be a way to network with other business owners. Businesses can tap into databases for technical information on marketing, demographics, and product development. There are also computer labs with selections of business software. The SBDC Web site has links to books and software to assist in writing a business plan.

The Oregon Economic and Community Development Department has a variety of information and services for businesses. To access its information, visit <http://www.econ.state.or.us/> or call (503) 986-0123.

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) Technical Assistance for Employers Program provides information on wage and hour laws, employment of minors, family leave, and civil rights laws, including state disability law. For questions on these or other services and publications, call (503) 731-4200, ext. 4. The BOLI Web site is <http://www.boli.state.or.us/>.

A Good Omen for Your Business

The Oregon Microenterprise Network (OMEN) is a statewide association of microenterprise

development programs and their supporters. A "microenterprise" or "micro business" is commonly defined as a business with fewer than five employees with capital needs of under \$25,000. These programs provide training, lending, and other enterprise opportunities to entrepreneurs with limited access to economic resources. OMEN supports small businesses by providing leadership and a voice for statewide microenterprises. It also helps build capacity of microenterprise practitioners and educate the public about the value of microenterprise development. Assisting with cooperation and collaboration strategies to combat poverty through microenterprise development is another way OMEN supports businesses. The phone number for more information is (503) 223-4041. OMEN's Web site is <http://www.oregon-microbiz.org/>.

The National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) is committed to providing members with the resources needed to be successful in the growing incubator field. Business incubators are assistance programs targeted to support start-up and fledgling entrepreneurial firms. Incubators offer small business clients financial and professional assistance, including flexible space and leases, a network of business and technical consultants, relationships with financial institutions, access to university resources, and new business opportunities through co-op ventures with other incubator clients. Visit the NBIA online at <http://www.nbia.org/>, or call (740) 593-4331.

Oregon has many incubator affiliates, including:

- The Business Enterprise Center of Linn and Benton Counties Inc., (541) 758-4009 or online at <http://www.thebec.com/>.
- Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME) Center in Portland, (503) 249-7744 or online at <http://www.oame.org/>. OAME provides services to minority, women and emerging small businesses.
- Portland Development Commission, (503) 823-3200 or Portland's online business resource at <http://www.businessinportland.org/>. The Web site is a one-stop resource about small business programs, and such city regulations as permits, licenses, and taxes.
- Oregon Innovation Center (OiC), (541) 312-5785 or online at <http://www.orbin.org/>. The OiC provides business incubation, capital sourcing, and many other services to growing companies.
- Portland Business Accelerator, (503) 725-2313 or online at <http://www.portlandaccelerator.com/>. This economic development initiative supports start-up technology businesses by providing affordable office space, delivering a variety of support services, and providing a link to research and development capabilities.
- The Food Innovation Center, (503) 872-6680 or online at <http://fic.oregonstate.edu/>. The center offers one-stop access to services for food producers, processors, marketers, and entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

It can be daunting to begin the process of striking out on your own in the world of business. However, careful planning, preparation, and knowing where to go for help can help to straighten out the curves on the road to being your own boss or becoming an employer in Oregon.

There are many risks and uncertainties involved with running a business, but the rewards can be great in terms of personal satisfaction and financial gains. Only you can accurately assess your strengths and weaknesses to determine if running your own business is best for you. Knowing where to go for help

and assistance can make the decision easier.

