

# SETTING UP IN BUSINESS: REALITY KICKS IN

Peter Savage continues his series, based on 19 years' experience, guiding you through the stages and decisions that come with establishing your own business.

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So, as described last month, you have a plan and a business bank account. It's time to get your business going.

### Step six: Premises and equipment

Now I am the type of guy who likes big, flash premises; a secretary to make my tea; and loads of parking space for my large, gas-guzzler of a sports car ... Oh, sorry, I've woken from my daydream – in truth, nightmare – and come bouncing back to real life ... in my back bedroom.

It doesn't have to be your back bedroom, but it could be. Or it could be a small, shared office. All I am saying is please, please don't spend your initial money on flash premises. Of course there are exceptions – if you run a shop, or a business where the customer has to come to you – but, in most businesses, because so much communication is by phone, email or internet, the customer rarely needs to see your place of work.



One of the start-up businesses I helped – a broadcast hire company – started out in a back bedroom, flight cases and all, and only moved to premises when they literally couldn't force their way into half the house.

The important point is to find some easily affordable space – with room for phone and fax (installing them can take some time) plus a computer (very few businesses can operate without one) – where you can concentrate on the business. Also

essential for most businesses is a front page on the web (you don't need the ultimate website on your first day). Then get ready to get going. Yes, you still haven't got started ...

### Step seven: The first day

Here's a brief synopsis of two first days that I had. They were similar: one was in a small room in someone else's premises; the other was in my small, six foot by nine foot study at home. In the first case, I had a short drive to work; in the second, I took the long and arduous walk from kitchen to study, in my case about four yards.

Close the door. Always do that, if you are at home, as your partner (male or female) always considers their new work-at-home partner as some additional, hired help. Giving in to "could you just do this ..." sets a precedent – which is not good for business.

Door shut, with no one else about, reality kicks in. In both cases I had left busy jobs in corporate environments and most of all other people. Yes, people. You'll understand the lure of helping around the house or garden – you'd welcome the interaction – but don't give in to it. Stay business-focused.

In your office, some small room, on your own. I looked at the phone, expecting it to ring. Obviously it didn't. And it didn't for the next half hour. I checked email, rechecked email, sent email to self to check email was working. Ah, one arrives. Oh, spam. Spent time wondering how spam could have been my first incoming email. End of first half hour. No calls, no emails and no business.

This is reality. Yes you are on your own and it's all down to you. This is no bad thing; it is what you wanted. And one huge benefit is that ... you are the only person who can tell you off in the morning. Just don't let it be for fiddling around at home instead of concentrating on business.

Understand the reality – and then make a list.



### Step eight: Become proactive – and open to business

Think of your top ten potential customers, hirers, whatever; make the list; pick up the phone – and become proactive. The best businesses are those that get up and go rather than wait for others to come. It is also rare to find someone else who can sell your business as well as you can – so get selling.

I remember, in both my new starts, my top five customers said: "Welcome back! What have you been doing for the last few years?" I had been working away, doing the same job, but lost sight of the main thing – my customer.

Customers make businesses and, it seems strange, but many like dealing with the owner, the person who can say yes or no. It gives them a warm feeling, cutting through the layers of gatekeepers (the term for a secretary/receptionist and others who protect the manager from the customer) when trying to give, yes give, their supplier their business. Why do businesses put up barriers to stop people doing business? Staying simple is easy for you and your customer ... so think of the customer, stay customer-centric, and you won't go wrong.

So, you have survived your first day. You've made your first sales call, done a deal – maybe, maybe not – and it's time to go home (open the door of your study). Kiss the partner, have a nice glass of wine, whatever, and "Wow do I feel knackered" is what you are likely to feel. Go to bed but, hey, it's started. Yes, it has really started.

So, what's next? Building on that first deal



**The series continues next month. If you missed steps one to five they can be found on <http://www.azule.co.uk/businessadvice/financialmanagement/articles>**