

30 in 30 Startup Challenge

Complete 30 tasks in 30 days to get your small business started in 2026

How the Startup Challenge works

- ▮ Decide on your starting date. (How about today? There's no time like the present.)
- ▮ Complete one task everyday for 30 days until you've checked off all the tasks.
- ▮ Do not look at the entire list of tasks. NOT EVER. Complete the task for that day and wait until the next day to see what's next on the list.

Ready. Set. GO!

DAY 1

Refine your 'idea', into a BU\$INE\$\$.

While you might have a great idea, its not a business unless it has the potential to make money.

Be honest and answer these questions (from Y Combinator founder Paul Graham) to assess whether your business is a sure sale or if it needs a bit of tweaking.

1. Will you **personally** use you product?
2. Can you find **10+ people** who are willing to pay for it now?
3. What do you **love to do**? How different is it from your idea?
4. Is your **target market** big enough to create a real business out of it ?
5. What is your **revenue model** and how realistic is it?
6. How does the **customer** addresses the problem today?
7. What is the **simplest** version of this idea?
8. How **fast** can you take the idea to market?
9. What makes your product **different**?
10. Customers will only buy a simple product. Can you **explain** your product in one sentence?
11. Do you have any advantage over the competition?
12. Are you **passionate** enough about the idea to dedicate the majority of your time for the next 1-2 years to it?
13. What opportunities and **risks** do you face?
14. What long-term **goals** have you set?
15. Why should someone give you money?
16. How will your business survive and grow in the next five years?



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DAY 2

Choose a business structure.

Figure out what form your business will take: do you want to run your business yourself, or would you prefer to run it with a partner or associate?

SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP

With this type of business organization, you would be fully responsible for all debts and obligations related to your business and all profits would be yours alone to keep. As a sole owner of the business, a creditor can make a claim against your personal or business assets to pay off any debt.

CORPORATION

Another type of business structure is incorporation. Incorporation can be done at the federal or provincial level. When you incorporate your business, it is considered to be a legal entity that is separate from the owners and shareholders. As a shareholder of a corporation, you will not be personally liable for the debts, obligations or acts of the corporation. When making such decisions, it is always wise to seek legal advice before incorporating.

PARTNERSHIPS

A partnership is a good business structure if you want to carry on a business with a partner and you do not wish to incorporate your business. With a partnership, you would combine your financial resources with your partner into the business. As a partner, you would share in the profits of your business according to the terms of your agreement.

COOPERATIVE

The last business structure you could create is a cooperative. With a cooperative, you would have a business that would be owned by an association of members. This is the least common form of business, but can be appropriate in situations where a group of persons or businesses decide to pool their resources to provide access to common needs, such as the delivery of products or services, the sale of products or services, employment, and more.



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DAY 3

Write your Business Plan

Learn what sections are essential to every business plan and what key points you should include in order to make yours complete.

Business Plans: The Essentials.

- ▮ The Executive Summary
- ▮ The Business Strategy
- ▮ The Marketing Strategy
- ▮ The Operation Plan
- ▮ SWOT Analysis
- ▮ Human Resources Plan
- ▮ Social Responsibility Strategy
- ▮ E-Business Strategy
- ▮ Financial Forecasts and other Financial Data
- ▮ Business Exit Strategy
- ▮ Additional Resources



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DAY 4

Figure out your money situation

So you've got an idea, and you're ready to put it into action. But do you have the financial means not only to fund your business but to sustain your lifestyle while you focus on building your business?

WHAT ARE YOUR LIVING EXPENSES?

Calculate the minimum amount you need to make in order to sustain the lifestyle you expect to live while setting up your business.

Consider all expenses including: rent/mortgage, food, transport, entertainment, insurance, etc.

START-UP COSTS

Estimate what expenses you'll incur before the business is up and running.

Factor in things like: building a website, registering your business, setting up your office or location and paying salaries of those helping with setting up.

BUSINESS FUNDING

Start thinking about how you'd like to fund your business.

Perhaps take some time to familiarize yourself with the various types of funding available from Government Grant and Assistance programs, to bank loans, angel investments and venture capitalists.



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DAY 5

Choose a Business Name

The right name can be an effective advertising tool that can help your customers understand what your business does and which market you are targeting. The wrong name can confuse or drive away customers.





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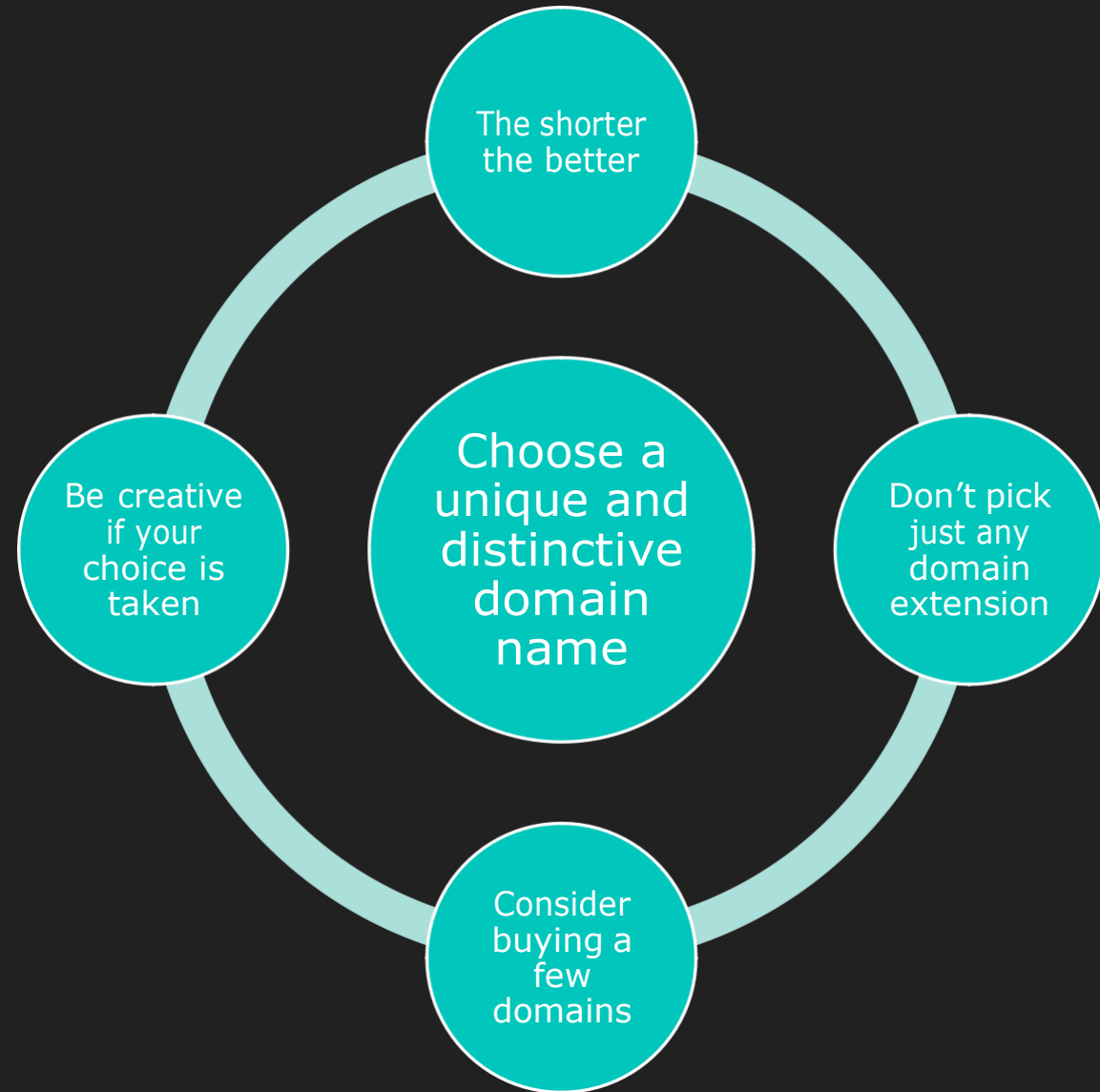
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DAY 6

Register a Domain Name

Get a matching domain to your business name. Have a domain name in mind? Learn more about domain names, check the availability of your chosen domain, and find out how to register it:





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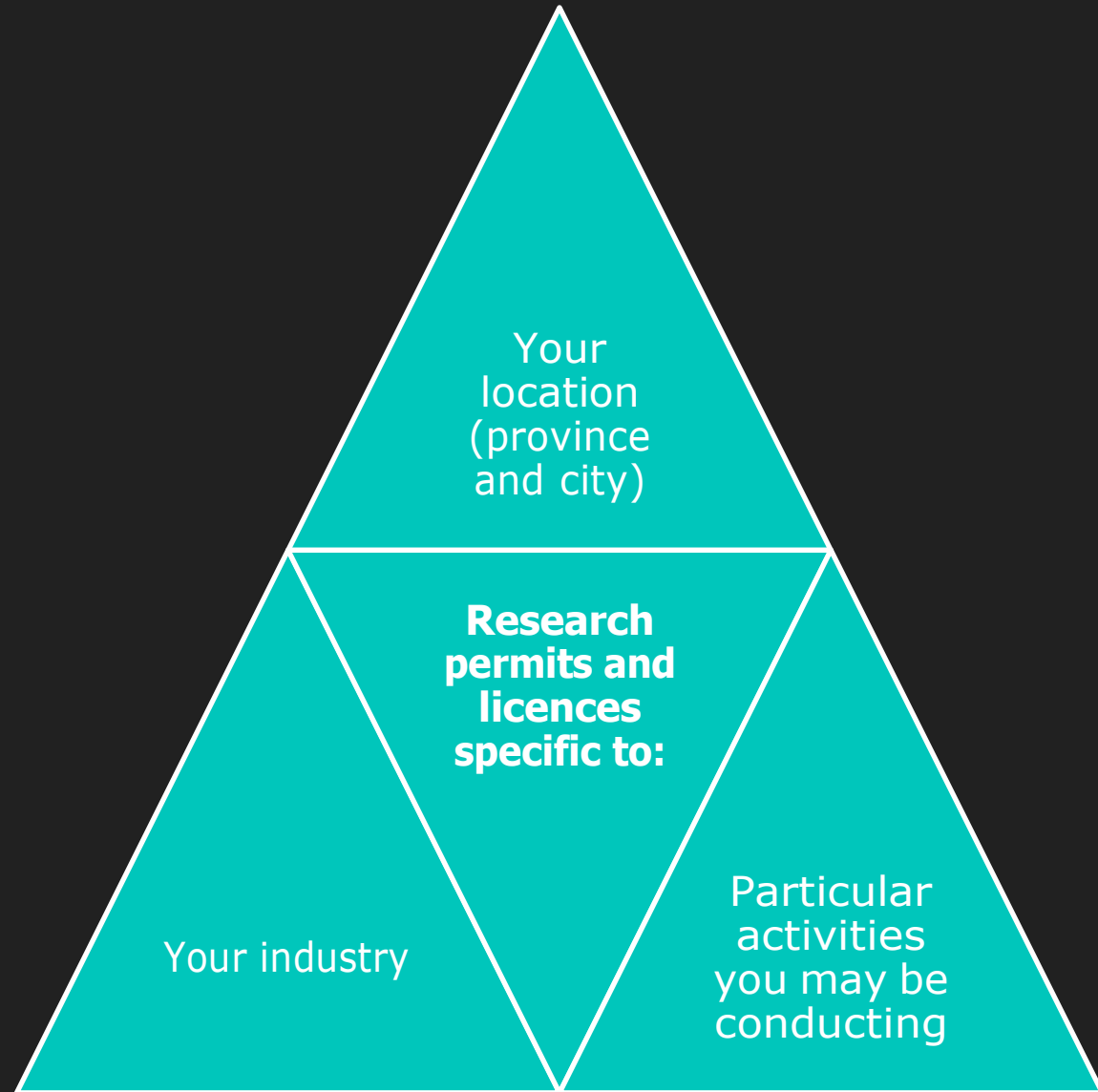
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DAY 7

Investigate & Apply for Business Licenses

You may need one, if not several, business licenses for your startup, depending on your industry and where you are located. Most licenses are at the provincial or municipal level.





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DAY 9

Set Up a Website

Get your website up and running as soon as possible. It's necessary for credibility. Even if your product is not yet built, you can start with company information.

Outline your website content

- Homepage
- Products & Services
- About Us
- Contact Us
- Additional Pages

Get a logo

- Do it yourself
- Ask a friend
- Use an online tool like Fiverr

Start building your site

- Use DIY template
- Create a WordPress site
- Hire a Professional



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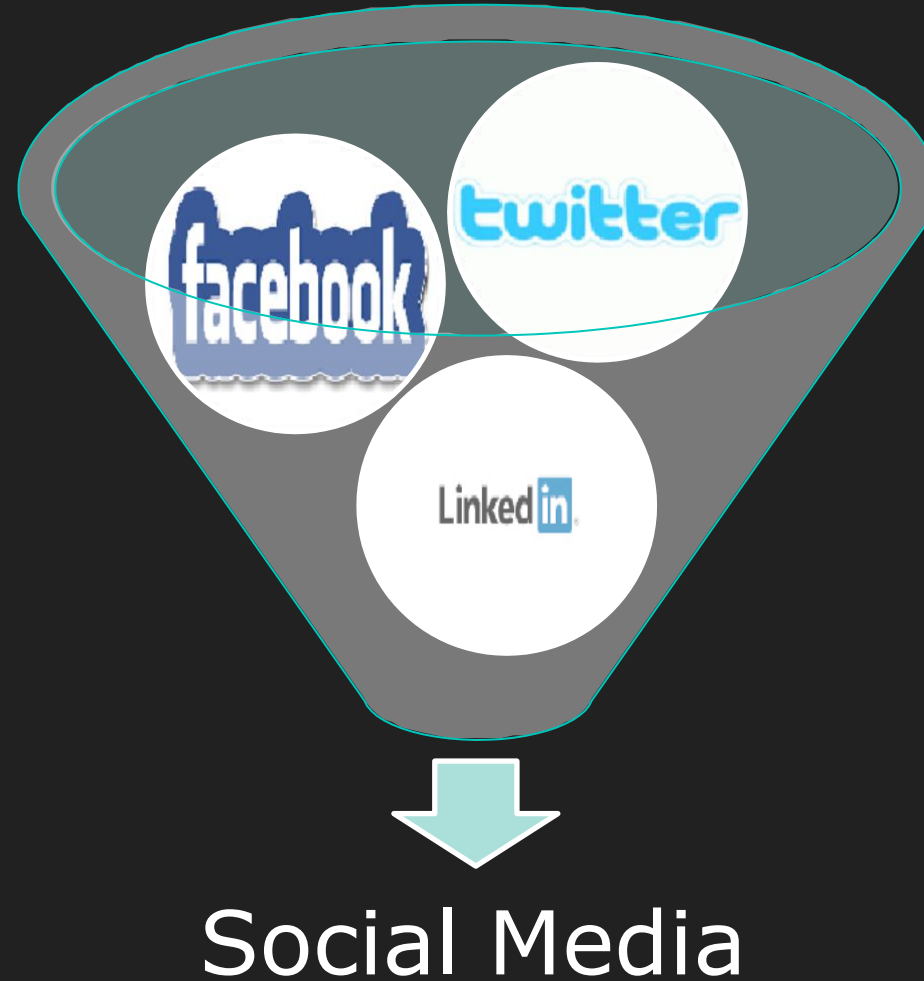
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Register Social Media Profiles

Getting set up on the major social media channels will make marketing on them later easier. Also, it's important to reserve your brand as a profile name.





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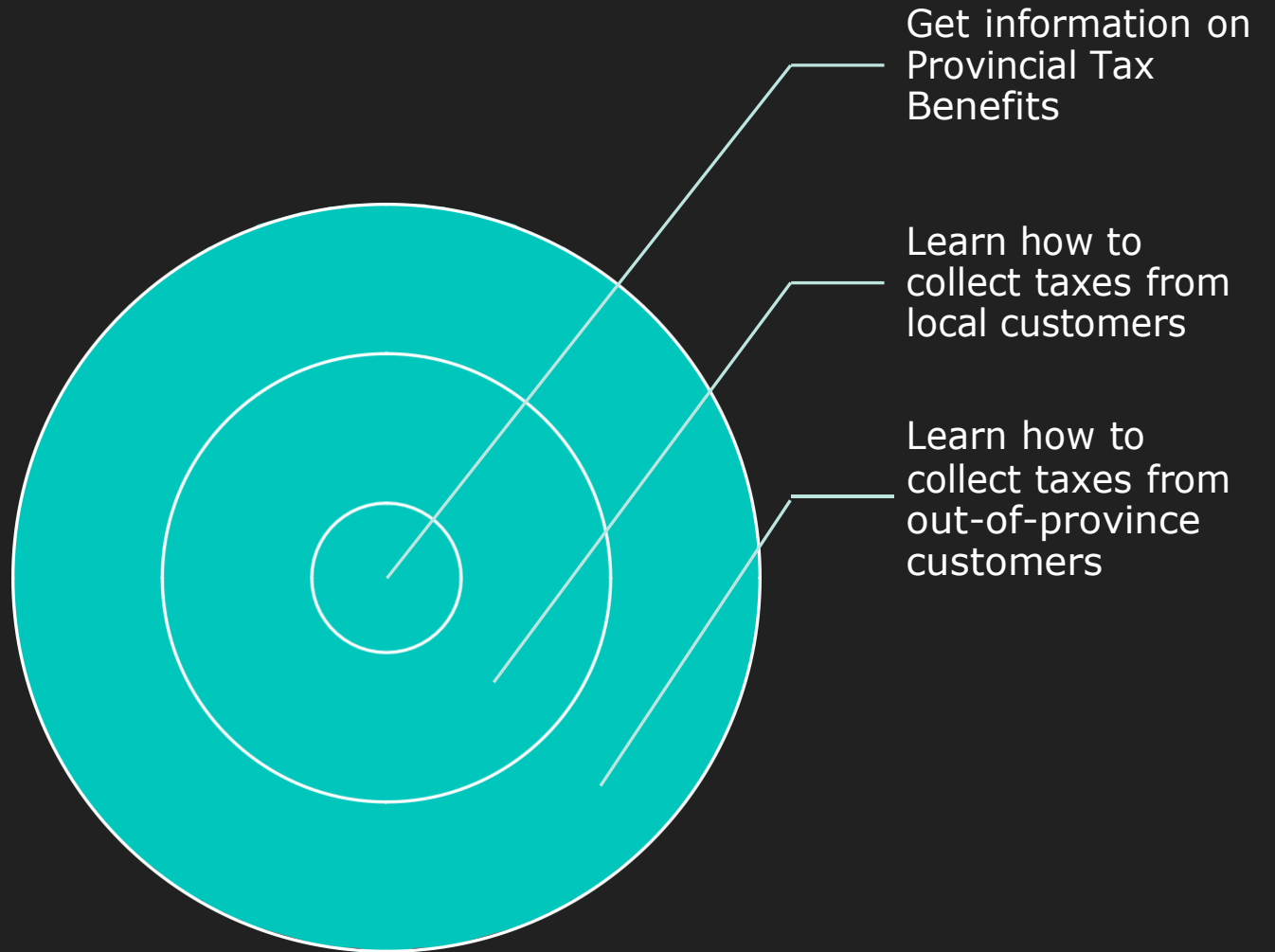
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Day 11

Learn about taxes

As a Canadian business owner, it's important to know how and when to charge sales taxes for the goods and services you sell and supply to your customers.





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Day 12

Test your product or service

Practice makes perfect so start putting your product or service to the test. Enlist friends and family to try out your product/service or give out free samples.

Be objective and listen to feedback from those who try your product or service.

Request testimonials from those who enjoyed it.

Ask for details about what they liked & what could be improved.

Ask if they would pay for this product/service and if so, how much?



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DAY 13

Set Up a Location

If you've got a brick-and-mortar business, you'll need to sort this out early. If you plan to run a retail business, pay attention to foot traffic, accessibility, and other factors that will affect the number of people that will walk in your store.

EXCEPTION: If you don't have a brick and mortar or retail business, then hold off renting an office as long as possible to avoid saddling your startup with lease payments.

Site Seletion

Research the neighbourhood/building to help you decide where to grow your business

Enlist help in how to organize your office, store or facility.

Home- based

Consider working from home if you can, as a more cost-efficient means of starting up.

Designate a comfortable and functional space for your home office that meets your business' needs.

Pro-tip: Compromise

Can't afford an office, but hate the idea of working from home? Meet yourself in the middle and join a Co-Working Space.



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DAY 14

Order Business Cards

As a startup founder, you'll be doing a lot of networking, so order plenty of business cards.

They are inexpensive enough that you can reorder them later if things change. Without cards you lack credibility.

There are plenty of inexpensive online services available to design and print your cards. If you want something very personalized, [Tailorbrands.com](https://tailorbrands.com) will design your logo and your entire brand, providing you with files for company letterheads, business cards, invoices and social media images that you can then send over to a printer.

Otherwise, check out these sites for cheap and quick business card printing:

▮ [Staplescopyandprint.ca](https://staplescopyandprint.ca)

▮ [Vistaprint.ca](https://vistaprint.ca)

▮ [Zazzle.ca](https://zazzle.ca)



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DAY 15

Open a Business Account

It's all too easy to use your personal bank account to pay for business expenses, but it becomes difficult to separate the costs later on.

- ▮ Ask about Business Bank Accounts for Low-Volume Businesses (You can always upgrade later when you sales increase)
- ▮ Get a "Free" Business Account. Most banks will waive the account maintenance fee is you maintain the required monthly balance.
- ▮ Think outside the 'Big Bank' box. See what Business Bank accounts your Credit Union offers first. In many cases their transaction fees are lower than at the banks.



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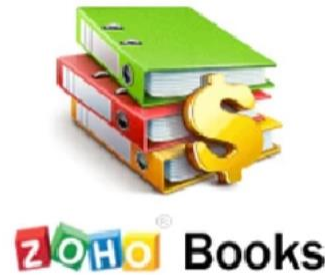
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DAY 16

Set Up An Accounting System

Once you have your bank account set up, choose an accounting program. Start as you intend to go. Few things will doom your business faster than books that are a mess.



Price:
\$9.99

Mobile Accounting:
iOS and Android

Customer Service:
Phone and Chat support

Price:
\$24 per month

Mobile Accounting:
iOS, Android, Windows phone

Customer Service:
Phone and email support

Price:
Free, with ads

Mobile Accounting:
No native app

Customer Service:
Phone and Chat at extra cost



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DAY 17

Get Useful Apps

As an entrepreneur you are going to be on the go – a lot. It cannot be emphasized enough how useful a good phone with good business apps can be, in running your startup. Get a credit card swipe device to accept payments, too.

Xero.com

This bookkeeping app is perfect for small businesses. The online software lets you monitor your cashflow in real-time and can be viewed from anywhere you have an internet connection.

Payfirma.com

It's now easier to take payments anytime, anywhere, with Payfirma's mobile app. The app allows you to accept payments, offer returns and pre-authorise transactions using a simple plug-in swiper.

Evernote.com

This is a great app for those just starting out or looking at developing their business. It lets you store, organize and share text, photos and voice notes. This app will let you gather all those inspiring ideas for products, branding, customer service, or for what your office or retail space will look like.

Drive.google.com

The Google Drive is a cloud based storage system; perfect to use for additional back-up of your important business files. One great feature of the Drive is that more than one person can work on a document at once, so if you have a pressing deadline and you've allocated different people to complete different sections of a pitch, they can all work on it at the same time.

Skype.com

Skype is one of the best-known online apps in the world, with nearly 30 million users globally. This inexpensive tool allows you to communicate Skype-to-Skype for free or Skype to landline or cell phone for a small fee.

ScannerPro

If you have a habit of losing important receipts, business cards or documents, this last app is for you. The app identifies the page size automatically when scanning, and converts it to a standard pdf. Have a multi-page document you need to send to a colleague in a meeting fast? You can use this app to scan the document and email it directly to them. You can even password protect the document.



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DAY 18

Hire Your First Employee

Depending on the type of business you have, you may need staff from day one (retail) or you may be able to outsource to freelancers, interns, and third-party vendors for a while (service and tech businesses).

Just remember, trying to do everything yourself takes you away from growing the business.

Familiarize yourself with your responsibilities as an employer.

There are many types of training for employees. Improving fundamental skills can help lead to success in your workplace.

Keeping employee records on topics like salaries and job skills and what steps you must follow to manage your employees' payroll.

Looking to hire freelancers? Find and hire freelancers for projects or ongoing work on sites like Upwork.com



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DAY 19

Line Up Suppliers and Service Providers

Finding a good source of inventory is crucial, especially in certain types of businesses (retail, manufacturing). Beyond inventory, line up good reliable suppliers and service providers so you don't have to sweat the details.

- Most retailers buy through company salespeople or independent representatives who handle the wares of several different companies. Prices from these sources are usually lowest unless the retailer's location makes shipping freight costly.

Manufacturers



- Also known as wholesalers, brokers or jobbers, distributors buy in quantity from several manufacturers and warehouse the goods for sale to retailers. Although their prices are higher than a manufacturer's, they can supply retailers with small orders from a variety of manufacturers.

Distributors



- Exclusive distribution of unique creations is frequently offered by independent craftspeople who sell through reps or at trade shows.

Independent Craftspeople





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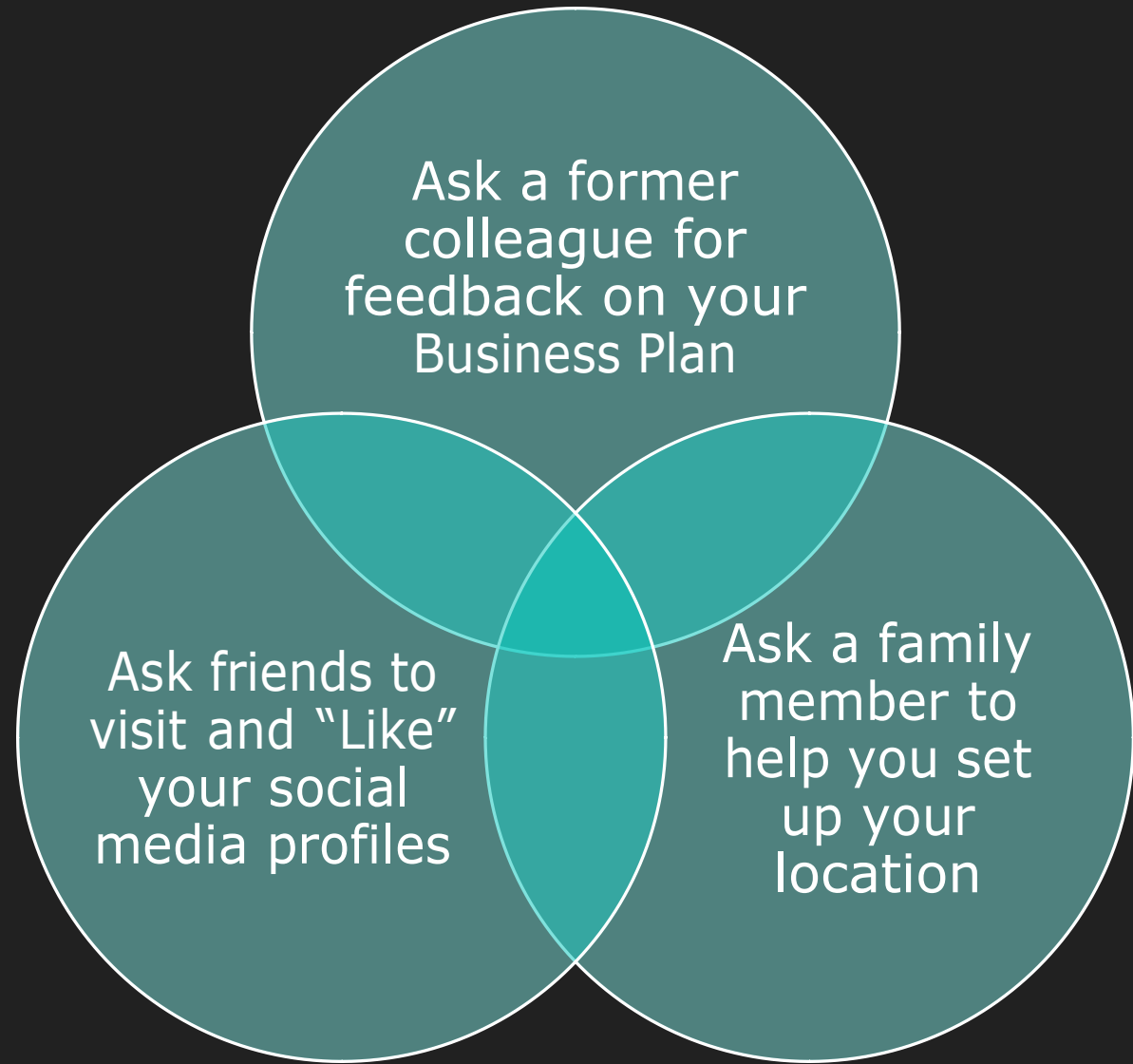
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DAY 20

Work Your Network

Reach out to former co-workers and colleagues, as well as friends and family. Don't pressure them to buy your products or services. Instead, tap into them for introductions and help with other things on this startup checklist.





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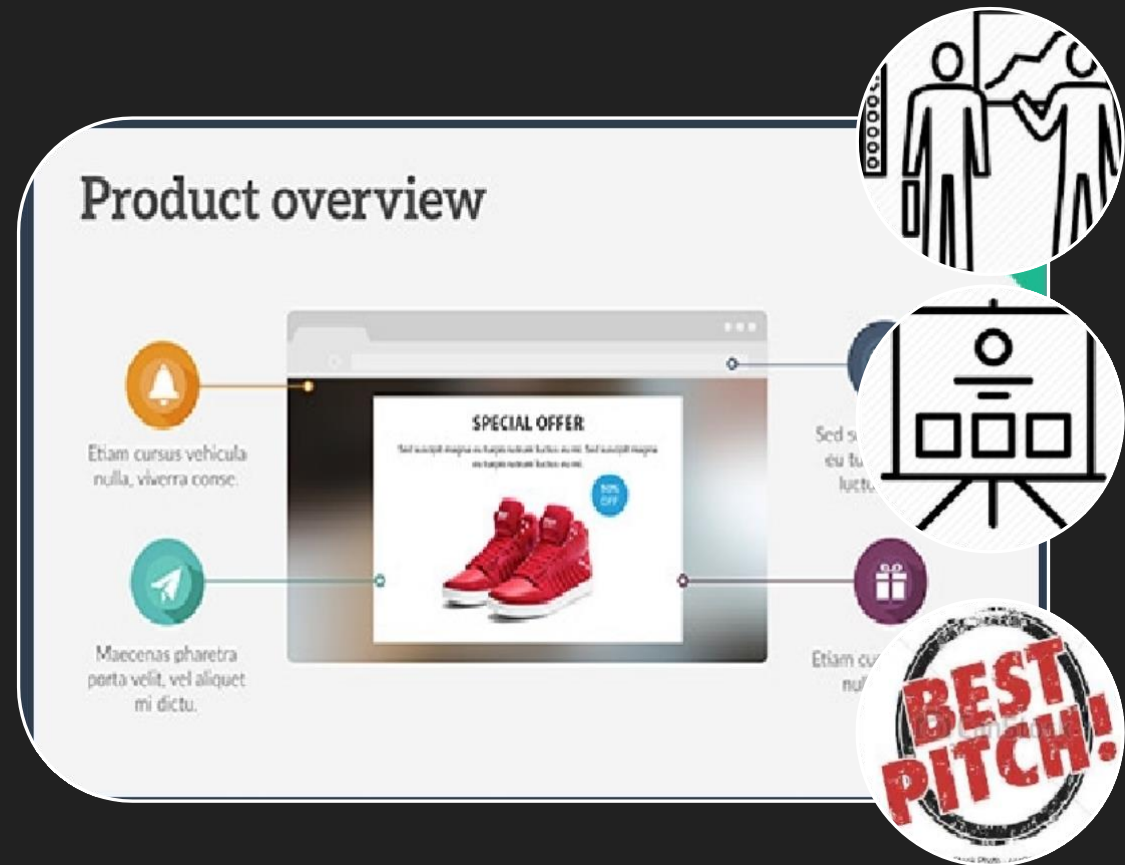
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DAY 21

Refine your pitch

You need a good elevator pitch for many reasons: potential investors, customers, prospective new hires, bankers. If you can't persuasively and clearly pitch your business, how can you expect key stakeholders to buy in?



Create a Pitch Deck

Provoke curiosity and give your business a human face using colourful visuals and interesting facts that make your business stand out from the crowd.



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DAY 22

Create a Marketing Plan

Every small business NEEDS a marketing plan, its what will tell you how to attract customers to your product or service and how much money you'll need to spend to do it.

Your **Marketing Plan** should answer the following questions about your business:

- ▮ What are you trying to accomplish, and why?
- ▮ Who are you trying to reach with your marketing activities?
- ▮ Who are you up against, and where do you rank?
- ▮ What makes your business unique?
- ▮ What will you charge, and why?
- ▮ How will you reach your target market?
- ▮ How much money will you spend, and on what?
- ▮ What tasks do you need to complete to reach your marketing goals?
- ▮ How are you implementing, and where can you improve?



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DAY 23

Get a Mentor

Mentors. Who needs em, right? Wrong. YOU need one! Being in business for yourself can be a lonely occupation. Sometimes you just need someone to talk to.

As an entrepreneur you are often faced with tough decisions. More often than not you instinctively know what has to be done but seeking out a valued second opinion allows you to make better informed decisions.

A mentor does not necessarily have to be involved in your type of business. Sometimes a well-experienced outsider can offer more insight and vision than those directly immersed in your industry.

Don't assume age is a factor and for that matter, don't assume a mentor has to be older than you are. A mentor is someone who has in-depth experience and is willing to share those experiences.

What you should look for in a mentor

Mentors don't automatically provide answers - they challenge you to think. They point you in the right direction and act as a source of information so you can discover the answers to your own questions.

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DAY 24

Make It a GREEN Business

Ensuring your business operates in the most environmentally-sustainable manner is not only good for the environment, but also reduces costs, increases efficiency, and helps your company develop a strong reputation in the community.

▮ A few simple ways to make your business green & save money!

- ▮ Switch to post-consumer waste (PCW) paper, paper products and packaging and use biodegradable cleaners to reduce the introduction of these substances into the environment.
- ▮ Use compact-fluorescent or LED lighting. They cost a little bit more, but last A LOT longer and use much less energy. Saving you money over time.
- ▮ *Replace outdated appliances with their greener counterparts.* EnergyStar appliances have labels to help you assess their energy (and cash) requirements over time. Look for the yellow tags when you buy your next appliance, and splurge up front for the long term economic and environmental savings.



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DAY 25

Research Funding Programs

Any business idea, no matter how great, doesn't stand a chance without the **funding needed** to get it off the ground. There are hundreds and hundreds of programs for Canadian small businesses.

Make a short-list of Funding Programs that could benefit your small business.





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DAY 26

APPLY TO A FUNDING PROGRAM

As a Canadian small business owner you are in luck. The Canadian government allocates billions of dollars each year in an attempt to support small businesses across the country.

Start applying to one of the programs on your short-list, to get your hands on a slice of the funding pie.

If you've made it through all 26 days of the 30 in 30 challenge, you should already be equipped with everything you need to start applying to programs TODAY.

Most funding programs require that you do the following:

- ▮ Submit a completed application form
- ▮ Provide a copy of your business plan
- ▮ Ensure that you meet all qualification criteria
- ▮ Respect program deadlines
- ▮ Provide detailed information on what you will use the funds for (Hint: Send them your Pitch Deck)



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Work On Your SEO

No SEO means no visitors from search engines. And that means that when people start Googling your product, they won't find you, but will likely find dozens of your competitors.

So start working on optimizing your website so your future potential customers can find you when they need you.

A few ideas for you to improve your SEO

- ▮ You can get big results on a small budget if you invest time in creating good content and building online relationships.
- ▮ The newer your website is, the more patient you will need to be. It takes time to build authority and trust, and until you've developed both, you shouldn't expect to outrank older, more established sites.
- ▮ Get advice directly from Google. Via their [Webmaster Guidelines](#) and [Webmaster Help Videos](#).
Set-up and use Google Analytics. To find out, among other things, how many visitors your site gets, the keywords they use to find it, and what pages they visit.
- ▮ Create content primarily for people, not search engines. There's no point creating content that ranks well if it doesn't help people, interest them, or persuade them to buy from you.
- ▮ Make your content engaging for visitors. The more engaging it is, the longer people will stay on your site, and high viewing times signal to search engines that your site deserves good rankings.
- ▮ Create videos. They increase the amount of time that people spend on your site and also allow you to get links from video sharing sites.
- ▮ Add a blog to your website. Doing so makes it quick and simple to add new pages of content to your site.
- ▮ Research keywords before optimizing them. If you choose the wrong keywords, regardless of what you do for on-site and off-site SEO, you'll get very few visitors and/or visitors who don't convert into sales.
- ▮ Target keywords with commercial intent. You want visitors who are ready to spend money rather than those who are just looking for information.

Source: <http://www.seomark.co.uk/small-business-seo-tips/#ixzz4VfHaw73h>



STOP!

Do not proceed.

Only complete 1 task per day
and do not look at tasks
before the day you intend on
completing them.

Want something else to do?

Learn about [How I got
\\$12,750 in government
funding for my small business
here.](#)

Tools that make starting
a business simple.

Develop,
Plan & Fund
Your Business



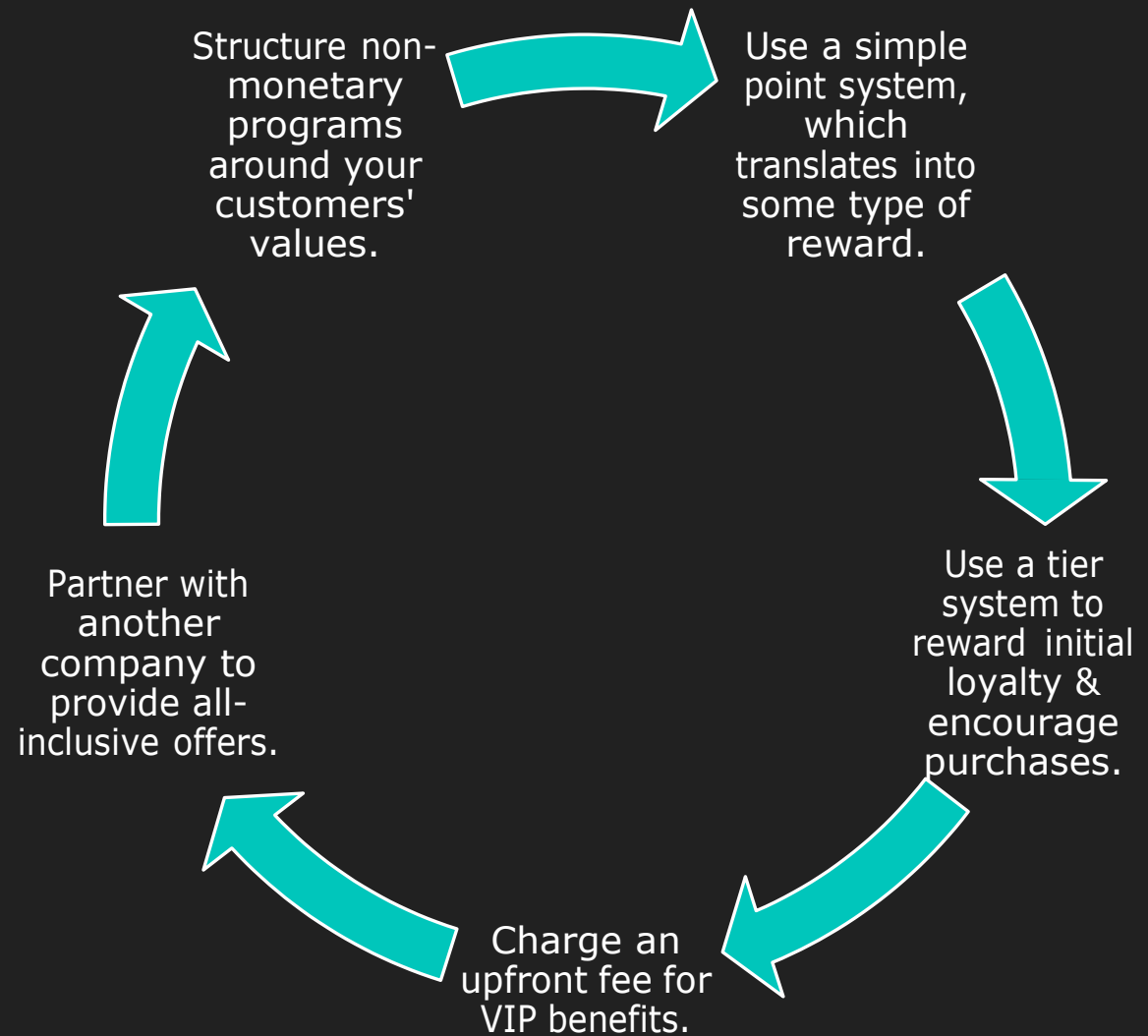
Self-employment
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DAY 28

Create a Loyalty program

Encourage new customers and increase customer retention by creating an appealing loyalty program with incentives for customers to buy, and buy again.





STOP!

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Want something else to do?

Read about [How to fix your
credit score before starting
your business here.](#)

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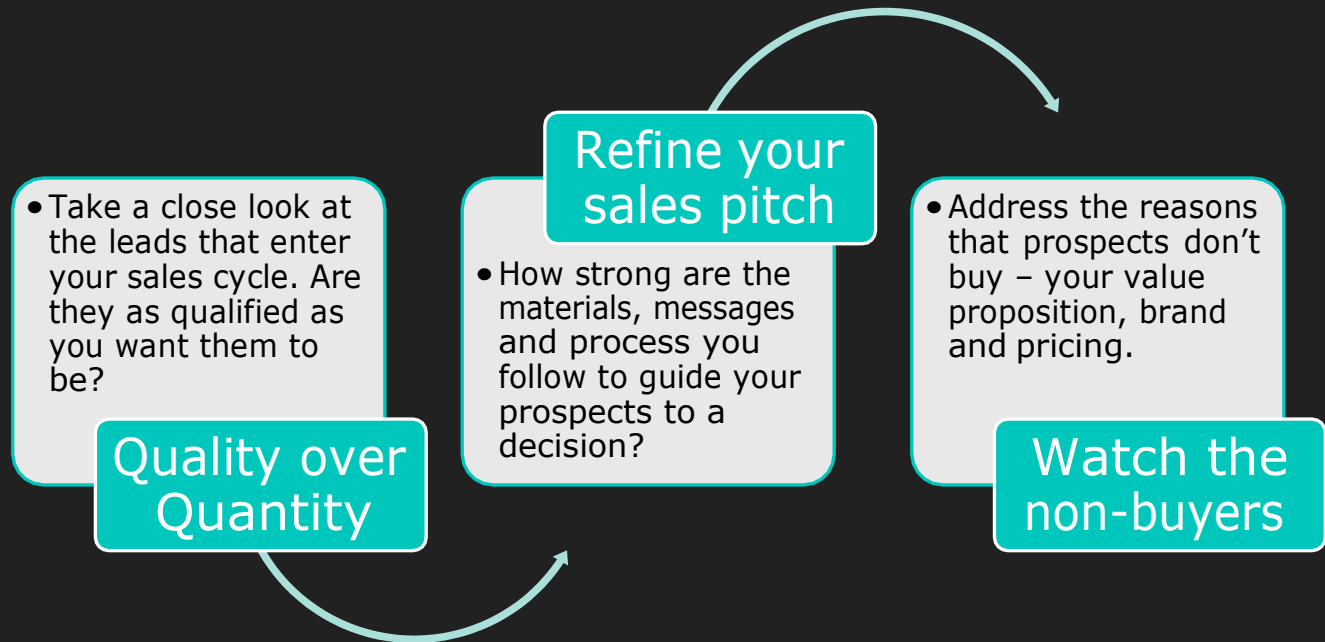
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DAY 29

Shorten Your Sales Cycle

Many businesses go through busy and slow periods over the course of the year. If your company has an "off-season," you'll need to account for your expenses during that time.





STOP!

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completing them.

Want something else to do?

Try the [STARTUP ASSESSMENT
TOOL](#) here.

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**DAY 30
CELEBRATE!**

You made it! Give yourself a pat on the back and brush that dirt off your shoulder; you persevered and made it through 30 days of working on building your very own business and grooming yourself into a successful entrepreneur.



CANADA  STARTUPS
ONE-STOP PLATFORM FOR BUILDING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS