

Useful Information

ENTREPRENEURSHIP BOOTCAMP FOR VETERANS (EBV)

The EBV is designed to open the door to business ownership for our veterans by:

- 1) Developing your skills in the many steps and activities that launch and grow a small business, and
- 2) Helping you leverage programs and services for veterans and people with disabilities in a way that furthers your entrepreneurial dreams.

Please visit whitman.syr.edu/ebv for more information on the EBV.

There are other similar veteran entrepreneurial programs offered without any cost to eligible and accepted applicants. Please visit the following websites for more information on these programs and for eligibility criteria:

ENTREPRENEURSHIP BOOTCAMP FOR VETERANS' FAMILIES (EVB-F)
<http://ebv.vets.syr.edu/families/>

VETERAN WOMEN IGNITING THE SPIRIT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP (V-WISE)
www.whitman.syr.edu/vwise

YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM
www.yellowribbon.mil/yrrp

VETERANS ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM
entrepreneurship.okstate.edu/vep

BOOTS TO BUSINESS
sba.gov/bootstobusiness

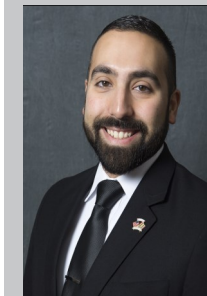
BOOTS TO BUSINESS REBOOT
sba.gov/bootstobusinessreboot



Volume 4
Issue 7

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Veterans Business Outreach Center VETERANS BUSINESS UPDATE

From the Director >>>



Market Research

By: David Elizondo

You have come up with a great idea for a business. Perfect! But have you determined if there is a demand for the product or service?

Market research can help you assess the business idea. Luckily, there are many tools on the web which can aid with market research. Some entrepreneurs tend to overlook this important step, which can affect the ultimate success of the business.

Continued on page 2

In this issue >>>

<i>Exploring New Horizons</i>	<i>P.1</i>
<i>Protecting Your Product</i>	<i>P.2</i>
<i>When Being a Veteran Matters to Corporations</i>	<i>P.3</i>
<i>Useful Information</i>	<i>P.4</i>

Exploring New Horizons

By: Julia Hubble

When you first leave the service and start a company, the easiest and most common target is the federal government. Since we're used to lots of paperwork and long waits, no problem. The Department of Veterans Affairs hires lots of us. The contracts are there. It's comfortable and familiar. And it's a trap.

All due respect to the fed, folks, but there's a huge, untapped market that you're missing if you're focusing solely on the fed for most of your work. Any savvy business person makes sure they balance their portfolio – and that means a healthy mix of both the kinds of contracts as well as when they pay.

This means that you ensure that you vary your clientele. By tapping into America's biggest businesses and their vast network of lower tiers, you expand your opportunities, your growth, and your income potential. Sounds like a winner to me.

SEA CHANGE

Ford Motor Company has decreed that they will buy from veterans, and they have set a 3 percent goal. That has established a sea change in the auto industry. All the other prime contractors will be following. Other competitors will be taking notice. That's just one industry. In retail, Target is a huge supporter of vets, so is Wal-Mart. Across the board, from pharmaceuticals to toys, America wants to buy from veterans. It's less complicated, you get paid more and faster. Sounds like a winner to me.

Here's the catch, folks. You need to get certified as a veteran-owned business. Not hard to do. It's less paperwork than contracting with the DOD. You need to function like a business, which means do the due diligence of identifying problems that businesses have, and making the argument to them that you can solve those problems. Sales. You can do this. Find where you fit in the supply chain, likely at lower tiers first.

You network, attend conferences, build a reputation, and create value. Establish joint ventures. Learn to play in the for profit in a very big way. The potential? We hire lots more vets, make way more money, have a lot more impact on our communities.

Sounds like a winner to me. America's corporations are looking to do business with you, but there is a process by which to do it. It's not hard. We all understand process. It's easier, faster and with a better payoff than just working with the fed. My humble suggestion is that you consider looking into the vast market that is America's corporations.

If that sounds like a winner to you, get busy!

Source: Vetpreneur Magazine



The Official Dictionary: Industry Lingo

Franchisee

An individual who purchases the right to operate a business under the franchisor's name and system.

Franchisor

The parent company that allows individuals to start and run a business using trademarks, products, and processes, usually for a fee.

Franchise Disclosure Document

All franchisors are required by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission to provide this legal document to prospective franchisees. FDDs are updated annually and consist of 23 sections, called items, which explain the company history, the fees and costs, contractual obligations, unit data and more. Don't make a move without reviewing it.

Master Franchise

A master franchisee serves as a sub franchisor for a certain territory.

Startup Cost/Initial Investment

The total amount required to open the franchise, outlined in Item 7 of the FDD. This includes the franchise fee, along with other startup expenses such as real estate, equipment, supplies, business licenses and working capital.

PTAC (Procurement Technical Assistance Center)

The PTAC mission is to generate employment and improve the general economy of its geographic area. The PTAC will assist businesses seeking to do business with the Department of Defense and State and local governments.

VOB (Veterans-owned Business)

A small business that is at least 51 percent owned and controlled by a veteran of the military.

SDVOB (Service-Disabled, Veteran-owned Business)

A small business that is at least 51% owned and controlled by a service-disabled veteran of the military. The service-connected disability can be zero percent compensation.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Veterans Business Outreach Center is funded through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. All opinions, conclusions, and/or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA. Arrangements for persons with disabilities will be made at all times in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and associated amendments. Arrangements for persons with special needs will be made if requested in advance. All SBA programs are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Assistance for the hearing impaired can be attained by calling the TDD at (956) 665-5071.

Empowering Veteran-Owned Businesses!
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Veterans Business Outreach Center
UTRGV CESS Building, 1407 E. Freddy Gonzalez Drive, Suite 1.200, Edinburg, TX 78539
(956) 665-8931 • vboc@utrgv.edu • www.utrgv.edu/vboc

Join our Mailing List: Text **TXVBOC** to 22828 to get started!

The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley
Veterans Business
Outreach Center



One important approach to market research is to review secondary data. Secondary data is comprised of historical data and can give business owners a snapshot of an industry's performance. There are many government agencies which provide useful information at no charge. For example, if you are interested in finding out the demographics of a certain area, the U.S. Census Bureau provides that type of information and more.

Other areas where you can find market research is trade associations. Trade associations offer valuable information, such as market statistics, reference materials, and most importantly, networking opportunities with other business owners in the same industry.

A well-developed market analysis will show you where your customers are located and what their expectations may be. Conducting market research illustrates to prospective lenders or investors that you have done your due diligence. This is included in the marketing plan, an essential component of your business plan. A market analysis should include a depiction of targeted customer segments, an industry description and outlook, and a detailed evaluation of your competitors, which highlights their strengths and weaknesses.

For further information about secondary market research, contact the Veterans Business Outreach Center, and we will gladly assist you.

Like us on
facebook.com/utrgvvhoc
for more information
on VBOC's
upcoming events!

Protecting your Product

By: Kelly Crigger, Army Retired

Source: Vetpreneur Magazine

Everyone has a routine. I wake up every morning and check about 10 websites that I like, including my own Facebook author page. One day a fan asked a question: "Hey Crigger, didn't you say this once?" and posted a link to an obscure website that had copied one of my articles nearly word-for-word and claimed it as their own. Angry doesn't begin to describe my attitude as I strangled my Mickey Mouse coffee mug. I sent a letter vehemently expressing my disdain (it may or may not have ended with the words, "I'll stab you in the face!") The article was removed immediately.

This incident taught me a valuable lesson: the more creative you are, the more you have to protect your creativity. Businesses copying the truly creative people of the world and profiting from that work as if it were their own is a disgusting trend in the business world. Anything and everything that can be copied will be, right down to a comedian's jokes. If you google Joe Rogan and Carlos Mencia, you can find a harsh video of Rogan confronting Mencia about word-for-word comedy plagiarism.

INFORMATION AGE OF PLAGIARISM

"The digital age brings content to your doorstep in the blink of an eye and when combined with unscrupulous people, it creates a situation where copying someone else's work and passing it off as your own is too easy," said Ranger Up CEO Nick Palmisciano.

Ranger Up is a mid-sized business that makes military and patriotic apparel, but its success has had a downside: its profitable designs put it in the crosshairs of rival companies who don't have a moral objection to copyright infringement. The blatant illegal activity keeps Palmisciano on his toes to find and expose copycats.

"On average, we send four Cease and Desist letters a week," he said. "We have to protect our intellectual property or we have nothing left. Are we copied less than some other similar sized brands? Yes, because people know we will move on them when they steal from us."

NOT ALWAYS A HAPPY ENDING

Ranger Up's experiences usually end well once the violator has been identified, but not every case does. Many times the offended party never finds out they've been copied, or once they do, they don't have the knowledge, time, or resources to take action. In this digital age the likelihood of getting caught is much higher, but the risk of someone taking action is actually lower. There's no incentive to not copy someone else's stuff when the worst you can do is tell them to stop or call them out publicly, which has little-to-no-effect.

"We don't really have the resources to go after all the copycats," says Tiffany Oden, owner of the small boutique business Quinn's Closet, which operates solely on web-based platforms like Etsy and Facebook. "I catch people copying our dresses long after I've made and sold them, but what can I do? I'm a two-person operation."

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

You can do a lot, actually. If you run a web-based business, then the first thing you can do is contact the sales platform about the infringement.

"Website providers have mechanisms in place to protect intellectual property that most companies don't know about," says Trevor Schmidt of Hutchison PLLC in Raleigh, N.C. This low cost mechanism should be the first step in protecting your product. Every platform from Etsy to Facebook has a copyright infringement clause in their terms of service so if you can demonstrate that another business is stealing your property they have the obligation of taking it down.

DON'T STAY SILENT!

Step two in the escalation process is to reach out to the offending company personally.

"A lot of people have success reaching out to the business owner," Schmidt says. "Initial contact is frequently effective before getting an attorney involved. If two owners can come to an arrangement and come to a business solution that benefits both sides then that's the best way to deal with the problem."

If that doesn't work then it's time to call in the people with law degrees, like Schmidt, which usually involves a couple of official letters. The first letter informs the offending party that you, the victim, are under counsel and intend to take legal action, which can also be categorized as a cease and desist letter. The second letter will either address any counterpoints the other side made or ratchet up the pressure to ensure the infringer knows you are serious, and the third is a court summons, but it rarely comes to that, according to Schmidt. "There's little to be gained for either party in going to court unless there is a lot of money at stake."

PROTECTING YOUR TRADEMARK

In the case of trademark infringement, a company can file a UDRP (Uniform Domain-Name Dispute-Resolution Policy) complaint to object to the registration of a domain name. But be warned... none of these actions prevent the offender from offending again. Businesses who rely on intellectual property must be ever vigilant to ward off the thieves and frequently it's a game of whack-a-mole, as Palmisciano has learned over the years.

"As bad as these pieces of lowlife scum are, the more damaging thievery comes from rival brands that take successful design concepts and modify them just enough to avoid litigation," he says. "The most frustrating thing in this business is watching creative people put out great products that they worked hard on, and then seeing uncreative remoras tweak those ideas and call them their own. It's unearned success, but such is life." Everyone has a routine. For some people that routine is to get up and see what they can steal from the creative people of the world and get away with it. Those creative people need to make action part of their routine and not let it happen.

When Being a Veteran Matters to Corporations

By: Julia Hubble



When does being a veteran supplier become a part of the conversation when you're approaching a corporation? Even the corporations who have the best track record are often frustrated by emails or conversations that begin with "I'm a service-disabled Iraqi war veteran and I'm looking for a contract." While being a veteran counts – and can count big especially in our best corporations – it is not the way to win the hearts of the supplier diversity professionals who could be our best friends.

It may be counter intuitive, but using your veteran status is, in your opening statement, the least important item to mention. Why? Because your socio-economic status has no bearing on your ability to solve a corporation's pressing problems, minimize overhead, or increase profitability. You might think that it's the one differentiator that gets you in the door. For nearly any major company, the door tends to shut, because in that critical opening sentence, your SD professional or buyer has to hear something that indicates:

- You understand their issues and have the ability to solve them
- You've done serious homework on the industry and this company in particular
- You put their needs first, not your demand for a contract
- You understand that the shareholder is king in any publicly traded company

CASE IN POINT

For example, GM has had issues with ignition switches which have, as of mid-April 2015, led to 84 deaths and 150 injuries. Let's say you have expertise with this particular is-

sue. Back when the news first came out, you were sure you could help with this problem. You approach Reginald Humphrey, supplier diversity manager at the GM booth.

Which of these two opening statements do you think he's going to respond to most favorably?

"Hello Mr. Humphrey. I'm a service disabled veteran, and I'm looking for a contract. What's the best way to go about this with GM?"

Or....

"Hello Mr. Humphrey. I solve the problem of faulty ignition switches. I understand GM is experiencing a significant issue with that right now. I believe I can save GM millions, based on my track record in the auto industry."

Your veteran status matters *AFTER* Humphrey has heard where you can add real value to the company. This may be right away; more commonly, most of us are looking at many months if not years, beginning at the lower tiers. Once Humphrey has got it that you're all about helping them with a real problem they want to solve, the door may open. I say "may," because you need to have the capacity to work for a company this big. That's why it's important to be willing to start well down the tiers, and do the work to develop your size over time. To be taken seriously at this level, you need to put in at least 80 hours of deep research into understanding the industry where you best fit. If you can't, you're not ready yet. Yes, your veteran status matters. But your focus on the company's issues and how you can solve them come first.

Other VBOC Locations Nationwide

Northeast Vets Business Resource Center
-Lawrence, MA

The Research Foundation of the State University of NY
-Albany, NY

Hampton Roads VBOC/ Old Dominion University
-Norfolk, VA

VBOC at Gulf Coast State College
-Panama City, FL

VBOC at Fayetteville State University
-Fayetteville, NC

VetBiz Central, Inc.
-Flint, MI

Vets Enterprise Training Program
-Albuquerque, NM

VBOC at Mississippi State University
-Mississippi State, MS

Veterans Advocacy Foundation Institute
-St. Louis, MO

Big Sky Economic Development Authority
-Billings, MT

VBOC IX
-Sacramento, CA

VBOC at WBC
-Chicago, IL

Seattle Business Assistance Center
-Seattle, WA

Syracuse University-Falcone Center for Entrepreneurship
-Syracuse, NY

Community Business Partnership
-Springfield, VA

To find out more, please go to www.sba.gov/vboc

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

VBOC
VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTERS