Robert R. Rowley, Attorney at Law

505 W. Riverside Ave., Ste. 500

Spokane, WA 99201

Phone: (509) 252-5074

Mobile: (509) 994-1143

Fax: (509) 928-3084

E-mail: Rob@RowleyLegal.com

Website: www.rowleylegal.com

Facebook: Rowleylegal

Twitter: @RobertRRowley

**Robert R. Rowley**

Robert R. Rowley was born in Alliance, Nebraska and graduated with honors in 1987 from the University of South Dakota. He also graduated with honors from the Gonzaga University Law School in 1994.

With over twenty years of experience, Robert’s law practice consists primarily of business, real estate matters and corporate transactions. He has represented clients in a variety of legal matters including residential and commercial transactions, due diligence, acquisitions, marketing analysis, leasing proposals, landlord tenant, debtor-creditor (foreclosures, evictions, loan modifications), contract drafting and pre-litigation disputes, business formation, planning, partnership dissolutions and negotiation. Robert has litigated numerous matters on behalf of Fortune 500 and small local companies in both Washington and Idaho state courts, federal district and bankruptcy court.

Robert also has considerable personal experience setting-up and operating small businesses as an entrepreneur and investor in the real estate industry.

Robert is a United States Army veteran having served as a Regular Army officer with the 11th Blackhorse Cavalry Regiment in Germany as a border officer and was honorably discharged as a Captain in 1991.

Robert has been recognized by his peers with multiple Attorney of the Year awards for his commitment to provide volunteer legal services for the disadvantaged and poor in his local community. His commitment to the community involves his work as a volunteer for his sons’ Boy Scout Troop, the Union Gospel Mission and as a director of the local Crisis Pregnancy Center.

He is the proud husband of Shannon and father of three teenagers. Robert and his family are active in their church serving in various servant-leader capacities. Robert enjoys spending time with his family and is especially fond of ultra-light backpacking, canoeing and winter camping.

**HOW TO START A BUSINESS**

**1. Idea & Business Plan**

Why are you starting a business?

It starts with your vision. Do you have what it takes -- a viable new idea or a way to break into an existing market and the work ethic to make it happen?

This is why you are an entrepreneur. You know that you have something special. But to make it work, you will also need a practical business plan. Your business plan should address the following questions: How much investment will it take to bring the product/service to market? Where will the funding come from- Investors, bank loan, family loan, savings, credit card debt, or boot-strapping? What is your expectation for sales? How long will it take for your business become cash neutral? If you can come up with reasonable answers for these and other difficult questions, you are off to a good start.

**2. Get Business Assistance and Training**

Take advantage of free training and counseling services, from preparing a business plan and securing financing, to expanding or relocating a business. There are a number of available programs to assist startups, micro businesses, and underserved or disadvantaged groups.

You can save money when starting or expanding your business by using government surplus. From commercial real estate and cars, to furniture, computers and office equipment, find what you need for your business in one place.

**3. Company Name & Brand**

Start off with the right name. Some would say that your company name is your business's most important asset. This view makes sense, as the company name is the heart of your brand and your company's public image. Consider this view point from one of America's most branded companies, Coca Cola. At one time, Coke's CEO was quoted as saying that the name itself was the company's most valuable asset, estimated at the time to be worth $150 billion. $150 billion for just the company name? Wow!

A good company name is professional, communicates your business offering and has marketing appeal. Too many individuals choose names that are unprofessional.

Another mistake is to omit what you do in your company name. "Xerox", "Xenon", "Google", and "Hulu" all have multi-million dollar marketing budgets to get their message communicated. For a small business, you have to convey your message in the name. Whether you are a software designer, architect, or real estate agent - tell it in your company name.

Finally, you need a name that is catchy. This is the difficult part and the part that could play a role in whether or not your company takes off. So, grab a pen and paper and start brainstorming!

**4. Incorporation or LLC Formation**

You know that you need to incorporate. You want the liability protection, the enhanced corporate image, potential tax benefits, etc. You also know that you need the corporation or LLC before you can open your bank account or even have a company name that you can use for your business. You're just not sure which corporate form you should choose.

Your answer should depend on your situation and your objectives. First off, all two forms (Corporation and LLC) offer personal liability protection to the owners- so that the personal assets are not generally at risk for business liabilities. However, the C-Corp is double taxed, making it unpopular for a small business startup.

Now, which is better for you? Statistically, most of my clients that are starting a service company, where the owners are the only ones providing the service and will choose an LLC. This is also the case for our clients who are starting an investment company, such as a real estate investment company. The LLC is considered to require less paperwork to maintain than the Corporation. However, if the service company will have employees or sub-contractors, our clients will typically choose an S-Corp for potential tax saving on the Self-Employment Tax. For similar reasons, our clients will also choose an S-Corp if the company is distributing products rather than providing services.

**5. Finance Your Business**

Find government backed loans, venture capital and research grants to help you get started.

**6. Get a Tax Identification Number**

Obtain the tax identification numbers you'll need from the IRS and your state revenue agency.

**7. Register for State and Local Taxes**

Register with your state to obtain a tax identification number, workers' compensation, revenue, unemployment and disability insurance accounts.

**8. Obtain Business Licenses and Permits**

Obtain the necessary federal, state and local licenses and permits required for your business.

**9. Location of the Business**

Finding the right location for your business is an important strategic decision. Is it a brick and mortar business that requires a precise physical location, or is it an online business? An obvious advantage of an online business is that you can cut costs in the startup phase by working out of your home. However, if you are going to require employees, this strategy won't last long. You'll need enough room for everyone to fit. Of course, you'll want a location that makes financial sense but balances financial concerns with other factors. For example, coming to work every day to a desirable office space could be a morale booster for your employees.

Now, if the business will be a retail store or professional service company, you'll probably need commercial space from the start. Cost is always a chief factor but choosing low cost commercial space can backfire in the long run. If you need to be in the right location to attract the right kind of clientele, then your business plan should budget for more expensive commercial space. If you're tempted to put your brick and mortar business in the cheapest space available, consider that being on the right block, on the right street, in the right building, could literally make or break your business.

**10. Hiring Plan**

Your staff will define the culture of your company. After all, your employees are your company. Will it be a dynamic, efficient, innovative culture or will it be a complacent, ineffective culture that is a barrier to progress? Smart hiring decisions will be invaluable as you begin to grow your business. In contrast, hiring and keeping the wrong employees will doom your business.

Which job candidates should you hire? You're looking for three things in an employee: personality, work ethic and job skills. After vetting the resumes, you'll get a gut feeling about certain candidates through the initial interview process but you need to go further than one meeting. Before hiring you need to analyze the candidate's resume for work patterns, call and have meaningful conversations with past employers and references and always schedule a second interview.

**11. Marketing Plan**

Your marketing plan is intertwined with every step of your business startup, though the plan can be simplified to the following question: How will you promote your product and how much will it cost to do so? Your marketing plan is essentially the heart of your business plan. It will lay out the actual path for producing revenue and ultimately meeting the financial objectives in your business plan. As such, your marketing approach is about determining (often through trial and error) the most effective way to push your product or service. Will you be selling through direct sales (cold calls), MLM, affiliate marketing, traditional media ads, wholesale distribution, a combination of different approaches? Will you have a sales force or do all the selling on your own? Will you hire an advertising agency?

Today, every business's marketing plan must include a website. A website allows a company to express its message and its value statement on its own terms. Potential customers automatically look to a company's website to explore its products and services, contact the company, and depending on the business, place orders.

**12. Accounting System**

Don't underestimate the need for a good accounting system with solid financial controls. If you don't know the numbers, you don't know your business. Accounting is the road map that goes from revenue to profit. Without good accounting, you won't be able to make informed decisions and will have trouble getting to profit. In other words, have a good accountant!

**13. Fine-tuning**

The last step to your startup is revision. You'll learn more in one month about your business, than you could with a decade of planning. As your business progresses, you will constantly need to readjust your approach in order to meet your objectives. Keep working, learn from your mistakes and believe in yourself. Remember that perseverance is the most important quality an entrepreneur can have.

“Sometimes when you innovate, you make mistakes. It is best to admit them quickly and get on with improving your other innovations.” - Steve Jobs, CEO, Apple Inc.

“I've failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed.” - Michael Jordan, athlete