

50
Tentmaking
Business
Ideas

and their ranking!

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pass it on!**

“I want to start a tentmaking business but I have no idea what business to do!”

Does this sound familiar? Is this what you are thinking?

Over the past 10 years of living as a tentmaker in the Arab world, many people have asked me about possible business ideas. They feel called to go to a “closed country” where traditional missionary visas are not offered yet they have never run a business and lack ideas for what they might do.

I began to jot notes about possible business ideas and eventually we launched www.tentmakingideas.com. Our goal is to offer business ideas, resources, and coaching tips for those involved or looking to be involved in tentmaking businesses.

This booklet contains 50 different business ideas that could get your creative juices flowing for potential tentmaking ventures. Visit www.tentmakingideas.com for more business ideas or business tips.

Remember that businesses are not like cookies! You cannot just use the same cutter to reproduce the same type of business around the world. Each host culture has its own nuances that require thorough business research and planning. Use these ideas to think creatively about what might work in your context.

Why Tentmaking?

Our family comes from a line of Christians working abroad. I was talking with my mother the other day and she commented on the difference in our lifestyle and how they lived when overseas. Actually, the main difference is that they worked in a very open country as traditional missionaries and we are living in a closed country as Christian business people. I asked myself, "Has missions changed?" My quick response was, "Of course!" In reality, "missions" has not changed. The church still has the same mandate to go into the entire world and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet something is different...the places that are left to be reached are not receptive of the gospel or traditional missionaries who bring this good news. Because of this, the need for "tentmakers" has taken the front stage. Not only does our "tentmaking" business allow us to enter our country of residence; it also secures us with an identity, thrusts us into relationships, and gives us boldness to proclaim.

Opening the Door

Whether we like it or not, many countries and peoples have slammed the door in the face of Christianity. In some cases, the doors are just closed, while others seemed to be bolted tight from the inside. So, what is the key to opening these doors? Traditional missions do not hold the key; actually, in some cases can cause the door to be locked more tightly. Every nation around the world is looking to develop their country, especially their economies. Heads of state are calling for investment and development. What an opportunity we have: to rise to this call, an open door, and to work investing our lives through business or

employment in these countries. “Tentmaking” is the key that will open these closed doors for the light of Jesus.

Who are you?

Anyone who has worked in the Arab world has experienced piercing questions like “Why did you leave the land of opportunity to come to my country?” I didn’t really know what I was doing or even going to do. I had some ideas but my identity was pretty shaky. Honestly, I was looking to do whatever could get me residency. Over the past 10 years, my thinking has changed to focus more on my identity and less on the VISA. Identity is crucial to establishing a long-term ministry in a closed country. As a tentmaker, you have the opportunity to establish a valid identity in the community. With a lot of prayer, strategic thinking, some hard work and planning, you can develop a strong professional identity that will build trust in the community.

Relationships are vital

“How can they know unless someone tells them?” ...How can you tell them if you never interact with them? The power of presence! We all know it is important to be in the community in order to have opportunities to share our faith. I strongly believe that each of our business ventures should thrust us into local relationships. Whether it is a colleague, an employee, a business associate, or client, each relationship opens the door to a family and further opportunities to be the light of Christ. We need to be intentional about developing these relationships and spending time on and off the job. One thing our team requires for any new business startup is a VSP (Vision & Strategy Paper), which outlines how the new business will create opportunities to proclaim.

How bold can I be?

A few years back, I was talking with a friend that owns an adventure sports company. He shared with me that as their business grew more viable, his boldness increased. He said that when he became more confident in his business identity, he was able to be more confident in his proclaiming. His friends did not think of him as someone sent to convert them, but as true Christian friend living among them sharing his very life. I totally agree with his point of view: boldness increases as identity solidifies.

If we reclaim tentmaking as a God honoring endeavor and approach it as “working for the Lord,” I believe that is when tightly locked doors will open for the ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

How to use this booklet?

We have listed 50 different business ideas for you to consider. They are in no particular order! Each of the businesses has a short paragraph describing the idea and a business-rating chart. Take some time to read through each idea and their rankings to see if one of these ideas might be right for you.

Business Rating Chart

At www.tentmakingideas.com, we have rated each business idea by 8 different categories.

Capital / Setup Cost: This is the amount of money that you will need to invest upfront to get this business off the ground. Please remember that these numbers are just estimations! You will need to do your own financial research to know exactly how much money your tentmaking venture will require. Also remember that these numbers are only setup and do not include any operating costs. We encourage business owners to have one year's running costs in the bank before launching the business.

Note: *Because property costs differ in each country, we do not include property costs in any of our financial estimations.*

Time Involvement: This is the average amount of time that we think that you will need to invest in your business to get it going. Remember that all businesses take quite a lot of time to launch, so expect extra time the first year. Although some of these businesses could be started with a small amount of time, we are looking to create solid professional identities. The idea is not do as little work as

possible but to allow your business to thrust you into ministry opportunities.

Legitimacy: This is a very subjective ranking based on our experience in business. We tried to rank this based on local people's perception of this business. Will they wonder what you are really doing, or will your business identity make sense? Obviously every business can be legitimate if it produces income, creates jobs, and is seen as viable by the host culture. We coach our clients to shoot for a business that is legitimate and respected by their country of residency. We believe this opens up the door into the community and allows for more boldness in proclamation.

People Contact: Because most tentmakers are looking to develop eternal relationships, we have ranked each business by the amount of people interaction time. Some tentmakers desire to focus on a few key people while others are looking to interact with as many people as possible. Make sure you consider your goals for people contact before you launch your tentmaking business.

Employees: This ranking is to help you consider how many potential jobs you could create with your business. Offering employment is a wonderful way that you can make a difference in the lives of locals. Not only do you provide economic growth, but also you create a natural environment for sharing in their lives.

Specific Training: Since most of us have never had specific business training, it is a good idea to consider what type of skills / training is required to run your new business. Some of these business ideas would be best run by those with

actual university degrees and others can be launched by anyone willing to work hard.

Rate of technological change: Although this ranking might not be interesting to some, it is very important as you consider a new business. The higher the technological change, the more you need to be staying relevant in your business sector. You need to make sure that you are keeping up with the current technology standards and systems. No one likes a business that is out of date!

Seasonality: Why is seasonality important? When you are looking at a potential business, you need to understand if your business will produce income year around or if it only operates during a season. A great example of a seasonal business is an ice cream shop on the beach. During the summer, these businesses should thrive, however, during the winter they might totally shut down.

Once again, remember that these rankings are just our own ideas and have not been exhaustively researched!

#1 Marketing Company

Over the past years of doing business in a foreign country, I have noticed that there is a scarcity of good quality marketing and advertising. Many small and large companies lack the ability to strategically market their service or products to a niche market where market share is available. A marketing company could consist of direct marketing, web marketing, media marketing, or focusing on Guerilla Marketing (Read *Guerilla Marketing* by Jim Lavenson). Marketing is not for everyone, but if someone has some business training and does some study on the concept of marketing, they could quite easily start a small marketing company. An advantage that a westerner could present to potential customers is their ability to help them enter into the US or European Markets.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Time Involvement: 30 - 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium / High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1 - 5

Specific Training: Degree is beneficial

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Low

#2 Web Design Company

As we all know, the Internet has radically changed the way people do business. Every company has a website and many companies use their websites as their primary marketing and sales tool. I have noticed that many foreign companies have very good programmers who know how to create websites and many of them are very attractive; however, I have also noticed that many of those same programmers do not understand anything about search engines, marketing strategies, and the front end user. I have noticed an opening in the market for good web design companies who not only create exciting and creative websites, but who turn those websites into valuable marketing tools. Do you have to know how to create websites that would make this a success? I would encourage you to find a partner (local or foreign) who can create the code for the site and I would study, learn, and understand the art of website marketing and selling. This idea can work tremendously in countries that focus on tourism or other services that they are looking to sell to the world.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1 - 5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Very high

Seasonality: Low

#3 SEO Company (Search engine optimization)

SEO is a very specific niche business with a huge potential of growth and profit. Every company that owns a website is looking to get their site ranked on Google, Yahoo, and the other major search engines. The question is how? Search Engine Optimization is an art and a skill that can be learned. It takes time and patience, but an SEO business would be welcomed in any country where businesses are looking to use their websites to sell and market. Many people promise to rank your site in the Top 10 on Google, however this is very difficult. Developing ethical strategies for your clients will thrust them into the next level of Internet business.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Very high

Seasonality: Low

#4 Silk Screen – T-shirt Company

A relatively easy business to get started is a t-shirt company that markets specialty t-shirt with designs on them. This idea has huge potential in countries that focus on tourism but have not yet started the t-shirt industry. Think about it: Grandma goes on a trip to some exotic destination and wants to bring back a small gift for her 6 grandkids. What is easy to pack and relatively inexpensive? A nice professional t-shirt, with a local design, that will remind the kids where their grandma traveled. You do not even have to make the t-shirts, but just add value to the shirt by silk-screening on a high quality, creative design. Creating the t-shirt alone is not the only piece to this business. You will need to have some good sales people who will distribute your product to tourism retailers or you will need your own storefront to sell your items. Each of these can work, but you will need to do your market research before hand to decide which one is best for your location.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#5 Recording Studio

Recording studios can come in all shapes and sizes; however, there is a real place in the foreign world for professional quality studios. The most obvious market for the recording studio would be a musician looking to produce a high quality album; however, there is also a market for people looking to record commercials, radio programs, language lessons, or anything else audio driven. Do not jump into this one quickly as it is for a specific person with a specific vision. The level of professionalism will depend on the level of recording studios that you will be competing with. In some countries, you will have the best studio in town with a MAC and Cakewalk! For those looking to access the urban market, you should consider some high quality equipment including a well-designed studio. Recording can open a door into an arena of life that others may never enter.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$30,000 - \$75,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1–5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: High

Seasonality: Low

#6 Relocation Management

With the rise of globalization, European and American companies are starting offices and companies in many foreign countries around the world. Each year, thousands of families are uprooted from their lives in their home countries and sent abroad to make a new home. How will they make the transition smoothly? Who will find them an apartment? Who will orientate them to culture? Who will help the wives and families fit into the new location?

Relocation Management is a growing business with some major players leading the industry. With this in mind, you have two options to choose from: First, to start your own small company that focuses just on your city or your country, or second, to become a representative or a subcontractor of one of the larger established companies. This job is perfect for someone who has already learned the local language and has established contacts in different areas of local life.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1–5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#7 Property Management

With the growing number of foreign investors purchasing land, buildings, and homes overseas, there is a corresponding growing demand for honest property management companies. The role of these companies can vary but could include duties like collecting rent, paying utilities, property care, and rental assistance. Property Management works well in destinations where Europeans have purchased second homes or investment properties. Many of the property owners live most of the year in their home countries and therefore are interested in contracting a property management company to oversee their investments.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: None

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#8 Head Hunting - Job Finders

In the business world, nothing is more important than finding the right person for the job. Many people make their livings each year by working with companies to find potential employees who meet their requirements and bio. Consider a business that will interview and test potential job candidates to see if their CVs are truly accurate, and save businesses the time and headache it takes to wade through the applicants. Think about contacting foreign companies to obtain contracts in order to help them with their human resource issues. Head hunting can be a lot of hard work, but it will also allow you to interact with many different types of people. I would suggest getting some training or doing an internship with a US firm before jumping into this business.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Time Involvement: 40 – 60 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#9 Transportation Company for Tourism

In many countries where tourism is growing, there is a need for increased infrastructure to accommodate the tourists. Transportation is a key component for high quality tourism. Developing a transportation company to meet this demand could be a good idea for someone looking for a larger scale investment. Buying a few small vans or buses could be enough to get you into the business; however, finding quality drivers may be a harder task. A company providing excellent service, clean vehicles, and professional drivers will give your company a good start at breaking in to the market. Before you jump into an investment of this scale, make sure to check into the local laws to see what restrictions or laws there are in the field of tourism and transporting tourists. What insurance would you need? Do your drivers need a special license? How many years can you use a vehicle?

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$75,000 +

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: High

#10 Music Lessons OR Music School

In some countries (especially among the upper class), musical training is becoming a sought after commodity. Parents looking to develop their children's musical abilities are ready to pay qualified instructors to teach their children various instruments and musical theory. Teaching music could be approached in one of two ways! First, one could offer music lessons on a private basis from their home or going into the homes of the students. This can be excellent for those who do not wish to develop an entire business but would like to make some extra money and relationships in the community. You may not be able to obtain a residency visa on this first idea. Second, one could develop a musical training school, which would offer set lessons and training students. This idea would require have more running expenses, but could provide employment for multiple teachers and would allow you to obtain a residence visa. One note of caution, make sure that your teachers are qualified and can instruct at a level that is required by the students.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Low

People Contact: High

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: None

#11 Laundry Service - linens / towels delivery

If you live in an area with numerous hotels or guesthouses, you might want to consider a laundry service. Many large hotels have their own laundry facilities for their sheets, towels and other linens, however there are many smaller hotels that do not have the space or capacity to run their own cleaning service. A laundry service company would offer a very specific service to the hotel or restaurant industry. Each day the company would go around to the hotels / restaurants and collect the dirty linens (sheets, towels, napkins, table cloths) and provide them with freshly washed linens. You would need to make sure that you are able to deliver your fresh, clean items on time. Remember to think through the different seasons, amount of rain, electricity and other factors that could play into the success of your business.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 40 – 60 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#12 Video Shooting – (weddings, commercials)

As technology begins to reach the 3rd world, there is a growing demand for video production. Whether you are looking to start simple by shooting weddings, parties or other social gatherings OR you plan to jump into the professional realm of commercials and promotional materials, a small video company could be a good option. In many countries, a top of the line amateur video camera will give you an advantage over your competitors. For those looking to shoot at the commercial level, you will want to consider purchasing equipment that is credible and able to deliver the necessary level of production. Capturing video is perhaps the easy part of the job, while learning to edit and create high quality final products is what will sell to the clients.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$30,000 - \$75,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: High

Seasonality: Medium

#13 English Proofreading Service

In many foreign countries, local businesses are looking to access and enter the English speaking markets of the world. After reading through brochures and advertisements, one will quickly realize that their English is substandard for the professional world. Offering services of English proofreading could be one simple business that a native English speaker could offer. With very low capital setup, this business idea would be perfect for someone that is motivated to go out to meet business people and offer their services.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Low

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#14 Disability Travel Consultant

There are many countries around the world that depend on the sector of tourism; however, many of them are not equipped for disabled travelers. A disability travel consultant could offer value added to the hotels / restaurants / sites etc., by assessing their premises and offering tips or suggestions that would make them disability-accessible. Depending on your vision, you could very easily become the leading expert on disability travel in your country of residence. Some spin off income producers could be developing an information website or printed guide for those disabled travelers looking to come to your location. You could also provide customized tours that are 100% disabled friendly; these tours could be marketed to travel agents or the clients directly.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Excellent

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Low

#15 Call Center - translation service, plumbers

There are many countries where call services do not exist. The only way you can get these services is by a connection in the cities, and even these do not always turn out so well. In this job, you would be either participating in or running a place where people could call to get a certain service done. They wouldn't have to search for it because you would be the one to call. You would know the best connections or you would hire people yourself. This would make their lives easier and provide many jobs. You could choose which services you would be providing (plumbing, translation, house cleaning, etc.), and then you could provide these services quickly and cheaply.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$75,000+

Time Involvement: 40 – 60 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 6-15

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: High

Seasonality: Low

#16 Graphic Design

In many countries people have a good business or idea, but bad marketing. They have a great hotel or shop, but their web site and logos are horrible. They also might have a t-shirt company, but their designs are tacky. In this business, you could use your skills to solve this problem. You could make a business that would market to hotels and businesses and help them make better logos. You could make a catchy logo, without the need of many materials, which would increase their sales. You could also sell your services to a t-shirt company and give them designs that would actually sell. Or, depending on your vision, you could market to any people that would want your help, giving them any service needed as long as it involves graphic design.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: High

Seasonality: Low

#17 Photography

They say a picture is worth a thousand words! In most countries around the world, there is a need for a photographer. Whether capturing the beautiful scenery, family celebrations, or shots for marketing materials, photography has its place. There are many spinoff products like puzzles, postcards, coffee table books, calendars and other things. The keys to this business are a good eye, quality equipment, and then the ability to market your skill. A photography business could be started for a small amount of money or one could invest a huge amount if they were looking to create a professional studio and developing business.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: High

Seasonality: High

#18 Virtual Office - provide online services

With the growth of the Internet, one could easily start a virtual service company. Being located anywhere in the world, you could offer your services to companies or individuals as a virtual secretary or assistant. Whether doing research, writing content, or inputting data, your virtual services could provide a valid business for you in any location with good Internet. Keep in mind that this is a highly competitive field, however, if you desire to hire qualified locals, you may be able to offer an inexpensive price for a quality service. With some creativity, this idea could go in many directions.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Low

People Contact: Low

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Medium

#19 Party / Event Planning

If you are good at organizing or planning, you could help plan parties or events. This could be a fairly low capital startup, however, it will take some real work to make it viable. The key to making this business work is being well connected to service providers who can deliver what your clients desire. The event planner is the glue that brings it all together. You might find it hard to break into the “cultural party” business like wedding planning and birthdays, however, planning business forums, meetings, and events can still be very lucrative. Developing a name is key in this business, so make sure you serve each client well and your business will surely grow.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 40 – 60 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: High

#20 Fitness Gym

Fitness gyms are becoming more and more popular around the world. Starting a business that offers top quality facilities, equipment, and instruction could set you apart from your competitors. For those looking for ideas to market to women, a women's only gym could be ideal. Creating a safe environment where women can gather to exercise and socialize could be just what the local women are looking for. This idea would take more investment capital upfront, but would be a viable business that puts you in connection with a lot of people.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$75,000+

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Low

#21 Restaurant – specialty

As you are looking for ideas, perhaps a specialty restaurant might be right up your alley. Perfect for an urban setting, an ethnic restaurant (Chinese, Indian, Ethiopian, etc.) might be just the thing to develop your business presence. One thing to be aware of is that any restaurant business is very time consuming and capital intensive. Make sure that you have done your market research before diving into this type of business.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$75,000+

Time Involvement: 40 – 60 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 6-15

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#22 Cafe – Sports Focus, etc.

In many places there are great cafés, but all the visitors have to do is sit around and talk. Imagine a café with a number of big TVs showing all of the favorite sports channels. You could either go with a very simple style café or a higher end café that reaches a different crowd. The key would be to offer something unique that attracts clients from around the town. One thing to think through would be your policy for their length of stay in correspondence with their purchase. Offering the World Cup or other championship games could be a huge draw to the community.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$75,000

Time Involvement: 40 – 60 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 6-15

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#23 Business Service Center - for business men traveling (high speed internet, fax service, office space)

With the growth of globalization, businesses are no longer only targeting their home countries. Businessmen are traveling all over the world to sell their services and products. Consider providing a service to these international business people! Your business center could offer a reliable Internet connection, fax machine, printing services, and other office related services for those business people looking to set up shop for a few days. The key to this business would be to establish your company in an excellent location and offering top quality services.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Medium

#24 Day Care

In the world today it has become more and more common for both parents to have jobs. Many cultures rely on immediate family to watch the kids while the parents are at work. What if you could offer an alternative solution where the kids could learn English, have creative projects, and spend the day in a safe location? If you offer a top-quality experience for the children, I believe the parents would line up! The downside of this type of business is that it might only target the upper class that has the money to send their kids to a private day care. Make sure to promote the fact that they will learn English while they are at your facility!

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$30,000 - \$75,000

Time Involvement: 40 – 60 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 6-15

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Low

#25 Import

Depending on the country where you desire to work, starting an import company may be a great idea. Perhaps there is a niche market that you can easily break into with your connections abroad. For example, as technology grows worldwide, you may find that you can import items that are not available locally and sell them for a good profit. The one thing to remember is that you will probably pay customs on all goods that you bring into the country for resale. It would be wise to research and test the market to see what price the locals will pay for your items. Import companies do not require much financial capital to start locally, however, depending on what you purchase to import, you may need a fair amount of upfront money.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 - 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Low

#26 Export

One of the best businesses to start in many countries is an export business. Local economies are looking to export their products abroad and generate foreign income. Another huge advantage is that many countries offer amazing handcrafted goods at a reasonable price. You can spend hours developing relationships with local craftsmen to acquire the best product for the best price. Perhaps the hardest part of an export company is the market access to the country where you are exporting. If you can find a sustainable outlet for your products, this business is a sure winner.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: None

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#27 Advertising Products - pens, mugs and calendars

This idea could work perfectly for someone who loves the sales side of business. Most businesses around the world understand the importance of advertising and many are looking for an inexpensive way to promote their services and products. Creating a company that focuses on selling and/or creating promotional materials like pens, cards, mugs, etc., could be a welcomed idea in your country. The key to this business is being able to convince your clients that these promotional items will put their name into the market and will increase business. If you are a little more ambitious, you might want to get the equipment to actually produce these products, but this will cost more money upfront.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Medium

#28 Computer Training

With the growth of technology in our world, there is a larger need for computer training. Those looking to get jobs will most likely need to know how to type or use basic computer software. Consider starting a company that focuses primarily on computer training. Depending on the level of computer literacy in your host country, you might want to open a typing school, Microsoft Office training, web design classes or even higher-level programming. The key to this business is offering something that is unique and perceived as valued to the community.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: High

Seasonality: Low

#29 English Language School

With the growth of English as the international business language, many people are looking to learn English. Whether they are a businessman looking to enter the foreign market or a university student looking to study abroad, many find that the knowledge of English is essential. Establishing a top-quality English training center with certified teachers could be a very welcomed business in your location. Although it would take some initial capital, it could open the doors for many others to join you. If you didn't want to start a full business, you could just offer English tutoring, which accomplishes the same goals, only on a lower scale.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$30,000 - \$75,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 6-15

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#30 Fair Trade Shop

Over the past few years, there has been a move towards “Fair Trade.” People are looking to support business ventures that not only provide a great product, but also pay the workers a fair wage. Fair trade coffee has taken off in the States with many other products following close behind. For those looking to impact the community and do some business, a fair trade shop might be the perfect thing. You would develop standards for what fair trade means in your country (maybe they already exist) and begin to look for products and distributors that match these standards. You may find that they don’t exist, which means that you can create new line of products that are fair trade approved. Whether you look to sell retail or export abroad, the fair trade concept might be perfect for you.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#31 Glass Engraving

For those looking for a good idea, glass engraving might be perfect. With the modern technology, you can laser engrave or sandblast almost anything into glass. From tourism mugs to trophies, this business offers a lot of variety and flexibility. The machinery can be costly, but with the right marketing and design, this business can take off. In countries like Kenya, engraved mugs and glasses are very popular. This business could be tourism focused or used to create marketing materials for other businesses. This idea is perfect for those looking for a simple business with possible growth and tons of creative ideas.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: Medium

Employees: None

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Medium

#32 Compliance Company

A few years back, I was talking with a local friend of mine who was trying to enter the US agriculture market. He expressed that one of the hardest things about trying to export to the states was the compliance law. He needed help finding out what types of sprays were legal, how long he could store them, etc. He had an excellent product, but needed some inside help to access the market. A compliance company would take very little capital, but would need someone who was an expert in a certain area. With a little bit of research, you could help local companies raise their quality and standards to comply with the European or American markets. Whether you are looking at agriculture or textile, each industry has certain standards that must be met.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: High

Seasonality: Low

#33 Grant Writers

Which country in the world is not looking for money? Every association or NGO is looking to raise money to further its efforts. For someone with great writing and research skills, you might consider starting a grant writing company. You could quickly develop relationships in the community by offering to write grants for their projects. You may be seen as the “source” of money, which may be cause for false relationships; however, helping to raise funds for excellent projects is a need. You could either charge by the project or a percentage of the funds raised (I would read up on what is best practice). This company would require little capital but would require learning the art of grant writing. Another benefit would be that you could actually do business with other countries remotely, offering your service via the Internet.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: Medium

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Low

#34 Dance Studio

Many people like to dance or want to learn how to dance, especially ballet. In many places this is not possible because there simply are no teachers. If you know how to dance (and have some qualifications) then you could open a dancing school, and teach children how to dance. The question you might want to ask is how much would people be willing to pay for this service? If the market were there, this would be an easy business to start and could go over well. Depending on how large you want to start, capital funds to buy a facility may be very expensive. You may want to consider starting with a rental property and testing the market.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$30,000 - \$75,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#35 Sports Training / Coaching

In many countries around the world, sports such as football are huge. Many little kids have the dream of growing up to be the next sports hero. Some countries are looking to expand the sports in which they compete by starting training schools and clubs for young children in these new events like basketball or tennis. If you are someone who loves sports and is qualified, you might consider starting a business that is focused around training athletes. Whether you run year around training, or just camps, you could bring in qualified instructors that would raise the level of play for all involved. The question in the business will be, "Who is going to pay?" Consider focusing on government contracts, sports clubs, or mid-level families. Market research will be needed to figure out what sports are actually desired.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#36 Rental Business

The rental industry has taken off in some countries especially where there is one of two scenarios. The first case would be in a setting where you have a very transient group of people (university town, military base, etc.) where they would be looking to rent items for a short period of time. The second option would be to offer items that are not used on a regular basis, but would be needed one time in 2 years. Whether you are renting tools, machinery, or camping gear, the rental business could be an option. This business requires a lot of a capital upfront, but depending on the life of the product, you could get a good return over time. For those of you looking for a smaller business, consider renting less expensive items for events (tables, chairs etc.).

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: High

#37 Paintball

Since most of the world's population is under the age of 25, there will always be a need for activities for the youth. In many countries this target market has been neglected and therefore there is room for business development in this area. If you love hanging out with youth and want an "active" business, paintball could be perfect. The main 2 keys to this business would be bringing in excellent equipment and finding a large enough facility to play in. Consider adding on a café or hangout area to maximize time with the youth as well as generate other spinoff income.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$30,000 - \$75,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: High

#38 Bicycle Adventure

Adventure tourism is a massive industry around the world. People spend millions of dollars each year on adventure vacations like trekking, climbing and biking. Consider starting a business that offers bicycles tours to your destination. Whether you are looking at road bikes or mountain bikes, adventurers from around the world would enjoy this activity. Depending on your business model, you could provide bikes for your clients or allow them to bring their own bikes for the tour. Setting yourself apart by adding cultural activities or luxury hotels would be one way to gain market access. Although this may not be capital intensive, it may take quite a bit of time to get this business launched and profitable.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: High

#39 Adventure Travel

Tourism is a growing sector in many countries and many governments are focusing their resources on developing their tourism industries. While this sector grows, there will be a need for a variety of services and activities. Consider developing a business on the adventure tour market like climbing, hiking, or motorsports. Although this sounds fun and exciting, make sure you carefully think through the risk and liability factor. One other consideration would be the type of traveler that you will attract and how much they are willing to pay. Careful planning will be the key to success in this venture.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$30,000 - \$75,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: High

Seasonality: High

#40 Translation Service

There are many different types of services that can be offered in the field of translation. If you are someone who has an excellent grasp of a certain language, you may offer your services as a translator. You could choose to work primarily online, translating for clients across the Internet OR you may want to offer your services locally. Some countries may have laws for translator services, but others may be wide open. Perhaps an easy way to start is to offer translation of materials into English, French or Spanish. You could target businesses that are looking to access and advertise to the European market. For those of you who are gifted at simultaneous translation, you may want to offer your services to seminars and professional gatherings. The key to this business, like any other, is to offer a high quality service at an affordable price.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: Medium

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#41 Temp Service

As you are aware, there are many people looking for jobs in most foreign countries. For those of you wishing to help with employment, you may want to consider offering a “temp service.” Your company would find qualified individuals who are looking for work. By pre-screening these employees, you could offer skilled and non-skilled laborers to the workforce. Whether you are sending in house movers or secretaries, you will want to make sure you offer trusted workers for each scenario. The major hurdle for this business will be to provide quality employees. You can either collect payment for the work done, or simply collect a finder’s fee for each person placed.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#42 Courier Service

Have you ever been stuck where you need to get something across town but don't have the time? A courier service is the perfect solution for that problem. This idea could work well in an urban setting, where businesses need to get documents, parts, or other items across town in a hurry. The concept is not difficult, but needs some good marketing explaining the benefit. It could be as simple as picking up the mail to take to the post office each day for 50 businesses. The key to making this business work is rapid response and on-time deliveries; plus convincing the clients of the value added.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#43 Indoor Play Space

If any of you who have children, one thing that you might enjoy is a clean, safe play space. Our experience overseas has shown that there are very few places where middle class parents can take their kids to play. Depending on where you live, you may be faced with extreme climates (harsh winter or blazing summer). An indoor play space, that is well monitored and kept up, would be a hit with any parent. Perhaps team up with a local shopping area, to create a safe space for kids to play while parents get their errands done. Without parental supervision, you may have some liability issues, but research in the local laws could easily show you what is allowed. Imported equipment would make it hard to copy, so it may be a good idea for the more competitive urban markets.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$30,000 - \$75,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: High

#44 Mini-golf

In many places there is nothing for a teen to do. One thing that would go over very well would be a mini-golf place. You would just have to buy the venue and then you could easily build the turf. This would be a great place for family outings, school trips or birthday parties, and it would be simple to run. An additional attraction would be if you have a snack bar that sells food, especially if you offer prizes for game scores or free refills. An air conditioned inside for the summer would also be a hit. This would be a lot of fun and quite easy to run once you get it started.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$75,000+

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: High

#45 Homemade Candles / Soap / Products

When visiting a country, most people love to take home souvenirs to remember their trip. Hand crafted goods are always a hit, especially if they are made where the tourists can watch the production. Consider hiring a few women to make specialty, handcrafted goods that can be sold to the visiting tourists. Soap and candles are just a few ideas; you can be as creative as you desire to develop products to sell. Make sure you test your ideas before investing a bunch of time and energy into specific products. In addition to selling locally, you might consider looking for outlets to export your products.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Low

People Contact: Medium

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: Medium

#46 Bead -paper or clay- Necklaces / Bracelets

The production of this product is very popular in places like Uganda and Kenya among NGO workers. These paper beads are very simple to make and are inexpensive. The clay beads would take more skill and resources, but could result in an amazing business like Kazuri Beads in Kenya. Again, the key to success of this business is the marketing of the products. If you can find access to an export market, that would be half of the battle. Some people are looking for sustainable local business models; the key to success would be a local market to sell your products. In our experience, we've found that some cultures do not give value to recycled products like paper bead. Market research is a key to success.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 20 – 30 hours per week

Legitimacy: Low

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Low

Seasonality: High

#47 Resume / CV Creation & Translation

Over the past few years of working internationally, we have seen that many young people would love to get a job or opportunity to work abroad. Many of them have the skills and training needed to work for a foreign company, however, they lack the writing skills in producing a resume (CV) that would be accepted by an international employer. Consider starting a business that would help potential employees produce high quality resumes. This business could very quickly be expanded into a employee screening service or head hunting business. If you are looking for a business that would put you in contact with many people, this could be perfect for you.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: Under \$5,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Medium

#48 College Information Services – information, research and application assistance

Anyone who has lived in a foreign country has met someone who is interested in studying abroad. A business that is starting to appear in some countries is an educational services business. This business is fairly simple to develop but could be perfect in a university city. Your company could offer services to students by providing assistance in research and the application process. You would not be able to offer visas or acceptance guarantees, but you could help them have a better chance, as their paperwork would be in correct order. A small office and lots of information would be the perfect start for this business. It could easily grow into testing services and other higher-level educational services. The key to this business is to make sure you offer a service that is wanted and that people are willing to pay for.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: High

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Medium

#49 Representative for Foreign Company

For those looking for a relatively easy option, you might want to research the potential of becoming a representative for a foreign company. In many countries around the world, foreign companies have the right to place a representative in the country. Most of them require some sort of work contract or paperwork, while other countries may require a local host company. There are three key things to think about when looking to get started into this type of business. First, you should find a foreign company that offers a good service and is welcomed into the host country. Second, you should make sure you actually are doing work for this company because identity and integrity are vital. Last, you should do your research to find out what the local laws are in regards to “representation” in their country. You may very easily be able to set up a contract with a company based solely on commission or sales generated.

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$5,000 - \$15,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: Medium

Employees: None

Specific Training: Specific training required

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Medium

#50 Pressure Washing

I had some friends who were very “hands-on” types of guys. They were looking for a business that would allow them to use the skills of their hands. These guys decided that a pressure washing business might be a perfect fit. Although they decided to pursue another idea; pressure washing could be a business that would thrive. You would need to do research into the cost of equipment and types of washing processes in order to wisely get into this business. Again, the key will be the marketing and sales of this service. Are people willing to pay enough to make ends meet?

Business Rating

Capital / Setup Cost: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Time Involvement: 30 – 40 hours per week

Legitimacy: Medium

People Contact: High

Employees: 1-5

Specific Training: Little training

Rate of Technological Change: Medium

Seasonality: Medium

Thank You

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