

Family Living Focus

by
Multi-County
Extension Agent

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Doing Business from your Home

If your household is like mine, you can always use a little extra money. It seems that coats are forever wearing out, and shoes are being outgrown. While the quickest solution might be to get a job (or a second job), leaving the home and working according to someone else's schedule isn't an idea that appeals to everyone. For many people, starting their own business—a home based business—is a very attractive option.

Home-based businesses appeal to people for a variety of reasons. Many types of products and services can be provided from the home setting. Much of the equipment that was once found only in a large business setting (like the FAX and computer) is becoming part of the home scene. Many adults find themselves sandwiched between two generations, both needing attention and time, making it necessary to balance income/work and family time. Probably first on many entrepreneurs' lists, however, is that setting up a business in the home means fewer overhead dollars than rental/purchase of a commercial location.

If you think a home business might be for you, how should you get started? First, come up with an idea that might be a good business idea. The product or service should be something about which you know (or are willing to learn). Your business may be related to a hobby that you have, or, for farm families, it may involve adding value to vegetables or fruits already grown/produced on the farm. It may involve some new skill that you have always wanted to develop, that you will learn before going into business.

Once you have come up with an idea, look hard at it. This hard look is often called a feasibility study. You need to see if the idea is "do-able," marketable, and profitable.

A "do-able" idea is a legal one. Check with your township, borough, or city government to find out whether zoning allows you to conduct your business in your home. Each municipality is different, and some neighboring businesses may have been "grandfathered in," which means that they existed before zoning was put in place, and are allowed to operate, contrary to an ordinance. Do not assume that land zoned for agriculture

can be used for all businesses. Check it out! Find out about any special licenses or registrations that are needed to operate—and who issues them. For example, food product businesses must be inspected and registered by the PA Department of Agriculture.

When looking at marketability, try to find out who would be most likely to buy your product or service—also called your target market. Find out how many people living in your area fall into this group. As you learn about your target market, try to find out how many other people make exactly what you want to make. In his book, "Sell What You Sow," Eric Gibson says that is just as important that a newly-developed product be different from other products already on the market, as it is that the entrepreneur choose something they enjoy producing. At this stage, you need to decide if the market can bear another maker of strawberry jam.

Finally, make sure that you will be able to make a profit with this idea. Some businesses require that you purchase equipment and materials to get things going, so that it is impossible to make a profit in the first six months, year, or two years. However, you must be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, a time when you will make money, after all the expenses are paid, for an idea to be a good business idea.

If you find you have a good business idea, remember that you don't have to go it alone. There are many sources of help. Cooperative Extension, local college business departments, and the Small Business Administration's Service Corps of Retired

State FFA Wrap-Up

Maria Trego
Pa. FFA Reporter
Pa. State FFA

Upcoming Events

•State Legislative Leadership Conference—March 12-14

•State Officer Candidacy School—Date/Time/Location—TBO

•Activities Week/Summer Convention—June 13-15

National FFA Officers

President—Chris Vitelli.

Western Region V.P.—Marshall Baker.

Southern Region V.P.—Carol Spruill.

Eastern Region V.P.—Joe Shultz.

Central Region V.P.—Leslie Small.

Secretary—Jodee Ruppel.

Update From the Pa. FFA Association

The mid-winter convention has successfully come and gone, and thus marks a little over half

Executives (SCORE) all provide free information. Throughout the year, Cooperative Extensions across the state will be offering *Food for Profit* classes for people who want to set up food businesses. Call your county office to see when the next session will be in your area.

Taking time to gather information will be the first big step so that you can, on your own time, in your own home, take a good business idea and make it into a source of extra income and personal satisfaction.

It all starts with a question: "Is a home based business for me?"

of the year for us as state officers.

It has been an exciting year full of surprises, good times, laughter, tears, and most of all, the members.

We have attended many events, such as the Big E in Massachusetts, National Convention in Louisville, Ky., and to events at more than 100 chapters from throughout the state.

The chapter visit tour is in high gear and we are nearly finished. We've all had a great time visiting and getting to know all of you in your own home chapters.

Just because our year is half over doesn't mean we don't have many exciting activities left. As listed, SLIC is approaching in March. Located in Harrisburg, SLIC teaches how a bill is passed and amended. A tour of the Hershey Chocolate factory and the state capitol building is scheduled in conjunction with the conference.

Our state officer candidacy school is quickly approaching. Watch for dates, times, and locations to be posted in your respective areas.

Finally, our last major function as the 1999-2000 state officer team is Pennsylvania FFA Activities Week. Come join us and watch as members from throughout Pennsylvania "unlock their potential."

Thank you to everyone who has helped make this year go smoothly, and thanks to the members of the Pennsylvania FFA.

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