

Thinking about

Self employment?

An easier read guide to starting your own business

4. Customers





Rapid Enterprise Development (RED) operates across the health, employment, disability and social care sectors to offer interactive and accessible approaches to the development of enterprise opportunities with and for disabled people. For more information about the RED business guides, training resources and strategic support packages, visit our website:

www.rapid-enterprise.co.uk

RED is part of Mutually Inclusive Partnerships:

www.mutuallyinclusive.co.uk

(For RED Australia visit www.redbiz.com.au)



Introduction

The recent health crisis is changing the way we work. As a result, many people with learning difficulties are worried about their job or wonder if they will be able to get one in the future.

For some, the answer may lie in setting up their own business.

Self-employment can provide opportunities for people to use their skills and talents, create their own employment opportunities and have more control over how and where they work.



Thinking about self-employment? is a series of guides developed by Mutually Inclusive Partnerships as part of its RED programme to help more disabled people to explore self employment and small business ownership.

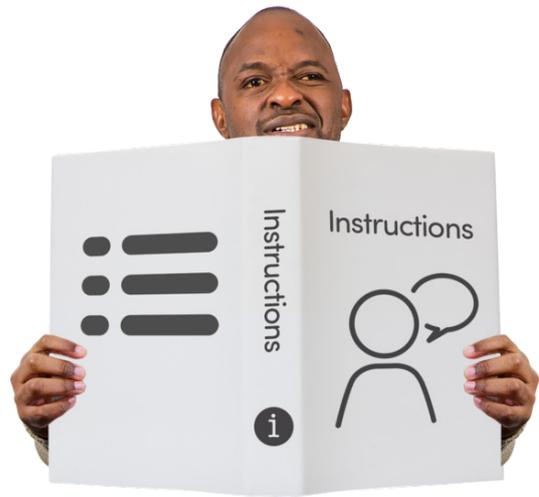
Of course, these short guides cannot cover everything and there may be more to think about if you decide that self-employment is something you want to explore further. More tools and resources are available on the RED website:

www.rapid-enterprise.co.uk.

All business ideas take time to develop, but by making the journey to enterprise a more straightforward and enjoyable experience, we hope that the guides go some way to support more people consider this route to work.

How to use these guides

These guides are designed to help you think about your business idea so you can see if it's likely to be a success.



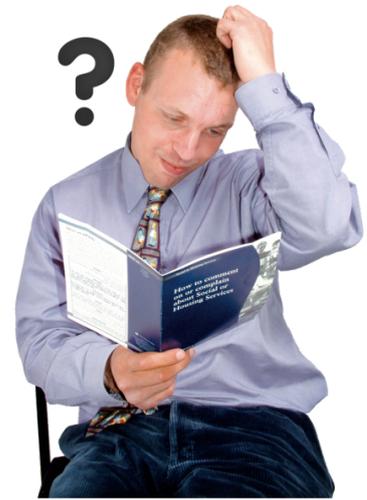
There are five guides in the series. Each one looks at an important aspect of running an enterprise:

1. Your business idea
2. Getting productive
3. Money
- 4. Customers**
5. Support



At the end of each section there is a worksheet to complete and questions to help you think about different aspects of your business idea. Later, these can be used as part of a business plan.

We have included pictures and tried to write in plain English. However, some business words might still be difficult to understand.



We have written these words in red. You can find out what these words mean at the end of the guide.

If you need some extra help you could look at the guides with someone from your family, a friend or a support worker.

Let's get started...



4. Customers

So far, we have looked at developing a good business idea, checked that you can make or do it and thought about the money side of things.



Now you need to think about something that every business needs – **customers**. This can be hard as we don't always know who our **customers** will be until we start selling things.

However, it might be possible to imagine the type of people who would be interested in your **product** or **service**.

Think about what your **product** or **service** is. You did this in section 1. These are known as **features**.

Now think about what your business idea does. What is it about your business that will make people want to buy from you? These are known as the business **benefits**.



Try to think about what the **customers** will like from their point of view. For example if you offer a dog walking service, will the **customer** like it because they will get more time in the evening if the dog has already been walked?

Try to think about the **features** and **benefits** of your business idea. Does it save time or money, is it made from natural resources, does it help save the environment, or something else?



It is also helpful to know about the difference between **customers** and **consumers**. **Customers** are the people who pay for your product or service. **Consumers** are the people who use your **product** or **service**. Sometimes they are the same people and sometimes they are different.



If you buy yourself a plant, you are both the **customer** and the **consumer**. However, if you buy some flowers for someone else, you are the **customer** and they are the **consumer**.

This can be important to understand so we have a better idea of how and why people spend their money. Many people will pay more for a gift for someone else.



Who will your **customer** be?

This is where you think about who would want to buy your **product** or **service**. You will need to think about things like:



- Where would **customers** come from? To start with they may be people you already know, but it is useful to think about who else may want to buy from you.
- Are they individuals or businesses? Is it for a group of people or is it for one person only? For example, a training course would be for a group of people. A dog walking **service** would be for one person only.
- How will you get your **product** or **service** to them? Will they come to you, or will you visit them or use the post? Can it be done online?



Top tip
think about the
benefits of your
business idea

Worksheet 4 - Who will your customer be?

1. In the first column, think about your business and list its **features**. In the next column think about the **benefits** of those **features**. Some examples have been given to get you started.

Features:

e.g. Using good quality materials

e.g. Reliable **service**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Benefits:

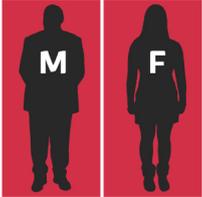
Product lasts longer

Customer doesn't have to worry



2. Next think about your potential **customers** and **consumers**.

Describe your ideal **customer**



Are they male or female?

How old are they?



Where do they live?

Do they live alone or with other people?



What do they do?

How could you contact them?

Is there anything else that you think is important to write down about your **customers**?



Hopefully, you have now decided on your business idea, are confident that you can do it and that it will earn enough money. You also know who your customers are likely to be, and a bit about how to contact them to tell them about your product or service.



You are almost ready to get started. However, there is one thing that we have not yet spent time thinking about – support.



The fifth and final unit in this series looks at support and how to get it

Business words used in this guide

Business benefits - these are the reasons - how and why - your product or service will improve your customer's lives.

Business features - these are the facts about your product or service.

Consumers - the people who use your product or service.

Customers - the people who pay for your product or service.

Product - something you make to sell.

Service - something you do for other people.



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