

Government of Alberta

LABOUR MARKET NEWS

NORTHEAST REGION

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JOB SEEKER CONNECTIONS

Entering the world of Entrepreneurship!

If you're like most people, you have dreamed of being your own boss at one time or another. According to the Statistics Canada website, 2.6 million Canadians were self-employed in 2008. The thought of doing what you love to do, working where and when you want, meeting new people, and making more money for yourself are strong reasons to explore self-employment. The freedom and power of running your own business can be very appealing, especially if you experience lay offs or are unemployed. Being an entrepreneur can be a good way

of taking control of your employment needs.

The Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website says that self-employment can be a strong work option for you to consider, but also advises that some people are more inclined to become successful entrepreneurs than others. It all depends on your personal circumstances, your skills and knowledge, and your willingness to work hard and take risks. It involves major decisions that take time, money and energy.

The prospect of owning your own business and creating a new future for yourself is very exciting. Your ideas, optimism, and enthusiasm (traits of successful entrepreneurs) are flowing and you are tempted to plunge headfirst into your new business. But you would be making a mistake if you didn't do the proper analysis first, to see whether you really are suited to self-employment or not.



According to The Business Link, self-employment is responsible for more than 75 percent of the job growth in Canada in the last 10 years. Source: *The Business Link, Alberta's Business Information Service website www.canadabusiness.ab.ca*

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Non-traditional Occupations

This publication has been prepared by Alberta Employment and Immigration. We would like to thank Service Canada for their assistance and insight in the development of this bulletin.

Is Entrepreneurship for you? Matching your personality, skills, and lifestyle

As you begin to imagine yourself as an entrepreneur, look at yourself in terms of what you need, what you want, and what you are capable of doing. The following lists show some of the key characteristics that The Business Link, Alberta's Business Information Service (1-800-272-9675) website (www.canadabusiness.ab.ca) says most successful entrepreneurs have.

Personal Qualities

Patience; perseverance; works long hours; weathers the highs and lows; loves a challenge; tolerates the unexpected; desires change and improvement; monitors social trends and adopts new technologies; action-oriented; thinks positively; gets over failures quickly; learns quickly, enjoys feedback, and is able to learn from mistakes; good communicator;

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independent and extroverted; self-confident, determined decision-maker; creative, innovative, and open-minded.

Physical and Psychological Qualities

Good health and energy; emotional stability; enough money for risky start-up period; lots of time; role models; intelligence.

Business and Management Skills

Able to set realistic, attainable goals; takes calculated not foolish risks; can influence and inspire others without imposing status or power; gets along with and adapts to all types of people; trusts others and gives out responsibility; good written and presentation skills; general financing, production, administration, human resources, sales, and marketing skills

Lifestyle Considerations

Other commitments and obligations; family responsibilities (food, clothing, shelter, love, attention, and security); your own happiness and passion about the business (your natural talents, skills, and sources of enjoyment may lead you to the best business idea); no job security or retirement plan.

Once you have figured out what is motivating you to start your business - money, freedom and independence, or lifestyle for example - you will be in a better position to assess your personal qualities. No entrepreneur possesses every quality listed above; and there are successful business people who have very few of these qualities. The point is that your business venture will be a very personal journey and it will be up to you to assess your self-employment strengths regardless of what kind of self-employment you undertake.

Types of Self-Employment

There are many ways to be self-employed. Alberta Employment and Immigration’s *Self-Employment: Is it for me?* workbook identifies these alternatives:

Entrepreneurship

- Business that sells a product or service and employs others.
- *Key advantage:* Offers most potential for growth and profit.



- *Key disadvantage:* Highest risk; most money for start-up.

One-person Business

- Often home-based or incubator-style business that offers product or service with no employees.
- *Key advantage:* Low overhead
- *Key disadvantage:* Ability to increase growth and profit.

Consulting

- Offers expertise to various clients and projects at same time in own premises.
- *Key advantage:* Variety of clients and profit potential.
- *Key disadvantage:* Requires high organization and marketing.

Contracting

- Works within organization on project, time-limited basis.

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Thinking of becoming your own boss?

This primer outlines the benefits and challenges of self-employment and examines the motivation, skills, traits and background of successful entrepreneurs. It explores the various forms of self-employment and how to get started in business. There are hints to get you thinking about innovative products and services, information on writing business plans and more.

Pick up a free copy of *Self Employment: Is it for me?* at your local Labour Market Information Centre (LMIC) or download a copy from the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website at alis.alberta.ca.



Entrepreneur Profile...

**Mona Bouchard and Ada Socholotuiik, Owners
Divinely Inspired Design Studio – Sturgeon Light
Morinville, Alberta**

Q: Can you tell us a bit about your company and what your primary area of service is?

A: Mona Bouchard: We began our company – Divinely Inspired Design Studio – at the beginning of 2009 with a desire to use our abilities to serve people. We are here primarily to design brochures and business cards, wedding and party invitations, and a gamut of other promotional print products to aid our clients in getting their message out. Ada and I work together as a team to provide our services to our clients, and neither could get to the point we're at today without the other.

A: Ada Socholotuiik: From our desire to serve people using our abilities we produced The Sturgeon Light in order to provide the people of Sturgeon County with a news magazine that would inform them of the events happening within the area that families can get involved in. This project has certainly become a good portion of our business and we are looking at increasing the frequency of the paper, although our main focus is still the design service.

Q: What is your personal background in your line of work?

A: Mona Bouchard: I've taken courses in visual communications and desktop publishing, and I've always had

a desire to use my natural talents. It is an exciting, ever-evolving career choice because styles are always changing, client expectations differ vastly from person to person and this keeps me on my toes, and keeps me motivated. I began in the print industry in 1999, but my desire to use my artistic abilities began when I pushed away my first colouring book and asked for blank paper instead. It continued through school with all the art courses I could take, receiving awards throughout junior and senior high, and on into college. After college, 99 percent of my jobs had an element of creativity, but it wasn't until I made it into the print industry ten years ago that I felt I was finally home.

A: Ada Socholotuiik: I have been in the sales and service industry for 36 years. I enjoy working with people and assisting others in the success of their own businesses.

Q: Can you tell us what chain of events led to your decision to become an entrepreneur?

A: Mona Bouchard: I've always had a desire to have my own business. I saw a movie when I was a kid that really hit home for me – the title of the movie eludes me – and that's where my dream started, although I could not relate to the character in any sense. The main character in the movie had a low station in life, but she ended up in a place where

she was able to start a small business and raise it into an empire over the years – a rags to riches type of story, but with a lot of blood, sweat and tears to get there as nothing came easy to this woman. So, over the years working in different businesses and through different positions, I've gleaned what I could from those situations, I took a business management course, and after losing my job due to economic cutbacks made a collective decision with Ada to proceed with our business using the equipment we had at that time and adding what we need as we go.

A: Ada Socholotuiik: For me it was necessity. I have had a few businesses in the past out of necessity: the necessity of income and the desire to serve.

Q: What advice would you give to other potential entrepreneurs, regardless of the type of business they are looking to start?

A: Ada Socholotuiik: Follow your dream, accept the challenges and setbacks, but stay on course through it all and it will all fall into place.

A: Mona Bouchard: Allow yourself the tears, but don't give up. Be realistic and accept that nothing happens overnight.



Entrepreneur Profile...

**Sophie and Robert Swiderski, Owners
Den of Antiquities
Redwater, Alberta**

Q: Can you tell us a bit about your company and what your primary area of service is?

A: *Sophie Swiderski:* Most of our customers are people who are out driving in this area and head this way because a lot of people just like to get out from the city. Because it's absolutely beautiful countryside in this area. It's not a long distance from Edmonton. So some people Google antiques and we pop up, then they sort of make this a destination ... and they kind of make a day of it.

And of course, once they've been here, a lot of people drop by once a week just to see what the new goodies are.

Q: What is your personal background in your line of work?

A: *Sophie Swiderski:* Well, being a bit of an antique myself! We also have a landscape construction company, Down to Earth Landscaping, and to be honest, when you are out in the country it's a bit difficult to get good help. If we get help out of Edmonton, then it's a long drive for them. So we're really sort of scaling back on the landscaping and really just doing what we love doing. It started as a hobby, basically, a hobby that got out of control, so we turned it into a business.

We specialize in the really cool old farm antiques primarily, things that if we don't watch it, are going to disappear and as the generations die off, people are going to forget about all these wonderful old bits and pieces.

I've always got my head down and looking for new stuff all the time.

Q: Can you tell us what chain of events led to your decision to become an entrepreneur?

A: *Sophie Swiderski:* Our landscaping business, we started that 22 years ago, and I still design gardens and we are still landscaping. But my husband and I are now in our mid-fifties and it's quite tough – physically – doing some of this work. It's very heavy work we do – timber retaining walls and composite decks and stuff. If you've ever picked up a 20-foot piece of composite decking; it weighs a tonne. And you slug that all day - and we're starting to feel it a bit.

I'm still very much designing and we're getting into house renovations, as well, which isn't quite such back breaking work as landscaping.

Q: What are some of the challenges of being self employed?

A: *Sophie Swiderski:* I'd have to say that you have to keep up with technology. You have to have a decent website and the tools to keep up with what's happening around you. You can't bury your head in the sand and think I'm so special, what I'm doing, or my services are so special that I don't need to compete at a standard other people are striving for.

I think that you can never rest on your laurels and you never stop learning. That's the big thing; you never stop learning.

And I think people skills; you have to be up on those because you have to be able to connect with people. Everyone who walks onto our property is looking for a different thing and they have a different story and they have to be made to feel welcome without being nosey, and engage them and then try and then find

something that they might not find on their own. It does mean that your people skills have to be good in the retail business, it really does.

We all get grumpy, but you can't afford to be grumpy at customers. They're doing you a favour by coming to your store. They didn't have to come and one certainly doesn't have to be rude to them when they do get there.

Q: What are some of the rewards?

A: *Sophie Swiderski:* I would say that it is that you drive the engine of decision. You are not beholden to anyone making decisions that you might not feel. My husband and I talk things through, and we've just worked together for so long, we just both strive in the same direction. So there's no tug of war between any ulterior ideas going on. Some couples cannot work together - we cannot work without each other.

Q: What advice would you give to other potential entrepreneurs, regardless of the type of business they are looking to start?

A: *Sophie Swiderski:* Do something that you really enjoy doing. Chances are, if it is something you enjoy doing, you're good at it or it's something that's always poking you along to learn more or get more involved and really get into it in depth. And if you're good at something, it shines right though.

It's all to do with enthusiasm. If you are not enthusiastic and happy doing what you are doing, get out and find something else. My husband and I really didn't click onto something we enjoy doing until we were past 30.

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- *Key advantage:* Variety and control over time between projects.
- *Key disadvantage:* Fee-for-service with no benefits; Canada Revenue Agency could view as employee for tax.

Brokering

- Markets other people's talents or products for a fee.
- Key advantage: profit potential.
- Key disadvantage: reputation of others.

Talent-pooling

- Consortium of different talents to bid on contracts
- *Key advantage:* team approach that shares strength, expertise, and risk to complete large contracts then disbands
- *Key disadvantage:* abilities of team members affects all

When you know for sure what form of self-employment is your best match there are three ways to get into that business that you must consider. You can buy a franchise, buy an existing business, or you can start your own business from scratch. Each has its bonuses and challenges. *The Self-Employment: Is it for me?* workbook referred to above explains the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Working for yourself rather than someone else can be a dream-come-true for you as long as you invest the time and energy up front to ensure success with self-employment.

From market research to business plan writing to financing and marketing, there are many tools and resources available to you to help you get started on your journey. Chances are good that you will succeed if you have the right vision, if you work hard, and if you persevere until you do succeed.

Quick Links: Starting your own business



Aboriginal Business Canada
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca

Alberta Entrepreneurs Association
www.aea.ab.ca

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs
www.awebusiness.com

BizPaL
www.bizpal.alberta.ca

Business Development Bank of Canada
www.bdc.ca

Business Development Centre
www.bdc-canada.com

The Business Link
www.canadabusiness.ab.ca

Canada Business: Services for Entrepreneurs
www.canadabusiness.ca

Community Futures of Alberta Network
www.cfna.ca

Community Futures business loans
www.roadahead.biz

Entrepreneur
www.entrepreneur.com

The Entrepreneurship Institute of Canada
www.entinst.ca

Entrepreneurship Learning Centre
www.elcnetwork.ca

Government of Alberta Programs and Services
www.programs.alberta.ca

Industry Canada
www.ic.gc.ca

Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities
www.hrsdc.gc.ca

Western Economic Diversification Canada
www.wd.gc.ca

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Cutting through the red tape with BizPaL

One of the biggest frustrations you may experience starting your new business is making sure you have the necessary registration, licensing, and permit requirements in order.

Early last year, Service Alberta launched an excellent new resource called BizPaL, a one-stop-shop website that guides you to all the local, provincial, or federal licenses and permits you may need to start your business.

Service Alberta's Assistant Director of Communications, Mike Berezowsky, says that what used to take a person hours or even days to search now takes about five minutes through an anonymous three-step process on the BizPaL website.

"Industry Canada partnered with the Province and its municipalities to reduce red tape by consolidating each level of government's various business license requirements into one place", he said. "So far, the information from twenty-six communities is covered, which represents about 63 percent of Alberta's population."

Service Alberta expects to expand the BizPaL site in the coming months.

"The Growth Alberta Economic Alliance (www.growthalberta.com), a Regional Economic Development Authority made up of several municipalities north of Edmonton, is working with us to expand and reduce the amount of work it takes for people to start a business," says Berezowsky.

**For more information on the
BizPaL program in your region,
please visit
www.bizpal.alberta.ca**



Business start-up quick tips

Once you have decided that self-employment is for you and you are beginning to form your business ideas the Alberta Learning Information Service website (www.alis.alberta.ca) can provide you with resources and tips to help you get started:

- **Tip 1:** Talk to people who are self-employed.
- **Tip 2:** Identify the knowledge, experience and skills you will need to succeed (e.g. organizational skills, time management skills, public speaking skills, bookkeeping knowledge).
- **Tip 3:** Research how to set up a business; your marketplace; and trends that influence current and future product and service demand.
- **Tip 4:** Scan the business section of your local newspaper daily to find out what is already happening and what future products and services will be needed.
- **Tip 5:** Visit your local public library, Chamber of Commerce, or Regional Development Branch to find business-related information and entrepreneur training programs.

When you are ready to make your business happen your local Community Futures office can guide you through these critical business start-up steps:

- **Step 1:** Assessment (developing and evaluating your ideas and business potential)
- **Step 2:** Business Plan (planning, financing, marketing etc.)
- **Step 3:** Start-Up (business name, registration, licenses, accounting etc.) See article on Page 5 about Biz-PaL, Service Alberta's new one-stop-shop business licensing website
- **Step 4:** Financing (finding the money to operate)
- **Step 5:** First Year (managing day-to-day operations and planning for growth).

Let's say you want to sell pickles. These are some of the questions you may need to ask:

Who will buy my pickles? What do my customers need? What price will they pay for my pickles? What size of jar do they prefer? What are their requirements for shipping that would affect jar size and/or shape?

What are the characteristics of my customers? Who buys and eats pickles - what is their age, gender, income? Where do they live? Is the combination of dill and carrot an appealing one?

Who else is producing the same or similar product - at what cost? Can I compete with their price, quality, etc? If nobody else is producing such specialty pickles, why aren't they?

What advantages can I offer that your competition can't or doesn't? It may be that your carrots are organically grown or that your pickles are an Alberta made product.

What about marketing? Are there expensive start-up costs involved with going into pickle production? Are there major legal requirements needed to get the name or label information I want? Will I be one of many companies selling pickles to people in my market area?

Is this an area with an expanding market or one that is declining? Can I make a profit? Does trend data indicate an increasing consumption of pickled products? Is there a growing or shrinking body of scientific evidence about possible health risks associated with eating too many pickled foods?

What is the future for my business? Do I visualize my pickles on the shelves of all Canada Safeway stores in Alberta?...in Western Canada?

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Looking for employees?
We can help.



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Visit Alberta-Canada's website at www.alberta-canada.com. *The Small Business Start-Up* page is a gateway to a great deal of information about starting a small business. It includes information about:

- Regional Development Branch offices in Alberta
- Small business guides
- Small business profiles
- Links to other key resources such as the Business Link website at www.cbsc.org/alberta in Edmonton.