




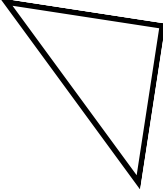
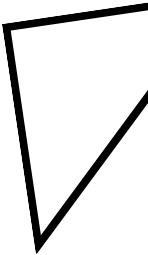
**BUILD A  
BUSINESS  
IN YOUR SKILLED  
TRADES CLASS**



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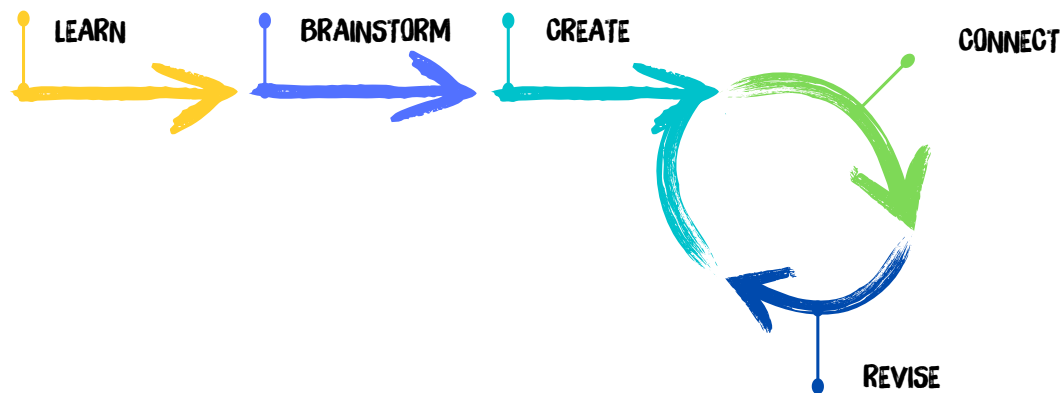
# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This business-building guide is divided into five main sections, each relating to a part of the entrepreneurial learning process. Each section includes an **introduction** to the concept, some **guiding questions**, and **resources** to help facilitate the necessary conversations or collaborative activities.

The time needed for each step will be unique to your classroom and your circumstances; the more you can integrate the business into your curriculum, the more engaging the process will be and the faster the business will get up and running.

## THE 5-STEP ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS

Entrepreneurship is an ongoing process of creation, reflection, and revision. Establishing a culture of **iteration** in your class will make for a more engaging and rewarding experience for your students as they learn to seek (and value) critical feedback.



1  
Section Name  
and Introduction

## LEARN

### Part I: Yourself + Your Team

Time for your students to learn about themselves, each other, and their customers. Building a business requires that you are clear about your motivations, the skills your team possesses, and how you can use those skills to produce and provide the products or services your customers want.

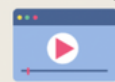
It's time to explore...

#### ...Your Goals + Motivations

- What are you hoping to gain from this experience? Think through your motivation for undertaking this journey.
- What about your students? This will be their business, after all. Discuss their hopes and dreams and intentions – as that can help inform what kind of business you start.



Finding Your Why



Discover Ikigai

3  
Clickable Links



→ Infographic



→ Website



→ Worksheet



→ Video

2  
Guiding Questions

# KEYS TO SUCCESS

You want to start a student-driven business in your skilled trades classroom. Awesome! Introducing entrepreneurship provides powerful opportunities for your students to develop critical real-world skills, take control of their learning, and engage with their community in new and meaningful ways.

Here's how to set yourself up for success from the start:

## BEST PRACTICES

**1**

**Don't get stuck in product development.** You can always add a product or retire an unsuccessful one. Do a little research. Make a list (or a *product menu* like this one). Narrow your choices, pick one, and get started!



**2**

**Whenever possible, collaborate.** Partner up with other classes like art, business, or Tech Ed. This will allow for greater product flexibility and customization, as well as opportunities for students to develop important skills like leadership, flexibility, and teamwork.

**3**

**Get comfortable with uncertainty.** Building a business from scratch can be messy. You won't have all the answers. Failures are likely. The more you're willing to try new things and learn alongside your students, the better the experience will be for everyone.

## FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS

**The most vital component in this process is an entrepreneurially-oriented teacher. Even when students are leading the way, they'll rely on your guidance and support.**

- If you **do what you love**, it will show, and your students will follow.
- **Engage with your community.** Local support, mentorship, and feedback are key pieces of the entrepreneurial process and will help bring the experience to life for your students.
- **Learn to adapt** your curriculum to involve your business as much as possible. Doing so fosters an environment of continual learning and exploration.

**Reach beyond the walls of your school. Use any resources your community can offer.**

- Businesses might offer coaching or partnership opportunities.
- Unions and trades organizations may have apprenticeships or internships.
- Trades shows and local selling events can give students the chance to put their skills into action in practical, relevant ways.

# LEARN

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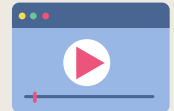
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Finding  
Your Why



Discover  
Ikigai

### ...your skills, strengths, and interests.

- What skills, knowledge, and interests do your students already have? Assess the skills already in the room using a tool like a **Skills Inventory**.
- There are many aspects of a running a business, and there's room for every personality type. Are there areas of overlap among your team members? Shared interests make a great foundation for a business.



Skills  
Inventory

### ...your community assets.

Before you can think about a product, take inventory of the resources available to you – both in your classroom and in your community.

- Does your team have access to tools, abandoned material, donated goods, or even event space? Use an ecosystem map to help you visualize what resources exist in your community.



Ecosystem  
Map

# LEARN

## Part II: Your Community + Customers

Once you're clear on your team's goals, it's time to think about customer and community needs. Your product should meet some need – whether that's addressing a community problem, filling a gap in the product market, or introducing something new.

It's time to explore...

### ...the expertise in your community.

- With your Ecosystem Map in hand, explore a bit further and discuss what your community already has or does well. This will help eliminate ideas that don't meet a community need.



Your Value Proposition

### ...the needs in your community.

We've discussed what the community doesn't need. Let's use that to identify some product gaps.

- To start, let's interview some prospective customers. Create a questionnaire to be completed by the customers you're hoping to attract.
- Distribute on social media, through any email contacts you have, and post it in local newsletters, places of worship, libraries, or community centers.



Understanding Your Customers

### ...the opportunities in your community.

- With an idea of the needs of your community in mind, consider the opportunities for creating a product or service that meets one (or more) of those needs.
- SWOT analysis (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats) is a useful tool that can help you and your team make careful, informed decisions.
- Click the link to learn more and get the ideas flowing with your own SWOT analysis.



SWOT Analysis

# BRAINSTORM

## Part I: Some Business Basics

You've discussed your motivations, identified student interests, and assessed the opportunities in your community. Time to start laying the foundations of your business. The decisions you'll make in this section will have lasting impact, so taking the time to brainstorm and discuss your options is essential.

### It's time to consider...

#### ...what you want to offer to the world, and how.

- What type of product or service do you want to offer?
- If you're making a product, think about how customers will receive their purchases. By mail? Local pickup? This will help narrow your product options. Large/heavy products are tough to ship. Discuss with students and problem solve. Use the brainstorm board to organize your ideas.



Brainstorm Board

#### ...the first product you want to make.

- Take everything you've learned to this point. What product or service will you be excited to make (over and over)? Consider local demand and the availability of the materials you'll need.
- Assess the cost to produce vs amount you can sell it for.
- Start simple! Check out the products menu if you need ideas.



Product Menu

#### ...how you'll make that product, consistently.

- You've chosen a product - now you need to create a quality version that people will want to buy.
- The prototyping process may require many rounds of trial and error: making the product, getting feedback from customers, implementing changes, and making it again.
- Continue this process until you can make a consistently high quality product.



Product Prototyping Ideas



Gathering Prototype Feedback

# BRAINSTORM

## Part II: Launch Preparations

Once you have a sellable product, it's important to create some infrastructure to set your business up for success – right from the start.

It's time to consider...

### ...your business plan.

- A *business model canvas* is a useful, collaborative tool that builds upon the work you've already done and can help you think through the aspects of your business you might have overlooked.
- Working through this activity as a group is a great way to develop a comprehensive business plan.



Business Model Canvas



The BMC, Explained



Crafting Your Business Model

### ...your name + logo.

Give your business an identity!

- The name you choose will impact how customers see you and should set you apart from your competition.
- A good business name should grow with you. Be careful not to limit yourself by naming your business after a single product.
- Designing the logo provides opportunities for students to add some personality and creativity.



How to Name a Business



Logo Must-Haves

### ...who will do what.

- A great team works together, with each person doing their part to get the job done. Because starting a business requires all sorts of skills, there is room for everyone to make a positive impact. Remember to consult your skills inventory.
- Develop a list of departments or roles, and create a system for deciding who will do what.
- Allow students to rearrange team roles during the year so they develop experience using a variety of different skills.



Team Roles Worksheet



# CREATE

## Part I: Get Your Logistics Ready

Start setting up the rest of the structural pieces of your business. In this section, you'll develop the administrative operations that will keep the business moving.

It's time to get real!

### Prepare your finances.

Detailed accounting is the backbone of a successful business, so plan from the beginning.

- Develop a budget and modify it as expenses change.
- Assess the market and your competition as you create the pricing structure for your products.
- Keep track of your business profitability by using a P+L statement.



Budgeting  
Tips for  
Beginners



Pricing  
Strategy  
Worksheet



Profit/Loss  
Statement

### Be ready to take orders.

How will you receive customer orders, and how will customers get their purchases? Consider the commerce part of your business – this will depend on the type of business you're going to run.

- If you'll be selling online, *create a website*. There are plenty of reasonable (or free) options like [Wix](#) or [Squarespace](#).
- If you aren't selling online, create a plan for receiving, tracking, and fulfilling your customer orders.



Website  
Design  
Basics

### Create and track your inventory.

Before you launch, you need products to sell. Time to build!

- Establish a timeline for your launch and set a sales goal. Be realistic, but ambitious.
- Using the prototype you made as an example, create enough of your product to approach (or meet) your sales goal.
- Creating an inventory tracking spreadsheet and keep it updated as you build up your stock.



Inventory  
Tracking  
with Google

# CREATE

## Part II: Launch Your Business

People will want to know what you're doing. Spread the word as much as possible – more attention means more customers to buy your products. This section walks you through the final steps before you open the doors and start selling.

**It's time to get real!**

### Make a marketing plan.

Customers can't buy what they don't know about. A marketing plan can help you quickly get your products in front of the right people. There are several methods, depending on your circumstances:

- **Social media marketing:** create a series of graphics and post to Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook Marketplace over several days/weeks
- **Email marketing:** send targeted emails to a list of customers
- **Local marketing:** create flyers and business cards and distribute to local spots: union or industry training centers, libraries, community centers, etc. Use a free online graphic design tool like [Canva](#).



Social Media Marketing 101



All About Email Marketing



Engaging Customers with Email

### Prepare for launch.

Time to organize your launch! This means officially opening for business. It's a big moment, so celebrate accordingly. You could:

- Host an event
- Offer discounts or incentives for purchasing
- Offer a workshop or demo on how you built your product
- Livestream a ribbon-cutting ceremony on social media
- Generate interest with a friends/family promotion



Launch Plan Template



Brilliant Launch Ideas



Plan an Epic Business Launch

### Press Play.

You're ready. It's time. Launch your business!

- If you haven't already, start your marketing
- Conduct your launch events, workshops, and ceremonies.
- Consider writing a brief press release and informing local newspapers, tv stations, and any other local publications
- Track progress on your sales goal, manage your inventory, and keep your accounting updated
- Ask customers for feedback about EVERYTHING: your products, marketing materials, website, name, logo – all of it.



Tips for Writing a Press Release



How to Ask for Feedback

# CONNECT

Once you're open for business, it's important to collect feedback and begin building upon all the work you've done so far. You'll want honest feedback from anyone who's willing to provide it. It's time to connect with people who can turn simple interactions into business relationships.

## It's time to get feedback from...

### ...business mentors.

- Connecting with local business owners, industry professionals, and union or community leaders is a great way to get critical feedback on your business plan, your financials, and your business launch.
- Turn these connections into ongoing business relationships. They could turn into board members for your business or maybe even internships for your students.



Connect with a Score Mentor



Virtual Meeting Success Tips

### ...your customers.

There's no better way to know what customers think of your business than to reach out to them - regularly.

- Consider how you can connect with new customers, and keep a mailing list for existing customers.
- Create polls or surveys to find out from customers how they feel about your marketing materials, their thoughts on new product ideas, and satisfaction with their purchases.
- Offer incentives or discounts for their ongoing participation.



How to Ask for Feedback



Customer Questionnaire

### ...an advisory board.

- Recruiting a board of advisors can help you fill any skill or knowledge gaps that might exist in your business.
- Your board should be constructed of individuals who will offer unbiased advice and help make tough business decisions.
- Think of the areas you need the most help and seek out board members who can provide professional help in those areas.



Advisory Board Needs Assessment



Advisor Types



Building an Advisory Board

# REVISE

Hopefully you're getting lots of feedback – from classroom mentors, your customers, and your board (if you've created one). Think through all the feedback and insights you've collected and reflect as a team to determine what changes you want to make to improve your products, policies, and operations. The entrepreneurial process is all about trial, error, and making adjustments. It's not just better for your customers; in a constantly changing market, businesses need to evolve in order to stay relevant.

## It's time to decide...

### ...how to integrate feedback you've received.

You might receive feedback on your product, website, branding, packaging, or customer service. Consider keeping a journal or Google Doc where you store all of the feedback you have received along the way. Talk about it as a team regularly to ensure that you're listening to your customer and mentors and using their feedback to steer your business you in a the right direction.



Feedback  
Records Form



How to Use  
Customer  
Feedback

### ...how to incorporate your own reflections.

In addition to what others have told you, you and your students have probably also learned a lot throughout this process. Reflecting on your experiences and documenting these learnings will make them more useful. Consider what students have learned about themselves, and how that might inform how your team works together. Reflect on any opportunities your team had to sell your products in-person. Get specific about what worked well and what didn't. Taking the time to compare your actual experiences with your original goals will allow you to identify issues or gaps and make the necessary improvements.

### ...how to keep moving forward!








The entrepreneurial process is an ongoing process of improvement. Your business should always be adapting – continue to solicit feedback, consider the changes you want to make, implement them, and start again. This will help keep the business fresh and your students engaged. It's theirs, after all. So let them take the reins, and good luck!

# TOOLS + RESOURCES













Click the folder to access all the resources in this guide, or find them individually below. Open any resource in the folder and make an editable copy by clicking **File** → **Make a Copy**

## LEARN

 Finding Your Why	 Discover Ikigai	 Skills Inventory	 Ecosystem Map	 Your Value Proposition	 Understanding Your Customers	 SWOT Analysis
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## BRAINSTORM

 Brainstorm Board	 Product Menu	 Product Prototyping Ideas	 Gathering Prototype Feedback	 Business Model Canvas	 The BMC, Explained	 Crafting Your Business Model	 How to Name a Business	 Logo Must-Haves	 Team Roles Worksheet
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## CREATE

 Budgeting Tips for Beginners	 Pricing Strategy Worksheet	 Profit/Loss Statement	 Website Design Basics	 Inventory Tracking with Google	 Social Media Marketing 101	 All About Email Marketing	 Engaging Customers with Email	 Launch Plan Template	 Brilliant Launch Ideas	 Plan an Epic Business Launch	 Tips for Writing a Press Release
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## CONNECT

 Connect with a Score Mentor	 Virtual Meeting Success Tips	 How to Ask for Feedback	 Customer Questionnaire	 Advisory Board Needs Assessment	 Advisor Types	 Building an Advisory Board
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## REVISE

 Feedback Records Form	 How to Use Customer Feedback
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# **BUILD A BUSINESS**

**IN YOUR SKILLED TRADES CLASS**

**Created in Partnership by**

