

Chapter IV

What Business is it of Yours?

Now that we've turned that page, we've accepted that nothing from this day forward is going to keep us from our goal, so it's time to delve deeper into our business.

Perhaps our first question should be, what is my business? Just what is it I wish to do to support my homestead? Of course, our options are widespread... Perhaps we want merely to expand the cottage business we already operate or

we want to develop our own virtual reality living system. Is our idea going to require specialized skill and knowledge, and, if it does, is that



knowledge and skill we have or can obtain? Perhaps it is that which we must hire.

Is our a business going to cost a ton of money to launch, or is it something easily handled within our budget? If we are going to operate it ourselves, will we be able to do so while keeping our present job, or will it be necessary to devote ourselves full-time to it?

Of everything we have mentioned this far, as important as those questions are, there is one that is even more important... is our family on board with us, or is this our dream alone? Unless the former is totally true, we are in trouble already! Absolutely, the most important ally we can have or the most potent adversary we must face is,

potentially, our mate! If our mate is not in our corner on this, we are climbing a hill we may never climb.

The next largest obstacle to overcome is money. Is our business adequately funded? Did we save enough before starting to get the space and tools needed to do the job we foresee doing?

There are places we can go for money... Banks, federal small business loans and grants... Even family and friends might be approached in certain circumstances. Of these choices, government loans, etc. would be my last choice. This is an open gate for bureaucracy to step in and control your every move! If you owe the government they will end up telling you what you can and cannot do, based on their models, not yours. If one wonders how well their model works, he has but to look at the national debt. It must be remembered that their model comes from colleges and universities staffed by people who have never done what it is we are wanting to do. They have absolutely no experience in the real world of the small business!



This then, leaves us with the choice to make and for the purpose of this treatise, we shall be examining the fields that we can enter and compete in successfully without large loans or start up funds. We shall then not be operating a business to compete with Microsoft nor General Motors. We

shall not be the next Peter Kiewit and Sons, building massive skyscrapers and bridges.

Our main goal is to make our homestead a success. That is job one. In order to do this, we must, first, feed ourselves



then, second, generate an income sufficient to sustain ourselves and the lifestyle we deserve. Remembering back, we discussed supporting ourselves while our business matures. Now we will see how we can do that without straining ourselves overly.

The first thing we will need to learn to do is to stay away from the supermarket! By learning what we can and will eat, we can cut the cord on 80% of our supermarket needs by producing those items on our own. This is a lofty and noble goal and should be a very high priority... But what do we do in the meantime to sustain us while our dinners are growing? A beautiful, delicious, low fat, zero cholesterol steak is a worthy subject to pursue, but we're going to be getting a bit hungry as we wait for our spring calf to grow through the summer into the fall, over winter, then begin the annual cycle a second time before reaching harvest size and weight at the end of his second fall season.

Yes, we will have our garden to supplement us... But the one-hundred days it takes our corn to grow also leaves us wondering what's for supper... Further, without our critters we're going to get considerably tired of zucchini and green beans... Broccoli and collard greens!

In addition to food items, there will be capital improvements needed to get our homestead up and running. Our garden and pastures will need water... Where is this coming from? Fencing is a must... And for our first spring to early summer we will need a greenhouse for winter vegetables and winter cover for our poultry. We will need a covered feedlot for our cattle by their first winter and covered space to work in, store equipment and help us survive.

This all takes money, of course and while it would be wonderful if our frugality provided it for us, the simple fact is, that will be unlikely in the beginning. Therefore, we will need a source of cash flow very early on. This need not be extravagant nor excessive, but it will be necessary.

I propose we begin with one, or more, of several cottage type industries we can expand to be run virtually full-time. These may include such craft items as blankets or ceramics... Perhaps someone in your family has a passion for making homemade bread or a delicious pound cake...

One of the basic skills necessary on the homestead is



welding... A skill in great demand everywhere! What would it take to obtain a semi portable welder and offer our services in our area? What if we can't weld, you ask? Virtually every community college or tech school offers

classes in the art. Take the class and practice... A quick hint here... If you are to take that course before you open your business, it's "schooling" and is not tax deductible, but if an established business sends a person for the course, it is entirely tax deductible... Including the mileage to drive there! (Are we beginning to see how that account pays their fees now? They are not a cost, they are an investment... A totally tax deductible investment!)

Although these ventures may sound like they are small time and not worth the effort to follow, I assure you they are, or can be, quite adequate for our needs. Remember... We are debt-free... We do not have even a car payment and we have money in the bank. We are using the smaller ventures to help us bridge the gap of start up of our main goal... Making our homestead profitable.

Let me relay the story of a young person who had an idea and parlayed that into a highly profitable business. To anyone who thinks that which we have been discussing is too small to help, listen to the story of twelve-year-old Trey



Brown. Trey lives in Philadelphia, PA, the son of a black high school teacher in a very densely populated area. In 2018,

Trey became very disturbed by an incident that occurred in his neighborhood that resulted In a fourteen-year-old boy being arrested for the murder of a thirteen-year-old boy.

Trey decided that it was only by sheer luck that this did not happen to one of his friends or, worse yet one of his cousins even.

It was obvious to the young lad that a lack of opportunity what is the underlying cause here... There were no jobs for any young person, and certainly none for black teens... So he determined to find a way to demonstrate that it was not necessary to deal drugs in order to make some money. People needed to know another way out.

To do this the young man took his Christmas money... The money received from family as a gift, and, using all \$172 he designed a logo and came up with a name, Spergo (from sports heroes go, he said) and bought sixteen T-shirts sporting his logo and name... As soon as those were sold out, he had money enough to purchase thirty-two shirts... Then seventy... Then one-hundred... All of which is sold in his neighborhood... He added hoodies to his line... A major step up for him... And he continued to grow.

Today, at age fourteen, Trey Brown is President and CEO of Spergo Sportswear, Inc., a line that is now found on sports stars and entertainers in great numbers. He has even retired his mother to work with him and to attend with him, the various shows and events he is asked to participate in... Events he could not attend without his mother because he's under age and our government tells him that he is unable to make his own decisions in these matters.

The young man had a dream and he made it come true... He invested every cent he had... All \$172, into that dream and, and this is the key point, he did what needed to be done to make it happen!

Can we do less? Should we not do more... So much more on the road to our success?

What Next

Before I leave this chapter and move into discussing some of our adjunct business possibilities prior to presenting the core of our treatise, how to build a profitable and sustainable homestead, I want to address the one single factor that will most affect your ability to not only survive, but to prosper as well.

What is the single most important item? What one facet of small business does the entrepreneur understand least, hence ignore most?

The answer is simple... *Marketing!*

We can produce the highest quality widget from the finest of materials in the most eco-friendly environment known to man and if no one knows about it, how does one go about selling it? Many years ago, I invented, developed and manufactured something that had never been seen... It's a



fully portable, fully adjustable, without the need for tools, target stand for 3-D archery targets. At this time I was shooting 3-D archery tournaments competitively and was

quite used to hearing the myriad complaints from those whose job it was to erect their targets for the competition to follow.

Virtually every target range was placed in a river bottom, probably because these grounds were undeveloped because they were in a floodplain. This meant that stakes had to be driven into a rocky river bed and the target then placed on the stakes. After twenty or thirty sets of arrows had been shot into and subsequently pulled from these very stiff plastic targets, many would be nearly falling over and virtually all were loose... My target stand eliminated this problem and made set-up and take-down quick and painless... The perfect fit, you think, right?

Well, perhaps... But sales were not easy as people were used to doing it in the old laborious way and we're reluctant to change... Truly we had a better widget, and the potential market for improved widgets was good, but the marketing tough. I took my stand to every shoot, large and small, and let them use them without charge... And this taught us much about modifications and improvements that made them even better widgets... But sales, while slow, we're improving... Then I got the idea... I loaded my car with stands and with my daughter, started traveling from store to store... If they sold archery equipment, we visited them and showed them our widget... And we sold our widget. Things were looking up when the unforeseen struck... And I was forced, medically, to retire... I was told that if I did not stop at once, I probably would not see the new year in. So, I quit. I simply could not go on...

At that time, a web page was a new and very expensive thing... I had all of my money invested in equipment to

make my widgets and I did not have the price for a slick, commercial grade, web page... But today that would be my first step... Get an online presence that shows what my widget did, why it was better and how they could have one of them in their own backyard... or fifty of them for their club.

Today, we can take credit cards right on our site, and even, if applicable, collect shipping and handling for our product.

If we take our product to a local bazaar, farmers market or street fair, we can collect on credit cards right on the spot. We don't have to limit our dealings to cash only... And it improved our record keeping tremendously. Even our sales tax can be collected and tabulated right on the spot... It truly is a much improved situation!



Next, we will spend some time discussing some adjunct businesses we might run from our homestead to make it more efficient then, in part two, we will shift our focus to our homestead and devote our time To describing those things we must do to be profitable.