

Legal Checklist for Starting a Business

The following checklist for starting a business is provided for your convenience only. It does not profess to be a complete list of legal issues, nor is it intended as legal advice.

Structuring Your Business:

- Do you want your business to be a sole proprietorship, a partnership or a professional corporation? Do the research and decide what's right for your business.
- Register your business in the province or country where it operates.
- If the business is a proprietorship or partnership and has a name different than the legal name of the owners, or if your business is a professional corporation, do a name search of other registered business names before choosing a name to register with the government.
- Separate personal and business accounts and assets.

Complying with Government Regulations:

- Determine which government laws and regulations affect your business. A good place to start your research is www.bizpal.ca.
- Obtain the necessary permits/licenses to operate your business.
- Ensure that your business space complies with all municipal, zoning, health, fire, transportation and environmental requirements.

Protecting Your Business

- Ensure your insurance coverage protects you and your business adequately.
- Draft client services contracts that limit your liability, minimize your risk and maximize your chances of getting paid early and often for your work and/or products.
- Protect your company's intellectual property through contracts and registrations.
- If you have a commercial lease, make sure you understand its terms. The lease will be one of your most significant contracts.
- Create strong procedures for ensuring credit is monitored and collected.

Working with Your Business' Employees

- Familiarize yourself with all laws affecting employer-employee relations and payroll requirements.
- Create an employee contract.
- Ensure that employees are legally able to work and properly classified as employees or independent contractors.
- Provide all employees with policies and training.

- Keep accurate performance records.