

Bed and Breakfast

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This work at home classic is high on the list of many entrepreneurs and still has significant potential all over the world. B&B's offer travelers an intimate accommodation experience with the added luxury of personal attention and local flavour. If you have a home with extra space set in an idyllic location and are considering a move into the hospitality industry, starting a B&B might just be your new work at home job.

Before The Start-Up, Let's Not Get Ahead Of Ourselves

Starting a B&B is a serious undertaking, as with most conventional businesses it might take up to five years to pay off your initial investment - draw up a comprehensive business plan before starting. Take the time to write reports on all your local competition and their marketing strategies, this information will be invaluable. It's also necessary to have a business plan prepared when taking out a loan, banks will be most concerned with the financial portion of the plan, make sure the expenditures and forecasts are properly researched.

In some areas you will have to apply for a permit before starting your B&B, you will also need to get the relevant licenses to serve food and alcohol. There are no qualifications needed to own a B&B, however any experience in the hospitality industry will be most helpful.

The Start-Up

Your start-up depends on whether you already own a suitable home. You don't necessarily have to have massive amounts of space to start a B&B, most range in size from two to ten bedrooms.

Once you've taken care of zoning and food and beverage licenses you'll need to outfit your home. You'll need comfortable beds and mattresses. Don't go cheap here; an excellent night's sleep can turn a good holiday into a brilliant one. You'll also need bedding, towels, furniture and suitable dining area with plates, glasses and cutlery. To prepare food you might need to refit your kitchen with more heavy duty food preparation equipment. A heavy duty washer, dryer, dishwasher and freezer will also be useful.

You'll also need a work space, desk, computer, internet connection, scanner, copier, fax machine and phone line. Create an appealing brand with attractive [business stationary](#) including business cards, a letterhead, an invoice, quote and receipt template and brochures.

If you don't already own a suitable home you can either buy and outfit a house or consider purchasing an existing B&B. You should be able to make the purchase price back in two to five years. If you don't want the hassle of starting your own B&B and have enough start-up capital this is the best option for you.

Making It Work

To be successful you'll need to create a comfortable environment combined with an excellent level of service. If you are able to influence the design of your B&B make sure your living quarters are as far

away as possible from the guest area. Remember most guests are escaping to your quite B&B for a break from their hectic lives, if you have small noisy kids this might not be the best time to start your B&B. Remember that like sleep, food is also an essential part of any travel experience. If you're not much of a cook now is the time to start learning or consider hiring one.

Marketing

Market your B&B online by developing an attractive website with pictures of your B&B, rates, testimonials, a list of local attractions and things to do and a booking form. Register your website with all the topic relevant and local business directories. Consider driving traffic to your site using a pay per click campaign such as Google's Adwords or Yahoo's Overture.

Market your B&B offline by using the Yellow Pages, booking agents in surrounding cities, flyers and brochures. Place advertisements in local petrol garages and supermarkets to capture those visitors that didn't plan ahead. Also register your B&B with local tourism and information centres.

Don't Forget

Pricing your services isn't easy, you have to factor in countless hidden expenses such as electricity, water and food. The easiest way to develop your initial pricing strategy is to pose as a prospective guest of other established B&B's and get quotes for stays of various lengths at different times of the year, remember prices increase in season.