

Upholsterer

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Furniture doesn't last forever; wear and tear or changing fashions mean that at some point many homes require the services of an upholsterer. If you're looking for a hands on business but still want to put your creative talents to good use, this is the home business for you. An upholstery business can be setup without breaking the bank and has the potential to produce excellent returns.

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

This isn't a trade that can be learned overnight or out of a book. If you have no experience we recommend getting started by attending a course at your local college or becoming an apprentice for an existing upholsterer. If you have a passion for cars you might consider becoming an auto upholsterer. This certainly isn't a mass industry but there is demand in the niche world of custom car design.

The Start-Up

With a solid skill set behind you its time to start building your business; you'll need to decide if your business will target a niche or offer general upholstery services. Examples of a niche might be antique furniture or auto upholstery.

Your workshop will form the heart of your business; a garage is best suited to this task. Zoning laws regarding manual work at home can be strict. If you think your neighbours might be quick to complain, do any loud work during the day when most people are at work. Outfit your workshop with a workbench, vice, general toolkit, fabric supplies, swatches to take to clients any everything else you need to get the job done such as glue, insulation and a staple gun.

To run the other half of your business you'll need a workspace, desk, computer, printer and phone. If you're getting started on a tight budget you can make do with a fax machine and phone line alone. Instead of printing your own quotes, invoices and receipts, buy an invoice book from your local office supply store.

Average rates vary between \$75 and \$400 (USD) depending on the piece being upholstered. Choosing the right pricing structure will be an important part of your start-up. Get it right the first time by doing comparative research online and in your local community. Once you know what the competition is charging you can decide where to position yourself.

Making It Work

Build your portfolio as quickly as possible. Invest in a decent digital camera and take before and after photos of your work. Compile these photos in an attractive album that you can show to clients. If you have the capital you might consider having a brochure produced with the best of your work.

Marketing

As a work from home upholsterer you'll rely heavily on networking and referrals. Work hard to build your business network within the furniture, upholstery and interior decorating industry. Remember that building a network and referrals takes time and dedication; don't expect it to happen over night.

Until you're the talk of the upholstery world in your area you'll need to plenty of advertising. Start small with adverts in the local classifieds, community newspapers and direct mailers or flyers to areas with the most potential.

Don't Forget

Any savings on supplies goes straight to your bottom line. Do your best to eliminate the middleman, negotiate favorable payment terms and generally get the best deal on your supplies possible.

Trade associations can be a great place to build a network, improve your public image and generally increase awareness of your business in the industry. Consider joining one if there are any in your area.