

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

UXBRIDGE

MAIN STREET INITIATIVE

BUSINESS BOOST CAMP

SMALL BUSINESS
SELF-ASSESSMENT

MERCHANT

TA

2021-2022

INTRODUCTION

Most small business owners are often too busy with their day-to-day concerns to actually pause and conduct a self-assessment. Just as the Town has to take a step back and look at an area or district such as Main Street, it is encumbered on the business owners to do their own assessment and determine where they stand with regard to their goals and how they fit into what may be proposed as changes to the physical and cultural make-up of Main Street.

Self-assessment is an important tool that involves performing a critical analysis of one's own goals, interests, skills, and experience. Employee development, team performance, and organizational change are among an assessment's other elements. Entrepreneurs have to know their strengths and weaknesses in order to be able to improve their chances of success. By evaluating such personal traits as business skills, experience, and knowledge, financial goals, likes and dislikes, willingness to expend effort, and ability to meet challenges, entrepreneurs may be able to identify business opportunities.

Innovative new business ideas often emerge from a self-assessment.

The tool of self-assessment can be used as an aid in employee development as part of a business' performance evaluation and training efforts. A "360-degree" system is a great tool, as it allows for business owner or manager an opportunity to evaluate and be evaluated and provide employees a chance to participate in setting goals, identifying shortcomings, and to generate ideas to increase competitiveness. Self-assessment allows an organization an opportunity to identify its strengths and weaknesses and map strategies to improve performance. At the organizational level, self-assessment performed with the participation of employees can help clarify a business' mission and goals.

What follows is a guide that will direct owners and managers of retail small businesses through a self - assessment. By no means is this guide intended to be the "end all" answer, rather it is intended to offer an opportunity to take a look around and determine where a business is at any given time and what opportunities to improve may exist.

Acknowledgement

The material contained in this workbook has been sourced and adapted from a number of outlets.

STEP ONE: *Take a good look around...*

Have there been any changes to “Main Street” or the area?

What, if any, changes to the vehicle traffic have occurred in the area?

What/who is our competition? Has it increased?

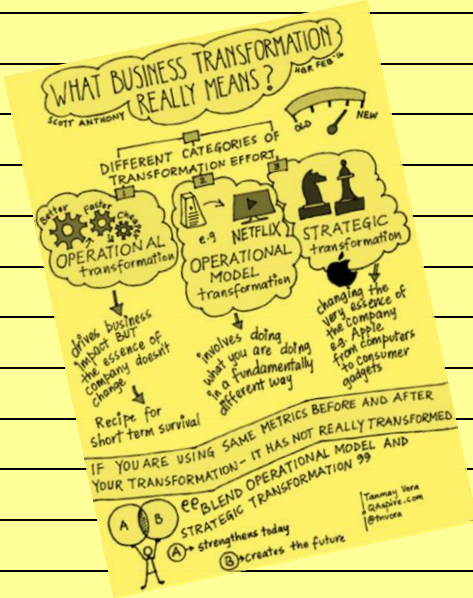
What new opportunities have been created?

What changes beyond our control affect our business – positive or negative?

What about the local - state - national economies? How are we affected?

What adjustments have we made?

STEP ONE *NOTES*



STEP TWO: *Take a good look in the mirror...*

Is our vision for the business the same as when we began? How is it different?

Has our idea of success become clearer since when we started? What have we changed?

What have we learned about being small business owners? Does it surprise us?

What do we need to learn?

How many hours do we spend *every week* working on our business?

Keeping the space clean and fresh

Ensuring a good customer experience

Being on top of new trends for...

Products

Technology

Marketing

Promotion

Finances

Operations

Do we think about how to improve our business?					
New sign	YES	NO	Update website	YES	NO
Fresh paint	YES	NO	Extend hours	YES	NO
New products	YES	NO	Sell on-line	YES	NO
Add staff	YES	NO	Add delivery	YES	NO
Other					

STEP TWO NOTES

a business plan is important

Helps to monitor our finances

Helps foster our business growth

Gives a foundation from which we can make further business decisions

Provides opportunity

STEP THREE: *Take a walk...*

When we stand across the street, does our business stand out?

Does something catch our eye and draw we over to our shop?

Do our outside lights shine on our business name *and* provide safety & security for our customers?

Is our street address visible?

Are there fliers, posters and/or paper signs stuck on our windows and doors?

remove
them
now

Is our businesses entry (doorway) inviting?

When we stand in front of our business and turn around, are the five storefronts across the street inviting?

1.	Yes	No
2.	Yes	No
3.	Yes	No
4.	Yes	No
5.	Yes	No

Does the area convey an inviting scene?

Crosswalks	Yes	No
Plantings	Yes	No
Street furniture	Yes	No
Lighting	Yes	No
Wayfinding signage	Yes	No
Trash management	Yes	No

Other

STEP THREE NOTES

Be sure our store attracts people's positive attention.

We have but a few seconds to do so, whether they are walking or driving by.

Need an interesting and appealing identity (signage façade, entrance) that is large enough and positioned to grab their attention.

Keep the windows and doors sparkling clean and free of clutter.

We should have creative and well-lit window displays.

We want the front of the store featured on the "Main Street" website!

STEP FOUR: *Be creative...*

Do we regularly update our window displays (at least once per month)?

What message do our windows convey to our customers and potential customers?

Does our window display relate to today?

How are the lights in our windows positioned?

Do they shine back onto the products?

Yes

No

Or directly down on them?

Yes

No

Are there any distracting reflections or glares that make our windows less inviting?

STEP FOUR NOTES

We have
one chance
to make a
great first
impression

be the best
salespeople
we can be!

make our
windows
big, bold
and
bright!

Do not fall into the
trap of putting a
little of everything
in the display.
Feature one or several
products that will
tease the customers'
interest.

Entice people to walk
through our door for
what can be a
satisfying
shopping
adventure that only
we can offer.

STEP FIVE: *Check the façade...*

Is the trim paint or material clean and attractive?

Does the paint or material color reinforce our business image and support our brand?

Are *ALL* entrances welcoming? What does our door say to a customer?

Are our customers adequately protected from the weather as they enter?

Is important information (hours, etc.) available at eye level?

Does the outside and inside of our store convey the same message about our products?

STEP FIVE NOTES

Brand strategy is the foundation for building a successful brand.

Brand identity needs to be consistent across all marketing channels.

Brand marketing is the process of building awareness about our products and services using strategic communication.

STEP SIX: *Look up....*

What does our sign say to our customers?

How many signs do we have? Where are they? Are they consistent?

Does our exterior signage truly reflect our business brand?

Logo

Color palette

Shape

Scale

Number

Do our signs meet the Uxbridge signage by-law requirements?

How does our signage compare to those to our left? Right? and Across the street?

Two to the left

Two to the right

Five across the street

Others

Do our signs convey fun? Excitement?

STEP SIX *NOTES*

People easily
connect to a
brand with a
story.

It directly
invokes positive
feelings in
their mind and
starts building
trust in our
brand.

The same story
will also help us
create a brand
voice.

It will help
determine how we
want to
communicate with
our customers,
and how they
respond to us.

STEP SEVEN: *What's in our store...*

Is our store name featured prominently inside the store?

Is our best seller or hottest new product a featured display at the point of entry?

What few words pop into our heads when we enter our store? Is it what we want our customers to think when they enter?

Are our store fixtures...?

Attractive	Yes	No
Interesting	Yes	No
Easily serviced	Yes	No
Up-to-date	Yes	No
Accessible	Yes	No

Have we used color for...?

Background	Yes	No
Brand message	Yes	No
Accent	Yes	No
Displays	Yes	No
Wayfinding	Yes	No

Is our service desk...?

Neat	Yes	No
Attractive	Yes	No
Visible	Yes	No
Fully stocked	Yes	No
Accessible	Yes	No

STEP SEVEN *NOTES*

Greet and engage customers near the entrance with a new product or special offer.

STEP EIGHT: *Walk around the store...*

Can I see over the displays?

Are our shelves the right height for *our* customers?

Are our aisles wide enough? Are they uncluttered?

Is there something interesting that will draw customers to the back of the store?

Have we strategically placed smaller items in an area that is visible, so as to deter theft?

STEP EIGHT *NOTES*

Every great customer experience starts with a great customer focused environment.

Maintain aisles that are comfortable and wide enough to accommodate people of all abilities.

Remove deliveries and clutter immediately

STEP NINE: *Work the visuals...*

Do our interior signs serve as *silent salesmen* by calling attention to products and offers?

Does our interior signage have a consistent look and feel?

Do we have attractive presentations around the store drawing customers from one area to another?

Do our presentations make customers think that there is plenty of stock?

Do our table displays tell a story and induce multiple purchases?

Is there a theme to the merchandising that relates to our customer's mindset today?

Are items that “go together” displayed together?

Are our product presentations “touchable”?

STEP NINE NOTES

Everything in
our store tells
our story.

We should use
compelling displays to
show off our products,
and place interesting
signs, stories and
display vignettes
around the store to pull
customers from place
to place.

Every day we
should act like a
customer, walk
into and around
our store as if we
are shopping.

STEP TEN: *Know our customers...*

Do we know three things that our customers like best about our store?

1.

2.

3.

Have we surveyed our customers during the past year?

Do we have and maintain a customer database?

Email addresses	Yes	No
Postal addresses	Yes	No
Phone number	Yes	No
Customer preferences	Yes	No
Frequency of visits	Yes	No

STEP TEN NOTES

Know our customers and the customers that we want to attract.

Reward customer loyalty often.

Stay connected with our customers in every way we can!

STEP ELEVEN: *Promote, promote, and promote again...*

Do we have and maintain a loyalty program?

Do we effectively educate our customers by sharing our expertise with them on line and in the local media?

When did we last offer a coupon or other incentive?

Are we having fun with contests to build our database and entertain our customers?

How do we support the community?

Sponsor a youth sports team	Yes	No	
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Buy advertising	Yes	No	
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Offer merchandise for fundraisers	Yes	No	
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Other

Do we have a media representative that offers local advertising opportunities?

Do we support a local charity(s)?

STEP ELEVEN NOTES

Research and select local community events and organizations to support.

Sponsor a youth sports team, they should wear our brand colors and our font., even if we have pay a little extra.

Support a local charity that we care about.

Offer support to those that share our business values.

STEP TWELVE: *Don't forget the internet...*

Do we have a website? Do we love it?

Do we change and/or update our website often?

Does our storefront and street address appear prominently on our website? Why not?

Do we send emails, texts and other electronic messages to our customers? Regularly?

Are we on...?

Facebook	Yes	No
Twitter	Yes	No
YouTube	Yes	No
Other	Yes	No

Did we post our last sale, promotion or event on social media?

STEP TWELVE NOTES

Update the website often and attach it to a social media site that is fresh.

"Word of mouth is the best advertising", today conversations are happening online.

We must be part of the new conversations!

STEP THIRTEEN: *Now, the hard part....*

Do we maintain our personal monies and business monies in separate accounts?

Do we ever fall behind on our rent or utility bills?

In most instances, do we prepay our vendors, use a credit card or use credit lines?

Prepay	Yes	No
Credit card	Yes	No
On account	Yes	No
Other	Yes	No

Do we stress about money?

Do we track business income and expenses so we know how we are doing?

No	Yes	No
Yes, weekly	Yes	No
Yes, monthly	Yes	No
Other	Yes	No

Do we pay ourselves a salary or hourly wage? How much? If no, why not?

Salary	Yes	No	\$
Hourly	Yes	No	\$
Other	Yes	No	

Do we feel we have an adequate emergency fund both for the business and personal?

Business	Yes	No
Amount	\$	
Personal	Yes	No
Amount	\$	

Do we understand the terms and conditions of our rent/lease agreement?

Do we feel as if we can invest in our business in the way that we want or need to?

How will we finance the growth of our business?

Not able to/not sure

Reinvest profits from the business

Personal funds

Loan

Bank

Credit card(s)

Other

Do we have an...?

Attorney

Yes

No

Accountant

Yes

No

Business plan/advisor

Yes

No

Realtor/real estate advisor

Yes

No

STEP THIRTEEN *NOTES*

pay rent
to make money,
not make money
to pay rent!

STEP FOURTEEN: *Now, the easy part...*

What are the best things about our business?

If we could change one thing about the business, what would it be?

Are we proud of our business?

Are we having fun?

STEP FOURTEEN *NOTES*

"All our dreams
can come true, if
we have the
courage to pursue
them."
Walt Disney

FINAL NOTES & THOUGHTS

"JUST START.
Don't worry that
you don't have
all the answers
yet."
Alli Webb



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It's Better Here! MA