AMERICA'S SBDC
ACCREDITED MEMBER
MONTANA

SBDC START-UP SERIES: MARKET RESEARCH

About the Montana SBDC

The Montana Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network is a partnership between the Montana Department of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, regional economic development organizations and institutions of higher education.

The Montana SBDC Network consists of ten centers throughout the state that provide free, confidential, one-on-one business counseling and low-cost training programs to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

The SBDCs are dedicated to helping small businesses throughout Montana achieve their goals of growth, expansion, innovation and success. Our Network combines the resources of federal, state and local organizations with that of the education system and private sector to meet the specialized and complex needs of the small business community.

Visit www.sbdc.mt.gov and contact the SBDC nearest you to learn more about what counseling services and training programs are available in your area.

Why do market research?

Conducting market research is an essential part of the business development process. Thorough and systematic market research can help you understand your market and the potential demand for you product or service.

How do you do market research?

There are two kinds of market research: 1) primary and 2) secondary.

Primary Research

1

Primary research means gathering your own data. For example, you could do a traffic count at a proposed location, use the yellow pages to identify competitors and do surveys or focus-group interviews about potential customer preferences. Professional market research can be very costly, but there are many resources available for small business owners to do effective research on their own.

Secondary Research

2

Secondary research means using published sources of information such as industry profiles, trade journals, newspapers, magazines, census data and demographic profiles. This type of information is available from public libraries, government agencies, industry associations, and chambers of commerce. Start with your local library. You will be amazed at how much information you can find there!

What information am I looking for?

Your market research will become the basis of your marketing plan. Some good questions to consider while you are researching are:

- Who is my target market? What is their age, gender, location and income?
- What is the total size of my market? What is the current demand in the market?
- What is the growth potential and opportunity for a business my size?
- What products and businesses are competing with me? How do I compare?
- What is my niche? What makes my product or service unique?

(Free!) Online Market Research Resources:

http://www.ceic.mt.gov
http://www.montanasiteselector.com
http://www.factfinder.census.gov

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

SBA U.S. Small Business Administration

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