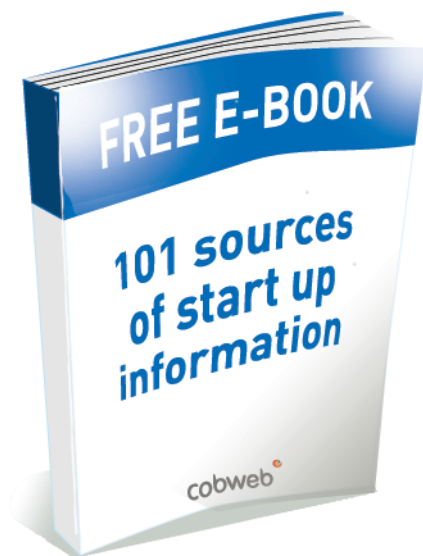


FREE E-BOOK

101 sources of start up information

Synopsis

Starting any new business requires time, planning, preparation, learning and completion of a mountain of tasks. It also requires a considerable amount of research and gathering of information. The purpose of this e-book is to give your preparation and research a head start by signposting you to 101 sources of practical and useful information that will help you find answers to the most common questions faced by new business start ups.



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- Seeking business support, help and advice

Introduction

Starting any new business requires time, planning, preparation, learning and completion of a mountain of tasks. It also requires a considerable amount of research and gathering of information.

The purpose of this report is to give your preparation and research a head start by signposting you to 101 sources of practical and useful information that will help you find answers to the most common questions faced by new business start ups. The information you will find in these resources is both educational and instructive.

The report will lead you to mainly free information provided by websites and organisations such as business directories, e-zines, specialist support agencies, regulatory bodies, business interest groups and associations, as well as some of the most widely read and respected news and educational services on the web.

Subject matter covered in this report includes:

- Finding a business idea.
- Researching your market.
- Setting up and trading legally.
- Writing your business plan.
- Setting up your office and office systems.
- Managing your finances.
- Seeking business support, help and advice.

Finding a business idea

If you are not quite sure what business you want to get into, a good place to start is by thinking about the basic human or business needs that people want all the time, or to analyse trends of what's selling well at the moment. Another option is to 'copy' a successful business that has taken off elsewhere, or to consider taking up a franchise. Matched to your own abilities, hobbies or personal interests, you may well be able to close in on an idea that has business potential.

Issues you should think about include:

- Could you use existing skills to develop a new product or service?
- Could you turn a hobby into a viable business?
- Which current trends could you cash in on?
- What type of business would suit your personality and lifestyle?

Information to help you think of an idea

Entrepreneur.com

A US-based site with a wealth of tips, tools, articles, how-to guides and information for businesses of all sizes, at all stages and in all sectors.

www.entrepreneur.com

EntrepreneurSecrets.co.uk

Offers information about global economic trends and niche business ideas, to help start ups and existing businesses write their business plans and carry out market research.

www.entrepreneursecrets.co.uk

British Franchise Association (BFA)

Provides useful tools for people researching a franchise, including how-to guidance on choosing a franchise, and plenty of detail about the relevant standards and legislation.

www.thebfa.org

Tools to help you spot useful trends and ideas

Idea A Day

Inspiration service showcasing one idea each day - you can browse an archive, view top tens and submit your own ideas for discussion.

www.idea-a-day.com

CREAX Trends Portal

Lists market trends and business ideas, and is usefully categorised by sector.

www.creax.com/portal.aspx

Trendwatching.com

Offers frequently updated articles about new business ideas and market trends across a range of sectors around the world.

www.trendwatching.com

Beermatting

Features a blog-style, categorised list of niche business ideas.

www.beermatting.com

From the publisher of this report

20 Tips to Help You Choose a Business Idea

This practical factsheet offers 20 tips to help you explore new ideas and think about the business opportunities that may be open to you.

You can download this factsheet from the Start Up Information Centre.

Protecting your business idea

Once you've decided on your business idea, it's vital that you try to protect it so that you can exploit the idea ahead of any potential competitors.

If you have invented a product that you now hope to sell, it's especially important to protect your own intellectual property (IP) and avoid infringing that of other people.

It's important that you understand the rules surrounding IP when creating new ideas, exploiting new opportunities and innovating in your business. The four main types of IP protection are:

- Design rights
- Copyright
- Patents
- Trade marks

Information about the legal aspects of intellectual property

The Patent Office

Gives plain English explanation of IP law, plus simple guides, factsheets, tips and checklists.

www.patent.gov.uk

Design Council

In the Business section of the website, the Design Council offers detailed guidance on the process of creating and registering a design.

www.design-council.org.uk

'Inventing the Future'

A useful report from the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) which explains how businesses and inventors can use patents to their advantage.

www.wipo.int/freepublications/en/sme/917/wipo_pub_917.pdf

Trevor Baylis Brands Plc - Patent and IP FAQs

A useful list of practical frequently asked questions about patents and IP.

www.trevorbaylisbrands.com/tbb/inventor/protection.asp

Tools and support to help you protect your ideas or inventions

The Innovation Logbook

A tool enabling you to record the progress of your inventions.

www.innovationlogbook.gov.uk

From the publisher of this report

How to Register and Protect Your Product Designs

This comprehensive factsheet describes the ways in which you can legally protect your designs, and outlines the procedures involved.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1680

Researching your market

Market research is essential to help you find out if there will be enough demand for your product or service to start up and sustain a business over the longer term.

Many new start ups fail to undertake basic market research before they start their business, increasing the likelihood of early failure because they have not done enough analysis of:

- Whether there is enough demand for their product/service.
- Who their customers will be and what their buying habits are.
- Who they will be competing against.
- How reliant they may be on third-party suppliers for the creation or delivery of their product/service.

Information to help you research your market

British Library

Offers access to a vast range of market information, which you can search online and access via the library. (Your local central library may offer similar services.)

www.bl.uk/catalogues/business/Home.aspx

TradePub.com

A specialist directory listing UK and international trade magazines, publications, journals and periodicals.

www.tradepub.com

UpMyStreet

Easy to use resource for finding postcode-specific demographic data or researching a specific location, listing key indicators such as age, income level and so on.

www.upmystreet.com

The Office of National Statistics

Produces regularly updated studies of economic activity, including household spending and disposable income levels, which can tell you how much money your customers have

got and what they're likely to spend it on.

www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nscl.asp?ID=5919

Tools to help you produce a marketing plan

Marketing for Profits

Sample marketing plans and advice on the type of information to include in your plan.

www.consultancymarketing.co.uk/marketing-plan.htm

Chartered Institute of Marketing - Marketing Plan Guide

A free step-by-step tool for writing a marketing plan - go to the Marketing Shop, and select Tools, where the marketing planning tool is second on the list.

www.cim.co.uk

From the publisher of this report

An Introduction to Researching a Market for Business Start Ups

This useful factsheet outlines the types of questions your market research should address, and describes the main ways of carrying it out.

You can download this factsheet from the Start Up Information Centre.

Setting a start up budget

When you are setting a start up budget, the issues you need to consider include:

- How much money do you need to spend to set up your business?
- How much cash will your business generate each month?
- How much will you need to spend each month once you begin trading?
- When will your sales exceed your income?

Information about preparing a budget

Business Debtline - Creating a Business Budget

A practical, step-by-step outline of how to prepare a budget for your business.

www.bdl.org.uk/contenten.asp?cid=9

The Consumer Credit Counselling Service

A useful article explaining exactly why budgets are important, and taking you step-by-step through the process of developing one. Although it is slanted towards consumer usage, the tips also have practical value for businesses.

www.cccs.co.uk/budget/budget.htm

Tools to help you prepare a budget

Business Owners Idea Cafe

A practical worksheet for developing and calculating a start up budget.

www.businessownersideacafe.com/financing/budget_calculator.html

Small Business Advice Service

Downloadable spreadsheet templates for producing a cash flow forecast, profit and loss account and business plan.

www.smallbusinessadvice.org.uk/busplan/bpdownloads.asp

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to Preparing a Budget When Starting Up

This essential factsheet explains how to prepare a sales and expenditure budget, and how you use your budget to keep control of your business finances.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1687

Choosing the right legal status for your business

When setting up your business, you have a number of options for the way you can structure it. There are several types of legal status that affect issues such as how your venture operates, how it is recognised by law, what the tax implications are, and what will happen to any future business debts.

There are four main types of legal status for a business:

- Sole trader
- Partnership
- Limited company
- Community Interest Company (CIC)

Information to help you choose the legal status for your business

Companies House - Guides

Provides a range of advice and tools for limited companies, including the ability to register online and help with choosing a business name, guidance on filing your accounts and a document submission checklist.

www.companieshouse.gov.uk

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) - Guides

Offers downloadable guides, leaflets and forms aimed at people starting up in business for the first time. The documents are designed to give a summary of the tax and legal implications of being a sole trader or a member of a partnership.

www.hmrc.gov.uk/startingup/index.htm

The CIC Regulator

A range of practical explanatory information about CICs, covering how they operate, which types of businesses are suited to this format, and how to set up a CIC.

www.cicregulator.gov.uk

Tools to help you register your business

Companies House - Limited Company Booklet

Offers a downloadable booklet taking you step-by-step through the process of registering a new limited company, including links to the forms you will need to fill in.

www.companieshouse.gov.uk/about/gbhtml/gbf1.shtml

From the publisher of this report

Choosing the Right Legal Status for Your Business

This instructive factsheet describes each of the options available to you when choosing the legal status of your business. It gives an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of each legal structure, along with details of tax, National Insurance (NI) and registration requirements.

You can download this factsheet from the Start Up Information Centre.

Choosing a business name

When setting up a business, you must think carefully about what you want to call it. You cannot simply call your business any name that appeals to you as there are strict rules and regulations governing both the form and the use of certain words and phrases in business names.

Your business name must not:

- Conflict with a registered trade mark.
- Be offensive or misleading.
- Constitute a criminal offence (for example, by using an officially restricted word).
- Already be in use.

Resources to help you choose a business name and domain name

How To Guides - Business Names

Practical guidance and tips about the key issues involved with selecting a memorable and legal name for your business.

www.howtobooks.co.uk/employment/self-employment/business-name.asp

Companies House - Guides

Guidance about choosing a name that complies with the Business Names Act 1985.

www.companieshouse.gov.uk/about/gbhtml/gbf3.shtml

TheSiteWizard

Tips on choosing a good domain name for your business website.

www.thesitewizard.com/archive/domainname.shtml

Tools to check if your business name and domain name are already in use

National Business Register Plc

Offers a search tool for identifying if your business name is already in use.

www.start.biz/business_names

Yellow Pages

Searchable directory that can be used to check existing business names, along with information about advertising opportunities plus listings of businesses and services throughout the UK.

www.yell.com

Domain.com

A great tool to find out if your domain name is available - all domain name suffixes are searchable, including .com, .co.uk, .biz and .net.

www.domain.com

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to Choosing and Registering a Business Name

This step-by-step factsheet sets out the basic rules governing business names, covers the registration process that you must follow when choosing and registering a business name, and provides advice about complying with the Business Names Act 1985.

You can download this factsheet from the Start Up Information Centre.

A Guide to Registering an Internet Domain Name

This helpful factsheet describes the process of registering an Internet domain name. It provides guidance on how to choose the most suitable domain name, and explains how your domain name can be used for websites and e-mails.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1583

Trading legally

Before you start up your business, you need to research all the legal issues you need to comply with. In general, you will need to consider:

- Tax, National Insurance and VAT
- Health and safety
- Fire safety
- Planning permission
- Intellectual property
- Licences
- Insurance
- Employing staff
- Trading regulations

Many of these issues have been covered in other sections of this report, but the following are resources that will help you to gain an understanding of key regulations that affect all businesses.

Information about key business legislation

Office of Fair Trading (OFT)

A useful overview of both general and sector-specific legislation for businesses.

[www.oft.gov.uk/Business/Running% 2Ba% 2Bbusiness/default.htm](http://www.oft.gov.uk/Business/Running%20a%20business/default.htm)

BBC - Tax, National Insurance and VAT

An overview of the key issues you need to consider with regard to tax, National Insurance and VAT.

www.bbc.co.uk/consumer/start_a_business/tax.shtml

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) - Health and Safety at Work

A free online advice pack that will help you to implement and manage all the key legal requirements of health and safety legislation in the workplace.

www.rospa.com/occupationsafety/smallfirms/index.htm

London Fire Brigade (LFB)

Provides a lot of useful information about fire safety at work, including the obligations of employers with regard to fire safety.

www.london-fire.gov.uk/fire_safety/at_work/at_work.asp

Start in Business

A useful summary of the business activities that require a licence before you can start trading and details of where to go to apply or for more information.

www.startinbusiness.co.uk/flowchart/8flowchart_lisences.htm

Tools to help you trade legally

Safestartup.org

An interactive website aiming to explain the key health, safety and environmental regulations for start ups and small businesses.

www.safestartup.org

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to Business Regulations When Starting Up

This essential factsheet lists the major business regulations that will affect the start up of your business.

You can download this factsheet from the Start Up Information Centre.

Seeking permission to set up in business

When you're ready to launch your business, there are certain organisations you must inform by law before you become self-employed, or before you employ other people.

It is also advisable to contact a solicitor or an accountant to seek their advice before starting your business.

Information about the organisations you must contact before starting up

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)

You must register as self-employed for tax purposes with HMRC within three months of starting up, or risk a penalty.

www.hmrc.gov.uk/selfemployed/iwtregister-as-self-employed.shtml

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Depending on the type of business you run, you may need to register with the HSE before starting to trade. It offers specific information for numerous business sectors - follow the drop-down list at the web link below.

www.hse.gov.uk

Directgov

Offers a wide range of information and tools to find out how to deal with your local authority, including applying for trading licences, planning permission and so on.

www.direct.gov.uk

Department for Communities and Local Government

Provides information about building regulations, planning permission and fire safety rules.

www.communities.gov.uk

Tools to help you find accountants and solicitors

Chartered Accountants Directory

A useful directory for finding an accountant in your area.

www.chartered-accountants.co.uk

LawyerLocator

A tool for locating a solicitor, which can be searched by area, postcode or area of expertise, as well as by name.

www.lawyerlocator.co.uk

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to the Organisations You Must Contact When Starting Up

This comprehensive factsheet lists and describes the organisations that it is essential to contact before starting up in business, as well as some of the organisations you could contact for support and advice.

You can download this factsheet from the Start Up Information Centre.

Writing your business plan

A business plan helps you to define your business goals and targets, and explain how you are going to achieve them. It is an outline of how your business will operate when it starts up, as well as a guide to monitor its progress over the longer term.

Your plan should contain:

- A description of what your business will do.
- Details about your goals and objectives.
- Descriptions of your target customers, competitors and trends affecting your market.
- Information about how you will promote your business.
- Details about how and where the business will operate.
- How much money is needed to get your business off the ground.

Information, tips and advice about business plans

Business Plan Help

A broad range of information, examples, advice and tips for preparing your business plan.

www.business-plan-help.com

Business Balls

Definitions, templates and step-by-step guidance on writing a business and a marketing plan.

www.businessballs.com/freebusinessplansandmarketingtemplates.htm

Tools to help you construct your business plan

Palo Alto

Examples of over 60 sample business plans for different business ideas/opportunities.

www.bplans.co.uk/sample_plans/businessplans.cfm

My Own Business

Online course in business planning that you can study in your own time, covering writing a business plan in digestible chunks.

www.myownbusiness.org/s2/

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to Writing a Business Plan

This essential factsheet describes what a business plan should include, how you should go about writing one and what you will achieve by doing so.

You can download this factsheet from the Start Up Information Centre.

Setting up your office and office systems

Whether you plan to work from home or from a small office, workshop unit or shop, you need to make sure that you are complying with the law and paying the correct business rates.

You also need to make sure that you have thought about the facilities and equipment you need, and are confident that you can use them effectively.

Information about setting up an office

My Business Rates

Provides step-by-step information on how business rates work, how they are calculated and how they affect businesses, as well as offering a tool for estimating your rates bill.
www.mybusinessrates.gov.uk

Valuation Office Agency

Offers guidance on the legal implications of working from home.
www.voa.gov.uk/council_tax/working_from_home.htm

Help With PCs

Practical tips and information about basic computing, covering the main Microsoft applications and explaining tricks such as keyboard shortcuts.
www.helpwithpcs.com

Tools to help you set up your office

Tavistock Directory

A directory of business centres and managed office space throughout the UK.
www.tavistockdirectory.com

Want Don't Want

A resource for businesses looking to buy or sell second-hand office furniture and equipment. Items are categorised (for example, desks, chairs, computers and phones) and listed according to their location.
www.wantdontwant.com

Broadband Checker

Postcode-specific search tool providing information about broadband availability and prices in a specified area, and including a directory of broadband providers.
www.broadbandchecker.co.uk

Google Docs & Spreadsheets

Google's free word processing software and spreadsheet package.
<http://docs.google.com>

From the publisher of this report

A Checklist for Setting up a Home Office

This practical checklist covers the essential considerations for anyone setting up a home office and identifies which regulations and restrictions will apply.
www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1636

Protecting your business assets

Even before you start trading, you will begin to accumulate 'assets' that need to be protected in order to safeguard your business. Once you open for business, you need to make sure you keep these assets safe and insure yourself against their loss or damage.

These assets include:

- Customer information, including names, addresses and contact details of existing or potential customers.
- Financial information, especially receipts and other documents that you will need to complete a tax return.
- Any information relating to your business that is held on your PC, such as business plans, cash flow forecasts and other financial spreadsheets.
- Stock and raw materials needed to supply or manufacture your product/service.

Information to help you protect your business assets

Nottinghamshire Police - Business Security

An overview of various measures you can take to protect your business assets.

www.nottinghamshire.police.uk/crimereduction/crime_prevention/business_security/

Association of British Insurers

Provides useful guidance on choosing a business insurance policy - go to the Information Zone, and click 'For Business'.

www.abi.org.uk

Home Computer Security

A useful guide to home computer security.

www.cert.org/homeusers/HomeComputerSecurity/

UK Orbit - Data Backup Advice

A practical overview of the options for backing up data from your PC.

www.ukorbit.com/data-backup-advice.htm

Tools to help you protect your business assets

Free-Backup.info

Free software for backing up and restoring PC files.

<http://free-backup.info>

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to Backing Up Your Computer Data

This instructive factsheet examines the risks to the information you store electronically, looks at how to create a policy and a plan for backing up data and suggests some of the practical measures you can put into effect.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1662

A Guide to Documents That You Must Keep

This helpful factsheet provides information about the types of documents that you need to keep and for how long, and also offers tips and advice on the best way to store them securely.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1697

Preparing to sell

Building relationships with potential and existing customers is one of the most crucial areas of running your business successfully. Before you start trading, you need to identify who your potential customers are and make sure that these people know you exist. Once you start selling to customers, you need to make sure you do so on a fair and legal commercial basis, to protect both your own and your customers' interests. You also need to make sure that you understand the changing needs and wants of your customers and that you deal with any complaints they may have swiftly and effectively.

Information to help you produce sales letters and deal with customers

Marketing Magic

Step-by-step advice on writing a sales letter.

www.marketing-magic.biz/archives/archive-advertising/writing-a-sales-letter.htm

Marketing Words

Advice about sales copywriting.

www.marketingwords.com/articles.html

Free Marketing Zone

Free Internet marketing tips and resources.

<http://freemarketingzone.com>

Bizhelp24

Advice on selling and building customer relationships over the telephone.

www.bizhelp24.com/marketing/an-introduction-to-making-telephone-sales-appointments-8.html

Tools to help you keep track of your customers

Contact Management Tools

A useful list of a variety of contact management tools available from a number of suppliers, many of which offer a free trial before you buy.

www.slipstick.com/addins/contact_management.asp

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to Building and Using a Mailing List

This useful factsheet describes where you can find names for a mailing list, how to collate and manage the information, and ways to make the best use of it. It also introduces you to certain legal requirements relating to customer information.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1752

The UK Small Business Marketing Bible

Hundreds of practical tips and techniques for finding new customers, increasing sales and growing your business.

www.ukmarketingbible.com

Managing your finances

One of the major causes of small business failure is running out of cash. No matter how healthy your business finances may appear, your ability to convert sales into actual cash at critical times may make the difference between survival and failure. The key areas to consider include:

- Monitoring and controlling your key financial statements: cash flow forecast, profit and loss account, and balance sheet.
- Controlling cash flow by keeping a tight check on invoicing and collecting payments.
- Dealing with late payment promptly and effectively.
- Controlling expenditure and keeping up with payments to your suppliers.

Information to help you manage your finances

Better Payment Practice Group

Offers information and advice about late payment, plus a range of free tools such as an interest calculator and sample letters for dealing with debtors.

www.payontime.co.uk

Card Watch

Practical tips on tackling card fraud, using Chip and PIN equipment and keeping card payments secure.

www.cardwatch.org.uk

Tools to help you manage your finances

Mind Tools

An explanation and tool that shows you how to use spreadsheets to forecast cash flow.

www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_06.htm

Allied Irish Bank

A cash flow forecast wizard to assist in the management of cash flow.

www.aibgb.co.uk/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GB_BusinessPortal/GB_Tool/gb_d_tool&c=GB_Tool&cid=1027674497583&channel=GBHP

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to Invoicing and Collecting Payments

This useful factsheet looks at the process of drawing up and issuing invoices, some issues you may face when collecting payment, and the advantages of electronic invoicing.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1772

How to Forecast Cash Flow

This practical factsheet will show you how to forecast cash flow and use the information you gather in your cash flow statement effectively.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1554

Taking on staff for the first time

Employment legislation is put in place to protect the rights of the people who work for you. It is vital that you understand how you could potentially be affected by relevant legislation.

The processes you must get right when employing staff include:

- Writing job descriptions.
- Selecting candidates for interview.
- Making a job offer and obtaining references.
- Issuing employment contracts.
- Agreeing wages and conditions, including working hours and holidays.
- Maternity and parental leave.

Information to help you recruit and employ staff

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advice about online recruitment and how to use the Internet to find staff.

www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/recruitmen/onlnrcruit/onlrec.htm

Acas - Best Practice

Information about best practice for recruiting staff and carrying out inductions.

www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=744

YourPeopleManager

Guidelines for conducting a successful interview.

www.yourpeoplemanager.com/YfoDOLFoTX_-WA.html

Information Commissioner's Office - Employment Practices Code

Guidelines to help you ensure that you protect your employees' personal details in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/topic_specific_guides/employment.aspx

Tools to help you recruit staff

Quintessential Careers - Recruitment Glossary

A glossary of terms used in the recruitment process.

www.quintcareers.com/jobseeker_glossary.html

Business Balls - Job Description Templates

Job description templates and tips on creating ones that you can use in your business.

www.businessballs.com/jobdescription.htm

Acas - Discrimination FAQs

Questions and answers on discrimination in the workplace.

www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=868

From the publisher of this report

An Introduction to Recruiting Staff

This factsheet provides a step-by-step guide to the recruitment process to help you develop a recruitment policy that is right for your business.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1534

Seeking business support, help and advice

When you set up a business, there are a number of organisations and individuals who can offer support, help and advice.

Issues for you to consider include:

- Identifying what business support is available to you.
- Choosing and using a business adviser.
- The importance of networking.

Information to help you find support, help and advice

National Federation of Enterprise Agencies (NFEA)

Details of the role of enterprise agencies and how they can help your business, including a directory of agencies in England.

www.nfea.com

Institute of Business Advisers (IBA)

Provides a tool to help you locate an independent business adviser in your area with the right skills and expertise to assist your business.

www.iba.org.uk/asp/advisersearch.aspx

Trade Association Forum

Includes useful codes of practice as well as listings of trade associations for every sector, and also has some advice on setting up your own trade body.

www.taforum.org

Tools to help you network effectively

UK Business Forums

A networking resource which lists a number of online business discussion forums and groups.

www.ukbusinessforums.co.uk

The Presentation Business

Practical advice, how-to guides, tips and tools on public speaking, sales pitching, networking and giving presentations.

www.presentationbiz.co.uk

From the publisher of this report

A Guide to Finding a Business Start Up Adviser

This essential factsheet focuses on what a business adviser does for business start ups, as well as looking at the types of advice available.

www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1623

This information is meant as a starting point only. Whilst all reasonable efforts have been made, the publisher makes no warranties that the information is accurate and up-to-date and will not be responsible for any errors or omissions in the information nor any consequences of any errors or omissions. Professional advice should be sought where appropriate.

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If you have any feedback or queries please contact us:

Tel: +44 (0)191 461 8000

E-mail: enquiries@cobwebinfo.com

Website: www.cobwebinfo.com