

LIL' BESSIE STARTS A BUSINESS

How One Girl Started a Business & You Can Too!



By: Dresham Harkless Jr.

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By: Gresham W. Harkless Jr.

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Introduction

Starting a business can be one of the most difficult things you will do in your life. I hope this book is a good starting point for entrepreneurs and business owners of all ages. It is written to be a simplistic way of approaching business. I don't consider running or starting a business to be easy but I think there are simple principles that business owners can follow to be successful. There are ups and downs and peaks and valleys but I hope after reading this that you will walk away with insight or at the very least a different perspective on running a business.

For those that are looking to start a business, I hope this is a good starting point. While the story is told through the perspective of a 10 year old girl, the appendix has a more detailed explanation on how to start a business. Along with *What If Aesop Started a Business*, and visiting www.ceoblognation.com, I hope these resources provide a guide and provide tips for starting and running a successful business.

More than anything, remember to *just do it* and also remember *don't quit*.

Gresham Harkless

Founder CEO Blog Nation & Blue 16 Media

Dedication



First, thank you God for making this possible. Without Him, nothing would be possible.

This was written for entrepreneurs and business owners. I have and always will respect and be motivated by what you do to shape the world.

This book is dedicated to my Grandma Bessie. We miss you and love you.

Lil' Bessie Starts a Business: How One Girl Started a Business & You Can Too!



Once upon a time, there was a young girl named Lil' Bessie. During the summer, Lil' Bessie would spend day after day lying in the grass next to her dog, Missy, looking at the sun.

With her dog by her side, Lil' Bessie would say, "I love the summer. Don't you Missy?" she said scratching the head of her furry companion.

There's so much to do.

"I can ride my bike."



"I can skip rocks."

"I can go swimming."



"I can play with my friends."

"I can even go to the Fai..." Lil' Bessie stopped. She remembered the County Fair every year where all the children and parents would go. Lil' Bessie hoped to go, but her father told her that this year they didn't have the money to go.

"Well there's still a lot of other things, right Missy?" she said giving her dog a kiss on the head.

Even though Lil' Bessie tried to stay positive about all the great things she could do over the summer she still wanted to go to the County Fair.

Every day her father would come home after work and she would rush to the door to greet him and give him a big hug and a kiss. She would sit on his lap, and she would ask him a million and one questions.



At the end she would always try to slip the one question she really wanted to ask, "Dad, can I go to the Fair?" Every day he would say, "Not this year baby girl, but maybe next year."

Lil' Bessie still sad because she couldn't go to the Fair, let a tear fall and then went to her room before dinner.



One day, after her normal routine she heard her older brother throwing a baseball against a wall. She was so mad, she yelled "Johnny! Keep it down over there!"

Her brother, the jokester that he was decided to keep bothering her. He kept throwing the ball against the wall. Finally, she went over to his room and said "Johnny, stop it!"

Seeing that his little sister had already been crying, Johnny said, "Geez, Louise! I was just playing I wasn't trying to make you cry."

After hearing that, Lil' Bessie broke into tears. "It's not you. Dad won't let me go to the Fair."

Johnny moved next to his sister, hugged her and said, "It's nothing to cry about Bess. Dad just doesn't have the money this year. I overheard him and mom talking again."

Some moments passed as the brother and sister held each other.

Then finally, Johnny said, "I have an idea. You know when I was younger, Dad used to always tell me he didn't have money for things but I decided to just find a way to make the money so that I could just do or buy things."



"What do you mean?" asked Lil' Bessie.

"Well...you were a baby but one year I wanted to go to the Fair and dad said I couldn't go. So I started cutting grass until I made enough money to go. I did a bunch of different things, I carried groceries for tips, washed cars...anything I could do."

"But I'm too young to get a job" said Lil' Bessie, knowing no one would hire a 10 year old.

"It doesn't matter how old you are. You don't have to get a job. You can start a business. You can just use a skill you have or something you create and give it to someone and they'll give you money back" said Johnny.

"What's a skill?" asked Lil' Bessie.



"Well...it's one of those things you do really, really good and people will pay you for it. It could be a product or a service. Like mom's good at baking pineapple cake and making seafood pasta salad. You know how mom makes her pineapple cake and sells them to the neighbors, that's her business. Her cooking is like her skill. You know how dad is really good at fixing computers? That's a service people pay him for. When someone's computer is broken, they call him."

"Now, scram I gave you an idea. You just have to figure out what you're good at."

The next day, Lil' Bessie laid in the grass with Missy looking up at the clouds. Her head was buzzing with ideas and opportunities to start her business.

She thought about selling cakes like her mom, but she wasn't good at cooking.

Then maybe cutting the grass, but she only liked grass for lying in.

Then she remembered, what her brother said...*You just have to figure out what you're good at.*

What am I good at? She wondered.



"There was one time I ate more hot dogs than my brother."

"Then, I beat all my friends racing."



"Then, I made everyone laugh at my jokes. Missy, remember when my brother snorted soda out of his nose?"



Missy barked very loud. "I know Missy, but how do I make that into a business?"

When Lil' Bessie made it back home, she went straight to her brother's room. She sighed and said "Johnny, I can't think of anything to sell."

"You're thinking too hard about it Bess. Sometimes the best ideas are right in front of your face. What do you do more than anything? What are you really passionate about?"

"Hmmm..." Lil' Bessie thought.

"With your hands..."

"Ummm..." said Lil' Bessie.

"And yarn..." her brother said.

"Sewing!" said Lil' Bessie. "How do I make money from that?"

"Simple Bess, think about all the cool things you can make and sell. Why don't you do that? Now, scram I'm going to play basketball in a bit."



Bess let out a big smile and shouted, "I got it!"

Bess ran back to her room and looked at all the stuff she had made. It was just a fun hobby for her but she knew that she could start a business and best of all she could go to the Fair.

"We did it Missy!" she said looking at her dog.

Now she had an idea, but what would she do next?

"Mom!" Lil' Bessie called at the top of her lungs.

"Yes, Bess?" her mom said as Lil' Bessie ran outside where her mom sat on the porch.

"I'm going to start a business" Lil' Bessie said confidently.

Her mother smiled at the boldness of her daughter. "Is that so? Well, what business are you going to start?"

"Well, I'm going to sell some of the stuff I made. I just don't know what to do."

"Why do you want to sell the stuff you made?"

Sheepishly, Lil' Bessie said, "So I can go to the Fair."

"Is that so? You sound like quite the entrepreneur."

"Entrepr--what?"



Bessie's mom explained, "It is someone who starts a business. They see opportunities to help solve problems. There's great entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey..."

Her mom rattled off more and more names as Lil' Bessie thought, *I'm an entrepreneur.*

"Huh?" Lil' Bessie said coming out of her trance.

"Make sure it's okay with your father, okay?"

"Okay!" said Lil' Bessie.

When Lil' Bessie's dad came home, they went through their normal routine where she talked about her day, but this time instead of asking to go to the Fair she said, "Daddy, I want to be an entrepronurse"

"A what?" her dad smiled.

"A...I want to start a business so I can go to the Fair."

"Is that so?" said her dad "So you want to be an entrepreneur?"

"Yes."

"And what are you going to sell?" he asked. "Well, all the things that I sewed."

"Is that right? Well that's a big girl decision and I'm proud of you for coming up with that idea. Go for it! It will be a lot of hard work, but it will be worth it."



"So let's brainstorm how you're going to start your business" said her father.

“Bess, did you know that before you were born, your mom and I used to own a restaurant?”

“Really?” said Lil’ Bessie, her eyes wide open in amazement.

“Yes. It was voted best restaurant in Darlington 5 years in a row. I want to show you all the important parts of starting a business so that you can be really successful. How’s that sound?”

“Sounds great dad!”

Sitting down at the dinner table, he said, “Ok, here are all the steps to starting a business. We will go through them and you can figure out the answers for your business.”

Steps Lil’ Bessie Took to Start Her Business:

1. **Have an idea:** Bess decided that she would start a sewing business after she realized it was her skill and that she was passionate about it.
2. **Have a goal:** Her goal was to make enough money to go to the County Fair.
3. **Come up with a name:** Bess wanted to come up with something unique and original so she asked friends and family for ideas and eventually she decided on Lil’ Bessie’s Sewing Shop.

4. **Find a team:** Bess worked with her father and mother to plan out exactly how she would run her business. She also asked friends to help and promised them some of the profits when they made sales.
5. **Do research:** Bess asked her family, neighbors, church members and classmates what their favorite color combinations were and what pieces they would most likely buy. Also, she asked them how much they would pay for her products. She was then able to decide on the best products to make and how much people would pay for the products.
6. **Use resources:** Bess went to the library and read some business books and she also used her computer and tablet to read online websites and blogs about running a successful business.
7. **Write a business plan:** Bess' dad told her how important it was to write out a business plan. She didn't write a long plan but wanted to write at least 2-3 pages so that she had a plan she could execute to reach her goal.
8. **Talk to an attorney:** In order for her to register her business, she talked with the family lawyer so that she knew the best way to register and set up her business.
9. **Find an accountant:** Her dad kept telling her that knowing her "numbers" was one of the most important

parts of running a business so she sat down with an accountant in town so that he could help her and answer any questions.

10. Open a business bank account: The accountant told Bess that one of the most important parts of starting a business was making sure not to mix up her personal money with the money she made from her business so she opened up a business account at a local bank.

11. Purchase insurance, licenses and permits: Bess didn't need any insurance or licenses but she had to get a permit to sell in downtown Florence.

12. Finances: Bess was able to convince her parents to give her \$25 to get her business started. She would sell her products and reinvest the profits to continue to grow the business.

13. Sales, marketing & advertising: Bess created flyers on the computer and handed them out. She also convinced her brother to create a website by promising him that she would sew some personalized socks for him before basketball season. He said it was called "bartering."

14. Find a space. Bess decide that she would start her business at home and kept most of her inventory in the garage. She heard a lot of successful entrepreneurs started the same way.

15. Create products and services. From her research she decided that she would focus on sewing quilts, scarfs and socks. People wanted those products more than anything else. She also found out that people had a lot of things that needed to be fixed like torn shirts or holes in their pants so she decided to add that as a service. Finally, she knew that she would take special orders because people wanted customized products.

16. Congratulations! Now the work begins! Bess was so excited to start her business that she couldn't sleep the night before. All the hard work and preparation was going to pay off.

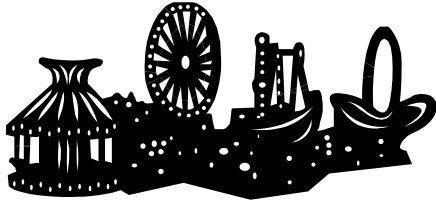
Lil' Bessie and her father sat in the living room all night with price tags and markers. Lil' Bessie's mom smiled as she sewed a scarf and her two entrepreneurs were working hard.

Finally, Lil' Bessie's Sewing Shop opened the next day. Her products had price tags, she had a cash register, a price list and everything she would need to get started. She even had a place where she would sell at the corner of town every Saturday. Her father loaned her \$25 to pay for the space.



"What's a loan, daddy?"

"Well baby girl, it's when someone lets you borrow money and wants you to pay it back on a certain date."



Every Saturday up to and even after the Fair, Lil' Bessie set up her table in town and sold all the items she created for people to buy. She was able to go to the Fair and buy ice cream and ride all her favorite rides with her friends.

While she was there enjoying her time, she saw other entrepreneurs and had more and more business ideas to start. Lil Bessie recognized more opportunities like adding additional services like embroidery and crocheting to her business.

For Lil' Bessie this was just the beginning. The young entrepreneur was ready to take on the world.



THE END

Appendix: How to Start a Business

For entrepreneurs and business owners, starting a business is one of the most exciting things that you can do. Below are the steps that you can take when starting a business. It is important to speak to an expert when starting a business, below are general guidelines but because each business and situation is unique it is important to contact an expert.

Step 1: Have an idea

Typically when businesses are started, it is because there is something missing in the market or something that people need. It may not have been created yet or you might be building a better version of an already existing product or service, but as a business owner you must have the vision to create what the market needs. Sometimes, businesses develop around an entrepreneur's passion. Have a brainstorming session where you just generate ideas. Some will be great and some will be good and others will be horrible. It's important to try to find a good balance between passion and an opportunity in the market. That's what Bessie did.

Lil' Bessie's Take: Starting a business is a lot of work, so I found something people will buy but also something I was passionate about.

Step 2: Have a goal

Why are you starting your business? Do you want to sell it to another company? Do you want it to replace the job you lost? Is it a part-time business to bring in extra cash? Are you planning on leaving your job? These are questions entrepreneurs should have answered before they get started so that they know their "Why."

Lil' Bessie's Take: Know where you want to go. I wanted to raise money to go to the Fair.

Step 3: Come up with a name

When deciding on your businesses name, you want to make sure that it is available when you register it online and available if you have to register it in the state or county you do business in. Typically, you want your business name to explain what you do but be unique enough that it won't be confused with other businesses.

Lil' Bessie's Take: I decided on Lil' Bessie's Sewing Shop. The domain name was available and also it was unique enough so it couldn't be confused with another business like South Carolina Sewing Shop.

Step 4: Find a team

It's very important to build a strong team. As the saying goes, if you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room. Being a great entrepreneur and business owner means being a great leader and hiring the best people and getting out of their way. The most successful entrepreneurs don't do everything, rather, they focus on what they do best and what will help grow their business. It is also important to have a mentor and/or advisor so your business is more likely to succeed.

Lil' Bessie's Take: I listened to my dad, mom and brother because they started businesses in the past. I also was able to hire my best friend by promising her \$0.10 for every sale she made. This allowed me to double my sales.

Step 5: Perform research

Measure twice and cut once. This saying means that it is important to do research about your business and even your industry. This is not a one-time action, it is important to constantly read and stay abreast of news and changes in your industry. It is important to be an expert about your business and an expert in your industry.

Lil' Bessie's Take: I did a lot of research including finding out if I had what it takes to be an entrepreneur by taking a personality test. I passed with flying colors! I also looked to research everything from my business name to competitors in the area. Finally, I kept up with news in my industry.

Step 6: Leverage resources

There are resources for entrepreneurs including CEO Blog Nation, the Small Business Administration, SCORE offices, small business development centers and local Chamber of Commerce's. It is also important to reach out to advisors, mentors and experts in the industry.

Lil Bessie's Take: I read a lot on websites like CEO Blog Nation, the SBA and anything that I felt would help me succeed. I followed important business

leaders on Twitter and read sewing blogs and watched techniques from experts on YouTube.

Step 7: Write a business plan

It is very important to plan out your business and take the steps to be successful. While a traditional 30-40 page business plan may not be necessary for success, unless you are trying to obtain financing from a bank, it is important to have a plan in place for how you are going to run your business. Your business plan is essentially a map for how you are going to reach your goal. It doesn't have to be long. It could be 1-3 pages. A traditional business plan should include an Executive Summary, a general company description, buyer's description, competitive analysis, marketing strategy, overview of your products and services, overview of your industry and competitors, operations plan, management and organization plan, development plan, risk analysis, personal financial statements, financial history, financial plan and technology plan.

Lil' Bessie's Take: I wrote a short version of the business plan (a few pages) because I knew it was important to put a plan in place for my business.

Step 8: Talk to an attorney

Incorporating a business is a very important step for business owners to protect themselves. There are different options including sole proprietorship, LLC, LLP, S Corp and C Corp and they all have different advantages and disadvantages which is why it is very important to consult an attorney and possibly an accountant for advice. An attorney can help with everything including permits, state requirements, taxes, partnerships, shares, contracts and more.

Lil' Bessie's Take: After talking with an attorney my dad knew, we decided to incorporate as an LLC. It offered more protection than a sole proprietorship.

Step 9: Hire an accountant/CPA

It's important to hire an accountant not just for filing taxes but so that you are able to keep your books in order the entire year. Because taxes can get complicated, it is important to have someone trustworthy to handle your finances.

Lil Bessie's Take: I don't know much about what I can write off for taxes but my dad said that it's very important to have an accountant and keep track of everything we spend. We get to meet at least every quarter to make sure everything is in order.

Step 10: Open a separate business bank account & credit card (optional)

So that funds are separate, it is important to have a separate account away from your personal checking and savings account. Also, opening a business credit card account is a good way to keep things separate if you have a personal credit card.

Lil Bessie's Take: We went to the local bank and opened a business bank account so that I didn't mix what I made from my business and my personal account. My dad says you never want to commingle (or mix up) business and personal funds.

Step 11: Purchase insurance, licenses and permits

For entrepreneurs and business owners having things like workers compensation, insurance and local licenses and permits may have to be purchased. It is important to consult with a professional because requirements might vary from each state and county.

Lil Bessie's Take: We spoke with our attorney so we knew all the insurance we might need if we hired employees and the local permits we needed for doing business.

Step 12: Financing

For entrepreneurs and business owners financing is vital. One of the reasons that businesses fail is due to lack of capital. There are many options for business owners including bootstrapping, venture capital, angel investment, commercial banks, the Small Business Administration, crowdfunding and friends and family.

Lil Bessie's Take: I took a loan from my dad so that we could reserve a space to sell my products each week and paid him back as I sold more and more. I didn't have much startup costs so I was able to bootstrap my business.

Step 13: Sales, marketing & advertising

One of the overlooked parts of business is marketing, advertising and even sales. While it is very important to have a great product and service and provide exceptional customer service, it is also very important to drive traffic to your website or storefront and let people know that you are in business. There are many options including social media, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising, Display Advertising, direct mail, networking and e-mail marketing.

Lil Bessie's Take: I created a website, and also created social media accounts—Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to promote the business. I created a Google Plus page and other local directory listings. I made cold calls and went door-to-door selling. My dad said he did that when he was a kid selling really, really big books called encyclopedias to families.

Also, we might hire a professional SEO company to do SEO on our website so that it shows up on the first-page of search engines. I also printed and designed flyers to hand out to friends and family, and I may join a local networking group.

Step 14: Find a place

Deciding whether to lease an office is a very important decision for entrepreneurs to consider. There are various options such as a shared space that entrepreneurs can rent to lower overhead costs. Also, businesses must determine whether to have a storefront or consider running an online store with a home office. There are a lot of options that entrepreneurs and business owners have to choose from.

Lil Bessie's Take: I decided to find a space downtown every weekend to set up my table. It made it easier for me to get traffic when people were going to shop each weekend. Everything else I did at home in my home office.

Step 15: Creating product & services

One of the most important parts of owning a business is having a product or service to sell. It is important to have an inventory and a simple, streamlined way for potential customers to buy your product and services. While this can develop as you bring your product to market, it is very important to at least have something to sell.

Lil' Bessie's Take: I sold most of the scarves, blankets and socks that I created before I started my business. After that, on weekends I would take orders, get a deposit and then create the product so that I would have it the next week.

Step 16: Congratulations! Now the work begins!

Once you have completed these steps you are ready to start your business. Understand that you might have to revisit some of these steps while you are running your business or introduce new products and services after you get feedback from the market. The important part is that once you have these things in order, you are ready to start!

Lil Bessie's Take: Good luck!

Book Description

After Lil' Bessie finds out her mother and father can't pay for her to go to the County Fair, she has to come up with a way to make enough money so that she can still go.

Join Lil' Bessie as she figures out how to start a business so that she can enjoy the County Fair with all of her friends. *Lil' Bessie Starts a Business: How One Girl Started a Business & You Can Too!* is a short story for all ages that teaches aspiring entrepreneurs and business owners step-by-step actions to take when starting a business. The appendix features detailed advice to take when starting a business that new and seasoned entrepreneurs can appreciate. If you have a business or if you are thinking about starting one, this is a great resource for you!

Gresham W. Harkless Jr. is the founder of CEO Blog Nation and Blue 16 Media. These businesses help and support entrepreneurs and business owners to succeed with their business ventures. CEO Blog Nation is an online resource with helpful tips and information for businesses. Blue 16 Media is a digital marketing firm dedicated to increasing online visibility and generating profits for businesses.

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