

## Non-Profit Getting Started Checklist

Congratulations on your new company. Starting and growing a business takes preparation, knowledge and in most cases a little help.

To help you get started Laughlin has put together the most common items you will need to do to move forward with your new business.

If you have any questions or need assistance with getting your company started please feel free to call 1-800-648-0966, even if we didn't form your corporation, we are here to help.

### ✓ Read and Understand Your Articles of Incorporation

The Articles of Incorporation also known as the certificate of incorporation are the blue prints of the company, specifying the amount and type of stock, description of the business, and who the incorporator is.

### ✓ Create and Sign Your By-Laws

If you formed your own company then you probably don't have By-Laws. The By-Laws are the blue print for your company, letting you know what you are required to do and how distributions will be handled.

### ✓ Hold Your Initial Board of Directors Meeting

This is where you gather all the players of the company together to vote on and approve the officers and directors. Even if you are the only person in the company you will still need to do this.

Remember you are a corporation now so you must follow the rules. The government doesn't care if you are a single shareholder or have 50 employees, rules are rules.

### ✓ Put Together Your Mission Statement

You should be able to articulate the beliefs and vision of the non-profit so you can establish the long term goals of the company.

### ✓ File for your Employer Identification Number (E.I.N.)

(E.I.N) Filing with the IRS can be done over the phone or on-line [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). There will be a series of questions you will have to answer to get your number.



**Tip:** For more information visit our [Employer Identification \(EIN\)](#) page.

## ✓ Open A Business Bank Account

You will need a resolution signed by the officers authorizing a bank account. You will need to have your [EIN](#) prior to opening a bank account. Be sure to keep your personal assets and business assets separate. You do not want to commingle your funds.

## ✓ File For Federal Tax Exemption

If you wish to be able to accept tax deductible donations then you will need to apply for 501 (c ) (3) status with the IRS by completing for 1023. It is usually recommended that you utilize the services of an experienced attorney to complete this process.

## ✓ Obtain City/State/County Business Licenses

Check to see what types of licenses you are required to have based on your business type. This can be a daunting task, and unfortunately if there is a missed step, it can cost you in penalties and fees.



**Tip:** You can go to [business licenses](#) and have them put together a complete packet of all the licenses and forms you will need to run your business. They deliver it to your doorstep, you sign the papers and return them with the filing fees, it's that simple.

## ✓ Obtain Sales Tax and or State Tax Authorization

If you plan to sell a tangible product within the state you are registered in then you will likely have to collect sales tax. If you are selling on-line to other states you will have to collect sales tax for each of those states.

## ✓ Choosing A Tax Year

What will be your tax year? The tax year is the annual accounting period for keeping records and reporting income and expenses.

**Calendar Year** - 12 consecutive months beginning January 1 and ending December 31, 2013.

**Fiscal Year** - 12 consecutive months ending on the last day of any month except December.

## ✓ Set Up a Recordkeeping and Accounting System

Yuck...I know this doesn't sound exciting but it is critical to the protection your corporation provides. If you are not sure how to start this process we have a quick solution for you. Simply go to [Corporate Tax Network](#) and take advantage of a complimentary tax consultation. They will walk you through the next step; don't go it alone, one wrong step here can cost you dearly.

## ✓ Set Up a Payroll Service

When you pay yourself through a corporation you are considered an employee so it's recommended you utilize a 3<sup>rd</sup> party service for payroll. It's inexpensive but they understand all the rules and regulations. A major mistake corporate owner's make is failure to manage their payroll correctly. A corporation does not protect you from mismanagement of federal payroll taxes; you will be held personally liable.



**Tip:** Check out SurePayroll [www.surepayroll.com](http://www.surepayroll.com) or even your local bank can provide payroll services.

## ✓ Build a Business Credit Score

Starting from day one you should be building a business credit profile so you can remove the burden of using your personal credit. Business Credit scores are the product of a business credit rating system that functions similar to your personal credit score, except it's attached to your business identity and tax information (EIN) and not you personally. Building business credit doesn't happen overnight but the quicker you get started the faster it pays off.



**Tip:** For more information visit our [Business Credit](#) page.

## ✓ Put Together a Business Plan

A [business plan](#) is usually needed if you are planning to obtain funding from the financial institution, but it isn't always necessary. It is a good exercise in developing a plan for your business. It helps you identify problem areas before they might occur and opportunities for revenue channels you might have overlooked. So, even if you aren't going to be using a business plan to try and get funding you might want to put together a plan so you stay on track during that crucial first year.



**Tip:** For more information visit our [Business Plan](#) page.

## ✓ Have a Website

All businesses should have a website. The level and scope of your site depends on the type of business you are in. If you are going to sell on-line then you need a fully functioning website. If you are simply using your site to let people know where to find you then you need a simple site that lets people know who you are, validates your existence and shows them how to contact you. The first step is to establish the “why” of your website and stick with that so you don’t get over sold on unnecessary bells and whistles.



**Tip:** There are lots of on-line sites where you can build your own website. That is ok as long as you understand there is always a learning curve. It’s always better if you can hire someone to help you so you can spend your time making money for the business.

## ✓ Get Business Cards

Your business cards say who you are, your title and how to get in contact with you. It’s important to have your business cards printed on nice paper. When you hand somebody a business card you are saying something about yourself. Don’t use cheap paper. If you can’t afford to have your cards branded just keep them clean and neat. Business cards are still the primary way people exchange information.



**Tip:** Vista Print [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com) offers free business cards if you are ok with them putting their logo on the back of your card.

## ✓ Business Phone

It’s never a good idea to make your cell phone your only business line. There are a variety of services that will answer your phone and bring a level of professionalism and legitimacy to your company. One missed call can cost you dearly.



**Tip:** If you are short on funds but want to utilize an answering service check out [Google Voice](#).

## ✓ Branding

If you need a logo or design work done you can use on-line services that will put together a branding package affordably.



**Tip:** Check out [www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com) or [www.99designs.com](http://www.99designs.com)

## ✓ Document In Order To Defend

Now that you have taken the step to run your business through a corporation you are required by law to maintain accurate and timely corporate records. That includes minutes, resolutions, annual filings, meetings and official documents. For a longer list of requirements go to our [Corporate Compliance](#) page.

## ✓ Establish a Legitimate Office Location

If you will be operating out of your house make sure you keep diligent records. It's very easy to commingle assets when you are using your home as an office. In the best case scenario it would be perfect if you could section off your house and *only* use a certain area for work. There are also places that you can rent temporary office space.

## ✓ Wear The Right Hat

Now that you are a corporation you need to act like a corporation. When you are doing business, signing contracts or working on partnerships you are acting on behalf of the company so be sure you sign your name and title, Fred Stable, CEO of ABC Inc.

\*This is a short list to get your corporation started. Each state, city, and county has different requirements for starting or maintaining a business so be sure to check with your local government.