

Taking Your Side Hustle to the Next Level: An Essential Checklist



You've built your side-hustle — now it's time to grow it!

Whether it generates steady income, transforms your passion into profit, or quietly evolves into your next big thing, the next chapter is yours to own.

Our essential checklist unlocks the critical moves to scale with confidence, amplify your earnings, and build lasting momentum.

How to use this checklist:

This list is a guide to help you understand some of the most common steps involved in turning a side hustle into an official business. Take it at your own pace and check off the items that work for you. Not all of it needs to be checked off right away.



Define your brand

- Choose a strong name**
Your name should be easy to remember, reflect what you offer and be consistent across your website, invoices and social profiles.
- Choose a logo or visual style**
Keep things recognizable – a consistent colour palette or typography can go a long way.
- Clarify your brand voice**
Obtain multiple original copies of the proof-of-death certificate, as most organizations that you will deal with as executor require original documentation



Cover the legal and registration basics

- Choose your business structure**
Determine whether your business best operates as a sole proprietorship, partnership or corporation.
 - **Sole proprietorship:** A business owned and run by one person, where you and the business are legally the same. The owner is personally liable for all business debts and pays personal income tax on profits.
 - **Partnership:** A business owned by two or more people who share responsibilities, profits and typically liabilities.
 - **Corporation:** A business that is legally separate from its owner(s), which can help protect personal property by limiting liability to the business's assets. Corporations are generally more complex to set up and maintain but generally come with tax benefits.
- Register your business**
In some provinces, you may need to choose – and sometimes register – your business name first. You can register with your provincial authority or through an online platform like Ownr.
- Get a business number (BN) from the CRA**
A BN identifies your business for tax and government programs and is needed to open a business account. In some provinces, you automatically get a BN when you register or incorporate.
- Register for a GST/HST account**
You must register for a GST/HST account if you earn more than \$30,000 in any given year.



Build a strong financial foundation

- Open a business bank account**
Keep business income and expenses separate from personal finances to stay organized, simplify recordkeeping and make tax season easy. The RBC Digital Choice Business Account Package, for example, is a low-cost, high-value account ideal for new and growing businesses.
- Get a business credit card**
Using a dedicated card for business expenses can help you easily track spending and build a credit history in the name of your business.
- Set up payment processing**
Whether you plan to accept credit cards, debit cards, online payments or bank transfers, having the payment options your customers want makes getting paid easier.
- Choose invoicing and accounting software**
Use tools that help you send professional invoices, track payments and keep records in one place. They make it easier to see what's been paid, what's outstanding and what expenses are still coming up.



Establish a professional presence

- Set up a professional email address**
Use an email tied to your business name to look polished and credible.
- Create a website**
It doesn't have to be complicated! Explain what you do, who you help and how to get in touch.
- Upgrade your social media presence**
If you already have social media, elevate your presence with dedicated business pages, polished photos and business contact details. If you're new to it, start with one or two platforms that make sense for your audience and keep them up to date.
- Create or claim business profiles**
Make sure your business appears where customers might search for you online. Google My Business is a free tool and a great place to start.



Get tax-ready

- Track all business income**
Make sure every payment you receive is recorded clearly and accurately.
- Keep receipts for business purchases**
Save copies of your receipts for business-related supplies and services, including subscriptions, software and other recurring tools you use to run your business.
- Separate business and personal transactions**
Use your business bank account and credit card for business activity to easily keep track of your business expenses.
- Organize invoices and payment records**
Store invoices and proof of payment so everything is easy to find when you need it.



Create simple client processes

- Standardize how clients pay and get billed**
Use the same invoice format and payment details every time so clients know what to expect. Offer a few payment options that work for your business (i.e., credit card, bank transfer, cheque) so it's easy for clients to pay and easier for you to track.
- Be clear about how clients work with you**
Make it easy for clients to contact you and understand the process of working together.
- Keep contracts and agreements organized**
Store key documents in one place so they're easy to access when needed.



Handle operations and compliance

- Check for required licenses or permits**
Confirm what approvals apply to your industry, location and employees, if applicable.
- Confirm any certifications needed**
Make sure credentials are current and visible if required.
- Set up applicable insurance**
Store key documents in one place so they're easy to access when needed.

