7 things to do before starting a business.

So… you're starting a business? Congratulations! Let's have a frank conversation.

Like all great things, a successful business starts with a simple idea. Whether it's something you've wanted to do for years or something you're just dreaming up, you've identified a product you want to offer, a service you want to provide or a community you want to work with. And now… it's time to take the first step.

When you're ready to start a business, here's what you should do:

1. **Build a business plan.** Whether you're relying on outside financing or covering startup costs yourself, a business plan is a necessity. Consider every moment you spend working on it to be an investment — one that will be wildly worth it once you're up and running.
2. **Define your product/service in detail.** A detailed explanation helps potential backers see your vision, and later, it will be your launching point for a one-minute sales pitch.
3. **Meet your market, then decide how to differentiate.** Before launching any new endeavor, be sure you understand how your product/service fits into the existing market. Do some research to determine who your competitors are, then decide how to differentiate.
4. **Finalize your financial plan.** The most common reason new businesses go under is their failure to create a precise and realistic financial plan. To combat that, don't estimate any of the costs involved in running your business. Do the research necessary for accurate figures. And when you begin the process of forecasting sales, don't base your projections on optimistic numbers. Otherwise, your financial plan won't be able to withstand even the smallest setback, drop in sales or unexpected expense.
5. **Survey your building's surroundings.** The physical aspects of your building are as important as

the work you'll be doing there. Is it stable? Does it need a new roof or new wiring? Is it up to code? Do you need parking, and what type of lot will you need? Is there any risk posed by the neighborhood you're in? These factors could make all the difference when determining where it's best to do business.

6. **Hire top talent.** How can you ensure you get a staff with the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to get the job done? Analyze your needs and spell out the specific responsibilities of each person. Organize these job responsibilities into job descriptions, then consider what characteristics, education and experience levels are essential for success.
7. **Invest in insurance.** Protecting your assets, your employees, your customers and yourself with the right types of insurance is a frequently overlooked facet of business planning. But, neglecting this step means you're one disaster away from losing everything.

Want even more information about commercial insurance? Find an agent near you.