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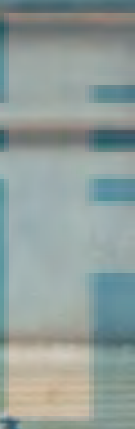
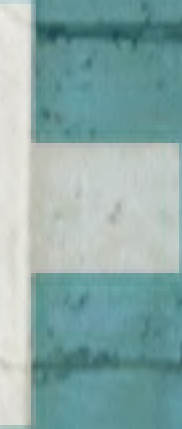
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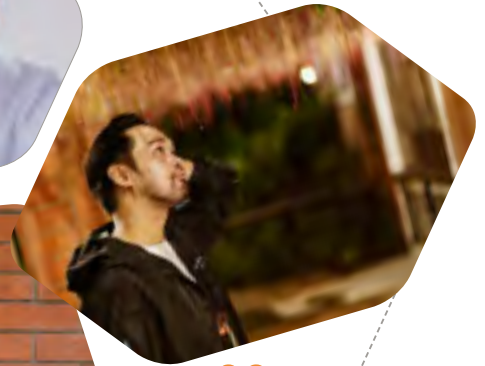
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“ I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.”  
—THOMAS EDISON

“ All our *dreams* can *come true*, if we have the *courage* to pursue them.”  
— WALT DISNEY

“ An *entrepreneur* is a man who knows he can fail, but he does not *accept* to fail before he actually fails, and when he fails he *learns* from his errors and moves on.”  
— BANGAMBIKI HABYARIMANA,  
PEARLS OF ETERNITY

Be the *change* you wish to see in the *world*.”  
— MAHATMA GANDHI

“ You have to *work* on the business first before it *works* for you.”  
— IDOWU KOYENIKAN, WEALTH FOR ALL:  
LIVING A LIFE OF SUCCESS AT THE  
EDGE OF YOUR ABILITY

“ The *Team!*  
The *Team!*  
The *Team!* ”  
— BO SCHEMBECHLER

“ Tough times never last, but *tough* people do.”  
— ROBERT H. SCHULLER

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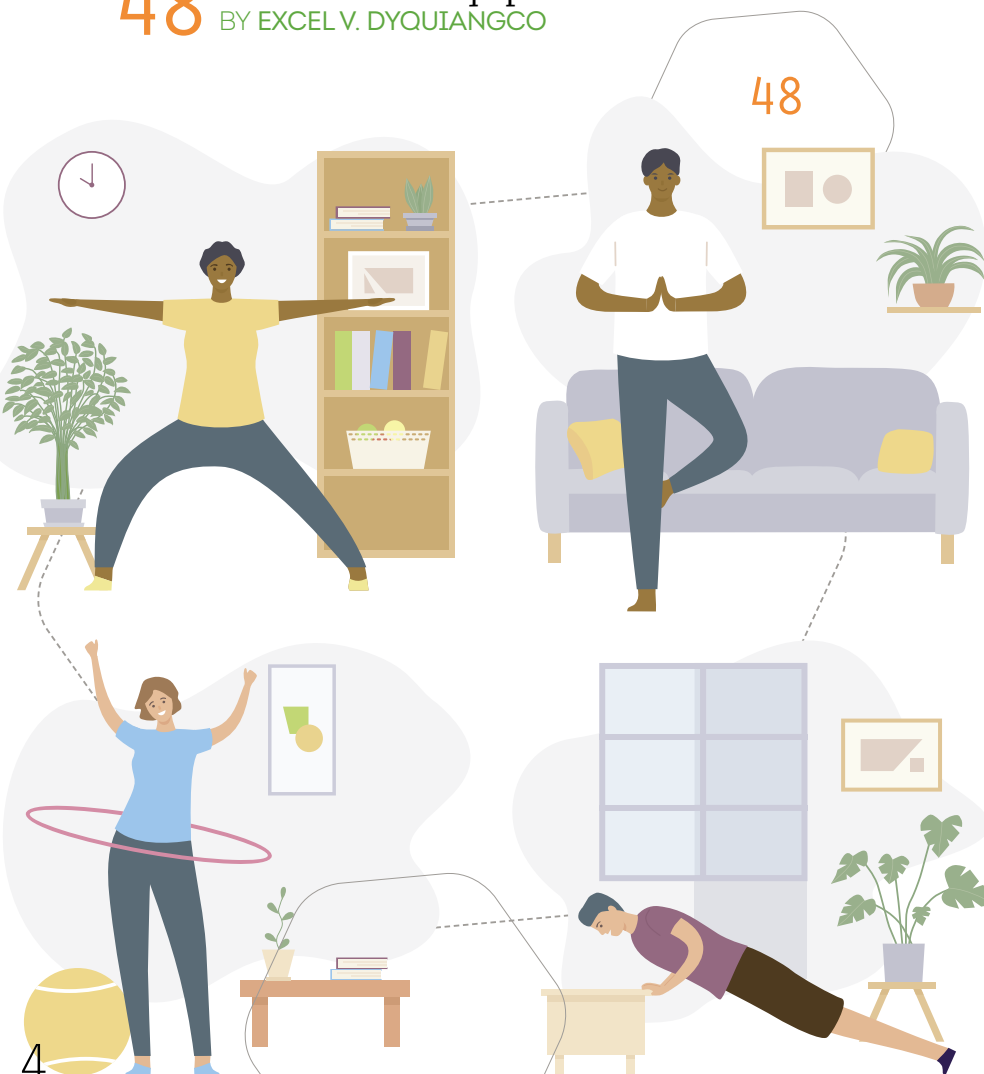
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# How to Fail in Business... Without Really Trying

It is easy to start a business. And it is easy to fail in business. In fact, you don't really need to do much to mess it up. I've had two failed businesses and a few false starts in my 20s and 30s. So, I know from experience. Thankfully, I've learned enough to finally build and run a business that's been providing for my family for more than a decade.

Now, if I were to list down the mistakes I've made and those I've seen fail, these would be some of the common mistakes wannabe entrepreneurs make that end up in failure:

**Mistake #1: Not understanding your market.** Probably the most common error for those starting a business is making a business out of a passion or a skill. Not that this approach is wrong; it's just not complete. It's like the secret of a successful career: merge what you love, what you're good at, and what will get you paid well.

There must be enough market demand for what you want to offer, at a price that will sustain your business. The biggest startup success stories are those that try to solve the biggest problems. So, ask yourself what pain points does your business address? What problems are you trying to solve? What does the market want, or need? If you can't answer that, it's the wrong business.

**Mistake #2: Not having a niche.** Another usual mistake is trying to do everything for everyone. Amazon may be the "everything store" and SM may "got it all for you" but they started off with just books and shoes, respectively.

In this highly competitive, global world, having a niche market or a niche product is critical to your success. It doesn't mean you're stuck to it forever. It just means you build your foundation on one thing and do it well. Later, you can expand to more market segments and offer more products.

**Mistake #3: Not building for scale.** Not every business needs to be scalable. If you're content being a lifestyle entrepreneur, i.e., earning enough to finance your lifestyle, then that's perfectly fine. But businesses that go big are those that can scale.

Whether it's an online business that has no borders, a product that can be licensed, or a retail chain that can be franchised, being able to scale will increase your chances of success.

**Mistake #4: Not having a USP.** These days, it's hard to have a truly original idea. Whatever business you are in, it's most likely you already have competitors. The only way to survive tough competition is to stand out. And that requires you having a clear unique selling proposition (USP).

What makes your business different? Do you offer higher quality? Faster service? Better customer service? Lower prices? Or do you specialize in a narrow market segment, like the real estate industry? Often, the market has only enough room for two to three major players, with the rest barely struggling to survive. You can't just offer a me-too product.

**Mistake #5: Not enough funding.** Money is not everything in business. A lot of successful businesses started with the smallest of capital. But at a certain point, you need a healthy cashflow or sufficient working capital to survive the inevitable downturns of a business cycle or, in the case of the pandemic, a black swan.

The best businesses are those that get cash from customers upfront and pay suppliers after 30 or 60 days. If your business is the reverse, you'd be in trouble. So, you better have enough working capital to make it. It's the same for capital-intensive businesses that require you to invest a lot just to get started and for high-growth businesses that need to scale fast before they can turn a profit.

**Mistake #6: Not managing costs.** Now, there's also the problem of having too much cash. You can be complacent and spend too much on a fancy office, hire talent from top-tier schools, and burn money like there's no tomorrow. It's always better to start slow and manage expenses like a hawk.

Of course, you should not go the opposite extreme and not spend more to finance your expansion. But spend your money on what will help your business grow, e.g., experienced professionals who can manage key areas of your business such as sales and operations, or a professional website that gives off the right impression.

**Mistake #7: Not agile.** Being agile doesn't mean chasing after the next hot fad. That's shiny object syndrome. Yes, focus on what you do best. However, you should be flexible and quick to pivot if necessary. This is one of the biggest lessons brought about by the pandemic.

While not every business could transition online, such as service-based, face-to-face businesses, those that could and did, survived. In fact, many discovered another income stream because of this.

**Mistake #8: Not using digital.** The writing has long been on the wall. Your business must be a digital business, one way or another. Whether it's digitizing your operations or using digital marketing, your business must go digital.

The Internet, and technology in general, has upended so many industries already. And yours could be the next. If you don't make the switch now, your business will go the way of the dinosaurs.

As you can see, the fastest way to fail in business is to do nothing. But if you want to make it beyond your first year and reach a decade and more, you'd do well to avoid these mistakes and do the exact opposite.<sup>MS</sup>

*Heinz Bulos*

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# How To Get a Revolving Credit Line for Your Business

By EDMUND LAO, RFP®

A revolving line of credit is a type of financing wherein a lender extends a specific amount of credit to a business for an open-ended amount of time. This is also used to augment operating and working capital requirements. A small business line of credit is subject to credit review and renewal, and is revolving, like a credit card. Interest begins to accumulate once funds is drawn, and the amount paid (except for interest) is again available to be borrowed as one pays down the balance.

One company allows you to draw down anytime within a six-month period, with no repeat application or approval required. So as not to miss a business opportunity or lose out because of delayed collections, this company's revolving credit line gives flexible, ongoing access to funds to help cover unexpected cash flow gaps and help grow a business. This is how it works:

- Use and re-use credit line as often as needed
- Renew every six months
- Get unlimited free drawdowns with subscription
- Access credit between P250,000 and P5,000,000
- Only pay interest on the funds used
- Get support from a dedicated account manager

## How to get a Revolving Credit Line

As with other types of loans, for a business to get a revolving credit line, your business should meet the following criteria:

- 1 Proof of sales transaction like purchase orders or issued sales invoices
- 2 Regular transactions from partnerships, cooperatives, corporations, or government agencies in the Philippines
- 3 Located in the Philippines
- 4 A corporation, partnership, or sole proprietorship
- 5 Operational for more than one year unless the annual revenue is more than P10 million.

Also, the lender will need to verify some personal information, including at least two valid government-issued IDs. Other documents required for submission include BIR Certificate of Registration, DTI (for sole proprietorship) or SEC Certificate of Registration (for corporations and partnership), proof of billing of the business, General Information Sheet (for corporations), Articles of Partnership (for partnerships), and BIR Form 2303 (for sole proprietors).

Once the information is verified and the eligibility is confirmed, you should prepare to submit either your purchase orders or unpaid invoices. And you can proceed with your revolving credit line application. The interest ranges from 1.74% to 3.49% per month, depending on the loan amount, loan term, and payment frequency.

There are also flexible convenience fee options. You can choose between a processing fee (1.99% of the principal amount of every drawdown) or a subscription fee for unlimited free drawdowns.

“A small business line of credit is subject to credit review and renewal, and is revolving, like a credit card.”

## Alternatives to a Revolving Credit Line.

Aside from a revolving credit line from a bank, there are other sources of funds that you can use for your working capital.

- 1 Borrow money from family and friends. Taking out a loan from family and friends is



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normal for Filipinos. In fact, majority of Filipinos who try to establish their own business borrow from relatives and other individuals close to them. Why do they do that? Lenders like banks often will not extend business loans because of the risks involved, and as such, they tend to ask entrepreneurs to complete lengthy documentary procedures and to meet stringent collateral requirements. Also, there is less headache involved in borrowing from generous relatives and friends. Your credit history will not matter, and often, collateral won't be required. And there is even the possible benefit of looser payment terms and lower interest rates.

**② Use invoice financing.** Another easy way for business entrepreneurs to obtain money quickly is to utilize invoice financing. The basic principle involves businesses borrowing money against their outstanding invoices, essentially the money that customers have yet to pay them. With invoice financing, a business can sell their invoices to a third party, which can then extend a loan representing a portion or the total amount of these invoices.

**③ Finance your purchase orders.** Aside from invoice financing, a similar tool is purchase order financing. This is an official document given by a customer to a business detailing the services they intend to buy. It also signifies the commitment to pay the business when the service or product is delivered in the future. This option becomes useful when a business needs to avoid depleting their

cash reserves due to their obligation to pay their external suppliers. Purchase order financing is helpful when a business wants to avoid declining purchase orders due to lack of capital. Unlike invoice financing, one gets the financing even before the invoices are generated. Like invoice financing, purchase order financing is typically offered by banks and lending institutions.

**④ Get equity funding.** Another way to raise revolving funds is via equity financing. This is different from borrowing in that the entrepreneur agrees to sell shares of the company in exchange for the money they need. This means the financier will essentially become a co-owner of the business. It's beneficial because you can get a significant amount of money that can be used immediately. And unlike many types of loans, you do not need to make regular payments. There are different ways to obtain equity financing. You can sell a stake in your company to family and friends or look for venture capitalists to support your business. The only disadvantage to equity financing is losing part of the control over your business. With every major decision, you would have to consult with, and even get approval from, your new business partners.

However you want to finance your working capital or fund your expansion plans, a revolving credit line and other alternatives will give you the funds you need to grow your business.<sup>MS</sup>





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

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

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# Business Franchises Under P500,000

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

**F**ranchising a business does not come cheap. Some can cost you millions and millions of pesos. But there are much more affordable options. They're not cheaper, but they're a lot cheaper than international fast-food franchises for example.

If you are thinking of going this route, here are some franchise businesses under P500,000:

## Food Cart Franchise

**Cost: P30,000 - P400,000**

Because they are inexpensive, food kiosks are perfect for those who are just starting out in business. In addition, Filipinos prefer to dine at food kiosks since the food is affordable and quick but still tasty. Just make sure you choose a strategic location with a lot of foot traffic, such as malls or railway stations.

Examples:

- ❶ Potato Corner  
Franchise Package: Starts at P150,000
- ❷ Sam's Everything on Sticks  
Franchise Package: P300,000
- ❸ Hong Kong Style Fried Noodles  
Franchise Package: P39,000
- ❹ Rice ATBP  
Franchise Package: Starts at P119,000

## Coffee & Cold Beverage Stand Franchise

**Cost: P100,000**

Not everyone drinks coffee, but a lot of Filipinos want their caffeine fix. One of the coffee stand franchises you may look into is Star Frappe, which has a P99,000 franchise package for a kiosk. Other options are franchises that sell fruit smoothies and juices, bubble tea, and other cold beverages.

Examples:

- ❶ Zagu  
Franchise Fee: P370,000–P450,000
- ❷ Fruitas  
Franchise Fee: Starts at P300,000
- ❸ Bubbletealicious  
Franchise Package: P350,000

## Water Refilling Station Franchise

**Cost: P100,000**

Our tap water is not exactly drinkable, hence the demand for filtered water. The great thing about a water refilling station is the refilling part. People will keep buying out of necessity, so you get regular customers at regular intervals.

Examples:

- ❶ Aquabest  
Franchise Fee: P100,000 (projected total investment: P500,000)
- ❷ Crystal Clear Water  
Franchise Fee: P100,000 (projected total investment: P600,000—P800,000)
- ❸ Bluewaters Water Station  
Franchise Fee: Starts at P80,000 (including complete alkaline water system)

## Fast Food Restaurant Franchise

**Cost: P300,000**

Filipinos love fast-food, so there is no doubt they offer a great opportunity. Whether it's a store, kiosk, or take-out counter, you have different options to choose from. Most fast-food franchises require huge capital requirements, but there are some like Angel's Pizza that offers a franchise fee for as little as P300,000.

Examples:

- ❶ Bento Box  
Franchise Package: Starts at P350,000
- ❷ Baliwag Lechon Manok  
Franchise Fee: Starts at P250,000
- ❸ Mr. Liempo  
Franchise Fee: P350,000

## Salon Franchise

**Cost: P130,000–P300,000**

Another kind of recurring business are barber shops, hair salons, and nail salons. Although the pandemic has badly hit this business, it will surely make a comeback once things go back to normal. People will want to get a proper haircut, a new hairstyle, or their nails done. If you want to ride on this eventual wave, get a salon franchise:



Examples:

① Orange Blush Salon

Franchise Package: Starts at P400,000

② The NailXperts Spa

Franchise Package: Starts at P130,000

### Vending & Service Machines Franchise

**Cost: P15,000–P300,000**

Maybe you don't want the headache of supervising employees. Or you prefer a business that you set and forget. You can own a franchise with few or even no staff. Except for maintenance and marketing, vending machines are all self-service.

Examples:

① TouchPay

Total Investment: P350,000 (no franchise fee)

② Positive Living: Vending Massage Chair

Franchise Package: P500,000 (they also have a rent-to-own program)

③ PhilVending: Vending Machines

Franchise Package: Starts at P15,000

### Education Franchise

**Cost: P50,000–P160,000**

Parents will pay for supplementary education to give their children an advantage or help them on subjects they're struggling with. If you are a parent or an entrepreneur who wants to make a difference in education, then this is the ideal business to get into.

Examples:

① Kumon

Franchise Fee: P60,480 (Total investment may at least reach P600,000)

② Seriously Addictive Math (SAM)

Franchise Fee: P168,000 (Minimum total investment cost is

P250,000 if you have an existing business)

③ Kreativ Robotics

Franchise Fee: P50,000 (Total investment cost is P350,000)

### Pharmacy Franchise

**Cost: P200,000–P400,000**

Medicines and supplements will always be in demand, especially during this time of pandemic. With people becoming more aware of generic medications as a cheaper alternative to branded ones, opening a generic drugstore as a franchise company is a no-brainer.

Examples:

① Generika Drugstore

Franchise Package: Starts at P350,000

② The Generics Pharmacy

Franchise Fee: P210,000

③ Farmacia Ni Dok

Franchise Package: Starts at P350,000

### Car Wash Franchise

**Cost: P250,000**

With more automobiles on the road, the need for car wash services is unlikely to decrease anytime soon. If you like automobiles, a car wash business could be right for you.

Example:

① Nice Day Car Wash

Franchise Fee: P250,000

As you can see, you don't need millions of pesos to become a franchisee. And your options are much wider than small food carts. Less than P500,000 is still a large sum, but it's certainly more within reach. And with a lower investment to begin with, the higher the potential return on investment and the faster the payback period. That is, if you choose the right location, target the right market, and run the business the right way.<sup>MS</sup>



# Sole Proprietorship Corporation

By JOSEFINO GOMEZ, RFP®

**A**re you starting a business? Before you proceed, it is wise to consider the different forms of ownership structure your business will undertake. Which is a better structure for a business—a single proprietorship or corporation? We will discuss each of them below:

## Ownership and Control

A single proprietorship is owned by one natural person while a corporation is owned by several persons, which can be natural or juridical. Natural person are human beings. Juridical person are certain associations of natural persons such as companies or corporations. The owner of a single proprietorship is called a proprietor while the owners of a corporation are called shareholders or stockholders.

The proprietor and his business are considered one and the same. Thus, the liabilities of the single proprietorship can extend to the private property of the proprietor. A corporation has its own separate entity and is different from its stockholders. The liability of the corporation extends only up to its assets.

“A single proprietorship is owned by one natural person while a corporation is owned by several persons, which can be natural or juridical.”

For sole proprietors, since you own the business, you have control over all the decisions of the company, and you get to keep all the profits. For corporations, there are more heads who decide, and stockholders share the profits in the corporation.

## Capital

Corporations need a bigger starting capital as the minimum paid-up capital required to incorporate a company in the Philippines is P5,000. This means the minimum authorized and subscribed capital required is P20,000 since the minimum paid-up required by law must be at least 25%.

In a sole proprietorship, because you and the business are the same, you cannot sell partial ownership to raise additional capital. Raising extra funds may be done by borrowing which would entail interest expense and increase financial risk. A corporation on the other hand can attract more capital easier from new investors since it has more regulations it needs to follow and has stated stockholders' rights found in the by-laws. The easy transferability of its shares also allows for smoother exits for investors. It was made for pooling of financial resources and talents.

## Taxes

A corporation is taxed with a fixed tax rate while the income tax of a sole proprietorship is based on a graduated tax rate. This means the lower income it produces, the lower the rate, and vice versa.

You can plan your tax wisely if you will be able to estimate the projected income of your business. If you expect that your income will be slow at the start, then you might choose single proprietorship as your initial set up. But if you expect a huge income at the start due to the nature of the business and a huge capital outlay, then you might start off immediately with a corporation. You can also have more flexibility over your taxes in a corporation as you may choose to pay your income through some form of salary or compensation or through the payment of dividends. Each will have different tax rates. Do take note however that new tax laws and tax regulations do change over time.





## Requirements

Filing fees, documentation, and public disclosures are lesser for a sole proprietorship. A single proprietorship is registered with the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) and is issued a Certificate of Registration while corporations are registered with the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) and is issued a Certificate of Incorporation.

**Lifespan.** The death of a proprietor will extinguish the business while the death of a stockholder will not terminate the corporation. Thus, the life of a single proprietorship is limited to the life of the owner. The life of a corporation can be perpetual and depends on the decision of the stockholders. Shares of ownership may be assigned or transferred to heirs or purchasers. Thus, a corporation has a long-term structure that can outlive its founders.

## One Person Corporation

If you still cannot decide between them, worry not. There is now a third form that has some qualities of each. This is

the One Person Corporation (OPC) created under the Revised Corporate Code, otherwise known as Republic Act No. 11232. It is a corporation with a single stockholder.

One of its features is the perpetual corporate life where the single shareholder of the OPC can designate a nominee who shall replace the founder in any event of his incapacity or death. There is also the absence of the need to file corporate by-laws and the absence of minimum capital required unless special laws require it. Since it is a corporation, it has also limited liability and can raise funds easily. You can sell a portion of your ownership in the company. It also entails lesser cost to convert an OPC to a regular corporation. Regular corporations can also be converted to an OPC.

As you can see, choosing the appropriate legal structure for your company will depend on the function and requirements you have for your business. Keep in mind that what you choose now may also change in the future depending on the changes of your situation. Knowing the pros and cons of each structure should definitely help you decide better.<sup>MS</sup>



# Government Loans for MSMEs

BY GENESIS KELLY S. LONTOC, RFP®

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc on the economy. Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have been hit hard. These businesses have either closed, slowed down, or suspended. They have laid off employees, shuttered stores, and given up on their lease. And they have suffered from financial losses, additional debt, and unpaid bills. With tight cash flows, some MSMEs have resorted to government loans that offer more reasonable terms given these unprecedented times.

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 6977 defines an MSME as any business or enterprise engaged in industry, agribusiness, or services with a business value of no more than P1 million. It can be in the form of single proprietorship, cooperative, partnership, or corporation.

MSMEs are categorized by asset values. A micro business has a value that is not more than P3 million. A small business has a value that is more than P3 million to P15 million. A medium-sized enterprise has assets worth over P15 million to P100 million. Anything above that is already considered a large corporation.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, in its 2019 list of establishments, there are 1,000,506 business enterprises operating in the country. MSMEs comprise the bulk with a count of 995,745, which is equivalent to a 99.5% share. That makes them an integral part of the economy. That's why the government is offering loans to keep them afloat.

## Loan Requirements

There are certain requirements for an MSME to get a government loan.

It must be duly registered with the appropriate agencies. For a micro business, it must be registered with the office of the city or municipal treasurer. It must be 100%-owned and capitalized by Filipino citizens, whether it be a single proprietorship or partnership. If the MSME is a juridical entity, at least 60% of its capital or outstanding stocks must be owned by Filipino citizens.

The MSME must be involved in a business activity that is within the major sectors of the economy like industry, trade, and services. This can include the practice of profession, operation of tourism-related establishments, and even agribusiness. The MSME must not be a branch, subsidiary, or division of a large business. This requirement does not preclude an MSME from accepting subcontracts and entering into franchise partnership with large businesses or from joining in cooperative activities with other MSMEs.

## SBCorp Loan

The main source of government loans for MSMEs is the Small Business Corporation (SB Corp), a government financial institution. Its vision is to be the leader in building financing alternatives for Philippine MSMEs by the year 2025. Its mission is to champion this neglected business segment by providing access to capital needed to grow successfully. It has a social outcome objective which is to cause prosperity among MSME segments traditionally spurned by most banks.

The target MSME segments of the SB Corp are micro and small agri and aqua enterprises, micro-retailers, small island economies, MSMEs requiring rehabilitation arising from







disaster, Islamic MSMEs, indigenous people-owned enterprises, and first-time small businesses. For its available loans to MSMEs, the SB Corp has a national government-funded loan program and a corporate-funded program.

### P3 Loan Program

The national government-funded program of the SB Corp is called the Pondo sa Pagbabago at Pag-asenso (P3). This loan fund is for micro enterprises with an asset size not exceeding P3 million with not more than 2.5% per month all-in interest rate and service charges. Micro enterprises can borrow between P5,000 and P200,000, depending on the size of the business and the enterprise's ability to pay. The loan must be used for business expansion or purchase of supplies. Micro enterprises can avail of the loan through SB Corp offices, DTI offices, and partner microfinancing institutions located nationwide.

To avail of the P3 loan, micro entrepreneurs must submit a loan application form, barangay or municipal business permits, DTI business name registration for loans exceeding P50,000, a photocopy of a government-issued ID, and an ID picture. Processing of the loan is around 12 working days. The P3 loan program has options for different micro enterprise needs like the regular program, special facilities program, wholesale program, and the enterprise rehabilitation facility.

### Corporate-Fund Loan Program

The SB Corp also has a corporate-funded loan program. To qualify, the enterprise must be at least 60% Filipino-owned. It should have an asset size of not more than P100 million exclusive of value of land where the project is located. It must have at least two years of profitable business track record. It must have registration with the DTI or the SEC. It should not belong to the SEC's exclusionary list of industries. Options available are fixed asset financing, working capital financing, wholesale program, and venture capital program.

### Other Loan Programs

SB Corp has specialized loan programs, such as the Cares for Tourism Rehabilitation and Vitalization of Enterprises and Livelihood (CARES for TRAVEL) program that is specific to the tourism industry. Tourism-related MSMEs can get zero interest, no-collateral loans of between P10,000 and P5 million. They only need to pay a one-time service fee of up to 8% per year for a four-year loan term.

Another is the Helping the Economy Recover Thru OFW Enterprise Start-ups (HEROES) program. This enables displaced, repatriated, or returning OFWs to rebuild their lives back in the Philippines by helping them establish their startup businesses. They can borrow up to P100 thousand with no collateral and no interest.

Given the lingering pandemic, the economy continues to struggle. As MSMEs continue to fight for survival, the availability of government loans gives them an impetus to recover. If used effectively, these government loans can help them to bounce back and get back on track.<sup>MS</sup>



# Changing The Face of Real Estate



By RYAN LLAMOSO as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

I have always looked up to people like Rich Barton, Jack Dorsey, and Elon Musk when I was in my teenage years. I listened to their interviews and podcasts and followed them in the digital world. I have never really thought of becoming an entrepreneur. However, listening to these dudes have opened my eyes that there are infinite possibilities in the digital world that can make our reality a better place to live in.

I found myself actively involved in building things, forming teams, and participating in different community events during my college days rather than going to class. It happened that I like being involved in new and exciting things, whether it's a new non-profit organization, a new startup, or just a cool idea I think is worth trying.

At first, I thought it was cool to start a technology company in the Philippines since data shows that Filipinos spend a lot of time online. I started being an employee in a local startup company, which helped me unveil some pain points about the property rental market, having experienced looking for one when I was in college.

Thereafter, I started rentalbee.ph with my brother Patrick. After a year of running my own startup, I met the guys from MyTown—Mark Kooijman and Revianne Sesante—who operate the largest co-living space in Asia. I was surprised that they were doing the same rental platform like ours in the form of bedsandrooms.ph. We then thought of collaborating and creating one company to build more products and services in different real estate verticals and from there, we formed Alternative Housing Group.

Since we established Alternative Housing Group (AHG) during the pandemic, we experienced a lot of hurdles in registering the company, opening a bank account, and a lot more. Although the registration process in Singapore is done online, we still had a hard time with getting signatures from



other incorporators. We even had a hard time attracting talents that would fit the company culture we're trying to build due to the difficulty of conducting face-to-face meetings. Despite all these, the good thing is that we found out that almost all of our work nowadays can be efficiently done online from meetings to contract preparations and signings and other day-to-day business operations.

### Empowering Consumers Through Real Estate

A holding company based in Singapore, Alternative Housing Group has operating businesses here in the Philippines through its platforms such as rentalbee.ph, bedsandrooms.ph, and enta.ph, and also its accommodation brands such as Link Living, Cozy Folk, 825 Spaces, and Havitat, to name a few.

There are currently 54 people in the team, and as a Co-CEO, I am responsible for managing the Accommodation Division of the company. Unlike traditional real estate businesses, the company empowers property owners and consumers through its wide array of products and services that involve technology and data.

In this present time when the world is turning digital, AHG is empowering consumers with the necessary tools and data about anything that is related to real estate. The company has a pipeline of creating more programs for home buyers and launching an array of features that aid renters in finding different types of places to stay. These programs and features are the company's way of creating transparency in the market and providing useful information for buyers and renters alike.

AHG is now leading the development of Sinigang Valley—a rising tech hub in Poblacion, Makati. The anchor startups/VCs/accelerators in the valley are Kumu, Foxmont Capital Partners, Gentree Fund, Endeavor Philippines, Manila Angel Investor Network, and a few other startups and organizations. There are other projects that the company is involved in, such as partnerships with existing known real estate brokerage firms, and introduction of new technology in the proptech industry.

Recently, we raised a US\$1.3 million seed fund. With the seed fund, we plan to roll out the other real estate platforms in our pipeline, focused on different niche markets. Whether it is about building new online proptech platforms or smart cities and hubs in the Philippines, AHG will continue to be in the forefront of the development of real estate in the Philippines.



homegrown unicorn companies.<sup>MS</sup>

### A Love for the Country

The fulfillment of having a business, for me, is quite simple. When I go to the office and I see people, that's when I feel the most fulfillment. It is because, first, it means that we are still able to pay for their wages. Second, it means that the business is still alive, and I have to fight really hard to be able to continue surviving. And last, it is a fulfillment to become part of these people's achievements, witnessing how they work for their dreams and aspirations in life.

Given such fulfillment and aspirations, I have always wanted to contribute as much as I can to my home country, the Philippines, whether it's in the form of a startup, a non-profit organization, or just building new and exciting things for the new generation that will enable them to become more active and start thinking of our future. I am very fortunate to be living in this country, since during these days, I am seeing a lot of disruption in different and creative ways. I believe we are on the right path towards creating

MY MONEY  
LESSONS

## Real Estate Startup

**Ryan Llamoso**, Co-CEO of Alternative Housing Group shares how to survive and thrive in the cutthroat world of real estate.

**Write down your idea.** Start with a pen and paper and write down how you vividly imagine the idea in the real world happening in reality. "I still do it this time with new ideas in the company and even for my personal plans and aspirations," says Ryan.

**Commit to your idea.** When you are starting, don't think about how messy or bad your idea is, get it out of the table and validate it. Ryan says, "We started without a website, just a drawing sketch of our platform, we showed it and told people what it is and got their feedback."

**Test and retest your idea.** "We launched the product, tested it, and redeveloped it. Iterate it again and again and launch with better versions. Repeat the cycle, until you get the product-market fit," says Ryan.

# From Debt to Light

By LAURENCE ARCEÑO as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

When my father, who was a seafarer, had a minor accident on board a ship, my mother wanted him to stay behind and not go back on board. With his savings for the past decade, he put all those funds to continue the operations of the gasoline station owned by my grandparents.

At first, we thought it was a great business investment for our father but the P500,000 savings he used all ended up as just the initial capital. The business needed more, so my parents pooled more funds. Unfortunately, after years of managing the business, the gasoline station barely survived. It was financially bleeding, to say the least, to the point that our family's financial debts ballooned to more than P2 million.

When I asked them about it, they knew that it was not profitable, but they still continued anyway because they were still paying for our studies. They had accumulated loans from banks, borrowed from different people, with some charging a crazy 10% interest a month. Just thinking of it now made me feel so grateful to God for helping my parents get through it.

I so wanted to help our parents pay off our debts that I studied so hard. I became a consistent top five student of my class and got a 100% scholarship to Ateneo de Manila University where I finished a degree in Applied Mathematical Finance.

I took my masters while working several jobs as a part-time teaching assistant, tutor, part-time assistant coach of a grade school cheering team, and gigs over the weekend. All of these combined, I was earning a hefty P50 thousand to P60 thousand a month.

I even remember asking my mother, “Ma, magkano ba utang natin? Babayaran ko lahat yan!” (“Ma, how much is our debt? I’ll pay for everything!”) It was funny because later that day, she showed the list to me, and I was overwhelmed that it was so big.

I would send my parents money almost every week to help with the finances at home and to slowly pay our debts. But the time needed to be able to pay all the debts compared to the money I was earning back then wasn’t enough and the interest just kept getting bigger and bigger. So right there and then, I knew I had to do something more.

**From Active to Passive Income.** It was around October 2013 when I came across an opportunity to start an online business, distributing high-rated cellular nutrition products. I was a skeptic at first but after studying the products, I was sold. I immediately called my mother to let her know that I was going to start a business, but she was actually against it for two reasons—my hectic schedule and our bad experience with managing our gasoline station. But I knew what I saw, and I was really motivated because I also knew that having a business is a relatively faster way to earn.





My first few weeks doing the business was not how I thought it would be. It was really very challenging. I experienced rejections and had trouble with time management since I was also working multiple jobs. One of the advantages I got from having a tight schedule though was I learned how to do my business presentations faster since I had very limited time when approaching potential clients.

All my hard work paid off eventually. When my business was already growing and the money I was earning was also getting bigger—compared to my income in my other part-time jobs combined—I decided I had to let go of them. I realized that the more time I could put into my business, the more there is potential for it to grow even more, in contrast to my part-time jobs where the salary would rarely increase even though I put more time and effort into them. I also didn't continue my master's degree anymore because I already saw the potential I had in this business and the big opportunities it can give me.

After creating new leaders in my organization and helping them achieve the great things that I also achieved in the business, I started investing in other opportunities to create another source of passive income. I was able to build a six-unit commercial building in our province. It was mainly for my parents so that it could be their source of passive income as well as to supply for their daily needs. With multiple sources of passive income, not only can I help my parents, but I can also start preparing for my own future.

**Opening Doors of Possibilities.** When the lockdown happened last year, I became anxious, but our business was able to adjust right away. We became 100% online. All transactions, training, and presentations were just a click away, and surprisingly, our company was able to achieve its

highest weekly sales in 2020 since it opened here in the Philippines. Most of our partners, including myself, were able to grow our annual income significantly the past year too! The main factor for that was the shift that we can do this business entirely online. Second was that our company was in the health industry which was certainly the point of focus during the

## Business Success

**Laurence Arceño** experienced darks days in his life. But his hard work led him to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Now, he has found business success by taking a leap of faith and believing in himself. He shares tips and pointers on how you can start your own business, too.

**Just start.** Most people want to wait for the perfect time or for the perfect environment for it to be “safe” before going into business. The truth is there is no such thing as “safe.” There will always be some risks in any business. When you experience those risks, all of those challenges and all of those obstacles in your business, eventually you will learn. Sometimes what you learn might not give you the best possible outcome, but in time, with enough patience and determination, you will be able to see and improve how you can make it better and closer to your expectations.

**Listen.** Listen to the right people. They say it's always best to listen to the experts, not just the mere opinions of random unqualified people. Follow the footsteps of those who have already succeeded in your type of business and listen to their advice. They are the ones who will lead you to your success. Look for a mentor and a support system that can motivate you, inspire you, and guide you all the way.

**Have patience.** Give it at least a year before true results come in. There is no such thing as overnight success. As long as you honestly put in the work, be patient, your time will come.

pandemic. With those two combined, it became our greatest advantage.

Last year, just through Instagram, I was able to connect with a Millennial from Canada. I've never met her nor talked to her aside from her seeing my posts on Instagram stories. Now, she is one of the top leaders in my team.

I always say, “Whatever story you believe in will be the life you will live in.” Most of the time, the only person that is stopping us from living the best life that we can possibly have is ourselves. We must be aware of the self-limiting beliefs that influence our daily lives. Identifying each one of them and creating alternate beliefs will surely help us move forward and grow on a personal and professional level. When we can overcome that part of our lives, that will be the beginning of the moment we hit our goals and achieve our dreams. It will also be the moment that will inspire other people that their goals and dreams are also possible. That is what makes the journey even sweeter for me, knowing that what I do and what I have achieved can open doors of possibilities for other people!<sup>MS</sup>





By JESSIE GEROY as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

I grew up in an impoverished household, and in a large family of 10. At a very young age, I remember working already. I was an errand boy, I washed a few cars, and cleaned houses for our relatives so that I could have an allowance in school. Even if I was too slim and tiny, I fetched pails of water, searched for and sold scraps, and sold banana cues, halo-halo, and fish balls during summer breaks.

Unfortunately, my “income” back then wasn’t enough. There were times I had to go to school on an empty stomach, sometimes without any new uniform or shoes, and used recycled school notebooks. Because I was saving for my fare, I also had to walk to and from school every day. The distance was about two kilometers and I had to walk under the heat of the scorching sun.

Things looked up in high school, however. I was lucky enough to be a Pasigueños Scholar and was able to maintain my top five standing, even if at that time, I was not able to prioritize and focus on my studies. During summer, I was employed in the Pasig Summer Employment Program which exposed me to public administration and ignited my desire to get into public service. In college, I was a consistent President’s Lister even if I felt I was not giving my 100%. To shoulder my tuition, I worked as a housekeeper at my aunt’s house for three years.

Just before graduation, I was fortunate enough to be employed as a Customer Relations Officer in one of the pioneering call center companies. Being young and ambitious, I soon looked for other higher-paying companies after college, finally landing a job at 24/7 Customer Philippines. In just 10 months, I was promoted as team leader. For four years, I worked as a dedicated team leader until the company had to go through a lot of restructuring, acquisitions, and transfers. That was the sign that I needed to change careers and challenge myself again.



### Taking Advantage of Online and Offline

In 2013, the business industry was taking shape through online businesses. With so much joy and excitement, I resigned as TL and started my online business. Everything was done manually—writing posts, tagging, and messaging—until Facebook launched Facebook ads. This skyrocketed our sales. The thing that attracted me most with online businesses is that you have the time and the freedom, and whatever effort you give is multiplied with profit. Unlike with being employed, no matter how much time you dedicate or energy you put in, your salary will still remain the same.

After working online, I soon established Nook Salon, a one-stop go-to shop salon. Being a salon owner requires so much responsibility for my employees and customers. I need to strike a balance between being customer-centered and rallying behind my staff. Advertising and marketing drive any business. I learned that strategic marketing kept me afloat. Some of the challenges we encountered include unexpected price increases of supplies, back jobs, and customer dissatisfaction, but these were dealt with accordingly.

However, the biggest blow was when we were asked to close during the pandemic. To keep the morale of the staff, I gave them an advanced 13th month pay and continuous stimulus until we were able to operate again.

During the pandemic, since most of us are working from home, I also put up my own line of sleepwear. The idea is to be comfortable and yet presentable during Zoom meetings. Hibo is a luxury sleepwear made from 100% silk. Colors and style were patterned from popular US brands, so customers can really expect high quality and comfort while working and staying at home.

## Being Flexible

Through hard work and determination, **Jessie Geroy** was able to shift from one career to another, from one business to the next. Here, he shares tips and pointers for those who want to start their own businesses, especially during the pandemic.

**Look at the need.** To flourish in these hard times, you just need to understand the needs of the market today and in the coming years. Foresee what will click in the coming months or year and be one of the first to do it.

**Enrich and develop your people.** Focus on developing your people to be customer oriented. Train them that customers will always be first.

**Focus on marketing and advertising.** Marketing and advertising are the life and blood of any business. Invest in social media platforms, use influencers, and advertise online as well.

### Being Customer Centric

As an entrepreneur, I have learned to be giving and understanding as well as to listen to my peers, employees, and customers. After all, they are the core of the business.

For my future plans, once everything is back to normal, economy wise, I would like to put up two or three more Nook branches and perhaps venture into the food business. **MS**







# BUSINESS MAVERICK, CHAMPION ENTREPRENEUR

VCargo CEO Paulo Tibig's unconventional, unpredictable, and unwavering ride to the top

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

ne would expect a successful CEO of a thriving logistics company perched inside a swanky condominium or exclusive gated community in the central business district. But Paolo Tibig often does the unexpected.

Since the pandemic started, he has been living with his family in Balanga, Bataan. If there is one thing that the pandemic has taught him, it is to live life simply. So, he moved out of Metro Manila and decided to settle in his hometown where, he stated, all amenities that he needed were there in the first place.

“I really see the value of money now that I am in my 40s and enjoying the comforts of life,” he says. “I live the simplest of life and the basics of necessities. Even if I can now afford some degree of comfort in life, for me, integrity, character, and good values are the things that I live for—a principled life.”

Paolo talks about values, principles, and impact a lot. It’s not surprising as the entrepreneur-philosopher has forged a successful second career as an author, speaker, and live streamer. What’s surprising is that he almost became a priest.

## Humble Beginnings

“I was a sacristan the whole of elementary and high school, so I had a passion for that particular vocation,” he shares. Because he studied in his younger years at a school run by nuns, Paolo initially wanted to become a priest. “But in the end, although I didn’t become a priest or a preacher, I became an inspirational speaker. So, the concept is still the same—I get to mingle with people.”

Paolo had to take a more secular path out of necessity. He explains, “Being the eldest, it was my responsibility to provide for my family. I had to persevere for the good of my family, my

siblings, and I had no intention of wasting these opportunities given to me.

Life then was not easy. He did not grow up with a silver spoon in his mouth. One thing that defined his school years was that he was always working. “I had to sacrifice a lot of things,” Paulo says. “I worked on Sundays just to earn tips for my baon in school. The diligence about working early molded me to what I wanted to be. Looking back, when you are pushed against the wall, you have to help your family. It’s not enough that your parents work. You have to help them too.”

In high school, Paulo was offered a scholarship to become a journalist but turned it down. Just two weeks after graduating from high school, he took a part-time job as a messenger and delivery personnel for his godfather at his customs brokerage firm near NAIA. In the afternoon, he went to school.

Because he was already working near the airport, he took up college at a flying school to be a pilot. To save up on apartment costs, Paulo slept inside his godfather’s office—on the table, a carton, or a dilapidated folding bed. Sometimes he called his mom on a PLDT phone booth and asked for a bowl of his favorite adobo, which served as his meal for a week.

This allowed him to save money because he wasn’t paying for rent anymore. “There were also times when my boss invited us to join him on a drinking spree,” he says. “I went not because of the drinks but because of the free dinner.”

His school years also became the start of his entrepreneurial experiments. With the little money that he had saved, Paolo ventured into buy-and-sell businesses. “I bought t-shirts in Divisoria and sold them to my classmates and friends,” he shares. “There were also times when our office ordered one batch of uniforms from me. So, this helped me earn and save for my education.”

In the end, he decided not to a pilot because of the high expenses.







## Zig-Zag Career

Paulo worked hard after college and literally started from the ground up, which prepared him for the challenges of professional life. For someone like him, life was not always easy. Like many, he struggled to make ends meet, but he persevered, even though things were not always apparent to him at the start of his career.

There were moments when Paulo believed he would remain in the corporate world, but there was always a longing for more. He worked for several large companies and even dabbled in insurance sales. His entrepreneurial spirit meanwhile was always tugging at him. His father was a former OCW and an entrepreneur (he owned a motor oil [for tricycles] business), so he knew what he was getting himself into.

“I hopped from one company to another,” he says. “I couldn’t last for more than a year. I was a medical representative assigned in Luzon, a marketing assistant in various industries, including the financial industry. This was my last gig and there, we developed the first few branches of a multinational company.”

Circumstances compelled him to quit from his corporate position when his father felt unwell. As the eldest child, he felt obligated to assist in the care of his father. This was the time when he started considering his options for starting a business.

“After a year, I resigned,” he says. “Then I asked myself: will I stay with my father to run his small business, or will I start my own?”

Like in his corporate life, Paulo’s entrepreneurial pursuits were all over the place. He tried everything from nata de coco production to hand-made paper production, but unfortunately, they all eventually failed.

By this time, together with his girlfriend (now his wife), Paulo opened a laundry shop to serve residents and students in Quiapo, Manila, where he used to live. She was still employed by a major international consumer goods company, but she shared his enthusiasm for business.

Their venture, however, also failed. Although water was a concern in the area, margins were thin owing to their target consumers’ low income. But this experience taught them the fundamentals of running a business, and they learned from their mistakes.

## Turning Point

Undaunted by his string of business failures, Paulo decided to give it yet another try. His wife’s job provided them with valuable expertise and opened doors in the field of logistics. They got into the logistics business with acute observation and a more thoughtful strategy. Confident that they’ll make it work this time, they decided to go for it. Even his wife quit her job to help make their business succeed.

They knew that there was a niche in the market they can own, a problem that they can solve. “There was always this complaint about merchandising. We wanted to address typical problems, so we pinpointed the pain points,” he says. “So, we started with logistics marketing services. This is what you see in the supermarkets where they combine detergents with fabric softener, for example, or soft drinks with chips. We did the repacking.”

They began taking on projects for one week, two weeks, one month, and then, three months. The gradual growth of their business propelled Paulo to take some drastic actions. He wanted the business to take advantage of this rapid growth, so he took a chance through what he fondly calls the MIL program, or mother-in-law loan. He borrowed P150,000 from his wife’s mom as starting capital. “That was a gutsy move, what I call creative financing,” he recalls, bemused. “Who else would loan me money? Not the banks.”

With the seed money of P150,000, they set up Vintel Logistics in 1999, bought second-hand vehicles and other equipment for their business. Their first office was located near the San Sebastian Church in Quiapo where snatchers and drug addicts abounded. It seems like an inauspicious start for their company. But it didn’t matter. What they did have was a lucrative niche and momentum on their side.





# Paulo's S-A-V-E Principle

For those who are continuously struggling with their businesses during this pandemic, Paulo says that companies and individuals should be like coffee beans. “When you dip the coffee bean in hot water, this is where you would realize how strong and how intense that coffee is,” he says.

“True character will surface when we are faced with many challenges and adversities. We need to be agile. Can you be a resilient person in your organization? Will you resist or absorb what is happening? For me, you should take into account the relevance of your product or services. I have this S-A-V-E principle to really be ahead. If in marketing, there are the 4Ps (product, place, price, promotion) I have S-A-V-E.”

Paulo explains, “S means Solutions. You should see not only the product but what solutions it can provide for your target customers. A means Access. This means to access the distribution channel, multiple access or platforms where customers can easily reach you. V means value. This means more than or the extras or things that can help your customers be associated with your product or services. E means education. This means more content, more driven and engaged customers.”

“To really be ahead, it's high time to see people innovating,” says Paulo. “You need to innovate to help you grow your business even in this pandemic.

Another concept is the “be the orange among the apples” principle. “This worked for me for many years,” says Paulo. “It's how you will stand out from the rest of the competition. Imagine a plate full of apples and an orange on top. Will you be the apple among the many or will you be the orange—the different one?”





## From Vintel to VCargo

In studying the business and the competition, one of Paulo's key strategies was looking into how they can get into an industry with established players, how they can penetrate certain markets, and how they can differentiate themselves. "In the second year of our business, we embarked on a plan because our business was growing, and we had to be ready. We had the vision to grow early on. We invested time, resources, and money," Paulo shares.

"We combined what we know and the needs of the people," he adds. "We pioneered bundling services, merchandising materials, and distribution. We approached companies with certain and similar requirements and tapped several multinational companies. We upped our antennas. We scanned the environment, and we were able to spot what the needs were. We developed different divisions, services, and solutions, and we were able to come up with pioneering solutions anchored on SME logistics. We developed mobile cargo acceptance in certain areas with the concept of 'we will be at your doorsteps'."

As a maverick during those times, their company eventually thrived to become one of the top freight forwarders in the country.

Ten years later, they rebranded Vintel Logistics as VCargo, which is now one of the country's leading logistics and cargo firms. They take pride in being a company that is large enough to have the efficiency of a global shipping organization while remaining small enough to respond quickly to clients' changing demands.

## Constant Change

Now on its twenty second year, VCargo continues to grow, offering value-added services that grow its market share and with a client base that includes the country's major corporations. The company has also been recognized here and abroad. "It's because we stuck to the business model that we have seen previously, the competency that works until now, even during the pandemic," Paulo says.

"Logistics has always been a part of any business," he adds, emphasizing that last year has been a banner year for the company as they



# Entrepreneurship for Kids

Paulo's hard work, dedication, and prudence rubbed off on his family, especially his two young children, the eldest just finished high school and one is still in his elementary years.

He says that his program for children six to 10 years old titled "Little Boss" taught his children money and entrepreneurship. In fact, they have a piggy bank so that they can save money.

Another way that Paulo teaches them about money is through the DESS principle—which stands for Donate, Entrepreneurship, Savings, and Spend.

"One good story I want to share is when we went to an Ortigas department store and saw Ms. Ai-Ai delas Alas," says Paulo. "Ai-Ai heard that it was my son's birthday, so she gave him P1,000, and the other one, P500. My children didn't spend that money, and this triggered their savings initiative."

He adds that there was also a time that they incentivized their children. For every chore such as washing or cleaning the dishes, they gave them P25 a week.

"But we stopped that already because we wanted them to have that value of helping around the house," he says.

Paulo adds, "This is our legacy—a person of good will, of character is something that we can be proud of, more than the money or material things. You may have the comforts of life, but you still need to remember, these are all temporary and not intended to really be our driver or motivator."





## COVER STORY



stroved to be resilient and agile. “We try to stay relevant and really figure out what works for us. For years, we have expanded, evolved, and evolved. We’ve learned that as we go on, we act as we see fit.”

As for the challenges, there were many along the way. One of them was realizing later that they were not knowledgeable about the international market. And some of their risk-taking moves have resulted into losses in time, money, people, and resources.

“As a maverick, I want to try a lot of things,” Paulo says. “No one is mentoring us on how to do it, so we did things gradually because we don’t have a lot of resources to work with. We always expand the surplus. We don’t rely on loans for our peace of mind.”

After experimenting and pilot-testing ideas, Paulo realized what they need is to strengthen the core of the business and compete based on their strengths. “This 2021-22, we have realigned because the past two to three years, our focus is on big ticket business partners,” says Paulo. “We have identified certain sectors that will provide us with the bulk of our revenues.”

## Second Career

Aside from VCargo, Paulo is also involved with speaking engagements here and abroad. And during this pandemic, he has become one of the most sought-after speakers online. This started 15 or 16 years ago when he became part of the Go Negosyo advocacy as one of its business mentors.

“I was driven to join the community to meet people, to learn from many people, and also to network,” he says. “Through this advocacy, I was given opportunities with Sec. Ramon Lopez, Executive Director of the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship and Sec. Joey Concepcion. We started caravans all over the Philippines, with forums, seminars, among others.”

Soon enough, Paulo received invitations to speak from schools, organizations, public events, and conferences—at least eight to 10 invites a month. He sat in panel discussions, shared his testimonial, gave keynotes, and guested on radio programs. He was also invited to write a column for one of the leading newspapers, now on his ninth year.

These speaking and writing opportunities led him to finally author two books. The first, *Strategies of a Champion Entrepreneur*, became a bestseller in the first three months of its release. His follow-up, *STANDOUT: How to Lead Without Losing Your Values*, a book on ethical leadership, was also a hit.

Nowadays, Paulo is studying international coaching and has plans of learning about executive coaching. “I need to study a lot to be able to share a lot of insights and knowledge,” he says. “With the advocacy talks for the government and for students, I get to share my failures and challenges. It’s like failing it forward.”

He admits that during this pandemic, he has worked more. He has been more active creating content, such as his podcasts, among others.

At this point, Paulo feels he is transitioning to a career and a life that is less stressful, more meaningful, and, yes, a lot simpler. Perhaps that’s one other reason why he moved back to his hometown where the pace of life is slower and far away from the hustle-and-bustle of urban life. And yet, it still allows him to speak, write, and run his company.

His path in life may have been unconventional and unpredictable. But his unwavering fortitude to forge his destiny, his doggone determination amidst failures, and his maverick approach to business has given Paulo the success and purpose he deserves. Just as one would expect. **MS**



# Ultimate Guide to Launching Your Own E-Commerce Store

By FITZ GERARD VILLAFUERTE, RFP®

One of the easiest ways to earn extra income nowadays is to simply sell things online. And the options of where to sell your stuff are everywhere, from direct messaging your friends to posting them on your social network; from listing them in classified ads and online marketplaces to creating your online shop.

If you're looking to make this into a serious business venture, then creating your e-commerce store is the way to go for various reasons:

- 1 It's better for your branding. You won't be seen as just some random person peddling wares online. You will give out the impression that you're a legitimate and reliable business.
- 2 You'll have an online headquarters. Social media marketing is important. And you can be consistent with your messaging everywhere by always directing your followers to go and shop on your e-commerce store.
- 3 You own your content. Social networks, shopping apps, and online marketplaces can come and go. If you become too dependent on one and it closes down, then you're in trouble.
- 4 You control your aesthetic. You can design your e-commerce store to look and feel a certain way that's consistent with your branding. Unlike when you simply upload your products in a marketplace where you're at the mercy of their usually confusing layout.

With these said, where and how do you start at launching your own e-commerce store? Here are the basic steps.

**1 Start with a niche product.** Don't be a supermarket or department store, at least in the beginning. It will be easier to reach your target market if you focus on a specific need and offer a flagship product. This will help build your brand and create an instant impression to first-time visitors of your website.

For instance, don't just sell clothes, start by exclusively offering dresses for teenage girls instead. Don't simply be a gadget store, be known for selling affordable brand-new digital cameras. Choose a niche product first and just expand your product line when you see the demand.

Moreover, it's recommended that you choose a product that you're knowledgeable in or something that you'd use yourself. This will benefit your marketing because you know exactly why people buy them and you know how to sell them to your customers.



**2 Define your target market.** You probably already have an idea of who your customers will be. Now it's time to get to know them a little bit better through market research.

Who exactly are your ideal customers? What are their demographics? And more importantly, what are their psychographics? If you walk inside a busy mall, will you be able to pick out the specific people who would most likely buy your product?

Demographics refer to their age, gender, civil status, and such. Meanwhile, psychographics refers to their fears, behavior, beliefs, values, and even their lifestyle and habits. It will also benefit you to know what apps they often use, and which social network are they most active on.

The more details that you know about your ideal customer, the easier it will be for you to find and reach out to them. Your marketing campaigns will be more effective, and it will be easier to generate sales.

**3 Test your product-market fit.** Now that you have your product and you now know who your target customers are, it's time to test if you have a product-market fit. This means checking if people will like your product and if they would be willing to buy it.

Reach out to around 10 people that meet the criteria of

your target market. Give them a sample of your product, and then ask for their thoughts about it. You can even ask them how much they'd be willing to pay if it's available in the market.

You can tweak your product or offer according to the feedback that you received, and then repeat the experiment again with 10 new people until you're satisfied with the results and there's real anticipation and optimism about your product.

**4 Define your unique value proposition.** You might have a great and innovative product, but there's no stopping others from copying it after you launch. So even before you start selling, it's essential to know what makes your product and your business different from others who might attempt to copy it.

This could mean a unique recipe or process that's hard to replicate. Or getting an exclusive deal from a supplier. In most cases, it means getting the proper trademarks and patents for your inventions and innovations.

**5 Develop your business plan.** An e-commerce business is still a business, which means that it would greatly benefit you if you could develop a business plan, which will serve as your roadmap that will help bring your ideas and thoughts together.

Creating a business plan is essentially like running your business on paper. You'll realize the capitalization that you need, the equipment that you have to buy, the tasks that need to be done, and all the other details that would be impossible to know if you simply went ahead and launched without planning.

Having a business plan that you can follow is much better than just swinging it and learning from trial and error. The latter will waste a lot of your time and you could end up spending more capital than necessary.



**6 Create your brand.** One of the most exciting parts of starting a business is creating your brand. This is when you think of your business name, design your logo, and decide on the overall aesthetic of your website based on the philosophy of your brand.

Make sure that the domain name is available, as well as the username for all major social networks and online marketplaces. You will want to be consistent with your name and branding across the board that's why it's important to secure them before you launch your business.

**7 Build your store.** Your e-commerce business is ready to launch and the only things that are probably missing at this point are your actual website and online store. Hire a web developer if you don't want to do it on your own. And if you can, talk to an SEO expert to optimize your website for search engines.

It goes without saying that you should upload quality photos of your products along with an effective copy for their description. Remember that people will be browsing your catalog on their own, so the images, layout, and the text on your website will be the ones doing the selling.

Remember to test your shopping cart and make sure that your payment channels are connected and working properly. Check that your shipping and fulfillment are well in place to handle incoming orders once you launch.

Lastly, set up your customer service channels. Where and how can customers reach you, especially those with suggestions and complaints? And who will answer them from your end?

**8 Set up your sales channels.** Once your website is done, you should now set up your business accounts in online marketplaces. This is a great way to reach customers because you're going to platforms where they already shop.

At present, Lazada and Shopee are dominating the online shopping industry, but also consider lesser-known portals that cater to niche products. You can even take advantage of the e-commerce and shopping cart features of some social networks like Facebook and Instagram.

The right mix of sales channels will depend on your products and your target customers, and they can definitely

complement and support your self-hosted store in the long run.

**9 Set up your social media.** These days, the best way to reach your target market is through social media. So set up your store's official accounts and make sure they have the same aesthetic as your online store or website.

Moreover, create your social media content calendar starting with teaser posts for your official launch. Create anticipation and invite your family and friends to share the news on their social networks.

Lastly, success in social media marketing heavily depends on your copy and consistency. This can be time-consuming, so be open to hiring someone to do this for you so you can focus more on running the actual business.

**10 Launch your business.** It's now time to officially launch your business. Congratulations!

However, don't expect to just sit back and wait for the money to come in. Starting a business is different from running and growing a business.

Learn about sales funnels and conversion rates. Apart from sales numbers, choose other key performance indicators that you should track to check the growth of the business. Remember that you can't improve what you don't measure.

Digital marketing also takes center stage at this point. Setting up online ads, collaborating with influencers and content creators, and building an email newsletter are some of the post-launch tasks that should be on your to-do list.

**Final words.** Building your own e-commerce store business is both exciting and challenging. There will be times when you'll feel overwhelmed, but there will be days when everything will just run smoothly like clockwork.

And with the ever-changing online and e-commerce landscape, there will still be a lot of things to learn and new obstacles to overcome.

So, buckle up and get ready for a rewarding journey as an e-commerce entrepreneur. **MS**

“Building your own e-commerce store business is both exciting and challenging. There will be times when you'll feel overwhelmed, but there will be days when everything will just run smoothly like clockwork.”





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
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# Your Guide to Business Insurance

By RYAN N. DE VERA, RFP, CWA, CTEP

Running a business is never an easy feat no matter how big or small a business is and at what stage it is in. It takes continuous planning, leading, managing, and monitoring. But as a business goes through its day-to-day operations, it also faces several risks. These risks can be very costly and can result to potential losses especially when not dealt with properly.

**Types of Business Risks.** There are many components in running a business. And there are just as many risks involved. The following are examples of risks that businesses face:

- Risks in dealing with suppliers and contractors not finishing a project or deviating from the contract.
- Risks to the physical facilities of the business, such as the office, warehouse, factory, or stores. These involve perils like fire, lightning, flood, earthquakes, or even burglary. Sometimes, damages to the business can be brought about either by a third party or by unavoidable incidents.
- Risks in logistics and deliveries, such as lost, incomplete, or damaged products during shipment.
- Risks to the company's vehicles, such as accidents like collision resulting to damage to the vehicle and another party's vehicle, or worse injuries and even death. It's not uncommon to see or read about trucks spinning on the expressway hitting and damaging other vehicles and properties.
- Risks such as general liabilities and lawsuits. For example, there could be incidents when a shopper's foot gets injured because his shoes got stuck inside a business establishment's escalator, or when a customer trips over a wet floor inside a mall. When not dealt with properly, the business may face lawsuit that may result to payment for damages and legal fees.
- Risks involving customers, especially key accounts not paying.
- Risks on staff's health and life. This includes instances of employees getting injured, ill, or confined. Being unable to perform work effectively could result to additional costs to the business. This is especially true in the ongoing pandemic where it is very costly to be infected by the coronavirus. This also includes death of employees that can hamper business operations. It's especially true for key employees

or executives, as they are vital to the company's day-to-day operations and decision-making. Or they can be key people managing key accounts, suppliers, and creditors.

- Risks of the business owners' untimely demise, leaving many business stakeholders in dire jeopardy.

As you can see, anything can happen. However, there are several ways of dealing with these risks. One is to absorb it, which is the costliest of all options. Another way is to avoid or minimize the risk. Preventive measures are good, but not every possible risk can be prevented, at least not all the time.

There is a third way to deal with business risks, and that is to pass them on to another entity, and this is normally through an insurer in exchange for a premium. For companies, it's called business insurance. Like any form of insurance, this requires planning and must be included in a company's annual budget.

**Types of Business Insurance.** As potential risks vary in type and magnitude, there are several types of business insurance that business owners need to consider depending on what apply best to the business.

**Property Insurance.** This covers damages to business facilities brought about by perils like fire, lightning, earthquake, theft, fortuitous events, and, in some cases, business interruption. Property insurance provides some form of protection should the operations need to halt or scale down due to the damages brought about by such perils. For instance, a fire at the office could result to business equipment, computers, and files getting damaged.

To some degree, some insurance companies offering property insurance also provide financial aid for a limited time to businesses for loss of income brought about by a fire. Also, there are some insurance companies that offer coverage for retail stores in cases when sprinklers malfunction, resulting to wet and damaged equipment, furniture, and inventory.

**Cyber Liability Insurance.** Cyberattacks or data breaches can lead to real financial consequences for a company. According to a Forbes magazine article, 80% of data breaches were perpetrated against small businesses. A common example is hacking of servers, emails, and websites to steal data. Other cyberattacks include hacks for a ransom, installation of malware, phishing, intellectual property theft, fraud, among others.

Depending on the insurance provider, cyber liability insurance may cover, but are not limited to, loss of electronic data, fines and investigations, forensic services, reputational damages, network interruption, data monitoring costs, media content, and even cyber extortion.

Data liability covers the loss arising from the breach of personal or corporate information, data loss, or security breach. The business is also covered for outsourcing liability if the company's outsourcer has a breach of personal or corporate information. Electronic data on the other hand covers the cost of restoring, recreating, or recollecting data after a breach.

Cyber liability insurance could also cover fees, costs, and expenses for fines, legal advice and representation that the business may be legally obligated to pay following data security breaches. In cases of suspected or actual data breach, a business may avail of forensic services to assist in identifying probable causes of the breach and get recommendations on how to prevent or mitigate the risks. This may also be covered by the insurance policy.

A cyberattack or data breach may cause panic to the company's stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, employees, and investors. And it may even tarnish the

company's reputation. In this regard, the company may require the services of a PR firm to help repair the reputational damages and remedy the situation. The insurance policy could also cover this.

Other important aspects that may be included by cyber liability insurance include loss of net profit due to the interruption on the client's network as a result of a breach, the costs arising out of alleged or actual errors, misleading statements, or omission of the business in connection with broadcasting or distribution of media content materials such as copyright infringement, trademarks, false light, public disclosure of private facts, libel, slander, plagiarism, among others.

**Car Insurance.** This covers damages to company vehicles and to third parties because of collision or acts of nature. To ensure efficient business operations, companies procure vehicles for its business owners, executives, and staff, as well as delivery vehicles for transporting goods. Unfortunately, accidents can occur, causing damages to the company's vehicles and possibly to another party. Worse is when it results to physical injuries to the passengers of either or both parties.

In this regard, having car insurance will mitigate potential





losses brought about by an accident. This not only covers theft but also damage to the insured vehicle to a certain extent. It can also cover third party liability in case the insured vehicle caused the damage such as hitting a property, another vehicle, its passenger, or a pedestrian. A business may also consider including a rider to the policy that covers acts of nature. This includes coverage in cases a car gets trapped in a flood or when a tree falls onto the car during a typhoon.

**Health Insurance.** Business operations can get hampered or slowed down when employees get sick or confined to a hospital. This risk can be addressed using the insurance to cover the medical and health bills of employees in the event of an accident or illness. Companies usually avail of Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) coverage, which provides holistic coverage for employees and sometimes even their beneficiaries. The coverage includes trips to the emergency room, confinement, surgeries, and optional benefits such as outpatient checkups and procedures, childbirth, and dental treatments.

**Life Insurance.** Other businesses go the extra mile by providing group life insurance coverage for employees. In case of their untimely demise, their designated beneficiaries like family members receive a lump sum of cash. Additional riders may also be attached to the life insurance coverage such as accident insurance, reimbursement of medical expenses brought about by the accident, coverage for total and permanent disability which provides some form of income replacement to the employee for a certain period, and even coverage for dreaded diseases like cancer, stroke, and heart problems.

The premium for group policies is much cheaper as compared to buying the policies individually. This is because it uses a certain age median based on the ages of the employees. Also, depending on the number of members to cover, pre-existing illnesses may be covered, which is often excluded for individual policies. However, because the company has ownership of the policy, employees receive coverage during their term of employment.

**Business Continuity.** It is one thing for an employee, even a key executive, dies. And it's another for the business owner to pass away unexpectedly. There is a saying that when a business owner dies, the business dies with him or her, especially when the business is a sole proprietorship. The death of a business owner can affect the family of the business owner, the business operations, and the employees relying on the business owner for important business decisions.

There are several ways to prevent or mitigate against this risk. A business owner may opt that a family member continues running the business, sell a part of the business, sell it as a whole, or liquidate the business assets.

To address the issue of succession and enable the family of business owner to retain ownership of the business, it will help to answer these critical questions:

- Is there a member in the family interested capable to run the business?
- Will the surviving heirs be willing to accept that person as successor to the business?
- How long will it take for the business to run smoothly under the new management?

If the option is to sell the business in whole or in part, these factors must be taken into account:

- Who is the buyer?
- At what price should the business be sold for?
- What are the terms and conditions?
- Is there a pre-arranged agreement?
- Is the agreement funded without loopholes?

In the case of just liquidating assets of the business, there are also questions that need to be considered:

- What is the liquidation value of the business?
- After final expenses, administrative costs, and taxes, how much will the family of the business owner receive?
- Will that amount be enough to provide for the surviving family without the business?

An easier and more economical solution to this is purchasing several life insurance policies that will address the above concerns. One policy can be bought to provide for the family's needs and lifestyle. Another policy can be used to pay off any existing debt.

As you can see, there are many uses and advantages of both life and non-life insurance, and it can be a very powerful tool in managing risks that may arise in running a business. It would be best to consult a trusted consultant to help you plan things out and consider possible solutions available. Also, make sure to review and weigh the pros and cons of each proposal considering all these angles. This will allow you to have a clear cost-and-benefit analysis in the purchase of your business insurance.<sup>MS</sup>

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# Investing in Bitcoin and Altcoins

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

“Cryptocurrencies have risen to prominence in recent years. They are no longer in the fringe but are already in the mainstream. They are not only popular with a new generation of investors and traders but have gained wider acceptance by governments, financial institutions, and large corporations.

They started off in the last decade with Bitcoin, a decentralized, blockchain-based digital currency that can be bought, sold, and exchanged directly without a bank. This has spawned into a multitude of altcoins, digital currencies like Bitcoin which denote any cryptocurrency that is not a Bitcoin. In addition, altcoins are generated by deviating from Bitcoin consensus rules or by creating a new cryptocurrency from scratch.

Since its public launch in 2009, Bitcoin’s value has surged substantially, explains Jonathan Tinoco, also known as the “Cryptopreneur” and founder of Museigen Training Academy, which aims to educate Filipinos on how they can participate and profit from the growing cryptocurrency market.

“Bitcoin’s price was less than \$1,” he says. “But as of August 14, 2021, its value went up to \$46,000. Because its supply is limited to 21 million coins, many predict its price will rise over time, especially if huge institutional investors start treating it as a digital gold insurance against price volatility and inflation.”

He adds in the case of altcoins, the most prominent cryptocurrencies are built on top of Bitcoin. “Because Bitcoin is a free and open-source platform, this method is simple,” he says. “When an altcoin’s blockchain forks, it requires a new set of consensus rules and a new distributed ledger. The same goes for new altcoins. Examples are Ethereum, Cardano, Binance, and others.”

**Reasons for Buying Cryptocurrencies.** So why should you invest in Bitcoin and altcoins and what are the things you should know before buying them? Jonathan gives these reasons why cryptocurrencies are the wave of the future.

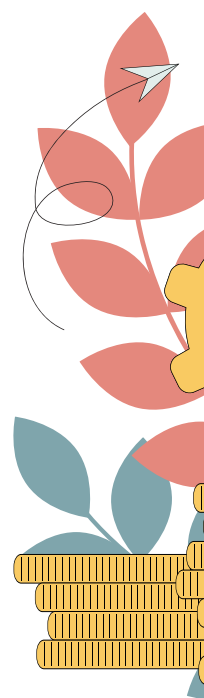
**Rising acceptance and adoption.** Cryptocurrencies’ value may climb as more corporations and individuals utilize them as a digital currency. BMW, Home Depot, Tesla, AT&T, JP Morgan, among others have all stated aspirations to use cryptocurrencies. Locally, UnionBank has embraced Bitcoin, launching the country’s first Bitcoin ATM a few years back.

**Need for a new wealth storehouse.** Following the pandemic’s devastation of the world’s economies, central banks turned to money printing, devaluing traditional currencies, and resulting in record low interest rates. Investors are now seeking alternative venues to preserve the value of their assets.

**Global accessibility.** With a reliable Internet connection, everyone may access cryptocurrency relative to other wealth stores (gold, art, real estate) and even conventional stocks and bonds. It is possible to buy these in tiny amounts, swap them, and access them globally via multiple cryptocurrency exchanges and wallets.

**Before Investing in Cryptocurrencies.** Despite, or perhaps of, their popularity, the cryptocurrency market is widely volatile, and therefore very risky. For first time investors, Jonathan has some tips and pointers.

**Never invest more than you can afford to lose.** Remember that you may lose it all, and only invest money that you can afford to lose. Most folks won’t win their first few trades. The market is volatile, and there are numerous factors to consider, many of which are learned when trading live. You can study charts and patterns, but nothing beats the thrill of risking actual money. Consider your first purchase as tuition. It’s a real-money investment in learning cryptocurrency trading. If you lose it, consider it a costly lesson. The last thing you want to do is risk money you can’t afford to lose.





Conduct your own research. Numerous online cryptocurrency experts and financial gurus claim to have a magical growth strategy. Never trust anyone with your money. These guys make money selling information and don't care if you succeed or fail. Before investing in a particular coin, always perform your own research.

Be cautious. If anything sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Be careful of anyone guaranteeing 100x gains on a new coin. A new coin's value can rise, giving early adopters incredible gains. Every time that happens, thousands of people lose everything, hoping for one of those fabled returns. Also, if a coin yields great returns, remove your original investment, and set it aside. Diligent investors do this. They don't mind restricting their potential return. Because not every coin will succeed, this technique allows them to reinvest in it instead if the coin fails.

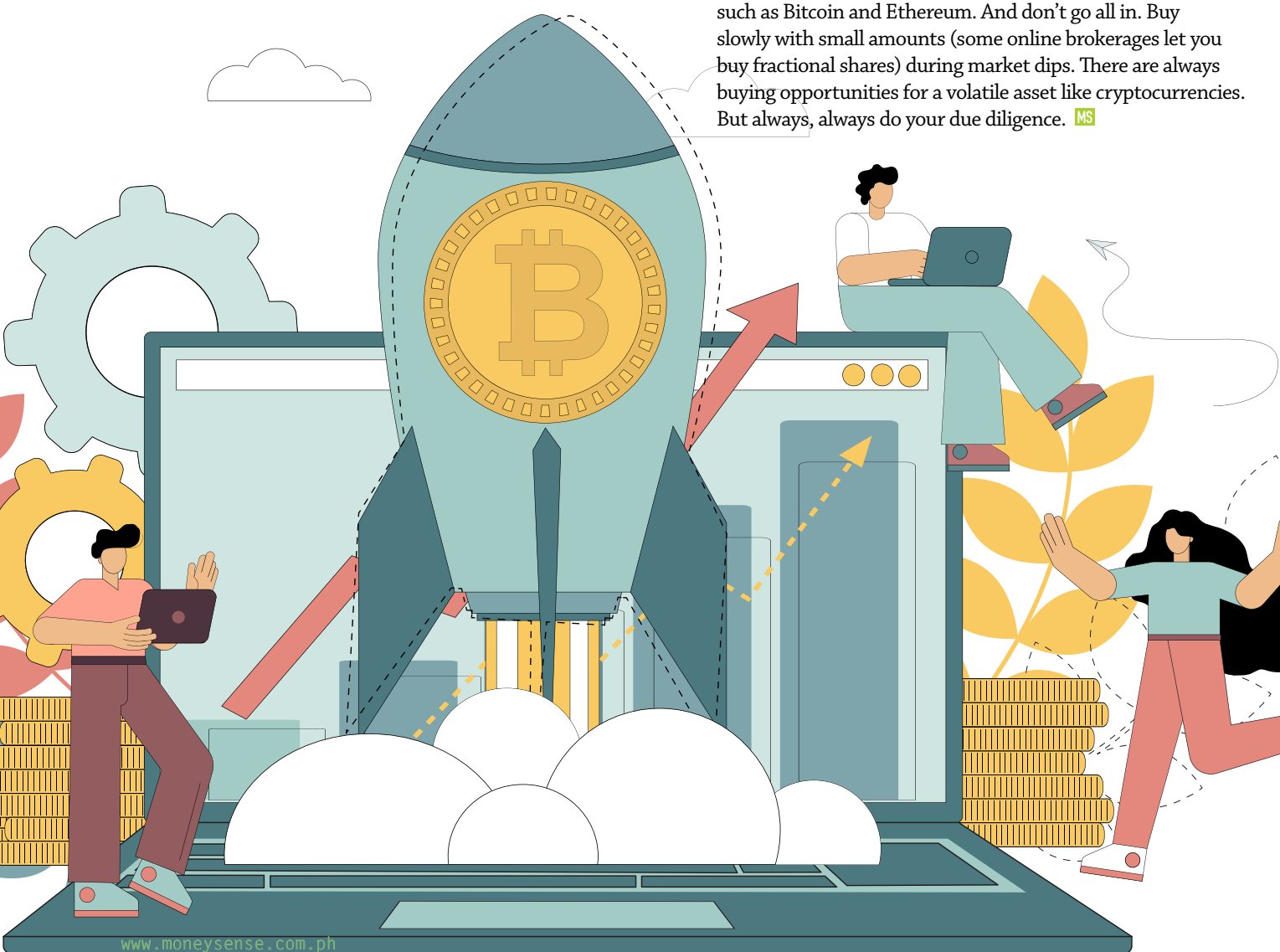
Never act based on FOMO (fear of missing out). Most new coins are launched with much fanfare. From aggressive marketing efforts to celebrity endorsements, this can encourage investors to make rash decisions due to FOMO.

This can lead to unwise decisions. A lot of PR is bought, not earned or fact-checked. It's also possible to buy endorsers and collaborations in the form of tokens, incentivizing each individual to promote the coin.

Diversify your investments. This notion applies to many facets of your life, including cryptocurrencies. Do not put all your eggs in one basket if you have funds to invest. If your basket falls, you lose everything since your eggs are broken. If you had 10 eggs evenly divided among five baskets, you would have lost two. Diversify your portfolio with different cryptocurrencies. The goal is to minimize risk.

Safeguard your keys. Protect your private key phrase. If you lose your keys, you can't access your cryptocurrency. Also, anyone with your key phrase can access and take your crypto. No computer storage and no leaving it out in the open. Remember it and lock it away. Consider writing it on many pieces of paper for extra security.

If it's your first time to buy cryptocurrencies, don't rush and be blinded by astonishing returns. Buy the more established ones that are already being used in financial transactions, such as Bitcoin and Ethereum. And don't go all in. Buy slowly with small amounts (some online brokerages let you buy fractional shares) during market dips. There are always buying opportunities for a volatile asset like cryptocurrencies. But always, always do your due diligence. MS



# How to Start a Real Estate Business

By RICHARD THADDEUS CARVAJAL, RFP®

**I**nterested in starting a real estate business in the Philippines but you're not sure how or where to start? Don't worry! This article will walk you through all the steps you're required to take so you can finally hit the ground running.

**Real Estate Regulations.** Although real estate practitioners have already been in existence in the country for many years, it was only in recent years that additional standardized measures for quality control were set in place.

Back then, interested individuals only had to hold a bachelor's degree in a course relevant to the field of real estate, earn at least 120 units under the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program from an accredited real estate service training center, and pass the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) examination.

At present, however, the profession requires a lot more than just the criteria listed above. Now, individuals need to have a diploma in BS REM before they can qualify for the board exam. This is to ensure that all licensed real estate practitioners have the necessary skills and knowledge required so they can be of real assistance to those who need their services.

Now you're probably wondering, what about those who already hold a bachelor's degree in a relevant program? Will they need to start from scratch and take up the entire four years of the BS REM course? The answer is no.

For these second coursers, they would only need to take up around 36-39 units of the BS REM program, which covers all the professional subjects in the curriculum. This means they can complete the necessary prerequisites in as fast as one year.

Once you're done taking the broker's exam and passing it, all that's left for you to do is register yourself with the PRC and the HLURB. Now you're a licensed real estate broker! Congratulations!

**What's Next?** Getting yourself licensed is just the beginning of your journey as a real estate broker. Now that you're done with that step, it's time for you to start building your real estate empire. And for that vision to turn into reality, you will need a solid business strategy.

Remember, you are not the only real estate broker in the country. There are thousands of others who are licensed like you, so you must find a way to stand out from the competition. So here are the steps you need to take after getting your license:

**Step 1: Make sure to come up with a solid business plan.** Anyone can come up with a plan for their business, but if you want to build an empire, you should make sure to lay out a strong business foundation first. Before anything else, you need to decide which type of real estate you want to focus on. Are you interested in dealing with commercial real estate? Residential? Industrial? Vacant land? You need to narrow down your options so you can also narrow down your competition.

Once you have identified the type of real estate that you want to be known for, it's time for you to do in-depth research into the market. Make sure to determine the demand and get to know your competitors. This will help you create a successful business strategy.

**Step 2: Create a financial plan.** Yes, a financial plan is not the same as a business plan. Sure, you probably have a solid business strategy in place, but if you don't have sufficient funds to keep your business going, it's still not going to work for you.

When creating a financial plan, you must consider how much it would cost for a startup like you to launch your business. That cost will include the lease for your office as well as all the equipment you'll have to purchase.

Once you already have a figure in mind, it's time to think about how to finance it. It would be great if you already have the money yourself, but if you're just starting out in business and you don't have all the funds you need, you need to look for someone who can help finance you.



Your first option would be to get a business partner. Having a business partner means that another person will have to run the business with you. He or she will co-invest in your startup and will also have a say in the way things should go. If you're planning on taking on a business partner, make sure to sign a memorandum of agreement with that person before proceeding, to prevent conflicts in the future.

If you don't want a business partner, then you could get a sleeping partner instead. A sleeping partner will only invest in your business and be responsible for a percentage of the profits you'll generate. He or she will not actively participate in the way you run your business.

Another option is to apply for a bank loan or a small business administration loan. The latter is awarded based on how solid your business plan is and your revenue projections. With a loan, you get to avoid the hassle of having to look for a partner who can fund your startup.

**Step 3: Launch your brokerage.** Once you already have your business and financial plan in place, all that's left for you to do is launch your brokerage. This involves hiring agents who'll work for you, leasing an office space for you and your staff, buying all the necessary equipment so your brokerage can function efficiently, and establishing broker trust accounts in your bank.

It also involves launching your website. Now the latter is very important, since most of your leads are now online. Once you have a website, make sure that you keep the content up to date so you get more views on your page. You'd also need to get listings and execute marketing and advertising strategies to get more leads for your brokerage.

Getting your real estate business up and running is, well, just the start. Running it successfully is another ballgame. But setting up right is crucial if you want to get off to a great start. As you can tell, the real estate industry is a competitive one. So, make sure to put your best foot forward and create a solid real estate business that will weather the test of time.<sup>MS</sup>





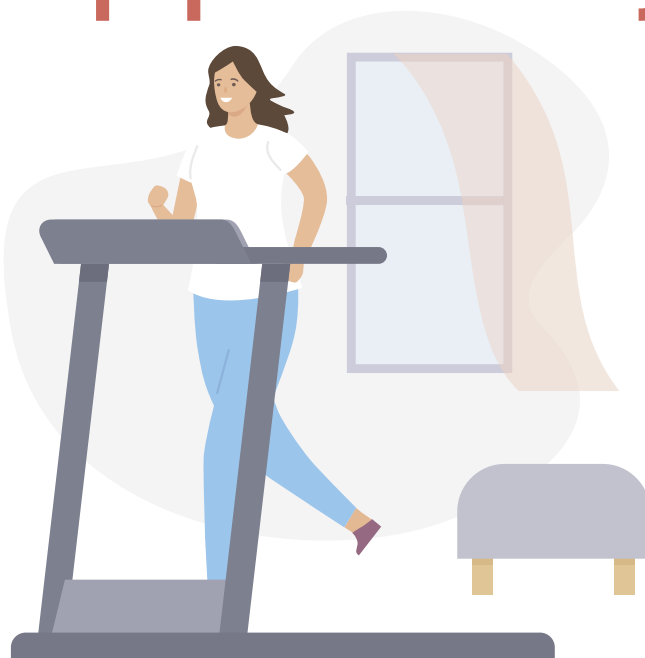
# 11 Home Exercise Equipment to Buy

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

While most gyms have reopened following the COVID lockdowns, it's still a smart idea (and a huge convenience) to keep certain exercise equipment at home, regardless of your living arrangement or financial limitations. So long as you have some clear square footage, imagination, and, of course, the will to get down to business and exercise once you have the appropriate gear.

There's something for every sort of exercise conceivable, from conventional heavy lifting to HIIT workouts to full-on indoor cardio rigs. You just need to find the appropriate equipment and accessories for your home gym. These are some of the options for you to consider investing in:

**Kettlebell.** You'll need at least one kettlebell if you want to do an all-around exercise. From goblet squats to swings, you can get a lot of exercise on a small area. Kettlebells are durable, too, because if you drop them, these soft-yet-powerful workout equipment are safe for you and your house flooring.



**Treadmill.** The beauty of a treadmill is that it fits your present fitness level and adapts as your capacity changes, no matter where you start. You have the option of walking, jogging, or running at your own pace. In some treadmills, it comes with a dependable 3.5-horsepower engine, a wide belt deck that's suitable for virtually all runners, and a soft belt that helps to decrease stride impact. In some treadmills, there is even a music port for connecting a music player, as well as access to fitness apps.

**Resistance bands.** Resistance bands are simple exercise tools with a broad range of applications and is an excellent addition to any home gym. Some bands can accommodate weights ranging from 2.4 to 21.3 pounds, allowing you to provide little resistance to a high-intensity workout or ramp it up for deadlifts or upright rows.

Resistance bands are light and thin, but they offer long-lasting performance (even if it feels like they might tear). Their latex-free design also ensures that anyone with a latex allergy won't have to worry. They are also very portable as resistance bands fold down compact enough to put into a small gym bag for convenient transport despite the lack of a handle or additional material.

**Jump rope.** Using a jump rope not only burns calories, but also strengthens your lower-leg muscles, improves balance and coordination, and sharpens your mind. Some jump ropes feature ergonomic grips, two different weighted ropes (1/2-pound and 1/4-pound), and a connected smartphone app so better choose wisely when investing in one.



**Slam balls.** Slam ball workouts may appear simple, but they give a terrific full-body workout when done correctly. A slam ball, in general, is a great addition to any at-home gym setup, whether it means adding weighted lunges to your routine, using the ball as a platform for side-to-side pushups, or simply completing a few tried-and-true ball smashes.

**Dumbbells.** Dumbbells are an essential component of any home gym. They're great for several movements, including squats, shoulder presses, lunges, and pushups, as well as improving curl technique, among others.

Investing in a set of adjustable dumbbells, on the other hand, is a smart approach to save space while increasing the variety of your exercises. The key to selecting a decent set is to see how much weight they would allow, and if they are comfortable lifting.

**Pull-Up Bar.** The pullup bar is the closest thing you have to a perfect exercise. It strengthens the shoulders, arms, and back while also improving endurance and flexibility. By varying your technique, you may develop your core while also working other muscle groups that are rarely used. And you can perform them practically anywhere - no need to go to the gym. Pullup bars are a home fitness need because of this gym equipment.

**Stationary bikes.** Riding a stationary exercise bike is a great method to lose weight and burn calories while also improving your heart, lungs, and muscles. A stationary bicycle puts less stress on your joints than other forms of cardio equipment, yet it still delivers a good aerobic exercise.



**Yoga mat.** A yoga mat is useful for more than just yoga. It may make stretching and core work more pleasant and hygienic. It may also serve as an excellent surface for strength training. Most basic yoga mats are inexpensive and perform a good job without breaking the budget. There are some yoga mats which are longer than others, so if you stand a tad tall, this kind of mat is for you.

**Core sliders.** Core sliders, often known as gliding discs, will elevate your planks and core workout to new heights. These discs, which resemble Frisbees, may be used on both hardwood floors and carpet, providing a plethora of low-impact movement alternatives during a strenuous workout. They may be used to strengthen key muscular groups in your body, such as your inner and outer thighs, legs, and buttocks.

**Workout sandbag.** The workout sandbag is an option for extra resistance that utilizes water instead of sand, making it easy to fill or modify the weight if you live in an apartment, for people who want an affordable and handy method to enjoy a great exercise at home. You may use it to do conventional strength training exercises including chest presses, clean and press, rows, bicep curls, squats, and deadlifts, depending on the weight.

So, if you are thinking of losing weight or packing muscles, then invest in any one of these equipment, and see yourself transform right at the very comfort of your own home. **MS**



# Bo Sanchez recovers from COVID-19, shares how others can financially prepare amid the pandemic

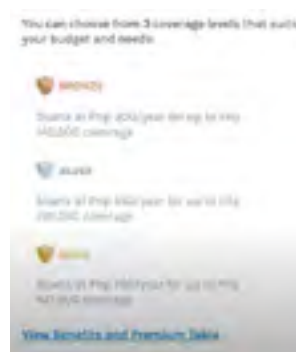
The Philippines has already logged over 1.4 million cases of COVID-19 in the country, and daily records are still in the high thousands. With new variants being detected in the past months, Filipinos are called to take all necessary precautions not only for their health, but also for the unexpected financial burden it will impose on families. Preacher and well-known financial advisor Bo Sanchez knows first-hand the toll medical expenses could take when he caught the virus earlier this year.

“During good times, it’s easy to pretend that we’re okay financially, because money flows easily and major financial mistakes are covered up by good cash flow. But crisis is brutal—it separates the wise from the foolish. When money stops flowing, we realize how ill-prepared we are to meet our needs,” Sanchez, now recovered, stated.

Sanchez shared in one of his vlogs the financial challenges he encountered when he was sick. While he was able to save on massive fees by receiving treatment from his own home and using a secondhand oxygen concentrator, costs for medicine and other necessities still continued to pile up.

Known to many as a successful leader, Sanchez actually came from humble beginnings—living with only PHP 800 a month as his missionary allowance. Through thoughtful planning and making the right financial decisions, he has built income streams and improved his financial capacity to be a more effective entrepreneur and preacher, a method he openly shares with the public as a form of service. Even then, when COVID-19 struck, Sanchez found it challenging to face the costs that came with his diagnosis.

“Seeing my expenses were very real. It broke my heart when I realized how difficult it would be for others, especially those who got hospitalized,” he expressed. “I had an emergency fund, built after many years of investing and saving, but I knew that many didn’t. So I really believe GInsure is a gift. [It] has solved two of the biggest obstacles: affordability and accessibility, and I’m very happy that this is now available to many people.”



Taken from Bo Sanchez's YouTube channel

GInsure Cash for Dengue Cost with Free COVID-19 Coverage (CFDC) is an affordable and accessible insurance product by digital wallet service provider GCash, powered by mobile-first insurance provider Singlife. It can help cover COVID-19 and/or Dengue costs for up to almost half a million, and the pocket-friendly protection costs as low as less than PHP 1 a day. GInsure CFDC can also be easily availed using the GCash app, with the entire application process and all approvals done within.

Today, Sanchez continues to teach and inspire others virtually through his YouTube videos in hopes of helping improve the financial situation of Filipinos. He generously gives advice on handling finances better and protecting everyone's financial future—a topic that is all the more relevant now in the middle of a health and financial crisis.

“I know a lot of people who have no choice but to go to work every day and so [GInsure] is a great back up plan. At least the financial challenge is already cared for,” he mentioned in his vlog. “A lot of people think that they will never have COVID-19 or that if they’re going to have [it, they will be] asymptomatic. I will recommend that you do not become overconfident—COVID-19 can hit anyone.”

With the unpredictability brought by the pandemic, GInsure CFDC brings peace of mind by securing the financial future of Filipinos and even provides the possibility of extending the insurance and protection to immediate family members. Especially for those who leave their homes for work and risk exposure to the outbreak, GInsure CFDC can be a back-up plan to care for unexpected COVID-19-related financial challenges. This affordable insurance option can be availed for as low as PHP 300 per year—with coverage of up to PHP 140,500. Varying coverage levels gives users the option to have coverage for up to PHP 421,500.<sup>IMS</sup>

For more information on GInsure CFDC, head over to: <https://help.gcash.com/hc/en-us/articles/900006391263-Everything-you-need-to-know-about-Cash-for-Dengue-costs->



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