
Best of the Best Business Websites

Brass Education Committee

Brass Education Committee Members: *Natasha Arguello (Chair), Leticia Camacho, Louise Feldman, Dan Hickey, Jared Hoppenfeld, Susan Schreiner, Peter McKay, Kim Bloedel, Hiromi Kubo, Tom Ottaviano, Christina Sheley, Penny Huffman, Lee Pike, Rhonda Kleiman.*

The Best of the Best Business Websites (Free Resources) is a RUSA BRASS Award, established in 2009, which recognizes three highly relevant business websites as selected by Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS) Education Committee members. The winners are announced at the RUSA Book and Media Awards reception at the ALA Midwinter Meeting. You may view previous winners at www.ala.org/rusa/awards/bestofthebestbus. To access other BRASS-recommended resources, go to <http://brass.libguides.com>.

2014 BEST FREE BUSINESS WEBSITES WINNERS

Entrepreneur, www.entrepreneur.com

For small business owners and for bright minds considering starting a business, there is a lot to consider. There are management practices, financial benchmarks, growth and expansion considerations, investment options, legal considerations and the list goes on. While the tools, advice, and even the encouraging success stories are all available, they are often scattered, can be difficult to find, and are not always reliable. This is where Entrepreneur Media comes in. They have recognized the need for easily accessible information for new and potential businesses, and have taken on the daunting task of creating valuable and relevant content, organizing that content and making it available to a very diverse group of users with very diverse needs.

Originally founded in 1973, Entrepreneur Media initially gained traction by publishing a newsletter. In 1978 it started publishing the well-known Entrepreneur Magazine, which today is issued monthly and, according to a company profile in Hoover's, has over 600,000 subscribers. Over time, the company has had a significant impact on the development of the idea of entrepreneurship, and they actually have a trademark on the term "entrepreneur." Entrepreneur.com, first launched in 1997, is a well-organized, easily-searchable, and user-friendly web platform for content created by Entrepreneur Media. Through the magazine, the website, and their many other publishing mediums, they seek to "inspire, inform and celebrate entrepreneurs," (this is part of their marketing slogan as found on social media sites) all while addressing challenges, offering tips, and developing tools to help entrepreneurs flourish.

Entrepreneur.com runs the gamut of potential topics in entrepreneurship. Articles and other resources will be available in the areas of finance, marketing, leadership,

productivity, and much more. Content on the main site comes in several different forms, and while they have the articles and other news that you would expect, they also offer videos and practical tools for new business owners such as business forms, templates, and financial calculators. They are respectful and appreciative of their readers' time, and go as far as to offer up how much time you might expect to spend reading a given article. Navigation is relatively simple. Newer articles come up by default on the main page. A search icon on the top right hand corner of the page offers a google search of the entrepreneur domain. Information can be browsed by subject and by certain content types by scrolling over the menu icon at the top left hand corner of the page and navigating the side bar that appears. Tabs to popular content on the main page include lists, rankings and how-tos, and a variety of social media options. Entrepreneur.com also serves as a hub for the Entrepreneur Media bookstore and as a marketing platform for events such as the entrepreneur expo.

Entrepreneur Media has developed an impressive web presence beyond their main website. They aforementioned social media accounts include Facebook, Google+, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube, and more. The information on each of these sites are relevant to popular news and culture, very well developed, and in most cases are not duplicated from one social media platform to the next. While this means you may want to follow Entrepreneur.com on each of these sites to catch everything that they are making available, it also means that it is unlikely that you will find a shortage of informative and entertaining content.

Entrepreneur Media makes a concerted effort to reach different populations. Spinoffs like youngentrepreneur.com, secondact.com, womenentrepreneur.com, and multiple international branches all bring fresh and relevant content to different groups interested in entrepreneurship. Be aware that some of the URLs for Entrepreneur.com's spinoffs actually take you to the main entrepreneur.com website. If you wanted to go to Entrepreneur's Second Acts page for example, the actual URL is www.entrepreneur.com/topic/second-acts.

Regardless of an entrepreneur's level of experience or where they are in the process of developing a company, there is useful information to be found on Entrepreneur.com. Public libraries, academic libraries with a business program and special libraries with a business focus will find this website particularly useful. That said, there is something here for everyone. Highly recommended.—*Thomas Ottaviano, Business and Economics Librarian, Cornell University*

Entrepreneurship.org, www.entrepreneurship.org

Entrepreneurs require information and education in each phase of the entrepreneurial process. These needs can be substantial and range from introductory to advanced. Entrepreneurship.org provides a wealth of high-quality content that delivers guidance and expertise to entrepreneurs when launching, growing, and sustaining a business. In addition, the site addresses the larger entrepreneurial community (i.e., academics, business mentors, investors, policy makers, etc.)

by giving access to general research about entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship.org is one in a family of websites (Kauffman Online) produced by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, which, according to its website (www.kauffman.org), focuses on education and entrepreneurship. The Foundation was established in the mid-1960s by philanthropist and entrepreneur (the founder of Marion Laboratories) Ewing Marion Kauffman and now works "to advance entrepreneurship education and training efforts, to promote start-up friendly policies, and to understand what new firms need to start and grow." It is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, and Kauffman entrepreneurship resources are highly recommended by librarians, SCORE, and outside entrepreneurs.

Mr. Kauffman believed that entrepreneurs played a key role in a viable economy, thus Entrepreneurship.org was launched to engage this community and assist in idea growth. The site houses original content authored by highly-credentialed practitioners, scholars, and thought leaders. Content is international in scope and well-organized by section: Channels, Events, and Resources. Channels provide educational tools and information on issues and insights that affect entrepreneurs. Events identifies opportunities for entrepreneurs to connect. Resources houses a mix of practical guides/templates (e.g., "Business Strategy Worksheet"), articles (e.g., "Nature or Nurture?: Decoding the DNA of the Entrepreneur"), how to's (e.g., "How to Conduct Primary Research"), and advice (e.g., "Lessons from Failure"). One can browse or search each individual content section or keyword search across the entire site.

An item of note, in the Channels section, is the Kauffman Founders School, an online educational tool for entrepreneurs. Learning module topics are entrepreneurial marketing and selling, lean and start-up methodology, work/life balance for entrepreneurs, powerful presentation techniques, and intellectual property. New content is being added. Each module includes a video presentation from experts, suggestions for additional readings, insights from other entrepreneurs, and tools and resources to assist in implementation.

Of particular importance to librarians assisting entrepreneurs will be the Resources section or the Entrepreneurship.org Resource Center (formerly part of Kauffman's *eVenturing* and *Entreworld* sites). The Center can be explored by audience (academics, business mentors, entrepreneurs, investors, policy makers); by content type (audio, article, blog, file, link); or topic (Accounting and Finance, Business Operations, Human Resources, Marketing and Sales, Products and Services, Public Policy, and The Entrepreneur). "The Entrepreneur" topic covers everything from basic definitions ("What is private equity?") to professional development tools ("How to Stay Current?"). One can keyword search across all topical areas or limit searching to a specific topic; however, no advanced searching beyond these options is available. Several hundred search results are returned for each topic, with "Human Resources" the least populated and "Public Policy" the most. Search results can be sorted by author, date, title, and content type, and include a short summary. Authors' names

FROM COMMITTEES OF RUSA

are hyperlinked and deliver additional content, and items are dated. Content that is returned can originate from other parts of the Entrepreneurship.org site (from the Kauffman Founders School for example) or be original to the Resource Center. Returned articles or items vary in length, but most are short and can be quickly read by busy professionals. Each entry allows for comments or ratings to crowdsource ideas and feedback. The site is said to be updated daily, but there is no new content in the Resource Center beyond March 2014 (content can be found back to 1997).

Entrepreneurship.org is a value resource for entrepreneurs as well as academics, investors, mentors, and policy makers. It is highly recommended for all levels/all libraries.—*Christina Sheley, Head, Business/SPEA Information Commons, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*

SCORE, www.score.org

SCORE provides tools, resources, education and workshops that assist business owners—existing, new, and aspiring—in succeeding. Sponsored by an array of national corporate and media sponsors, SCORE offers new businesses looking for basic information and existing business looking to grow, mentoring, workshops, and legal tools. One-on-one coaching is available from successful business people, often retirees looking to give back. There are 320 chapters of SCORE in the US and more than 11,000 volunteers helping small business owners. In 2013 these volunteers gave over a million hours to more than 124,000 small business owners and entrepreneurs, and helped to start more than 36,000 businesses.

The homepage provides the reader a rotating collection of articles, resources, and advice. Included is a new feature from SCORE, the “Business Plan Assist,” which allows a business owner to submit a business plan for review or ask a specific questions about developing or implementing a business plan. Contained within the SCORE website are seven top tabs: Business Advice, Startup, Run and Grow a Business, Marketing, Finance and Money, Technology, and Management. “Business Advice” breaks down into three smaller categories: (1) Business Plans with start-up and established business plans and financial statements templates (2) Mentoring which allows searchers to look in a database of answered questions and gives a place to e-mail specific questions; and (3) Small Business Outlook which offers current webinars and articles about new legislation, the economy and “how we did it” stories.

“Startup” gives the potential business owner a wealth of information to begin a business. From the basic in providing potential business and trend ideas, to considerations in buying a business, financing one, and dealing with governmental and industry red tape, to selecting a business entity, and incorporating if appropriate. A variety of how-to guides give

instructions on business tasks as diverse as creating a logo to getting a patent. A section titled “Green Business for Start-ups” provides information on a variety of green topics—from working with environmental strategies to implementing green strategies for increased business and profit.

“Run and Grow a Business” focuses on the successful business that needs to be moved to the next level. This sections looks at increasing your client base, hiring employees, moving into branch locations, and/or expanding your product line. With topics like “government contracting,” “leadership,” and “office and operations” this section provides the established business owners the resources and advice to grow and expand. And when the business owner is ready to move on altogether, there is a section on “selling a business” to help the business owner prepare, value, and market an existing business.

“Marketing” covers the nuts and bolts of advertising your new or established business with emphasis on online ads and search engine optimization. Social media is addressed as well as traditional advertising and the importance of maintaining current customers. “Finance and Money” provides data on financing a new business and generating expansion funding, the world of payments and collections, as well as the nuts and bolts of accounting and money management. “Technology” covers a wide variety of helpful topics from office and business software to mobile computing and security. Finally, the “Management” tab gives details on topics as diverse as employee benefits and work–life balance.

Each section has dozens of articles on the main topic. The search box is a little clunky as you need to know the jargon for what you are searching in order to get the best results. But the user can also look though all the article titles to see what might interest them. For those just starting a business it would be in their best interests to familiarize themselves with the variety of information available in each topic as challenges and threats they are unaware of may be presented in the articles.

The SCORE website is a valuable tool for new and existing business owners. With numerous articles, webinars, and how-to guides, many questions that business owners have are answered. Almost everything is free, however some seminars may have a fee although none of the fee-based seminars were being presented at the time of this review. And perhaps most valuable of all, those questions not answered directly by the site, or not specific to an industry, can be answered via the network of successful business mentors who offer their advice in person and without cost.

This website is appropriate for everyone interested in learning more about creating, opening, and running a small business.—*Susan A. Schreiner, Access Services Librarian, Axe Library, Pittsburg State University*