

Options for the Future: Opening a Business vs Working Up

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to recommend a course of action for myself after graduating from Texas Tech University with a degree in Technical Writing. The two options I was comparing were whether to move to Austin, Texas and work as a Technical Writer, or to move back to my hometown of Fredericksburg, Texas, and start my own business, a flower shop. The criteria I looked at while compiling this report were: the cost of opening a business, steps to opening a business, Floral Design certification and requirements, living expenses in Austin vs Fredericksburg, commute, the Austin job market, and salary in Austin. While researching, I used both primary and secondary sources. My primary sources came in the form of interviews of business owners in Fredericksburg, while my secondary sources were web sources. My findings and recommendation are below.



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to recommend a course of action for myself after graduating from Texas Tech University with a degree in Technical Writing. I compared opening a business against working in Austin as a Technical Writer. My major is in Technical Writing, and I have always loved writing. After taking a floral design course, however, I found that I had a love of that art form as well. My true passion in writing is creative, so I was drawn to the creative outlet of floral design. My love of floral design, as well as my desire to work in the field in which I have studied, prompted this report. For this report, I have researched what goes into opening a business, as well as the steps to take to begin if I were to choose this path. I have also interviewed three people that have opened businesses in Fredericksburg, Texas, which is valuable because they are familiar with the process of starting a business as well as knowledge of starting a business in the area I am looking at. I have researched the certification and requirements for floral design. I have researched the price of living in Fredericksburg versus living in Austin. I have also done research into the Austin job market. I have used Indeed, as well as the provided Tech job site, Hire Red Raiders, to look at possible jobs in Austin. The results of my research are summarized below.

Discussion of the Method of Study

The two options I decided to weigh for this report were whether to be a business owner or an employee. The criteria I looked at while compiling this report were: the cost of opening a business, steps to opening a business, Floral Design certification and requirements, living expenses in Austin vs Fredericksburg, commute, available jobs in Austin, salary in Austin, demand for floral shops in Fredericksburg, Texas. In my research, I used both primary and secondary sources. My primary sources came in the form of interviews of business owners in Fredericksburg, while my secondary sources were web sources.

Results

Interviews

I interviewed three business owners in Fredericksburg, Texas. Each one had a different type of business, as well as varied starts, so I was able to see significantly different sides to opening a business. I felt that interviewing current business owners was important because I wanted to analyze the more realistic side of starting a business versus the more glorified version seen on the internet and on popular news outlets.

Interview One:

My first interview was conducted over email and in person. The business owner, Leslie Spraggins, started a Dry Cleaners in Fredericksburg, Local Laundry. She said it was very difficult, and took her away from her family. She decided to put the main plant in a neighboring town instead of in Fredericksburg because of the cost of real estate. She has the plant, as well as four drop off/pick up locations in surrounding towns. She estimated the cost to open her business was \$1.8 million. This interview was helpful because it gave me insight into what goes into starting a business from scratch.

Interview Two:

My second interview was also conducted over email and in person. This business owner, Kevin Spraggins, owns an engineering firm in Fredericksburg, VEI Consulting Engineers. He bought the already existing business, and kept the name because it had a good reputation. He said that buying an existing business was better because there was an existing client base, as well as the reputation throughout the community. He originally bought the business for \$350,000. He later purchased the building for \$325,000. This interview was valuable because it gave me insight into the possible benefits of purchasing a business versus starting one from scratch.

Interview Three:

My third interview was over email and in person. The third business owner was Savannah Sikes, owner of Absolute Charm Wine Tours. Ms. Sikes is 21 years old and her business has only been open a year. She opened the wine tour business under the name of her family's bed and breakfast representation business. This allowed for an existing client base, as well as a joint partner, and a way to grow the client base through the rental service. I believe I learned the most from her because she is young, and she has opened a business more recently, and therefore has more knowledge into what goes into it in a more modern sense. I also got a sense of the struggles I might face opening my own business as a young female. Ms. Sikes expressed that it was difficult and she struggled frequently because she was not taken seriously or discredited because of her age and gender.

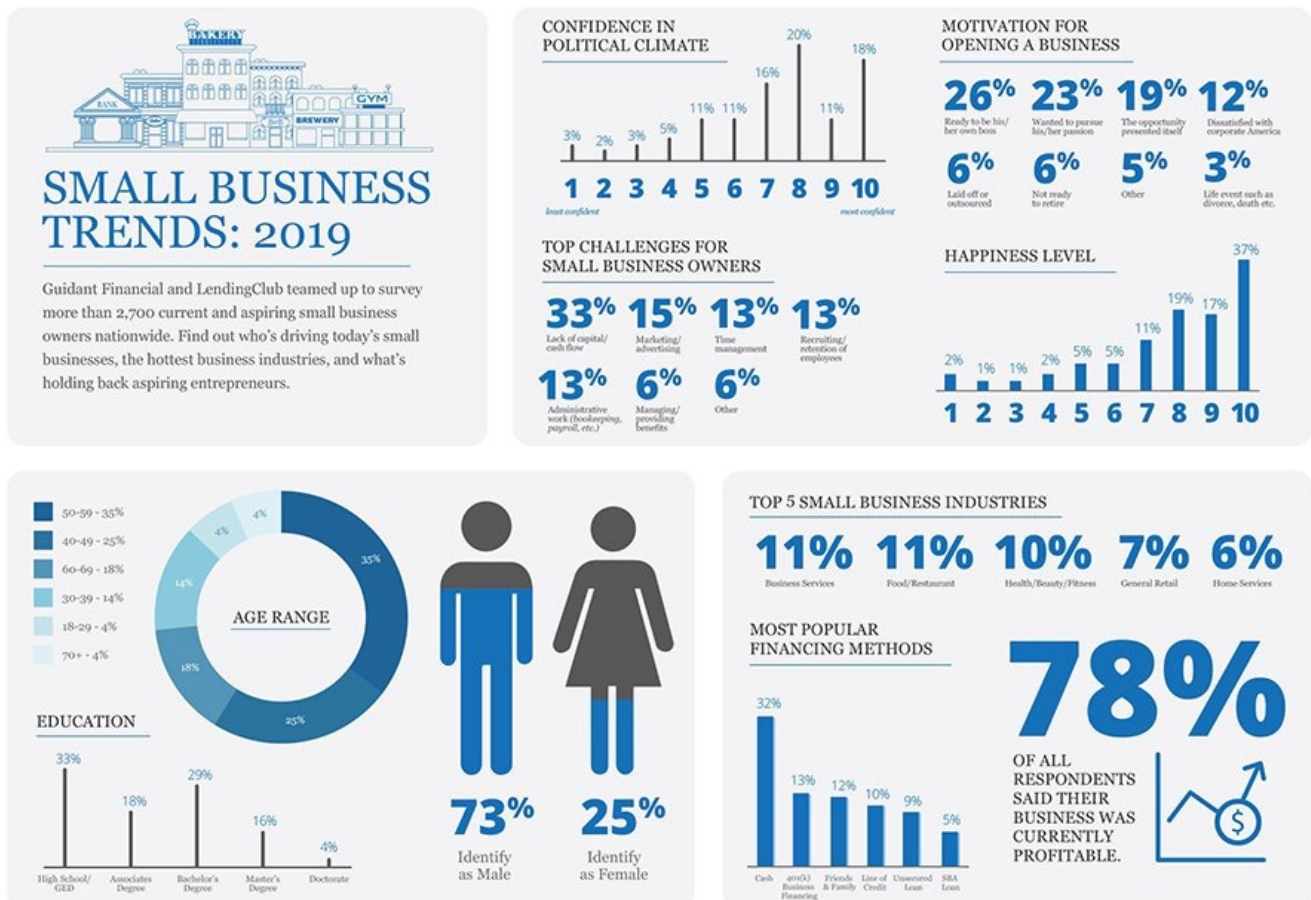
Secondary Sources

Steps to opening a Business:

I began by looking into the cost of opening a business, and the steps that go into starting a business. According to [MBDA.org](https://www.mbda.org), the estimated cost of starting a business from scratch is \$30,000. I used the Small Business Administration's website for the steps to opening a business. This article gives ten easy steps one needs to take to start a business. It gives short summaries of the steps, and provides links to learn more in depth information about each step.

The ten steps are as follows: conduct market research, write a business plan, fund your business, pick your business location, choose a business structure, choose a business name, register your business, get federal and state tax IDs, apply for licenses and permits, and open a business bank account. I thought this was a very well organized and structured list because I feel that many focus on the wrong aspects at the beginning and then lose steam or are unprepared later.

I also found the site [guidantfinancial.com](https://www.guidantfinancial.com) very helpful. The page detailed current small business trends. I have included one of their graphs that I found particularly interesting.



Floral Design Certification and Requirements:

I then looked into the required Floral Design certification requirements. American Institute of Floral Design was a good resource because it outlines the steps I need to take to become certified as a Floral Designer. It also outlines the certificates and memberships I would need. The American Institute of Floral Design is the original institution for certification, so they are the upmost authority on it.

The page outlines the steps necessary to become a Certified Floral Designer, as well as other classes and certifications one would need in order to be educated enough to start your own business. The three sections of information were: Becoming a Certified Floral Designer (CFD®), Obtaining Your CFD through an AIFD approved Education Partner, State Association, or SAIFD Chapter, Obtaining Your CFD through an AIFD Professional Floral Design Evaluation (PFDE), and Maintaining your CFD status.

The website also provides available sites to take the required certification classes. The most convenient location for classes for me would be at the Texas State Florists Association in Austin. They offer online classes, with a live lab, or fully live classes. The basic class costs \$445, while all courses combined (Wedding, Funeral, Advanced) cost \$1270. The certification exam costs \$150. To maintain your certification is \$200 a year, as well as mandatory continued education every three years.

Cost of Living in Austin, Texas vs Fredericksburg, Texas:

The median home price in Austin is \$346,500. The median age is 32. The median income is \$55,216. The median home price in Fredericksburg is \$300,700. The median age is 46. The median income is \$50,645.

I used a site called BestPlaces.net, as well as Zillow.com to compare Austin and Fredericksburg. The information I was able to gather was that the Median Age in Fredericksburg is 13.9 years older than in Austin, Fredericksburg housing costs are 16.9% less expensive than Austin housing costs, and the average commute for residents of Fredericksburg is 9.6 minutes shorter than it is for residents of Austin.

Possible Technical Writing Jobs in Austin, Texas; Salary:

I used Indeed and Hire Red Raiders for my job search in Austin. I began with Indeed. The website provided the information that the average salary for a writer in Austin is \$20.05 an hour, while Technical Writing jobs were higher, at \$32.06 and hour on average. The website also had valuable tools to sort the results so I could only look at certain jobs within certain qualifications. My criteria were full time positions. Since my degree will be in Technical Writing, I

looked primarily at those jobs that were available. I found multiple jobs that sounded interesting, and had salaries that ranged from \$50,200 to \$95,000+ that I could apply for based on my degree and experience.

I then looked at Hire Red Raiders. This website is specifically for Texas Tech students and Alumni looking for employment. I found Hire Red Raiders less helpful than Indeed because there were no jobs listed under the Technical Writing criteria. There was also less criteria with which to sort jobs. It was also less helpful because there were no writing jobs at all in the Austin-Round Rock area.

Conclusion

Based on the primary and secondary research I conducted, my recommendation is to pursue a career in Technical Writing in Austin, Texas.

Summary of Recommendation

Based on the fact that I am not financially able to start a business, nor do I feel I have enough knowledge to be able to effectively do so, I feel that the best course of action would be to work in Austin, create a base for myself, and then pursue opening a business later. Based on the possible salary in Austin, as well as the median age of residents and cost of housing, moving to Austin seems to be a more reasonable and achievable option. I believe the best way to move forward regarding this plan of action would be to participate in more activities and internships to improve my resume and experience base.

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