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How to Find Business Opportunities

By Dr. Kathleen Begley
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Note to Readers: *This free e-newsletter, sent only upon request, comes from Dr. Kathleen Begley, owner of Write Company Plus communications training. She writes weekly on topics connected to business and personal success. Dr. Begley recently launched a new blog called "Meandering to a Different Drummer." Click onto the website address at the end of this article to read her one-paragraph musings on life, death, and how to floss your teeth without using your hands.*

I have a guilty pleasure. OK, I have a lot of guilty pleasures. But one I've been consumed with lately has been reading a magazine advising you to open your own business for fun, independence, and bazillions of dollars. Every time I shop at a grocery or drug store, I'm totally unable to keep myself from plunking down a whopping \$3.99 for the periodical: Small Business Opportunities.

"Profits Skyrocket" "Mail Order Booms!" "Be Your Own Boss!" "Online Goldmines!" "Stay Home, Make Money!" "75 Surefire Money-makers!" "Fast Fortunes!" "Hit the Jackpot!" Now I ask you: what entrepreneurial aficionado, namely me, could possibly resist such cover lines?

Small Business Opportunities is produced by Harris Publications, a large conglomerate in New York City. The company's other magazines include Turkey Hunting Strategies, Tactical Knives, Combat Handguns, and Quilt. I have no idea how the latter magazine got in cahoots with its three violence-laden sisters, but there it is.

Now back to Small Business Opportunities. I feel guilty reading it because of the aforementioned cover lines, which appeal to everyone on earth wanting to wallow in wealth with little or no effort. The number one example is me. Oh how wonderful it would be to strike a financial gusher without getting out of bed!

Without question, the magazine pales in respectability when compared to other popular periodicals for the same market: Entrepreneur, Fortune Small Business, INC, Success, and Fast Company. I venture to say the owners of billion-dollar firms view Small Business Opportunities the way a fastidious gourmet would look at McDonald's or Burger King.

That being said, when you come to ideas for possible businesses to start without a lot of money, the magazine is unbeatable. In these horrific economic times, when so many people lack an income, savings, or entrée to a deep-pocket venture capitalist, I think the publication – despite its over-the-top cover lines -- deserves more respect than it gets. It provides numerous self-employment ideas that may keep you afloat until jobs start falling like manna from the heavens – how's that for optimism -- on the 15 million Americans currently in the unemployment lines.

And you know what? The advice is really solid. During the past few years, I've noticed that Small Business Opportunities consistently taps into current social and political trends that drive new enterprises. Some ideas from recent issues for those of you wanting to make a few extra bucks after you've already lost your job or while you're worrying you might:

Think green. After years of discussion by pioneers such as former Vice President Al Gore and actor Ed No Relation Begley, environmental concerns have reached their tipping point. An



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innovative way to tap into this issue is starting gardening classes for kids. Once you have some cash in hand, you can make extra money by buying and reselling pint-size aprons and tools.

Consider health care. You don't have to get a medical degree or nursing license to become part of this bonanza. Now that many hospitals are trying to provide a more upscale experience to patients, for instance, why not tap into the trend by making spa, cosmetic, and other grooming baskets to sell to the gift store.

Educate kids. In bad times, loving parents tend to cut down on luxuries for themselves before perks for their kids. Tutoring continues to flourish as a moneymaking enterprise. So do businesses that help high schoolers edit essays, fill out applications, and present themselves favorably – as in talking in standardized English -- to college admissions officers.

Care for seniors. As you undoubtedly know, baby boomers are fast becoming the largest group of senior citizens ever to populate the United States. Old people need a lot of help to maintain a quality life. That's where you step in. Sure, you could care for bedridden folks. But you could also open a more creative and fun-for-you business such as helping seniors track their ancestry with a family tree. You might also pitch in arranging photographs in traditional albums or capturing their life stories on a DVD.

Help busy people. Yes, overscheduled neighbors and friends still exist, even though many men and women no longer have 9-to-5 jobs. During the upcoming holiday season, Small Business Opportunities says that you can add to your piggybank by charging to decorate other people's homes, wrap their gifts, and assemble their toys.

Use computer skills. Most non-technical people use their office equipment on a need-to-know basis. That's why, if you're knowledgeable about Information Technology, you can make money with skills you may consider basic. One hot area: coaching small business people on the uses of Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn – often referred to as social networking – as a marketing tool.

Cash in on pets. Americans are bonkers about their dogs, cats, hamsters, and other animals. I'm a prime example. Although my husband Joe and I already have three dogs, I want another pet. Alas, Joe says the neighbors probably wouldn't take kindly to living close to Penelope the Pig. Anyway, pet-sitting is one of the most lucrative sidelines going; many entrepreneurs charge \$10 and up for walking Max and Sport. Other newer pet-related enterprises: making and packaging home-baked bones, winter boots, and recorded lullabies. Hey, anything to keep the guys calm happy when you're out of the house, right? If you go the pet-product route, please notify my Abby Cadabby, Vanna Banana, and Mikey the Tykey. As awkward as it is to type with furry paws, they already have managed to write long letters to Santa – but, if your merchandise strikes their fancy, they tell me they can still add more requests.

Dr. Kathleen Begley has written seven books and gives corporate seminars on topics such as writing persuasively, presenting confidently, and managing positively. You can call her at 610-429-1562 or e-mail her at KBegley@writecompanyplus.com. She responds to everybody.