

## Think Smartly About Your Startup, Think Safety Around Your Workplace



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Hey, everybody. This is Gene Marks, and welcome to this week's episode of On the Mark - a THRIVE podcast. This week, we're going to be talking about news that impacts your business, and there were two big things in the news this week. One has to do with new startup applications, and the other has to do with the overturning of President Biden's vaccine mandates. So, let's get started.

2021, according to the Small Business Administration, was a record year for startups. There were over five million startup applications filed in 2021, an unprecedented number. Just to give you some comparison: in 2016, there were three million files. Now, that number's been going up and up every year. We hit an all-time high in 2020 with 4.4 million, but again, 2021 surpassed even that.

So, why is that happening? Well, a lot of people give a lot of different reasons. I mean, for starters, people need to start a business to put food on the table and pay their rent. There was a pandemic and a big recession in 2020. Others, well, they're finding the time to do side gigs, maybe they're working from home a lot more. They have corporate jobs, and they're able to manage their schedules in such a way that they can do something more entrepreneurial. Plus, it's so easy to set up a small business today and sell things online, or maybe be in a delivery service or be an independent contractor or a freelancer.

There's lots of reasons and lots of things going on. So, I just want to make sure that if you are one of those five million that started up a business in 2021, and you are looking to actually grow that business into something that's really viable, maybe even if you have a job now and you want it to replace your job, I've got four pieces of advice for you.

Number 1: Make sure you've got some good advisors around you: a good accountant, a good attorney, a good friend with business experience. Maybe reach out to SCORE, S-C-O-R-E. You can go to [score.org](https://score.org), or the Small Business Development Centers, which are a resource provided by the Small Business Administration. They can give you lots of advice and ongoing consulting for helping you manage and grow your business as you're starting it up.

Number 2: Have a realistic plan and a forecast. All right? Don't be romantic. Don't be dreamy. Don't be thinking that you're going to change the world with your business. People start businesses because they want extra income, or they want income that can be their primary income. They want to make money. So, look ahead, put together a spreadsheet. Again, work with an outside accountant or an expert, somebody that can help you forecast your business out two years. Prove to yourself that your business can make money. Otherwise, it may not be worth the time or the effort.

Number 3: Speaking of money, make sure you've got plenty of it. You need to have savings of at least two years. If you're expecting to start up a business and don't have any other income coming in, starting up a business is tough. It's a cold dark world out there. If you're planning on quitting your job, if you're one of the people that filed a startup application, you want to go out there on your own - good for you - but like I said, it ain't easy.

You are going to be living off your savings, and you need to make sure that you've got enough savings that will support your expenses for at least two years. Remember, we live in a capitalistic society and a capital economy. You need capital to start up a business, and part of that is your savings that can pay your expenses.

And finally, and most importantly, if you are starting up a business, whether you're doing it on the side, or even if you're just going to be doing it full time, just remember, it takes a huge commitment if you want it to be successful. You need to make sure you've got buy-in from your family, your significant other, whoever that is, because whatever your startup venture is going to be doing, you're going to be working on it nights, on weekends, early in the mornings. It's going to take a lot of commitment. And you've got to make sure that your family members around you are on board with this, and that they understand the issues that you're going to be facing and the time constraints you're going to be having at least for the first few years of starting it up.

So, have a good advisor, a CPA, an accountant, a friend. Leverage maybe some of those government resources, like the SBDC. Have a realistic plan and a forecast. Make sure you've got two years of cash in the bank to see you through. Make sure you've got family buy-in. Those are the four big pieces of advice I have if you're one of the five million people who filed startup applications in 2021.

Okay, let's move to the other bit of news, which is about safety in your business and the president's vaccination plan, which was overturned last week by the Supreme Court. So, even though the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is no longer allowed to enforce the president's rules, you're under no requirement to abide by them.

Those rules required any employers with more than a hundred employees to either make sure those employees were vaccinated or get them tested every week. Well, I realize you don't have to do that anymore because of the Supreme Court's ruling. However, just a few thoughts on that, that decision is up to you, but you want to make sure that you are running a business as safely as possible.

People are concerned. They have fears. These are both your customers and your employees. Is your workplace safe for your current employees? Remember, we have a severe labor shortage going on. If your employees don't feel safe coming to work, they might quit their jobs and go on somewhere else. And by the way, if you are looking for new employees and you're trying to grow your business, and everybody is shorthanded, one of the selling points of joining a new company is basically how management runs that

company and how safe it is. You might be hurting yourself if you are not paying attention to the health and welfare of your employees.

Now, does that mean that you should require your employees to get vaccinated or tested like the president's mandates were trying to do? No, not necessarily, but listen, without violating any privacy or without being too draconian about it, you should do your best to encourage vaccinations or at least weekly testing, particularly if you support them. It's the right attitude to have. Again, it's a good culture to have, and it will help you keep your employees. It will help you attract new employees. It'll also help you with your customers when they come into your place of business.

Finally, just to the 2022, as we're still in the middle of the Omicron surge, you really should be asking people to be wearing masks when they're walking around your office. Spend a few bucks and get some N95 masks, not the cloth mask, which I think most scientists are saying aren't as effective. So, have those N95 masks around for your employees to use. They don't have to wear it all the time, but maybe as they're walking around your place of business.

And yeah, if you've got a customer-facing kind of business, a service business, a retail business, or restaurant, your employees should be wearing mask as well. It'll just make your customers feel that much more comfortable. Hopefully, this won't continue through the end of 2022, but for now, it's a good practice to have. And also, do your best to keep as much spacing as possible between employees, customers, and each other. Advertise that you're doing this stuff and that you're running a safe business.

So those are the two bits of news that came out this week. You have been listening to THRIVE. My name is Gene Marks. You can catch me on Twitter, @genemarks. And by the way, if you've got any questions, advice or if you'd like to suggest any topics or guests for this show, please make that suggestion. Go to [payx.me/thrivetopics](https://payx.me/thrivetopics). That's P-A-Y-X dot M-E forward slash thrivetopics. As I said, my name is Gene Marks. Thanks for joining us this week. We'll be back next week with more news that affects your business. Take care.

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