



Feedback from Idea Lounge (Thursday, October 19)



What Obstacles Do Inspiring Entrepreneurs Face in the Eau Claire Area?

- “People just starting out have problems communicating their ideas and networking with established businesspeople.” Jasmine, a member in the audience announced her ideas of an artist co-op and wanted more people at the event to become involved.
- “One of the biggest obstacles is one’s self. You have to be prepared to spend more time than what you initially plan with your venture and have the passion to continuously make improvements to allow your business to grow.”
- “Proving yourself and making the community take you seriously is one obstacle many new entrepreneurs face, especially if you’re young.
- “Eau Claire, especially Downtown, lack available and affordable space.”
- “An expression of public wealth and support for entrepreneurs is lacking. Its hard for those with great ideas to make the jump and give up the benefits of having a full time job (i.e. health insurance, stable salary) especially when the community support is unknown.”
- “As a Downtown business owner, the non-existing wayfinding system for Downtown Eau Claire is a major obstacle. A creative signage campaign should be enforced to increase foot traffic.”
- “Those who want to start a business must have the courage to stay in Eau Claire. Too many people have perceptions that a small business cannot survive in the area. We must take it upon ourselves to encourage people to stay in Eau Claire instead of losing them to larger cities.”
- “There is a lack of ‘after-hour’ help for those who work full-time but are also trying to start a business.”

Advice for Starting/Operating/Maintaining a Business in Eau Claire

- Generate your own momentum
- Have a shared vision of Eau Claire
- Take lots of advice
- Take advantage of diversity
- Aesthetics are important in retail as well as good experience
- Keep selling yourself
- Think about your customer's needs, not your own
- Work hard for yourself
- Call ten people who need your services
- Don't take people's opinions of your idea personally—believe in yourself.
- Create motivation by allowing employees to take ownership
- Don't overbook yourself and take a break!
- Go out and find your customers
- Connect public art, retail, and service
- Get together and share your ideas
- Be brave! Stay put!
- There doesn't have to be a jump but rather gradually slide into new business ventures
- Use community resources such as SCORE, EDC, SBDC, Western Dairy Land
- Always have a "can do" attitude