



Small Businesses to Start in 2021

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Seth and Mark Samuelson are reaping profits from the gardening trend | Credit: courtesy of Seth and Mark Samuelson

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It's been nearly a year since the coronavirus pandemic upended our lives. A year when we embraced new habits (curbside pickup) and technologies (Zoom) and found solace in old pastimes (gardening and baking). Many behaviors and preferences we've adopted will endure long after the crisis eases, which opens opportunities if you're thinking of launching a business or side gig in 2021.

So, what are the key trends you might profit from?

Below are four I learned about in a recent webinar from [SCORE](https://www.score.org/) (the national small-business mentoring program affiliated with the U.S. Small Business Administration) presented by Rieva Lesonsky, CEO of GrowBizMedia. Along with each trend, you'll find my suggestions of related business opportunities and resources.

Trend #1: More Americans are starting businesses.

In 2020, applications for new business tax IDs actually rose at the fastest rate since 2007.

Opportunity: As Kerry Hannon recently wrote in her Next Avenue post, "[Smart Move for Your Home Business: Hiring a Virtual Assistant](https://www.nextavenue.org/hiring-virtual-assistant/)," new entrepreneurs (especially one-person shops) often turn to freelancers and consultants to help run, manage

and grow their ventures. The people they hire might be bookkeepers, virtual assistants, business coaches and the like.

"By contracting for these services instead of hiring directly, entrepreneurs reduce costs, and in many cases, gain access to insights from higher quality talent," says Jon Eckhardt, a professor at the University of Wisconsin's Entrepreneurship Science Lab and Editor in Chief of Entrepreneur and Innovation Exchange or EIX (full disclosure: EIX and The Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation help fund Next Avenue).

LinkedIn's [report of the top 15 in-demand jobs for 2021](https://www.searchenginejournal.com/linkedin-top-15-in-demand-jobs-in-2021/392479/) (<https://www.searchenginejournal.com/linkedin-top-15-in-demand-jobs-in-2021/392479/>) includes four jobs in this category: data content creator; business development and sales professionals; digital marketing professionals and professional and personal coaches.

How much you'd earn starting such a helping business depends on a number of factors, including your skill level, industry and years of experience. For example, ZipRecruiter says [work-from-home virtual assistants earn \\$67,115 a year](https://www.ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/Work-From-Home-Virtual-Assistant-Salary) (<https://www.ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/Work-From-Home-Virtual-Assistant-Salary>), on average, but some make as much as \$130,000 or as little as \$15,000.

Working as a freelancer or [consultant](https://www.nextavenue.org/become-consultant-second-career/) (<https://www.nextavenue.org/become-consultant-second-career/>) can be especially rewarding for professionals over 50, who bring a lifetime of experience to their clients, but sometimes struggle to land full-time jobs. Many independent consultants charge \$100+ per hour; those with specialized expertise can command significantly more.

"A good external consultant will not only perform the function, but will also add value by leveraging their expertise," says Eckhardt. "For example, a contract bookkeeper, accountant or CFO should be able to improve the business as they perform their basic



contracted function."

To learn more about starting an entrepreneurial support business, check out the many [excellent training resources on SCORE.org](https://www.score.org/) (https://www.score.org/).

Trend #2: Gardening is blooming.

The pandemic created a new generation of gardening enthusiasts. Seed supplier Burpee reported the highest sales in its 144-year history last spring. And the gardening trend isn't likely to wither anytime soon. According to a fall 2020 survey by Axion Marketing, [86% of homeowners who were gardening said they plan to keep at it](https://axiomcom.com/2021-garden-survey/) (https://axiomcom.com/2021-garden-survey/) in 2021.

Opportunity: The increased interest in gardening is driving demand for gardening-related services. Options include teaching a gardening class, running a lawn care service or offering landscape consulting services. To get a feel for what's possible, check out the [New York Botanical Gardens online catalog](https://www.enrole.com/nybg/jsp/index.jsp?startDate=y) (https://www.enrole.com/nybg/jsp/index.jsp?startDate=y) where you'll find a variety of classes to help you get launched in this fertile field.

Another possibility from this growth trend: Sell a gardening product or accessory. As an example, the father and son team Seth and Mark Samuelson, of Coupland, Texas, have seen revenues for their [SeCa HoseHolder](http://www.secahoseholder.com/) (http://www.secahoseholder.com/)(a hands-free tool that helps people avoid bending down while gardening) soar by 300% since 2019.

"With people spending more time at home over the pandemic, many turned to gardening and found the SeCa Hose Holder to be the perfect addition for them," says Seth.

Trend # 3. Here come the brides!

The wedding industry is projected to rebound in 2021 after a dismal 2020 due to pandemic cancellations and postponements. But since many traditional wedding venues have a backlog of reservations, some newly engaged couples will opt for more intimate celebrations of 50 people or less, also known as "microweddings."

On the other extreme, some couples who privately wed last year are planning "sequel weddings" in 2021 — larger celebrations that showcase their original wedding vision.

Opportunity: Whether their weddings will be intimate or extravagant, most couples want to make the day extra special. That means a likely increased demand this year and next for wedding vendors including photographers, wedding planners and caterers.

Kathy Kristof, editor of [SideHusl.com](http://sidehusl.com/) (http://sidehusl.com/), told me she is seeing plenty of demand for wedding photographers on her site. She advises taking advantage of the "buy local" trend by announcing your services on free neighborhood websites, such as Nextdoor. "This is particularly attractive right now because a lot of consumers are newly committed to helping their local businesses survive," Kristof said.

Another way to benefit from the weddings trend: If you own a property that could be rented for a small reception or milestone celebration, Kristof recommends offering it up on sites like [PeerSpace](https://www.peerspace.com/) (https://www.peerspace.com/) or [ThisOpenSpace](https://thisopenspace.com/) (https://thisopenspace.com/). Of course, you'll only want to do this after you've been vaccinated and, if you live in a cool climate, in the summer or fall months when it can be held outside.

"Be sure to check into city regulations and zoning requirements," warned Kristof. "The city of Los Angeles, for example, has famously threatened to turn off utilities to sites that allow gatherings of more than ten people" during the pandemic.

Trend #4. Pet adoptions are surging.

According to the American Pets Product Association, U.S. [sales for pet food, supplies, vet care and other services](https://www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytr ends.asp) (https://www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytr ends.asp) were estimated to be a whopping \$99 billion in 2020.

Opportunity: There are endless ways to profit from your love of pets, including as a pet sitter, dog walker, groomer or trainer. You can open your own business or freelance on an "as-needed" basis by signing up with one of the online platforms that list pet-care jobs, such as Rover.com. The average [Rover.com dog walker earns \\$20 an hour](https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Rover.com/salaries/Dog-Walker) (https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Rover.com/salaries/Dog-Walker) according to Indeed.com.