Lesson 1: Discovering Your Personal Genius

Many people, whether sighted or visually impaired, pursue self-employment to gain a successful business career, but they do not spend enough time analyzing or preparing for the task in front of them. Some people start a small business after much research while they are still at a job. Still others leave their jobs to start a new small business, and some begin directly with self-employment instead of in the traditional job market.

This lesson describes some factors people think about when first considering self-employment. It presents some self-analysis activities that help people "discover their personal genius" so they can identify an interest, talent, gift, or skill they can best use to create a small business. Familiarizing yourself with these self-analysis activities can help you evaluate whether self-employment is right for you, before you spend a lot of time, energy, and money on the venture.
Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to
a. identify factors to think about when considering self-employment
b. recognize self-analysis activities people use when considering self-employment

Thinking About Self-Employment

What might a person, whether visually impaired or sighted, consider before following the path to self-employment? This section presents three stories about people who chose the self-employment option. Familiarizing yourself with their experiences will help you identify the activities that people consider when first thinking about self-employment.

First, meet Douglass. Think about the factors he considered when planning his self-employment.

Douglass A., Indiana, USA, Property Management

Being independent minded and wanting to rely on myself drove me to start a small business in addition to my career as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. The income of a counselor is quite modest, and I realized that I
would need to consider something else if I were to be as self-sufficient and financially independent as I preferred.

I also realized that instead of paying for training or working additional jobs, I could gradually invest in quality, low-end condominiums that homeowner associations would maintain on the outside. In my area, down payments were very low, so I could avoid the large upfront investment that many businesses require. Also, I could save money by living in the condominium until it was ready to rent for income. Marketing the apartments and finding the right tenants became key facets to this small business.

Because I was both working full-time and operating the rental business part-time, I could keep the rental business income in a separate account and not touch it. I thought about using it as a future reserve for other rental purchases or possibly for the upfront money for purchasing another type of business. But I
decided not to touch it but to keep it in reserve.

I believe that networking skills were important to my success. The condos I purchased needed mostly superficial repairs with occasional essential repairs. Through attending church retreats and meeting running guides, I made many friends with skills in engineering and home maintenance. I held pizza parties for those who helped paint, and I took some individuals out to dinner in thanks for their skilled labor. Without their help, I definitely could not have improved the properties for future rental purposes at such an affordable cost.

As a self-employed person, I have encountered challenges related to my visual impairment. For example, when I have an immediate need for repair, I find it difficult to call on my friends, as I do not want to take advantage of their willingness to help. There’s a time and place to ask friends for help, but I realize that sometimes I need to pay an outside business
to make the repair. Not being able to see and make the repairs myself has added an additional expense to operating the business, but the amount has not been significant enough to be a deal breaker.

Did you notice what factors Douglass considered when he planned his self-employment? He thought about doing something that would not require additional training or working an additional job. He also decided he preferred to find a business that didn't involve a very large upfront investment. Networking skills played a large role in the success of his endeavor, as well as did his consideration not to take advantage of his friends.

Now meet Suzanne. Ask yourself what factors Suzanne considered as she planned her self-employment.

**Suzanne L., Illinois, USA, CD and DVD Duplication**

My business provides duplication services for business owners, producers of training or informational materials, or anyone requiring
multiple copies of CDs, DVDs, or flash memory.

I started my business to earn an income. I was laid off from a job at a radio syndication company, where a large part of my responsibilities involved duplicating CDs of radio programs to send to our affiliates. I did not have luck getting another job in radio, so I explored other options where my skills could be used and decided to start my own business. I knew I had potential customers, based on my experience at the radio syndication company.

When considering a business, it is important to choose something that you are passionate about and that involves providing a needed service or product. In my case, I examined my skills base and explored ways to make a career of them.

As a self-employed person, I have also encountered challenges related to my visual impairment. Initially, the learning curve for using the equipment involved in duplicating and printing or "publishing" a disc was quite
steep. Another challenge was bookkeeping. Although QuickBooks, which I use, is tremendously helpful, it is not particularly JAWS friendly. This is where my consultant-husband has contributed to the business.

Did you notice how Suzanne recognized that she could use her skills in a self-employment endeavor? She also realized the importance of both being passionate about what she would do, as well as providing a needed service or product. In addition, she included the skillful help of her husband as a valuable part of her business success.

Finally, meet Faith and think about the factors that she considered in her self-employment endeavor.

**Faith C., Kansas, USA, Custom Knitting and Crocheting**

I am in small-scale manufacturing. I create and sell hand-crocheted and hand-knit items to order. I do not keep a large inventory, but make what people specifically ask for.

I employ only myself with some volunteer help from my husband. I am totally blind, and my
husband is sighted. Starting this business was a lifelong desire. I started it also to create some extra income because I found it next to impossible to find outside work.

I am an active member of my community, but I have found more help and customers through the Internet and e-mail as well as by becoming part of the "blindness community" by advertising in magazines like the *Braille Forum* and the *Braille Monitor*.

I have encountered self-employment business challenges related to my visual impairment, too. Sometimes people who can see think that the work I do is extraordinary and have lower standards for me than I do for myself. I find this frustrating!

I think it is very important for us as people who are visually impaired to find out what we are good at and find exciting, and then use that knowledge to find a career that we enjoy. When you're working at something you love, it is no longer work.
Similar to Suzanne, Faith recognized the value of using the skills she had and doing something she loves. She, too, involved the skillful help of her husband. She doesn't try to run a huge business, but controls costs by making items to order.

Section Review

Respond to each of the following questions. Then compare your answers with the ones provided.

1. What factors did each of the following persons consider when coming up with their business ideas?
   a. Douglass A., who rents condominiums
   b. Suzanne L., who sells CD and DVD duplication services
   c. Faith C., who sells custom knitting and crocheting

2. Identify and list all of your reasons for wanting to be self-employed. When you are done, look at the list you've made and put the reasons in order from most to least important.
Answers

1. a. Douglass A. (condos) considered the following:
   - doing something that didn't involve paying for training or working additional jobs
   - not needing a very large upfront investment
   - using networking skills and making friends through church retreats and running, who could help with maintenance work
   - recompensing friends by treating them to pizza parties or dinner out
   - recognizing it occasionally would be necessary to pay for outside help

b. Suzanne L. (CDs and DVDs) considered the following:
   - using skills she already had in the radio business
   - choosing something that she was passionate about and that also involved providing a needed service or product
   - examining her skills base and exploring ways to make a career of them
   - gaining technical help from her consultant husband
c. Faith C. (custom knitting and crocheting) considered the following:

- recognizing her lifelong desire
- needing a means of extra income, as outside employment was "next to impossible"
- deciding to make items to order, rather than keep a large inventory
- using the Internet, email, and advertising in blindness magazines to find help and customers
- getting volunteer help from her sighted husband
- recognizing that people with sight often set standards for her that are lower than her own, which she finds frustrating
- realizing the importance of determining what she is good at and finds exciting and using that knowledge to find a career that she enjoys
- working at something one loves is no longer work
2. Answers will vary based on your personal situation, but be sure to consider:

- what skills you have
- what activities you enjoy doing
- what needed products or services you may be able to provide
- which people you know who could help you in your self-employment endeavor

This section presented three stories about people who chose to become self-employed and identified the factors involved with their choice. The next time you meet someone who is self-employed, why not chat with that person about the factors he or she considered when first thinking about self-employment?

Self-Analysis Activities

"The challenge is to do what you want to do and make money from the enterprise," says nationally renowned small-business expert Urban Miyares. Successful small business owners discover their ideas in their own unique ways. However, first they needed to decide if self-employment was right for them. The following self-analysis activities can help people discover their
personal genius and decide whether to pursue self-employment:

- Identify and highlight your unique talents and interests
- Assess your risks and responsibilities
- Create a relationship map
- Assess your community
- Convert your experiences and talents into a small business idea
- Use a listening circle

Some of these activities can be accomplished alone, and others require group discussions. In either case, they should reveal information that helps you come up with a self-employment idea, decide if you should spend more time on the idea, and check its feasibility.

**Identify and Highlight Your Unique Talents**

This self-analysis activity uses the familiar method of asking *who, what, when, where, why, and how.* By doing so, you can make a list of what you do well and what you are willing to do for a business.
**Who**

These questions ask who you are. Identify your lifestyle, home environment, personal history, travel requirements, and likes and dislikes. How do you want to integrate your small business into your lifestyle? Is there someone who could help you with some of the tasks of running a business?

**What**

What do you enjoy doing? Do you have a hobby? What skills do you have? Describe your talents and interests. What type of employment have you had in the past? What parts of any previous job were enjoyable to you? What particular type of business specifically interest you?

**When**

These questions deal with time frames. How many hours do you want to work? What working hours are the most convenient? Mornings? Afternoons? Evenings? When can you begin working? Immediately? In three months? In six months?
Where
These questions concern your travel preferences. Are you seeking a home-based business? Do you need farmland, an office, or a storefront? Are you willing to travel? Do you want to conduct your business affairs locally, in your state or province, nationwide, or internationally?

How
These questions concern how you plan to run the business. Do you want to do all of the tasks associated with running a small business? Will adding these tasks ruin a hobby? Do you need training?

Why
Why do you want to be self-employed? Is it for money? For pleasure? For control? How much do you want to earn? What type of additional income is available to you?

The result of this self-analysis activity is information that should enable a person to come up with at least one possible new business idea. Consider what these
questions reveal about the three self-employed people featured in this lesson:

Douglass A.:

• **Who:** He had a lifestyle in which he worked as a VR counselor.
• **What:** He was able to purchase and live in low-end condominiums.
• **When and Where:** He could start his home-based, small business immediately.
• **How:** He networked to find help, and he managed others’ services to maintain the property. Low down payments in his area made upfront costs affordable for him.
• **Why:** He wanted a second income that could eventually allow him to be as self-sufficient and financially independent as he wanted.
Suzanne L.:
• Who and What: She is passionate about CD and DVD duplication services. She also planned to use the technical help of her consultant husband.
• How: She had the needed skills and experience in this job, as well as the ability to learn other skills such as bookkeeping.
• Why: She was laid off from her job.
• Where and When: She wanted to start a home-based business right away.

Faith C.:
• Who and Where: She has a lifestyle that allows her to work from home with help from her husband.
• When: She can work when she wants, as she creates pieces to order.
• What: She has a talent with knitting and crocheting and the ability to create custom pieces for her customers.
• How: Based on her self-analysis, she used her participation in the blindness community to help her market her business to customers looking for custom knitting and crocheting.
• Why: She can make money doing something she does well and enjoys.

As you saw in these three cases, the information from a self-analysis should identify work that a person would enjoy doing. Once you know what you want to do, you then need to assess your personal risks and responsibilities.

Assess Your Risks and Responsibilities

It is important to ask honest questions about your risks and responsibilities regarding self-employment.

Risks

Assessing your risks means performing a careful examination of what you can lose or gain by moving forward with a particular business idea. Imagine you have a short-term goal of making $5,000 in a six-month period selling your homemade self-standing cabinets. But what if business turns out so good that you’ve taken in $20,000 during this period, instead of $5,000, and have fifty new orders on a waiting list? How will you handle this unexpected development? A whole host of details can be affected. For example, will you be able to purchase materials, store them, and
arrange for all the shipping? And some events are very difficult to plan or prepare for.

During this early stage of considering self-employment, many business owners try to prepare for potential business risks by thinking honestly about what they can and cannot handle. Personality, work ethics, attitude, knowledge, financial skills, and the market itself can all play a part in the success or failure of a business idea. Be honest with yourself about what you can and cannot do and accommodate. This is the time to ask yourself if you are up for this challenge: Can I effectively lead in this business? Can I manage others? Will I be able to accept the success . . . or the failure of the business? The following are example questions that assess risk:

1. **Am I fully committed to this idea? Do I have the drive and commitment to persevere?** You may want to consider beginning this business on a trial-run basis, possibly part-time, while keeping your main job.

2. **Do I have or can I learn the skills needed to successfully run this business? Can I handle my own bookkeeping and administrative duties?** In Lesson 6,
you will learn more about identifying your strengths and weaknesses and how to turn weaknesses into strengths.

3. **How do I currently handle stress? Will this change as I develop this new venture?** As the person in charge, you will have to handle varying degrees of stress, which can affect job performance. It can also affect your personal life, as you are more likely to take your worries and concerns home with you.

4. **Do I usually take things in stride when they don’t turn out the way I want, or do I explode and blame others?** Everyone makes mistakes. This is a normal part of any learning process. Some handle these mishaps better than others. How well will you rebound?

5. **Can I manage without my current benefits?** Many people enjoy the personal perks and benefits of working for a company. If you are leaving an office job to be self-employed, benefits are a big detail to examine. Midday coffee breaks, social business outings and networking, and health insurance premiums will all be at your expense. Think carefully about the benefits you may be giving up to be self-employed. More on being self-employed and retaining benefits is discussed in Lesson 6.
Honestly answering questions like these helps determine if your business idea is possible. That is, assessing your risks now can help you decide if the scope or type of business you’re considering fits you and your situation.

To assess your overall risk for a business idea, rate your answers to the previous questions on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being low-risk, and 10 being high-risk. For example, how would you rate yourself on your ability to handle stress? If you’re used to stress and generally fix it and move on, then give yourself a low-risk rating, at maybe 1 or 2. But if you don’t handle stress well, then be honest and rate yourself as high-risk, possibly 9 or 10. Note you can make up questions of your own that assess specific risks; the previous questions are merely examples.

After rating yourself for all five questions, look at the numbers. If you have mostly 8s, 9s, and 10s, this signifies overall high risk. Consider the potential impact it can have on the business. It would be good to reassess your business idea. Rating your answers to questions regarding business risks gives you a good
assessment of where you stand with your business idea. In fact, this assessment might provide an insightful road map for you to follow as you move forward.

**Responsibilities**

Assessing responsibility refers to the business owner’s duties regarding business operations. Answering questions such as the following can be helpful:

1. Will this business be a sole proprietor, partnership, or corporation?
2. Will I need an accountant, lawyer, or tax professional to handle my legal affairs?
3. What are my business obligations to federal, state, and local tax agencies? As a business owner, you have to be aware of filing deadlines, improperly claimed deductions, or incomplete records or documentation.
4. What are my business obligations to employees? Will I need a staff, or can I implement this business idea myself? If you will need a staff, this means collecting payroll taxes, supplying benefits, and the creation of a safe work environment.
5. Can I do the necessary research to make sure my business idea is possible and can be profitable? It is
the business owner’s responsibility to determine that he or she can be successful in the business venture. There may already be many other businesses carrying out your business idea. You need to know the market situation as you weigh the pros and cons of your idea. You want to have a good indication that after a lot of hard work, your business will be successful. So performing research now is a good idea. This is discussed in more detail in Lesson 2.

6. Am I able to perform and provide the technical functions that may be necessary? If computers or other mechanical equipment are needed for the day-to-day operations of this business, will I have the capital to replace or fix the items?

As a responsible business owner, laying out the details of implementing a business idea is a smart plan. Whatever business idea is chosen, the business owner bears the responsibility of seeing that the businesses’ obligations are met. Now that you’ve strengthened your potential business idea further, it’s time to determine whether other individuals and communities can help you make money in your business.

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Create a Relationship Map

Most potential business owners make a list of all the people who can help them. Moreover, they arrange the names in a way that shows the connections among people and among groups of people. Many people can do this activity in their heads. Others prefer to systematically develop a list and create a relationship map on paper.

The following is one way to create a relationship map. List everyone you know who might help your new business, whether as a volunteer, potential employee, partner, coach, or consultant. For example:

- Parents
- Brothers and sisters
- Other family members
- Friends and acquaintances
- Clergy
- Teachers
- Club members
- Association members
- Agency staff
- People you know where you shop or bank
Then describe all the ways that these people could help your small business. For example:

- Become a partner
- Refer potential customers
- Refer interested investors
- Invest money themselves
- Provide services
- Recommend others who could work for you
- Recommend attorneys, accountants, consultants, and trainers

Once people begin recommending others who can help you, you begin to create a large network of people who can help with the small business. The result of this analysis is a relationship map.

Using a relationship map has many benefits. First, the people who help you will become emotionally invested in your success. They may do a variety of tasks later in the process to help your business. Some business owners organize a meeting where everyone willing to help forms an "advisory group" of helpers. This group of people often goes out of its way to make your new business a big success.
For example, Douglass A. had a network of friends and acquaintances who helped him improve and maintain his properties. Suzanne L. had been in the radio business where she had developed many connections who could help her start her business. Faith C. had help from her husband. And to promote her new business, she also used the power of networking with organized groups of individuals who are blind.

These successful small business owners used the resources and support of the people in their lives, community, and previous careers. They identified people who would become emotionally invested and committed to their success. Once they identified these people, they used this network for business development.

**Assess Your Community**

Next, you can assess for opportunities in the community that may help with your small business idea. Traditionally, a community is a group of people who live in the same place and have something in common, such as culture, heritage, religion, occupation, or personal interests. With the advent of the Internet, people can find communities online, where
they can "meet" others with similar interests, backgrounds, or needs. Whether physical or online, these communities perceive themselves as distinct in some respect from the larger society.

Many small businesses target a market in a local community. Others might market to an entire state, province, country, or many countries. Internet businesses, also known as e-commerce, can target all of these markets, from a small community to a worldwide audience. Using resources from consumer groups and organized groups of individuals who are blind can often jump-start an Internet business.

A careful study of a community's demographics, which are the characteristics of its population, community businesses, and community resources available for individuals with visual impairments, can yield insights into the market that the new business owner would like to serve. There are many ways to develop a community assessment; however, most people follow the familiar pattern of asking who, what, when, and where.
Who

Who in your local community can help? What other organizations can help? Are organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club, the Kiwanis, or other businesses in the area available to help?

If the small business targets a town, become part of the town's business community. If the business targets a dispersed market, or people who are physically spread far apart, investigate the usefulness of associations, clubs, and online communities.

What

Ask questions about the basic requirements connected to starting a small business in your targeted community, such as the following:

- taxes
- possible tax breaks
- licenses
- rules and regulations
- city, county, state, and national purchasing advantages
- special "set-aside provisions" for business owners who are ethnic minorities or who are disabled
When
Is there a time frame connected to this community? Will something occur in the future that will benefit or hinder this community? Are future initiatives or funding incentives being considered for this community?

Where
Identify the geographical area. Describe the businesses in the area. Identify the potential customers in the area.

Your resulting answers to these questions form your *community assessment*. Consider how the three self-employed people featured in this lesson used this information. Douglass A. used his knowledge of his community and its real estate market to search for properties and potential renters. Suzanne L. already had a market of potential customers based on her participation in the community of CD and DVD reproduction users. Faith C. used her knowledge of the blindness community by advertising her custom knitting service in blindness-related magazines.
Convert Your Experiences and Talents into a Small Business Idea

After you gather enough information, you can use the information to create a description of the small business idea. How does someone describe a small business idea? A common technique among business owners is the "elevator speech," which is a short, carefully planned, and well-practiced description of a company that anyone can understand in the time it takes to ride in an elevator. This technique also works for new business ideas. Simply answer the following six questions:

1. *What* is your product or service?  
2. *Who* are your customers?  
3. *How* do you make money?  
4. *Why* are you the best person to start this company?  
5. *Who* is the competition?  
6. *What* is your competitive advantage?

For the last question, you need to communicate how your company is different and why you have an advantage over the competition. For example, consider how Faith C. uses this technique:
1. What is your product or service? She sells custom knitting and crochet work.
2. Who are your customers? She sells them to people who notice her ads in blindness-related and other media.
3. How do you make money? She sells made-to-order pieces at competitive prices.
4. Why are you the best person to start this company? She has the talent and the background to succeed in this role.
5. Who is the competition? Her competition may be stores selling machine-made items or other persons who sell hand-knit and hand-crocheted items.
6. What is your competitive advantage? Her talent, ability, and network in the blindness community give her a competitive advantage in this market.

Consider Using a Listening Circle

Some small business owners get help from career coaches, business development consultants, veteran administration (VA) and vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors, or other employment specialists so they can refine a business idea and then turn that idea into a
profitable small business. The best of these coaches often look "inside-out" with their clients and lead listening circles, which involve activities and brainstorming sessions that help the individual "discover his or her personal genius." Although organized and facilitated by the career coach, these sessions must always emphasize your desires and interests as the small business owner. It is important that you always remain in control of the process.

The process begins with the discovery experience that involves four parties: the potential small business owner, family and friends, community members, and the counselor or coach. Each person has a role to play in this listening circle, and everyone is responsible for creating tangible results. Once again, this type of activity will help you identify people who are invested in your success.

Many small business owners follow this process to identify a product or service to develop and then sell for a profit. Two similar listening circle techniques are the Essential Lifestyle Planning (ELP) method and the MAPS (Making Action Plans) method. ELP is a tool used to determine how a person wants to live and how
he or she wants it to happen. It involves the creation of a detailed action plan. MAPS focuses on people’s desirable futures or dreams, covers their history, and identifies their gifts. The end result of a listening circle is to lead you to a small business idea that you can assess in the next lesson. More information about ELP and MAPS are in the Resources section of this lesson.

**Section Review**

*Multiple Choice*

Select the best item to answer each of the following questions.

1. Which of the following is a self-analysis activity that can help you discover your personal genius?
   a. creating a business plan
   b. assessing your community
   c. asking a close friend for help with financing

The correct answer is (b). Self-analysis activities to pursue when you're considering self-employment are identifying and highlighting your unique talents and interests, assessing risks and responsibilities, creating a relationship map, assessing your
community, converting your talents into a small business idea, and using a listening circle.

2. Self-analysis activities can do which of the following?
   a. help you create a budget
   b. enable you to think of at least one possible new self-employment idea
   c. negatively impact your new business

   The correct answer is (b). Self-analysis activities can be used to help you think of a new self-employment idea, decide if you should spend more time developing the idea, and assess it.

3. When identifying and highlighting your unique talents, what might you determine when asking who?
   a. how to integrate your small business idea into your lifestyle
   b. how to make a large profit
   c. both (a) and (b)

   The correct answer is (a). When asking who while identifying and highlighting your unique talents, you might determine how to integrate your small
business idea into your lifestyle. Other things to consider with this question include your lifestyle, home environment, personal history, travel requirements, and likes and dislikes.

4. When assessing risks and responsibilities, which of the following is recommended?
   a. not worrying about whether one will be able to handle stress
   b. not wasting time on research so early in the process
   c. rating one's answers to questions regarding risks

The correct answer is (c). Rating one’s answers to questions regarding business risks helps a person decide if the scope or type of business being considered is a fit. It is important to know how well one handles stress; also, research on a business idea is important at this stage.

5. What is the purpose of creating a relationship map?
   a. to evaluate skills
   b. to determine if a particular time frame in getting the business running is feasible
c. to show connections among people and groups who could help you in your new business

The correct answer is (c). Many people design relationship maps on paper and systematically list the people in their lives who can help them succeed in their new business.

6. When developing a community assessment, many small businesses do which of the following?
   a. target a market in the local community
   b. determine if they are willing to travel
   c. determine how many hours they plan to work

   The correct answer is (a). Some small businesses target a market in the local community; others might market to an entire state, province, country, or many countries.

7. In a community assessment, which question includes considering special provisions for business owners who are ethnic minorities or who are disabled?
   a. what
   b. who
   c. when
The correct answer is (a). In a community assessment, the *what* question includes considering special provisions for business owners who are ethnic minorities or who are disabled. The *what* question also involves asking about the basic requirements connected with starting a small business, taxes and possible tax breaks, licenses and rules and regulations to follow, and city, county, state, and national purchasing advantages.

8. In a community assessment, which question involves identifying potential customers in a geographical area?
   a. when
   b. where
   c. who

The correct answer is (b). In a community assessment, asking *where* involves identifying potential customers in a geographical area. It also involves describing other businesses in the area.

9. When should the question, "What is your competitive advantage?" be considered?
   a. when creating your relationship map
b. when you're ready to convert your talents into a small business idea
c. both (a) and (b)

The correct answer is (b). The reading suggests six questions to answer when considering converting your talents into a small business idea:

1. What is your product or service?
2. Who are your customers?
3. How do you make money?
4. Why are you the best person to start this company?
5. Who is the competition?
6. What is your competitive advantage?

10. What is a listening circle?
   a. when the boss and coworkers gather to give advice on a business idea
   b. a technique used for the online community
   c. a brainstorming session that helps you discover your personal genius

The correct answer is (c). A listening circle is a brainstorming session that helps you discover your personal genius. It is designed to help individuals
refine a business idea into a profitable idea by emphasizing the individual's desires and interests. A career coach leads these sessions, which typically involve the potential business owner, his or her family and friends, and community members.

**Short Answer**

This lesson provided three real-life stories of self-employed individuals:

- Douglass A., who purchases and rents condominiums
- Suzanne L., who provides CD and DVD duplication services
- Faith C., who performs custom knitting and crocheting

Choose one of these individuals, and briefly describe a self-analysis activity the individual used correctly in his or her small business. Use the concepts you learned in this section reading.

For example, Douglass A. mentioned his networking skills were important to his success. He developed a
relationship map when he made friends and acquaintances through church and running who were willing to help him out. When the condos he had purchased needed minor repairs, he was able to contact his friends who had skills in engineering and home maintenance, rather than paying professionals. He would then hold pizzas parties, treating his friends to free pizza in exchange for their labor.

*Suggested Answers*

- Douglass A. performed an assessment on his community and real estate market when he searched for properties and potential renters. He was able to decide that investing in low-end condominiums was feasible for his market or local community.

- Suzanne L. identified and highlighted her unique talents and interests when she decided to choose something she was passionate about and had skills in. Also, Suzanne must have assessed her community, because she knew she already had a market of potential customers based on her previous experience.

- Faith C. converted her talents into a small business idea by selling her made-to-order crocheted and
knitted items. She developed her relationship map by attracting customers via the Internet, email, and advertising in *The Braille Forum* and *The Braille Monitor*. Also, she identified and highlighted her unique talents and interests by asking *what* to determine what she enjoys to do and highlighting a hobby.

This section presented some self-analysis activities that people use when considering self-employment. Why not begin doing some of these activities now to get at least one new self-employment idea?

**Summary**

This lesson discussed factors to consider and self-discovery activities associated with self-employment. The stories and information will help you understand what it takes to discover an interest or talent that you can convert into a small business. Now that you have this information, the next lesson provides a way to assess your idea with a feasibility study.
Assignment 1

For general information on completing assignments, refer to the Getting Started instructions. Then start this assignment by giving your full name, address, and phone number. Also list the name of this course, Assignment 1, your instructor’s name, and the date. Be sure to include the question number along with each answer. This assignment is worth 100 points.

Multiple Choice

Select the best item to answer each of the following questions. (6 points each)

1. Which of the following is NOT an important factor to consider when thinking about self-employment?
   a. what skills a person has
   b. who can help with the business
   c. which business opportunities do not involve other people

2. Which of the following factors did Doug, Susan, and Faith all think about when considering self-employment?
   a. special training
   b. skills required for the task
3. Which of the following statements about factors to consider when thinking about self-employment is TRUE?
   a. It is important to choose an activity you enjoy and are good at.
   b. Providing a necessary product or service is not essential to self-employment.
   c. Only people with visual impairment must consider self-employment factors.

4. How are self-analysis activities, which can help you discover your personal genius, accomplished?
   a. by just yourself
   b. through group discussions
   c. both (a) and (b)

5. Why follow the self-analysis activities outlined in this lesson?
   a. to reveal information that can help you develop a self-employment idea
   b. to help you assess your idea
   c. both (a) and (b)
6. Which of the following describes arranging names in a way that shows connections among people and groups of people?
   a. determining a suitable time frame before launching your business
   b. creating a relationship map
   c. determining a new business idea

7. What is a benefit of forming an advisory group?
   a. This group may go out of its way to help your new business.
   b. This group can become emotionally involved in your future successes.
   c. both (a) and (b)

8. When assessing your community to see if self-employment is ideal for you, which activity gives invaluable insight into the market you want to serve?
   a. asking about basic requirements for starting a small business in the community
   b. studying community demographics and resources for people with visual impairments
   c. both (a) and (b)
9. Which of the following describes an elevator speech a businessperson would use?
   a. a carefully planned, well-practiced, and brief description of your business idea
   b. a relationship map to someone who can help with the business
   c. a discussion of community demographics and existing businesses

10. If you use a listening circle, who can help you refine your business idea?
    a. a spouse or family member
    b. veteran administration/vocational rehabilitation (VA/VR) counselors
    c. both (a) and (b)

**Short-Answer**

Briefly respond to the following question in a paragraph or list. (100 words)

11. What is your "personal genius"? To answer this question, first describe yourself and your situation. Then explain a self-analysis activity you have tried, and identify your interests, talents, gifts, or skills
that you can best use to create a small business. (40 points)

Once you have completed this assignment, send it to your instructor. Then begin Lesson 2: The Feasibility Study.