

▪ ***Can you give a brief history and explanation of BAI?***

Business Alternatives was created Feb 4th 2002 to fill the need that a single company had in the area of data entry. Since then we have moved into the Scanning/Imaging arena and we also have created small custom programs for clients to perform highly specific tasks. A high level synopsis of BAI is that we take clients images/paper/input and turn that into usable data. Scanning the paper into electronic data allows the clients that we service to become a more efficient and more productive outfit. By removing the manually intensive processes from employee hands, clients can focus on their core business not shuffling paper and searching for data. From Feb '02 till June '03 BAI was a home-based business ~ in June '03 we moved in to our offices.

▪ ***With several different options available for starting a business, (sole proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations) what was the reasoning behind your decision?***

Business Alternatives is a sole proprietorship with no shares of stock sold. Currently, I am the only officer of the corporation. The reasoning behind the sole proprietorship was basically made after speaking with my lawyer and finding out that this would be the best option for the business at the time.

▪ ***Knowing what you do now, would you have considered a different startup option?***

Sometimes I wonder if having a partner would have been a good idea because we could have split some of the decision making responsibilities and hopefully had moved the business forward twice as fast. Having a second set of eyes on some of the information/marketing materials/opportunities for the business may have made a difference.

▪ ***Entrepreneurs are often referred to as “risk takers”, who provide an impetus for change, innovation, and progress in economical life. Do you consider yourself a risk taker and what role, if any, did that play in your decision to start a business?***

I do think of myself as a risk-taker in business, however, I don't think it played that big a role in starting the business since I was very familiar with the functions of Imaging, Scanning and Data Entry. I believe that even risk-takers have to have some knowledge of the business venture that they are getting into or else they are bound to fail. Also, I believe that most small businesses are created by people that see a gap in a current process or see a need for a product that is not being fulfilled.

▪ ***It is believed that occasionally small business owners will rely merely on a “gut feeling” that their product or service will sell. Although not recommended, in many circumstances, it has proven to be successful. Was BAI a result of that “gut feeling” or a result of extensive market research? (or possibly a combination of both?)***

Business Alternatives was conceived for a single large client so there was not really a need for gut feeling in the initial startup of the business. Every move since that initial decision, however, has and continues to be a 'gut-feeling' decision.

▪ ***How important is marketing for BAI? What strategies, if any, are used to relay the availability of BAI's services to potential customers?***

Marketing for any company is what keeps the company alive. Business Alternatives has employed many marketing strategies in the past and will continue to do so when needed. We have used the Direct Mailing approach, Cold Calling prospects, Website promotion of the business and recently we began to actually go in to client offices to meet with management and discuss our services. We are also looking at hosting a free seminar at our office as a Marketing Campaign and a way to get information out to prospective clients.

▪ ***What would you consider the most challenging aspects of a business startup?***

By far the most challenging aspect of starting a business is getting the next customer. After that it has to be the time that a business takes from your home life. After the first customer is serviced your next task is always finding the next one. This encompasses all of your next steps including Marketing, managing your employees, and determining the need for additional resources (people or equipment). All of this happens while staying flexible enough for your next customers needs.

▪ ***What are some of the advantages of starting/running your own business?***

Advantages of running your own business is a personal feeling. It could be that you want to be in charge of your work and the direction that you are moving within your own career. This belief is likely derived from your work experience good or bad. Also, after the initial startup costs associated with any business there is, if done correctly, a monetary advantage with running your own business.

▪ ***Are there any setbacks or disadvantages to starting/running your own business?***

The one disadvantage to me in running your own business is the amount of time that it takes to get the business off the ground and then managing the day-to-day operations of the business. This undoubtedly takes from your personal time and from your time with your family. Other than that, I have not run into the disadvantages or set-backs.

▪ ***From an entrepreneurial standpoint, what does the future hold for BAI? (future plans, changes, expansion, possible succession plans)***

Business Alternatives future, like any small businesses future from an entrepreneurial standpoint is to expand and grow. Realistically, that takes time, money and hard work. We will continue to market the business looking for new clients to service and service the clients that we have contracted with. I would love for this business to grow and thrive since this venture does help other businesses with their information. We will continue to move in that direction.

▪ ***What does your future as an entrepreneur hold? (another startup? different industry?)***

Since, as we discussed, most entrepreneurs as risk-takers, there is always thought of the next business venture or the next industry to get in. This sometimes makes a person unfocused on their current work. I always have my ears/eyes open to new things but I am also quick to realize that thus far this business has been good to me and before I get too deep into the next thing make sure that the “now” work is taken care of.