

# Self Informed

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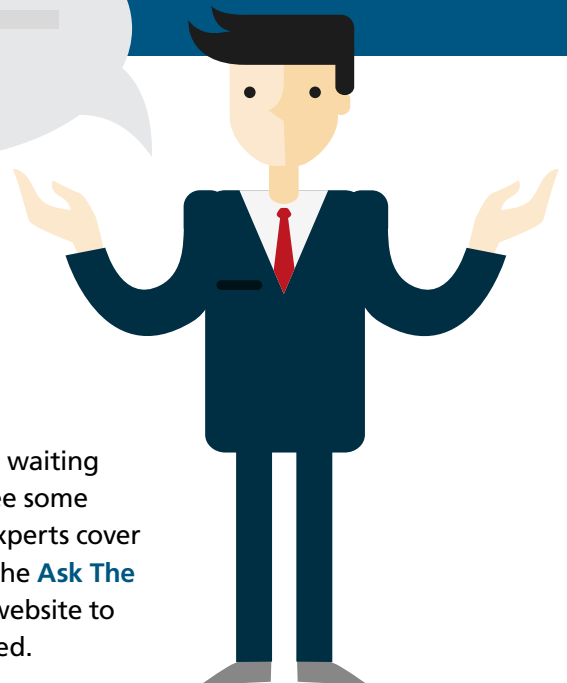


# GO AHEAD, ASK THE EXPERTS!



NASE members have unlimited access to professional business consultants through the [Ask The Experts portal](#) on our website. With a few clicks on the mouse and strokes on the keyboard, you get answers to specific questions you have about your business. This is not a Frequently Asked Question section (though we do have that) that you see on typical websites, our [Ask The Experts portal](#) allows you the opportunity to give details and include specifics when asking your question and receive a direct specific answer in return. All this is included in your membership at no additional cost.

Over the years we have consulted with over 100,000 micro and small business owners on scores of business topics. So what are you waiting for? Browse below to see some of the topic areas our experts cover and then head over to the [Ask The Experts section](#) of our website to get the answers you need.



## TAXES (TAXTALK)

Benjamin Franklin is often credited with the common idiom, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes." Whether or not he really said it, most of us have heard this before. The experts at NASE TaxTalk may not know that much about death, but we do know taxes. From federal tax to state tax, from auto deductions to depreciation, from estimated taxes to penalties and interest, and everything in between, we are here to help with any question that you might have. Our CPAs and tax professionals have over 100 years of small business tax experience and we have answered literally hundreds of thousands of questions over the last 35 years. We hate to use the words "logic" and "IRS" in the same sentence, but if you have a question about taxes and the IRS, NASE TaxTalk is logically the place to find the answer.

## FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

Very few of us grow up wanting to be accountants and even fewer of us will admit to being an accountant when asked at the Sunday school party. But when a small business owner has an accounting question, we can be as handy as a pocket on a shirt....with or without a pocket protector. If you are setting up a new chart of accounts for your new small business or trying to decide whether to lease or buy your new car, we can help. Net present value, depreciation questions, compliance with GAAP accounting, and even setting up a new payroll process are all issues that our experts are available to help with. The accountants, bookkeepers, and CPAs dedicated to helping NASE members are also small business owners who not only know the answer to the questions, but also understand the importance of having asked the question themselves.

## BUSINESS STRATEGY (SHOP TALK)

The most dangerous question a business owner can have is the one they don't know exists. Our job is to help identify and answer those questions promptly. A few of the more common questions we address include:

- › Starting a new business or expanding an existing one.
- › Buying or selling a business.
- › Choosing the right business legal and tax structure.
- › How and when to develop a business plan.
- › General business liability and insurance issues.
- › Financing and capital needs for a business.
- › Marketing, advertising and public relations.
- › Hiring, managing and terminating employees.
- › Dealing with government regulations.
- › Copyrights, trademarks and patents.

No matter what the question might be, the Business Strategy experts are available to help members one-on-one manage and grow their business.



## BUSINESS LAW

Why is a business law discussion of value? With so many local laws how can general discussion be of benefit? Legal issues are always affecting business, either below the surface or as a matter of routine. One thing they have in common is that they are usually time and energy consuming distractions from your already spread thin work time.

We discuss business law issues from contracts to regulations to business structure. Recurring themes seem to involve trademark, copyright, business structure and risk. General discussion and review of potential issues helps a business owner move past the sometimes overwhelming language and scope of business law. We are not a replacement for direct legal advice and in fact do not give specific advice as every situation and state is different.

Our most satisfying feedback comes from those who become more successful and comfortable in business as they gain more understanding of legal terms and situations. This type of knowledge not only breeds confidence but helps you know when you may need a lawyer and, when you do, what to expect and how to better work with that lawyer.

## HEALTH CARE REFORM

Health Care has been a hot button ever since the Affordable Care Act was proposed. We have all had to deal with the changes it brought in different ways. Some of us had rising costs, some were saving money. Maybe you had to get rid of your employee's health-care, maybe you had to add it.

While we have had some time to adjust, many small business owners still have questions surrounding health care in general. Our experts are well versed in both what you need to do for your business in a practical sense and what is being done in Washington DC at a high level to impact laws and policy. When you have a question, big or small, about health care the NASE should be the first place you come to for answers.



## REAL ESTATE

Our real estate experts have over 25 years of experience in both real estate sales and investments. With thousands of real estate transactions completed, we are uniquely qualified to consult with NASE members on a variety of real estate topics. A few of the areas about which we answer questions include:

### Commercial

- ▶ Commercial property leasing for tenants: how to identify, negotiate, and lease property as a small business tenant.
- ▶ Commercial property leasing for landlords: the steps and considerations involved in leasing out commercial property as a property owner.
- ▶ Commercial property acquisition: all aspects of purchase, whether it be an existing structure or raw land to be developed.
- ▶ Tenant finish: the relevant issues and steps tenants encounter in finishing out raw space to be occupied.
- ▶ Commercial investing: strategies and economics of commercial real estate investing.

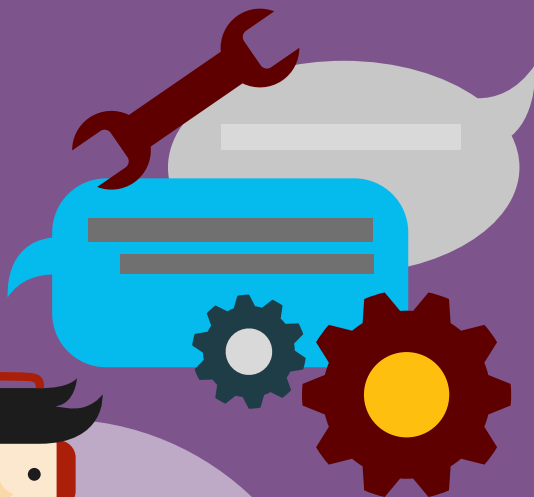
### Residential

- ▶ Purchasing a home: the entire purchase process, from finding the right property to successfully closing the purchase.
- ▶ Selling a home: all steps of selling, from identifying a professional real estate agent to closing the sale.
- ▶ Residential investing: the processes and economics of real estate investing, whether as a long term investor or as a residential house "flipper".



## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

At NASE, we get IT! If you're a small business owner you probably don't have a budget for this stuff. That's why we're here. We can help you find the IT solutions you need to keep your business going without the funds that big businesses normally have. The NASE professionals have the knowledge and experience to help guide you through the many challenges and decisions a business such as yours faces each and every day. Need a website? Perhaps an affordable yet scalable computer or phone system? Not sure which software you should buy? Do you not know where to turn or perhaps you want a second opinion before you spend the big money? IT can be a complicated subject. We're here to help you understand so you can get the most out of your investment. If it's IT, we get IT!



## DATABASE MANAGEMENT

More and more today, data is becoming the life-blood of your business. Gathering the right data, storing it securely and properly, and knowing what to do with your data is critical to the success of most businesses today. The manner in which your data is managed provides an essential competitive edge to your business. A robust data management plan can provide invaluable insights into growing or starting your business by better understanding your customer's needs and reducing your costs of providing for those needs. Ever wonder what database solution might work best for your business now and into the future? Already have a database solution and wondering if it's the right one or why it's not performing as well as you need? Get an error from your database solution you just don't understand? Ask away...We can help!

- › Data Gathering and Structure issues
- › Data Management
- › Data Storage Concerns
- › Data Security
- › Database Performance
- › Database Maintenance Best Practices
- › Structured Query Language (SQL) questions
- › Database Errors and Potential Solutions



## MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

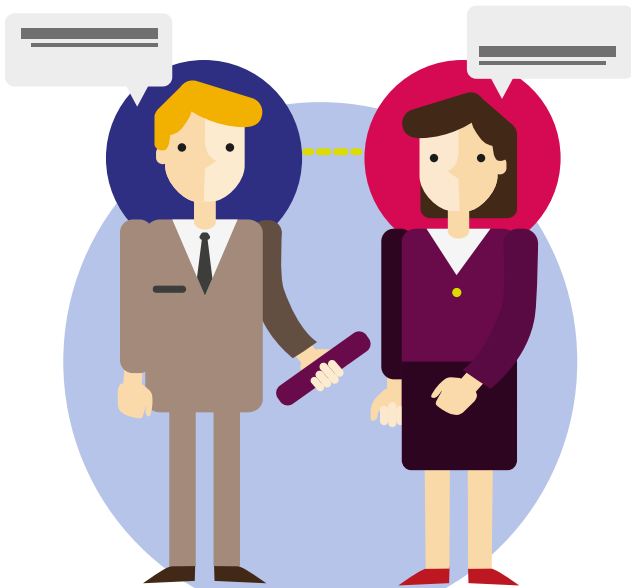
Is my marketing working? How can I measure it? Do I really need it? What can I improve?

These are common questions. 'Marketing' encompasses everything from your signage, your business cards, website, company apparel, to the wrap on your company truck. Marketing is all about your image and the perception you build in the mind of your customer. Yes, you need a solid strategy that will meet your profit goals. Then you need to know how to effectively execute the plan and measure your efforts. With more than 25 years of experience in creating marketing and advertising campaigns that work, the NASE experts are here to help you develop a plan and a budget to meet your monetary goals. If you want to ensure that your brand strategy stays on target, generates leads through direct mail or develop and execute a social media plan, we are an email away.

Having worked with a variety of clients including pawn shops, insurance agents, pool maintenance companies, juice bars, car manufacturers, trade schools, non-profits, authors, audiologists, cancer hospitals, appliance manufacturers, glass and mirror companies, publishing companies and more - every company and industry is unique. However, all share the need to be well branded and earn a profitable return on investment.

Ultimately, you have to know if your marketing and advertising are paying off. Every day I work with clients to put tracking systems into place to measure return on investment and continually improve their return.

Don't continue to wonder if your marketing is working, let's put it to the test.



## B-TO-B LEADS

Business-to-Business (B2B) refers to one business making a commercial transaction with another. Business-to-Consumer (B2C) refers to a transaction conducted between a company and consumers. Think of it like this; B2C is when you go to the store and buy goods or services from a business, B2B is when business 'A' buys goods or services from business 'B'.

Understanding the buying process can help increase sales as long as you are marketing through the right channel. Recent trends show budget increases for website optimization, social media, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing and email marketing. Likewise, there have been budget decreases for webinars, tradeshows, direct mail and print advertising.

The past decade has brought numerous changes to the buying process. Our experts have an extensive background in the marketing process of capturing interest in a product or service for the purpose of generating and cultivating leads.

If you are having trouble finding leads, or if current leads are not paying off, talk to our experts. Any questions you have regarding leads, NASE has an expert who will assist you.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Should I advertise on Facebook? What is Snapchat? Will my customers be on Instagram? I hate writing, do I need a blog?

Do you find yourself asking these questions or similar ones about social media? Do you even know what social media is or does? The experts at the NASE know the answers to these questions and more. We will help you decide which social media outlets you should be spending time managing and which ones you can do without. From content creation to technical support to spending advertising money, we are here to ensure you have all the information necessary to manage these tools effectively. The internet is a big place; don't hesitate to ask us about areas that are unknown to you.





# Ask the Expert

**Q:** *I am in my second year as a small business owner and I am still not sure if I am required to use a CPA to do my tax return. What is my best option?*

**A:** Your question is a great one and one that should be answered before you do anything else related to completing your annual income tax return. As a CPA myself, I certainly don't want to talk you out of using a professional but it is my concerted opinion that almost all of us are capable of preparing our own tax return. The availability of sophisticated tax software packages such as TurboTax, TaxCut, and others along with increasing access to experts such as those available through the NASE for questions and detailed assistance, the process becomes more and more palatable. Most CPAs, EAs, and other tax professionals will charge somewhere between \$300 and \$600 to prepare a basic small business tax return and if you have an extra Saturday,

this is money that you can probably keep. This is not necessarily an easy decision so don't take it lightly, but if you are doing basically the same things you did last year with about the same income and about the same experience with expenses, this may be a good year to attempt to do the return yourself. Keep in mind that if this is your first small business tax return or if you have some complicated issues such as accelerated depreciation options on the new equipment you purchased this might be the year to use that CPA or EA to help. But before you jump to conclusions think about doing the return yourself. You have resources and you have places to ask questions. There is no wrong answer here, but make sure that you know that you have options.



24/7 business expertise.  
**Help yourself.**

Get free answers online from our experts for every business question.

Find an expert now >

nase



As always, don't forget that you are not alone. Bookmark our website at **NASE.org** as well as the IRS website at **IRS.gov** you will always be able to find the help you need.



# Member Benefits

Visit [www.NASE.org](http://www.NASE.org) to learn more about the following benefits!

The **NASE Minute** is a series of videos created by our own experts and released weekly. The videos are designed to help your business succeed!

If you are like most business owners, your time is valuable and often you run out of it. That's why we aim to keep our videos less than 3 minutes in length. We pack a lot of helpful information into each video, so if you find you have a question, be sure to **ask our experts directly**.



Browse all of the previous NASE Minute business videos such as:

- ▶ Deducting Health Insurance Premiums
- ▶ Hire Your Kid and Reduce Your Taxable Income by \$6,000
- ▶ Preparing an Audit Proof Tax Return
- ▶ Small Business – Most Important Success Factor
- ▶ Small Business Benefits from NASE

New!



### TurboTax Online

NASE members receive a 15% discount on the #1 online tax preparation program. **Turbo Tax Online** makes filing your taxes easy... and it's quick and affordable.

- Prepare your taxes for free and pay only when you're ready to print or file
- No software to install
- File electronically and get your refund faster

Members need to login to [NASE.org](http://NASE.org) to access the benefit discounts.

- ✓ \$29.99 for the **Deluxe** package (most popular)
- ✓ \$44.99 for the **Premier** package
- ✓ \$64.99 for the **Home & Business** package

## Office DEPOT® OfficeMax®

NASE Members can save up to 80% on over 93,000 products.

Great for your printing, hardware, software and all of your office supply needs. Shop online or in any Office Depot or OfficeMax store. Enjoy FREE next-day delivery when online orders over \$50 are placed.

### Office Depot and OfficeMax Benefits Include:

- Up to 80% off preferred products
- 93,000 products discounted below retail price
- FREE next-day delivery on online orders over \$50 (excludes furniture)
- Conveniently shop online or visit one of our local stores
- Exclusive low printing costs
- 100% satisfaction guaranteed



## Member Spotlight



# Cooking Self-Employment

*Brooke Kinsey is the Co-Owner and Chef at **Bleu & Fig** located in Columbus, Ohio. Brooke has long loved food and attended Johnson and Wales University in Virginia where she got her degree in culinary arts. Brooke met her business partner and Co-Owner Regina (a horticulturalist by trade) and together they started Bleu & Fig where they combined their expertise in catering and floral displays. When starting Bleu & Fig, they had the mindset that food should be entertainment unto itself. Brooke applied for an NASE Growth Grant so they could take their traveling business and set up a brick and mortar store front.*

### What inspired you to enter the field you are in?

A love of food led me to pursue a degree in culinary arts. I learned comfort food from an early age. Pan fried steak from my grandmother fueled me to produce beef tenderloin with fig and bleu cheese preserves. Mashed potatoes gave way to fingerlings with crème fraîche and caviar. At Bleu & Fig, we create Modern American comfort food. The idea of food without love doesn't make sense to us.

### When and why did you start your business?

Bleu & Fig started in 2000 with the goal of a holistic and modern approach to entertaining. By combining the food and floral display areas, we feel we have the unique ability to succeed in our approach to entertaining.

### What challenges have you faced in your business?

Marketing is always a challenge! Determining the best way to reach potential clients is a learning process. As we've grown, staffing is a constant concern. As you grow, putting your faith in employees, rather than being responsible for every aspect of the business is tough! Keeping good employees is also a challenge, as we aren't able to provide a set, full time schedule.

### Speaking of marketing, how do you market your business?

Social media has been useful to us as a marketing tool to promote events being held at our new event space, located at 4622 North High Street. Marketing is always a challenge and hard to measure. We've truly found that existing clients and good referrals have been fundamental in the growth of our business. We often consider paid marketing and advertising but word of mouth has worked so far for us.

### What's your schedule like, what's a typical day for you?

As you and your readers likely know, every single day is different for a small business owner. I wear many hats, some days I may be in the kitchen all day preparing food. Other days may be in the office, or meeting with clients. I've found that flexibility is the key to survival.

### Do you have any employees?

We have one full time staff member, our Operations Director, which has been instrumental in our success. We also have part time servers that are utilized for our larger events. We try to have some consistency with the part time employees that we hire because we don't need to train and provide instruction as much but it is difficult as schedules don't always allow it. We are currently looking for a full time Salesperson if anyone knows someone in or around Columbus!

*"The idea of food without love doesn't make sense to us."*





*"If I had to sum [self-employment] up in two words,  
I would say: creativity and freedom."*

#### **What's the best thing about being self-employed?**

The ability to be creative in what we do every day is the best part of being self-employed. It is a pleasure to create amazing celebrations for our guests and to see it come together in our own vision under our terms. If I had to sum it up in two words, I would say creativity and freedom.

#### **What's the best compliment you've ever received from a client?**

A recent bride & groom told us "they could never have imagined in their wildest dreams that their wedding day would have been such a fabulous celebration!" It was very

gratifying to hear this but it also made me think back to when we started the business and our mission to create "holistic and modern entertaining" and how impactful we could be in client's lives.

#### **What's the most important piece of advice you would give to someone starting their own business?**

Absolute dedication to your business is imperative to being an entrepreneur. Know that some failures will happen, but being able to persevere is essential for success. A belief in yourself and your business that is unbreakable and able to weather the storms and carry you to sunny days.



### **Want to be Featured in Upcoming Issues?**

Log onto [NASE.org](http://NASE.org) and fill out the **Get Publicity** form. Don't miss this unique opportunity to showcase your business and get noticed by your fellow NASE members.



### **Learn More in the NASE Member Directory**

Learn more about other Self-Employed businesses in the **NASE Member Directory**. You can add your own company to the NASE Member Directory at no charge – it is a free benefit to NASE members.

# YOU ARE YOUR OWN BEST ADVOCATE

The joy of working for the NASE is that I get to be your advocate in Washington, D.C. and across many State capitols, however, the most effective advocate for the issues that are most important to you, the self-employed business owner, is YOU!

Elected officials, Administration representatives, political staff, and other influencers, are always enthralled and attentive when we have NASE's members participate in our advocacy efforts—they see and hear from those who are affected by the policy proposals and decisions that are being made.

Here are three tips to help you advocate for the self-employed and your business:

- 1) Familiarize yourself with all of your elected officials: local, state, and federal; follow them on social media channels;
- 2) Attend elected official events within your community and/or District—don't be shy, make sure you introduce yourself and share relevant information about your business;
- 3) Let your voice be heard. Engage directly with your elected officials via email, phone calls, and social media.

While the NASE will always value the opportunity to advocate, we hope that you will feel empowered to directly engage with your elected officials so that the voice of the self-employed is AMPLIFIED!

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**Katie Vlietstra** is NASE's Vice President for Government Relations and Public Affairs; You can contact her at [kvlietstra@nase.org](mailto:kvlietstra@nase.org).



*“Let your voice be heard. Engage directly with your elected officials via email, phone calls, and social media.”*