

# SelfInformed

Published by the National Association for the Self-Employed

May 2026



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Charlene Beach & Bryan Goodman

Armadillo Woolery

# VISIBILITY, BRANDING, & OPPORTUNITY

FOR TODAY'S SELF-EMPLOYED BUSINESS OWNER



---

Though many aspiring entrepreneurs may wish it were, starting a small business is not a set-it-and-forget-it endeavor. It takes work, perseverance, and for most, a whole lot of elbow grease. For self-employed professionals and small business owners, building something that lasts requires ongoing attention, thoughtful choices, and a willingness to adapt. Success does not arrive overnight. It is shaped over time and takes careful consideration of what you offer and why it matters to the people you want to reach.

Every business begins with an idea, but ideas alone do not carry a business forward. Products and services must be shaped around real challenges facing potential buyers. That takes research, reflection, and a clear understanding of how your work fits into someone else's day, budget,

or priorities. For entrepreneurs, micro business owners, and family businesses alike, clarity is not optional. It is the foundation for making meaningful connections with customers who are actively looking for answers.

This is why branding and visibility need to be such an integral component of your business strategy. Being present where buyers are looking and recognizable when timing aligns requires intention. Visibility is not about being everywhere at once. It is about being seen consistently, clearly, and with purpose. Branding helps people understand who you are, what you do, and why your business exists. Visibility helps them remember you when the moment to act arrives. Together, they create opportunity and help position your business for sustainable progress.

## What Visibility Really Means for Small and Micro Businesses

Not all that long ago, visibility for a small business followed a familiar path. You opened a storefront. You listed your business in the Yellow Pages. You might have run a newspaper ad or sponsored a local event once or twice a year. Being present in the right physical location often did much of the work.

Today, visibility looks very different. Consumers are technically savvy and quick to search online when questions come up, when they are ready to open up their pocketbooks. They compare options, read reviews, and look for businesses that feel familiar before ever reaching out. At the same time, competition has increased dramatically. In 2024 alone, it was estimated that there were **33.2 million businesses** operating in the U.S. That is a crowded space with countless places for people to gather information.

For small and micro businesses, visibility now means standing out without overwhelming potential customers. Advertising still plays a role, but it is only part of the picture. Community presence, consistency, and recognition shape how a business is remembered.

Here is what visibility really means for small businesses:

- Being present where customers already spend time, both online and locally
- Appearing consistently across platforms and conversations
- Staying recognizable when customers are ready to act

Here is what branding means:

- Clearly communicating who you are and what you offer
- Using a consistent tone, message, and presentation
- Creating familiarity that builds trust over time

Together, visibility and branding help small businesses remain relevant, approachable, and remembered when it matters most.

## Standing Out Without a Large Marketing Budget

Many small businesses aim to allocate roughly **5% to 10% of sales toward marketing**. On paper, that guideline sounds reasonable. In practice, especially when you are starting a business or navigating a year that has not met projections, that percentage can feel overwhelming. Cash flow matters, and every dollar needs a purpose.

The good news is that visibility does not depend solely on paid advertising. Organic marketing gives small business owners and entrepreneurs ways to reach audiences without placing a strain on finances. These efforts take time and intention, but they allow your business to stay visible while protecting resources.

**Social media** plays a central role in this approach. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok give micro business owners direct access to people who already spend time there. Consistent posting, thoughtful content, and genuine interaction can build recognition over time without requiring a large spend.

Here are several ways to expand reach organically:

- Share helpful content that answers common customer questions
- Publish blog posts on your website that address common customer pain points, then repurpose that content into social media posts to extend its reach
- Show behind-the-scenes moments that reflect how your business operates
- Engage with comments and messages to build familiarity
- Participate in local groups and online communities
- Encourage customers to share their experiences



## Consistency Provides Small Business Owners with a Long-Term Advantage

Small business owners often hear advice about quality and quantity, but consistency is what ties both together. High-quality content builds trust and credibility. Quantity alone can increase visibility, but without focus, it often falls flat. When quality is paired with consistency, it creates recognition and reliability that support long-term results. In nearly every entrepreneur growth strategy, this balance matters more than short bursts of activity.

Consistency outperforms bursts of effort because it keeps your business present over time. Posting heavily for a few weeks and then going silent makes it harder for customers to remember you. Small business consistency, even at a manageable pace, supports brand recognition and reinforces business owner marketing habits that can be maintained alongside daily operations.

That said, consistency still needs scale. If your routine includes one blog and one social media post every three months, it may be time to revisit your approach. Many marketers suggest publishing one blog at least twice a month, with **six to eight times per month** as your ultimate goal. Those blog posts alone can support social content and help with building a business that stays visible.

Here are some simple ways to consistently maintain visibility while building your brand across platforms:

- Use a similar tone and language everywhere you show up
- Repeat core messages in different formats
- Share blog content across social channels
- Keep visuals and descriptions familiar to your audience



## Turning Everyday Interactions Into Marketing Moments

Though marketing and advertising are key contributors to a strong brand visibility, it's important to understand that visibility and branding are not limited to ads, websites, or social platforms. For small business owners and self-employed professionals, many of the most meaningful impressions happen during everyday interactions. Emails, phone calls, invoices, follow-ups, and in-person conversations all contribute to how your business is remembered. Each touchpoint reinforces who you are and what it feels like to work with you.

These moments matter because they shape perception over time. A clear, friendly email signature. A prompt response to a question. A thoughtful follow-up after a completed job. None of these requires additional spending, yet each one supports visibility and brand recognition. When handled consistently, they help customers recall your business and feel comfortable recommending it to others.

For micro business owners and family businesses, this approach can be super valuable. Daily interactions already exist, so why not make those interactions more intentional? Using the same tone, language, and messaging across communications helps your business feel familiar and reliable. Appreciation and responsiveness also go a long way. People remember how they were treated, often more than what was sold.

Those day-in and day-out exchanges can be part of your branding efforts. And when approached this way, visibility becomes a natural extension of how you already operate. This supports connection, reinforces trust, and keeps your business present without adding pressure to your budget.

## Preparing Your Business for a Busy Season

Seasonality affects far more businesses than many owners realize. Home remodelers often see demand rise in spring and summer. Landscapers experience clear peaks tied to weather and growing seasons. Even businesses offering marketing services tend to see increased activity ahead of product launches, events, or year-end planning cycles. These patterns shape revenue, workload, and visibility needs across a wide range of industries.

Understanding when demand rises and falls starts with tracking performance. Reporting that highlights past sales, inquiries, and workload trends allows business owners to spot seasonal shifts early. That insight matters, especially when cash flow is at stake. Research has shown that **82% of businesses fail due to cash flow problems**, and seasonal fluctuations play a major role. Knowing when busy periods occur helps owners plan ahead rather than react under pressure.

Visibility requires some legwork upfront. Marketing and branding efforts often matter most just before demand increases, not once schedules are full. Here are some tactics that small business owners should focus on to make the most of seasonality.

- Aligning messaging before demand increases
- Evaluating capacity, workflows, and visibility gaps
- Setting expectations with customers early

## Exposure and Momentum: Recognizing When Growth Is Approaching

Some business owners are satisfied maintaining the same level of revenue year after year. Others have goals tied to year-over-year increases, added services, or expansion into new markets. For those who want to grow, whether gradually or on a faster track, visibility and branding take on added weight. Growth rarely happens in isolation. It is usually preceded by increased awareness.

Most business owners find that when their business is more visible, opportunities appear long before the revenue follows. More people begin to recognize your business name because they have seen evidence of your brand online, via traditional marketing methods, or out in the community. The result? Conversations increase. Inquiries arrive from new places. These signals matter because they indicate momentum building beneath the surface. When business owners pay attention to this stage, they are better positioned to respond thoughtfully rather than rushing decisions later.

Here are some indicators that business is growing and that it may be time for expansion:

- More website visits or social media engagement
- An uptick in referrals or word-of-mouth mentions
- New inquiries that reference past content or interactions
- Increased requests for information rather than immediate pricing

Exposure should prompt internal preparation. Growth brings pressure on time, systems, and customer experience. Evaluating capacity and clarifying processes

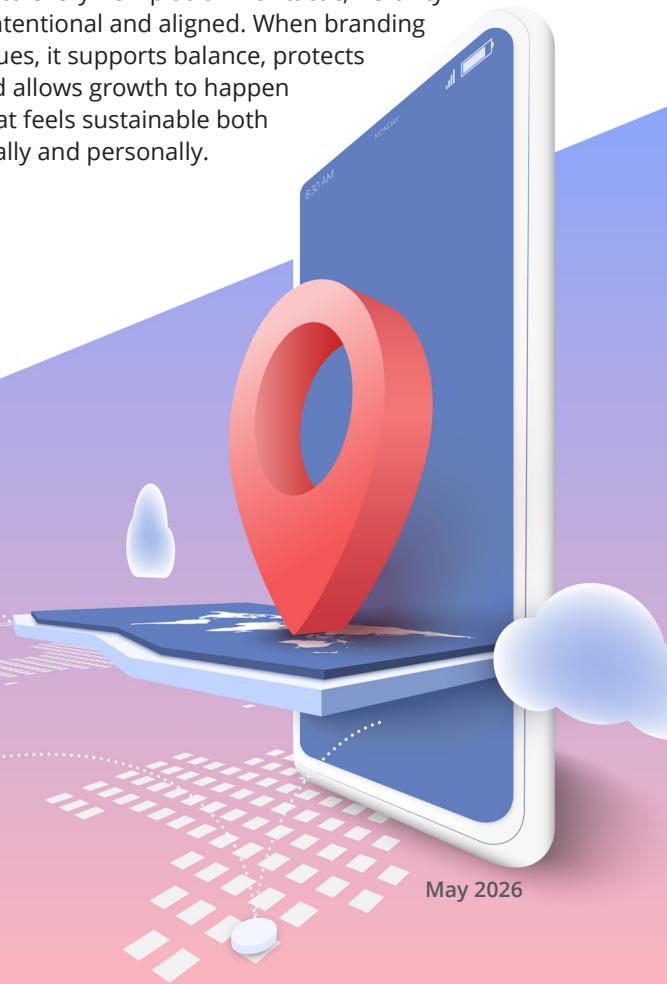
early allows business owners to meet demand without strain. Avoiding reactive decisions during periods of attention helps protect brand perception and supports sustainable progress when momentum turns into measurable results.

## Building for Sustainability, Not Short-Term Attention

Visibility and branding offer small business owners an opportunity to think beyond quick wins and focus on lasting impact. Across industries, long-range thinking supports growth that aligns with personal values and business goals. A values-based business or values-based organization begins with a clear set of principles that guide how the company operates, both internally and externally. Those principles shape how employees, support partners, and customers are treated, and they influence decisions around growth and sustainability.

This approach matters more than ever. **Customer acquisition costs are rising** quickly in 2026, making trust and retention increasingly important. Nearly **two-thirds of consumers show loyalty** by shopping regularly with brands they trust. Appreciation, consistency, and connection are no longer optional. They are part of how businesses remain visible without constantly chasing new audiences.

A values-based approach also helps business owners avoid trends that distract from long-term goals. Instead of reacting to every new platform or tactic, visibility becomes intentional and aligned. When branding reflects values, it supports balance, protects energy, and allows growth to happen in a way that feels sustainable both professionally and personally.





## Visibility and Branding are Not One-and-Done Marketing Tactics

Visibility is not a one-time task. It's not something that business owners can make efforts toward one time and then walk away. It is an ongoing practice shaped by consistency, preparation, and thoughtful decisions. This whitepaper has explored how branding, everyday interactions, organic marketing, and seasonal planning all work together to support progress. When these efforts align, building a business becomes more intentional and growth feels more manageable.

Consistency and preparation allow opportunity to arrive without disruption. Clear messaging, repeated presence, and values-based decisions help business owners stay recognizable and ready when attention increases. Over time, these habits support brand recognition, stronger relationships, and long-term success.

Organizations like NASE, the [National Association for the Self-Employed](#), exist to support this path forward. Through education, advocacy, and member support, NASE offers small business resources and entrepreneur support tailored to the realities of self-employment. Community also plays a meaningful role. Connection with peers creates shared learning and encouragement.

For those focused on growing a business, visibility and branding guide the next steps forward. With guidance shaped around real-world challenges, self-employed success becomes more attainable, sustainable, and aligned with long-term goals.

## See the Latest Press Releases from NASE



### NASE Welcomes New Retirement Savings Accounts as a Critical Step Toward Retirement Security for America's Self-Employed

May 08, 2026

NASE welcomes the launch of Trump IRA accounts as a "bold and necessary step toward closing the retirement savings gap that has long left self-employed Americans behind."

[READ FULL STORY →](#)



### NASE Celebrates American Entrepreneurs Powering the Nation During National Small Business Week and Month

May 05, 2026

Access to capital remains one of the most critical factors in both opening and sustaining a small business—and continues to be one of the most persistent challenges facing America's self-employed community.

[READ FULL STORY →](#)

[READ ALL PRESS RELEASES](#)



# Member Benefits

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

UENI  
**DONE-FOR-YOU  
BUSINESS WEBSITE**  
**\$79** **87% OFF**  
FREE DOMAIN NAME INCLUDED  
30-DAY MONEYBACK GUARANTEE  
**10 year ANNIVERSARY** ✨ ~~\$599~~ - ONLY \$79 GET YOURS TODAY ✨

UENI offers small & micro businesses a no-hassle, all-done-for-you online marketing package that includes a fully built website, custom domain name, a branded email inbox, and unlimited hosting, with incredible human support. All at an incredibly affordable price.

[Click Here To Get Started](#)



NASE has teamed with Intuit®, the makers of **QuickBooks Self-Employed** financial software. QuickBooks Self-Employed gives you the power to manage your business more effectively by providing you with fast, easy, and integrated solutions to meet the needs of your business. Whether you're looking for financial, customer or retail management software, **Quickbooks** has a solution for you!



# Member Benefits

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



## Member insurance program with savings lies ahead

At NASE we strive to provide access to offerings like the discounted insurance available through Farmers Insurance Choice that could benefit members like you.

Farmers Insurance Choice provides members with an easy way to compare and shop for **auto and home insurance**, and there are opportunities to **save money** as well.

- **Multiple quotes** from top carriers can be obtained in minutes by phone or online
- Others have **switched and saved** an average of **\$581\*** on auto insurance with Farmers GroupSelect®
- Members can apply for the policies that are right for their **needs** and **budget**



### Learn more today.

You can [click here](#) or call **844.212.4754**. NASE's discount code is **BIV**. Members can access full details and get a free quote by clicking [Free Quotes](#).



# Member Benefits

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



## AT&T Business

### AT&T Business Fiber

Get more speed, reliability, and value from your internet with AT&T Business Fiber®

Whatever your business, there's a good chance that quality Internet is an important factor in your success. Our internet has over 99% proven reliability<sup>1</sup> and it's fast and secure. You can count on our dedicated 24/7 business-class customer care for fast and attentive solutions. Depending on which speed is available in your area, you may be eligible for AT&T Business Fiber, which offers our fastest internet plans of 1 GIG, 2 GIG and 5 GIG

in select areas<sup>2</sup>. All of our fiber plans, including the hyper-gig plans, come with AT&T All-Fi™, a next-generation Wi-Fi experience for your devices<sup>3</sup> and AT&T ActiveArmor<sup>SM4</sup> internet security.

Your business deserves the AT&T business difference, a new standard of networking. **NASE members, get our best price** when you order AT&T Business Fiber online and receive a reward card up to \$500.

[Click Here for Best Price!](#)



**NASE** members in the US can take advantage of special member pricing on Dell's entire portfolio — including laptops, desktops, peripherals, licensing, servers, storage and more. Dell Technologies partners with **NASE** to help members gain benefits and value tailored to their business needs.

[Click Here to Get Started!](#)



#### MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Charlene Beach & Bryan Goodman

We are Charlene Beach and Bryan Goodman, co-founders of Armadillo Woolery, a Chesapeake, Virginia-based company building PFAS-free, FR-chemical-free Merino wool apparel for first responders and everyday wear. Bryan brings nearly two decades of experience in the fire service and a strong background in firefighter health and safety advocacy. Charlene helps lead the company's vision, operations, and brand growth. Together, we started Armadillo Woolery to create safer, harder-working clothing after seeing how common textiles can expose firefighters and other workers to unnecessary chemicals. Our mission is simple: protect the people who protect everyone else.



**When and why did you join NASE?**

We joined NASE because we were looking for practical support, trustworthy small-business resources, and a community that understands what it takes to build something from the ground up. As a growing business, we value tools and guidance that help us make smart decisions, manage growth responsibly, and stay focused on serving our customers.

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

Our work was inspired by a very real problem. Through Bryan’s experience in the fire service and our research into firefighter health, we kept coming back to the same issue: the people doing some of the hardest jobs in the country are often wearing gear and clothing with chemicals they never agreed to be exposed to. That led us into textile innovation, product development, and education. We wanted to build something better, not just talk about the problem.

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

We started Armadillo Woolery after asking a hard question: why are firefighters facing so many toxic exposures, even outside the fireground? As we dug deeper into station wear and everyday apparel, we found major gaps between what people assume is safe and what is actually in the clothing they wear for long hours. We launched the business to create a cleaner, better-performing alternative built around Merino wool, transparency, and the needs of first responders.

**How do you market your business?**

We market through a mix of e-commerce, social media, educational content, word of mouth, and direct outreach. A big part of our approach is teaching people about PFAS and other harmful chemicals in textiles, while also showing the performance benefits of Merino wool. Because our brand is mission-driven, storytelling matters. We share why we started, what we are learning, and how our products are tested in the real world by firefighters and hardworking professionals.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### **What challenges have you faced in your business? How have you overcome them?**

Like many small businesses, we have faced challenges with capital, production timelines, product development, and educating the market. Building something new in a category where people are used to the status quo is not easy. We have overcome those challenges by staying close to our mission, listening carefully to customer feedback, keeping our operation lean, and continuing to improve the product. We have also learned to be patient, resourceful, and disciplined with every decision as we grow.

### **Do you have any employees?**

Right now, we operate as a lean founder-led business. That has allowed us to stay hands-on with product development, brand direction, and customer relationships. As the business grows, we absolutely see opportunities to add support in operations, fulfillment, sales, and marketing. We want to grow carefully and bring on the right people at the right time.

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

No two days look exactly the same, which is part of entrepreneurship. A typical day can include product development calls, customer service, marketing content,

outreach, planning, and problem-solving. Because we are building a mission-driven brand, our days often blend strategy and execution. We spend a lot of time thinking about how to grow the business while staying true to why we started it in the first place.

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

The best thing about being self-employed is the ability to build something that reflects your values. We get to make decisions based on mission, not just convenience. That freedom comes with responsibility, but it is rewarding to know that the work we do each day is directly tied to the impact we want to make.

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

One of the best compliments we can receive is when someone tells us they trust what we are building because it was created for the right reasons. Hearing that our products are comfortable, durable, and aligned with a larger mission to reduce toxic exposure means a lot to us. Trust is everything, especially when your customers depend on what they wear every day.

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

Start with a real problem and stay close to it. Trends come and go, but solving something meaningful gives your business staying power. Also, be ready to learn constantly. You do not need to have every answer on day one, but you do need to be willing to adapt, stay disciplined, and keep going when things get hard.

### **Which NASE member benefit is most important to you?**

The most important benefit is having access to practical support for small-business owners. Whether that is educational resources, growth opportunities, or tools that help members navigate challenges, that kind of support matters when you are building a business with limited time and resources.

### **Any other information you would like to share?**

At Armadillo Woolery, we believe small businesses can lead meaningful change. We are proud to be building a company that challenges old assumptions, supports first responders, and creates products rooted in health, performance, and purpose. For us, this is bigger than apparel. It is about protecting the people who protect others.



# Promoting Retirement-Savings Access for American Workers



On April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026, President Donald Trump signed an executive order expanding access to retirement savings plans for workers who don't have access to a 401(k) or other employer-sponsored plans. This is particularly relevant for small business employees, part-time workers, independent contractors, and the self-employed.

## Overview

- The expansion takes place through a new website, administered by the Treasury Department, called [TrumpIRA.gov](#) (*set to launch in 2027*).
- The site will allow individuals to “shop” for private-sector IRA accounts through which they will be eligible for an annual \$1,000 match from the federal government, deposited directly into their accounts.
- Workers with incomes below \$35,000 who contribute to retirement accounts are eligible for this match.
- It will replace the existing **Saver's Credit**, a provision from Secure 2.0 of the Biden Administration.
- It is set to launch in January 2027.

## Potential Implementation Challenges

- **Lack of automatic enrollment:** Employee enrollment in private IRAs is not automatic under the President's Executive Order. This plan will place the responsibility of enrollment and contribution on the employee rather than the employer.

- **Dependence on the private sector:** This executive order relies wholly on private financial institutions to offer IRAs (meeting **specific criteria**). The success of [TrumpIRA.gov](#) (*set to launch in 2027*) relies on these options being viable competition for other savings methods.
- **Education and enrollment hurdles:** Other initiatives aimed at promoting financial stability and security have historically low participation rates due to a lack of awareness. The executive order does not contain a plan for conducting education and outreach programs for the site, which often leads to lack of use or the programs. This has been seen with tax credits such as 45S.
- [TrumpIRA.gov](#) (*set to launch in 2027*) has the potential to expand access to retirement for historically excluded populations, particularly small business employees, part-time workers, independent contractors, and the self-employed. However, several barriers to successful implementation remain, including a lack of automatic enrollment, plans for education and outreach, and dependence on the private sector to offer competitive plans.

---

**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).