

## How government rules stand in the way of startup growth

*The New York Times (tiered subscription model)*

When executives from online eyeglasses company Warby Parker sought Small Business Administration-backed loans from banks, they ran into a tangle of requirements. Despite turning a profit, the company was rejected for loans by 15 banks because it didn't have two years of tax returns. "It probably was necessary to implement hard-and-fast rules to stop the bleeding when the crisis hit, but they should be looking at the policies and thinking: Does this make sense now?" company co-founder Neil Blumenthal said.

## Small-business lessons from retail's biggest successes of 2011

*Entrepreneur.com/The Daily Dose blog*

Ascena Retail Group, formerly known as Dress Barn and recently named to the top spot on the National Retail Federation's 2011 list of Hot 100 Retailers, offers small businesses a lesson in how diversifying brands and merchandise offerings to appeal to different demographic groups can fuel growth. Other winners include Fresh & Easy, which increased sales by combining low prices and high perceived value, and Bodega Latina, whose focus on the expanding niche of Hispanic consumers is paying off.

## How Facebook can help boost your sales next year

*BusinessNewsDaily.com*

The shift in Facebook's role from social platform to serious business tool will likely continue in 2012 as companies find more ways to use Facebook's capabilities, writes Kim Ann Zimmermann. Some ways you'll be able to use Facebook to boost business in 2011 include doing market research, distributing marketing videos, selling your product and providing customer service.

## Apps that make QuickBooks even better for your business

*PC World*

Make your QuickBooks software more effective at helping you analyze data and perform other tasks for your small business with the 10 add-ons presented in this slide show by Yardena Arar. For example, Postcard Services can help create postcards for a marketing campaign, mail them to addresses already in your computer and analyze the campaign's success.

## How mobile apps are improving company-consumer dynamics

*Mashable*

Mobile applications are helping social media realize its potential as a tool for brands to connect with consumers on a personal level, writes Simon Mainwaring of consultancy We First. Kiip, one of three platforms that Mainwaring highlights, seeks to harmoniously integrate advertising into social games.

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## Successful innovation starts with failure, Facebook exec says

*BusinessNewsDaily.com*

Innovation requires attempting things that haven't been done before, so it's OK to fail along the way to building something great, Facebook executive Tim Campos says. Employees at the social media giant are encouraged to spend time on projects unrelated to their jobs, and while they don't always hit a home run, their efforts can still be valuable. One example is Facebus, an unsuccessful bus-tracking program that laid the foundation for other projects.

## How to build an advisory board that will be a boon to your business

*Entrepreneur magazine*

Advisory boards can help startups by plugging holes not filled by employees, but entrepreneurs need to choose their advisers carefully. Aim for about six members, and recruit people with a mix of expertise, recommends startup veteran Cynthia Kocialski. Make sure potential advisers aren't already bogged down with other commitments and that they know what you expect of them, she says. ■

## From where I sit...

*To a great extent, local economies have essentially three options:*

- 1. Do nothing, and watch store fronts and business park vacancies grow*
- 2. Retreat, withdraw from competition; or*
- 3. Get competitive and go to the marketplace.*

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