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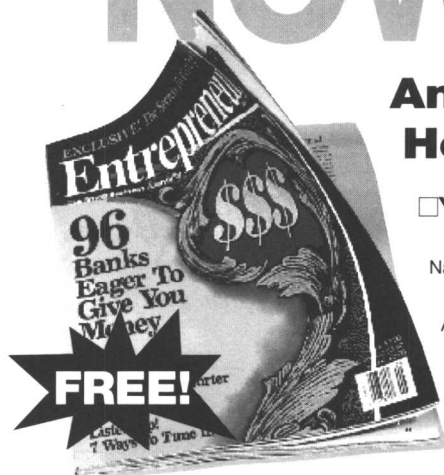
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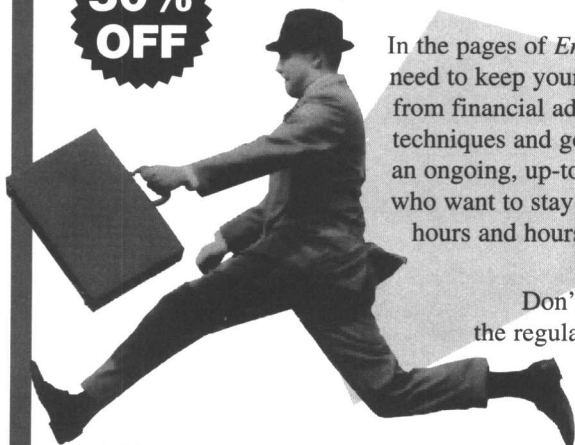
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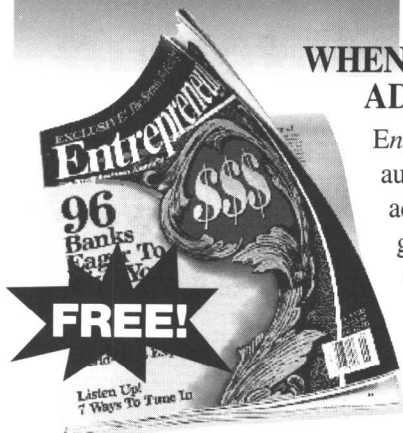
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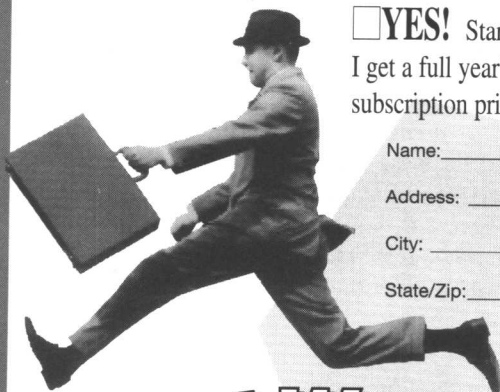
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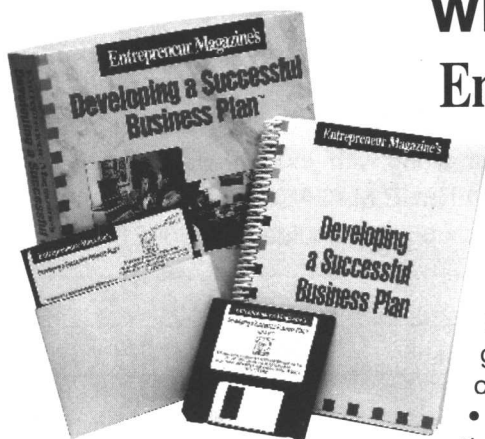
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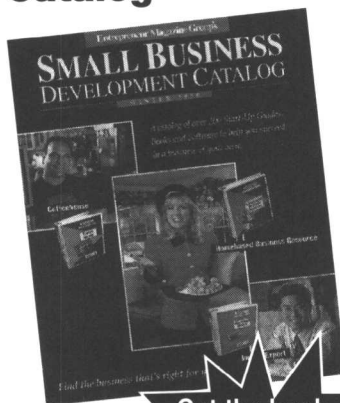
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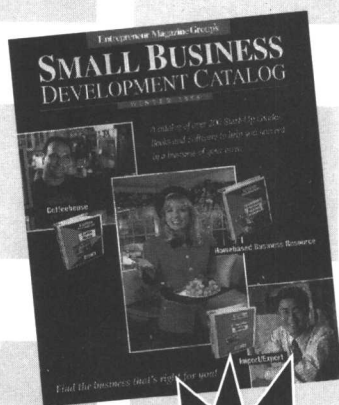
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# INTRODUCTION

When *Entrepreneur* magazine reported on the world's first and only hobby-computer store in 1977, even we didn't anticipate the high-tech explosion that was to follow. Within a few years, the microcomputer industry had become a multibillion-dollar business, creating dozens of ancillary industries for computer manufacture, sale, and service, plus an aftermarket.

The advent of the moderately priced microcomputer made it possible for individual entrepreneurs to operate full-fledged businesses. More importantly, they were able to conduct business from their home, saving on start-up costs and overhead during the initial stage. Many entrepreneurs have continued in business at home indefinitely. Today, more than 30% of U.S. households have computers, and some researchers expect the number to reach nearly 50% by 1996. For the more than 40 million people who are home-based entrepreneurs, the figures aren't surprising. With start-up investments as low as \$1,000, these entrepreneurs have turned their home computers into highly profitable instruments for making a living.

If you don't know much about computers, don't despair. You don't have to be a computer programmer or software publisher to make money with your computer, though both these skills can lead to lucrative home-based businesses. Instead, if you're able to use a computer confidently (or can learn to do so), are willing to keep on top of the

latest technological advancements that pertain to your business, and know how to market yourself and your product or service, you can start and run your own computer-based business within your home.

This book will give you an idea of the range of small business opportunities available to an entrepreneur equipped with a computer. The choices are many, varied, and continuously changing, which is why you should think of this book as a "survey" of opportunities available to you. Essentially, any product or service that can be generated from computer know-how and is useful to the business sector is likely to find a market. As *Fortune* magazine reported in April 1994, "American business is . . . outsourcing like crazy." Companies are continuing to downsize and the work needed to fill in the gaps is highly specialized. The key is to find a niche within your selected business offering and then get out there and get yourself known.

Products and services for busy American families are also in demand: referral services, home inventory cataloging services, and computer setup and tutoring services. Personalized children's books and local specialty newsletters and newspapers are also popular. Retail computer-based businesses, which require extensive facility preparation and inventory buying, are outside the scope of this book. (However, a few of these businesses have been analyzed in depth in other *Entrepreneur* business start-up guides.)

It's important to determine whether you're ready to make a commitment to being self-employed. Buying this book was a step in the right direction. Now ask yourself: Can I do without company-paid health insurance and retirement plans? Will I miss office socializing and the comfort of a steady paycheck? Can I get by without access to the equipment and support staff that I once took for granted? Will I manage my time and be willing to knock myself out getting new clients?

If the answer is yes, you could become one of the hottest entrepreneurs in the country, making more money from your home-based venture than you ever thought was possible. According to Dun & Bradstreet (D & B), new business incorporations in 1993 reached their highest annual level since the mid-1940s. Even more impressive: of the businesses studied by D & B that had started in 1985, 70% were still active in 1994 (*Business Week*, May 23, 1994). What does this mean for you? The time has never been better for taking the plunge into entrepreneurship and making your new business last for the long haul.