

****Red Worm Composting Special Podcast****

Starting a Small Worm Composting Business
(a.k.a "The Tiny Worm Business with BIG Potential")

~ **Written Companion Guide** ~

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INTRODUCTION

A lot of us just finished the holiday season – a time where we tend to spend way too much money, and over-indulge way too much! As we turn the corner and enter a new year, it is usually a time to “turn over a new leaf” - a time to focus on ways to improve our lives, and perhaps even start up an exciting new venture. This combined with the fact that spring is really just around the corner for a lot of us (even up here in Canada it is only a few short months away), makes it a great time to explore the topic of starting up your own vermicomposting business!

WHY did I decide to create this podcast?

- 1) This is a topic a lot of people have shown an interest in over the years. Naturally, anyone who is passionate about worm composting, and who also happens to have some entrepreneurial spirit, will likely wonder about the possibility of making some money from their hobby. Again, this tends to be the time of year when interest is highest (understandably).
- 2) This is a topic a lot of people seem to have misconceptions about – they tend to make assumptions about what is required in order to be able to start a business venture like this. As I'll explain later on, I myself had plenty of misconceptions as well. My hope is that I'll be able to make people realize that there are a wide variety of other options aside from the more “traditional” worm farming biz approach.
- 3) This is of course a topic that is near and dear to me. I have been teaching people about starting up worm businesses via various courses/memberships for a number of years now – and I definitely have a soft spot for all those who make the leap from vermicomposting hobbyists to small worm business owners.
- 4) A big part of why I wanted to create this recording is the fact that I am getting ready (at the time of recording/writing) to launch a new course called “Worm Profits” - an audio series + companion guide focused on the idea of creating a “Tiny 'worm business' with BIG potential”. As you might guess (and will see more evidence of in this discussion), this is NOT your typical worm

farming business course! It is based on my "Modern Worm Farming" philosophy, which focuses on what I refer to as "worm business strategies for the 21st century".

Misconceptions (and Full-Blown Myths)

- **You need lots of money to start a business like this.** Understandably, a lot of people expect to need a decent amount of seed capital to get going – as is the case with a lot of "real world" businesses.
- **Similarly, you need lots of land and likely some expensive equipment.** This is "farming" after all, right? Of course these tie back in with the money, since unless you already own a farm and equipment you'll need to pay a lot to get them!
- **You need to be a serious veteran/pro/expert worm grower, castings producer etc etc.** Obviously, someone fairly new to vermicomposting can't expect to become a "professional", right?
- **You need to purchase a "turn-key" worm business package (again requiring lots of money) in order to have any hope of doing well.** Ideally one that involves having the parent company buying worms back from you.

Those are what I would refer to as the "pessimistic" misconceptions. Another type of misconception would be of the overly-optimistic or downright "delusional" variety. Here are some of them...

- **This type of business is an "easy" way to make money.** In some ways this is absolutely true – but don't assume that it's going to happen without a decent amount of "blood, sweat, and tears".
- **A "fast" way to get "rich".** Again, yes it is possible to start earning money very quickly (as we'll discuss further along), but if you are starting a business like this solely because you want to get rich quickly, you are definitely setting yourself up for disappointment!
- **There is a MASSIVE, "untapped" (yet well developed) market full of**

people just waiting for you to start up your business so they can beat a path to your door and buy your products! While there is certainly a lot of “potential”, unlike some of the more mainstream markets, education is usually an important part of the process. Unlike in “Field of Dreams”, just because you “build it”, it doesn't mean “they will come”! lol

As the term “misconceptions” should imply, my aim here is to show you that these are all false. But first let's talk a little about my own “backstory”.

Until about 6 years ago (as I write this), I just naturally assumed that starting up a vermicomposting business was something out of reach for me. I had most of the “pessimistic” misconceptions described above. I assumed it would cost a ton of money, that I would need a decent piece of “land” and expensive equipment, and didn't think I was experienced/talented enough to pull it off anyway.

Thankfully, that didn't stop me from creating a website called “Red Worm Composting” (you may have heard of it! Lol) around 2006/2007 as a means of “sharing my passion with the world”. I definitely didn't have any high expectations, but I kept at it anyway.

Long-story-short, by the time early 2008 rolled around, the site had increased considerably in popularity (by vermicomposting standards), and I was approached by someone who wanted to know if I would sell his composting worms on the site. Basically, the idea would be that I'd take the order, and he and his team would then take care of the order fulfillment. (What you would refer to as “drop-shipping”).

Initially, I was very hesitant to accept the offer. I had started the website as a fun project and it had become something of an educational resource over time. I was worried that if I suddenly turned it into a business venture, people would think I was some sort of “sell-out”, “in it for the money” etc etc.

Ironic Side-Note – What I didn't think about was the fact that bringing in some money could actually help me to dedicate even MORE time to the website, thereby creating an even better resource! As it was, I was spending waaaaay too much time on it, without much to show for it (other than the positive feeling of creating something people appreciated) – so the timing of the proposal was very good.

The other funny thing is that many of my readers WERE actually looking for a reliable worm supplier. I received emails on a fairly regular basis, wondering if I had recommendations for who to order from!
(DUH!)

Anyway – of course, I did eventually move past my resistance and go ahead with the arrangement. The rest, as they say, is history! I am still working with that same supplier to this very day.

I can still remember how excited I was that first week after putting up the order buttons, watching orders coming in almost right away. Needless to say I was kicking myself for not considering something like this earlier.

Shortly thereafter, feeling confident and optimistic as a result of this new-found (mini) “success”, I got it in my head that I should try starting my my own “real world” vermicomposting biz up here in Canada as well. I'll talk more about this a bit later on, but let's just that first season was an *interesting* experience to say the least!

Getting back to those “misconceptions”...

The bottom-line here is that all those notions are simply not true!

- You CAN start a vermicomposting business with very little money.
- You absolutely do NOT need to own a farm or any fancy equipment
- You also don't need to be a worm-growing genius. You don't even need to grow your own worms at all – heck, if you really didn't want to, you wouldn't even need to ever touch a worm for that matter!

(The way I sell worms on the Red Worm Composting website is a case in point.)

BUT...you still need to be prepared to put in some time and effort if you really want to make a full-fledged business out of it. This is definitely not the path to take if you are after some sort of “easy” (and “overnight”) big-money-making scheme.

This type of business is best suited for someone who has at least a passing interest in vermicomposting, and - in my humble opinion - your greatest chance for success comes from starting small and building up from there.

I see this as a fantastic opportunity for those who are retired and looking for something fun to put their focus on (and looking for a way to supplement whatever retirement income they have). It is also well suited for young people – children, teenagers, and college/university students. I *really* wish I knew about this when I was in school since it would have been a great way for me to earn money. (Although, it definitely would have been a bit more challenging without the “power of the web”)

Really, it's a great little business for *anyone* with some entrepreneurial spirit and (ideally) some interest in vermicomposting (or related fields).

It's definitely worth mentioning that it can also be tied in nicely with other existing businesses. If you raise any sort of livestock, for example, what better way to earn some additional income than by turning the livestock manure into a fantastic compost (and lots of worms)? One of my own “ultimate” business ideas (yep I've got a few – and they typically include vermicomposting! Lol) is a horse boarding stable with worm growing operation and organic farm.

I actually see more potential for vermicomposting when it represents just one piece in a larger puzzle, rather than solely as a stand-alone process (or business).

Some may wonder if you can dive in “full-time” right away.

People have – it IS possible! But, it's important to realize that it's going to take a LOT more work to make it happen. Normally I am not a “business plan” kinda guy – especially not in this day and age – but this is definitely a scenario where I would recommend putting together an in-depth business plan, and just generally, making sure you do a LOT of research ahead of time.

I personally like (and recommend) the start start-small-and-grow-from-there approach, since there is virtually no risk involved and you can learn and adjust as you go. You can also reinvest some of your earnings into business development, so you are not relying on other sources of capital.

Don't get me wrong, though – I am not trying to discourage anyone here! I just want to make sure everyone knows what they are getting themselves into.

Again, that isn't really the sort of business we are talking about here, or in the

course itself.

We're talking primarily about something that can be started in your spare time – literally in a closet or in a corner of your basement (or without using up ANY room, if you choose to go with more of a “virtual” business). This is a business that might cost a few hundred \$\$ to get started (if that). A business you can cater to your own particular interests/strengths/experience (obviously assuming there is also some market demand for what you are selling).

With a typical “Worm Profits” type of business you will likely take one (or more) of three MAIN approaches.

1) **Vermicomposting** – in this case you are focused primarily on converting waste materials into high quality vermicompost/castings. The focus here would be on selling castings and/or related products.

2) **Vermiculture** – in this case you are primarily focused on the worms themselves. You are growing them so they can be sold to those interested in starting vermicomposting systems, and perhaps others wanting them for fishing or for use as a live food organism.

3) **Wholesale/Drop-Shipping** – in this case you are simply working with someone else who is producing the castings and/or the worms and you are focused primarily on the marketing of the products.

As touched on above, I am not trying to imply that you will only focus on one of these approaches – more often that not, you will in fact go with more than one (if not all of them). My own “real world” business has been a combination of “vermiculture” (since I've been raising my own worms for sale) and “wholesale/dropshipping” (since I have worked with other suppliers).

There is actually a 4th “Other” category – which could include various “virtual” revenue streams, such as digital information products, online advertising (well suited for those taking more of an educational approach) etc. Red Worm Composting is a prime example of a website that incorporates this approach (and the fact that you are reading these words should support that fact! lol)

****Important Side-Note About “Vermicomposting” Focus****

Generally, if you want to get serious about selling (your own) worm castings, it is likely going to require more money, space, equipment etc than for the typical “tiny” businesses we are talking about here. It is tough to produce a significant quantity of good quality vermicompost in your basement, or even in larger beds out in your yard (the latter is particularly challenging since you'll be battling with the elements). This is a product that will need to be pretty consistent in quality and (hopefully) available in large quantities during times of peak demand.

I'm not claiming it's impossible – I'm simply saying it's probably going to be easier if you focus mainly on the worms early on.

You do have some options though...

If you do have a bit more money to invest and a bit more (indoor) space, setting up a number of larger VermBins, or similar single-compartment flow-through beds could help you produce a decent quantity of quality material.

You could also focus on specialty products like castings tea and/or tea bags etc, that would require smaller amounts of castings.

Of course, there is also the option to connect with a “wholesaler/drop-shipper”. My friend, Joe Ferrone has done exactly that. You can learn more about his business in this post on the Worm Farming Alliance website:

<http://www.wormfarmingalliance.com/wfa-members/joe-ferrone-joe-ferrone-worm-poop-llc/>

I myself have actually taken that approach as well. For a couple of seasons I had a supplier drop off super-totes of worm castings at my house (they would sit in the driveway) and I transferred the material to smaller bags to be sold to customers. I actually used an old Worm Inn (on a wooden stand) as my bagging machine – and it worked really well! Lol

It was a very valuable experience, and I even managed to turn a nice profit with low pricing. Demand for the castings was very high during the spring, then tapered off (as you might expect). I eventually decided to discontinue selling castings since A) my supplier was moving to another location, and B) I wanted to keep my “real world” business as simple as possible.

Ok, getting back to the worm-selling side of my business... (I promised to tell

you a bit more about how things developed on that front)

When I first started, I decided that I would order worms in bulk from my supplier in the U.S. and have them shipped up to me here in Canada. On paper it looked like a fantastic opportunity. Pricing is much lower in the U.S., so it looked as though it would be very easy to turn a nice profit by reselling the worms in smaller quantities to Canadian customers.

There were multiple things I failed to factor in, however:

1) **Long shipping times** – best case scenario, it would take about a week for the worms to reach me. That is quite a long time for a bulk order of worms to be in transit.

2) **Overzealous Border-Control Agents** – Canadian Customs tends to be pretty sensitive about allowing living organisms to cross the border. Even though there are LOTS of Red Worms already in Canada (lol) and, ironically, the worms from my supplier were packed in CANADIAN peat moss, I encountered additional delays due to packages being held at the border.

3) **Time** – I assumed it would be a simple matter of quickly re-harvesting the worms (I had put in recovery beds) for smaller order. As it turned out, it took MUCH longer than I had predicted – and the real kicker was that I wasn't recovering the same amounts I had ordered (mortality and shrinkage during shipping were major factors!)

Thankfully, I realized pretty quickly that this approach was not going to work out in the long-run.

Around that same time, a friend had connected me with a large-scale supplier in my own region. His prices were higher than in the U.S., but were still excellent by Canadian standards – and the huge advantage was that he was near by.

The *problem*, though, was that I still had a flawed game-plan. I was still ordering in bulk, placing the worms in holding beds, then trying to re-harvest for smaller orders.

I'll be honest – during those first few months, there were times where I probably would have been better to simply PAY the customer not to take the worms, and then put my time into something else! LOL

That's how long it was taking to fill some of these orders. It was pure insanity!

Yet somehow I still managed to keep things going (largely thanks to another unexpected "goldmine" we'll talk about in a minute) for nearly two seasons that way!

Finally, I reached the point of realizing "enough is enough", and I decided that there would need to be MAJOR changes to the way I was operating the business if there was any hope of keeping it alive. It was right around that time that I had a bit of a "light bulb moment".

"Who says I have to sell worms by the pound?!"

Something I'd never really thought about before was the fact that my easiest new-system-start-ups had resulted from simply transferring worm-rich material from a mature system over to the new system. Worms always settled in really quickly, I didn't have any die-offs, and the population of worms in the new system always exploded quickly.

One thing was for sure – I had PLENTY of worm-rich material in my own vermicomposting systems. I've always had an easy time producing loads of smaller worms. Where I seemed to fail miserably (from a worm business perspective) was trying to systematically grow lots of bigger worms – the sort of worms that make it much easier to sell "by the pound" - in a relatively small amount of space (I live in the suburbs after all). And this is why I had needed to work with a large-scale supplier!

One little "aha!" moment I had hit on earlier that same season that helped to get me "outside of the box" with my thinking was when I was harvesting Red Worms from aged horse manure.

QUICK ASIDE: Remember that "goldmine" I talked about earlier? It just so happens that a friend of the family keeps her horses at a stable where there is an outdoor heap of manure with a resident population of Red Worms already in it! If there was ONE single thing that saved my neck during those first two challenging seasons it was likely the fact that I had free access to this worm-rich aged manure heap (only downside is that it takes nearly an hour to get there). I HIGHLY recommend getting in touch with local horse stables and livestock farmers to see if they have aged manure they are willing to give away. The

material itself is absolutely worth the effort – but you may just luck out like I have, and find your own vermi-gold-mine!

Getting back to what I was saying...

What I noticed about this aged manure I had harvested worms from was that it was LOADED with worm cocoons and small worms – not to mention countless beneficial composting organisms. If I left it to sit for a matter of weeks, I could find loads of worms in it again! I realized that this leftover material could serve as the ultimate “compost activator” - and thereby be sold on its own. Unlike the box of dry lifeless powder you can buy at your local garden center, this would actually be an active, LIVING material. I called this new product “compost ecosystem”.

Well, when my “light bulb moment” arrived, I realized that if I simply left the worms in the “Compost Ecosystem”, THAT could be an alternative to the typical “pounds of worms” approach. This is how “Red Worm Culture” (later “Red Worm Mix”) was born.

I'll be honest – I was NOT overly optimistic that this hair-brained idea of mine was going to work. But the key was that I didn't really care! I was SO fed-up by that point that I almost wanted for it to NOT work (lol), so I could put all my time towards my web-based projects (eg Red Worm Composting).

As you might guess, it DID work – and has worked very well ever since. Here are some of the key benefits to this sort of approach:

1) **Cheaper for the customers** - Even though there is a lot of composting “potential” in a mix like this, you are still going to sell it for considerably less than a pound of worms. This is great for those who don't feel like breaking the bank just to try out vermicomposting.

2) **Healthy worms** – The worms don't deal with the same sort of harvesting/shipping stress as they can with bulk orders. They are also not sitting in lifeless peat moss (or similar sterile medium) – they are in their own habitat material (or even something superior, such as well aged horse manure), so this helps them to settle into a new system far more quickly and easily.

3) **Incredible Shipping Tolerance** – Last season (2013) I had a package stuck in-transit for ONE MONTH due to a mistake with the address. When it finally got back to me, I opened it up and found bags full of worm castings and

loads of smaller – but very alive – worms! lol

4) **Ideal Population Development** – Composting worms are literally designed to rapidly take advantage of available resources as quickly as they can. This is when they are at their best. As such, when you add a worm culture mix to a new system (assuming it has been set up properly), the population is typically going to grow VERY quickly until it reaches an “ideal” level. What can happen when you add “pounds” of worms to a new system all at once is that the population can actually self-regulate itself (i.e. some worms die) – not to mention the fact that the worms are very often stressed and restless (typically leading to roaming).

There are also some advantages for us “tiny” worm biz owners as well!

1) **Much easier to produce** – As touched on earlier, it is a LOT easier to grow loads of smaller worms than loads of bigger worms, especially when you have space constraints (and various other limitations associated with a non-farm property). As I learned, I was basically able to produce all my own worms from that point on (I did order some bulk batches of worms from my supplier periodically – but only for the sake of supplementing my population when demand was just too high for me to keep up! Not a bad “problem” to have! Lol).

2) **Greater profit potential** – Obviously, once I started selling my own worms it was much more profitable than when I was selling worms I purchased from someone else! NOTE: I am not claiming “worm culture” is more profitable than selling by the pound in general (I am sure it would totally depend on the situation). I'm simply referring to my own particular situation (and this would likely be the same case for most of you starting up smaller worm businesses).

3) **Faster/Easier Harvesting** – Similar to #1, actually getting the product ready for customers has been a breeze in comparison to the “re-harvesting” method I was using when selling worms by the pound. I simply remove worm-rich material from my systems, concentrate it further using a modified “light harvesting” method, then bag it up! Less time spent on harvesting means more time available for other things – like helping customers, and building your business!

IMPORTANT NOTE: I want to make it clear that I am NOT suggesting that

people stop selling worms by the pound. That's not the case at all – the fact is, I still sell worms that way from the Red Worm Composting website (and this winter have actually been doing so with my Canadian business during the “off season”, since establishing drop-shipping arrangements with other suppliers).

What I am offering here is an alternative approach – especially well-suited for those who are just starting out and/or have some space/resource limitations. If you already sell by the pound, and it's working for you – great! No need to “fix something that ain't broke”, right? You MAY want to considering offering worm culture mix as a new, alternative product, though! As touched on, there are definitely some advantages (not the least of which is the lower cost) that may appeal to a lot of potential customers.

It's ALSO important to note that I am not suggesting that buying wholesale and re-selling can't work! This will depend on a number of different factors, and I know for sure that it would be a viable option in certain situations – especially for those in the U.S., since it will be easier to find great wholesale pricing. Of course, there's also the option of buying in bulk yet still selling some form a “worm culture” (rather than by the pound). The key will always be to crunch the numbers and keep track of your time, so that you can determine what will be most realistic (ie profitable) for your particular situation.

We'll look at some other ideas relating to the buying-in-bulk and reselling approach a little bit later on.

Some Food For Thought - “Commodity” vs “Experience”.

If you are the type of person who has trouble breaking free from the “time-tested” proven methods that “everyone else” is using, you might have trouble wrapping your head around the “worm culture” approach. You're not alone – and in all honesty, even some customers have a little trouble “getting it”, unless you take the time to help them understand.

What may help (apart from reviewing those benefits I listed) is to think of your product not just as some specific quantity of worms (basically, a commodity) but rather as a successful/fun customer vermicomposting experience. Even if they don't consciously know it, people are always after an EXPERIENCE when they buy something – not just some product they can own. If you can provide your customers with exactly 1.00 lb of (living) worm meat every single time, without

fail, that's great, but it's only going to get you (and the customer) so far.

Don't obsess over exact figures (eg. exactly how many worms is the customer going to receive) – you'll drive yourself crazy! Focus *instead* on how best you can serve the customer's needs. Rest assured, selling some form of worm culture is NOT about cutting corners, or ripping people off! While it's difficult to offer you any exact worm-density figures, I do want to emphasize that the material you are selling should be loaded with worms (and ideally cocoons as well).

But even apart from the worm mix itself, I highly recommend that you include the education and support that your customer needs to succeed!

“So How Much Money Can You Make With a Business Like This?”

I'm sure this is a common question among those thinking about starting some form of vermicomposting business. As always, the most accurate answer is “it depends” - and it DOES indeed depend on a wide range of factors. But that's not very helpful (lol), so let me at least provide you with a ball-park range.

With one of these “tiny”, mostly-spare-time businesses, building your income up to the “\$100's to low \$1000's/month” range is very doable within a fairly short time frame. Notice I didn't say “revenue” - I am actually talking about take-home income. Obviously this isn't earth-shattering, mansion-buying money – but if you consider that this is a cool little side business we're talking about, it's nothing to turn your nose up at!

You should expect to see some seasonal fluctuations, with the BIGGEST surge in interest (and business) happening in the spring. Where you are located, and the amount of effort you put in (among other things) will also have a major impact.

What's funny is that even though I'm not nearly as passionate about my own “real world” business as my online projects – and the fact that it has been badly neglected as a result – it has continued to save my entrepreneurial neck every year! Lol

I am constantly amazed by the potential of this tiny little business, and in some ways wish I was a bit more interested in developing it further.

As I type this report, I actually have an inbox full of inquiries from people eager to buy composting worms from me (via my Canadian biz). It's the middle of winter up here!! I'm a little annoyed by the notion of playing "catch-up" when I have so much else to do – but YES, this is indeed yet another example of a "good problem" to have!

AND, this is a BIG part of why I am so eager to share this information. I can only imagine what some of the "go-getters" among you might be capable of!

Again, please keep in mind those numbers are just ball-park figures, assuming a part-time venture. Some of you may "kill it", and do so more quickly – while others may take a lot longer to start earning steady income.

Apart from how much you can expect to earn, you may also be wondering how quickly you can get up and running, how exactly to do so, and how much you should expect to spend in order to make it happen. Let's now spend some time with all of these.

Firstly, here are my recommendations in terms of what NOT to do right out of the starting gates:

Don't...

- Run out and start spending a ton of money on things like logos, business cards, fancy letterhead paper, corporate entities (LLCs etc), trademarks etc
- Spend a lot of money on "wholesale" products you think you should be selling (often-times because you see other people selling them). The one exception may be worms and/or castings (but this will depend on the time of year, and your overall game-plan).
- Spend all your time in "research mode" - analyzing everything to death for months on end before actually DOING ANYTHING – making sure that all your "i"s are dotted and that all your "ducks are in a row". (The one exception here is if you ARE planning to develop a large-scale business that requires a formal business plan etc)

One of my key recommendations AT ALL TIMES with this sort of business – *especially* early - on is to stick with the “K.I.S.S.” (“Keep It Super Simple”) principle. Focus on getting some revenue flow as quickly as you can, and don't worry if everything isn't “perfect”, or that you “don't know enough yet” etc. You can always tweak everything as you go. (I'll talk more in a minute about a super simple start-up strategy that could likely have you earning money within a day or two).

Another simple strategy I recommend – especially if you have a demanding full-time job, or various other serious time commitments – is what I refer to as “One Small Thing”. The basic idea is this – make absolutely sure, NO MATTER WHAT, that you are doing AT LEAST one small thing, every single day, that helps move you towards your business goals (and really, ANY important goals). These should be things that directly or indirectly lead to revenue generation. So, things like sharpening your pencils and making neat stacks of paper on your desk don't count! LoL

Excessive online “research” doesn't count either – unless it is being performed as a means of gaining info necessary to help you get from A to B.

With small businesses like this it can be SO EASY to let things slide when you are busy – and before you know it, it's a year or two later and you look back and wonder why you didn't accomplish anything! On the flip-side, if you employ this technique – while it may not feel like you are doing anything all the way along, believe-you-me all these “small” things will add up over time, and you will be amazed by what you can accomplish!

What's also cool about it is that just the process of “starting” a single small thing can have an almost magical impact on your motivation. Overcoming that resistance can start a snowball effect that leads to LOTS of small things being accomplished at one time.

OK – let's talk about potential supplies...

I've made it abundantly clear by now (I hope) that this type of business can easily be started on a shoestring budget. So the question now becomes – what exactly do we spend our shoestring money on? LoL

What you need to buy will certainly depend on what stage of the “vermicomposting hobby” you are at (assuming you have started at all). Obviously, if you are a super-serious amateur worm grower, you'll likely already

have a lot of the supplies needed.

Here are some common basics:

- Plastic tubs (Rubbermaid Roughnecks are my favorite)
- Plastic harvesting trays (black "concrete mixing trays" are excellent)
- Breathable bags (cloth "parts bags", or small sand bags from Uline.com)
- Shipping boxes – IF you have your heart set on shipping right away (again, Uline is great for these)
- Rubber gloves
- Simple hand rake (or three – I am ALWAYS misplacing these things! LOL)
- Composting worms (again, this will depend on how far along you are with your own worm rearing efforts).
- Nicely aged horse manure (fantastic bedding material for worm bins, but also a really nice shipping medium) – should be earthy smelling and dark in color.

Assuming you DO already have some worm bins/beds going, the breathable bags may be the only supplies you need (and in a pinch you could probably even use something like empty yogurt containers with holes cut in the lid).

The Super Simple Start-Up Strategy

One VERY easy way to get the ball rolling, while also testing the waters for your own local area, is to create basic ads on free classified ad websites, such as Craigslist, USFreeads, and Kijiji (Canada), advertising your worms (or whatever it is you are selling).

As we talked about earlier, my recommendation would be to sell some form of "Red Worm Culture", since this is going to be FAR easier (for most people) than trying to round up pounds of worms – and it offers lots of benefits (as we looked at earlier). Just to review, this is worm-rich material harvested from healthy vermicomposting systems and then concentrated further. If the worms are not already living in well-aged horse manure, you MAY also want to drive them down into it and use that as your habitat medium since it is fantastic stuff!

These ads should be VERY descriptive! As touched on, I am all about "K.I.S.S." and not spreading yourself around too much, but this is definitely a case where I recommend casting out the net as FAR as you can – so you can see what markets you get the most "nibbles" from! Lol

Also make sure you include at least one photo if the ad site allows this. You will see a huge difference in the number of responses between an ad with no images and one that does have them (Hint – the one without them will lose every time!).

You may want to add some additional incentives like “life-time email support”, or some sort of “Free Worm Care Guide” (assuming you want to create it) since this may help to attract more prospects as well.

NOTE: While selling your own worms is definitely recommended if possible, you may also want to try purchasing in bulk from a reliable supplier and reselling (ideally as the “culture” since you'll get more bang for your buck that way). If you had a bunch of bins ready to receive worms (nice aged manure + moistened shredded cardboard + a little food waste will be a good start) or a larger system like a VermBin48 or 96, you could simply release the worms into these systems, leave them to process materials and drop cocoons etc for maybe a week or two – and then have yourself some really nice worm culture mix. (You probably wouldn't even need to concentrate it further using this approach).

Here are a couple other simple ideas to help get you going fairly quickly

Along with your online ads you also want to try out a very basic flyer campaign. This is especially well-suited for peak-interest times (such as spring) when a lot more people are thinking about gardening/composting. You could post these flyers on university campuses (offering worm bin kits would probably be your best bet for this crowd, rather than worms or castings), at supermarkets – and really, any location that has some sort of bulletin board. If you include some sort of discount code (specific to your flyer campaign) you'll likely get a better response, AND you'll be able to track your results!

Another cool idea I'm actually “borrowing” (lol) from some of my own customers is what I refer to as a “Wormshop” (i.e a vermicomposting workshop). The idea here is that you hold a workshop teaching people about vermicomposting, and showing them how to set up their own system. The price of admission covers all the supplies (worms, bedding, basic bins etc) they need plus the training itself. This is a great example of a situation where ordering in bulk from a supplier could actually work really well, but it could even be more profitable if you had enough of your own worm-rich material (the added advantage being that it would be very easy to educate your customers about the benefits of the “worm

culture” approach). People LOVE hands-on training like this, so there is great potential for ending up with happy customers, and a nice little chunk 'o' change in your pocket!

I've had customers placing bulk orders with me on a regular basis and conducting these workshops again and again!

We are literally just scratching the surface here in terms of the possibilities for setting up a “tiny”, “high potential” vermicomposting business – but hopefully I have at least provided you with enough of an introduction help you to get the ball rolling, or at least to whet your appetite for more!

Speaking of which, as touched on in the podcast, I would like to do a follow-up podcast dedicated solely to answering your questions about starting (or further developing) a business like this. I realize that there are lots of different topics we didn't get a chance to cover, so I want to give people the opportunity learn more about specific areas of interest.

Please be sure to leave your questions in the comments section of the podcast blog post here:

<http://www.redwormcomposting.com/worm-business/the-tiny-worm-business-with-big-potential/>

OR simply drop me an email with a subject line something like “worm business questions”.

<http://www.redwormcomposting.com/contact-us/>

If you have not already done so, I also highly recommend signing up for the “7 Fun Ways to Make Money With Worms” email course:

<http://www.wormfarmingalliance.com/general-worm-business/7-fun-ways-to-make-money-with-worms/>

It is a great companion to this report (and the podcast), going into greater detail about various business models and selling approaches.

UPDATE – If you want to learn even more about the topic of starting your own vermicomposting business, you may also want to check out my new course:

Worm Profits (www.WormProfits.com)