



## SCORE column: Business plan can be used to judge idea's merit

In the past few weeks, this column has looked at serial entrepreneurs and the driving force that compels an entrepreneur to start more than one [business](#).

Chad VanCalster of Green Bay is one of those who plan to make serial entrepreneurship a way of life.

"I'm on business number two and [business idea](#) about 100," he said.

VanCalster doesn't think people become entrepreneurs; he thinks they're born that way. He added, "I remember as a kid, taking pens apart and trying to sell the parts for a profit. We'd collect cans on the street and I tried to build a contraption that would store more cans, because more cans meant more [money](#)."

In the late 1990s, he started a business that allowed fantasy football leagues to manage their [data](#) online. When the cost of getting the statistical data increased, he had a choice — he could find investors or sell. He decided to sell.

"In the process, I learned about investors," VanCalster explained. "Angels look more at the potential within the person while venture capitalists are looking for something more solid."

In retrospect, he thinks he should have given the business more time and moved slower. Instead of trying for perfection, he could have saved money by going with a lesser product and listening to what the [customers](#) wanted.

With the start of his newest business, Sonix Studio ([www.sonixstudio.com](http://www.sonixstudio.com)), a Web-development, design, search-engine optimization and hosting firm, he is building the business based on customer needs. He's learning more about people and managing products better. He's learned the value of [a business plan](#).

"After my first business, I heard about E-Hub and the classes they offered," VanCalster said. "I needed to focus and wanted to know how to attract investors. That was the start, but I also learned how to build a business plan and connect with the right people to find out what to do next."

The business plan has become a tool. Instead of writing a plan for an investor or lender and putting it in a drawer, VanCalster follows his plan closely. When he has a new idea, he writes an honest business plan to see if it has merit.

"Some owners skew the revenue numbers so the business plan looks good," he said. "If you have to skew the numbers, then [your business](#) plan is no good."

He is currently planning his third business, a Web-based product that will be marketed throughout the country. He hasn't decided if the new product will be marketed alone or under the Sonix Studio Brand. In the interim, he will continue to think of new ideas.

"The wheels are always spinning. It starts with a problem or something I think could be done better or faster and I try to solve it. Sometimes I'll move it forward with a business plan to see if it has legs, but if I don't believe in the numbers, I'll scrap it," he said.

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