

By Ken Kimmel, Co-Founder & President

[ON THE SPOT SYSTEMS, Inc. \(Survey On The Spot\)](#)

So two and a half years ago I left the comfy confines of Corporate America (CA) to pursue my “dream” of becoming an entrepreneur. Starting with an idea that my longtime friend and business partner had formulated 10 years earlier, we set off on our adventure to build Survey On The Spot.

The original idea came to us one afternoon while standing outside a Dunkin’ Donuts store in 2001. Geoff, my co-founder, was showing me his new cell phone and its very cool (and new at the time) integrated camera. As the CMO of Dunkin’ Donuts, I commented that if I could get a photo of the donut case of every location at 3:00pm each day, I would know exactly how well the store was run. Fast forward to 2009, and Geoff is again showing off new technology that he possesses...an iPhone. He says to me, “Remember that idea we had? Now we could actually do it!” And so a business was born.

[Survey On The Spot](#), as the name implies, allows our customers to quickly and easily publish surveys to any Smartphone or tablet. Our clients include businesses in the restaurant, healthcare, spa & salon, retail, and media segments. They use our system for customer satisfaction surveys, research and development projects and field data collection...essentially anywhere they want to get real-time data from customers or employees while they are on the go. The system automatically compiles the data and publishes reports and can send instant management alerts via email or text in the event of feedback that requires immediate attention. The surveys can be custom branded through our web portal without the need to create a proprietary app.

In a world where everyone is asked to go home to their computer on every cash register receipt to provide feedback, we provide a new point of view...feedback right now, when it counts most.

As a self-funded start-up, we started by creating demo ware to share the idea with our industry friends. Their response prompted forward movement. In fact, our first meeting went something like this: “I can’t get the people that do guest satisfaction surveys to return my calls because my business is too small. You’re telling me I can get real-time feedback from customers before they leave my restaurant for \$60/month – this is a no-brainer!” – Industry Friend. Having a potential client say something is a “no-brainer” gets you pretty fired up, so we engaged developers to create the mobile app and web portal to manage the system. Our pricing ranges from \$40 – \$60 a month for small operators with volume discounts and enterprise platforms for larger, specialized needs. In six months, we were up and running, or at least crawling...and today we have a wide range of satisfied clients and case studies to enable future growth.

But here is what I wish I had known about the promised land of the entrepreneur:

- If you are self-funding your business (a good idea to maintain control; a bad idea if you don’t have money), make sure you are prepared to not make any money for much longer than you expected. That bi-weekly paycheck and the corporate “chains” can look pretty good after a few months.
- Per item one above...be prepared to spend more money than you expected...you can’t just call the IT department to fix things. The meter is always running.
- Smaller is better – the office with a view is nice, but a basement with no windows will have to do.
- Remember all of those people that loved the idea as demo ware...where did they all disappear to?
- Remember how you enjoyed managing by walking around...see the basement item above.
- Did I mention legal costs? No calling the legal department to make issues go away...the meter just runs faster.
- This gives new meaning to Chief, cook and bottle washer.

All that said, we have created quite a business from a pretty straightforward idea. Our client roster includes 7-Eleven, Outback Steak, Daily Grill, Brockton Hospital, Tifton Regional Medical Center, *The Tallahassee Democrat*, Not Your Average Joe’s, O’Charley’s Restaurant, and Angell Memorial Veterinary Hospital to name a few. Several clients use the system with iPod touch devices in their restaurants. Using this system, Not Your Average Joe’s, a 15 unit casual dining restaurant, is averaging 1000 surveys per restaurant per month and adding 25% of these folks to their email marketing list. “The business impact we have seen from Survey On The Spot is incredible. It is a real-time business management tool as well as a business building system as it allows us to rapidly and easily build our email marketing list.” says Steve Silverstein, the founder and CEO.

So, can you do it on a ‘Shoestring’? Absolutely. Just be sure to set your expectations walking in the door.

Tags: [Mobile app](#) [Mobile survey application](#) [Restaurant management](#) [Entrepreneur articles](#) [Customer feedback survey](#)