



Business Plan Template

Creating a business plan is an excellent tool to both map your mind and your trajectory for success. Knowing what you don't know is as important as knowing what you do. Writing a business plan helps you to discover both.

A great business plan is built upon sound analysis. It doesn't need to be long or filled with sophisticated graphics. In fact, length and visual filler can hide what you don't know. Keep it simple and focused. Be sure you can not only present your business well in the written business plan, but in person. If you are seeking capital, Investors and lenders will want to meet you face-to-face before writing a sizable check.

The following are some suggested categories to get you started.

1. Executive Summary

This is the snapshot of what your business is up to. Concisely describe what your business does and what market need it solves. Of critical importance, describe your "unique success factors," which are the 4-7 reasons why your business will be successful. Plan on rewriting your executive summary frequently. It will grow and change as your understanding of your unique business proposition deepens.

Also show your topline financial projections and amount of money you are seeking to raise here, if applicable.

4. Marketing Position

In this section, you will describe your products and/or services and your desired brand positioning.

5. Customer Analysis

Here you will identify who your target customers are and their needs. Get as specific as you can with regards to the demographic and psychographic make-up of your customers.

6. Competitive Analysis

In this section, identify your competitors and their key strengths and weaknesses.

Importantly, identify your competitive advantages, that is, where you fit into the market and why your advantage will bring success in that area compared to your competition.

11. Financial Plan

Your financial plan is critically important to investors. Identify the ways in which your company generates revenues. Also, highlight the key assumptions which govern your financial projections.

If you are seeking funding, identify how much money you need to start and/or run your business, and the primary uses of these funds.

Finally, include a summary of your financial projections.

12. Appendix

Use the Appendix to support the rest of your business plan. Include your full financial projections, including your projected income statements, balance sheets and cash flow statements.

Include any additional details, such as patent information, customer lists, etc., that help prove to investors that your company is a great investment opportunity.
