

STEP 17

Your completed plan

It's time to pull it all together!

Right now, your business is spread out over all the worksheets that you have completed. It's time to pull it all together in your business plan.

Business plan outline

Below is our recommended business plan outline. It contains guidelines and questions to help you ensure that you include all the relevant information. However, every business is different and your business plan needs to be tailored to reflect that, therefore this is more a guideline than a strict template.

Before you begin... important tips

Bear in mind that because of the high failure rates it is very difficult to obtain funding for start-ups. Your only tool to secure investor funding is the business plan that comes out of all this planning. It must showcase your business and has to convince investors that you have done all the planning to build a strong, successful, and sustainable business, and that you'll be a strong, resilient, and trustworthy owner.

If you want to give your business plan the best chance – it's time to pull out all the stops and present a professional business plan that will wow investors.

1. Formatting

Business plans should use simple and standard formatting:

- Twelve point font size in a font like Times New Roman is best.
- Bold headings in a larger font; and even a different font, such as Arial.
- Standard margin size of 2.54cm.
- Pages must be numbered.
- Your business name must appear on each page in the header or footer.
- Leave lots of white space. Make it easy to scan and read. Do not cram everything up.

2. Writing

- Keep it simple. Complex and long documents won't be read. A business plan should be brief, relevant, and focused.
- However, allow your passion and enthusiasm to shine through.

- Use short sentences and short paragraphs.
- Use bullets where possible.
- Cut the flab – no long and fluffy sentences, no waffling.
- No slang; no jargon, no cliches.

3. Ask someone to read it

- Ask someone who knows business to read through it with a critical eye and ensure that it covers everything it should cover, is well-written and actually wows them – as you are hoping to wow an investor.

4. Proofreading

- You simply cannot present a business plan that has spelling mistakes or grammar mistakes.
- Proofread it at least three times. Ask someone to also proofread it for you.

5. Presentation

To present your business plan in the best possible light, you need to put careful thought into how it's presented. Investors do judge a book by its cover – and if your business plan looks shoddy or badly presented or skimpy – you can rest assured they will not get beyond the cover page.

- Have it bound at a printers (don't simply hand the potential investor a sheaf of loose or stapled papers).
- Make sure that your cover page is eye-catching and that your business name and logo are printed in their full colours, not black and white (unless your logo is a zebra).

Don't try to pad your business plan out in any way to appear more enticing or less risky. Investors understand business and will spot padding in a heartbeat – and reject your plan.

Business Plan Outline

Cover Page

Your cover page is the first thing the reader will see, so make sure it looks good. (But good doesn't mean lots of fonts or silly graphics – it means clean-looking, well-spaced and well-formatted.) Your cover page must include the following:

- Business Plan (Include the words “Business Plan” at the top.)
- Your name
- Business name
- Logo
- Address
- Phone
- Cell phone
- Email
- Website
- Tax number
- Prepared document date (so the reader can see this is a current document)

Table of Contents (New page)

Insert after you have completed the plan.

Confidentially Agreement (New page)

It is always a good idea to include a confidentiality agreement. Here's one:

The undersigned reader acknowledges that the information provided by _____ in this business plan is confidential. Therefore, the reader agrees not to disclose it without the express written permission of _____.

It is acknowledged by reader that information to be furnished in this business plan is in all respects confidential in nature, other than information which is in the public domain through other means and that any disclosure or use of same by reader may cause serious harm or damage to _____. Upon request, this document is to be immediately returned to _____

Signature

Name (typed or printed)

Date

Executive Summary *(New page)*

The Executive Summary sounds intimidating. It's not. It's simply an overview of your business that sums it up in a concise, optimistic, and compelling way. This is the first thing investors will read about your business – so it has to grab their attention. Remember, this is just a brief recap, so don't go into detail. Keep it clear, to the point and relevant. The Executive Summary appears first – but write it last.

Describe:

- who you are as a business
- the purpose of your business
- the product/service you offer and what makes you different
- the customers you intend serving and why your customers will choose you
- where it fits in the market and why it will be a success in your industry and today's business environment
- how your product/service differs from competitors in the industry
- financial requirements, as well as how the capital will be used.

Business Description

- Business structure (sole proprietor/partnership/Pty Ltd)
- Describe the purpose of your business: What are you doing and for whom?
- How is your business different from other businesses?
- Location – and why it will work for your business
- Vision
- Values
- Branding
- Management team (and a summary of your strengths and experience as business owner)
- Employees
- Business strengths and how you intend building on them
- Opportunities and how you intend seizing them
- How do you plan to grow your business in the future?

Product or Service

- Describe your product/service in detail
- Describe your product/service's key features and benefits
- What makes your product/service unique (your USP) , and how does it differ from your competition?
- What need or want does your product/service satisfy?
- Why will people buy it?

- Why will customers choose to buy your product/service instead of another business's?

Pricing

- How do you intend to price your product/service?
- How does this compare to your competitors' pricing?
- How do you know customers will be willing to pay this price?
- Show that you will make a good profit with your pricing structure

Value Proposition

Demonstrate that you understand that adding value in an over-crowded market is what attracts and keeps customers, has a positive impact on your pricing, and makes you stand out from the competition.

- Describe how you intend to add value through every step of a customer's experience with you
- How else do you intend to deliver value?

Market Analysis

Present the results of your market research to prove that there is an opportunity to be seized in the market. By being specific, you'll illustrate expertise and generate confidence. If your market analysis is not specific, it will be a red light for investors.

Target Customers

- Describe your target customers:
 - Age
 - Location
 - Gender
 - Income level
 - Education level
 - Marital or family status
 - Occupation
 - Ethnic background
 - Personality
 - Attitudes
 - Values
 - Interests/hobbies
 - Lifestyles
 - Other
- What do your customers *need* – *want* – and *expect* from your business and product/service?

- What is the overall size of your target market?

Competitors

- Who are your direct competitors?
- How long have they been in business?
- Where are they located?
- What services and products do they offer?
- What are their major strengths – and how do you plan to match/better them?
- What are their biggest weaknesses – and how do you plan on using this to your best advantage?
- How are you better than your direct competitors?
- Who are your major indirect competitors – and how do you plan on grabbing the market from them?
- Mention your stealth competitors and how you intend to add value that will attract them. *(Keep it very brief, as it's not a major section and simply serves to demonstrate that you understand your market.)*

Marketing Plan

- How will you market your business and product/service? Discuss all the ways you intend to advertise and market your business and product/service.
- Discuss your website as a marketing tool
- Discuss using social media marketing
- Discuss adding unbeatable value with great customer experiences

Management and Business Team

- What are your personal strengths, skills, knowledge and ability to run a successful business?
- Who else will be on your business team?
- What employees are you planning on hiring? Be sure to mention the qualities you will look for in an employee, that they will have employment contracts, and that they will undergo an on-boarding process.

Financial Plan

- Start-up budget (attach a copy in the appendix)
- Personal survival budget (attach a copy in the appendix)
- Break-even point (attach a copy of how you arrived at it in the appendix)
- Business bank account (bank, account name, account number)
- How will you monitor your sales?
- How will you manage your finances? Discuss it in detail.

Funding Requirements

- How much money do you require?
- How much are you investing in the business?
- Exactly how will the money be used?
- How long do you need to repay the money?
- How will the money be repaid?
- What collateral do you have to offer?

Thank you for your consideration

This is the polite way to conclude your business plan.

Appendix

The appendix includes all of the documents and additional support information for the plan. It will include things such as:

- *Start-up Budget*
- *Expenses Budget*
- *Break-even Point*
- *Cash Flow Statement*
- *Personal Survival Budget*
- *Sales Forecast*
- *Balance Sheet*
- *Leases*
- *Partnership Agreements*
- *Photos, etc.*