

1.1.1 Business Plan Outline

This outline briefly describes each section of the business plan and lists several questions to answer under each section.

1.2.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a one to two page highlight of key ideas/plans in business plan. The summary should interest a reader in the business concept and entice her to read the full plan. Although the Executive Summary appears first in the final document, it will be written last.

1.2.2 DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS

This section should give a brief history of the business. For start-ups, this section should at least address questions 1-4.

1. What is the business name?
2. How is the business organized (sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation)?
3. Who are the business owners?
4. How long has the business been organized?
5. What accomplishments have been achieved to date?

1.2.3 DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCT/SERVICE

It is critical to give a clear and concise description of the product made or the services offered by the firm. This section should be written in layperson terms - technical information can be attached in the appendix. You should emphasize the benefit your solution offers to the target market.

1. What does the business sell?
2. What are the features and benefits of the product or service?
3. What solution does the business offer to the marketplace?
4. Describe your pricing.

1.2.4 MARKETING PLAN

The marketing plan should include a review of industry conditions, a precise definition of the target market(s), an analysis of competitor advantages and weaknesses and a plan for promoting and selling your product or service.

1.2.5 INDUSTRY

Describe the state-of-affairs within your industry segment.

1. What industry does the business represent?
2. What are the industry conditions (expanding, declining, new, mature, etc....?)
3. How do businesses enter the industry?

1.2.6 CUSTOMERS

In this section write a clear description of your target market and include their needs and wants. Your product or service should offer a solution to the target market or provide a benefit to your customer.

1. Who are the customers? (Individuals - age, gender, socio-economic characteristics, etc..;
1. Corporations - size, industry, etc...)
2. What do the customers need or want?
3. Where are the customers?
4. How does product or service satisfy customer needs?

1.2.7 COMPETITION

This section identifies competitors providing the same or similar solution to your target market. For each competitor, you should define strengths and weaknesses and in conclusion define how you will position your business in the market with the established firms. Do not assume that you have NO competitors. Somehow, someday your target market is using a product or service that meets the need you aim to satisfy.

1. Where do potential customers currently buy the product or service you offer?
2. Who else offers the product or service you offer?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your competitors?
4. How will your business be positioned with the competitors?

1.2.8 ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

In this section, you should define how you will get your product or services to your target market. This includes marketing avenues - advertising, promotions, public relations, and distribution channels.

1. How will you reach customers?
2. How do your target customers make buying decisions?
3. Where do target customers shop for products or services?
4. How will you incorporate a variety of marketing efforts? (Trade shows, advertisements, direct mail, directories, phone books, internet, periodicals, coop advertising, marketing/sales representatives, etc...)
5. How will you measure the success of advertising and promotion efforts?

1.2.9 LOCATION

1. Where is your business located? (home-based; retail; commercial, etc....(National Business Center - Handbook)
2. Is the location of your business important?
3. Does your business require special zoning, land or building improvements to accommodate your operation?
4. If location is important, what are the features of your location?
5. How can you benefit from being located at NBC

1.2.10 SUPPLIERS / SOURCE OF MATERIALS / SUBCONTRACTORS

If you are producing a product or if you depend on subcontractors to deliver a service, you should know how to contact these sources. In this section you will list your critical suppliers and subcontractors.

1. What materials or services are required to complete production?

2. Where do you get your raw materials?
3. Will you rely on subcontractors to complete a project? If so, who and in what function?
4. How do you find potential suppliers or subcontractors?

1.2.11 MANAGEMENT

It is important to know what resources you have in-house to support business development and growth and what resources you will need to find. In this section you should demonstrate that your management team has technical abilities, marketing abilities and business acumen to succeed. In addition, identify directors and advisors who you will consult with.

1. What background does the management team have? (Industry and management experience)
2. What is the make-up of the board of directors or advisors?
3. What key staff/management positions need to be filled?
4. How many employees to start?
5. Accountant
6. Attorney
7. Banker
8. Insurance agent
9. Consultants

1.2.12 FINANCIAL PLAN

This section should include past financials and future projections based on sound and reasonable assumptions. If the business plan is being presented for financing, the source and use of funds should be defined here.

1. How much capital is needed to start or expand the business?
2. How much capital can be raised by owners?
3. How much additional capital is needed?
4. What is the capital needed for?
5. Historical financial statements
6. Financial projections