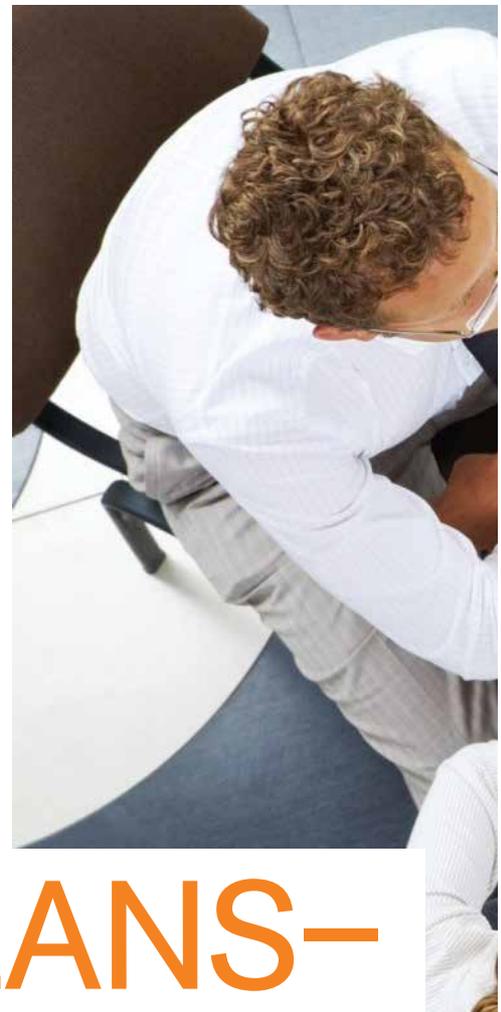


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Why do you need a business plan?

Business Plans improve business! It's really that simple. Theories abound when it comes to what they should look like and how to create one. There is a new term called a business road map, personally I don't really care how big, how small, how to start or all the other ideas you will run across when you're researching business plans. Frankly, any plan is better than no plan, even a few bullet points on an A4 sheet pinned on your wall at least offers a focus point.

BUSINESS PLANS— Unlock Potential Whilst

Failing to Plan = Planning to Fail

Sure, it's an old saying but full of home truths. If you're sitting around wondering why XYZ Company is flying ahead and you have stalled – I suggest it's that you have no plan and they do! Sound familiar?

Going back many years my first business plan was developed from a government incentive program, it cost around \$22K back in the 90's. It had chapters, from memory 75 – 100 pages and was a massive effort. We learnt a lot in the process. Key to what we learnt was – don't use all your energy and enthusiasm creating it.

Clearly understand it's about "action", not just a bunch of words. Nowadays a real business plan is action based and should only be a day or two in development to offer you steps and directions, without loads of cost. The cycle time of modern business demands actions, outcomes and deliverables.

A good plan is all about the summary, so read it over and over but ensure you action it! So, plan all you like but make sure it's deliverable and actionable. The key to business plans in my view is: "if it's more than

10 pages it makes a good door stop". I don't have time for the warm and fuzzies, give me a few pages of distilled, focused, energetic ideas and passion about how to deliver it – that is the way to go!

A plan needs to be a dynamic live document, rather than a business plan that sits in a filing cabinet gathering dust.

What is a Business Plan anyway?

In its broadest overview it has many faces, your plan is likely to have some of these points:

- A document that includes snapshots from the past, present and future
- The plan may list any potential problems you may foresee and how you will resolve them along with the capital required to finance all of your projects
- A vision of the future and how you are going to get there
- The plan may adopt the KISS approach – keep it simple
- It may start by writing an abridged version of your basic plan and once this is complete you can take it to the next step and further elaborate to your heart's content, without going overboard

- It doesn't have to be a long-winded document, preferably the smaller the better, straight to the point and realistic
- If you're the type of person that likes details, discuss with your partner/s or staff just what they need. If you like details and they like simple – write a big detailed document then cull back to a document that is meaningful for them and their needs

The benefits of a Business Plan

- By planning for anticipated business developments both good and bad you can reduce this risk either before or as they arise
- If you have partners or other people involved in owning or running your business, a business plan can clarify the expectations of all concerned, and avoid potential conflict and poor coordination. Therefore enabling everyone to pull together in the same direction
- Establishing business directions will allow you to focus on the key initiatives, which need to be undertaken over time. Ensuring resources – time, staff and money – will be utilised more effectively
- Determine specific objectives and goals, giving you the opportunity of tracking how well your business is performing. Planning



Harvesting Your Momentum

will also usually offer a wider range of performance measures, enabling improved business monitoring by measuring your progress against objectives

- If you require financial assistance a formal Business Plan is essential. It needs to build a logical picture that can justify projected returns, aim to ensure the financier or bank can embrace your vision

What does a Business Plan need to cover?

Think reading a road map, its goal is to take you from point "a" to your desired destination. The action plans and goals you need must assist in delivering you to your business destination.

- Describe both your past and your present business – (*who are you, your position, what does your company do, how long has the company been going?*)
- Describe your present – (*marketing, operations, products and services, employees, clientele, equipment, financials*)
- Analysis of your future goals – (*to increase revenue, productivity, adding value to your customers business etc.*)

- Now, make me believe – yes truly believe, draw me a picture of your vision – (*how are you going to get there, where is it, how is your business going to build foundations to this dream, what is the magic in your business, why is the future going to deliver this vision, and WHEN in steps of real timeframes is this vision going to happen*)

What is holding you back with your future?

An important note is that a recent study of Australia's fastest growing businesses revealed 68 percent had a business plan, and those businesses recorded a growth in profits that was 69 percent faster than competing businesses without a plan. Ref: Kevin Lovewell, *Corporate Solutions*

Yet the sad truth and reality is those great high percentages belie the fact that the opposite is true for small to medium businesses, just like you! Yes, YOU. Are you reading with interest and saying to yourself "YES I want one!" I hope so; as if you do, you're about to unlock the mystery to one of the key elements to what is holding you back! Just like the sad truth – only around 15 percent of businesses have a business plan – a road map to the future.

As a business consultant we see clients weekly who have focused on gloom and doom, politics, what is happening here or there and worst of all they drain their own energy reliving the glory days. It's time to step up; it's time to realise that what makes a great business is a great leader and all the great leaders had plans! – now ask yourself – where is your plan or when was the last time you reviewed it? Or if you're probably just like everybody else just too busy, too focused on working in the business to ever step back and unleash your business's potential by digging yourself into an ever deepening hole.

Here is a simple one-question test? "Why haven't you got a real functioning road map to the future?" – if you are not happy with your answer – take action now.

Still not sure what needs to be done? Send us an email and ask for our free 'how to plan' and start helping yourself now!

If you're too busy we can even help,
call 02 9660 5428 or email
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page; <http://www.controlzone.com.au/>