

BUSINESS PLAN FORMAT

1. **Executive Summary** – this should be a concise, punchy brief of the whole plan, slanted at whoever the plan is specifically aimed at eg normally the Bank Manager. The summary must be sufficiently exciting to grab the recipients attention so they read the rest of the plan. **This part of the plan should be written last so it can properly reflect what is in the plan.**
2. **Organisation and Management** – full details of key personnel, shareholdings, directors, their experience, their roles and details of the current and future organisational structure. Comment should be passed on the employees, their skills and what training will be needed and how the staff participate in the running of the business. (CV's for directors/owner managers should be included in the appendix.)
3. **Product and/or service** – here should be a detailed description of your products/service and what you see as your unique selling point ie how you differ from the competition. Also include your thoughts on future product development and goals for future expansion. (Any brochures in appendix)
4. **Market and Marketing Strategy** – Who are your customers, why will/do they buy from you and how do you ensure they remain happy with your products. Comment on the size of the market and that you have looked at how it may be affected in the future by political, environmental, social and technological changes. Who are your competitors and what are their strengths and weaknesses.
5. **Operations** – Here include details of your premises, machinery/plant etc. Who are your suppliers and to what capacity will you be working initially. Do you have room for expansion. Comment on the operational workflow if appropriate and highlight any critical areas for you and how you will control them.
6. **SWOT Analysis** – it is always useful to undertake a swot identifying what you believe to be your strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities otherwise the person reading the plan will do so. Try and address any weak areas and comment on how you would deal with threats etc.
7. **Financial Analysis** – this should be as detailed as you can make it particularly when you are seeking funding. A minimum of 12 cashflow projections are required and it is often a good idea to do a sensitivity analysis covering different levels of sales ie a what if scenario. Always enclose details of the assumptions you have made in drawing up the figures and if this is not your forte then ask an accountant to help you. If you are a mature business then details of historical trading for the last 2/3 years will be required and highlighting key ratios from your performance is always a good idea.

The above forms the basis of your plan. In some cases you will want to add in other relevant headings applicable to your particular business but it is essential that the plan has more good points than downsides and the Executive Summary should aim to bring this out.

If you are still not comfortable with business planning then have a go at it drafting your thoughts out on paper and then take it to Businesslink or any other professional adviser (see partners page and they can provide further guidance.)