Big iDeas Business Plan Competition

TEMPLATE

This 7-page business plan template, adapted from Forbes.com, contains ten sections, each dedicated to an essential piece of information needed for a well thought out professional business plan. Some sections also have subsections to help you organize a complete plan. Keep your plan to no more than 7 pages.

Follow the template. While this may seem like a lot of information, it is your outline to help you start and grow your venture. Complete the sections one at a time. This will help you think holistically and efficiently about what you are trying to build and develop an efficient roadmap of your goals and how to achieve them.

PAGE 1

Section I – Executive Summary (this is the first page, one page only!!!)

The Executive Summary is the most important part of your business plan. If this page interests readers, they will go on to the rest of your plan. If not, they won’t.

Start your Executive Summary with a brief and concise explanation of what your company does. Next, explain why your company is uniquely qualified to succeed. For example, does your management team have unique competencies? Do you have any patents? Are you the first mover in your market? Does a huge, unmet market opportunity exist? Add any other unique characteristics, the ones that make you want to be in this in the first place!

Finally, include a synopsis of your financial projections in your Executive Summary. Specifically, include your expected revenues, expenses and profits for each of the next five years, how much funding you are seeking, and the key uses of these funds.

PAGES 2-7

Section II – Company Overview (this begins the second page!!!)

The Company Overview provides a brief history of your company. Address when and how your organization was formed, what type of legal entity you are, and accomplishments to date.
Importantly, your past accomplishments are perhaps the best indicator of potential future success, so be sure to identify and include all key milestones your company has achieved to date.

**Section III – Industry Analysis**

1 – *Market Overview* is the subsection that discusses the size and characteristics of your market. For example, if you are a restaurant, you would include the size of the restaurant market, a brief discussion of sectors (e.g., fast food versus fine dining) and market trends.

2 – *Relevant Market Size* is the subsection includes a much more specific calculation of your market size. It is the annual revenue your company could attain if it attained 100% market share. To calculate your company’s relevant market size, multiply 1) the number of customers who might be interested in purchasing your products and/or services each year and 2) the amount these customers might be willing to spend, on an annual basis, on your products and/or services.

**Section IV – Customer Analysis**

1 – *Target Customers* is the subsection that precisely identifies your current and/or intended customers. Include as much demographic data on your target customers as possible, such as their gender, age, salary, geography, marital status and education.

2 – *Customer Needs* is the subsection that specifies why customers want or need your products and/or services. Answer the questions about what your target customers care most about. For example, do customers care most about speed, quality, location, reliability, comfort, price, value, other attribute, etc.?

**Section V – Competitive Analysis**

1 – *Direct Competitors* are companies that fill the same customer need you fill with the same solution. For example, if you operate an Italian restaurant, other Italian restaurants would be direct competitors.

In this subsection, outline who your direct competitors are, and their strengths and weaknesses.

2 – *Indirect Competitors* are the companies that fill the same customer need you fill with a different solution. For example, if you operate an Italian restaurant, a French restaurant would be an indirect competitor.

In this subsection, outline who your indirect competitors are, and their strengths and weaknesses.

3 – *Competitive Advantages* is the subsection where you state what is it about your company that will allow you to effectively compete (and win) against both direct and indirect competitors.

**Section VI – Marketing Plan**

1 – *Products & Services* is the subsection where you give the details of the products and/or services your company offers.

2 – *Pricing* is the subsection where you detail your pricing. In particular, discuss how your pricing relates to competition. For example, are you the premium brand? the low cost brand? Discuss your expected branding based on your chosen pricing model.
3 – *Promotions Plan* is the subsection that details the tactics you will use to attract new customers. For example, you might choose radio advertising, or online pay-per-click ads, or press releases, and so on. In this section, detail each form of promotions you will use.

4 – *Distribution Plan* is the subsection where you outline the ways in which customers can buy from you.

In some cases, customers can only buy directly from you, perhaps at your physical location or web address. In other cases, you might have distributors or partners who sell your products or services. Detail this structure of your distribution plan.

**Section VII – Operations Plan**

1 – *Key Operational Processes* are the daily functions your business must conduct. In this subsection, you will detail these functions. For example, will you maintain a Customer Service department? If so, what specific role will it fill?

By completing this section, you’ll get great clarity on the organization you hope to build.

2 – *Milestones* is the subsection where you list the key milestones or goals you hope to achieve in the future and the target dates for achieving them.

Here is where you set goals for specific and critical undertakings, such as when a new product will be created and launched, by when you plan to execute new partnerships, etc.

**Section VIII – Management Team**

1 – *Management Team Members* is the subsection that details the current members of your management team and their backgrounds.

2 – *Management Team Gaps* mentions if you have holes in your team. This is particularly true if your company is a startup venture. You will likely have gaps in your management team, roles that you hope to fill later

Identify such roles in this subsection, and the qualifications of the people you will seek later to fill them.

3 – *Board Members* (if you maintain a Board of Advisors or Directors), include names and brief bios of all board members.

**Section IX – Financial Plan**

1 – *Revenue Model* is the subsection that gives clarity on how you generate revenues. Clearly articulate what you sell. Do you sell products? Do you sell advertising space? Do you sell by-products, like data? Do you sell all of the above?

2 – *Financial Highlights* is the subsection where you will indicate the highlights of your financial model. Your full financial model (income statement, balance sheet and cash flow statement) belong in your Appendix.

In this subsection, mention your revenues, key expenses, and projected net income for the next five years.

3 – *Funding Requirements/Use of Funds* is the subsection that specifies any funds you are seeking for your company. Detail the amount here, and importantly include what the funds are for and how you will use them.
Exit Strategy is the subsection that details your expected exit. This is particularly important if you are seeking equity funding. The most likely exit strategy is to sell your company to a larger firm. If so, detail the types of firms that might be interested in purchasing you and why. List the specific names of potential acquirers, if applicable.

Section X – Appendix

The Appendix contains all supporting documentation that will help convince readers your company will succeed.

As mentioned above, your full financial model (income statement, balance sheet and cash flow statement) belongs here.

Likewise, include other documentation per each section of the plan. This could be customer lists, awards, and patents received, etc.