FILL-IN TEMPLATE

Simple Business Plan

A fill-in template. Print it, or type into it.
The Biz Foundry, Cookeville, Tennessee.

THE BIZ FOUNDRY

HOW TO USE THIS

Before you start

Answer the questions in order. Write badly and quickly the first time — a plan you have argued with twice is worth more than one you wrote carefully once and never revisited.

If a question does not apply to your business, write down why not. That is an answer too, and it is usually the interesting one.

THERE IS A WORKED EXAMPLE OF ALL OF THIS

Sourwood Bakery — a fictional bakery with a complete set of numbers — is on the resources page at thebizfoundry.org. If a question here is hard to picture, go and see how it was answered there.

AND YOU CAN BRING IT TO US HALF-FINISHED

Coaching is free and there is no pitch at the end. A plan with gaps in it is more useful in a session than a tidy one.

SECTION 1

The business

What does your business do, in one sentence?

If it takes two sentences, you are not finished thinking yet.

What will you call it, and what legal structure will it have?

Sole proprietor, LLC, corporation, non-profit — and why that one.

Where will it operate?

Premises, from home, online, mobile. Include why the location suits the customer.

When will it open, and what has to happen first?

SECTION 2

Your customer and their problem

Who exactly is your customer?

Not "everyone". Describe one real person: age, situation, what their day looks like at the moment they need you.

What problem are you solving for them?

How do they solve it today, without you?

There is always a current answer, even if it is "they put up with it". That is your real competition.

Why would they switch to you?

SECTION 3

What you sell

What are your products or services?

List them. Keep the list short enough that you could deliver all of it well on your worst week.

What will you charge, and how did you arrive at that?

Cost plus a margin, or what the market bears, or what a competitor charges — say which, and be able to defend it.

What does each sale cost you to deliver?

Materials, ingredients, direct labour. If you do not know this, you do not yet know whether you are profitable.

SECTION 4

Competition

Who else could your customer buy this from?

Include the ones that are not obvious competitors — the do-it-yourself option, the big chain, doing nothing at all.

What do they do better than you will?

Answer this one honestly. A plan claiming no weaknesses tells a reader you have not looked.

What will you do better, and how would a customer tell?

SECTION 5

Getting customers

How will your first hundred customers find out you exist?

Be specific. "Social media" is not a plan; "a post every morning showing what came out of the oven" is.

What will that cost, in money and in hours a week?

How will people buy — in person, online, by phone, on account?

SECTION 6

Running it

Walk through a normal day. Who does what, and when?

Who works here, and what does each person cost?

Include yourself. A plan that only works because the owner is unpaid is not a plan.

What do you need to buy or lease before you can open?

SECTION 7

The money

What does it cost to open? List every item.

Equipment, deposits, fit-out, stock, licences, insurance, signage — and a cash reserve. The reserve is the line most people cut and the one that keeps businesses alive.

Where is that money coming from?

Savings, a loan, family, a grant. Lenders want to see your own money in it.

What does it cost to run each month, whether or not you sell anything?

Rent, wages, insurance, utilities, loan payments, software.

SECTION 8

Break-even

This is the most important page in the document. Everything else is description; this is the test.

How much do you make on an average sale, after the cost of delivering it?

How many sales a month do you need to cover your fixed costs?

Monthly fixed costs divided by the figure above.

Is that number realistic? What would it look like on a normal day?

Convert it to customers per day and picture them coming through the door.

What happens if you are twenty percent short of it?

How many months could you survive? This question has ended more bad plans than any other, which is exactly what it is for.

SECTION 9

Milestones and risks

What are the next five things that have to happen, and by when?

What could go badly wrong, and what would you do about each?

Three or four is plenty. Naming them is what turns a risk into a plan.

YOU HAVE WRITTEN A BUSINESS PLAN

Now go and argue with it. Show it to somebody who will tell you the truth, change the parts that do not survive, and bring it to a free coaching session at thebizfoundry.org.