GENERAL

How to write a business plan
Te āhua o te tuhi mahere pakihi

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
Stats NZ

A business plan helps you set goals for your business and plan how to reach them. Find out what to consider when writing a business plan.

Preparing a business plan

Follow these tips to prepare your business plan.

- Be clear and focused about what you want to achieve. This will help direct your team so you're all working toward the same goal.
- Choose the type of business plan that works for you – for example a document, or a business model canvas.
- Keep it short, simple, and easy to understand.
- Keep your goals realistic and relevant to your industry and the current economy.
- Use Stats NZ's 'data for business' website to find useful business tools and statistics.
- Speak with your customers to understand how your product works for them and if it's something they would pay for.
- Do a SWOT analysis to determine your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- Ask your advisor or mentor to review your plan and give you feedback.

Data for business Stats NZ ↗

LEARNING RESOURCE

Create a business plan from scratch

You can download this free template and use it to write your business plan. Use it to plan for starting out in business, changing direction, seeking new partners or facing challenges.

Business plan template →

LEARNING RESOURCE

Quick-focus business plan

Reflecting on your business strategy and plan doesn't have to be difficult or time consuming. Download this template and use it when you want to quickly focus on the right things - or refresh an existing business plan.

Quick focus business plan →

Common mistakes

These are some common mistakes to be aware of when starting a business plan:

- Not being able to clearly articulate your business and the value it offers to customers.
- Making assumptions about your customers rather than speaking with them.
- Not reviewing and monitoring your business plan.
- Setting unrealistic or uninformed targets.

Business plan online learning

Watch our four short videos to start your plan or get a fresh perspective on what you've already planned. We'll step you through our templates, one section at a time.

Business planning online learning →

SWOT your business and your competition

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are usually inside your business. Opportunities and threats are usually external factors.

Write down what these are for you and your business.

Strengths

This is what you and your team are good at.

Your strengths might include:

- what helps you achieve your goals
- unique skills and expert knowledge
- what your business does better than your competitors
- good processes and systems
- where your business is most profitable.

Weaknesses

These are the things that stop you from achieving your goals, and that you want to minimise.

Weaknesses might include:

- areas you need to improve in
- what costs you time and money
- resources you don't have
- parts of the business that aren't profitable
- ineffective processes
- poor brand awareness
- poor online presence.

Opportunities

These are external conditions that can help you achieve your goals.

Opportunities might include:

- how you can do more for your existing customers
- how you can reach new markets
- related products and services that could help your business grow
- technologies that can enhance your business.

Threats

These are external conditions that could damage your business and that you want to minimize.

Threats might include:

- obstacles you face in your industry
- the current economy
- your competitors' strengths.

Competitor analysis

Do a SWOT analysis for your competitors too, so you can:

- identify areas where you can beat them
- refine your market
- be prepared to address the challenge they pose.

Implementing your business plan

There are different options to implement your business plan.

- Keep your business plan as a living document that you and your team can access at any time.
- Make your goals your business's priority.
- Make sure the day-to-day operations of your business reflect your goals.
- Determine the most practical and cost-effective way to achieve your goals, and note any extra resources you'll need.

CASE STUDY

Refine and review

Craig Jackson has experience in business planning, but when he set up his ice pop business, he decided to work with a mentor. "It's important to ask 'do people want your product' and then 'are there enough of them to buy it'?" Jackson regularly reviews progress against his business plan.

Reviewing your business plan

Once you've created your business plan, remember to review it regularly.

Track how you're reaching your key milestones in your business plan every month. Celebrate when you reach them.

Stay on top of industry trends and stay connected with your customers. Make changes to your business plan if needed.

Update your business plan with any changes affecting your business or industry.