

# VENTURING PLANNING

It doesn't have to be fancy and bound in leather, but your completed venture plan should look professionally prepared and be ready for serious review by potential investors. Here's how to make sure it looks right and does the job.

## General Guidelines for Writing Your Plan

As much as your plan represents your dream and is very important to you, it may not be as high on the agendas of the people who read it. When you sit down to write your plan, think of who will be reading it and put yourself into their shoes as much as possible. In most cases, the people who will read your plan are going to be potential investors, bankers, and/or potential partners. Your readers have likely seen dozens, and perhaps even hundreds, of plans. These people do not often have a great deal of time, so prepare your plan accordingly.

In general you should:

- Write the plan yourself. Get help if you need it, but do not let your accountant, bookkeeper, or other professional write your plan for you. You may let them help you with the financial plan, for example, but you need to know your plan inside and out-and the best way to ensure that is to write it yourself.
- Back up every claim you make with supporting evidence. Include surveys and detailed market research as an addendum or appendix to your plan.
- Write clearly and to the point, keeping your prose to a minimum.
- Avoid hyperbole: don't overstate your case. Similarly, avoid unnecessary adjectives such as "fantastic," "amazing," "astounding," "irresistible," and so on. Let the reader form his or her own opinion.
- Ensure that your writing is error-free and edited for proper form and syntax.
- Choose a simple, common font such as Times New Roman, and stick with it throughout the document.
- Use professionally produced drawings, photographs, and graphs. Unless you are a professional, your own attempts at art will look amateurish. The same is true for videos, if you're using them, or an online demo.
- Bind the pages simply. Cerlox or its equivalent is likely sufficient.
- Make sure you include your contact information right on the cover. Not doing so is one of the most common mistakes entrepreneurs make.

## Sections of the Plan

The first two sections should appear at the beginning of your plan. It is not as critical that the others follow in the order given, but this sequence will likely work well.

### Executive Summary

This is by far the most important part of your plan. It should be no more than two pages in length, or less. State the idea, the opportunity, how much money you need, where you hope to get it, how it will be spent, and how you will pay it back. Readers who are interested may then go on to read the rest of your plan. Be warned, if your executive summary is more than three pages long, it will likely not be read.

### Your Planned Venture

Describe your idea as clearly as possible, with diagrams, photographs or any other medium necessary to communicate it to the reader. Back up the idea with a description of the target market, tell why the opportunity exists, and why your idea will capture that market.

### Market Research

Explain how you determined the product or service was appropriate to the market. Include explanations of the "four P's" (price, product, promotion, placement).

### Background and History

Tell who you are, what experience and skills you bring to this venture, and whether or not you've run your own businesses in the past. Describe and explain their successes or failures. Include your own, short, biography here.

### Management Team

Provide the names and short bios of the people you will use to fill the key positions in the business.

### Start-up Plan

Tell when and where you plan to start the business and why you chose this time frame and location.

### Operational Plan

Describe, in detail, how your business will operate. Include diagrams of production or service areas if appropriate.

### Marketing Plan

Describe, in detail, how you will attract customers or clients and how you will deliver your product or service to them.

### Financial Plan

Provide a detailed financial plan, including a cash-flow projection, that accounts for the money you will need (borrow) and the repayment plan and return on investment to investors.

### Appendix

Include your own and your team's detailed biographies here as well as additional market research and any other information that is too detailed to be included in the body of the plan.