

Vital information for small business managers

Preparing a Winning Business Plan

HOW TO WIN
THE ATTENTION
OF INVESTORS
& STAKEHOLDERS

REVISED AND UPDATED
4TH
FOURTH EDITION



Matthew Record

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Preparing a Winning Business Plan

*How to win the attention
of investors and stakeholders*

4th edition

MATTHEW RECORD

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Preface

Preparing a winning business plan is crucial to help ensure the success of your business. A well researched and carefully structured business plan is the single most important component in the development and continuation of any venture. It is a detailed map that shows where you're going and allows you to identify potential problems long before they arrive. With poor planning being the major cause of business failure, this book could literally save your business and your livelihood!

Whether you run an established business or are contemplating a new start-up venture, a business plan will convey your company's plans and illustrate how they can be achieved. You need it to measure performance, monitor progress, make future plans and raise additional finance.

This fourth edition has been thoroughly revised to provide you with up-to-date information and contact addresses should you need further advice. It is hoped that this book will help you on your way, though it must not be considered a substitute for taking detailed professional advice.

Matthew Record

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1

Writing a Business Plan

The fact you have this book in your hands means that you are already aware of the importance of a business plan. With business failing at an alarming rate the need has never been greater to start off on the right foot with a clear understanding of exactly what you hope to achieve and how you will do it. A well thought out and carefully structured business plan is the key to the long-term success of any business. Whether you are just starting a business, buying one already established or perhaps in need of extra finance for expansion you will need a business plan.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR A BUSINESS PLAN

Reasons for a business plan

Your reason for compiling a plan will be different for each situation:

- If you are starting a new business you will require a plan to clearly assess every aspect of the business and show how it will succeed.
- If you are buying an already established business you will need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the business to decide if you will be able to make it a success.
- If you are already up and running and in need of extra finance you will need a plan to convince those putting capital into your business that you can and will succeed.
- If you are applying for one of the many grants available.

Who will read your plan?

When you begin to compile a business plan you must always remember who the plan is for. Just as an author must always remember who will read his books so you must remember who will

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read your business plan. With this in mind you must present your plan in a clear and logical format. This will enable the recipient to achieve a clear understanding of your business and make a decision based on the information you have supplied.

Your business plan will benefit the various types of people who will all be using your plan as a basis for making decisions:

- your bank manager
- alternative providers of finance
- business advisory organisations
- friends and colleagues who will invest in your business
- yourself and your work colleagues who will be running the business and using the plan on a daily basis.

ASSESSING YOURSELF

Launching a new business or buying an existing one is a huge step that shouldn't be taken lightly. However with the right forethought and careful planning the transition from being a salaried employee to a self-employed worker should be a simple process. But before you take the plunge and tell your boss what he can do with his job, make sure you have the abilities needed to run your own business and that you have chosen a business that will suit your abilities. It is no good considering setting up a business to repair video recorders if your only experience of them is to press a few buttons to record your favourite programme.

Self-motivation

You must find your business both stimulating and exciting to run, or you will find yourself getting bored and your enthusiasm draining. It does not matter if your friends find your particular business idea uninteresting; it is what makes *you* satisfied that counts. After all it is you that will be investing time, energy and money in your business, not your friends.

Have you got what it takes?

The dream of owning your own business and becoming your own boss will for many remain just that, a dream. However, for those

with the determination and drive to turn their dreams into reality, then anything is possible. As you are reading this book it is assumed you are one of this number ready to take your future into your hands and become your own boss.

Becoming committed

In the early days your business will demand your total commitment for very little financial reward. This can put a great strain on both yourself and your family so sacrifices will have to be made. You will probably have to survive on a reduced income whilst the business is getting established. The annual holiday in the sun will be postponed for a while and very few evenings and weekends will be totally free from work. You and your family must believe in your business and be prepared to adapt to the inevitable changes to your lifestyle that a new business brings with it.

Learning to be in charge

All the hard work associated with starting your own business should be outweighed by the many benefits being your own boss will bring. You will no longer be taking orders from someone else, it is you who will be giving them. No longer are you just another number or a face within a workforce, you are the person at the top, the one who makes all the decisions and ultimately it's you who will be responsible for the success of your business.

You will have to remember though, it is you who will have to put things right when they go wrong, it is you who will have to stand behind your decisions and it is you whom people will turn to for advice and support. If you are ready to accept these challenges with determination and enthusiasm then you are ready to accept the challenge of running your own business.

Ten key questions to ask yourself

Ask yourself these questions to see if you have what it takes to run your own business:

1. Are you hard working and determined to make a success of your new business?
2. Are you totally committed to becoming your own boss?
3. Are you a highly self motivated person who thrives on pressure and new challenges?

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4. Can you organise yourself and your business to work efficiently, productively and profitably?
5. Are you prepared for setbacks and ready to accept that things will not always go as planned?
6. Can you make sound decisions and stick by them whatever the consequences?
7. Are you able to learn from your mistakes and ensure they never happen again?
8. Do you have previous experience of your chosen business idea?
9. Have you examined your potential market to ensure you are able to succeed in it?
10. Are your family and friends totally behind you and prepared to make sacrifices?

If you have been able to answer all of these questions with a positive and confident *YES* then you are well on the way to starting your own business and becoming your own boss.

CHOOSING YOUR BUSINESS

Once you have decided you have the necessary qualities and abilities to run your own business you must next decide on which business idea is right for you. There are many ways to become your own boss, these include:

- Discovering a new **niche** market and developing a product or service to fill it.
- Developing a product or service of **superior quality** to that of the competition and then competing with them.
- Buying an already **established business**, perhaps with unrealised potential.
- Buying a **franchise** opportunity and using an already proven successful business formula.

Whichever method of becoming your own boss you choose it will cost you time, money and energy to get up and running so you will have to make sure you are able to make a success of it.

GATHERING YOUR INFORMATION

It is at this stage you should start to gather information. If you need to write to a government department for help or advice, then do so now. Many organisations, particularly government bodies, are notorious for taking weeks or months to respond to an enquiry. There is nothing more annoying than sitting down to write up a section of your plan only to discover the information you need is not to hand.

The golden rule of information gathering is to collect as much of it as you possibly can. You can *never* have too much information.

Even something which doesn't seem to be important now may turn out to be crucial to your business plan at a later date.

COMPILING YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Just as a book is separated into chapters which follow a logical sequence, so too should be your business plan. Here is an example of the section headings you could use to compile your plan:

Contents Page
The Executive Summary
The Nature of Your Business
Your Product or Service
Your Market and Competitors
Your Marketing Plan
Operations
Financial Forecasts
Financial Analysis
Appendices

A quick overview

Here is an overview; each heading is explained in detail later in the book:

Contents page

It is a matter of personal preference whether this follows or precedes your executive summary.

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The executive summary

This is a brief yet concise statement which is designed to give your reader an overview about your business by summarising the key points. Here you should describe the following:

- The current position of your business.
- Details about who will be buying your products or services, in what quantities and why.
- Your short, medium and long-term objectives and how they will be achieved.
- A summary of your financial forecasts.
- Details of how much money you need.

The nature of your business

This section of your plan should give your reader an understanding about who you are, what you do and how you do it. The following points should be covered:

- Your business name, address and contact telephone number.
- The legal status you will trade under.
- Details of your key members of staff including yourself.
- Your location.
- Your business objectives and how these will be achieved.
- Your mission statement.

Your market and competitors

This section of your business plan should describe the market you are in. It should highlight who your clients will be, what they will expect from your products or services, and details of who and where your competitors are.

Your marketing plan

Your marketing plan will describe how you will promote and sell your products or services. It will include details of:

- market research
- your target market
- the competition
- marketing methods.

Operations

Your operational plan is the nuts and bolts of your business. It will

illustrate to your reader the steps you will take to make sure your business will operate both successfully and profitably.

Financial forecasts

This is the most difficult part of compiling a business plan. Obviously you will feel optimistic, but it is essential to be realistic. Any bank manager who knows his job will be able to see through any proposal based on inflated figures which make the balance sheet look good. The only person you will be fooling is yourself. Your market research will be able to provide you with an accurate sales forecast.

Financial analysis

This will go hand in hand with the sales forecast as the sales forecast is presented in the form of cash flow forecasts which in turn lead to profit and loss and balance sheet forecasts.

Appendices

In the appendices you should include any information which will support and verify any statements and assumptions you have made in other areas of your business plan.

DESIGNING YOUR PLAN

There is no set formula for designing a successful business plan. Every plan will differ in length and style depending on the type of business. However there are characteristics which should be apparent in each of them.

Deciding the length

The length of your business plan will vary depending on the nature of the business. As a guideline your plan should be between 25 and 40 pages including the title pages and any appendices. Obviously if you have just invented a new car that runs on fresh air you are going to need a far more detailed document than if you are planning to set up a simple grass cutting business.

The amount of capital you need to raise will also have an effect on the length of your plan. Generally speaking, the more capital you need the longer the plan. If you are looking to raise £100,000 then anything less than 25 pages is unlikely to convince your bank manager to lend you money. However, if you only require a few hundred pounds, then a 40 page document is likely to bore the reader and overstate your case.

Choosing the right style

You will develop your own style of writing but you must always retain the interest of the reader and write in a narrative style using everyday terms. There is little point in using technical jargon if the reader cannot understand what you are trying to say. For example if 'it has a 456 micro buffer enhanced with a 789 extended memory data translator' means it is a fast and powerful machine, then just say it is a fast and powerful machine. Each sentence should follow on from the last in a logical sequence as should each chapter and sub-heading. Avoid trying to convey too many ideas in one sentence. Remember you are trying to make your business plan easy to read and understand.

SIMPLIFYING YOUR PLAN

The task of producing a business plan can seem daunting but with a little forethought you can turn it into a highly enjoyable experience, and this after all is one of the fundamental reasons for being in business – to have fun and enjoy what you are doing.

Ten steps to help you

1. Decide which business best suits you and where it should be located.
2. Compile market research data to summarise the competition.
3. Decide how much capital you are able to invest and then set your business objectives.
4. Decide on the legal structure of your business. Identify your target market.
5. Compile your marketing strategy to show how you will sell your product or service.
6. Work out how many employees you will need and what they will cost.
7. List any equipment you need and how much it will cost.
8. Compile your cash flow, profit and loss and balance sheet forecasts.

9. List your assumptions indicating how you arrived at these figures.
10. Write notes about each of the above points.

When you have completed all of these points you will be ready to start writing your business plan. Whatever the size of your business organisation you should be able to condense all the information you have gathered and wish to convey in 20 to 40 pages including all title pages. No-one reading your plan will have the time to wade through a document the length of *War and Peace*.

EDITING YOUR PLAN

After you have gathered all your information the task of actually sitting down and writing your plan begins. The key to successful writing is to always compile a rough draft first then leave it for a few days. When you return to your draft, read it and then read it again deciding how it can be improved. Only editing, re-writing and fine tuning will make your plan into the best document you can possibly produce. If possible, get a friend or colleague to read through your rough draft before you start on your master copy. Sometimes someone else's viewpoint can prove to be invaluable; there is no substitute for constructive criticism.

Preparing the master copy

When you begin compiling your master copy from your rough draft, take particular care that your document is grammatically correct and that any spelling mistakes have been corrected. If you are using a word processor to produce your plan, then do not just rely on the spell check facility to amend any spelling mistakes: some words with just a letter added or removed can make a different word which although spelt correctly is not grammatically correct.

Finding someone to read it

Before submitting your plan to anyone, get a friend or colleague to read through it and ask them if they understand what you are trying to convey. If there is any part of your plan they do not understand, then edit, re-write and fine tune until it does make sense. If they had a problem understanding it then you can be sure your intended business reader will have the same problem. Ultimately you are

responsible for any errors, so make sure none remain.

Alternative methods for producing your business plan

In addition to compiling your business plan yourself there are a number of other options you could consider using:

- An accountant or business consultancy would be able to produce a business plan on your behalf, but the cost of this is likely to be quite considerable.
- There are a number of computer packages which are beneficial providing that you have completed the initial research yourself, these include:

Peninsula Business Plan – available from Peninsula, Orchard House, St John's Avenue, Bridlington YO16 4ND. Tel: (01262) 673591.

PlanIT Business Plan – available from Roderick Manhattan Group Ltd, 123 Disraeli Road, Putney, London SW15 3DZ. Tel: (020) 8875 4444.

CHECKLIST

- Before you begin to compile your business plan, make absolutely sure you understand why a plan is necessary, who will be reading it and for what reasons.
- Take some time to really assess whether you have got what it takes to run the intended business. Being your own boss may sound very glamorous but are you ready to run your business professionally, competently and profitably?
- When you choose a business, be sure to choose the right one and enjoy what you are doing.
- Research your intended new business or business opportunity fully. Look into every aspect and detail of the set up and operation to make sure you know what to expect.

- With all the necessary information to hand begin to compile a rough draft of your business plan, paying particular attention to detail and to the design, layout and keeping a simple appearance.
- When you compile your finished plan from your rough draft, pay particular attention to editing and eliminate all spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes.

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake want to buy a franchise

Joshua and Jake are two friends who have worked together in a retail store for the past six years. They have developed an excellent working relationship and are also good friends away from their working environment. An opportunity to buy an established franchise business close to their homes has been advertised in a local newspaper. The present proprietor wishes to retire due to ill health and has reluctantly put the business up for sale. Following a meeting with both the franchise company and the proprietor, Joshua and Jake decide they want to buy the business and run it between themselves.

Jasmine discovers a market niche

Jasmine has spent the last three years working in a greetings card shop. During that time she has discovered a new niche market to produce personalised calendars and diaries with all of her client's important dates already printed out. Calendar Creations will be financed from her own savings but she will be compiling a business plan to put her business objectives into context. This will let her know if she has a viable business concept or just a pipe dream.

Luke looks to expand

Luke runs his own engineering company and currently employs 30 people who help him generate a £2 million turnover. His company has just won a large contract to supply a large car manufacturer with various components and equipment. The contract would involve employing extra staff to cope with the demand and expanding his existing premises on either his existing site or relocating to larger premises perhaps even in a new area. Luke is looking to finance the expansion with a combination of investments and grants. He needs a business plan to convince both potential investors that he has a

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business worth investing in and the various government departments that he would be eligible for grant assistance.

2

Your Business Idea

In order to effectively convey your business idea to others it is essential to define clearly the basic structure of your business. Your business idea forms the nucleus of your business plan and is the starting point from which every other aspect will emanate. A clear definition of your intentions is essential for investors to make informed decisions regarding your proposal.

This chapter will cover the processes involved in setting up your business. All the sections are equally important and will form the introductory part of your business plan. From this information the reader must be able to gain a clear and concise understanding of your business idea.

PLANNING YOUR LEGAL ENTITY

Once you have decided which type of business you would like to run the next task is to choose the legal entity you will trade under. There are three main types, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. We will look at each in more detail to help you decide which best suits your needs:

- sole trader
- partnership
- limited company.

Becoming a sole trader

As the name suggests this is usually a one person business where one individual has been solely responsible for starting it up and raising all the necessary capital. There is very little red tape with this type of business and there are no particular legal formalities to adhere to. However, you should contact the Inland Revenue and Social Security authorities to inform them you will be working for yourself and when you intend to start trading. They will be able to give you further advice

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and can be contacted through your local phone book or:

1. Inland Revenue, Somerset House, The Strand, London WC2A 1LB. Tel: (020) 7438 6622.
2. Department for Work and Pensions, Correspondence Unit, Room 112, The Adelphi, 1–11 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT. Tel: (020) 7712 2171.

Going into partnership

A partnership is similar to a sole trader in that it is simple to establish. Each partner has unlimited liability for all debts of the partnership. There may be anything from between two and 20 members, each with the same objective – to make a profit. For this reason a charity cannot become a partnership.

As with a sole trader, a partnership does not have to be registered and it is not compulsory to have any form of partnership agreement. However it is strongly advisable to have such an agreement drawn up by a solicitor at the outset of your business, even if your business partner is your wife, husband or best friend. That way, if there is ever any dispute, both parties will have a document to refer to. It would cover such things as:

1. How will decisions be reached if the partners disagree?
2. How much money will each partner put in?
3. What will happen if one partner wants to pull out?

You may wish to include a sleeping partner in the business. A sleeping partner would provide capital but have no say in the day to day running of the business. The sleeping partner may choose to become a limited partner which means they would only be liable for their initial investment and nothing else. At least one member of a partnership must be a general partner with unlimited liability for all the debts of the partnership. A partnership, like a sole trader, is not legally bound to publish its accounts.

Forming a limited company

Limited companies are the most complex type of business to set up. Once formed, a limited company is a legal entity quite separate from its owner(s). The individuals who own it are only financially responsible for paying for the shares they are issued with. A limited company has to pay corporation tax on its profits, and PAYE plus

national insurance contributions on behalf of its employees. If you are a director you will be treated as an employee and have Class 1 national insurance and income tax deducted from your salary.

There are two types of limited company, private and public, each carrying advantages and disadvantages.

Further information about limited companies can be obtained by contacting your professional adviser.

Getting further help

There may be tax advantages to trading under a particular structure. For example, in the early years of a business when the profits may be small, it may be worth operating as a sole trader or partnership, and then registering as a limited company at a later date. Your accountant will be able to advise which is the best legal structure to suit your needs.

Make sure the accountant you choose is professionally qualified (which usually means 'chartered') and has a proven track record. Personal recommendation is the best way to find a good accountant. The financial penalties for poor advice could be severe. Good accountants should earn their fees from the money they save you in tax. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales will be able to provide you with a list of its local members; it can be contacted at PO Box 433, Chartered Accountants Hall, Moorgate Place, London EC2P 2BJ. Tel: (020) 7920 8100.

CHOOSING YOUR TRADING NAME

Long and careful consideration should be given to your business trading name. It should reflect the image you wish to portray to your clients about who you are and what you do. For example, builders Dave Bodgitt and John Leggit would have more commercial success calling their partnership Dave and John's Building Services than simply Bodgitt and Leggit. You may feel the word Limited after your name will portray an image of a large organisation even if you are only a two person team. Choosing a name begins to create an identity for your business.

Using a logo

The name you finally decide upon will appear on all your letterheads, compliment slips, business cards, invoices, order forms, vehicles and clothing to name but a few areas. Therefore it may be a

good plan to incorporate a **logo** either within your trading name or as a separate graphic image. There are many advertising and marketing companies who will be able to design a logo for you. Be careful to agree on a written price before any work begins. If you do not, then the cost can be very high especially when the company starts to charge you for its 'thinking time'.

For a nominal charge most high street printers will produce a small selection of possible logos for you to choose from. You may have designed a logo yourself in which case it will be worth contacting **The Trade Marks Registry** who will be able to offer help and advice about applying for a trade mark. They can be contacted at Concept House, Cardiff Road, Newport, South Wales NP10 8QQ. Tel: (01633) 814991.

Controlled names

There are some controlled names you are not allowed to use without first getting official permission. These include the words Bank, International and Royal. This is to stop businesses claiming to be something they are not. The complete list is available as a guide entitled *Control of Business Names* from the Department of Trade and Industry at 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET. Tel: (020) 7215 5000.

DEFINING THE NATURE OF YOUR BUSINESS

In order for the reader of your business plan to make any decision about the future of your business, you must first ensure that they know all there is to know about how your business works and why you believe your business will be successful. This section of your business plan will give you the opportunity to introduce the reader to your business idea by clearly summarising the nature of your business.

This will be an *overview* of how your business works; many of the topics will appear in greater detail later in your business plan. Be clear and precise in this overview but do not assume your reader will fully understand what you are trying to convey.

Including background information

It is a good idea to begin this section by giving the reader some background information about your business. Start by describing how you arrived at your business idea; state what your business name is and explain why you have chosen it. It is often said that when an

investor puts capital into a business, they are not really backing ‘the business’ but the person behind the business. Therefore you must also describe the skills and experience you have which may be relevant to your business. This need only be an overview as your skills and experience will be covered later in this chapter under *Listing your key personnel* (page 31).

Giving trading details

The recipient will expect to know which legal form you will be trading under and why you have chosen it. If you have not yet started to trade then you can include the date you intend to start your business. Perhaps you intend to buy a business which is already established and trading, in which case the reader will want to know why the business is for sale and whether the asking price is fair. A personal recommendation from your accountant to substantiate the selling price will go a long way to convince the reader that you have got a good deal.

For an already established business state when, where and why the business was launched. Include a brief summary of the business’s financial results and achievements to date. Copies of the actual annual accounts from previous years should be included in your appendix.

DESCRIBING YOUR PRODUCTS OR SERVICES

When you write about your products or services, imagine your reader as a novice with little or no understanding of your business concept. It is very tempting to assume your reader will automatically understand what you are trying to convey, but by the end your reader must have more than a passing understanding of your products or services.

Obviously the more complex your product or service is, then the more detail you will have to go into. For example, if you have just developed a new method for converting sea water into drinking water at a fraction of the cost and time taken by the present desalination process, then you will have to explain in greater detail than if you are just about to start up a window cleaning business.

Avoid trying to ‘sell’ your products or services to your reader at this stage; that will come later when you meet face to face. Stick to the facts and be specific.

PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS IDEA

If you have developed a new product or invention – or indeed if your business idea is a totally new concept – then you should give serious thought to protection against the theft of your product, invention or idea. This can be done in a number of ways depending on the nature of your business. There are four main types of protection, each one relating to a different aspect of your business.

- A **patent** protects how your product works.
- **Design registration** protects how your product looks.
- A **trade mark** protects what your product is called.
- A **copyright** protects your work on record, paper or film.

Guides relating to registering designs are available free of charge from the Design Registry. Three booklets *How to Prepare a UK Patent Application*, *Applying for a Patent* and *Introducing Patents: A Guide for Investors*, are all available from the Patent Office. *Applying for a Trade Mark*, and the *Trade Marks Journal* (published every Wednesday) are both available free of charge from the Trade Marks Registry. The Design Registry, Patent Office and the Trade Marks Registry can all be contacted at Concept House, Cardiff Road, South Wales NP10 8QQ. Tel: (01633) 814991.

Registration forms and details about registering a copyright are available from Stationers Hall, Ave Maria Lane, Ludgate Hill, London EC4M 7DR. Tel: (020) 7236 1156.

Other useful addresses

Institute of Trade Mark Agents, 4th Floor, Canterbury House, 2-6 Sydenham Road, Croydon, Surrey CR9 3JX. Tel: (020) 8686 2052.

Institute of Patentees & Inventors, Suite 505A, Triumph House, 189 Regent Street, London W1B 4JY. Tel: (020) 7434 1818.

The Chartered Institute of Patent Agents, 95 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1DT. Tel: (020) 7405 9450.

DEFINING YOUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Now that the reader has a better understanding of your business

concept, you are able to show them exactly what direction your business is going to take and how it will get there. Your business objectives will be a blueprint for you to work to which will show you what you hope to achieve and by when. It is very important to define your objectives clearly at the outset of your business; this will not only show the reader that you have thought through the long-term future of your business, but it will also put your ideas into context.

Everybody in business has a different set of objectives depending on who they are and the nature of their business. Your objectives may be as simple as to still be trading at the end of the first year, or as detailed as to obtain a 25 per cent market share by the end of your third year. Whatever your objectives are, be ready to substantiate any statements you make with facts and figures. Obviously you want to be optimistic but wild assumptions will cut no ice with your investors. Be as prudent as you possibly can; keep your objectives realistic and within reach. Remember, it is far better to under-estimate and over-achieve than to over-estimate and under-achieve.

Defining your short term objectives

In general 'short term' means the initial twelve months of trading. If you have carefully thought about your objectives then you should be able to list them accurately and in the order they will be reached. As very few businesses make much profit in the first year, your short term objective may be to survive the first year with a small overdraft and a full order book.

Defining your medium term objectives

The medium term will cover the first two years. Obviously these will not be stated in as much detail as your short term objectives but nevertheless they should still represent carefully calculated assumptions. Perhaps you would like to pay off your business loan or reduce your overdraft; if so your cash flow forecast should illustrate how.

Defining your long term objectives

These objectives refer to the first three years and beyond and as such can be as broad as they are long. It is very difficult for anyone to estimate where a business will be after three years, so your long term objectives can be stated in more general terms.

Your long term objectives may include employing more staff, introducing more products or expanding your business. Whatever they are they can be little more than dreams at this stage but they should still be sensible and achievable.

COMPILING YOUR MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a brief definition of your overall business philosophy in relation to your products or services, and the level of client satisfaction that you wish to develop and maintain. Although only a brief statement it should encapsulate all of your business objectives and provide your staff, clients and yourself with a clear set of goals to work to.

Key points to make

Many large corporations will pay a small fortune to have their mission statement professionally compiled, but as long as you include the following points in your statement, then yours can be just as dynamic as theirs. State:

- what business you are in and why
- your strategic goal, detailing what you want to achieve over the next one to three years
- how you will do it, for example by quality of service or adhering to strict values and standards.

Over time your mission statement will have to change as your goals are met. If you achieve your intended goal to become the market leader then your statement will have to be updated to reflect this.

Example

Phoenix Business Plans has been founded to fill a niche that exists in the market place. We will specialise in compiling professionally packaged business and marketing plans both rapidly and efficiently, at a fraction of our competitors' prices, whilst maintaining the highest levels of quality and client service at all times. It is our intention to become the market leader within the next five years. The success of our business will be directly influenced by our dedication to continually improve the quality and service in every aspect of our operation.

DESCRIBING YOUR LOCATION

Next in importance to the nature of your business is its location. In an ideal world every business would be located where it could achieve maximum profits for minimum cost, but as we do not live in such a world then your location must be chosen with the utmost care. If you work from home then your location is already defined. If not, the task of finding the perfect location can be very difficult.

The nature of your business will have a great bearing on your location. For example if you run a garage, restaurant or a shop, your clients will come to you and your location will be of paramount importance. If, however, you are in the construction, plumbing or electrical industry then you will have to go to your clients and your marketing skills will matter much more than your physical location.

LISTING YOUR KEY PERSONNEL

This section of your business plan will give you the opportunity to introduce the driving force of your business to the reader. By now the reader will have a very good understanding of what your business is all about, what you will be selling and how you will be selling it.

- Now is the time to show that you and your colleagues can make it happen.

Even if you have the simplest business concept ever, without the right mix of people behind you your business will quickly stagnate.

Your potential investors are going to examine not only your business concept, but also your personal attributes. They will want to know, have you got what it takes to achieve long-term success? Are you prepared to work very long hours week in week out, even year in year out, with little reward to begin with? If you have any relevant skills, experience or qualifications, include them now. These can be evidenced by including your curriculum vitae and any certificates or diplomas in the appendix.

Show how you will make an excellent employer. Summarise your hiring strategy and any special features you will offer as an employer such as profit sharing, incentives for good work and flexible working hours.

For key staff members you should briefly describe their background including their name, previous relevant experience and success,

educational and professional qualifications and details of their managerial methods.

CHECKLIST

- Have you decided which legal entity your business will trade under?
- Have you chosen the trading name you will use for your business?
- Have you explained the nature of your business?
- Have you described what you are selling to your reader in easy to understand terms?
- Is your reader aware of the aspirations you have for your business and what steps you will take to ensure that these are met?
- Is the mission statement you have compiled truly representative of what you want to achieve?
- Are the key members of your personnel described in such a way to highlight how they will contribute to the success of your business?

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake approach the bank

The £25,000 asking price for the business has been pre-set by the franchise head office with little room for negotiation. However, after examining the previous three years' accounts, Joshua and Jake felt this appeared to be a fair price based on the present level of sales and overheads. They could raise £7,000 between themselves and an additional £3,000 from Joshua's parents. Their next task would be to approach the bank for the additional £15,000. Jake had held an account with a local bank for a number of years so it was decided to approach this bank first. A visit to the bank revealed the need to compile a business plan and for an appointment to then be made.

Jasmine conducts her own market research

Before Jasmine exchanges the security of a regular job and regular wages for the uncertainty of running her own business she decides to carry out her own market research study. She wants to see if she has a viable business concept. Working in a greetings card shop gives her an ideal opportunity to talk to people who are already buying calendars. The initial response is very encouraging, and Jasmine decides to go ahead with her own market research survey. High street shoppers are surveyed at various times of the day and week in order to obtain a good cross section of respondents. Once again Jasmine manages to generate a positive response.

Luke assesses his situation

Having been in business for five years gives Luke an edge when it comes to assessing his current situation and compiling a business plan. His financial forecast could be made with a certain degree of accuracy as most of his calculations would be based on recent experience. In order to cope with the extra workload which would be generated from his new contract, a £350,000 investment would be needed to bring his present premises up to date, and he would need a further £150,000 to buy new machinery.

ACTION POINTS

1. List the main advantages and disadvantages of the various legal trading entities available to you. What are the benefits of choosing the entity you have?
2. Define your key business objectives? How will you ensure that these objectives are met?
3. Draw up a list of the ten main features and benefits of your product or service. Consider how these will make your clients buy from you.

3

Defining Your Market

Marketing means many different things to many different people. To some, marketing is merely a process that only large businesses should be concerned about; to others it is just an expensive way to find out what the client wants. Whatever your views on marketing are, you cannot hide from the fact that it is a necessity for each and every business no matter how big or small and not just an accessory for the larger businesses with huge budgets to spend. Marketing can be simply described as: how to bring in the business.

WHY USE MARKETING?

In the first instance you have to tell your clients about the product or service you are selling but more importantly you must be selling something that they actually want and will buy. This is where your marketing methods will prove to be invaluable. Marketing methods come in many shapes and sizes but can easily be summed up in one word, research. Your marketing methods will help you to identify your potential market and everything associated with it.

To just find out if your product or service will sell is not enough on its own. You need to be aware of:

- who will buy from you
- how often will they buy
- the amount they will buy
- what they are prepared to pay
- what do they expect to get for their money
- which newspapers do they read
- where to advertise to maximise the response
- who and where are your competitors.

RESEARCHING YOUR CLIENTS

Your potential clients are one of the most important elements of your business. Without clients your business is nothing: it will cease to be. Treat your clients well and they will come back time after time but upset them once and you may have lost them for life. Many new businesses are formed in the belief that as soon as they begin to trade then the clients will come. In reality nothing could be further from the truth.

Compiling a business plan is all about forward planning, and getting strategies to ensure that your business is both viable and profitable. Therefore, to even begin to consider the direction your business will take without first considering your client base is marketing suicide. Knowing and understanding who your clients are will be crucial when you are devising your marketing plan and deciding whom to target for your advertising and promotion. A truly successful business will provide a product or service which has a universal appeal to each and every client and is able to satisfy all of their needs.

SEGMENTING YOUR MARKET

The buzz word in marketing over the last few years has been ‘market segmentation’. It is unlikely that your business will be able to sell to every part of the industry you are in. Instead you need to discover which segment of the market will be more lucrative and profitable.

Example: two restaurants

Two restaurants on opposite sides of the road may be in the same overall market of providing food for clients, but they could be in quite different segments of that market, depending for example on the type of food they serve, the prices they charge, the decor of the premises and quality of the service they offer. One could be a *cordon bleu* restaurant aimed at a high-spending clientèle, the other a ‘greasy spoon’ with its own type of clients. These are two similar business in quite different segments of the same marketplace.

COMPILING YOUR MARKET RESEARCH

How to compile your market research could almost be a book in itself – in fact there are already a number of books available on the

subject. Your local book shop and library will have a wide selection for you to choose from. Market segmentation is just one area of your market research. Although important, it is even more important to look at your potential market as a whole.

Market research in its simplest form is the name given to the method of collating, storing, organising and assessing information about clients, competitors and any other ways they are influenced in the buying of products. Whether you are starting a new business or launching a new product or service, your research should be compiled before you embark fully on the project. In the long term time spent on how to investigate your potential market will be time well spent, especially if you discover a major flaw in your idea or even worse find out that there is not even a market. At least then you could have only lost the time and energy it has taken to compile your data and not thousands of pounds in stock you cannot sell or a product that will be too expensive to manufacture.

Deciding your marketing objectives

The best way to begin your market research is to consider what information you want to discover from your research. Here are some questions for you to consider:

- What do your clients need from you?
- Who is your intended market and what information do you want to find out about them?
- Who and where are the competition and how do they compare to you?
- Are there any areas of the market you are able to exploit?
- Have you test marketed your product with your potential clients?

With these objectives in mind your market research will be clearly defined and will enable you to gain a better insight to the market you are in. Only when you are able to answer the above questions yourself will you be able to begin designing your questionnaire.

Types of market research

In the main there are two different types of market research for you to consider when you are about to start compiling your data. These are:

- field research
- desk research.

Field research

This is obtained by collecting raw data from the general public as a whole and can take many different forms with one fundamental similarity, a questionnaire. The questionnaire will be developed from the information laid down in the marketing objectives and will be written with these in mind. Obviously, the information you want to discover from your market research will influence the questions asked and how they are worded.

1. The most common type of field research is that of personal interviews. These are usually conducted in the middle of the high street by an eager interviewer working on a commission to obtain as many completed questionnaires as they can.
2. Other methods of getting field research include interview by telephone, by post and by asking a company or group of individuals to use and test your product and then report back by completing a questionnaire.

Desk research

This involves analysing already published data for you to adapt to suit the needs of your own marketing objectives. The best place to begin your research is your local reference library. Your library has an endless supply of information just waiting to be read as long as you know where to look. The assistants will only be able to help if you know what information you need to find. If you are looking for information about a particular type of company to sell your product to then the *Kelly's* and *Kompass* directories will be invaluable. They list thousands of different companies, complete with address and even a contact telephone number for the purchasing manager. In addition to this you will find many informative and helpful trade association yearbooks and directories.

Financial and other information about a particular company can be obtained from the Registrar of Companies at Companies House, Crown Way, Maindy, Cardiff CF14 3UZ. Tel: 0870 3333 636. There is a small charge for this service but information relating to the people behind a company and its current financial position can be obtained, providing the business is registered and up to date with filing its accounts.

DESIGNING YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE

There is not any particular right or wrong way to design a questionnaire. The layout and wording will be influenced by what information you want to discover. There are however some guidelines which you might find useful.

Guidelines

- Never ask any more questions than is absolutely necessary.
- Keep your questions short, simple and to the point.
- Your questions should be answerable with a simple yes, no, or do not know. If not, then offer them a maximum of four alternatives.
- Not everyone interviewed will be a suitable respondent, so build in a question at the beginning of the questionnaire which will eliminate them from your research.
- Word your questions to get an exact answer, not just a vague one.
- Make the last question one that will show that a broad selection of respondents have been interviewed. Their occupation or salary are two good examples.

ANALYSING YOUR COMPETITION

The competition should always be treated with extreme caution. On one hand they are your enemy; they are the opposition who would like to see nothing better than you out of business. However, on the other hand they can be your best friend and you can learn just as much from them about how to successfully run your business as you can from any other source. As the old adage says, 'keep your friends close but keep your enemies even closer'.

The same rule should apply when you are in business. Who do your competitors buy from? How much do they buy? Who do they sell to? How much do they sell? The answers to these questions only barely begin to scratch the surface when you are analysing the competition but with these, and many other questions about your competitors and how they run their businesses answered you will be well on the way to establishing your intended market and your clients.

Your competitors will come in many different shapes and sizes and their true identity will not always be apparent. In the main your competitors can be split into two categories:

- direct competitors

- indirect competitors.

Direct competitors

These are defined as businesses which produce a similar product or offer a similar service to yours, and sell to a similar market to yours.

Indirect competitors

These are businesses which may either sell a different type of product or offer a different type of service to your business but in turn sell to a similar market. Alternatively, your indirect competitors may well sell similar products and offer a similar service but sell to a totally different market.

ANALYSING YOUR PRODUCT LIFE

No matter how big, small, old or new your product is, it will always abide by the laws of its product life. This in simple terms means charting the life of your product from the original concept and its introduction onto the market, through to market saturation, and eventual decline. Exactly where your products are positioned on the chart will depend on a number of factors including:

- How new or unique it is.
- Will clients continue to use your product after they have used it once?
- How will the competition react to your product and what steps will they take to maintain their own sales?
- Can your product be modified or further developed to prolong its life?

Product life cycle graph

Figure 1 illustrates an average sales pattern for two totally new products (A and B), from the early stages of their development through to their saturation of the market and then the decline as new products (A1) are introduced or the demand starts to decline due to a change in client buying trends. As you can see, there are five main phases which attribute to the life of a product:

1. research and development
2. introduction and launch

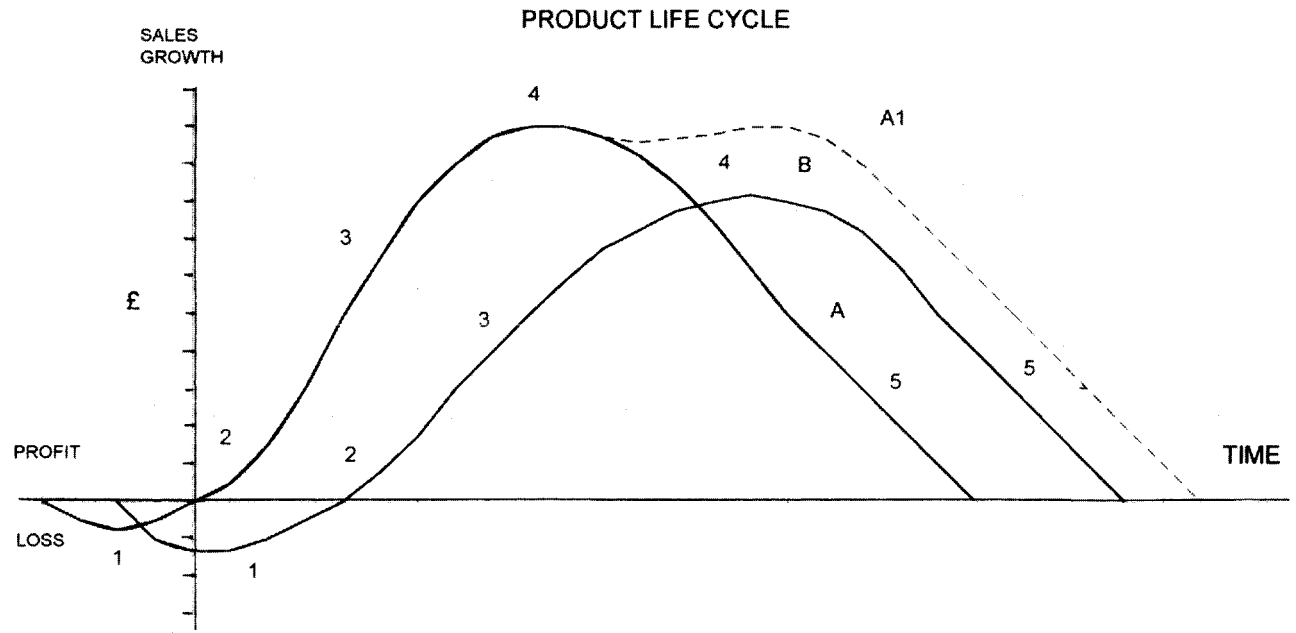


Fig. 1. A product life cycle graph.

3. growth and exploitation
4. maturity and saturation
5. decline and death.

SETTING YOUR SELLING PRICE

Many new businesses fail because they underprice themselves, nervous that the market will not pay their asking price. A lack of confidence in themselves and their new venture are the reasons for this but the golden rule is to always charge as much as the market is prepared to pay. It is common practice for new business to pitch their price just below the competition in an attempt to win over new clients who would have gone elsewhere.

Your selling price must be set with your competitors in mind so that even though you remain competitive within your market you are still able to make a profit. Your new product may be ten times better than that of the competition but if you have got to charge ten times the price of your competitors in order to make it profitable, then you must be sure that your clients will still be prepared to pay your selling price.

Pricing factors

When you set your selling price take into account every conceivable variable. It is not just a case of thinking of a number and then doubling or trebling it, there are many other factors to consider:

- Establishing the exact cost of producing your product by taking into account all of your overheads and the cost of your raw materials.
- What price the competition is asking for a similar product.
- Whether the demand for your product will affect your selling price; a cheaper price may increase the demand but this is not always the case.
- The image you are trying to convey. If you have a plush office in a new office block your selling price will be affected by your class of client whereas if you are based in a back street location your class of clientèle will probably be vastly different as will your selling price.

WHEN CONSIDERING INCREASING PRICES:

		Present profit margin %											
		10	15	20	25	30	35	40	50	60	70	80	90
P R I C E R I S E	2.0	17	12	9	7	6	5	5	4	3	3	2	2
	3.0	23	17	13	11	9	8	7	6	5	4	4	3
	4.0	29	21	17	14	12	10	9	7	6	5	5	4
	5.0	33	25	20	17	14	12	11	9	8	7	6	5
	7.5	43	33	26	23	20	18	16	13	11	10	9	8
	10.0	50	49	33	29	25	22	20	17	14	12	11	10
	15.0	60	50	43	37	33	30	27	22	20	18	16	14
	20.0	67	57	50	44	40	37	33	29	25	22	20	18

% by which volume can go down without loss in sales revenue

WHEN CONSIDERING REDUCING PRICES (OR GIVING DISCOUNTS):

		Present profit margin %											
		10	15	20	25	30	35	40	50	60	70	80	90
P R I C E R E D U C I O N	2.0	25	15	11	9	7	6	5	4	3	3	3	2
	3.0	43	25	18	14	11	9	8	6	5	4	4	3
	4.0	67	36	25	19	15	13	11	9	7	6	5	5
	5.0	100	50	33	25	20	17	14	11	9	8	7	6
	7.5	300	100	60	43	33	27	23	18	15	12	10	9
	10.0	-	200	100	67	50	40	33	25	20	17	14	12
	15.0	-	-	300	150	100	75	60	43	33	27	23	20
	20.0	-	-	-	400	300	133	100	66	50	40	33	29

% by which volume must increase to maintain sales revenue

IMPORTANT NOTES:

This table takes no account of changes in Fixed Costs and Fixed Asset or Working Capital Investment arising from volume increases and therefore shows an absolute minimum.

This table may not be appropriate when dealing with 'fashion' goods or services which deteriorate or expire with time (newspapers, fruit and vegetables or an airline seat).

Fig. 2. Pricing tables.

- Present market conditions. If you have developed a new safety product for children, and the media are currently featuring child safety, your selling price can be influenced by the fact there is already a great deal of client awareness about your product.
- Methods of distribution are important. Will you be sending your products nationwide or will your clients be calling to collect? The nature of your business will obviously affect this.
- Whether you are able to produce your products completely by yourself or if you will be contracting out the work to an outside source.
- Assess your profit margin in relation to your costs. The retail sector traditionally works on a 100 per cent mark up by doubling the cost price of their stock but car dealers may only realise a 10 per cent profit margin on the sale of a new car.

Profitable pricing

Your selling price must be set so that you are able to make a profit and still remain competitive. Making a profit is the main reason for being in business. Unless you are actually making a profit then there is little point in operating your business in the first place. There is no set profit margin to use. Anything under 40 per cent of sales is going to mean you will have to make a lot of sales in order to keep your head above the water. If you are able to achieve and maintain anything above this amount then you will be doing very well. Your accountant and bank manager may have some knowledge of what margins would be typical in your business.

If you have discovered that at your current level of sales you were making a loss, it is important to understand how your profits will be affected by any changes you make to rectify this. Although the most obvious course of action would be to cut your selling price in an attempt to increase sales, this can actually make matters worse.

Pricing tables

Figure 2 shows two pricing tables. These can be used to work out by what percentage your level of sales can be reduced in the event of a price increase, or increased by in the event of a price decrease in order to maintain the same level of profitability. The tables have been reproduced by kind permission of TACK Training Interna-

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tional, TACK House, Latimer Park, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 1TR. Tel: (01494) 766611. They come complete with a health warning to consult your accountant when first using them.

CHECKLIST

- Are you aware of exactly where your target market is?
- What area of your market will you concentrate on promoting and establishing your business in?
- Have you fully researched your intended potential market to ensure that your business can survive?
- Are you aware of who your competitors will be and where they are positioned?
- Is the selling price you have set competitive and are you sure that your clients will pay it?

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake prepare their business plan

The bank have provided Joshua and Jake with a pre-printed business plan form to complete before their forthcoming meeting. At first, compiling this lengthy document seems to be a daunting task. However, as they begin to read through it they soon realise most of the information can be extracted from a combination of the information pack supplied by the franchise company following their initial interest, and from the previous trading accounts of the present proprietor. Nevertheless, it takes many late nights and a lot of hard work before the document is complete. A letter of introduction is sent to the bank. After a reply by return of post, a date is set for the meeting.

Jasmine tests the local market

All Jasmine's market research shows that there is an untapped market niche for personalised calendars and diaries. However, before taking the plunge she decides to gauge the anticipated level of response by sending a mailshot to all large local companies with 20

or more employees.

She manages to obtain her mailing list from a local business directory. The mailshot announces the forthcoming launch of Calendar Creations and invites pre-launch orders at a discounted rate. Order forms are included with the mailing and then put on staff notice boards and in canteens. With the Christmas rush fast approaching the response is so tremendous that Jasmine wishes her business was already up and running.

Luke examines the grant options

Having carefully calculated how much additional finance would be required, Luke's next task is to decide how to obtain it. He decides his best option would be to look first at which government grants he may be eligible for, and then to raise the balance through private investment as opposed to a loan from the bank. During his investigations, Luke discovers that in his present town he would not qualify for any assistance. However, if he were to relocate his business to the next town then he could apply for a £200,000 relocation grant. In addition to this he could also borrow £100,000 at a heavily subsidised rate providing his grant application was approved.

ACTION POINTS

1. Describe which methods of research you will use to identify your potential market.
2. Assess the size of your potential market and the existing competitors. Will your business be able to survive and prosper?
3. Choose your selling price. How have you arrived at this figure?

4

Compiling Your Marketing Plan

Now that you have established exactly where and how big your potential market is, the next task is to put all your findings together in the form of objectives; these in turn will become your marketing plan. This marketing plan will form the basis of how you intend to promote your business and ensure that you are successful in generating sales revenue.

The nature of your business and the market you are in will influence what these objectives are. For example, a window cleaner may consider door to door canvassing and a small local advertising campaign to be a sufficient marketing plan. A larger electronics company will want to analyse current buying trends, establish the activity of their competitors and be constantly developing new products to stay ahead of the market as part of their marketing plan.

MAKING A SWOT ANALYSIS

Before you can begin to compile your marketing plan you need to make a critical self-assessment of where your business is and where you consider it to be going. This assessment is often known as the **SWOT analysis**. It must be brutally honest because if it is not, then the only person you will be fooling is yourself. The SWOT analysis relates to the following:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats.

Strengths

The strengths of your business include everything that you are competent at, and everything associated with the running of your business from manufacturing and selling through to accountancy and purchasing. How many strengths you can describe as being

competent in, will depend on whether you are a one man band or if you have a number of employees able to strengthen your business.

Weaknesses

This is the most difficult section of the analysis to assess critically – but it is important to try. There will always be areas in which you lack the necessary expertise or experience whatever the size of your organisation. You may even need to approach an outside source and hire the necessary resources to get the job done.

Opportunities

It is very unlikely that you will ever be able to dominate your market. Even businesses seen as brand leaders are vulnerable to a competitor who discovers a gap in the market place.

Threats

Your competitors will present you with your biggest threat but they are far from representing the only one. For example, new legislation could be threatening, as could a change in client buying trends. Be aware of anything which may affect the success of your business. Let your reader know that you have identified these threats and how you intend to deal with them.

BALANCING YOUR MARKETING MIX

Marketing is a kind of chemistry. Putting together the right mix of marketing methods can make or break a business depending on whether you get the mix right or wrong. Having the right product, at the right price, in the right place, promoted by the best methods – is the basis for your marketing mix. Only by continuously changing and adapting your marketing mix to meet market trends will you be able to survive and progress.

Marketing can be divided into four sections, each linked integrally with one another. They will influence how you develop your marketing plan. These sections are often referred to as the four Ps of marketing and are as follows:

- product
- price
- place
- promotion.

Product

This means what the product offers to the client in terms of features and benefits, quality, styling, guarantees and after sales service.

Price

Value for money will be more important to the client than price alone but your selling price will depend on the client base, whether in the retail or trade sectors, and will depend on any special offers and your terms of sale, *eg* credit given and deposits.

Place

Where you and your distributors are located in relation to your clients, and what effect this has on your methods of distribution.

Promotion

The size of your business and your available advertising budget will affect how and where your business is best advertised. The cost of trade shows, public relations, methods of selling and sales promotions are all covered under this section.

Getting the balance of the marketing mix can be likened to a set of scales: whatever adjustments you make on one section you will need to make a similar adjustment to another, or the scales of your marketing mix will overbalance and you could discover that your marketing plan has failed. For example, if you were to make a change to your selling price to increase the demand for your product, then you must also ensure that you adjust the product and place of your marketing mix so that you have sufficient supplies of your product in the right place to meet the expected demand.

DEFINING YOUR MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Now that you have defined your marketing mix, your next task is to clearly define your marketing objectives. These objectives and how you will achieve them through your marketing plan are closely linked with the overall business objectives that you have previously set. The recipient of your business plan must be able to understand what you want your marketing to achieve and how you intend to meet these objectives.

When you define your marketing objectives you can apply the same methods as you used to set your business objectives: examine

the short, medium and long term effects that your marketing will have on your business. This will show the reader of your plan that you have a clear vision of where your business is going and how you will take it there.

Short term

This generally means the immediate future and up to the end of your first year.

Medium term

The next two years are referred to as the medium term.

Long term

The long term is obviously more difficult to predict with any accuracy but your overall business strategy and objectives will affect what marketing methods you intend to be using in three to five years' time.

For each period of time list your objectives in the order in which you hope to achieve them, then follow your list of objectives with a strategy showing how these objectives will be achieved

Example: the board game makers

The inventors and producers of a new board game might define their short term marketing objectives as:

Objectives

1. Find a major wholesaler to take 50 per cent of production.
2. Expand a current local client base to include nationwide accounts.
3. Begin to develop a second board game for a similar target market.

Strategy

1. Use public relations to launch the game by sending a press release to all the trade journals and magazines.
2. Attend the London International Toy Fair in October to attract nationwide toy buyers.
3. Compile market research into the present games market to discover how to develop another winning game.

PROMOTING AND ADVERTISING YOUR BUSINESS

The steps you intend to take to promote your business will be just as important to the reader of your business plan as the product or service you will actually be selling. Now that the reader has grasped the concept of your business and what market you are in, he or she will now want to see exactly how you intend to make it all work.

The marketing methods that work for you will not necessarily be the same as those that work for your competitors. There is little point in advertising a certain way just because Joe Bloggs down the road does. The promotional methods that work for him and those that work for you will be the result of two different methods of marketing.

The promotional mix

The various ways to promote your business are known as the promotional mix and include:

- press advertising
- direct mailing
- public relations
- exhibitions.

You will probably use one or a combination of all of these at some point.

Press advertising

Getting your message across and persuading the client to buy from you instead of the competition is the fundamental concept of advertising. To the small sole trader it can just mean having the van sign written and a few business cards printed. To the larger organisation it is likely to mean the start of a carefully thought out and implemented strategy to increase sales.

The larger companies will be able to employ the services of an advertising agency. Before you rule this out as being too expensive it is well worth considering what they have to offer before you make any decision. Newly established agencies will probably be anxious for work (but do not mistake enthusiasm for experience).

If you decide to co-ordinate the advertising yourself, as many businesses do, then you will need to formulate a plan of where, when and how you will advertise. Start by asking yourself why you are advertising? What do you hope to achieve? Maybe you are just

launching your business and want to advertise your presence or perhaps you are offering some kind of special promotion. The answer will form your advertising objectives.

Direct mailing

Direct mailing – or the ‘mailshot’ as it is more commonly known – can be a very effective method of advertising providing that your mailing is carefully **targeted** to achieve the maximum response. With the average response rate at a mere two per cent it is vital that your mailings only go to people who will be really interested in what you are offering.

Compiling a list of prospects

You can compile a list of potential prospects in a number of different ways including:

- Using published data in the form of trade journals, directories and yearbooks.
- Contacting mailing list brokers. These companies can supply address lists for any type of mailing from business opportunity seekers to gardening enthusiasts.
- Previous clients or inquiries: this type of list is likely to yield a better response rate than the other methods as half the work has already been done. Their interest has already been generated.

The mailshot format

Although the physical content of a mailshot will alter between businesses there is a standard format of what you should include:

- your sales letter
- your sales literature
- an easy method of ordering
- a reply envelope or card.

Mailing lists

The Postal Address Book is an excellent source of useful mailing information and advice. It is produced by Royal Mail and covers everyday postal services through to specialist contract services for businesses. Copies are available from Address Management Products, Royal Mail, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 0GB.

Tel: (0131) 550 8999. Before embarking upon your direct mail campaign it may be worth contacting the Mailing Preference Services (MPS) who are a non-profit making body, established to foster good relations between direct mail users and the general public. They can be contacted at Haymarket House, 1 Oxendon Street, London SW1Y 4EE. Tel: (020) 7291 3310.

Public relations

To appoint the services of a professional public relations consultancy used to be out of reach for most small businesses. However, there are now a variety of companies who specialise in providing a cost-effective solution in the form of fixed rate services which will enable you to plan your expenses more accurately.

Alternatively, with a little forethought and preplanning any company with commonsense can easily compile and implement their own public relations strategy. Public relations is a way for businesses to get their name in front of the public without actually paying to advertise. This can be done in a number of cost effective ways by:

- becoming a public speaker
- sending letters to the editor of your trade journal or specialist magazine
- getting a listing in yearbooks, trade directories and business publications
- donating your time, products or money to a worthwhile charity
- getting a regular slot on local television or radio
- using announcement columns to tell the public what is new
- compiling a press release to gain free publicity.

Of these various methods of public relations the most effective and frequently used is the press release.

Compiling a press release

A press release can be sent to any number of publications, including specialist business, trade and professional journals as well as local, regional and national newspapers and magazines. When you compile a press release, here are a few guidelines to help you increase your chances of publication.

1. Ensure your press release is double spaced typed for easy reading and no more than two pages long.
2. Your press release must be newsworthy and appeal to the editor. Avoid trying to sell your product or service or your release will end up in the bin.
3. Observe the who, what, where, when, why and how principle of journalism. If your press release covers all these points it will improve your chance of publication.
4. Your headline will either make or break the chance of getting published so think long and hard before committing yourself to your headline. Editors are looking for original, appealing or humorous headlines.
5. Always include a contact name, address and telephone number with your release or your release will not even be considered.
6. Make sure you address your press release to the editor of the relevant publication unless it states otherwise.

Exhibitions

Although these can be a costly expense if you intend to actually exhibit at one, exhibitions can prove to be an excellent source of information for both potential clients and competitors alike. Your competitors will be able to visit your stand and see exactly what you have to offer. As this is a two way street, you will be able to do the same, and analyse and assess the competition all under one roof.

For new and existing businesses, exhibitions can be a great way to launch their company or new products straight into the main stream of sales with both buyers and distributors being able to view what you are selling. Never underestimate the power of an exhibition as a tremendous wealth of information and inspiration.

There are many companies who specialise in designing and preparing everything necessary for the perfect exhibition stand. In addition to this there are a number of companies who are able to supply visual aids and exhibition equipment including:

Nobo Visual Aids Ltd, Alder Close, Eastbourne, Sussex BN23 6QB. Tel: (01323) 641521. They also produce a very informative guide titled *Presentation Know-How*.

Pinewood Associates Limited, Presentation Products and

Services, Barton Hall, Hardy Street, Manchester M30 7WA. Tel: (0161) 707 7076.

MONITORING THE RESPONSE

Whichever marketing methods you decide will work for your business, it is only by constantly reviewing, amending and adapting your strategies that your business will succeed. A method of marketing that you use today could very well be out of date within a short period of time. Therefore, it is essential to keep monitoring which methods are most cost effective.

Before you can begin to monitor your responses you must obviously have all the information to hand. This can be done by finding out where your clients heard about you by simply asking them as they make an enquiry or sale. As long as you know the cost of using a particular method of advertising or marketing, and know how many clients and sales have been generated from it, then you can analyse which methods are the most cost effective.

CHECKLIST

- What do you want your marketing to achieve and how will go you about it?
- Have you described the marketing methods you will use to advertise and promote your business?
- Can you state the strengths and weaknesses of your competitors and how your business can satisfy the needs of your clients?
- Can you state the size of your potential market and what share you hope to achieve after your initial trading period?
- Who will use your product or service? How often will they purchase and how much will they be prepared to pay?
- Have you compiled your marketing strategy with a plan of how you will attain your objectives?
- Have you worked out a way of monitoring your marketing methods to see which methods are the most effective?

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake face a setback

Joshua and Jake go to their meeting with the bank manager full of hope and confidence, safe in the knowledge that they have completed their business plan to the bank's specifications. By now both are anxious to get the loan approved and begin their business relationship. The business is profitable and looks to remain that way; the asking price is fair and they have already committed their own savings to the proposal. Nothing can go wrong – or so they think.

The bank manager looks favourably on their proposal and even agrees that should he ever lose his job, he might even consider a similar opportunity himself. The projections look good, and provided the present level of sales revenue could be maintained, then the repayments should easily be met.

However, the bank is keen to learn how their repayments are to be met, should the level of sales fall below the estimates. As neither Joshua nor Jake has any equity in their homes or any other form of security, the bank has little option but to turn down their application for an unsecured loan. It was a risk the bank was not prepared to take no matter how good the proposal looked on paper.

Jasmine prepares her business plan

Despite all the positive response, Jasmine decides that she will still need a business plan to explain how her business will survive. She realises that the interest so far has been heavily influenced by the Christmas rush – but how will she survive during the rest of the year? Calendars are traditionally only purchased once a year, so she will need to discover a way to survive during the interim period.

Further research indicates that large organisations begin to purchase calendars in June ready for December. Jasmine's business plan shows that if she could achieve a minimum of 20 per cent of her total sales revenue for the second half of the year in the first half, then her business would prosper. This could be achieved by targeting clubs and societies with summer fixtures and timetables such as skittles, bowls and darts leagues. These organisations would place orders during the early part of the year, and this would boost revenue. With this information to hand and her business objectives clearly defined within her business plan, Jasmine decides to launch Calendar Creations.

Luke seeks additional finance

Having calculated how much grant assistance he would be eligible for, Luke still needs to raise an additional £100,000. With his business already achieving a £2 million turnover – set to increase by at least 25 per cent with the new contract – raising the additional finance should not prove too difficult. In exchange for the necessary £100,000, Luke offers the investor a ten per cent share of his business and a yearly dividend.

ACTION POINTS

1. Select the methods you want to use to promote your business.
2. Devise a press release launching your new business venture.
3. Look at the methods your competitors use to promote and advertise their businesses. What are the advantages and disadvantages to using these methods?

5

Your Operational Plan

Now that you have considered the various strategies to ensure the success of your venture, it is important for the reader of your plan to understand *how* you intend to meet these objectives. Your **operations** plan is another term for the ‘nuts and bolts’ of your business. It is the behind the scenes work that is needed to make your business successful.

CHOOSING YOUR CHANNELS OF DISTRIBUTION

In an ideal world all of your clients would come directly to you, eliminating all your distribution costs. Deciding which method of distribution to use would not even be an issue. However, whatever the size of your business, you can assume at some point you will have to address the issue of distribution. How you intend to distribute your product or service to your clients will depend on a number of factors, including your profit margin and selling price.

There are three methods of distribution for you to consider:

- indirect distribution
- direct distribution
- third party distribution.

Indirect distribution

If your product will be sold through the retail and wholesale sectors then this is considered to be indirect distribution as your clients will be purchasing your product from a business other than yours. Only products with a large profit margin and mass appeal tend to be sold in this way. With a large profit margin you will be able to attract good distributors with a generous discount whilst still keeping a percentage of the profits for yourself.

Direct distribution

Products which are sold straight from yourself to your clients are described as being distributed directly. This is usually achieved when

you use the telephone for selling and then back it up with a mail order method of distribution, or when the client comes to your premises.

Third party distribution

Appointing an agent to sell your products on your behalf is another method of distribution. This method is favoured by businesses such as double glazing and insurance companies, but their heavy handed, hard sell techniques have brought door-to-door selling a bad name, and the introduction of new legislation to cut down on cowboy companies.

A softer approach has been made by party plan organisations which have proved to be very successful over the last few years. Kleeneze, Dorling Kindersley and Avon are examples of successful party plan companies. The Direct Selling Association (DSA) is the regulatory body for party plan and direct selling businesses and can be contacted at 29 Floral Street, London WC2E 9DP. Tel: (020) 7497 1234.

FINDING THE RIGHT PREMISES

The location of your business will partly depend on what you are selling, and who to. For example if you have a restaurant or a retail store then your clients will be coming to you. However, the manufacturing industry will generally discover its potential market and then go out and sell to it. In this case your channels of distribution will have an effect on where your business is located as will the possibility of obtaining a grant.

There are a number of grants available if you locate your business in a rural or underdeveloped area. The Development Commission will be able to provide you with further information and can be contacted at Countryside Agency, John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham GL50 3RA. Tel: (01242) 521381.

Positioning your business

Your market research data will show where the best position of your business is in relation to your intended market. In reality, this can be easier to discover than to put into practice. Retail stores generally prefer to be in the middle of a busy high street, whilst a manufacturing business might favour a purpose-built unit on an industrial site. A new business may find it difficult to meet the running costs of being in such a prime position.

Where you are positioned in relation to your competition will affect your success. Will you be attracting trade away from your competitors by competing close to them? Or will the fact that you are the only type of business in a particular area be one of your benefits? Only you will be able to discover the answers to these questions.

MEETING SAFETY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

If your business involves the manufacturing or assembly of products then you need to be aware that your products may have to meet one or more of the many standards of safety and quality set by the British Standards Institute. Tell the reader of your business plan about any standards your business has to comply with, and how you will obtain the relevant certification.

The British Standard EN ISO 9990 is the nationally recognised standard of quality which many companies are proud to own. Although this certification can put your business ahead of your competitors it can be very expensive to obtain and out of reach for many new businesses.

However, if you can follow the necessary procedures for obtaining certification then ultimately you will be in a position to achieve these internationally renowned standards of quality.

Further advice about applying for registration and certification can be obtained from the British Standards Institute at 389 Chiswick High Road, London W4 4AL. Tel: (020) 8996 9000.

OBTAINING STOCK AND MATERIALS

Having sufficient stock to sell is obviously crucial to the success of your business and your business plan should set out the methods you will use to obtain your products. Your reader will not expect you to go into great detail, just to summarise how your stock will finally be made ready for sale.

If you will be buying your stock as fully assembled products then tell the reader your sources of supply and how they compare with other businesses supplying similar products. Explain how your stock will get to you, how long it will take and what conditions of sale will be made such as sale or return and whether you will be granted any credit. However, if your products will be bought in as partially assembled products then you will need to explain your manufactur-

ing process, stating how this stock will become assembled into your finished products.

Learning from competitors

It is worth investigating how and where your competitors obtain their materials. They have probably been established for a number of years and are fully aware of which suppliers are better than others. Constantly monitor the quality of your materials because you will only ever be as good as the materials you use.

- Keep it simple – Remember to make your business plan easy to read by eliminating any complicated jargon and substituting it with easy to understand terms.

CONTROLLING YOUR LEVEL OF QUALITY

Unless you are planning to buy an already established business your first objective will be to convince your potential clients of the quality of your product. Quality is of paramount importance and should never be overlooked. It not only relates to your finished product or service but it encompasses the whole concept of your business.

Every point of contact your clients have with your business will be measured in terms of the quality of your business. Whether it is on the telephone, with face to face contact or by postal correspondence, how you present yourself will constantly be assessed in terms of the level of service your clients will demand and expect of you.

Remember, just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so is a business. You may have a product or service that is second to none in terms of quality and value for money but if your clients contact you by telephone and are greeted by a miserable unhelpful voice, then you will not get the chance to show how good your business really is.

Maintaining quality

Once you have established a level of quality it is important to maintain it. Don't fall into the same trap as certain other companies by becoming complacent and allowing the standards you have set to become only adequate. We are living in a fast moving world; by tomorrow, today's level of quality will be out of date. Constantly monitor your quality, and your previous, current and potential clients will be able to help you achieve this objective. Constant communication with your clients is the key to maintaining the level

of quality and service they have come to expect. How will you be able to put a problem right if you are not even aware that a problem exists in the first place? Your clients should be the first to let you know when there is a problem, unless of course you can foresee any decline in quality and already have a strategy to overcome it.

EMPLOYING YOUR KEY PERSONNEL

Your personnel are the most important element of your business plan. Without them you will cease to have a business to run.

- In this section of your business plan you should highlight the job descriptions of each key member of staff.

Once you become fully operational your staff are in any case required by law to be given a written job description and a contract of employment stating the terms and conditions of the position offered. In the event of any dispute both parties then have a written document to refer to.

After you have defined your key personnel you will be in a better position to assess whether your present level of staffing is adequate and if not then how you will overcome this. Your level of staffing should be sufficient to cover holidays, sickness and days off without affecting the smooth running of your business. You may decide to alter the job descriptions of your present staff to compensate for any shortfall or perhaps employ further members of staff. Alternatively, you may consider introducing a number of training programmes to let your present personnel develop the skills and experience needed for your business.

The reader of your business plan will want to know about your employment methods. Will you advertise nationally or locally for staff? What wage and salary will you be offering? What, if any, incentives can your personnel expect to receive such as pensions, profit and performance related bonuses, holidays or other personal benefits?

Your reader will also want to know about any provisions you have made for the payment of PAYE (Pay As You Earn), National Insurance and pension plans. There is now a new employer's helpline which has been set up by the Inland Revenue, Contributions Agency and Customs & Excise. If, as an employer you have any general questions regarding tax, National Insurance and basic VAT registration, then all three departments can be reached by contacting one number, 0845 60 70 143.

ORGANISING YOUR BOOK-KEEPING

In your business plan you will need to cover the question of book-keeping. Tell your reader what methods you intend to use and who will be responsible for ensuring that the books are up to date. Chapter 10 takes a more in depth look at what is involved with keeping accounts. In the meantime it is important to understand why your book-keeping is important and what effect inadequate accounts will have on your business.

When any new business is launched, a capital investment is made to get the business started. This investment will be used to acquire various items needed to get things going. In turn this will lead to a return on the capital investment by generating sales revenue to come into the business.

All movements of money coming into and going out of the business must be fully documented and recorded. This is done by keeping a set of organised books detailing all transactions. If you run a larger business then you may be able to employ a book-keeper to control the books for you. However, if you run a smaller business, the responsibility of maintaining accurate and up to date books will remain with you personally.

INSURING YOURSELF AND YOUR BUSINESS

Regardless of the size and nature of your business you will need to make sure that you and your business have sufficient insurance should anything go wrong. There are many different types of insurance. Some are mandatory (required by law) such as motor insurance and employer's liability insurance if you have any employees. Others will depend on the nature of your business, and are largely a matter of common sense – policies such as cover against fire, theft and accidental damage.

Your business plan need not go into great detail about your intended policies, such as who they are with or what they will cost. Your reader will only be interested to learn that you *are* planning to be adequately insured. A good business insurance broker who knows the job inside out will be worth their weight in gold in finding the best quotes for the specific cover you will need for your business.

Getting independent advice

The golden rule to remember when dealing with insurance is always to seek professional independent advice. Some insurance companies will

sell you policies that you simply do not need. Make sure that your insurance broker is a member of The British Insurance and Investment Brokers Association; full details about their members can be obtained from 14 Bevis Marks, London EC3A 7NT. Tel: (020) 7623 9043.

CHECKLIST

- Do you know the channels of distribution you will use to get your product or service to your clients?
- Have you selected the right business premises for your potential market?
- Will any alterations be needed to the premises before you can start trading and has any necessary permission been sought from the local authorities?
- Does your business need to be registered with any authorities and has this been done?
- Do you know who your main suppliers will be, and what their terms and conditions of sale are?
- What steps have to be taken to ensure that your level of quality will be maintained?
- Have you considered who your key members of staff will be and have they been appointed?
- Have you made plans to keep your accounts from day one and decided who will be responsible to ensure that they are kept up to date?
- Do you and your business have an adequate level of insurance cover to provide for every eventuality?

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake discover the Loan Guarantee Scheme

Down but not beaten, Joshua and Jake reassess their current situation. They feel that the business will be profitable and all projections indicate that this would continue but they still have to overcome the problem of loan security. To borrow any money from friends or family would still leave them with the same debts but from a different source.

At the local library Jake discovered a book about raising finance which mentioned the government's Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme. Under the scheme, 85 per cent of the loan would be

guaranteed by the government for a business such as Joshua and Jake's in exchange for a small guarantee premium. This meant that should the business fail, then 85 per cent of the loan would be repaid by the government which would leave the bank with only 15 per cent of the loan unsecured.

Jasmine launches Calendar Creations

Calendar Creations is launched just in time for the Christmas rush. As the business begins to get established it becomes apparent that Jasmine's original projections were a little too conservative. Although it was quite an effort Jasmine has managed to fulfil all her obligations and get the calendars out on time.

After Christmas the rush did not really die down as more and more people began to hear about her and her business through word of mouth recommendations. Orders started coming in for summer league fixture cards, school diaries for the new academic year, and from a broad selection of clubs and societies. Jasmine's business was by far surpassing her original expectations – wonderful!

Luke prepares his business plan

Having found the avenue of additional capital investment, Luke's next job is to compile his business plan in such a way as to satisfy both the government grant board and his potential investor that he was offering a viable opportunity. He will do this by generalising the facts and figures relating to the current business as a whole, and then highlighting the specific details which related to the grant board and to the private investor. This had the double benefit of not only illustrating to the government where the additional investment would be coming from but would also show the potential investor how the government would be assisting.

ACTION POINTS

1. List the various methods of distribution of goods and services to customers. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the method that you will choose?
2. Describe the proposed location of your business. What, if any, effect will this have on the level of your expected sales revenue?
3. Examine the different types of business insurance policies.

6

Your Sales Forecast

So far your business plan has told the recipient what you are selling, who you are selling it to and how you intend to generate these sales. Now it is time to put all of your assumptions together in the form of your sales forecast. This represents the most important set of figures to come out of your business plan to date. These figures will be used to compile your cashflow, profit and loss and balance sheet forecasts. In addition they will be used to calculate how much capital you will need to get started, how much profit you expect to make and ultimately the viability of your business venture.

PROJECTING YOUR SALES

When you compile your expected sales projections, make sure the figures you present really are achievable, believable and most of all realistic. If your business is in the fortunate position of already having advance orders then you may already have a good idea of what your sales will be. However, if you are launching a new venture then your assumptions will be based on the information you have gathered from your market research studies. It is inevitable that the enthusiasm you have for your venture will lead you to be a little optimistic with your projections but try to keep yourself focused on a believable and prudent forecast.

Making up a sales forecast

Whatever sales projections you make you must be able to support your assumptions with evidence clearly showing how these figures will be reached. There are various methods you can use to support your sales projections including:

- gathering sales information on similar businesses
- communicating with the founders of similar indirect competitors

Profit & Loss Forecast

Year

*	Month		Month		Month
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Sales (a)					
<u>Less: Direct Costs</u>					
Cost of Materials					
Wages					
Gross Profit (b)					
Gross Profit Margin (% x 100%)					
<u>Overheads</u>					
Salaries					
Rent/Rates/Water					
Insurance					
Repairs/Renewals					
Heat/Light/Power					
Postages					
Printing/Stationery					
Transport					
Telephone					
Professional Fees					
Interest Charges					
Other					
Other					
Total Overheads (c)					
Trading Profit (b) - (c)					
<u>Less: Depreciation</u>					
Net Profit Before Tax					

*These headings may vary according to the needs of your business. You may therefore need to amend any that are not app

Fig. 3. A profit and loss forecast.

beginning _____



	Month		Month		Month		Sub totals	
Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual

licable.

PTO

- discovering how much revenue your target market generates and what market share you hope to achieve
- analysing previous sales records, if the business is already established
- listing any firm orders that you have already received.

COMPILING YOUR PROFIT AND LOSS FORECAST

Your profit and loss forecast will show your potential investors or backers just how viable your venture is in terms of its profitability. You will find it very difficult to get any kind of capital investment unless you can show that at some point your sales will exceed the costs incurred for obtaining that sales revenue, and that your business is trading at a profit. A typical profit and loss forecast will be budgeted on a monthly basis for the first twelve months, and then quarterly for the following two years assuming you feel confident enough to predict that far.

Most of the banks and financial institutions will be able to provide their own standard profit and loss forecast forms similar to the one shown in Figure 3, reproduced by kind permission of Barclays Bank plc. In order to compile a full twelve month forecast, simply carry forward the subtotals column to complete the remaining six months. The nature of your business will determine which of these headings will apply, so just leave blank any columns that are not applicable. It is worth remembering that the figures you enter into your profit and loss forecast will be exclusive of any VAT.

Budgeted sales

Your sales forecast will have shown how much sales revenue you expect your business to generate. You can now begin putting these figures into the 'budget' column of your profit and loss forecast.

1. If you are planning to set up a new business, remember to allow for a steady build up of sales during your initial trading period.
2. Your forecast should also allow for any seasonal influences which will affect the demand for your product or service.
3. For your profit and loss forecast your sales should include all the work you have completed or invoiced regardless of whether or

not you have been paid. At present you are only concerned with the profitability of your venture, not its cashflow.

Budgeted direct costs

To calculate your direct (variable) costs simply add together the cost of the materials you have used, with the cost of the labour you have engaged to either make, buy or offer sufficient goods or services to meet your monthly sales figure.

Budgeted gross profit

You can calculate your gross profit by deducting the total of your direct costs from your sales figures.

Gross profit margin (%)

Dividing your gross profit by your total sales and then multiplying this figure by 100 will give you your percentage gross profit margin. For example:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{GP: } \underline{\pounds 43,000} \\ \text{Sales: } \pounds 100,000 \end{array} \times 100 = 43\%$$

Total overheads

Your total overheads (fixed or semi-variable costs) incorporate every expense associated with the running of your business. Unlike your direct costs which vary according to output, your overheads are likely to remain fixed for the duration of your business but will increase with inflation and if your business expands.

Working through the list of overheads, estimate the annual cost of each one and then divide by twelve to give your average total monthly expense. Quarterly expenses such as telephone, gas and electricity should be included in this monthly figure. Remember, your cashflow forecast will detail exactly *when* they have to be paid. Your profit and loss forecast merely allows you to budget for them.

Trading profit

Subtracting your total monthly overheads from your monthly gross profit will provide you with your trading profit. If your gross profit is larger than your overheads then your business will be trading at a profit. However, the reader of your business plan will probably be surprised to see anything other than a forecast loss during your initial trading period while your sales have time to catch up with your expenses.

Depreciation

You can only 'depreciate' business assets which you own such as plant and equipment. You do not depreciate any assets which are rented, hired or leased.

The best way to calculate your monthly depreciation figure is to begin with the purchase cost of each asset and then divide this by the amount of years which you consider it will be able to be used within the business. For example a £1,000 computer system with an expected lifespan of five years will depreciate at a rate of £200 per annum. Dividing your yearly depreciation by twelve will give your monthly figure to include in your forecast.

Interest

You will also have to forecast the interest payable on any loans and bank overdraft that you may have.

Net profit before tax

To complete your profit and loss forecast simply deduct your monthly depreciation figure from your trading profit to give your net profit before tax.

Backing up your figures

It will not be enough to submit your profit and loss forecast on its own merit. Your reader will expect to see evidence of how you arrived at all your figures. A set of notes which explain the reasons behind your assumptions will help to convince your reader that you have carefully considered your forecast and not just entered a series of numbers at random. Any information you have included about price lists, guaranteed orders or supplier quotations should be included in your notes and then referenced within your appendices.

DRAFTING YOUR CASHFLOW FORECAST

As your cashflow and profit and loss forecasts are very similar in appearance and layout you should apply the same principles when you are completing both of them. To begin with, all of the figures that you include must be substantiated with supplementary notes explaining how you arrived at them and where appropriate, with material to back up your forecasts. Your cashflow forecast is a working example which shows the expected effects on your bank

balance over a period of time, and your ability to pay your creditors as money moves into and out of your business account. It will also show when any additional finance may be required and when it could be repaid.

Most of the figures for your cashflow forecast will be the same as those you have already used for your profit and loss forecast. It is just a case of transferring these figures into your cashflow forecast.

Using the cashflow forecast illustrated in Figure 4 (again reproduced with kind permission of Barclays Bank plc) you can see that many of the headings mirror those of the profit and loss forecast with just a few differences. In order to compile a full twelve month forecast, simply carry forward the subtotals column to complete the remaining six months. Working down through the forecast you will start with your receipts.

Receipts

Your sales will change over time as your products move through their life cycle where a peak is reached and then sales either subside or decline. Whenever a peak in sales occurs, sales thereafter will either subside (level out) as repeat orders are received or products are supplied in direct line with demand or they will decline as competitors begin to supply similar products or demand for the product has fallen – toys are a good example of this. Allow for these peaks and dips within your figures by regular monitoring of your business. It is important to note that, if applicable, your sales figure should include the VAT that you have charged. VAT can be a big item in a cashflow forecast.

Your cash sales estimate will be similar to the figure you used for profit and loss forecast providing that most of your clients will pay with cash. Of the clients to whom you extend credit and invoice, a ten per cent non payment factor would be a realistic average to work to. Whenever your debtors (people who owe you money) make a payment you should record this under the 'cash from debtors' column.

There may be times in the life of your business that you will make additional payments into your account. These could be in the form of savings, loans, grants or even receipts from the sales of any assets. Whenever you make such a payment it should be included in the 'capital introduced' column. Your 'total receipts' is the total of all of these figures.

Cashflow Forecast

Year

*	Month		Month		Month
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Receipts					
Cash Sales					
Cash from Debtors					
Capital Introduced					
Total Receipts (a)					
Payments					
Payments to Creditors					
Salaries/Wages					
Rent/Rates/Water					
Insurance					
Repairs/Renewals					
Heat/Light/Power					
Postages					
Printing/Stationery					
Transport					
Telephone					
Professional Fees					
Capital Payments					
Interest Charges					
Other					
VAT payable (refund)					
Total Payments (b)					
Net Cashflow (a-b)					
Opening Bank Balance					
Closing Bank Balance					

*These headings may vary according to the needs of your business. You may therefore need to amend any that are not app

Fig. 4. A cashflow forecast.

Payments

Your payments represent *all* of the expenses that will be going out of the business. In an ideal world all of your debtors would pay up promptly and all of your creditors (people to whom you owe money) would offer you an extended line of credit. In turn this would lead to a very healthy bank account and put you in an excellent cashflow position.

However, back in the real world this just does not happen so it is important for the survival of your business to reach a happy medium. This can be done by delaying your outgoing payments for as long as you reasonably can without triggering any bankruptcy orders against you, whilst at the same time maintaining tight credit control of your debtors.

Salaries and wages

This figure must include all National Insurance and Pay As You Earn (PAYE) payments you may have to pay on behalf of your staff. If your business trades as a sole trader or partnership then any money you pay yourself will be classed as **drawings** as opposed to a salary or wage. It should still be included in this figure and mentioned in your accompanying notes.

Most of the remaining headings under the payments section will be the same as they were in the profit and loss account. However, it may be possible to take advantage of a monthly direct debit system that many utility and insurance companies are now in favour of. This will mean you will not be faced with any unexpected bills once a quarter: you will be able to forecast your cashflow with more accuracy as you will know in advance what most of your payments will be.

Interest charges

This will only apply if your business is either being operated with an overdraft facility or you have taken out any loans. The bank will charge you on a quarterly or monthly basis straight from your business account.

VAT payable

You will only have to be registered for VAT by law if your annual sales exceed £58,000. VAT is split into two sections; there is the VAT that you charge to your clients (**outputs**), and the VAT that you pay to your suppliers (**inputs**). The difference between these two amounts represents the money you owe to HM Customs and Excise if your outputs are greater than your inputs (and vice versa). This total will

either be paid or received on a monthly or quarterly basis and should be included in your forecast.

Total payments

The next task is to add together all of these figures to give the total of your monthly payments.

Net cashflow

To calculate your net flow of cash simply subtract your total monthly payments from your total monthly receipts. Any minus figure should be identified by putting brackets around the amount, for example (£432).

Bank balance

Your net cashflow total must either be added or subtracted (depending on whether the amount is a plus or minus) from your opening bank balance, to give you your closing bank balance.

Finishing off

Just as you provided supplementary notes for your profit and loss forecast, the same must be done for your cashflow forecast. The reader of your business plan will not be too pleased to receive a comprehensive forecast without any explanation of how you arrived at your figures, or of any amounts that have been lumped together under one heading such as 'other payments'. A well informed reader will be a happy reader, satisfied that you have given real consideration to the financial side of your business plan.

Your assumptions regarding debtor and creditor days should be fully explained. It could be useful to do a 'sensitivity analysis'. For example, if your sales forecast was to be reduced by ten per cent, what effect would this have on your cash? How much each month, and for the whole year?

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BALANCE SHEET

Your balance sheet is an overview showing the financial position of your business at a specific time. It generally shows the position at the year end, but during your initial trading period it is advisable to produce one at least once a quarter to help you analyse how well you are performing. This analysis can then be used to make any necessary amendments to your business strategy in order to

Balance sheet forecast for 31 December 200X

	£	£
Fixed assets		56,213
<u>Current assets</u>		
Raw materials	15,914	
Stock in hand	27,548	
Debtors	10,351	
Cash in the bank	<u>11,785</u>	
Total current assets	<u>65,598</u>	
<u>Current liabilities</u>		
Creditors	8,656	
Tax liability	1,618	
Overdraft	<u>2,549</u>	
Total liabilities	<u>12,823</u>	
Net current assets (Working capital)		52,775
Net assets		<u><u>108,988</u></u>
<u>Financed by</u>		
Owner's investment	45,000	
Bank loans	40,000	
Retained profit	<u>23,988</u>	
Total capital		<u><u>108,988</u></u>

Fig. 5. Example of a balance sheet.

maintain or improve upon your current trading position.

In simple terms a balance sheet forecast will be a forecast of both your assets and liabilities. Your assets will include everything that your business actually owns; your liabilities will include all the money your business owes. Assets can then be further divided into fixed and current assets, and liabilities into short and long term liabilities. A fixed asset will remain a part of the business for a long period of time (*eg* a building or vehicle). A current asset will only remain with the business for a short term (*eg* raw materials, stock).

Your balance sheet will help you understand where all of the money that has come into your business has come from and where it has gone.

PRODUCING YOUR BALANCE SHEET

Most of the financial data to be included in your balance sheet will be extracted from your profit and loss and cashflow forecasts. Much of the work has already been completed, so your next task is to extract the necessary information to complete your forecast both accurately and professionally.

Figure 5 shows a typical balance sheet forecast which will be referred to during this section. The first half of your balance sheet will show where your capital of £108,988 has been distributed among the various assets you have obtained; the second half where it came from.

Fixed assets

These are permanent items such as buildings, land, machinery, vehicles and plant which will be used in your business for a long period of time. In normal economic conditions, you should calculate and adjust their current worth by allowing for **appreciation** in case of buildings and land, and **depreciation** when valuing your machinery, vehicles and plant. If you can spare the resources, it is a good idea to start putting cash aside to cover the eventual replacement costs of your depreciating assets.

Current assets

These are items held for a short period of time before being converted into an item which can be sold. A raw material is an example of a current asset; it is bought in and then assembled into a finished product before being sold and eventually paid for. Raw

2002/05 Enter/Change Expenditure Data [MANUAL F50] 7:43 PM

File Edit Data Opening Help

Sales Lines
 Software Sales
 Hardware Sales
 Development Contracts
 Support Contracts

Expenditure Record
 Shipping Costs

Opening
 Creditors/(P on A)
 635

VAT Included

Use Percentage
 All %

Apr	3.75	%
May	3.75	%
Jun	3.75	%
Jul	3.75	%
Aug	3.75	%
Sep	3.75	%
Oct	3.75	%
Nov	3.75	%
Dec	3.75	%
Jan	3.75	%
Feb	3.75	%
Mar	3.75	%

Expenditure (£)
 As % of Sales
 Enter Purchases (£)
 From Payments
 As % of Sales
 Use Sales Units

May	300
Jun	300
Jul	338
Aug	337
Sep	338
Oct	337
Nov	375
Dec	375
Jan	375
Feb	375
Mar	412
TOT	4162

Payment Profile
 All %

0	0.0	%
30	30.0	%
60	30.0	%
90	20.0	%
120	20.0	%
150	0.0	%
180	0.0	%
210	0.0	%
240	0.0	%
270	0.0	%
300	0.0	%
330	0.0	%

Payments
 Use Profile

Apr	276
May	299
Jun	323
Jul	337
Aug	366
Sep	379
Oct	387
Nov	398
Dec	408
Jan	425
Feb	432
Mar	441
TOT	4471

Fig. 6. A data entry screen showing options available for entering different types of expenditure prepared

materials, finished stock, debtors and any cash would all be included as your current assets.

Current liabilities

Your current liabilities are calculated by adding together all of your temporary debts which will be repaid within a short period of time, generally no more than twelve months. These liabilities will include all debts to your creditors (suppliers), the bank for your overdraft, and interest on any loans in addition to any outstanding tax and VAT payments.

Net current assets

This is more commonly referred to as **working capital**. It is calculated by subtracting all of your current liabilities from the total of your current assets. If your current liabilities exceed your current assets then this section will become your net current liabilities, in other words your business will owe more money than it has available. You would be running a serious risk of 'trading while knowingly insolvent' or even bankruptcy.

Net assets

Your net assets are worked out by adding together the totals of both your fixed assets and net current assets (working capital).

Financed by

This section shows where the capital has come from in order to finance your assets. It will include any capital investment made by yourself and any long term loans from banks or other financial institutions. You will also need to include the total profit or loss for the accounting period to which the balance sheet relates. This information can easily be extracted from your profit and loss forecast.

Tidying it all up

In order for your balance sheet to be accurate the total of your net assets must be equal to the total of the capital that has been introduced. If it is not, you will have to go back over your totals and re-calculate your figures until the two totals do balance.

Any items that require further clarification should be included in your accompanying supplementary notes. However, remember that most of these totals would have been explained with your profit and loss and cashflow forecasts and you should not need to repeat any of your comments.

BREAKING EVEN

Your potential backers or investors will be interested to see that your business is forecast to generate a profit. Every business has a **break-even point**, the point at which the total sales revenue is equal to the total costs. In simple terms any amount below this point represents a loss and anything above means a profit.

The nature of your business will determine how you measure your break-even point. For example, if your business involves producing or assembling a finished product, the break-even point will be expressed as the amount of units that need to be sold to cover your costs. However, if you are offering a service then you need to ascertain how many paid hours you need to work to cover your costs.

Alternative methods of financial forecasting

If you have access to a computer system then there are many software packages available to help with your financial planning. One of the best currently on the market is the purpose-built *WinForecast Professional Edition* software package. This is a **windows** (type of operating software) based program; as such it provides a very easy-to-use and flexible method of preparing professionally presented cashflow and financial forecasts. It works by linking all of your financial reports together so that when new records are created, the financial data is transferred between the various reports and the totals are automatically calculated to ensure that they are always correct. Figure 6 shows a screen shot taken from the *WinForecast* software program. Further information is available by contacting Sage Group PLC, Sage House, Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7LZ. Tel: (0191) 255 3000.

CHECKLIST

- What evidence do you have to support your sales projection?
- Have you devised a contingency plan in case your financial projections do not go according to plan?
- What is the difference between a cashflow forecast, and a profit and loss forecast?
- Have you compiled your cashflow forecast?

- Does your profit and loss forecast indicate that your business venture will be viable?
- Have you produced a balance sheet to show your financial position the day before you begin trading?
- What is your projected break-even point? What level of sales are needed to achieve this?
- Will your clients expect you to provide them with credit? If so, have you devised a system of credit control to monitor their payments?

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake prepare their second business plan

As the first bank they visited did not even suggest the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme, Joshua and Jake decided to take their proposal to another bank. Presenting their proposal on a rival bank's stationery would do little to enhance their chances of approval, so a second plan had to be put together. If only they had considered compiling their own business plan in the first place all this extra work could have been easily avoided.

After many more long nights the document was completed and sent to the bank with an accompanying letter. This would give the bank manager time to familiarise himself with their proposal before they all met.

Jasmine needs to expand

Business has been going so well for Jasmine that the time has come to expand. Calendar Creations has outgrown the office workshop set up in one of her spare bedrooms. A small industrial unit is now needed and at least one full-time and one part-time member of staff if the business is to continue to grow and develop at its current rate. Jasmine could just afford these development costs herself but she feels it would leave her in a very vulnerable financial position. Instead she decides to approach her bank for additional finance in the form of a business development loan.

Luke applies for a relocation grant

With his business plan compiled, Luke went before the grant board and presented his case. Due to the nature of his business and the fact

that he would be creating an additional 20 jobs, the board looked favourably on his application. Although it was a further three months before the £200,000 relocation grant and £100,000 subsidised loan was finally approved and made available to him. Luke could now expand his business and meet the demands of the extra workloads created by his new contract which had also boosted his business in general by enabling his business to become internationally known.

ACTION POINTS

1. Consider what steps you can take to improve your cashflow if your sales revenue does not meet your expectations.
2. Looking at your profit and loss forecast, what methods can you use to increase the profitability of your business?
3. Consider the effect on your business if the cost price of your product or service were to dramatically increase. Could this cost be absorbed in your business or would you have to increase your selling price? How would this affect your position in the market place? Do you think your clients would still be prepared to pay the new price?

7

Your Financial Analysis

Unless you are one of the few people with plenty of savings or capital to finance your business yourself then the chances are that you will be looking for further financial assistance. Many of the businesses launched without the further need to borrow go on to become highly successful and prosperous. However even these businesses may need to borrow at a later date as they expand and develop.

If you do need to borrow any more money it is important to be well prepared before seeking any outside help.

SPECIFYING YOUR FINANCIAL NEEDS

Three key questions

The financial analysis of your business plan should lead you to the answers of the following questions:

- How much money do you need and exactly what will you need it for?
- What type of finance do you need and when will you need it?
- How will the money be repaid, and how will your investors or backers benefit from their investment?

This chapter will help you answer the above questions which will have to be answered in your business plan.

PLANNING YOUR BORROWING

Your cashflow and balance sheet forecasts will be invaluable tools when you are planning how much money you will need and what it will be used for. Even though your forecasts will not be a true picture of exactly how your financial year will develop, they will act as a very good indicator (provided your research is accurate). Your

cashflow forecast will show the available funds you will have access to at any one time, assuming you achieve your expected level of sales and your overheads do not exceed your forecast.

Your reader will not have the time to work out how much money you will need and what it will be used for so you will have to supply this information in the simplest way possible. The best way to do this is to draw up a **financial requirement statement**. This will summarise how much money you need and quickly show your reader what it will be used for.

Example financial requirement statement

A net investment of £200,000 will be needed which will be distributed in the following way:

<i>The money will be used to purchase:</i>	£
Premises	75,000
Plant	10,000
Equipment	15,000
<i>It will provide:</i>	
Working capital for the first twelve months of trading	<u>150,000</u>
Total capital investment	<u>250,000</u>
Less personal investment	<u>(50,000)</u>
Total net funding	200,000

Every financial statement you make in your business plan must be supported with evidence that the figures you have presented are correct. Your balance sheet can be used to support the totals of your fixed assets; your cashflow forecast will provide the necessary evidence for your working capital needs. Once again, remember that these figures have already been substantiated with your forecast so just a reference to these documents will be sufficient. However, ensure that the money you say you need matches the figures in your forecasts.

There is a very fine line between borrowing too much finance and not borrowing enough. Too much means that it will cost you more than you really have to pay, whilst too little will mean going back to your lender at a later stage, and he will not look favourably on your request if your initial projections were way out.

UNDERSTANDING THE VARIOUS TYPES OF FINANCE

The length of time you require your finance to last will depend on which of the many different types of finance will best suit you and your business. There are traditionally four types of finance:

- permanent
- long-term
- medium-term
- short-term.

Permanent finance

If your business is as a sole trader or partnership the permanent finance would come in the form of the capital you or your partners personally put in, plus any profits that have been made and retained in your business. However, if you intend to launch as, or develop into, a limited company then your permanent finance will be structured slightly differently: it will come from the sale of shares, including perhaps investment from venture capital organisations. This method of permanent finance will usually mean that the investor will expect to either receive a percentage of ownership or have some control over your profits.

However, on the positive side, this finance can be used to buy virtually anything needed for the business such as fixed and current assets, and used as a cash reserve against unforeseen expenses.

Long-term finance

This type of finance will be borrowed from external sources over a long period of time, usually anywhere between five and 25 years. A commercial mortgage or long-term loan agreement from one of the main clearing banks are examples of long-term finance. The money can be used for any long-term assets such as your business premises and any expensive machinery or plant.

Medium-term finance

Any borrowing that will be repaid over a 2-7 year period can be described as medium-term finance. This finance is commonly based on an agreement between yourself and the organisation who will be providing it. It will cover:

- hire purchase
- leasing

- loan agreements.

Short-term finance

The most typical and frequently used type of short-term finance is the bank overdraft facility. Although the **arrangement fees** can be fairly hefty you have the advantage of only paying interest on the amount you are actually overdrawn. With a bank loan, on the other hand, you have the use of a set amount of money and will pay interest whether you use the full amount or not.

If your business experiences seasonal trends and you need extra finance to cover stock purchases then an overdraft will be the ideal way to finance them; you will soon reduce the overdraft again when your seasonal rush gets underway.

The credit you receive from your suppliers is not often referred to as a form of finance, but whenever you are able to obtain and use goods before any payment is made then this is still a type of finance.

TIMING YOUR FINANCE

Having examined the various finance options open to you, what you need it for will have the biggest influence on which method you choose. When you have decided how much money you need and why, you should be able to manage things so that not all of the money will be needed at once. For example, the capital you need to acquire your premises or equipment will probably be required weeks, if not months, before you start trading. On the other hand your working capital will not be needed until you start trading.

ASSESSING OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCE

Most businesses look towards the main clearing banks to raise the necessary finance but if for whatever reason this avenue fails then there are many other less conventional methods to choose between. If the bank has turned down your application for finance then ask yourself why? Maybe your business is not quite the viable proposition that you consider it to be. However, many propositions have initially been turned down by one or more banks, but gone on to become highly successful business ventures. Anita Roddick of Body Shop fame is just one example. Here are a few examples of other sources of finance:

Raising venture capital

Venture capital companies

Unless you are either a well established business or looking to raise £250,000 or more, few venture capital companies will be interested in the opportunity that you are offering.

Business angels

The alternative for new business start-ups is private investment by way of informal equity capital. Informal equity capital is put up by so-called 'business angels'. Business angels operate much like venture capital companies. They are considered to be the first step to obtaining corporate venture capital later on as your business grows and needs extra investment for development and expansion.

Both types of business will require a comprehensive business plan which will show not only detailed financial projections but also the complete background of your management team, and information regarding your potential investors' return on their investment.

The Enterprise Investment Scheme

The government offers various tax relief advantages for investors through the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS). This replaced the Business Expansion Scheme in January 1994. Complete details of the scheme are included in form *IR 137 – The Enterprise Investment Scheme* published by the Inland Revenue and available from your nearest office or by contacting the Inland Revenue direct at Somerset House, The Strand, London WC2A 1LB. Tel: (020) 7438 6622.

Business contacts

A full listing of companies specialising in raising informal equity capital can be obtained from the **British Venture Capital Association (BVCA)** at 3 Clements Inn, London WC2A 2AZ. Tel: (020) 7025 2950. The BVCA represents virtually every major source of venture capital in the UK. Its members include venture capital firms, professional advisers, corporate financiers, mezzanine firms and other companies whose executives are experienced in the venture capital field. The BVCA's primary objective is to increase awareness and general perception of venture capital.

Accountants, stockbrokers and solicitors are an excellent source of information as these organisations have direct contact with a large number of clients who may be able to offer you investment for your venture. Further help and advice on the whole venture capital process can be obtained by contacting your **Local Enterprise Agency**

(LEA). The address of your nearest LEA can be obtained by contacting Business in the Community at 137 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7RQ. Tel: (0870) 600 2482.

Applying for government assistance

Contrary to public belief, the government are taking positive steps to assist business and industry as a whole although this may not always appear to be the case. There are currently millions of pounds set aside for the sole purpose of providing various grants and government subsidised loans in a bid to encourage investment and development. In general the government are looking to assist projects which benefit areas of declining industries with high levels of unemployment, as well as promoting growth and improvement in underdeveloped urban and rural areas.

Griffin Factors Limited produce a very informative guide, *Getting to Grips with Grants* which is available from Griffin House, Farncombe Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 2BW. Tel: (01903) 205181.

The Loan Guarantee Scheme

If you have a viable business proposition but lack the necessary security to obtain a loan then this Department of Trade and Industry backed scheme may be the answer. The DTI will guarantee a maximum of 70 per cent for new business and 85 per cent for businesses with at least two years' trading behind them or start-ups based in either Inner City Task Force or City Challenge areas. The loan cannot be used to replace existing borrowing but it can be used to buy assets, improve the business, start up your business or simply improve your efficiency. An approved loan must be repaid over a 2-7 year period and the DTI will require a premium for offering the security in the first instance.

Most of the main high street banks are members of the scheme but further information can be obtained by contacting the DTI Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme at Level 2, St Mary's House, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ. Tel: (0014) 279 4374.

Offering your shares to the public

If your business is a well established limited company, then you could consider raising capital by offering your shares to the public. A full listing on the stock exchange will be very costly and probably a long way off for your business at present. However there is now a more relaxed option available through the **Alternative Investment**

Market (AIM) which is operated, regulated and promoted by the London Stock Exchange. It was set up to replace the Unlisted Securities Market (USM) which has gradually been phased out and ceased trading at the end of 1996. AIM is open to all companies regardless of their country of origin. Although this represents an easier route to offering your shares to the general public, it is still a very complex process which should only be undertaken after seeking professional advice from your accountant.

The Prince's Youth Business Trust

The Prince's Trust provides business start-up advice, information, training, marketing support, loans of up to £5,000 and non-repayable grants of up to £1,500. To be eligible you must be between the ages of 18 and 25 and able to produce a comprehensive business plan showing how your business will succeed. Contact the Prince's Youth Business Trust at 18 Park Square East, London NW7 4LH. Tel: (020) 7543 1234.

Raising private loans

There may be friends, relatives or colleagues who are in a position to lend you money. Although it may seem like a good idea at the time you can almost guarantee that they will demand their money back when you can least afford it. Therefore it is important to get the terms of the loan written down clearly and precisely in order to avoid any confusion at a later date. The points you should cover include details of:

- the final date of repayment
- the frequency and amount of interim repayments
- any rate of interest, and the date when due
- whether the loan will entitle the lender to any control over the business.

Approaching finance houses

These companies may be able to provide you with finance but they are mainly secondary lenders. This means that the money they lend to you has been borrowed by themselves in the first instance. Therefore your repayments will not only have to cover the cost of your lenders' borrowing but also allow the lender to make a profit. This is why finance houses tend to be an expensive option.

Advertisements for these companies can be found in most national newspapers. If you consider this option, never sign any documents unless you are completely sure of all the contractual terms and you have first taken the professional advice of your own solicitor or accountant. There are many unscrupulous companies within this industry so make sure they are registered as a **Member of the Corporation of Finance Brokers**.

Cash from factoring

If you begin to experience cashflow problems, it may be because much of your capital is tied up with debtors in the form of overdue invoices. There may be a solution to this situation. Factoring is a method many businesses use to turn unsettled invoices into immediate working capital. The idea is very simple. You would forward details of your outstanding invoices to the factoring company and in return they will advance you up to 80 per cent of the value of these invoices. The other 20 per cent will be received as and when your client finally settles their invoice (less a certain fee which will be retained by the factoring company for providing this facility in the first instance). In addition to this, factoring companies can also maintain your sales ledgers, offer a credit control and collection service, assess credit risks and provide insurance against bad debts.

Your bank manager or accountant will be able to recommend a good factoring company. The **Factors and Discounters Association** is the regulatory body set up to keep tight control over factoring companies. It can be contacted at Boston House, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1QE. Tel: (020) 8332 9955. Close Invoice Finance Limited are a company who are full members of the Association of British Factors and can be contacted at Southbrook House, 25 Bartholomew Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5LL. Tel: (01635) 31517.

RAISING YOUR FINANCE

Having decided the amount and type of finance you require, your next task is to actually raise the necessary funds. By examining the two previous sections you will have a better understanding about whom to approach for your finance. This section of your business plan must be tailor-made to suit your particular lender or investor. Telling your reader about how you intend to repay the money you wish to borrow and then presenting your business plan to an

investor instead of a lender will do little to generate any faith in your business venture.

Approaching lenders

Unless your potential lenders have taken leave of their senses they will not be prepared to lend you any money if they have any doubt that your business will generate enough profit and cash to meet the repayments. Your cashflow and profit and loss forecasts should be referred to when illustrating how and when you will be able to make repayments of your loan.

Putting up security

Whether you approach one of the main clearing banks or any other financial institution you must firstly include details of any security you have to support your loan application. This could be in the form of

- personal savings in addition to the capital investment you are already making
- any equity you have built up within your home
- details of any life assurance and endowment policies.

You must be able to prove that the amount of security you are offering is correct. Making a glib estimate about the value of equity in your home will not be enough on its own. You must support this with a letter from your estate agent, surveyor or valuer stating the value of your property. Copies of your mortgage documents and any policies are also ideal and must be included in your appendices alongside the estate agent's letter.

Think long and hard before you offer security of this nature. Will you be prepared to surrender this in the event of things going wrong?

Persuading potential investors

When describing your financial requirements to your potential investors, you must not just show that you have a viable business opportunity but also describe how *they* will be able to directly benefit from their investment. The deal you are offering must be attractive to them. You must be able to hold their interest long enough for them to consider taking your proposition on a step

further by investing their money.

In exchange for a capital investment most offers would typically include a percentage of ownership. This in turn would give your investor a limited amount of control within the business and a share of any profits equal to the value of their percentage of ownership. This would probably be in the form of dividends. Although your lenders may be prepared to wait a long time for their loan to be repaid, your investors may not be quite so patient to see a return on their money. Therefore, when you make your offer it is important that your potential investor is made aware of how they are able to **exit** from your business if they choose to.

Exit clauses

An exit clause must be offered but you may decide to put a minimum time limit of perhaps five years or longer before they are able to relinquish their interest in your business. However if they choose to sell out then you could suggest they sell their interest back to you at a pre-agreed price per share, or to a mutually acceptable third party. Whichever method you choose ensure that you have a draft agreement drawn up and include it within your appendices.

CHECKLIST

- Have you carefully calculated how much money you will require to get your business established?
- Have you produced a breakdown of this figure?
- Do you know what source of finance you will use to raise the necessary capital?
- Have you calculated exactly when you will need the finance that you are looking for?
- Have you made a list of your preferred lenders?
- Make sure that you have explained how and when your backers will be repaid and how your investors can benefit from the investment they have made.

- Can your business support the level of borrowing needed to get it launched?
- Have you considered taking any legal advice and has this actually been done?
- Have you compiled a financial statement which shows where you expect the necessary capital to come from and exactly how it will be used?
- Do you know if you are eligible for any government grants or subsidised loans which may be available?

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake visit another bank

By now Joshua and Jake knew their business inside out and were completely prepared for every eventuality that this meeting may present. The meeting went very well and their suggestion to use the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme to overcome their lack of security was warmly received.

All proposals for the scheme must be supported with a recommendation from a bank. Although the final approval must come from the offices of the scheme, this is generally only a formality. After a long uphill struggle Joshua and Jake were finally within reach of running their own business.

Jasmine prepares her second business plan

Although Jasmine's first business plan was prepared for her own benefit, it did provide her with the necessary skills and experience to produce a professionally presented business plan – essential if she was to get the loan to assist with her expansion plans. Jasmine's business plan would be based on the information contained in her first plan with any necessary facts and figures updated. Her financial projections for Calendar Creations were likely to be more accurate now the forecast could be based on a combination of actual trading figures and orders received, rather than the pure estimates of her original business plan.

Jasmine's business plan would show how the loan would be used to further develop her current level of service by introducing a range of calendars and diaries that could not only be personalised with

important dates but also with the clients' own photographs. This new range would make excellent presents and business gifts. Although there would be an additional 50 per cent increase on the selling price, market research indicated that her clients would be prepared to pay it.

Luke finds a private investor

Until the government relocation grant and subsidised loan had been approved, Luke found tremendous difficulty in getting potential investors to commit themselves to his business opportunity. Many private investors expressed an interest but until the government approval was obtained they were reluctant to invest their money. However, now that the government had made its commitment a private investor was quickly found and the business could now begin to operate at full production following the purchase of the much needed additional machinery.

ACTION POINTS

1. List the different methods of raising finance that are available to you. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the type that you have selected to finance your business?
2. If you were to offer an outside investor shares in your business in exchange for cash, what effect could this have on how you decide to control your business?
3. Consider which methods you will use to determine exactly how much capital you require to launch your business.

8

Adding Your Appendices

The appendices will be the last section of your business plan to be compiled, but not until the rest of your plan has been written will you be able to do so. The appendices are a collection of documents, illustrations, samples and literature which will help to reinforce and substantiate all of the comments and assumptions you have made. Without any documentary evidence to back up your business plan it is unlikely to convince potential backers to provide any kind of finance.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR APPENDICES

Even though each and every business plan will vary in content there are a number of different headings which will be apparent in nearly all business plans. Under each of these headings are examples of the documents which can be included within the appendices:

The nature of the business

- A map of your location in relation to your competition and to your intended market.
- Any relevant media reports from newspapers or magazines.
- Written details of correspondence from your professional advisers such as an accountant, solicitor or surveyor.
- An agreement showing the freehold or leasing details of your premises.
- Details of any trading history to date. This will obviously only apply if you are buying an already established business. A summary of the previous three years will be sufficient.

Key personnel

- Full curricula vitae for all the key members of your management team.
- Any certificates or diplomas awarded to any of your personnel. The originals will carry far more weight than photocopies.

- Details of any partnerships or incorporation agreement.
- An organisation chart showing who will be responsible for each department.

Your market

- Details of any firm orders, and previous client sales records.
- Relevant newspaper or magazine articles with details about your market.
- Details of any outside help from trade associations, chamber of commerce, business links or the government.
- Details of market research methods and results.
- Any information about your competitors such as their prices and details about their premises.

Products and services

- Price lists from your suppliers and the competition.
- Details of product lead times.
- Any independent reports from consultants and the media.
- Details of your sales literature, promotional and advertising material.
- Applications for copyright, design and patents.

Financial

- Cashflow forecasts.
- Profit and loss statement.
- Balance sheet.
- Estimates for your overheads.
- Proof of your capital contributions such as bank statements or any policies you may have.

POSITIONING YOUR APPENDICES

Where to position your appendices will largely depend on how many supportive documents you intend to include, and how many pages they will span. If you will only be using a modest amount then it will be best to put them all at the end. This will keep your business plan as a single document and will let the recipient read through your plan as if it is a book. However, if your appendices number too many to fit easily within your plan then it will look more professional to produce a secondary file and clearly mark it 'Appendices'.

In order to continue the high level of professionalism you have so far created and developed, ensure your appendices file is the same colour, style, make and design as the one you have chosen for your business plan. If your appendices are to be included in a second file then make sure this is made clear on the contents page of your business plan. Just a footnote referring to the second file will be sufficient, *eg* 'Appendices are in the accompanying file'.

When you send your business plan to your bank manager or potential investor it is unlikely the intended recipient will be the actual person who will open your letter and business plan. In most cases it will be a secretary or a member of their staff. Since your business plan should arrive at least a few days before your meeting then the chances are it will be put on a desk or a shelf until the day. During this time the possibility of two files finding their way onto different desks or shelves is quite high. By bringing the reader's attention to the fact that there should be two files at the beginning will avoid any confusion at a later stage. Before the reader assumes that you have forgotten to include the appendices in your file, the footnote will indicate a file is missing.

PRESENTING YOUR APPENDICES

You have now decided where your appendices will be positioned in relation to your business plan and which ones you intend to use. Consider next how to present these documents in such a way that the reader will want to study them. This in turn will lead to a greater understanding of your business plan.

The supportive documents which will make up your appendices come in all shapes and sizes but there are only two sources these can come from:

1. Documents produced and compiled by yourself and your colleagues, or
2. Documents supplied by outside sources such as estate agents, accountants and surveyors.

It does not matter where your appendices have come from, they will all end up in the same file at the end of your business plan. Therefore no matter how different in appearance they are, they must all look uniform and as though they belong together in the same file.

Internally compiled documents

Documents compiled by yourself or colleagues are much more fun to work with. They can be altered or changed as many times as you wish before your finished document has been fully compiled. The only two rules to abide by are:

- do not distort the truth
- do not amend the information for your own benefit.

This will only mislead the reader, and when you are found out the reader will assume you to be a poor business person with little regard for honesty and integrity: not the best way to begin any working relationship.

A document checklist

There are many documents you may want to include yourself. These include:

- A map showing your premises in relation to the competition.
- An overhead view of your premises showing office space, working areas, fire escapes and so on.
- A curriculum vitae for each of the key members of your management team.
- A graph showing your proposed management structure and if necessary the position of your potential investors.
- Results of any market research studies you have conducted.

Externally provided documents

The dangers of 'doctoring'

Documents provided by external sources should be left just the way they are. Any attempt to 'improve' the quality or layout of these documents by correcting spelling mistakes, doctoring photocopies or re-writing text will only undermine their authenticity. Wherever possible try to provide the original document unless it is either very valuable or difficult to replace. If a photocopy is used, make sure you have the original with you at your meeting.

Highlighting key points

Despite not being able to change the appearance of these documents, there are a number of ways you can make your appendices more appealing to the reader. To begin with, read through them as though you were to be the recipient of your business plan, and ask yourself if all the information you are presenting is really necessary. The key points you want to get across may well be buried in paragraphs of text. A simple fluorescent highlighting pen will help bring the reader's attention directly to the key points.

Adding notes

For graphs, reports or newspaper extracts, a short explanatory note at the bottom of the document or details of when and where the newspaper article was published, will help the reader to understand why you have included these appendices.

COMPILING YOUR APPENDICES

Now that you have an idea about what information needs to be included in the appendices, your next task is to put them into an order that will enable the reader to be able to quickly refer to them. The compiling of your appendices should coincide with the final editing of your business plan. Begin by putting all of the documentary evidence that you have so far collated in a pile in front of you. Along with this pile you will also need your business plan and a blank piece of paper.

1. Start by carefully reading through your business plan page by page.
2. At every point where a reference is made to a fact, figure or statistic, make a note of it on your blank piece of paper.
3. Try to find a document from your pile of appendices to substantiate these comments.
4. This formerly blank piece of paper will now form the basis for the contents page of your appendices.

When you have finished reading through your business plan you may find that you have a few documents which still remain without a

home. If this is the case, then read back over the text with these documents in the front of your mind and try to build them into your plan remembering also to list them in the contents page.

NUMBERING YOUR APPENDICES

With all of your comments backed up by documentary evidence, the next step is to make sure the reader is able to refer to them with ease. This can be done simply by numbering each appendix and using that same number in the text of your business plan. Your appendices should now follow the same order as the notes you have made on your piece of paper.

Begin by numbering the first document Appendix 1, then Appendix 2, Appendix 3 and so on. Try to resist using the number system 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and so on for any multiple page appendices such as audited accounts for example. This will only make the task of finding an appendix more difficult to the reader and will make your contents page look cluttered.

Completing the contents page

Now that your appendices are all individually numbered, your appendices contents page can now be compiled. Begin by numerically listing the appendices down the left side of the page following with a brief description of each one. For example:

Appendix 1: Town map showing the position of the business in relation to the competition.

Appendix 2: Market research results showing a definite need for our service.

Down the right side of the page list the page numbers which relate to the appendices. This will now form the layout for the contents page of your appendices and help the reader to quickly refer to a particular section.

CHECKLIST

- Have you selected which information you will include in your appendices?

- Has the information been fully numbered and catalogued for easy reference by your reader?
- Have you referred to your appendices in the text of your business plan?
- Do you know where your appendices will appear within your business plan?
- Have you presented all of your information in a uniform style to give it the impression of fitting together?
- Have you highlighted the relevant text of the lengthier documents so that the reader's attention is immediately drawn to key facts, figures and data?

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake sign the contracts

When the loan was finally approved, all that remained was for the contracts to be signed and exchanged. Even though this was a tried and tested franchise concept, and the contract had been used and approved on many previous occasions, Joshua and Jake decided to take legal advice and appointed a solicitor to read through the document prior to signing. The solicitor did not find any reason to delay signing, so the contracts were exchanged and the business was finally theirs.

Jasmine visits the bank

Jasmine's business plan was sent to the bank long before her meeting with the bank manager. Based on her previous trading history and her plans to develop new product lines such as the personalised organisers, the bank did not hesitate in lending her the £7,000 required to finance extra equipment, employ staff and move into new premises. Her loan was secured on the £10,000 balance she had managed to accumulate in her business account.

Luke's business prospers

Luke's business began to prosper as production levels reached an all time high. In just 18 months following the introduction of the new contract his sales revenue had increased to just under £3 million.

Both the grant board and private investor were encouraged by the level of production and turnover being so good.

However, coping with the extra workload had resulted in the business gradually monopolising more and more of Luke's time. In turn, this had led to the fundamental aspects of running a business being ignored. Too much time and energy was being spent ensuring that all deadlines were met and not enough time given to controlling the basics such as expenditure and employing the right members of staff.

ACTION POINTS

1. Are the assumptions or important information you have written about during the business plan supported with any additional evidence?
2. Devise a uniform method of presenting your information.
3. During the course of compiling your business plan you will collate a large amount of additional information. Determine which information to include and which to disregard.

9

Presenting Your Plan

By the time you have finished compiling your business plan you will have invested a great deal of time and energy. You will have ensured that all the information you have presented is both accurate and of a quality second to none. However, unless you present your business plan effectively all this hard work may be wasted.

COMPOSING YOUR INTRODUCTORY LETTER

When you attend an interview for a job or meet someone for the first time you want to make a good first impression. It is this first impression that people will always remember. The same can be said for a business plan; how a potential investor first becomes aware of your business idea will be how they will remember it and you.

An introductory letter will be the first point of contact your potential investors will have about you and your business idea. This should be sent at least seven days prior to your meeting and will serve as a brief introduction about you and your business. Time taken now to compile a professional letter of introduction will be time well spent. There are many different ways to write a good business letter and although there is not one specific right way there are many ways which look untidy and unprofessional.

All your business letters must be typed or if you are fortunate enough to have access to one, then use a word processor. Never under any circumstance write a business letter by hand. It gives the impression of an unorganised person with little interest in professional presentation. After all if you are unable to present yourself professionally, then how will you convince anyone to back you?

Where to start

Invest a little time and money in having your business stationery professionally designed and printed. There are a number of

companies who specialise in producing business start-up packs in a wide selection of attractive type styles and layouts. This is an inexpensive way of giving yourself a truly professional image. How much stationery you need will obviously depend on the size of your business but a good start would be to order at least 200 of the following:

- letterheads (A4)
- business cards
- compliment slips
- envelopes (DL).

Where your letterhead is positioned will determine where you begin your letter. If you have not already had your business stationery printed then always start at the top right hand side of the page with your address and contact telephone number with dialling code. A contact telephone is very important and should always be included. If you do not have one then include the number of a colleague or relative but remember to tell them you have used their number or you may have some explaining to do. A line should be left before the date is inserted on the left hand side of the page, and two more before including the reader's name, position and company address. Then leave another two lines before starting with the word 'Dear'. If you do not know the reader's name then find it out. Pay particular attention to the spelling of the name as an incorrectly spelt surname can be infuriating.

A letter addressed to a specific person will look more professional and personal than a letter starting with 'Dear Sir'. Even less professional is 'Dear Sir or Madam'; this will resemble a circular sent by a desperate business person to each and every financial institution and potential backer.

What to write

You may wish to give the letter a title now before beginning your main text. This should start with the word 'Re:', which is an abbreviation for 'Reference' and then the title, for example, your business name or perhaps the nature of your forthcoming meeting.

The main text of your letter should be clear, concise and to the point. Remember, this is only to introduce yourself and your business idea. Further details and information can be provided when you meet your investor face to face. Always ensure your letter is double spaced between paragraphs with generous margins. This will

not only make your letter appealing to the eye but also easy to read.

As you have taken the time to discover the receiver's name then close your letter with the words 'Yours sincerely' followed by a large space, then your name and if appropriate your job title. If you intend to send anything with your letter of introduction the words 'enc', or 'enclosures' will follow next with a description of what you are enclosing. It may be necessary to enclose your actual business plan either with your letter of introduction or at a later date. The reasons for doing this include:

- to give your potential backer a chance to read through your business plan prior to your meeting
- if your potential backer lives too far away to have the meeting face to face.

If you do enclose your business plan, always ensure you have at least one other copy. Never under any circumstance send your last copy.

After you have finished your letter read back over it, then read it again and again. If possible get a friend or colleague to read over it. This will not only help eliminate any spelling and grammatical errors, it will also give you a second opinion about the content. If the letter does not read or appear perfect then continue re-writing it until it does sound right.

Figure 7 shows a sample letter of introduction sent by Jasmine Jade when she approached the bank for a Calendar Creations business loan.

SUBMITTING YOUR PLAN

Who you send your business plan to can be just as important as what you say in the plan and letter themselves. Obviously what you want your business plan to achieve will influence who you send it to. For example, if you are looking to raise finance to back your new business or business idea then in the main you will probably be approaching at least one of, if not all of the main clearing banks. However, if you intend to introduce a potential investor to your business idea by offering some kind of equity then your business plan will be aimed at venture capital organisations. There are a great many of these as described in Chapter 7, so the same careful research you have used in developing your business idea should also

Calendar Creations

5 Norton Road, Dottington, Surrey SF8 4BJ
Telephone: (0123) 456789, Fax: (0123) 987654

October 23, 200X

Mr. J. L. Richards
The Manager
Euro Bank
Dottington
Surrey SF4 2CR

Dear Mr. Richards

I am in the process of establishing my own business compiling and producing personalised calendars for which I have discovered there is a new niche market.

My total start up costs including working capital are £2,800 of which I have £1,400 of my own savings. As I have had a current account with Euro Bank for the last eight years I am looking to the bank to assist with financing the remaining £1,400 as a business loan.

Please find enclosed a business plan for your attention prior to our meeting on 1 November, 200X. I trust this will meet with your approval and I look forward to our forthcoming meeting.

Yours sincerely

Jasmine Jade

enclosure: Calendar Creations Business Plan

Figure 7. A sample letter of introduction.

be used when choosing which organisation to approach. Some organisations will only back businesses within a specific sector such as engineering or computing; others will only look at propositions that require a minimum investment of £250,000 or even far more.

Leave the final editing of your business plan until you know exactly who your reader will be. This will allow you to include information you know your reader will be personally interested to learn. You may even be able to give the impression you have personalised your business plan just for one specific reader when in fact all you have done is to amend small sections to make it appear that way. A simple way to personalise your plan without altering lots of sections is to personalise just the front page. This will not only make the reader feel important but also indicate your professionalism.

EXPLAINING YOUR BUSINESS

Just as you know all there is to know about your business, your potential backers know all there is to know about their business, whether it be lending money, backing viable opportunities or approving grant applications. Somewhere in the middle has to come a mutual understanding: it is unlikely that just from reading your business plan your backer will gain a full working knowledge of how your business works and why it will be a success. Therefore just as layman terms were used when writing your plan, the same approach should be used when explaining your business. The fact your backer is now only sitting across a desk from you does not mean that they will understand geophysics just because you have explained it to them face to face. When you are explaining your business:

- keep your explanations simple
- keep them short
- keep them interesting.

Remember, an interested backer is more likely to favour your business plan than someone who feels they would have had more fun watching the BBC test card.

MAKING A WINNING PROPOSAL

When the time comes to present yourself before your bank manager, investor or backer, treat the meeting just as you would any interview.

1. Long before the meeting sit down and have a good think about any points you want to raise and then jot them down on a piece of paper. This will help you to focus on what you need to say and how you will say it.
2. Show your list to your family and colleagues and monitor their response. There is no better criticism than constructive criticism. They may even have some thoughts of their own that you had not considered.
3. If you can, act out a mock interview, with a friend or colleague being the bank manager and you as yourself. The expressions on the face of the bank manager will show just how convincing you were.

Preparing for your meeting

Aim to arrive early for your meeting. Try not to look too eager as your bank manager may take this as a sign of desperation. Five to ten minutes will give you time to clarify any points in your head and a chance to compose and relax yourself.

What to wear to the meeting can also present some problems. If you are hoping to secure a loan then you do not want to look as if you already have an overflowing wallet by wearing a tailormade Giorgio Armani suit, nor indeed will scruffy jeans and a shirt with holes give the impression of a person capable of repaying any kind of loan let alone running a business. A standard suit will usually be quite sufficient.

Who will speak

If all the key members of your team have been fully involved with preparing and researching your business idea then you will have compiled a good solid business plan. Solutions to any problems that arise would have been quickly resolved by your team pulling together.

It may be appropriate for some or all of them to be present at your meeting, so appoint a main spokesperson before you go in. There is nothing more annoying to a bank manager than trying to listen to more than one person speaking at any one time. It also gives the

impression of a disorganised team. If you cannot work as a team now, then how will you cope when your business gets off the ground?

The main spokesperson should not be the *only* spokesperson; make sure everyone is able to make their own contribution at some point during the interview. This shows the backer you are able to work well as a team and that teamwork will be a strong influence on the success of your business.

Be prepared

Visual aids can be used to emphasise particular points but do not be fooled in thinking these will impress your bank manager. They will only make parts of your plan easier to understand, nothing more. Your business plan must be able to withstand stringent scrutiny, and your bank manager will be the first to put this to the test.

Do not be alarmed if the bank manager asks a lot of questions about your plan. This can be a positive sign. It shows they have read through it and are willing to find out more by clarifying points they are unsure of. Be ready to answer any point raised but never just waffle on like a politician and hope that if you continue talking for long enough your backer will forget what the original question was. It may work in the House of Commons but in a closed office it will do little to convince anyone that you know your product and your market. Remember, the objective of an interview is to see whether you have considered every eventuality in the running of your business, so be prepared to defend your plan against criticism.

SHOPPING AROUND

You may be in the fortunate position of having your business plan approved by the first organisation who examined it. But never accept the first offer you are made. If your business idea is so commercially viable then finding another backer will not present too much of a problem. In fact you may find backers falling over themselves to get your business. However, back in the real world the chances of this happening, although possible, are extremely low.

When a bank finally agrees to arrange a loan it does not mark the end of the planning process but simply the beginning. Banks are keen to offer many spin off products associated with a business loan such as pensions, life assurance, business insurance and health insurance to name but a few. Investors like to put their clients through a series of hoops before deciding upon their fate.

The best strategy to employ is to make a list of all those lenders you would really prefer to do with business with. The first name on the list will probably be the bank manager of your local branch. Put the rest in order of preference and work through them until you secure the deal you want.

Being refused

Do not be alarmed if your business plan is not accepted by the first organisation who you approach. The reason for refusal is the most important part of any research for the perfect business plan. Think of refusal as a chance to amend, adapt and change your business plan before you are in a position to approach another potential backer. If the next backer also refuses your plan then modify it again and again until you finally get it right.

However, it does not matter how many modifications you make, an unrealistic business idea will not be able to hide behind any amount of fancy words or professional presentation. You will be fooling no-one but yourself if you keep trying to pass off a poor business idea as a commercially viable one. You will not impress your potential backers by dressing up mutton as lamb. You will be politely shown the door.

CHECKLIST

- Has the final editing of your business plan been finished before your letter of introduction has been compiled?
- Have you written your letter of introduction? Do you know which information to include?
- Do you know who to send your letter to? Have you spelt their name correctly?
- Does your business plan look professional in its presentation?
- Has your business plan been personalised for your reader?
- Do you know how to present yourself at your meeting and have you planned what you will say?
- If there is to be more than one of you present at the interview, has a main spokesperson been appointed?

- Remember to keep your explanations, answers and information simple, short and interesting.
- Do you know where your meeting will take place? Have you planned how you will get there on time?
- Are you fully prepared for your meeting? Are any visual aids ready to use?
- Have you considered any alternative lenders or investors if your business plan is initially rejected?
- Each time you use your business plan for another lender or investor then remember to ensure that it is in pristine condition. Any torn or dirty pages should be immediately replaced.

CASE STUDIES

Joshua and Jake's success

Joshua and Jake completed their first year of trading with a 25 per cent increase on the previous year's sales revenue. This, combined with only an additional 10 per cent increase on their overheads, puts them in a very strong financial position. Their initial overdraft to finance working capital has been repaid and they have managed to accumulate a few thousand pounds in reserve capital.

They put their success down to a combination of being in complete financial control and using their business plan to constantly monitor their progress. Having to compile quarterly management figures as a condition of the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme helped them keep a tight control over their finances which in turn led to a cash reserve.

Jasmine develops her business nationally

Over the next two years Calendar Creations developed into a very successful venture with 60 per cent of the sales revenue coming from repeat business. Jasmine has decided that the time has come to further expand her business. She still operates from the same industrial unit with eight full time members of staff, her business is thriving and looks set to continue. The local area is well served but there still remains a large untapped market with huge growth potential.

Jasmine considered opening additional offices around the country but decided that the capital investment would be too much of a financial commitment. Instead she settles on a method of sub-contracting out postal districts to a small army of sales agents. These agents are to be employed on a commission basis and, for every calendar sold, the agent would keep 20 per cent of the selling price. Jasmine's only overheads are to supply her agents with their own printed stationery and to meet them half way with their advertising costs, a small price to pay to achieve national recognition.

Luke begins to experience problems

Trying to run a business with inadequately trained staff is simply asking for trouble. With Luke spending so much of his time on the shop floor ensuring that quality levels were being maintained and production targets met, the sales office was being left to run itself. Without a good credit control system being implemented and controlled, invoice payments began to get overlooked and a severe cashflow problem developed.

The sales staff tried to remedy the situation – not by chasing outstanding debts as they should have done, but by beginning to invoice clients as soon as an order was placed. For a short while this seemed to have solved the problem but in reality the company was now buying raw materials to produce products they had already been paid for. The results of this meant that customers became unhappy, all the sales figures were wrong, and a false picture of the financial position of the business was being portrayed.

ACTION POINTS

1. List the main strengths and weaknesses of your proposed venture. How will you overcome any negative comments by your potential backers or investors?
2. Decide who will be first to see your business plan, and why.
3. Although you will not be able to plan exactly how your meeting will go, you can prepare yourself for it. Rehearse your presentation in front of a friend or colleague and then gauge their response.

Running Your Business to Plan

This section of the book assumes that the business plan you have prepared has now successfully achieved the purpose for which it was designed. This could have been to raise additional finance, attract an investor, or simply organise your ideas to see if your venture is a viable proposition. Whatever your reasons for preparing a business plan, this chapter is intended to help you ensure your business remains both profitable and successful.

MONITORING YOUR BUSINESS

Following the launch of your new venture you will risk being so preoccupied with the day to day running of your business that you may easily overlook the fundamentals which will make your business successful. It is important periodically to take time out to monitor how well your business is performing. Any potential problems can then be identified early on and preventive action taken to rectify matters. The penalties for failing to do this can be severe.

A small gradual loss of business may not be noticeable on a day to day basis but when you start comparing weekly and monthly figures then tailing off can be clearly seen. Any loss must be quickly identified and tackled to stop it increasing further. If clients are no longer buying your products or using your service, then find out why.

A busy business person will probably be so engrossed in their own work that they may not even have noticed the arrival of a new competitor or a fall in the standard of their work. If you are a sole trader then you will probably be constantly fighting against the clock to get your work done and your money in the bank, but time spent monitoring your progress is invaluable. A partnership or limited company will be better able to assess its situation as many jobs can be delegated giving you time to concentrate on your progress.

Who to talk to

Your accountant or bank manager are examples of people to discuss your business with. They tend to have impartial views and a wealth of experience behind them. A problem you are facing today could be resolved after speaking with them tomorrow. In addition, your local Enterprise Agency or Business Link have trained personnel to help you with any problems as they arise. If they are not able to assist you directly, they will be able to recommend sources of further help. However, sometimes just talking through a problem is often enough to help you see the solution for yourself.

USING YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Try not to fall into the same trap as many other businesses by disregarding your business plan as soon as you are up and running. One of the most important, yet frequently overlooked reasons why you compiled a business plan in the first place was to use it to continually monitor how your business is performing. Many businesses feel that the plan has served its purpose as soon as the loan has been approved or the doors to the office are open. On the contrary, it merely marks the beginning.

Your first two years

For at least the first two years it is a good idea to sit down at least once a month either on your own, with your bank manager or accountant and use your business plan to analyse how well your business is doing. This will help you spot any problems long before they arise and take the necessary actions to stop them developing any further. For example, a steady decline in profits or cashflow will not always be apparent during the early stages of your venture whilst you are concentrating on the day to day running of your business but your sales revenue and cashflow forecasts will soon highlight any shortfalls.

How well is your business performing?

Use your business plan to monitor your progress; don't hide behind your business trying to convince everyone, including yourself, that everything is just fine. This will help you to face up to any problems you may be experiencing. It is far better to address any problems at an early stage and work towards solving them, rather than trying to cover them up; the latter will only lead to ever increasing debt and even bankruptcy.

Obviously you want your business venture to succeed because you have invested so much time, energy and capital getting it from the drawing board and into reality. However, there may come a time when you will have to face up to the fact that your new business venture is not working. Using your business plan to continually analyse your position will enable you to try something else before you lose too much.

On a more positive note, using your business plan to assess your current position will soon show if you are doing better than you expected. If this is the case you will be able to budget for further growth. Success leads to more success.

MANAGING YOUR CASHFLOW

Keeping a tight control over your cashflow will enable your business to prosper and succeed. Remember, cash is king. Without it your business is in danger of failing. Suppliers need to be paid and costs need to be met. This money has to come from somewhere and the best place is from your business bank account, provided you have sufficient funds available.

Once you begin to trade you will be able to compare your original cashflow projections with your current cashflow position. Do this on a regular basis, and see how well (or badly) your business is performing. You may be doing better than expected and have a cash surplus that needs to be invested so that your money is working harder for you. However, you may be in a poor cashflow position whereby drastic action is needed before bankruptcy looms. Close, careful monitoring of your cashflow will highlight these areas long before they become critical.

If your actual sales totals are equal to your estimated figures and your clients have paid their invoices then you are unlikely to experience any cashflow problems. However, in real life this is seldom the case, but there are some precautions you can take which will help your cashflow position:

Eight ways of improving your cashflow

1. Before you give any credit, try to ensure your client is creditworthy.
2. Invoice your clients promptly to ensure fast payment.

Example No. 1 - Bank in Credit

Week No. 14 Commencing 2ND APRIL 201X

RECEIPTS					
Day/Date	Daily Gross Takings			Other Receipts Col 4	Particulars
	Cash Col 1	Cheques Col 2	Credit Cards Col 3		
Sun : 2/4	186 27				
Mon : 3/4	232 44	25 80	19 95	35 60	TAX REFUND
Tues : 4/4	256 26			5 48	DEBTOR: P. SMITH
Wed : 5/4	112 27	12 64			
Thur : 6/4	289 85	19 74	41 05		
Fri : 7/4	364 24	26 34			
Sat : 8/4	382 72	62 50	72 95		
Sub Totals	1824 05	147 02	133 95	41 08	Total
Gross Weekly Takings (Cols 1 + 2 + 3)			2105 02		

PAID TO BANK			
Cash Col 5	Cheques Col 6	Credit Cards Col 7	TOTAL Col 8
		19 95	19 95
420 00	66 88		486 88
440 00	58 72	41 05	539 77
860 00	125 60	61 00	1046 60

PAYMENTS FOR BUSINESS STOCK			
Date or Chq. No.	To Whom Paid	Amount Paid	
		By Cash Col 9	By Cheque Col 10
3/4	J. CARLAN & SONS	49 50	
6/4	J. BARNER & CO. LTD.		36 50
6/4	A. J. GOOD LTD.		136 85
5/4	J. BROWN & CO. LTD.	53 80	
7/4	F. LINESY & CO. LTD.	26 70	
6/4	A. NEWCOMBE		86 25
Totals		109 00	259 60
Total payments (to Summary)		368 60	

PAYMENTS OTHER THAN FOR STOCK		
Nature of Payment	Amount Paid	
	By Cash Col 11	By Cheque Col 12
Rent	35 00	
Rates		
Light and Heat		63 50
Carnage	9 45	
Postages (£170; 24p; £2.38)	4 32	
Paper		27 46
Motor Expenses	PETROL 16 12	
-do-	REPAIRS	96 50
Travelling	7 32	
Cleaning	5 00	
Printing & Stationery		23 20
Repairs & Renewals		15 78
Insurance (Business)		
Advertising		
Telephone		
Sundries	1 05	
Wages (Employees)	65 75	
Totals		
229 01	244 40	

WEEKLY BANK REPORT		
Add	Opening Balance b/fwd from last week	1343 56
	Total Paid to bank during week (Col 8)	1046 60
	Start-up Allowance/Other Direct Credits	80 00
	Total	2470 16
Deduct	Cash drawn from bank	-- --
	Stock (Col 10) chqs only	259 60
	Other payments (Col 12)	244 40
	Standing Orders/Direct Debits	-- --
	Bank and Interest Charges	-- --
	Total	504 00
Closing Balance carried forward		1966 16

WEEKLY CASH REPORT		
Add	Cash in hand (as counted) b/fwd from last week	6 46
	Gross Weekly Takings (Col 1 + Col 2 + Col 3)	2105 02
	Other Receipts (col 4)	41 08
	Cash Drawn from Bank	-- --
	Total	2152 56
Deduct	Stock Payments (cash) (Col 8)	109 00
	Other Payments (cash) (Col 11)	229 01
	Amount paid to bank (Col 6)	1046 60
	Total	1384 61
GEORGE VYNER LTD		Cash Balance on books
		767 95
		Cash in hand (as counted) carried forward
		767 60
		Difference on books (+ or -)
		35

Figure 8. The Simplex Weekly Page.

3. Threaten overdue accounts with legal action. This will usually generate a response.
4. Try to discourage your clients from using your credit facility. Charge them a higher price for items bought on credit and offer a discount for goods settled on delivery or completion.
5. Keep your level of stock roughly in line with your sales.
6. Make a note of every phone call, quotation and estimate that you make and receive. You never know when this information may be needed.
7. Develop a very tight control over any credit that you give.
8. Always ask suppliers for credit for your business.

These points go part way to helping you manage your cashflow. Having money in the bank and keeping it there is really common sense. If you aim to get your clients to pay on time and delay the payment of your own suppliers then your financial position will improve. However, be careful not to get a reputation as a bad or slow payer: you may find your credit facilities severely reduced.

As your company prospers, you may well develop a cashflow problem with more and more overdue and unsettled invoices. You may then be able to turn to a factoring company to advance you up to 80 per cent of the value of these invoices. The balance will be payable when your clients settle their invoice less a handling charge for the original advance. (Factoring is covered in greater detail in Chapter 7.)

KEEPING BUSINESS ACCOUNTS

Regardless of the size of your business you are legally obliged to keep accurate and up to date financial records which detail all of your trading activities. There are many ways you can do this and it is not as complex as you might first think. In fact, the simpler the method you use the better. The system will then be easy to understand and maintain, and you can minimise the time spent doing your accounts and use it more productively building up your business.

Many people think a file full of receipts and invoices an adequate accounting system, but nothing could be further from the truth.

These receipts and invoices have to be presented in such a way that you can clearly see what was purchased or sold and when.

- If your business is not registered for VAT then your accounting system can be very simple. All you need do is list your sales and receipts weekly or monthly, then subtract your business expenses from your total sales to give your profit or loss for the year.
- Even when your business becomes VAT registered your system does not have to become any more complex; you just need to keep a separate record for your VAT transactions. Your accountant will be able to advise you about the best method to use for your business.

Choosing your accounts system

Many different accounting systems are available. One of the best on the market is the **Simplex System** which is shown in Figure 8. This system is available from most good stationers, or direct from the publishers, George Vyrer Limited, PO Box 1, Holmfirth HD9 7YP. Tel: (01484) 685221. The *Simplex D Account Book* consists of 52 weekly pages as illustrated. Each page is ruled to take records of every activity likely to occur in a week, as listed below:

1. Receipts

This has a place to record cash, cheques and credit card vouchers taken on each day of the week. There is also a record for Other Receipts which include additional capital contributed by yourself, any loans received from the bank or finance house, refunds from the VAT office and so on.

2. Paid to Bank

Records all amounts paid to the bank, whether cash, cheques or credit card vouchers, on any day of the week.

3. Payments for Business Stock

Here you can record all the purchases made by the business of stock for re-sale, or for raw materials to be made up into finished products.

4. Payments other than for stock

This is where you record all the expenses of your business which are not items for eventual re-sale. The various overheads have a line each.

There is also room for such items as VAT payments to HM Customs, payments to the Inland Revenue, drawings made by yourself or partners. Finally there is room to record any capital expenditure which represents the purchase of assets for long term use.

5. *Weekly Cash Report*

This will enable you to check the money received and paid in during the week and to discover any shortage or surplus. The special point to note here is that everything in your till – cash, cheques or credit card vouchers – is regarded as cash until it is finally paid into the bank, when, of course, it ceases to be ‘cash in hand’.

6. *Weekly Bank Report*

This report will enable you to keep track of the balance that should be in your bank account at the end of each week. It consists of an opening balance at the start of the week, to which any sums paid into the bank are added (the total of column 8) and from which the sums paid by way of cheque are deducted. When you receive your bank statement you will be able to spot any direct credits received and any direct debits, standing orders or bank charges deducted. These can then be entered on the lines provided.

Each week the total takings, purchases, and expenses are carried to summaries at the back of the book. The figures from these summaries, when totalled for the year, enable you to compile your own final accounts and to discover the yearly profit or loss of your business. A fair copy of this final set of records can then be produced and submitted to the Inland Revenue.

In addition to the *Simplex D Account Book*, George Vyner Ltd also produce a *Simplex Wages Book* and *VAT Record Book* designed to work in conjunction with the account book and complete the Simplex system. It is difficult to imagine a simpler set of book-keeping records. However, for those who do get into difficulty there is a free and confidential advice service and hot-line, available by contacting the Simplex Advice Bureau at George Vyner Limited.

Computerised book-keeping

If you have access to a computer then it may be worth considering a computerised method of book-keeping. Your local specialist computer store will be able to guide you through the many software accountancy packages available.

The **TAS Books Account Processor** is an excellent budget priced

PC-based accounting system, accredited by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). The unique 'Account Processor' concept removes the fear of making mistakes because it allows entries to be retrieved, corrected and re-saved so the ledgers 100 per cent accurately reflect the source documents. Full details of the system are available from Tas Software plc, 5 Compton Road, London SW19 7QA. Tel: (0845) 245 0220.

In addition to this software there are many other packages available including the following:

Sage Instant Accounting – contact The Sage Group plc, Sage House, Benton Park Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE7 7LZ. Tel: (0191) 255 3000.

Pegasus Capital – contact Pegasus Software Ltd, Orion House, Orion Way, Kettering, Northants NN15 6TE. Tel: (01536) 495200.

Quickbooks – contact Intuit Ltd, PO Box 4944, Twyford, Reading RG10 9BF. Tel: (0845) 606 2161.

CHECKLIST

- Do you know how you will monitor the performance of your business?
- Are you aware of how to use your business plan after you have completed the document?
- Have you devised an effective method of managing your cashflow?
- Have you appointed an accountant to keep your books, or will you be doing this yourself?
- Have you selected an accountancy system to use?

CASE STUDIES

Joshua wants out

Running any business requires a tremendous amount of hard work, long hours and commitment. Unlike Jake, Joshua does not have a

wife, children and a mortgage to support. He found the long hours and hard work put unbearable pressures on his social life and had announced that he wished to sell his share of the business.

Unfortunately, Jake was not in a financial position to buy him out in order to retain complete control of the business. Instead he offered an investment opportunity to a member of his family to become a limited (sleeping) partner.

As with any partnership, it is important to choose your business partners well. It takes at least two to make any partnership a success but it only takes one to destroy it. Next time, Jake will be much more cautious.

Jasmine looks back

Looking back at all she had achieved from her humble beginnings in the spare bedroom of her home, Jasmine realised that if she had not taken the time to prepare a business plan in the first instance she would never have been as successful as she had become.

Even during the early days, Jasmine's business plan provided her with a clearly defined direction of where she was going and how she was going to get there. It made her realise the level of sales needed just to survive and how much more would be needed to succeed. She had realised that the only difference between surviving and succeeding is planning.

Regardless of whether you need any additional finance to launch your business it is still worth preparing a business plan to be sure in your own mind that you can succeed.

Luke finds a solution

With production and sales revenue increasing in line with his overdraft, Luke had to take drastic action if he was to avoid bankruptcy. He began by delegating many of his responsibilities to his key personnel, which gave him more time to concentrate on controlling his business.

His first task was to compile a set of management figures; had he done this a few months previously he could have avoided his present situation. These figures showed that if he were to use the services of a factoring company to exchange his outstanding invoices for cash, and then operate a strict credit control system, he would be able to pay off his overdraft and put his business back in a more healthy condition.

Over some months this was done and Luke avoided certain

bankruptcy. Now Luke always makes sure that he is never too busy to realise how his business is performing and is constantly monitoring his financial position.

ACTION POINTS

1. Decide what methods will you use to monitor how well your business is performing and what steps will you take to overcome any loss of business.
2. Examine the various methods of book-keeping.
3. It is vital to keep a tight control over your cashflow. Which methods will you use to ensure your system is working?

Sample Business Plan

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Phoenix Business Plans

Business Plan 200X

To: The Manager at The Euro Bank

From: Matthew Record

2A Grove Trading Estate, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1ST
Telephone: 01305 269000 Fax: 01305 269001

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1. The Executive Summary

Phoenix Business Plans is a specialist fixed fee mail order service, launched to fill a niche that exists in the market place. We compile business plans rapidly and efficiently at a fraction of our competitors' prices, whilst maintaining the highest levels of quality and client satisfaction at all times. Our business is currently run by my wife and myself.

We have kept our overheads to an absolute minimum in order to offer the client a service which is both extremely competitive and of the highest professional standards. Working from an office within our home we produce all of the business plans ourselves.

There are currently 450,000 new businesses starting up in Britain each year and whilst some will begin without the preparation of a business plan and succeed, the law of averages dictates otherwise. Some will prepare a plan on their own, or with the aid of the bank's forms, they will manage to a certain degree but the majority will use the services of a business such as ourselves. By offering a low cost, fixed fee service we believe this will give us the competitive edge and our business will be a huge success.

Our service will mainly be advertised in specialist business start up magazines and with the use of direct mailings. Clients will respond to these advertisements and word of mouth recommendations to order a business plan. An in depth detailed questionnaire will then be despatched and it is from this information we will compile their business plans. Continuous telephone and fax support will be made available for an unlimited period of time should the client have any queries regarding any aspect of their plan.

It is our intention to remain a mail order company and solely supply the UK

market for the foreseeable future. When we have established ourselves as a market leader and control a large market share, we will then look to promote our business on an international scale. In the meantime, we will welcome overseas orders should the situation ever occur.

We will need an initial investment of £1600 to get the business established; £1000 of this we have ourselves and the remaining £600 will be supplied with the aid of a business loan repayable over 24 months. To begin with, we conservatively estimate to receive one or two orders a week increasing to between three and five by the end of the first year. Our fixed fee service is £110.00 with additional copies of the business plans at £10.00 respectively. With these figures we expect to complete the first year of trading with a little over £14,000 in the bank.

2. The Nature of Our Business

2.1 Position to Date

All of our initial research has been fully compiled and as soon as we have purchased our computer system, printer and business stationery we will be in a position to commence trading.

2.2 Mission Statement

Phoenix Business Plans has been founded to fill a niche that exists in the market place. We will compile business plans rapidly and efficiently, at a fraction of our competitors' prices, whilst maintaining the highest levels of quality and client service at all times. The success of our business will be directly influenced by our dedication to continually improving the quality and service in every aspect of our operation.

2.3 Short Term Objectives

As a short term objective, it is our intention to launch our business in the most cost effective way in order to achieve the greatest market penetration. This will be achieved by beginning with a press release to all of the specialist business magazines and publications.

2.4 Long Term Objectives

When our business has become a fully established success we will be looking towards franchising the concept throughout the United Kingdom. As a franchised company we will have to be in a position to demonstrate a successful method of running and controlling the business which can be set up and run in any part of the country with equal success. This will be achieved by constantly monitoring and adapting our advertising and marketing methods in order to develop such a system.

2.5 Key Personnel

At present the business is run by my wife and myself. When we have established and maintained a larger market share and the work load outweighs our resources, we will then employ the use of out workers to meet the demands of our clients.

2.6 Legal structure

Our business will be launched and trade under the name of Phoenix Business Plans. We will operate the business as a partnership between my wife, Helen Record and myself, Matthew Record.

2.7 Professional advisers

We have appointed the services of Paul Whitehead as our solicitor for the business. He has already drawn up a partnership agreement and will be consulted as and when the situation arises. Until our sales revenue exceeds the VAT registration threshold our financial records will be kept with the aid of the Simplex accounting system and will be updated on a weekly basis by Helen Record.

3. Our Service

3.1 How Our Plans Are Produced

Each and every business plan will be compiled by myself. I shall use a combination of a Windows based Pentium computer, a Hewlett Packard Ink Jet Printer and special prestige ink jet paper. The finished document will be spiral bound and approximately 25 - 40 pages in length depending on how the client has responded to the questionnaire.

3.2 Our USP (Unique Selling Point)

Our main Unique Selling Point is the fact our service is operated on a fixed fee basis. Unlike accountants or management consultants who charge by the hour, our clients know in advance exactly how much our service will be and are then able to budget themselves accordingly. We believe this Unique Selling Point will provide us with a competitive edge which will ensure our business is successful.

3.3 Testing

A number of business plans have already been produced using the questionnaire system which has worked very well. As the questions are pre-set it is the clients who will spend their time researching the relevant information and not ourselves. This means that we can accurately estimate the length of time it will take to compile a business plan and therefore we are able to offer a fixed fee service.

3.4 Sales Materials and Special Offers

An A5 sales leaflet will be produced and sent to prospects, business consultants, accountants *etc.* We will offer a 10 per cent discount to our clients if the plan is paid for in full at the time of ordering. A similar discount will be offered to business consultants *etc.* should their clients wish to order a plan through these organisations.

We have set ourselves a low profit margin in order to offer our clients value for money against the price of the competition. Therefore we have very little room to offer large discounts and as the average client is only likely to order a single business plan with a number of copies, then a bulk order will rarely occur. We strongly believe the high levels of service and client satisfaction that we provide will far outweigh any sales gimmick that we could offer.

3.5 Suppliers

As our business provides a service as opposed to manufacturing a product our main supplier will be Stanley Office Suppliers of Weymouth, Dorset. This company will be used to supply all of our stationery and office consumables.

4. The Market and the Competition

4.1 Our Target Market

The geographical area of our clientele is only limited by the extent of our advertising and word of mouth recommendations. Our clients will mainly be private individuals who need to acquire additional capital to set up in business, as opposed to large firms seeking finance for expansion. However, that is not to say that we would be unable to meet their requirements should the situation ever arise.

Our target market also includes newly established businesses which should update their business plan periodically. This will enable those with capital invested in a business to see how well it is performing and enable the client to adapt to the changing needs of the business and its clients.

4.2 Market Positioning

We consider ourselves to be in the medium price, medium volume sector of the market place. By offering a fixed fee service we feel we will succeed against our competitors who charge an hourly rate and provide their clients with little indication as to how much their business plan will cost.

4.3 Quantity of Clients

To begin with we anticipate one or two clients a week which would

increase to between three and five by the end of the first year. Each client will purchase at least one business plan and a number of copies. We will remain in contact with all our clients and will gently remind them when their business plan is due for renewal.

4.4 Client Response

Each time a client responds to an advertisement they will be sent an information pack which will contain full details about the service we offer, a very brief questionnaire, an application form and a return addressed envelope. The questionnaire will ask the client what they thought of the service that we offer and whether they will be using our services. The last section will ask them for any suggestions they may have about how we can improve upon the level of service we currently offer. We strongly believe the only way to survive in today's market place is to provide the client with the high level of client service and satisfaction they have come to expect and it is only by asking what they think of us that we are able to do this. It is important for us to listen to the needs of our clients; this will enable us to provide a level of service and client satisfaction that is second to none.

4.5 The Competition

A specialised business plan service is a niche market with huge growth potential, providing we are able to offer the right service to match the needs of our clients. The competition for this type of service is very minimal. Since researching the possibility of establishing such a service, I have only come across two direct competitors who offer a similar service. The first was in Bournemouth but their fee was just over 200 per cent more than ours. The second competitor was based in London and worked on an hourly rate; they were unable to estimate how much a plan would be. Both were contacted but neither contacted me again after I received their initial information.

4.6 Competition Price Comparison

Although our prices are approximately 200 per cent cheaper than that of our competitors, that does not mean the quality of our service is any less professional. As a company we promise to give our clients pure value for money and to do so have developed a service that will give us a medium profit margin with a high client turnover which we believe will be better than only a handful of clients with a high profit margin. We believe the more clients we have the sooner our name will become known in the market place and our market share will increase. Word of mouth recommendations are one of the most effective methods of advertising with the added benefit of it not costing anything. It is only by providing a professional service that we can achieve this.

5. The Marketing Plan

5.1 Anticipated Demand

The demand for the service we offer is determined by the level of new businesses starting up each year. At present this figure is estimated at some 450,000. The year before there was a 10 per cent fall in these figures. Low interest rates and the gradual rise of the economy have resulted in increased consumer spending thus putting confidence back into industry which in turn has the effect of more businesses starting up. It is estimated 200X will see a 15 per cent increase in the number of new businesses.

5.2 Marketing Methods

We will purchase a number of mailing lists and target 'Business Opportunity Seekers', for the time when they have found a business opportunity to suit them. If we target the right market then a good client list can be worth a lot more than it would cost to acquire.

We understand that advertising only reinforces, it does not generally sell. Therefore the information pack we send out will contain all the features and benefits of our business and marketing plans in order to convince the client to take the final step and order a plan. All inquiries will be followed up with a courtesy call a few days later to ensure the information pack has arrived and to ask whether we may be of any further assistance. National magazine advertisements will be placed on a monthly basis whilst the local press will be used on days of increased circulation.

5.3 Attracting Clients

We only have a small advertising budget at present so we will have to target our promotional methods effectively in order to produce the maximum response with the budget we have. To begin with, a press release will be sent to all local and national newspapers and specialist business magazines such as *Home Business*, *Enterprise*, *Business Franchise etc.* with details of the service we offer and where we can be contacted.

This will be followed up with direct mailings to potential clients who are in a position to use our services now. Business bankers, accountants, tax advisers *etc* will also be approached, as these organisations deal directly on a daily basis with clients who are about to set up in business. Many of these organisations may be competing for our clients' business but we feel many of these will be too busy to undertake this type of work, whereas we are a specialist company dedicated to providing professionally packaged business plans. It is hoped that after a period of time most of our clients will be reached by word of mouth recommendations.

5.4 Public Relations

The service we provide will mainly help new small businesses which the press are keen to promote as the up and coming businesses of tomorrow. We will use the press to highlight our service as one which will help small businesses achieve long term success.

6. The Operational Plan

6.1 Our Location

We are located in Dorchester, Dorset which is along the South Coast of England. As we are a mail order company then our location is irrelevant to the success of the business. To keep our overheads at an absolute minimum we work from home and will continue to do so in the short term. We have converted one of the rooms in our home into an office.

6.2 Client Support

Should our clients have any queries, then telephone support will be available throughout the completion of their business plan. We will only be too pleased to assist with anything from how to answer a particular question to whom the client should approach for finance. No charge will be made for this support and it is available to the client for an unlimited period of time.

6.3 Service Plan

All business plans need to be updated on a regular basis either bi-annually or preferably annually. We will maintain a client database and contact them shortly before their plan is due for renewal. After a client has used our services once, we aim to be able to provide them with our services for the duration of their business. As it is a service we provide, then after sales support is not an issue. However we will stay in contact with all our clients and hope they will use our services again.

6.4 Distribution Methods

As the geographical area of our target market is nationwide we will use the Royal Mail for all our client correspondence. Our business and marketing plans are light documents so our carriage costs only represent a small percentage of turnover. We will guarantee the client a service to compile their business and marketing plans within 14 days following the receipt of the completed questionnaire. This is exactly half the delivery lead time quoted by our competitors.

PHOENIX BUSINESS PLANS 1 JANUARY 200X TO

Month	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Sales	440.00	660.00	880.00	880.00	1,100.00	1,100.00
Materials	60.00	90.00	120.00	120.00	150.00	150.00
Labour	120.00	180.00	240.00	240.00	300.00	300.00
Cost of goods sold	180.00	270.00	360.00	360.00	450.00	450.00
Gross Profit	260.00	390.00	520.00	520.00	650.00	650.00
Overheads:						
Rent	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Water Rates	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Electricity & Gas	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00
Postage & Carriage	12.00	18.00	24.00	24.00	30.00	30.00
Business Stationery	20.00	20.00	20.00	22.00	24.00	24.00
Repairs & Renewals	12.00	18.00	24.00	24.00	30.00	30.00
Insurance (Business)	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Advertising	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00
Telephone	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00
Sundries	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00
Professional Charges	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wages (Employees)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bank & Interest Charges	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
National Insurance	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50
Depreciation	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00
Total Overheads	194.50	256.50	218.50	220.50	234.50	234.50
Net Profit	65.50	133.50	301.50	299.50	415.50	415.50
Interest Payable	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Profit Before Tax	62.00	130.00	298.00	296.00	412.00	412.00
Taxation	15.50	32.50	74.50	74.00	103.00	103.00
Retained Profit	46.50	97.50	223.50	222.00	309.00	309.00

PROFIT & LOSS FORECAST

31 DECEMBER 200X

JLY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals
1,650.00	1,650.00	1,760.00	1,760.00	2,200.00	2,200.00	16,280.00
225.00	225.00	240.00	240.00	300.00	300.00	2,220.00
450.00	450.00	480.00	480.00	600.00	600.00	4,440.00
675.00	675.00	720.00	720.00	900.00	900.00	6,660.00
975.00	975.00	1,040.00	1,040.00	1,300.00	1,300.00	9,620.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	48.00
8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	96.00
45.00	45.00	48.00	48.00	60.00	60.00	444.00
30.00	30.00	36.00	36.00	42.00	42.00	346.00
45.00	45.00	48.00	48.00	60.00	60.00	444.00
10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	120.00
40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	480.00
20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	240.00
20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	240.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	270.00
26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	312.00
270.50	270.50	282.50	282.50	312.50	312.50	3,090.00
704.50	704.50	757.50	757.50	987.50	987.50	6,530.00
3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	42.00
701.00	701.00	754.00	754.00	984.00	984.00	6,488.00
175.25	175.25	188.50	188.50	246.00	246.00	1,622.00
525.75	525.75	565.50	565.50	738.00	738.00	4,866.00

6.5 Making The Sale

In an ideal world every enquiry would turn into a sale with the client completing the application form and returning it to us. However, as we do not live in an ideal world then we will have to work hard to achieve our sales targets. If after a week we have not had a response from a prospect, then a follow up telephone call will be made to determine if the client is genuinely interested in our service. We estimate that for every three responses we get, one will develop into an order.

We will accept an initial 10 per cent deposit to compile a business plan. Then 50 per cent of the balance will be required when the questionnaire is returned and the remaining 40 per cent only when the client has received the plan and is completely satisfied with the service.

6.6 Samples

Sample business and marketing plans will be produced for members of the press as they request them. This will enable them to see exactly the service we offer and they will hopefully be able to include an appropriate article in their publication. Should they request it, clients will be sent sample pages of text so they can see the style and quality of our work.

6.7 Packaging

All business plans will contain a title page, contents page, main plan and financial details. These will be spiral bound and then despatched by first class post.

6.8 Job Responsibilities

As the manager I will produce each and every business plan myself. It is also my responsibility to actively promote the business and see to all aspects of its day to day running. My wife Helen is the proprietor and it is hoped that when our three young sons start school she will be able to take a more active role with the running of the business. At present Helen takes care of all the accounts and usually deals with all of the correspondence.

6.9 Insurance

We have discovered a very comprehensive home office insurance policy through our insurance broker, Connor Associates. The policy will be in force as from 9 December, 200X and will provide cover for the complete contents of our office including up to £2,000 in cash. We have also taken out an extra policy to provide cover against the increased cost of working due to business interruption. We have not taken out any public or employers' liability insurance as our clients use postal and telephone correspondence and at present we do not employ any staff members.

7. Financial Forecasts

7.1 Profit and loss forecast

See enclosed profit and loss forecast.

7.2 Profit and loss forecast explanatory notes

Sales - these figures assume an initial four clients during the first month of trading and then gradually increasing to 20 clients a month by the end of our first year. This will give us an estimated turnover of £16,280.00 in our first year.

Materials - paper, ink and binding are the only materials needed to compile a business plan. We have calculated these to be £15.00 for each 40 page document based on the price list supplied by Stanley Office Supplies. In order to meet our expected turnover, £2,220.00 of materials will be needed to produce our expected 148 business plans within the first year.

Labour - assuming each plan takes an average of six hours to compile, this estimate is equivalent to £5.00 per hour.

Cost of goods sold - it will cost £6,660.00 to produce sufficient business plans to meet our expected turnover of £16,280.00.

Gross profit - based on our enclosed figures we anticipate our annual gross profit will be £9,620.00.

Rent - as we intend to work from home, we will not incur any premises rental charges.

Water rates - we have allowed a 25 per cent contribution from the business towards the total cost of our residential water rates bill.

Electricity & gas - an additional 20 per cent has been added to our previous annual electricity and gas bills to allow for the extra use and then a 25 per cent contribution towards the new cost has been calculated.

Postage & carriage - each plan will cost £3.00 to despatch which includes a 20 per cent contribution towards the cost of sending information to potential clients who decide not to use our services.

Business stationery - this cost is based on the price list supplied by Stanley Office Supplies and includes letterheads, business cards, compliment slips and envelopes.

Repairs & renewals - a £4.00 contribution towards the costs of repairs and renewals has been calculated for each business plan sold.

Insurance (business) - the total annual cost of £120.00 has been estimated based on a home business insurance policy arranged through Connor Associates.

Advertising - this £40.00 monthly advertising cost is based on a £10.00 advertisement being placed in two monthly business magazines and the

PHOENIX BUSINESS PLANS 1 JANUARY 200X TO

Month	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Receipts						
Sales Receipts	440.00	660.00	880.00	880.00	1,100.00	1,100.00
Capital Introduced	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Loans	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Receipts	2,040.00	660.00	880.00	880.00	1,100.00	1,100.00
Payments:						
Materials	0.00	60.00	90.00	120.00	120.00	150.00
Salaries	120.00	180.00	240.00	240.00	300.00	300.00
Rent	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Water Rates	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Electricity & Gas	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00
Postage & Carriage	12.00	18.00	24.00	24.00	30.00	30.00
Business Stationery	20.00	12.00	18.00	18.00	24.00	24.00
Repairs & Renewals	12.00	18.00	24.00	24.00	30.00	30.00
Insurance (Business)	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Advertising	0.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00
Telephone	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00
Sundries	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00
Capital items	750.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Professional Charges	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wages (Employee's)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Customs & Excise (VAT)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
National Insurance	0.00	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50
Bank & Interest Charges	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Loan Repayments	25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00
Total Payments	1004.50	491.00	549.00	579.00	657.00	687.00
Net Flow	1035.50	169.00	331.00	301.00	443.00	413.00
Opening Bank Balance	0.00	1035.50	1204.50	1535.50	1836.50	2279.50
Closing Bank Balance	1035.50	1204.50	1535.50	1836.50	2279.50	2692.50

CASHFLOW FORECAST TO 31 DECEMBER 200X

JLY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
1,650.00	1,650.00	1,760.00	1,760.00	2,200.00	2,200.00	16,280.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00
1,650.00	1,650.00	1,760.00	1,760.00	2,200.00	2,200.00	17,880.00
150.00	225.00	225.00	240.00	240.00	300.00	1,920.00
450.00	450.00	480.00	480.00	600.00	600.00	4,440.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	48.00
8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	96.00
45.00	45.00	48.00	48.00	60.00	60.00	444.00
30.00	30.00	36.00	36.00	42.00	42.00	332.00
45.00	45.00	48.00	48.00	60.00	60.00	444.00
10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	120.00
40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	440.00
20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	240.00
20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	240.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	750.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	22.50	247.50
3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	42.00
25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00	300.00
873.00	948.00	990.00	1005.00	1155.00	1215.00	10,153.50
777.00	702.00	770.00	755.00	1045.00	985.00	7,726.50
2,692.50	3,469.50	4,171.50	4,941.50	5,696.50	6,741.50	0.00
3,469.50	4,171.50	4,941.50	5,696.50	6,741.50	7,726.50	7,726.50

remaining £20.00 being used for classified advertising in local newspapers.

Telephone - an additional 20 per cent has been added to our previous annual telephone bill to allow for the extra use and then a 25 per cent contribution towards the new cost has been calculated.

Sundries - this cost is represented by tea, coffee, and various business magazines and newspapers.

Professional charges - this £50.00 cost is for our partnership agreement to be drawn up by our solicitor, Paul Whitehead.

Wages (employees) - we will not be in a position to employ anyone during our first year of trading.

Bank & interest charges - as we anticipate our account to be in credit we will take advantage of twelve months' free banking currently being offered by the bank.

National Insurance - our National Insurance contribution will be paid by monthly direct debit.

Depreciation - we anticipate our £500.00 second-hand computer system will be used in the business for two years before being replaced. This represents a monthly depreciation cost of £20.80. Our new printer will remain in use for four years which represents a monthly depreciation cost of £5.20.

Total overheads - our total overheads are estimated at £3,090.00.

Net profit - the above figures indicate that our expected net profit will be £6,530.00.

Interest payable - assuming the bank will advance us £600.00 at 12.9 per cent APR this represents a total monthly repayment charge of £28.50 of which £3.50 is interest.

Profit before tax - our annual profit before tax is calculated at £6,488.00.

Taxation - this total cost of £1,622.00 is calculated at 25 per cent of the profit made by the business.

Retained profit - using the enclosed figures we should complete our first year of trading with a retained profit of £4,866.00.

7.3 Cashflow forecast

See enclosed cashflow forecast.

7.4 Cashflow forecast explanatory notes

Sales Receipts - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Capital Introduced - this £1,000.00 represents our initial investment taken from our personal savings which will remain in the business for the

duration of our trading life.

Loans - this figure of £600.00 represents the two year loan we expect to obtain from the bank.

Total receipts - this figure of £17,880.00 is calculated by totalling our sales receipts (£16,280.00), capital introduced (£1000.00) and loans (£600.00).

Materials - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Salaries - as we will only draw a salary from the business plans actually sold this figure of £4,440.00 is based on the total plans sold during our first year. Although this does not represent a large amount of money, by December we anticipate compiling at least 20 business plans a month which will give us an income of at least £600.00 per month.

Rent - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Water rates - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Electricity & gas - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Postage & carriage - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Business stationery - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Repairs & renewals - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Insurance (business) - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Advertising - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Telephone - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Sundries - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Capital items - the total cost of £750.00 comprises a second-user computer system at £500.00 and a new inkjet printer at £250.00 which we will need to purchase at the end of December 200X.

Professional charges - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Wages (employees) - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Customs & Excise (VAT) - as our expected annual turnover of £16,280.00 is below the £58,000.00 registration limit we will not be registered for VAT during our first year of trading.

National Insurance - *see profit and loss forecast.*

Bank & interest charges - with free banking for the first year our only interest charges will be £42.00 which represents the interest payable on our £600.00 loan from the bank.

Loan repayments - borrowing £600.00 over two years with 12.9 per cent interest represents a annual repayment of £300.00.

PHOENIX BUSINESS PLANS 1 JANUARY 200X

Month	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Fixed Assets	724.00	698.00	672.00	646.00	620.00	594.00
Current Assets						
Raw Materials	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Debtors	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash in the Bank	1,035.50	1,204.50	1,535.50	1,836.50	2,279.50	2,692.50
Total Current Assets	1,035.50	1,204.50	1,535.50	1,836.50	2,279.50	2,692.50
Current Liabilities						
Creditors	122.50	160.50	192.50	196.50	226.50	226.50
Tax Liability	15.50	48.00	122.50	196.50	299.50	402.50
Overdraft	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Liabilities	138.00	208.50	315.00	393.00	526.00	629.00
Net Current Assets	897.50	996.00	1,220.50	1,443.50	1,753.50	2,063.50
Net Assets	1,621.50	1,694.00	1,892.50	2,089.50	2,373.50	2,657.50
Financed by:						
Capital introduced	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00
Bank Loans	575.00	550.00	525.00	500.00	475.00	450.00
Retained Profit	46.50	144.00	367.50	589.50	898.50	1,207.50
Total Capital	1,621.50	1,694.00	1,892.50	2,089.50	2,373.50	2,657.50

BALANCE SHEET FORECAST TO 31 DECEMBER 200X

JLY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
568.00	542.00	516.00	490.00	464.00	438.00
0.00	0.00	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0.00	0.00	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00
3,469.50	4,171.50	4,941.50	5,696.50	6,741.50	7,726.50
3,469.50	4,171.50	4,941.50	5,696.50	6,741.50	7,726.50
301.50	301.50	316.50	316.50	376.50	376.50
577.75	753.00	941.50	1,130.00	1,376.00	1,622.00
0.00	0.00	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00
879.25	1,054.50	1,258.00	1,446.50	1,752.50	1,998.50
2,590.25	3,117.00	3,683.50	4,250.00	4,989.00	5,728.00
3,158.25	3,659.00	4,199.50	4,740.00	5,453.00	6,166.00
1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
425.00	400.00	375.00	350.00	325.00	300.00
1,733.25	2,259.00	2,824.50	3,390.00	4,128.00	4,866.00
3,158.25	3,659.00	4,199.50	4,740.00	5,453.00	6,166.00

Total payments - we expect our total payments for the first year to be £10,153.50.

Net flow - even though our net flow indicates steady financial growth, we will still require a £600.00 loan as a contingency in the event our sales receipts do not meet our expectations or our payments exceed our estimates.

Opening bank balance - this figure simply represents the closing balance from the preceding month of trading.

Closing bank balance - we anticipate completing our first year of trading with a closing bank balance of £7,726.50.

7.5 Balance sheet forecast

See enclosed forecast.

7.6 Balance sheet explanatory notes

Fixed assets - these include our second-user computer system and our new inkjet printer. The net worth of these assets has been calculated in accordance with the depreciation described in the *Profit and loss explanatory notes*.

Current assets

Raw materials - as we offer a service as opposed to manufacturing a product, we will not carry any raw materials in stock.

Debtors - as our clients will pay for their business plans in full before being despatched, we will not have any debtors.

Cash in the bank - the amount of money we will have in the bank at any given time is illustrated in our cashflow forecast.

Total current assets - as we neither carry raw materials or have any debtors our total current assets are represented solely by the cash we have in the bank.

Current liabilities

Creditors - we anticipate keeping our creditors to an absolute minimum but we will take advantage of credit given by companies providing items such as materials, business stationery, insurance and advertising. Our National Insurance payments are also listed under creditors as they will be paid monthly in arrears.

Tax liability - this is calculated from the tax due on our business profits as illustrated in the profit and loss forecast.

Overdraft - providing we meet our sales projections and we do not exceed our expected payments, then we do not anticipate the need for an

overdraft facility.

Total liabilities - as we will not have an overdraft, our total liabilities will be represented by the total of our creditors and tax liability which we estimate to be £1,998.50.

Net current assets - we have calculated the difference between our *Total current assets* and our *Total liabilities* to be £5,728.00 at our year end.

Financed by

Capital introduced - this will remain at £1,000.00; see our cashflow forecast for further information.

Bank loans - having repaid £300.00 of our £600.00 loan at £25.00 per month during our first year of trading, we will be left with the balance of £300.00 remaining at the end of our first year.

Retained profit - this will be £4,866.00; see our profit and loss forecast for further information.

Total capital - at the end of our first year of trading we anticipate having accumulated £6,166.00 in total capital/net assets.

8. Financial Requirements

8.1 Required Finance

Our business will require a capital investment of £1600.00 to get established. We have £1000.00 ourselves and require an additional bank loan of £600.00. All funds will need to be in place by 15 December 200X. This will enable us to purchase the computer, printer, software and stationery prior to the launch of the business on 9 January 200X.

8.2 Risks

If this country was ever unfortunate enough to suffer another recession then obviously the amount of new businesses starting up would decrease, as would our initial target market. Even in times of recession, new businesses will be set up and the demand for a low cost, quality service such as ours would probably improve as clients use their budgets more wisely. However, if this was not the case, then being a resourceful company we would diversify our market and target those businesses already trading to make them see the key to success is careful business planning which our service provides. As we are primarily a mail order company then a postal strike will have a detrimental effect on our business. This would be overcome by using parcel couriers. Our carriage costs would rise quite considerably for the duration of the strike but we would still be providing the client with a level of service that is second to none.

Glossary

- Accounts.** A set of financial statements detailing the financial transactions of a business.
- Advertising.** Use of paid media to publicise a business in order to persuade clients to buy.
- Analysis.** The separation of an item into sections to enable it to be examined and described.
- Assets.** Items or property with monetary values which are owned by a business or individual.
- Assumptions.** Estimates made concerning future developments which cannot be supported with facts.
- Balance sheet.** A financial statement illustrating the financial position of a business at any given time.
- Break-even point.** The point at which the total sales revenue is equal to the total costs.
- Budget.** A financial estimate of future revenue and expenditure.
- Business objectives.** These are the goals set by a business which they hope to be able to achieve.
- Business plan.** A detailed statement describing the nature of a business – its trading details, business objectives and competitors, including financial forecasts detailing current and future requirements.
- Business partnership.** This is the legal trading of two or more individuals trading together as a business in accordance with the Partnership Act (1890).
- Capital.** A combination of both long term funds and assets which are either owned by or loaned to a business.
- Capital gains tax.** The tax due to the Inland Revenue on any profit produced by the sale of an asset.
- Cash flow forecast.** A financial forecast which estimates actual cash payments coming into and going out of a business, for example each month.
- Contract (written).** A document listing the rules and conditions of an agreement between two or more parties.

- Creditors.** Businesses or individuals which you owe money to for work they have done or materials they have supplied which you have not yet paid for.
- Current assets.** Assets which are either cash or can realistically be exchanged for cash within a twelve month period, *eg* stock, work in progress, and debtors.
- Current liabilities.** Short term debts which must be repaid within a twelve month period, including bank overdrafts.
- Debtors.** Businesses or individuals by whom the business is owed money for work done or materials supplied.
- Depreciation.** The decline in value of assets during the course of their working life.
- Desk research.** A source of obtaining information directly from already published materials.
- Direct mail.** A method used to directly target existing or potential clients with information about goods or services offered by a business.
- Distribution.** Methods by which organisations transport their products to their clients.
- Exhibitions.** These are a way of displaying and demonstrating your products or services to a large number of potential or existing clients at a particular venue.
- Factoring.** A service offered by certain businesses to exchange unpaid invoices for cash.
- Field research.** A source of obtaining various information directly from the general public through a combination of surveys and questionnaires.
- Finance lease.** A lease in which the lessee (user) will be given the opportunity to purchase the leased item when the lease expires.
- Fixed assets.** Long term assets which will be retained and used by a business as opposed to being quickly resold. Typical examples are land, buildings, plant, machinery and vehicles.
- Fixed costs.** These are the costs which will remain constant regardless of any change to the level of business. Typical examples include rent, rates and depreciation.
- Franchise.** A business whereby the owner (franchisor) grants the user (franchisee) a license to trade under the brand name of the franchisor in exchange for a royalty.
- Grants.** Money awarded by the government and local authorities for specific purposes such as urban regeneration or development in rural areas.
- Hire purchase.** A method used to purchase goods over an extended

period of time using a credit facility and then making regular fixed repayments.

Insurance. A way of compensating a business or individual for any loss.

Investment. A commitment made by an organisation to increase the financial or physical assets of a business for example in the form of plant, machinery or equipment.

Limited company. An organisation whereby a number of people invest capital in return for a share of ownership of the company.

Limited liability. The maximum loss for which a shareholder is personally liable; the amount of capital which they have agreed to invest (*ie* pay for their shares).

Loan. An advance of a specified sum of money by a lender which is repayable, usually with interest, over a specified period of time by the borrower.

Market research. A method of investigation used to determine the nature of a particular market and to ascertain current market trends.

Marketing. A process used to identify client requirements and then supply appropriate products or services to satisfy those needs.

Marketing mix. A combination of various marketing methods used to generate sales. The methods may include advertising, pricing and sales promotions.

Overdraft. A facility provided by a financial institution to allow the borrower to withdraw up to a pre-set amount of money from their account.

Patent. An ownership right granted by the government to the inventor of an entirely new product or manufacturing process.

Private limited company. A company which only issues shares to private individuals.

Product life cycle. A sales pattern showing the rise of a product from the initial launch through to its eventual decline.

Profit & Loss Account. A financial summary illustrating the sales revenue of a business and of all the costs incurred to obtain this revenue.

Public limited company. A company which issues shares to the general public through the Stock Exchange.

Sales revenue. The income generated by a business following the sale of its goods or services.

Sensitivity analysis. A method used to determine how the results of a financial analysis will be affected following a change made to any of the assumptions.

Sole trader. A business owned and operated by a private individual.

Stock. The name given to finished products which are owned by a business and ready for sale, and to raw materials to produce these products.

Turnover. The total amount of revenue which has been generated directly from sales.

Unlimited liability. The owners of a business with unlimited liability status are personally liable for any debts incurred by the business. This includes sole traders and most partnerships.

Variable costs. These are costs, such as raw material costs, which will vary directly according to the level of output.

VAT. (Valued Added Tax) This government imposed indirect taxation is charged on products and services at a set rate which is currently 17.5 per cent.

Work in progress. Goods which are in the process of being completed.

Working capital. This is readily available money used to finance the day to day running of a business.

Useful Addresses

YOUR BUSINESS IDEA

Blenheim Group, 630 Chiswick High Road, London W4 5RY. Tel: (020) 8742 2828. Franchise exhibition organisers.

British Franchise Association, Thames View, Newtown Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1HG. Tel: (01491) 578050.

British Standards Institute, 389 Chiswick High Road, London W4 4FL. Tel: (020) 8996 9000.

Department for Work and Pensions, Correspondence Unit, Room 112, The Adelphi, 1-11 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT. Tel: (020) 7712 2171.

Department of Trade and Industry, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET. Tel: (020) 7215 5000.

BUSINESS PLAN PREPARATION

Peninsula, Orchard House, 9 St John's Avenue, Bridlington YO16 4ND. Tel: (01262) 673591. Suppliers of *Peninsula Business Plan* computerised business planning software.

Roderick Manhattan Group, 123 Disraeli Road, Putney, London SW15 2DZ. Tel: (020) 8875 4444. Suppliers of *PlanIT Business Plan* computerised business planning software.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Address Management Products, Royal Mail, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 0SP. Tel: (0131) 550 8999.

Amber Promotions, Amber House, 115 Arethusa Way, Bisley, Surrey GU24 9BY. Tel: (01483) 475996.

Chartered Institute of Marketing, Moor Hall, Cookham, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 9QH. Tel: (01628) 427500.

Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), 2 Torrington Place,

- London WC1E 7HW. Tel: (020) 7580 5555. Advertising help, advice and guides.
- Direct Selling Association (DSA), 29 Floral Street, London WC2E 9DP. Tel: (020) 7497 1234.
- Institute of Direct Marketing, 1 Park Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0AR. Tel: (020) 8614 0277.
- Mailing Preference Services (MPS), Haymarket House, 1 Oxendon Street, London SW1Y 4EE. Tel: (020) 7291 3310. Regulatory body of the direct mail industry.
- Nobo Visual Aids Ltd, Alder Close, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6QB. Tel: (01323) 641521.
- Office for National Statistics, Cardiff Road, Newport NP10 8XG. Tel: (0845) 601 3034.
- Pinewood Associates Limited, Presentation Products and Services, Barton Hall, Hardy Street, Manchester M30 7WA. Tel: (0161) 707 7076. Suppliers of exhibition equipment.
- The Market Research Society, 15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AH. Tel: (020) 7490 4911.
- The Marketing Society, 1 Park Road, Teddington TW11 0AR. Tel: (020) 8973 1700.

FINANCIAL

- Barclays Bank, 54 Lombard Street, London EC3P 3AH. Tel: (020) 7699 5000.
- British Insurance and Investment Brokers Association, 14 Bevis Marks, London EC3A 7NT. Tel: (020) 7623 9043.
- British Venture Capital Association, 3 Clements Inn, London WC2A 2AZ. Tel: (020) 7025 2950.
- Close Invoice Finance Ltd, Southbrooke House, 25 Bartholomew Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5LL. Tel: (01635) 31517. Factoring company.
- Co-operative Bank plc, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP. Tel: (0161) 832 3456.
- Countryside Agency, John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham GL50 3RA. Tel: (01242) 521381.
- Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS), details from Inland Revenue, Somerset House, The Strand, London WC2 1LB. Tel: (020) 7438 6622.
- Financial Ombudsman Service, South Quay Plaza, 183 Marsh Wall, London E14 9SR. Tel: (0845) 080 1800.

Girobank plc, Sales Support, Bridle Road, Bootle, Merseyside GIR OAA. Tel: (01519) 662767.

Griffin Factors Limited, Griffin House, Farncombe Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 2BW. Tel: (01903) 205181.

HSBC, Lower Thames Street, London EC3R 6HB. Tel: (020) 7260 0500.

Independent Banking Advisory Service, Suite A, North View, North Fen, Somersham, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 3WD. Tel: (01487) 843444.

Lloyds TSB Bank plc, Canons House, Canons Way, Bristol BS99 7LB. Tel: (0117) 943 3182.

NatWest Bank plc, 135 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 3UR. Tel: (020) 7726 1000.

Princes Youth Business Trust, 18 Park Square East, London NW1 4LH. Tel: (020) 7543 1234.

Royal Bank of Scotland, 42 St Andrew Square, Edinburgh EH2 2YE. Tel: (0131) 523 5986.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme, Level 2, St Mary's House, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ. Tel: (0014) 279 4374.

LEGAL

Chartered Institute of Patent Agents, 95 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1DT. Tel: (020) 7405 9450.

Health & Safety Executive, Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HS. Tel: (020) 7717 6000.

HM Customs & Excise, Thomas Paine House, Angel Square, Torrens Street, London EC1V 1TA. Tel: 0845 010 9000.

Institute of Patentees & Inventors, Suite 505A, Triumph House, 189 Regent Street, London W1B 4JY. Tel: (020) 7434 1818.

Institute of Trade Mark Agents, 4th Floor, Canterbury House, 2-6 Sydenham Road, Croydon CR9 3JX. Tel: (020) 8686 2052.

Office of Fair Trading, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8JX. Tel: (020) 7211 8000.

Office of the Data Protection Register, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF. Tel: (01625) 545 700.

Patent Office, Concept House, Cardiff Road, Newport, South Wales NP10 8QQ. Tel: (01633) 814991.

Registrar of Companies, Companies House, Crown Way, Maindy, Cardiff CF14 3UZ. Tel: (0870) 3333 636.

Stationers Hall, Ave Maria Lane, Ludgate Hill, London EC4M

7DR. Tel: (020) 7236 1156. Copyright registration.
The Law Society, 113 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1PL. Tel:
(020) 7320 5794.

ACCOUNTING

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, 29 Lincolns Inn
Fields, London WC2A 3EE. Tel: (020) 7396 7000.

Factors & Discounters Association, Boston House, Little Green,
Richmond, Surrey TW9 1QE. Tel: (020) 8332 9955.

George Vyner Limited, PO Box 1, Holmfirth HD9 7YP. Tel: (01484)
685221. Suppliers of the *Simplex accounting systems*.

Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales, PO Box
433, Chartered Accountants Hall, Moorgate Place, London
EC2P 2BJ. Tel: (020) 7920 8100.

Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, 27 Queen Street,
Edinburgh EH2 1LA. Tel: (0131) 225 5673.

Intuit Limited, PO Box 4944, Twyford, Reading RG10 9BF. Tel:
(0845) 606 2161.

Pegasus Software Limited, Orion House, Orion Way, Kettering,
Northants NN15 6PE. TEL: (01536) 495000. Suppliers of *Pegasus
Capital* computerised accountancy software.

Sage Group PLC, Sage House, Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon
Tyne NE7 7LZ. Tel: (0191) 255 3000. Suppliers of computerised
accountancy software.

Tas Software plc, Addington House, 5 Compton Road, London
SW19 7QA. Tel: (0845) 245 0220.

GENERAL BUSINESS HELP

British Chambers of Commerce, 1st Floor, 65 Petty France, St
James Park, London SW1H 9EU. Tel: (020) 7654 5800.

Business in the Community, 137 Shepherdess Walk, London N1
7RQ. Tel: 0870 600 2482.

Federation of Small Business, Sir Frank Whittle Way, Blackpool
Business Park, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 2FE. Tel: (01253)
336000.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), St Clements House, 2-16
Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ. Tel: (01603) 621000.

Inland Revenue, Somerset House, The Strand, London WC2A 1LB.
Tel: (020) 7438 6622.

National Federation of the Self Employed and Small Businesses, 2 Catherine Place, Westminster, London SW1E 6HF. Tel: 0845 91545.

Small Business Bureau, Curzon House, Church Road, Windlesham, Surrey GU20 6BH. Tel: (01276) 452010.

TACK Training International, TACK House, Latimer Park, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 1TR. Tel: (01494) 766611.

Further Reading

STARTING A BUSINESS

Be Your Own Boss, British Telecom Guide.

Franchising: A Practical Guide for Franchisors and Franchisees, I Maitland (Mercury, 1991).

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Going for Self-employment, John Whiteley (How To Books, 2nd edition, 2003).

How to Be an Entrepreneur, I Phillipson (Kogan Page, 1993).

The First 12 Months, D Bangs (Kogan Page, 1993).

Working for Yourself, G Golzen (Kogan Page, 1995).

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Starting Your Own Business – the Practical Steps (Department of Employment).

Starting a Small Business, Alan & Deborah Fowler (Warner Books).

Starting Up, G Jones (Pitman Publishing, 1991).

Swim With the Sharks, Harvey McKay (Warner Books).

The Wyvern Business Library, Wyvern House, 7 The Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4JW. Suppliers of a wide range of business books, available through mail order.

ORGANISING YOURSELF

Conquering the Paper Pile-Up, Stephanie Culp (Writer's Digest Books, Cincinnati, 1990).

Getting Things Done: The ABC of Time Management, Edwin C Biss (Warner Publications).

Managing Growth, M Bennett (Pitman Publishing, 1991).

Running Your Office, Margaret Korving (BBC, 1989).

10-Minute Time and Stress Management, Dr David Lewis (Piatkus).

Small Business Survival, R Bennett (Pitman Publishing, 1991).

BUSINESS PLANNING

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The Business Plan Workbook, Colin and Paul Barrow (Kogan Page, 1988).

How To Prepare a Business Plan, Edward Blackwell (Kogan Page 2nd edition, 1993).

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Book-keeping and Accounting for the Small Business, Peter Taylor (How To Books, 7th edition, 2003).

MARKETING & PROMOTION

Effective Negotiating, C Robinson (Kogan Page, 1995).

The Language of Success, BT Booklet.

The Secrets of Effective Direct Mail, John Fraser-Robinson (McGraw-Hill, London 1989).

- The Secrets of Successful Copywriting*, Patrick Quinn (Heinemann, London)
- Seductive Selling*, Kit Sadgrove (Kogan Press).
- Total Confidence*, Philippa Davies (Piatkus).
- Writing to Sell, The Complete Guide to Copywriting for Business*, Kit Sadgrove (Robert Gale, London 1991).
- How to Plan Direct Mail*, I Maitland (Cassell, 1995).
- How to Sell a Service*, Malcolm McDonald and John Leppard (Heinemann, 1986).
- How to Win Customers*, Heinz Goldman (Pan, London 1980).
- Selling*, P Allen (Pitman Publishing, 1991).
- Successful Marketing for the Small Business*, Dave Patten (Kogan Page).
- Successful Negotiation*, R Maddox (Kogan Page, 1988).
- Writing a Report*, John Bowden (How To Books, 7th edition 2004).

TAKING ON STAFF

- How to Recruit*, I Maitland (Gower, 1992).
- Managing Staff*, I Maitland (Cassell, 1995).
- Motivating People*, I Maitland (Institute of Personnel and Development, 1995).
- Modern Employment Law*, M Whinchup (Butterworth Heinemann, 1995).
- Recruiting for the Future*, I Maitland (Cassell, 1995).

USING PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS

- Getting Value from Professional Advisers*, C Standish (Kogan Page, 1993).
- Why You Need a Chartered Accountant* (Institute of Chartered Accountants).

UNDERSTANDING BUSINESS LAW

- Computers and the Law*, David Bainbridge (Pitman Publishing, 1990).
- Heath and Safety Law*, J Stranks (Pitman Publishing, 1994).
- Law for the Small Business*, Patricia Clayton (Kogan Page, 1991).
- A Step by Step Guide to Planning Permission for Small Businesses*,

available from your local authority planning department.
Your Business and the Law, John Harries (Oyez Longman).
Law for Small Businesses, A Holmes, R Evans, C Wright, S Wright
(Pitman Publishing, 1991).
Understanding & Negotiating Business Contracts, Jon Rush (How To
Books, 2002).

PAYING TAX

How to Cut Your Tax Bills, G Thornton (Kogan Page, 1995).
Tax for the Self-employed (Allied-Dunbar Money Guide), David
Williams (Longman, 1990).
Taxman Tactics, How to Play by the Rules – and Win, Stephen
Courtney (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1990).
Taxation, T Docherty (Pitman Publishing, 1994).
Taxes on Business, K Armstrong (Kogan Page, 1994).
Understanding VAT, W Lovell (Pitman Publishing, 1991).
The VAT Guide (HM Customs and Excise).

BUSINESS PERIODICALS

Business Opportunity World, The Mill, Bearwalden Business Park,
Wendens Ambo, Saffron Waldon, Essex CB11 4JX. Tel: (01799)
544200.
Home Run, 'The action guide to working successfully for yourself.'
Active Information, 79 Black Lion Lane, London W6 9BG. Tel:
(020) 8846 9244.
Managing Your Business, Illustrated magazine published by Chase
Communications, 66-68 Pentonville Road, London N1 9HS. Tel:
(020) 7837 9977.
OwnBase: The Newsletter for Home-based Workers, 68 First Avenue,
Bush Hill Park, Enfield EN1 1BN.

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