



CHECKLIST FOR A BUSINESS PLAN

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (written last)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What problems are you trying to solve or what needs your business will satisfy?• Whose problem is it? Define your customer(s). <i>Single or multiple markets? Consumer vs B2B vs government contracting?</i>• What is your service area? Where are your customers located?• Why is your concept “unique and valuable” to your intended customer?• What resources are required to succeed? <i>A specific location? Equipment? Employees? A robust website?</i>• What validates your reasons to believe you can succeed? <i>Industry and specific market research? Experience?</i>• Who are your management and operations teams? <i>What qualifications do you and your team have to contribute to its success?</i>• How much money is required to launch? <i>How will you finance it?</i>
II. BUSINESS DESCRIPTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What type of business are you planning? <i>Fixed location vs online only? Service? Manufacturing? Agriculture?</i>• Is it a new idea vs existing business acquisition with a track record vs franchise? What industry are you in? <i>Is it growing in general? Trends in technology, sales streams, etc.?</i>• What products or services will you sell? How many revenue streams will you have?• What will appeal to your customer? How does this match their needs or wants?• What differentiates you from the competition? <i>Unique enough, valuable enough to the customer? What will compel your intended customers to switch to you or try your services/product?</i>
III. RESEARCH, DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT (if needed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you carefully described your design, process, or product?• Are you pursuing intellectual property protection (patent, trademark)• What technical assistance have you received or need now or later?• Who will conduct this research, i.e., in-house personnel or outside labs, etc.?• Are there industry or regulatory compliance issues?• How long will it take to create and trial your prototype?• Who will validate your concept?• What costs are involved in this process?
IV. YOUR TARGET MARKET
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who precisely are your customers? <i>What did your market research tell you about demographics?</i>• Do you have more than one market for different product lines or industries? <i>Public and/or B2B? Government contracting?</i>• How large is your market? <i>Solving a big problem for a few people or a small problem for many?</i>• Who and where are your competitors? <i>Why are you comparable to or better?</i>• How will you price your product or service? <i>How does that compare with your competitors?</i>• How will you attract, retain and grow your customer base? <i>How are you different? Are your customers price sensitive or will they be brand or store-loyal? What will compel customers to try your business?</i>
V. MARKETING
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are your advertising/promotional strategies? <i>What will appeal to your customer? What will motivate them to buy from you?</i>• Webpage: Have you secured your URL? What features does it need to satisfy your customers? <i>Ordering capabilities? Scheduling calendar? Online chat/tech support? Secure access?</i>• How do your customers want to be reached? What channels will you use? <i>Traditional advertising and/or social platforms?</i>• What strategies will you use to retain and grow your customer bases? <i>Loyalty rewards, discounts, extended terms of sale?</i>• Who will design, direct and manage these efforts? <i>In-house and/or outsourced vendors?</i>
VI. OPERATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who will run the business? What qualifications are needed? What role do you play in the operation?• Where will the business be located? <i>Fixed location vs home-based vs mobile and/or virtual?</i>• How will it operate? <i>Seasonal or year-round operation? Mobile with fixed base operation?</i>

- What physical resources are required to produce or deliver your product or service? *Equipment, materials, facilities?*
- Who will be your suppliers? *Do you have reliable alternatives? How time-critical are your supply chains?*
- What types of shipping or distribution channels are required to deliver your product or service?
- What kind of licenses or certifications are required for your operation?
- How will you collect and record your sales receipt, track sales and inventory? *Point-of-sale system /cash registers? Software systems?*
- Are you required to collect and remit sales tax? In more than one location, state, online?
- What kind of insurance will be required for your operation?
- What kind of labor will you need to employ? What skills must they have? Who will train them? Will you outsource to independent contractors or use employee leasing agencies?
- What kind of consultants or specialists will you need? How will you find them?

VIII. FINANCIAL MATTERS – Operation and Financing

- How much will it cost to open the doors? How much lead-time and money are required?
- What are your operational costs (fixed and variable)?
- What are your material and/or production costs? *Can you use industry standards as a model for Cost of Goods Sold (COGS)?*
- How many customers will you need to cover your costs to break even? To make a profit? How long will that take?
- How much of the startup and operational costs can you personally fund? *Have you done a personal financial statement? How is your personal credit? Check this regularly*
- Will you need outside funding? What sources of capital can you tap? *Lenders, family and friends, investors?*

VII. ORGANIZATION / MANAGEMENT & ADVISORY TEAMS

- What is the legal structure of ownership (LLC, partnership, corporation)? Where will the company be based?
- Do you have a written operating agreement between the owners?
- Who is on your B.A.I.L Team (Banker, Accounting professional, Insurance agent, Lawyer/Legal advisor)?
- Who will be on your advisory board or serve as a mentor?

APPENDICES

- Resumes of Owners and Key Personnel
- Background materials like industry reports, equipment brochures, advertising or research on existing business, if acquiring a current business; real estate maps or zoning docs; etc.
- Franchise Agreement, if applicable

Have you taken advantage of SBA resources to help you define and refine your concept into a viable, fund-worthy business plan? Find no-cost and low-cost intelligence at www.VBOC.org and www.SBA.gov