

# Small Business Information

## Create A Money Winning Business Plan Outline

By [Darrell Zahorsky](#), About.com

A business plan outline is the second most important starting point once you've pre-determined your audience. The business plan outline should be prepared before the actual research and writing of the business plan. Once your outline has been set; organize your research files around the layout of your plan.

Every business plan follows a generic outline but not every business plan is the same. Business plan outlines differ on 2 factors:

**1. Type of Business:** Details of critical success factors for businesses in your industry must be included in the plan. Technology companies will discuss R & D, intellectual property, and time to market. A retailer will feature pricing methods, inventory control, merchandising and location. Ensure that your plan is complete by addressing factors important to your industry.

**2. Type of Audience:** A banker business plan will be different from an investor plan. Bankers like to see risk assessment and planning, loan amounts, repayment terms and collateral. Investors want a return on investment, an exit strategy, and planned growth with the funds.

### **Business Plan Outline General**

**Executive Summary:** overview of most important points of business plan and selling your business.

**Company Description:** mission statement, company overview, industry briefing, corporate history, legal structure.

**Products & Services:** description, R & D, pricing, delivery, production.

**Marketing & Sales:** market definition, customer profile, competitive & SWOT analysis, strategy, sales & promotion.

**Operations:** Legal & government issues, staffing, suppliers, alliances, policies, risk assessment, facilities, location, insurance, milestones.

**Management:** key job descriptions, responsibilities, management team, organizational chart, advisors.

**Financials:** Profit & loss, cash flow, balance sheet, financing, debt schedule, use of funds and assumptions, break-even analysis.

### **Business Plan Outline Extras**

The extras are what takes a plan from 10 pages to 20 pages. More in-depth and detailed for higher levels of funding and a greater complexity of investors. No real need for extras if your plan does not require it. Here's a brief description of some of the extras that can be added to your business plan outline:

**SWOT Analysis:** As part of your competitor profile, adding a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis can show your investors you understand the competitive landscape and your business can operate within that environment.

**Porter's Five Forces:** Michael Porter's 5 forces framework is a standard business tool used by companies to evaluate an industry's key forces. This is an important extra to add to your business plan outline especially if you are a start-up or an existing business entering a new market.

**Glossary:** If your business plan audience is not well-versed in your

industry jargon, a glossary adds value to your overall plan. If you are writing a biotech business plan on gene therapy agents, determine the level of knowledge your target audience has on the subject.

**Publishing Value-Adds:** These are simply publication elements to improve the readability and presentation of your plan. This can include: a cover page with logos, graphics, charts, and table of contents.

What goes into your business plan appendix for a complete outline?

Your business plan will require an appendix following the financials for all supporting documents. This acts as a great reference area to back up your assumptions and provide added credibility to the plan. The appendix is not part of the plan but an addition. Therefore, a 10 page business plan will be 10 pages plus the cover, table of contents, and appendix.

### **What to Put in Your Business Plan Appendix?**

legal documents

market studies

resumes

customer testimonies

photographs & maps

distributor/supplier list

articles

owner's personal financial statements

tax statements

advertising materials & brochures

credit reports

character references

equipment list

glossary

reference section/bibliography

Once you have a good understanding of the business plan outline needed for your company then the research and writing can begin. A business plan novel does not ensure success. Provide enough information for decision-makers to give you the opportunity to sell your company and yourself.