

Collins & Co.

2016 NFP Conference

Be Empowered Through Knowledge

Support Materials

For Dangerous Meredith's presentation

How to Make Your Business Plan into a Living Document:

- How do you undertake the planning process so that your business plan lives and breathes as a dynamic document?
- Top Four Tips for Writing Good Plans
- Web based resources
- (For anyone who has never written a business plan before:) General Outline of a Business Plan

As well as sharing some resources, these support materials spell out the 'why' behind my presentation topic. Join me for the 'how': I look forward to seeing you at my interactive session to discuss how you can animate your planning process.

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How do you undertake the planning process so that your business plan lives and breathes as a dynamic document?

Dust gatherer, door stop, tea pot stand...

Business plans the size of regional phone directories. Business plans as compendiums of weasel words. Business plans as mindless tick-the-box compliance exercises. Business plans that leach time, labour and resources to write but which then get consigned to the bottom drawer to gather dust.

I love the planning process. During my travels through the Not for Profit sector I have seen how good plans can anchor, inspire and support meaningful action, and how bad plans can undermine the efforts of even the busiest and best intentioned organisations. In both small organisations and large I have seen the part good plans play in informing governance, culture and an organisation's ability to deliver or innovate.

But I have seen plenty of bad plans, those that have been undertaken with inadequate consultation, festooned with weasel wordage, and / or written with an ear to what sounds either impressive or safe rather than doing the following:

Manifest your culture and values: a good business plan should be a first step to making these important things tangible, both through explicitly articulating them and implicitly describing them through the processes and conditions your plan records. Of course, consultation with your stakeholders, internal and external, is vital to ensure that what you are writing aligns with what is real.

Support planning for change and / or times of uncertainty: Working in the NFP sector can be a white knuckle ride of adapting to uncertain conditions and lack of resources. As well as anchoring strategy and operations a good plan can, and should, define the times and space (cultural, physical and timewise) for reviewing, analysing, creating and implementing necessary change and managing risk.

Mapping creative and innovative thought against the planning process: Following on from the above a good plan can also create space for creative thought and then innovation, pin pointing those phases and operations that either need and / or will support this.

These are just three areas of focus that could help transform a business plan from being a moribund obligation into being a dynamic document that supports, rather than burdens, your work.

This article outlines the 'why' I am presenting on this topic at the conference;

join me for an interactive session to discuss the 'how.'

This article has been written as an adjunct to Dangerous Meredith's presentation on How to Make Your Business Plan into a Living Document at the 2016 Collins & Co. NFP Conference.

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Dangerous Meredith's Top Four Tips for Writing Good Plans

I love a good writing exercise of any kind; I am especially fascinated by the challenge that comes from enshrining an organisation's vision, mission, goals and operations within a business plan.

If you think about it this is often a process of translation: a business plan writer has to take ideas and frame them as tangible processes and measurable outcomes. Here are some things to bear in mind while you are undertaking that translation exercise:

Write using plain English: No weasel words please and leave out the jargon. Ask yourself if an industry outsider could comprehend the plan as easily as an insider.

Use templates but don't be ruled by them: A huge array of resources are parked on the internet and available to us via a Google search. Some of this knowledge exists in the form of templates. I dearly love a good template, they provide an excellent springboard and framework on which to stick your ideas or even to guide your thinking.

But don't be afraid to play with templates. Consider writing the way they suggest – as a challenge to your own thought processes - but then change to suit you. Change the vocabulary, the structure (and thereby the flow of ideas), leave irrelevant headings out and substitute your own. Do what is necessary so that your plan truly reflects your organisation and its culture.

Cross reference: The different components of a business plan should 'speak' to each other so that the plan is a coherent thing driving towards an end goal and reflecting a unifying vision. As you write different parts of the plan – financial, marketing, operational, legal, management – take the chance to review other sections of the plan and ask yourself if what you have just written will support or negate them. If you are overseeing a team of people who are developing the plan then this is an excellent chance to get them to consider, and understand, each other's contribution.

Review and update: Good plans have a tendency to gradually start rendering themselves obsolete from the moment they start being implemented. This is because good plans set things in motion and affect the conditions they define and respond to; they create change.

When you write your plan build in a schedule to review your plan and design processes whereby you can harvest feedback and update your plan so that it can continue its work in creating, exploiting and directing change.

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Managing a Small Professional Practice - Web Resources

Area	Website	Notes
General	Business Victoria www.business.vic.gov.au	Has information, fact sheets, templates for every conceivable area of planning and managing a small business
	StartupSmart www.startupsmart.com.au	An excellent collection of articles about all aspects of running a business in Australia
	Ready Set Startup www.readysetstartup.com	Melbourne based composer come entrepreneur Susan Jones has put together a comprehensive collection of user friendly 'how to' articles to guide people through the setting up of a small business. Highly recommended.
	Innovic www.innovic.com.au	Worth noting that Innovic has a regular email bulletin that you can subscribe to. This regularly includes announcements about grants and forthcoming events
	www.business.gov.au	Includes a good template of a business plan
Financial	NAB Bank http://www.nab.com.au/business/calculators/business-tools	Terrific collection of templates and tools
Tax	Australian Tax Office www.ato.gov.au	Check out the link below to find out about the tools and resources the ATO offers https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/Starting-and-running-your-small-business/How-to-get-help/
Marketing and communications	99u.com	Has an especial focus on creatives. Has some fantastic articles about self-promotion and / or how to stay motivated

Legal	Arts Law Centre of Australia www.artslaw.com.au	Has lots of samples, templates and fact sheets covering all legal areas including contract management, debt recovery and protecting intellectual property
	IP Australia www.ipaustralia.gov.au	Has a really handy section you can work through to uncover just what intellectual property protections you will need and how they are covered by law
	ABLIS Survey http://ablis.business.gov.au	Can also be accessed via a link on the Business Victoria website. This survey will help you identify the necessary laws and regulations you have to follow to set up your creative practice.
	Victorian Small Business Commissioner www.vsbv.vic.gov.au	Offers a free service to mediate between your business and another business in the case of a dispute
Customer Service	Consumer Affairs Victoria www.consumer.vic.gov.au	This website can help you understand your obligations to your customers, especially in the areas of fair contracts and advertising
Staff Management	Fairwork Ombudsman www.fairwork.gov.au	Covers legal aspects of staff management and includes industrial awards and agreements
Not for Profit – all areas	Our Community http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/	Big website covering lots of different areas to do with running a not for profit organisation
Not for Profit - Legal	NFP Law http://www.justiceconnect.org.au/our-programs/not-for-profit-law	Australian website covering legal issues for NFPs. May provide cheap or free services or training

Not for Profit – Industry Trends	Pro Bono Australia http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/#	An online Hub for NFP organisations. Has a good newsletter
Not for Profit – State Govt. laws regarding fundraising and incorporated associations	Consumer Affairs Victoria http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-not-for-profits	
Not for Profit – social enterprises	Social Traders http://www.socialtraders.com.au School for Social Entrepreneurs – Links page http://www.the-sse.org/schools/24/australia/158/links-resources	

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General Outline of a Business Plan

There are many templates for business plans available on the internet. They all differ slightly but most ask for the following information:

Business Overview

This section gives us facts about the business such as:

- Business name
- Australian business number (ABN)
- Description of the business what products and / or services will you be offering
- Location
- Your background and experience that is relevant to running this business
- Your vision and goals for your business

This section will also contain summaries of the marketing and financial plans.

Marketing Plan

Your **market** is the group of customers that you hope to sell your services or products to. You find out who will buy from you by conducting **market research**, and in this section of the business plan you will summarise what methods of market research you used and what information you found out. You will also include a **SWOT** analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats and will help you analyse what you have going for you and against you.

Using this information you will put together a **marketing strategy** that helps you to target your customers, and this strategy is included in this section of the business plan. As part of this marketing strategy you will talk about your “**marketing mix**”:

- **Price** (what do you need to charge, what do you want to charge, how much will people be willing to pay).
- **Place** (where you locate your business activities and why)
- **Product / service mix** (what precisely are you selling)
- **Promotion** (how will you let your customers know about your business)

You may also include information about **customer service** in this section of the business plan.

Management Plan

This section includes information about how you will keep control of things such as:

- Time
- Costs
- Quality
- Debt

This section will also have information about you and your staff.

Legal Aspects

This section will contain the following information:

- **Legal structure** of the business (this means whether or not you will be running it by yourself – 'sole trader' – or whether or not you will be in a partnership or wish to form a company).
- **Insurance**
- **Government Regulations** that you have to follow
- **Contracts** – what sort of contracts does your business require?

Financial Plan

This section could contain the following information:

- (in the case of a start-up) Establishment costs - the costs of starting up the business
- Sources of finance (if needed)
- **Balance Sheet** – Snapshot of how much the business is worth at any given moment.
- **Profit and Loss** forecasts. A type of budget that lists the ways your business will make a profit as well as the payments your business will have to pay to cover its bills.
- **Cash Flow** forecasts – a record of when money will come in (your income) and when money will go out (payments you make). One of the most important parts of the business plan.
- **Break Even** Analysis. Shows how much money you will have to make (or sales you will have to make) to cover fixed costs (such as rent and wages).

Operations Plan

This plan will include information about:

- Managing staff
- Occupational health and safety
- How you will produce and deliver a high quality product or service

Risk Management

You will identify the things that may go wrong and come up with strategies to deal with them. This section can cover not only safety risks, but also legal and financial risks.

Business development

This will include an action plan as well as sources of assistance or resources.

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