

The Digital Business Plan

Your Complete Guide





Introduction

Traditional business plans are long, comprehensive and difficult, and they take a long time to prepare.

The purpose that a traditional business plan serves in essence, a strategic document, and needs to:

- Set out clear business objectives based on information and analytical data.
- Present the viability of a business venture.
- Detail the assumptions on which a business prospect relies.
- Outline cash flow projections based on assumed sales, expenses, market data, and competitive analysis.
- Include resumes which outline the strength and relevant background and experience of the most important staff members including the business owner.
- Outline business and market strategies in case of setbacks and adverse conditions.

The Modern Business Plan

Today's market conditions are constantly changing rapidly in response to technological advancements. For this reason, a business plan has a progressively shorter life-span and needs to be revised and updated more frequently. Both assumptions and market data needs to be reviewed and updated at least annually and quite possibly quarterly.

Two separate market conditions have changed expectations about strategies that must now be incorporated into a modern business plan:

- Business organisations must now embrace technology to remain relevant and competitive.
- Organisations must develop a digital strategy with particular emphasis on mobile technology and mobile applications.

These conditions have given rise to what is now called the **Modern Digital Business Plan**, and this type of business plan is dramatically reduced in size.

Entrepreneurs may wish to use an application called StratPad to guide them through the process of writing a shorter plan.

What is a Digital Business Plan?

A digital business plan is an extension of a business plan that details how digital initiatives can contribute to the success of the vision, the goals, and opportunities contained in the business plan. For example, consumers today expect to communicate with a company using a website, app or phone, and the strategies outlined in the business plan should facilitate such communication.

What Needs to be Included in a Digital Business Plan?

There are some aspects of a business plan that will be applicable to both a business plan as well as a digital plan, and these include:



VISION

A business vision statement will outline what your business will focus on, and should communicate your long-term view for your organisation. It should include your mission statement, your goals, and communicate your company's values to your staff, your finance backers, and your customers.



MISSION

Your mission statement is your business objectives, and the principles underlying them. It should reflect every facet of your business, as this will help to clarify what you want to achieve.



GOALS

By sitting down and taking the time to define attainable goals, you will be on the right track to achieving those goals.

They shouldn't be generic, but rather be specific targets that you can work towards eg. 'I will sell 200 units in 6 months' is better than 'I will make a profit in 6 months'.



VALUES

Your business values should be made up of three things: The principles you personally stand for; the attitudes and beliefs that everyone in the business has in common, and the standards of behaviour that your organisation subscribes to.



A digital business plan impacts every area of your business and should include:

Finance

How will you generate revenue? What are your costs likely to be? What are your profit projections?

Cloud based accounting practices

How do you backup your financial data? Cloud computing offers a convenient and reliable method for backing up accounting data, and the primary advantage is that the data can be retrieved using a desktop or mobile device from any location. However, before choosing a cloud provider it is essential to make sure that it offers more than incremental backups, as historical financial reports must be retrievable ongoing.

Online ordering and payment system

How flexible is your online ordering and payment system? Many programs and mobile applications are now available to allow customers to place orders and pay online, but some are still user-unfriendly. Ensure that the ordering and payment system you choose is suited to your products/services.



Staff

What positions in the business are there to be filled? What policies do you need to have in place?

BYOD policy

Do your employees prefer to use their personal mobile device to perform work-related tasks? It can provide a significant cost saving for an organisation to implement a BYOD policy, as it reduces the amount of hardware that needs to be purchased upfront by the business.

If you decide to allow your employees to BYOD, does your BYOD policy ensure that company data is not mishandled? And does the policy set out what to do if a mobile device is lost or stolen?

Regulated use of mobile devices

If your employees are allowed to use either their own or company mobile devices, do you have a system in place to regulate their personal vs professional use and their device's security? It's important that everyone is on the same page, particularly regarding what your staff's responsibilities are regarding software and security updates, bills and liability.

Use of cloud-based applications and tools for projects

Have you thought of using cloud-based tools for project management and project collaboration? Cloud providers supply a range of tools on a subscription basis, and can be an economic choice for startups and large enterprises alike.

Integration of digital technology and apps

Can your staff members communicate and collaborate regardless of location? Can they accept orders, process payments, and enter project time and expenses using a mobile device? There are a large range of business applications available on mobile stores like the Apple store and Google Play designed to provide mobility for staff, as it enables them to access project data from any location. For example, Google recently introduced a work related mobile for Android devices called Android for Work.

Online chat

How do your staff members communicate between themselves and with customers? Online chat can be implemented with a service provider like Skype, which provides voice, video, and conference call facilities.



Marketing

How do you plan to market your new venture? Include the four P's of marketing: Price, Product, Promotion and Place.

Online Presence: SEO

Does your website attract a sufficient number of visitors? Search engine optimisation (SEO) ensures the visibility of a website in Search Engine Result Pages (SERP). The purpose of SEO is to make a website appear in search listings in response to a person's search intent. The major factor is the selection of a major and some secondary keywords (search phrases), but SEO is a complex process that involves more than 50 ranking factors.

Online Presence: PPC

Pay-per-click (PPC) is the use of paid advertisements (Google Adwords) to increase visibility and bring in sales/leads from the search engine Google. PPC is an essential part of any lead generation campaign for a business, and so should be implemented by the marketing department of a company.

Online Presence: Social

Do you have a presence on social media channels? Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest facilitate engagement with potential or existing clients. Like website content creation, social media activities should be based on a content marketing strategy that defines what type of content to post, the frequency of posting, and analytics to measure what type of content produces the best engagement with clients. Facebook ads can also be a valuable lead generation resource for a business, depending on your industry and target audience.



Operations

Cloud Based File Management

Have you considered the pros and cons of cloud based file storage? Files stored on a cloud server can be retrieved from any location using a mobile device. It provides flexibility as project staff working in different locations can collaborate, share files, and assign project tasks easily.

Online Security

How secure is your computer and communications network? Security systems must be implemented that prevent the intrusion of computer viruses, malware, malicious hackers, and spam mail.

Reliable Backup Process

How safe is your data? A reliable backup process is an essential requirement for any business. Apart from data loss caused by equipment failure or malicious hacking, the process should also provide off-site data storage as protection from theft, fire, or natural disasters.

SSL Security

A Secure Socket Layer (SSL) certificate increases website security and provides encryption of data, and is recommended for all businesses with an online presence.

Cloud computing

What hardware and software could you potentially hire from a cloud service provider? Cloud service providers supply hardware and software on a subscription basis.

Source nationally and globally

Do you operate on a worldwide basis? Digital facilities enable companies to source products or services on a worldwide basis.

Customise software

Are your software systems optimised for the tasks they perform? Strategic reviews may reveal areas where existing systems can be customised to provide improved productivity.

Digitise processes

What manual processes can potentially be automated? Manual processes should be reviewed and analysed with the intention of integrating them with online computer systems.

Automatic inventory control

Is your inventory management a manual process? Computer systems are available that can re-order products on the basis of sales volume and inventory holdings.

Online purchasing

Review and implement systems that improve online purchasing as a service for customers, and as an internal process for inventory management. A variety of mobile applications are available.

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)

Save capital costs by paying a subscription service to software programs.



Customers

Online purchasing capability

An increasing number of Australian people now prefer to shop and pay for products and services online. As outlined in the operational section, potential systems include payment gateways and mobile applications.

Channel development

What channels can customers use to order and pay for your services?

These can include the Internet, mobile applications, Facebook or online ordering applications.

Create FAQs

How do your customers find common information and problem solutions?

Publish an FAQ on your website. It can save your staff a lot of time by not having to answer the same questions repeatedly.

Online Support

Who and how do your customers contact your business for support?

Customers today expect fast turnaround and good customer support service.

Implement a live chat system or a ticket system, or alternatively have a dedicated email for contact.

Call to Action apparent throughout website (CTA)

There is a saying that people browsing a website will only take action if told to do so. Be clear what action you want people to take, and spell it out on every page.

Use of social media for engagement

Implement a social media strategy, and establish a presence on social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest. This will increase the engagement your customers and potential customers have with your brand.

Need help with your digital
business plan?

Find out more about how Expert360 can help you.

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