

7th Edition

SUCCESSFUL **business** **plan** *secrets & strategies*



*The #1 best-selling
business plan guide of all time!*

What people say about *Successful Business Plan: Secrets & Strategies*

*Actual ratings and quotes from online reviews
at Amazon and Goodreads*

Amazon

(5 out of 5 stars)

Buy it now or miss a plethora of very useful knowledge

Quite possibly the best book out there to give your plan the momentum to get done and get it right! This book is worth more than its weight in gold. I was intimidated at first glance, but the content flows seamlessly and the worksheets are a fantastic planning tool, some of them can even be physical pieces of the business plan. I highly recommend to anyone serious about starting a business, get this book immediately, regardless of where you are at in your planning process and you'll be the next person writing a 5 star review. Get it done and get it right!

(5 out of 5 stars)

Very informative an easy read

The Successful Business Plan is just what I needed to complete my final class towards my MBA. The book is very detailed and covers each area from start to finish. The book has several examples and also guides and prompts users on exactly what to plug into your project/plan. I recommend this text especially for anyone who has no idea where to begin with a successful business plan. The writing is clear and easy to read.

(5 out of 5 stars)

The Best Business Book I have EVER purchased!

Buy it! Buy it! Do not hesitate to Buy it! One of the BEST business books I have ever purchased! Just take a peak at the Table of Contents if you do not believe me.

(5 out of 5 stars)

Top 10 textbooks for entrepreneurs!

I just finished my MBA and this is on my top 10 list of textbooks out of 5 years and countless classes. This is a keeper!

(5 out of 5 stars)

Five Stars

I love this book and it's a great tool for teaching students.

(5 out of 5 stars)

The best book on writing business plans that I have come across

The best book on writing business plans that I have come across. It has really helped me to put out a clear and concise plan. It's also very easy to read. Great job Rhonda Abrams!

(5 out of 5 stars)

Awesome!

Great stuff in each chapter! Love the guidance and templates in every chapter and clear examples. Would recommend for anyone trying to create a business plan starting from scratch!

(5 out of 5 stars)

Five Stars

Well laid out plan for success. A must for start up business owners.

(5 out of 5 stars)

A valuable resource!

Very helpful charting my pathway to launch a business bigger than initially anticipated!

(5 out of 5 stars)

Five Stars

Excellent tool for developing a business plan.

(5 out of 5 stars)

Jam Packed with Secrets and Strategies— Don't Pass This Book Up!

Ms. Abrams has done an excellent job of putting it all together and imparting concrete business wisdom. The book is up-to-date and a great resource for anyone in business be it a small or large business. She hit the nail on the head in the Financial chapter. She is correct in strongly asserted that you DON'T ignore your finances if you're having a bad month. I wish I had been taught from this book when I was in College!

Good Reads

(5 out of 5 stars)

From not knowing anything from business planning I read this book and came out knowing the essentials and now I feel ready to make my own business plan.

Praise for *Successful Business Plan: Secrets & Strategies*

“User-friendly and exhaustive...highly recommended. Abrams’ book works because she tirelessly researched the subject. Most how-to books on entrepreneurship aren’t worth a dime; among the thousands of small business titles, Abrams’ [is an] exception.”

— *Forbes Magazine*

“There are plenty of decent business-plan guides out there, but Abrams’ was a cut above the others I saw. *Successful Business Plan* won points with me because it was thorough and well organized, with handy worksheets and good quotes. Also, Abrams does a better job than most at explaining the business plan as a planning tool rather than a formulaic exercise. Well done.”

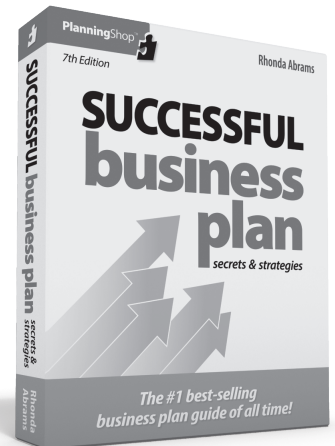
— *Inc. Magazine*

“We are again using *Successful Business Plan* in my business honors course this semester. Must be working, as Penn State was just named (by Kaplan and *Newsweek* magazine) as the ‘hottest school in the U.S. for student entrepreneurs!’”

— *Greg Pierce, Penn State University*

“*Successful Business Plan* enables my Entrepreneurship students at the University of Vermont to develop really great business plans. The book’s easy-to-follow, step-by-step format makes preparing a plan logical and understandable. Over the years...several students have actually launched their businesses successfully. Our son used the book at St. Michael’s College in Vermont to develop a plan for airport fitness centers, winning the school’s annual business plan competition for business majors...with a hefty cash prize! His plan was so thorough, especially the financials, that he was flown to the West Coast to present his plan to a prospective buyer. The bottom line, there is no better road map to business plan success than *Successful Business Plan!*”

— *David Kaufman, University of Vermont*



“If you’d like something that goes beyond the mere construction of your plan and is more fun to use, try *Successful Business Plan: Secrets & Strategies*, by Rhonda Abrams...this book can take the pain out of the process.”

— “*Small Business School*,” *PBS Television Show*

“*Successful Business Plan* is easy to follow and comprehensive. From the first chapter to the last, it guides you through the business planning process with a proven systematic approach.”

— *Sean S. Murphy, Ernst & Young LLP*

“As a 20+ year veteran SBDC director, consultant and entrepreneurship instructor, I have assisted thousands of individuals and business owners through the planning process. Having reviewed tens of thousands of plans and critiquing hundreds of planning texts, programs and tools, *Successful Business Plan: Secrets & Strategies* remains my hands-down favorite text/workbook/guide. The content and construction is comprehensive, practical and “do-able” for the serious small business owner/entrepreneur.”

— *David Gay, Illinois Small Business Development Center at College of DuPage*

“In my opinion, your book is the definitive guide for successful business plans. I particularly appreciate and recommend the use of the Flow-Through Financial worksheets. Each is a great device to illustrate the connection between the qualitative and quantitative elements of a plan.”

— *Gene Elliott, Business Consultant, New Mexico*

“I’ve been using and promoting *Successful Business Plan* since 1993, and it’s great! I’ve taught business plan writing in several local SBDCs, as well as nationally, through the Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute. My course is designed and delivered around your book.”

— *Ransom S. Stafford, Business Consultant, Twin Cities, MN*

“*Successful Business Plan* was an excellent learning tool for me at the University of Vermont and proved to be incredibly valuable as I started my own business after graduation. The step-by-step guidance through business planning ensures that you have all your bases covered before investing time and money in a new enterprise. The book helped me start a promotional products business and I have since recommended this book to dozens of other entrepreneurs who have used it for everything from restaurants to fashion boutiques. If you are considering starting your first, second, third or tenth business you need to look at *Successful Business Plan!*”

— *Issa Sawabini, University of Vermont, ’99
Partner, Monitor Premiums LLC*

“ In December 1991, I came upon the book *Successful Business Plan: Secrets & Strategies*. It is the closest to what I know works in the real world, at least in high-tech industries. ”

— Barb Tomlin, *e-Business Strategy Consultant and President/CEO, Westward Connections, Inc.*

“ One of the best books on business planning. The overall quality of this book is excellent, but three things make it stand out: First, it contains worksheets that walk you through the information-gathering process. Fill them out, and even the financials—always the hardest part of a plan—will fall right into place. Second, it has a sample plan that reads like a real business plan, written by a real person for a real business. You can use much of the wording in your own plan. Third, it has tips from successful managers, leaders, and business owners, large and small. I was especially fascinated reading the tips from ex-49er head coach Bill Walsh. You can't go wrong following his advice on planning and organizing! ”

— *Economic Chamber of Macedonia*

“ *Successful Business Plan* is thorough, well-organized, and a very useful tool for business planning and development. It's an excellent guide to the details involved with creating a solid, useful business plan. ”

— Jim Jindrick, *The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the University of Arizona*

“ I chose *Successful Business Plan* because of its ease of use, its clarity and its good examples. I have used the book for a number of years now... ”

— Jean Morris, *The Culinary Institute of America*

“ It has a clearly defined, comprehensive approach. ”

— Zane Swanson, *Emporia State University, KS*

“ Here at the SBDC we offer clients an 8-week business planning counseling program called Business Plan Expedited (BPE). BPE is structured around *Successful Business Plan*—the end result is a well-written business plan that can be used as a part of a business loan application package. I specifically chose this text because I used it, per recommendation from my graduate school advisor, for my MBA project in graduate school 13 years ago! ”

— Indria Gillespie, *Sierra College SBDC*

“Your book has been both an inspirational read as well as a comprehensive guide for starting my business. Since I am relatively inexperienced with entrepreneurship, your book has not only given me the ability to create a solid road map for planning, but has also provided an encouraging and easy way to cope with the enormous amount of information and organization needed. I particularly enjoy the various quotes from business professionals who have had experience in business planning. They give precious insight and different viewpoints that I would not have seen. Thank you for writing this book!”

— *Simon Lee, Entrepreneur*

“It combines, in a very clear way, both aspects of business planning and effective writing of business plans. The book is very well written. The forms are very useful.”

— *Eyal Yaniv, Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

Other Recognition for *Successful Business Plan*

- Ranked one of the Two Best Books for small business by *Forbes*.
- Ranked one of the Six Best Books for startups by *Inc.*
- Ranked one of the 20 Essential Books for Entrepreneurs by *Home Office Computing*.
- Main Selection, BusinessWeek Book Club.
- Main Selection, Executive Book Club.
- Used in colleges, universities, and business schools nationwide, including Stanford Business School; Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley; Northwestern University; Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo; MIT; Cornell University; Temple University; Texas A & M; University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Southern Oregon University; Arizona State; University of Washington; and dozens of others.

Praise for Books from PlanningShop

Entrepreneurship: A Real-World Approach

“What separates Rhonda Abrams from the crowd? She is an expert in building successful small businesses. And she continues to create timely, meaningful, and (most importantly) useful content for academics, students, and business owners like myself. This book is the definitive guide for anyone who either wants to be an entrepreneur or just wants to grow their own business.”

— *Gene Marks, New York Times Small Business Columnist*

Business Plan In A Day

“A business plan is something every business needs, but too many fail to create one because it seems intimidating. Rhonda Abrams is on a mission to change that. With this book she shows you how to create a professional business plan that will seem like it took weeks to write instead of 24 hours.”

— *Anita Campbell, Publisher of Small Business Trends*

“I’m growing my business this year by purchasing a commercial building, and I needed a real estate loan to make the purchase. *Business Plan In A Day* was THE source I used for writing my plan, and the bankers and brokers I spoke with all commended my plan as being very strong and well-written. Thanks to you, I’ve secured my loan and the transaction is going through. I feel so fortunate to have found this book.”

— *Lisa Stillman, Garden Walk Massage Therapy, St. Louis, MO*

Bringing the Cloud Down to Earth

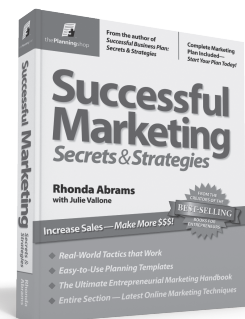
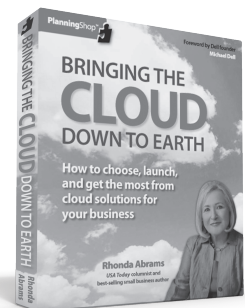
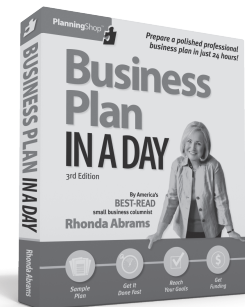
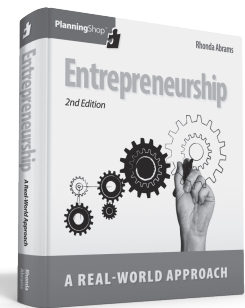
“No matter how you refer to it, working in the Cloud is a fundamental business practice these days and Abrams has done a terrific job of making this sometimes confusing subject relevant and practical for businesses of all shapes and sizes.”

— *John Jantsch, Author of Duct Tape Marketing and The Referral Engine*

Successful Marketing: Secrets & Strategies

“*Successful Marketing* encourages students to think through standard marketing concepts while applying them directly to their business idea.”

— *Meredith Carpenter, Entrepreneurship Instructor, Haywood Community College, NC*



To my clients, who've shared with me their enthusiasm for the entrepreneurial spirit and have shown me that business can be a career for people of integrity, intelligence, and honor.

To my employees, who've helped me grow a sustainable business and who share with me their intelligence, commitment, ideas, hard work, and their continual good humor.

To the memory of Eugene Kleiner, my mentor and friend, who taught me so much more than just what made a good business and a good business plan.

To my family, who has been with me every step of the way. They are more than family—they are friends.

To the memory of my parents, who would have been proud.

PlanningShop™



PlanningShop
Palo Alto, California

SUCCESSFUL business plan

secrets & strategies

Rhonda
Abrams

*The #1 best-selling
business plan guide of all time!*

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— *from a Declaration of Principles jointly adopted by a committee of the American Bar Association and a committee of publishers*

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About Rhonda Abrams



Entrepreneur, author, and nationally syndicated columnist Rhonda Abrams is widely recognized as one of the leading experts on entrepreneurship and small business. Rhonda's column for *USA Today*, "Successful Strategies," is the most widely distributed column on small business and entrepreneurship in the United States, reaching tens of millions of readers each week.

Rhonda's books have been used by millions of entrepreneurs. Her first book, *Successful Business Plan: Secrets & Strategies*, is the best-selling business plan guide in America and has sold over 2 million copies. It was named one of the Top Ten business books for entrepreneurs by both *Forbes* and *Inc.* magazines. She is also the author of more than a dozen other books on entrepreneurship. Rhonda's other books are perennial best-sellers, with three of them having reached the nationally recognized "Top 50 Business Bestseller" list.

Rhonda not only writes about business—she lives it! As the founder of three successful companies, Rhonda has accumulated an extraordinary depth of experience and a real-life understanding of the challenges facing entrepreneurs. Rhonda first founded a management consulting practice working with clients ranging from one-person startups to Fortune 500 companies. Rhonda was an early online pioneer, founding a website for small business that she later sold. In 1999, Rhonda started a publishing company—now called PlanningShop—focusing exclusively on topics of business planning, entrepreneurship, and new business development. PlanningShop is America's leading academic publisher focusing exclusively on entrepreneurship.

A popular public speaker, Rhonda is regularly invited to address leading industry and trade associations, business schools, and corporate conventions and events. Educated at Harvard University and UCLA, where she was named Outstanding Senior, Rhonda now lives in Palo Alto, California.

Rhonda Abrams:



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How to Use This Book

Icons

The following icons appear throughout the book in the margins. Look for a page number in the text near the icon to find the corresponding worksheet, sample plan, or sample electronic presentation.

Worksheet

When this icon appears in the margin next to text, it signals a nearby worksheet related to the topic under discussion.

Sample Plan & Plan Preparation Form

This icon indicates both the sample plan sections of the fictitious company ComputerEase and the Plan Preparation Forms you will fill out for the various sections of your own business plan (Executive Summary, Company Description, Target Market, and so on). Use the sample plan as a guide to help you fill out the Plan Preparation Forms. These completed forms will become the basis of your business plan.

Flow-Through Financial Worksheet

This icon indicates a Flow-Through Financial worksheet (which is also marked with a dollar-sign logo). Transfer the figures from each of these completed worksheets to their appropriate line(s) on the financial forms in Chapter 16. For more information on using the Flow-Through Financial Worksheets, see page 294. A Microsoft Excel version of these worksheet is available as part of PlanningShop's Business Plan Financials package, available from www.PlanningShop.com.

PowerPoint Presentation

This icon indicates a sample PowerPoint Presentation.



Foreword to the Fifth Edition

By John Doerr

Partner, Kleiner Perkins

Ideas Are Easy, but Execution Is Everything and “Teams Win”

Ideas Are (Relatively) Easy

I love innovation, great new ideas and businesses, and the entrepreneurs who create them. Probably you do, too. Innovation is the source of America’s great wealth and leadership position, and the way lives are improving around the world.

Innovation can be everywhere. It is a high-tech, magical iPad, or a breakthrough life-saving drug. Or innovation can be a better local yogurt store, or helping Realtors list homes, or one of hundreds of thousands of programs in a smartphone app store.

Now, more than ever, we need the power of new ideas, new businesses, and the resulting new jobs.

But, relatively speaking, new ideas are easy. New ideas are necessary, but insufficient. What’s more difficult and even more important is execution.

Execution Is Everything

Thomas Edison is one of the great innovators of all time. He invented the light bulb, the phonograph, and the motion picture camera. But just as important, Edison understood well the importance of execution. He famously said, “Vision without execution is hallucination.”

On this topic my friend Bill (Coach) Campbell is blunt and direct: “John, we’ve gotta focus to achieve operational excellence. Execution is everything.”

The best entrepreneurs are the ones who really go the distance with their companies, who are always learning. They don't know what they don't know, so they attempt to do the impossible. And they often succeed.

Entrepreneurs do more than anyone thinks possible, with less than anyone thinks possible.

Teams Win

Unless you are Einstein, or an author, your work is not alone. Most ideas worth pursuing take a Team to Win.

Great entrepreneurs are great team leaders. They motivate their teams with the promise of more than money. They inspire their teams with their plan for winning. The plan clearly says **who** and **how** the team wins (**what**)—how who wins what.

The Plan

Why write a business plan? Particularly in this age of 24/7 tweeting, friending, and blogging? Won't PowerPoint and a smooth elevator pitch work just as well?

You may think business plans are fund-raising documents for investors, and indeed they are.

But the best plans are much more. They are the road map so your team can execute with excellence. Writing them disciplines your thinking, and establishes priorities. Your plan clearly, concisely defines the mission, values, strategy, and measurables—objectives and key results. If you don't know where you're going, and how, and why, you won't get there.

Your plan is for more than investors. In 1974, my partners Gene Kleiner, Tom Perkins, and Brook Byers invested in Tandem Computers. Tandem's business plan was written in Kleiner's offices by a junior partner, Jim Treybig. Jim became the CEO and grew the business to great global success. (Compaq acquired Tandem for \$3 billion in 1997.)

Treybig was a great communicator. Every Friday he held popular "beer busts," which were actually company meetings. And once a year Jim gathered all of Tandem's employees, spouses, and families for a picnic with beers and burgers. He presented Tandem's business plan, in its entirety, to all of them. Jim said, "I don't care if my competition knows our plans. I want to be sure our executives and families get it."

Plan to Win

There's never been a better time than now to start a new business. Innovation is everywhere—in how we communicate, how we buy things, how we sell things, how we learn, how we live. Now is a great time to be an entrepreneur. And this book can help you take your good idea and make it a great business.

Good luck. Plan on it.

Foreword to a Previous Edition

By Eugene Kleiner

Founding Partner, Kleiner Perkins

In today's environment, a business plan is an entrepreneur's most crucial business document. No company can expect to articulate its goals or to secure financing without a well-conceived and well-presented business plan. Without a convincing business plan, no one will seriously consider your business idea.

This wasn't always the case. The first business plan I ever wrote as an entrepreneur was not a business plan at all; it was just a letter. Eight of us from Shockley Laboratories for various reasons wanted to start a semiconductor company on our own, and we needed the money to make it possible. We drafted a letter, perhaps four or five pages long, describing what we proposed to do and sent that letter along with our resumes to an investment banker.

Fortunately for us, that letter found its way to the desk of a young business school graduate named Arthur Rock who felt that we might have promise. As a result, we were able to get our funding, and Fairchild Semiconductor was born. From Fairchild, the eight of us branched out and went on to form or fund such companies as Intel, Tandem Computer, and many other leading Silicon Valley firms.

Today, our letter might never be completely read. Investors now are far more structured and expect a far higher level of expertise and preparation from the entrepreneurs they choose to fund. When examining a proposal, they want to see much more than just a good idea and a bright young man or woman; they want to see a business plan showing that the concept has been rigorously assessed and that the entrepreneur has carefully thought through the issues for steps necessary to take the idea and fashion it into a successful company.

At Kleiner Perkins, the venture capital firm I cofounded in 1972, we had a diligent system of evaluating business plans. A plan had to stand up to the most exacting scrutiny and toughest standards. Most plans, of course, never made it past the initial screening phases. Only the most interesting and well-conceived plans warranted the allocation of resources necessary for a more thorough examination. From that group, we narrowed our selection down even further, spending a great deal of time investigating each plan's merits. Finally, before deciding to invest in a company, part of the staff would serve as "devil's advocate," suggesting all the pitfalls. Only the plans that made it through that process were considered for final funding.

In this book, Rhonda Abrams has given you the tools you need to create a successful business plan. Working with Rhonda over the years, I've developed a strong appreciation and respect for her grasp of the business planning process. We have had many sessions evaluating what it takes to make a successful company, and I've seen her take what I've shared with her about long-term and strategic planning and expand upon that knowledge, bringing to bear her own experience with clients and her intelligent, practical approach to the entrepreneurial process.

About the Contributors

John Doerr

Partner, Kleiner Perkins

Famed venture capitalist John Doerr is a Partner at Kleiner Perkins, the nation's premier venture capital firm. Doerr began his career with a summer job in 1974 at what was then a small chipmaker, Intel, and in 1980 he joined KPCB. With KPCB, Doerr has funded some of the world's most innovative companies, including Google, Amazon, Intuit, Twitter, Symantec, and Zynga. Passionate about sustainability and social issues, Doerr has backed entrepreneurs working to combat global warming, poverty, and health issues. He is active in public policy, covering issues from public school funding to preparedness for pandemic flu. Doerr serves on the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. He also serves on several company boards, including Coursera, Flipbook, and Google.

Eugene Kleiner

Founding Partner, Kleiner Perkins

Eugene Kleiner was a legend—in venture capital and in Silicon Valley. Kleiner was one of the country's first venture capitalists: In 1972, he founded what would become the country's foremost venture capital firm, Kleiner Perkins. He was an early investor in companies such as Intel and Genentech. Kleiner was one of the so-called “Traitorous Eight”—the eight young men who broke away from Nobel Prize winner William Shockley to form the first silicon semiconductor company, Fairchild Electronics, in 1957, and who are considered to be the “fathers” of Silicon Valley.

Andrew Anker

CEO, Tugboat Yards

A veteran of several startups, Andrew Anker has served as Director of Project Management for Facebook, the CEO of Tugboat Yards, and the Executive Chairman of PandoMedia. As an angel investor, Anker has invested in a wide range of companies, including LinkedIn, TCHO Ventures, and Ebates. He was the cofounder and CEO of Wired Digital, Inc., a pioneering Internet news and media organization that launched the first advertising-supported website, www.hotwired.com, in 1994. Anker led Wired Digital

from its founding through 1998 and built it into what was one of the 20 largest networks of websites at the time. After leaving Wired Digital, he was a Partner at August Capital—one of the nation’s most respected venture capital firms—and then served as vice president of corporate development at Six Apart.

Damon Doe

Banker

A former Partner at Montage Capital, Damon Doe has extensive experience in financial services, corporate banking, fund management, corporate finance, and equity investment. Prior to working in a senior-level capacity for several banks in the San Francisco Bay Area, Doe cofounded Sand Hill Capital, a \$150 million venture debt and equity fund located in Menlo Park, California, where he managed a large part of the venture firm’s portfolio and also served as CFO. Before that, Doe financed early-stage and middle market high-tech companies at both Silicon Valley Bank and Bank of the West. Doe’s past clients include Advanced Fiber Communications and JDS Uniphase.

Lauren Flanagan

Angel Investor, BELLE Capital USA

Lauren Flanagan was cofounder and Managing Partner of BELLE Capital USA, an early-stage angel investment fund, located in the Greater Chicago area. Belle invests solely in companies with women in leadership positions. Flanagan has more than 25 years’ experience founding and operating technology companies, and she was the founder of four technology companies. She is also cofounder and Managing Director of the Phenomenelle Angels Fund. In 2010, BusinessWeek named her one of the top 25 angels in technology. She is Executive Chairman of the Current Motor Company.

Nancy Glaser

Management Consultant, The Glaser Group

Before working as a business consultant through Stanford University’s Seed Program in East Africa, Nancy Glaser was founder and President of The Glaser Group, a consulting firm that specialized in early-stage business strategies and turn-arounds for troubled companies. Her focus was in specialty retailing and in consumer-based and service businesses. Previously, Glaser was a Partner at the venture capital firm U.S. Venture Partners. Earlier in her career, Glaser helped take The Gap from a 35-store chain to 350 stores in less than five years, and served with Macy’s and Lord & Taylor. Glaser was active in international venture capital, both in Poland and as a founder of the Apparel Innovation Center in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Seth Goldman

President and CEO, Honest Tea

With his partner and former Yale School of Management professor, Barry Nalebuff, Seth Goldman cofounded Honest Tea in 1997. He began his entrepreneurial career at the age of six by retrieving stray golf balls from a course near his home, and selling them back to golfers along with lemonade. Honest Tea was acquired by the Coca-Cola Company in 2011 and today, more than 100,000 retail outlets carry the company's beverages. In addition to his role as President and CEO of Honest Tea, Goldman is the Executive Chair of Beyond Meat and also serves on several boards, such as Bethesda Green, the Yale School of Management, the American Beverage Association, and the Maryland Economic Development Commission.

Mark Gorenberg

Founder and Managing Director, Zetta Venture Partners

Mark Gorenberg has the rare distinction of having been a judge in three of the country's leading university business plan competitions, at MIT, Stanford University, and the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley. As founder and Managing Director of Zetta Venture Partners, Gorenberg invests in the fast-growing analytics market. Prior to launching Zetta Venture Partners, he served as Managing Director at Hummer Winblad. He has over 20 years' experience in venture capital and serves on the boards of startup and public companies. Gorenberg has also served on President's Barack Obama's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST), the Board of Trustees for MIT, the National Venture Capital Association, and the FCC's Technological Advisory Council.

Kay Koplovitz

Founder, USA Network

When Kay Koplovitz founded USA Network, she became the first female network president in television history. She served as Chairperson and Chief Executive of the network until it was sold in 1998 for \$4.5 billion. President Bill Clinton appointed Koplovitz to head the National Women's Business Council, after which she helped found Springboard Enterprises in 2000 to showcase women-led entrepreneurial ventures. Since its founding, Springboard has helped women entrepreneurs raise more than \$6 billion in venture capital, creating tens of thousands of jobs. To further encourage women entrepreneurs, Koplovitz also cowrote *Bold Women, Big Ideas*. In 2007, Koplovitz joined the board of what was then Liz Claiborne Inc. (now Kate Spade & Company) and long served as Chairperson of the Board. She is the Chairperson and CEO of Koplovitz & Company, and serves on several other boards.

Robert M. Mahoney

Former Executive Director of Corporate Banking, Bank of Boston

In this leadership position, Robert Mahoney was responsible for commercial lending services throughout the New England states for the Bank of Boston, a bank that earned a reputation as one of the nation's most receptive to entrepreneurial companies. During his two decades with the bank, Mahoney served as President of Massachusetts Banking and Vice President for corporate banking in the United Kingdom.

F. Gibson "Gib" Myers, Jr.

Venture Capitalist, The Mayfield Fund

Gib Myers is well known as a General Partner (Emeritus) of the prestigious Mayfield Fund, a venture capital firm with over \$1.5 billion of capital under management. Myers joined Mayfield in 1970 and participated in virtually all of the firm's portfolio company investments, including 3Com Corporation. He nurtured companies in diverse areas of technology through every phase of growth, from startup to maturity. In 1997 Myers and Mayfield Fund created the Entrepreneurs' Foundation, dedicated to bringing the entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to societal and community activities. The Entrepreneurs' Foundation is a nonprofit organization that assists entrepreneurs and young companies in developing a community involvement plan and in participating in unique philanthropic giving programs.

Bill Rancic

Entrepreneur and Inaugural Winner of *The Apprentice*

By the time he won the first season of the reality TV show *The Apprentice*, Bill Rancic was already a seasoned entrepreneur. After he graduated from college, he founded the Cigar of the Month Club. Today, Rancic travels across the U.S. and around the world as motivational and business speaker. He has written two business books, develops real estate, runs restaurants, and makes guest appearances on shows such as *Today*, *The Tonight Show*, *The View*, and various CNBC programs. A television producer, Rancic appeared with his wife on their reality TV show, *Giuliana & Bill*, which aired from 2009–2014.

Premal Shah

President, Kiva

Premal Shah first began dreaming of "Internet microfinance" while working at PayPal, the online payments company. In late 2004, Shah took a three-month leave from PayPal to develop and test the Internet microfinance concept in India. When he returned to Silicon Valley, he met other like-minded dreamers and quit his job at PayPal to help bring the Kiva concept to life and eventually to scale. Kiva has raised over \$1.26 billion for the working poor in over 81 countries worldwide. For his work as a social entrepreneur, Shah was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum and selected for *Fortune* magazine's "Top 40 under 40" list in 2009. Shah began his career as a management consultant.

Andre S. Tatibouet

Founder and Former Owner, Aston Hotels and Resorts

Andre S. Tatibouet's first exposure to the hotel business in Hawaii began in his parents' 14-room hotel in Waikiki in the 1940s. At the age of 19, Tatibouet developed his first hotel and has been a force in the hospitality industry ever since. He built the largest condominium resort and hotel chain in Hawaii, which also included properties in California and Mexico. He was named one of the top five entrepreneurs in the hotel industry and is active in numerous philanthropic and civic organizations. Today, he works with other hotel owners as a consultant.

Bill Walsh

Former Coach and President, San Francisco 49ers

When Bill Walsh was hired as head coach of the San Francisco 49ers football franchise in 1979, the team was hardly taken seriously. But within three years, under his innovative management, the 49ers had won a Super Bowl. He went on to win two additional world championships and was named "Coach of the Eighties." His management style was marked by intelligent, strategic planning of every detail and contingency. Formerly a commentator on NBC Television, he was a frequent speaker to business audiences.

Ann Winblad

Cofounder, Hummer Winblad Venture Partners

In high-technology circles, Ann Winblad is a well-known software entrepreneur and venture capitalist. In 1976, she cofounded Open Systems with a \$500 investment and sold the company in 1983 for \$15.1 million. Prior to starting her venture capital firm with partner John Hummer, she served as a consultant to clients such as IBM, Microsoft, Apple, Price Waterhouse, and numerous startup companies. Hummer Winblad has invested in companies such as Central Point Software, Powersoft, and Liquid Audio.

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Introduction

If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you are lost?

For over two decades, *Successful Business Plan: Secrets & Strategies* has been used by entrepreneurs to launch hundreds of thousands of businesses. I am incredibly proud of helping entrepreneurs to achieve their dreams—and, as importantly, create new jobs. It is my life's work.

It's led to some wonderful moments in my life. Like the time I was speaking at a conference in Pittsburgh and a man, surrounded by a gaggle of his employees, told me that he had been homeless, found this book in his local library, and used it to help start a small business, which eventually grew to having more than 100 employees.

Or the time a woman came rushing out of a store in Boise, Idaho. She had somehow recognized me, and pulled me into her beautiful home goods store. "I built this store following your book—just look around." And I did—not only at the lovely products she was selling and the employees she had working, but at the immense pride she had in her accomplishment.

Or meeting some of the hundreds of thousands of students who have used this book to better understand the possibilities and opportunities of entrepreneurship. Many have used what started as a class assignment to actually launch their own businesses.

It's been immensely gratifying to hear from entrepreneurs from all walks of life, from all over the globe, about the businesses they've started, the money they've raised, the jobs they've created—and knowing that this book has been a part of that.



With the first edition of your plan, you shouldn't even think about getting money. Use the planning process to decide if the business is really as good as you think it is. Ask yourself if you want to spend five years of your life doing this. Remember, that's about 10% of your active working life, so seriously examine whether the enterprise could really be worthwhile to you."

**Eugene Kleiner
Venture Capitalist**



The intensity in football incorporates, in one season, what a corporation must have over five years or so. You deal with people under stress; performance is measured by the bottom line; success is what the group accomplishes. To succeed, you must set goals, define roles, recognize excellence, acknowledge failure, recover from disappointment, and stay abreast of the competition. You must always be evolving systematically, improving the mechanisms for developing progress, and bringing along younger players.”

Bill Walsh
Former Coach and President,
San Francisco 49ers

Creating a business plan helps you:

- Think through your entire business
- Better understand your true financial needs
- Secure funding
- Attract key management
- Develop marketing messages and materials
- Identify key strategic partners and customers

Remember, it's the PLANNING and not the PLAN that's really important. The process of developing a business plan is what helps you succeed. The greatest benefits come from examining all the critical aspects of your business, looking at the factors and trends that can affect your success or threaten your livelihood, and then asking yourself the tough questions.

During the process of developing a business plan, you're almost certainly going to change several facets of your business—perhaps even some major components of it. It's far better to make your mistakes on paper instead of with your real money and precious time.

I sincerely hope this book helps you achieve your dreams.

—*Rhonda Abrams, Palo Alto, California*

SECTION

I

Starting the Process

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The Successful Business

It is not enough merely to survive; the goal is to succeed.

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Accomplishments

In this chapter, you'll:

- Understand the many elements that contribute to a successful business
- Describe your basic startup concept as originally conceived
- Recognize the various types of change that may affect a company's growth
- Recognize that a company's values are critical to a company's long-term success
- Identify the types of global factors that must be considered when growing a business
- Articulate your personal goals that may affect the success of a business



KEY TO SUCCESS

By going through the business planning process, you think through the most critical aspects of your startup in an organized manner. This planning process is critical for launching, growing, and saving companies.



Even if you have all the money you need, you still need a business plan. A plan shows how you'll run your business. Without a plan, you don't know where you're going, and you can't measure your progress. Sometimes, after writing a business plan, you may change your approach, or even decide not to go into a certain business at this time."

Eugene Kleiner
Venture Capitalist

Factors of a Successful Business

The ultimate purpose of developing a business plan is to have a successful business. In the long run, it is fruitless to write a business plan that can raise the funds you seek if your enterprise is so poorly conceived it is bound to fail. So, as you create your plan, be certain to address the long-term needs of your business and devise strategies that enhance both the overall performance of your company and your personal satisfaction.

The following factors contribute most to business success and should guide your planning process.

The Business Concept

Meeting needs is the basis of all business. You can devise a wonderful new machine, but if it doesn't address some real and important need or desire, people won't buy it, and your business will fail. Even Thomas Edison recognized this fact when he said, "Anything that won't sell, I don't want to invent."

Typically, entrepreneurs get their original business inspiration from one of four sources: 1) previous work experience; 2) education or training; 3) hobbies, talents, or other personal interests; or 4) recognition of an unanswered need or market opportunity. Occasionally, the impetus comes from the business experience of a relative or friend.

As you refine your business concept, keep in mind that successful businesses incorporate at least one of these elements: something new, something better, underserved or new market, new delivery or distribution, and increased integration.

Your business should incorporate at least one of these factors—more than one if possible. Ideally, you can bring a new or better product or service to an identifiable but underserved market, perhaps using a more efficient distribution channel. Evaluate the ways your business concept addresses the elements described above. Your concept should be strong in at least one area. If not, you should ask yourself how your company will be truly competitive.

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS ELEMENTS

Include at least one of these as you refine your business concept.

Something New



Create a new product, service, feature, or technology.

Something Better



Improve on existing product or service: more features, lower price, greater reliability, faster speed, or increased convenience.

Underserved or New Market



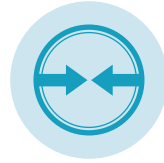
Find a market with greater demand than competitors can satisfy, an unexploited niche market, or an unserved location.

New Delivery or Distribution



Provide products or services less expensively, to a wider geographic area, or with greater choice.

Increased Integration



Both manufacture and sell your product, or offer more services and products in one location.

The Basic Business Concept worksheet on page 6 helps you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your basic business idea.



Understanding the Market

It is not enough to have a great idea or new invention as the basis of your business; you must also have a market that is sufficiently large, accessible, and responsive. If your market isn't large enough, you can't reach it efficiently, or it isn't ready for you. Your business will fail, no matter how good your business concept. Consider the automatic teller machine (ATM) seen

key terms

Barriers to Entry

Those conditions that make it difficult or impossible for new competitors to enter the market: Two barriers to entry are patents and high startup costs.

Business Plan

A document outlining how a company will achieve its goals. A business plan can describe the concept and projected development of a startup company or the new product or project of an existing company. It assesses all critical aspects of a business—including its mission, market, industry, competition, team, operations, financials, objectives, and more—and identifies a sustainable strategic position.

Business Planning

The act of examining and researching the development of a new or existing company. Although the act of business planning doesn't necessarily require the

creation of a written business plan, it does require an entrepreneur to rigorously evaluate and determine a company's fundamentals in order to successfully launch, grow, and even save a business.

Cash Flow

The movement of money into and out of a company; actual income received and actual payments made out.

Intellectual Property (IP)

Unlike physical or real property, refers to creations arising from the human intellect and inventiveness, such as inventions, designs, artistic works, software, names, and music. IP is typically intangible and has value in commerce.

Strategic Position

A company's distinct identity that separates it from the competition and helps it focus on its activities.



Basic Business Concept

Using this worksheet as a guide, outline your business concept as you presently conceive it.

Is yours a retail, service, manufacturing, distribution, software application, or online business? _____

What industry does it belong to? _____

What products or services do you sell? _____

Who do you see as your potential customers? _____

Describe your basic overall marketing and sales strategy: _____

Which companies and types of companies do you consider to be your competition? _____

List your competitive advantages, if any, in each area listed below.

New Products/Services: _____

Improved Features/Services and Added Value: _____

New or Underserved Markets Reached: _____

New/Improved Delivery or Distribution Method: _____

Methods of Increased Integration: _____

on virtually every street corner. It was invented more than 10 years before it became popular, but the company that initially marketed the ATM was unsuccessful—people weren't yet willing to trust their banking to machines.

First, evaluate whether market demand is adequate to support your company. For instance, if you are opening a flower shop in a neighborhood where none currently exists, what indications are there that the neighborhood residents are interested in buying flowers? Do they currently purchase flowers at a nearby supermarket? Does national data on the demographics of flower purchasers coincide with neighborhood demographics? Perhaps you should conduct a survey of the neighborhood's residents, asking about their flower-buying habits and preferences.

Next, if you are creating a new product or service, what indications are there that the market will be receptive to you? Market readiness is one of the most difficult and most unpredictable aspects to measure. That is why companies spend substantial amounts of money on market research before launching a new product.

You may not have the funds to undertake extensive market research, but even a small amount of analysis can help you gauge the receptivity of a particular market to your idea. Methods of conducting market research and evaluation in a practical, economical fashion are discussed in Chapter 2. When gathering information for your business plan, spend considerable time learning about your market. The more you understand the various factors that affect your market, the more likely you are to succeed.

Industry Health and Trends

Your business does not operate in a vacuum; generally, your company is subject to the same conditions that affect your overall industry. If consumer spending declines nationally, there's a good chance your retail business—whether a neighborhood boutique or an online shop—will also experience poor sales.

As you develop your plan, you need to respond to the industry-wide factors affecting your own company's performance. While it is certainly possible to make money in an industry that is experiencing hard times, you can only do so if you make a conscious effort to position your company appropriately. For example, if you are in the construction business and the number of new-home starts is down, you may want to target the remodeling market or the commercial real estate market rather than the new-home construction market.

Investors and lenders are particularly sensitive to issues of industry health. It is much harder to raise money to start or expand businesses in troubled industries. Even though opportunities exist in such fields, investors and bankers are concerned about the increased risks an enterprise faces in an unhealthy industry. Conversely, if your business is in a healthy and expanding industry, investors are likely to be more receptive.

What direction is your industry going? It is important to look at the major trends that will influence industry health in the future as well as examining its current condition. Is the industry consolidating as big companies

“ Relatively speaking, new ideas are easy. New ideas are necessary, but insufficient. What's more difficult and even more important is execution.”

John Doerr
Venture Capitalist

“ In judging a business concept, by far the easiest and first place to start is, 'Do I want to use this myself?' If I'm not sold that I would want to use it—if I can't look at my partners and say, 'I know this fills a need because I know no one else does this; I would use it myself'—it's not going to go anywhere.”

Andrew Anker
Venture Capitalist



merge into huge businesses? What is happening with pricing pressures, consumer demand, availability of parts and supplies, and global competition? *Several worksheets included in Chapter 6 help you identify and anticipate trends in your industry.*

If you are seeking outside funds, your business plan must reassure investors or bankers that you understand the industry factors affecting your company's health and that you have taken those factors into consideration when developing your business strategy.

Clear Strategic Position and Consistent Business Focus

A crucial factor for a successful business is the development of a clear **strategic position** that differentiates you from your competition—and then maintaining focus on that position. All too often businesses fail because management loses sight of the central character of the enterprise.

Defining a clear strategic position enables you to capture a particular place in the market and distinguish yourself from your competitors. Different companies may sell a similar product, but each may have a very different sense of what its business is really all about.

For example, suppose four companies are making jeans. Company A defines itself as selling work clothes; Company B sees itself as a sportswear manufacturer; and Company C defines itself as being in the business of selling youth and sex appeal. But Company D has never clarified its mission—it just sells jeans.

These different positions affect the way each company markets itself, how it designs its jeans, what subsequent products it produces, and even the employees it hires. The first three companies may all succeed and rarely be in competition with one another. But Company D, which misses the big picture, is almost certain to fail over time as it flounders in its attempts to compete with all of the other, more-focused companies.

A second aspect of positioning your company and maintaining focus is the development of a company style or corporate culture. By creating a consistent style that permeates every aspect of your enterprise, from the design of your stationery to personnel policies, you give your customers and employees a sense of trust in your company.

Imagine two different restaurants on the same street, both with basically the same business mission: providing good, fast food, priced at only a few dollars a meal.

The first restaurant is a national burger chain. Its style is characterized by consistency, cleanliness, and impersonal friendliness. A strong corporate image is important, which is reinforced through the restaurant's decor, the food's packaging, and the employees' uniforms. The meals are prepared by standardized routines, and every customer is given the same greeting.

The second restaurant is a diner. Management characterizes its corporate culture as that of a friendly neighbor. To help make sure that employees know customers' names and food preferences, management aims to retain employees for many years. A bulletin board features notices of local events.

“What tips me off that a business will be successful is that they have a narrow focus of what they want to do, and they plan a sufficient amount of effort and money to do it. Focus is essential; there can be the possibility of the business branching out later, but the first phase of a company should be quite narrowly defined.”

Eugene Kleiner
Venture Capitalist

This restaurant's target market is the neighborhood regulars who know they will feel at home there.

With a strong company style, each restaurant clearly distinguishes itself from its competitors and gives its target customers a precise understanding of what to expect. Every business needs to consider its style as it relates to the company's overall mission, and then infuse that style into virtually all its undertakings.

To help clarify your company's position and focus as part of the business plan process, you should define a Mission Statement. This Mission Statement should guide your company's short-term activities and long-term strategy, position your marketing, and influence your internal policies. *A Mission Statement worksheet is in Chapter 5.*

Capable Management

Perhaps more than any other factor, competent management stands out as the most important ingredient in business success. The people in key positions are crucial in determining the health and viability of your business. Moreover, because of the importance of capable management to business success, many investors and venture capital firms place the single greatest emphasis on this factor when evaluating business plans and deciding on loans or investments. They'll review the management section of a business plan with special scrutiny. Your business plan must inspire confidence in the capabilities of your management, and you should put your management team together carefully.

Before submitting your business plan to investors, conduct your own analysis of your management team. Evaluate each individual (and yourself) to see if he or she fits the profile of a successful manager. Some of the traits shared by successful managers are:

- **Experience.** They have a long work history in their company's industry and/or they have a solid management background that translates well to the specifics of any business in which they become involved.
- **Realism.** They understand the many needs and challenges of their business and honestly assess their own limitations. They recognize the need for careful planning and hard work.
- **Flexibility.** They know things go wrong or change over time, and they are able to adapt without losing focus.
- **Ability to Work Well with People.** They are leaders and motivators with the patience necessary to deal with a variety of people. They may be demanding, but they are fair.

In developing your business plan, determine whether key members of your management team possess these characteristics. If not, perhaps you can increase training, add staff, or take other measures to enhance your management's effectiveness. For instance, if you have little or no experience in your chosen field, perhaps you should first take a job with an existing company in that field before opening your own business.



The most successful entrepreneurs tell you they have a great team, but lots of small business owners let ego get in the way. Many people helped me along the path. You've got to remember the people who were loyal to you. Don't forget them when you become successful."

Bill Rancic
Serial Entrepreneur



We don't just want to make secure loans; we want to make good loans. A good loan is a loan with a high probability of being repaid from the primary source, such as the business, without interrupting the lifestyle of the borrower. Collateral makes a loan 'safe,' not necessarily good. It's not fair to make a loan if the collateral is good BUT the business plan is shaky. We're not interested in getting people's homes; we're interested in successful businesses."

Robert Mahoney
Corporate Banker

In addition to evaluating the traits of each individual, look at the overall balance of your management team. Do you have people who are capable and experienced in the various aspects of your business—marketing, operations, technology, finance, and so on? Are some managers better at dealing with internal issues and others at handling external relations? Or do the talents and traits of your managers duplicate each other?

Ability to Attract, Motivate, and Retain Employees

A company is only as good as its people. The ability to find, attract, and keep outstanding employees and managers is crucial to a company's long-term viability and competitiveness.

With declining fertility rates, decreasing immigration to the U.S., and an aging population, the labor market will continue to be a tight one for the foreseeable future. Companies will have a difficult time competing for the relatively limited number of outstanding job applicants. Your company's reputation for treating employees well directly enhances both the number and the quality of job applicants and your company's ability to retain employees once hired.

Employee morale also has a significant impact on a company's productivity, the quality of its products or services, and its ability to provide outstanding customer service. Unhappy employees are less motivated to do excellent work. Satisfied employees are far more likely to want to see their company succeed, and they can dramatically alter a company's bottom line.

Examine your management style and policies as part of your overall business planning process. Develop management practices that treat employees fairly, offer opportunities for advancement, afford reasonable job security, and provide fair pay and benefits.

Financial Control

Key to any business is how it handles money. Not fully anticipating startup costs can immediately place impossible pressures on a new business. Poor **cash flow** management can bring down even a seemingly thriving business. One of "Rhonda's Rules" is "Things take longer and cost more than anticipated." Build financial cushions in your plan to allow for unanticipated expenses and delays.

As you develop your business plan, make sure you have the information to understand your financial picture on an ongoing basis. What does it take to open your doors each month? Where is your real profit center? How much expansion do you need to maintain growth? What are the hidden costs of marketing your company? What are the consequences of your credit policies?

Build in mechanisms to keep you continually informed as your business develops. It is easier to establish good financial procedures right from the start than to wait until you face a financial crisis. How frequently will you do your billing? What kinds of credit policies will your business follow?

How will you keep informed on inventory?

Make certain you receive detailed financial statements at least monthly and that you understand them thoroughly. Examine financial reports for any deviations from your plan or any indications of impending cash flow problems.

Controlling and understanding your finances makes decisions easier. And you'll sleep better at night.

Anticipating Change and Adaptability

Change is inevitable, and the rate of change gets ever faster. In today's world, your company needs to anticipate and respond to change quickly and train its employees to be adaptable. Nimble companies that can quickly evaluate and respond to changing conditions are most likely to be successful.

In planning for change, keep in mind the kinds of conditions that will affect your business' future. They include:

- **Technological Changes.** It's impossible to predict the exact technological developments that will affect your industry, but you can be sure that you will be faced with such changes. Even if you make old-fashioned chocolate chip cookies, you'll find that advancements in oven design, food storage, or inventory control software will place competitive pressures on your business. Competitors' technological advances may cause significant downward pricing pressures on you.
- **Sociological Changes.** Evaluate demographic and lifestyle trends in light of their potential influence on your business. In the cookie business, for example, consumer interest in natural foods or the number of school-age children in the population may influence the number and kinds of cookies you sell. What sociological factors have the greatest impact on your company? Keep your eye on trends that represent true change; be careful not to build a business on passing fads.
- **Competitive Changes.** New businesses start every day. How hard is it for a new competitor to enter the market, and what are the **barriers to entry**? The Internet makes it possible for companies all over the world to compete against each other, increasing the number and type of competitors you may face.

When developing your business plan, consider how your company deals with these outside changes. Also anticipate major internal changes, such as growth, the arrival or departure of key personnel, and new products or services.

No business is static. Planning a company responsive to change will make the inevitable changes easier. See Chapter 6 for more on anticipating change.

A Company's Values and Integrity

Every company must make money. You can't stay in business unless you eventually earn a profit. However, studies of business success over time have shown that companies that emphasize goals in addition to making money succeed better and survive longer than companies whose sole motivation is monetary.



You need to be able to fail fast and fail forward. At PayPal, our business started out as sending money between Palm Pilots, then we had the idea of sending money over email. We saw the need for electronic payments, but we weren't wedded to the idea of something that wasn't working."

*Premal Shah
President, Kiva*



Passion is a prerequisite. If you don't have passion, you're not going to be successful. Entrepreneurship is not purely a numbers game. But you can't be stupidly passionate, you have to do your homework."

*Damon Doe
Banker*

As you develop your business plan, keep in mind those values you wish to have characterize the company you are creating or expanding. These values can be aimed externally (at achieving some business, social, or environmental goal) or they can be aimed internally (at achieving a certain type of workplace or quality of product or service) or both.

Articulating your company's values to employees, suppliers, and even your customers can strengthen their commitment to your business. Values-driven companies often have greater success in attracting and retaining good employees, and they can usually better weather short-term financial setbacks because employees and management share a commitment to goals in addition to financial rewards.

A company is likewise strengthened by maintaining integrity in all aspects of its dealings—with employees, customers, suppliers, and the community. Certainly, you will face situations where it appears that you will be at a disadvantage if you are more honest than your competitors or more fair than other employers. However, the long-term benefits of earning and keeping a reputation for integrity outweigh the perceived immediate disadvantages. A clear policy of honesty and fairness makes decision-making in difficult situations easier, inspires customer and employee loyalty, and helps avoid costly lawsuits and regulatory fines. It's also the right thing to do.

Responding to Global Opportunities and Trends

Today's business world is a global world. In all aspects of your business, you may find it possible to be working internationally. Even a small company with an online presence may be selling its products internationally. Certainly, your raw materials or inventory may come from global sources. You may have competitors, suppliers, employees, contractors, and partners worldwide. A successful business in this environment must at least evaluate international opportunities and consider international threats when constructing a business plan.

Some of the global considerations to keep in mind as you develop your business plan are:

- **Target market.** Because of the electronically connected world, it's possible to target a market even halfway around the globe, and that can be a way to significantly expand your market opportunities. If you have a highly niche product, your customers may be widely scattered internationally, and you may need to or want to serve a wide geographic area. Even if you plan to concentrate on a local or domestic market, you must address how you'll serve international customers who find you online. Successful companies today at least evaluate international market opportunities when choosing which markets to target.
- **Competitors.** It's far easier than ever for global competition to enter local markets. Certainly, if you are selling a product—even a fairly mundane one—you may find yourself competing with online international companies.



Getting sufficient supplies can be challenging. When we launched our Honest Kids organic drink pouch, we had to buy half the world's supply of organic, kosher grape juice."

*Seth Goldman
Cofounder, Honest Tea*

- **Suppliers.** Whether for raw materials for production/manufacturing or inventory for sale, it is likely that at least some of your supplies will come from countries other than your own. You should certainly consider sourcing material and inventory globally as you grow your company.
- **Labor.** It is no longer necessary for your employees or contractors to be located in the same office, same city, or even same country as you. Finding workers—especially technology or manufacturing labor—in other countries may offer significant labor cost reduction. It is now typical for companies to “offshore” many tasks, and flexible companies evaluate some of those opportunities. Of course, managing a far-distant labor supply has significant challenges, and you must think those through as you plan the global aspects of your business.
- **Legal issues.** Whether protecting your **intellectual property (IP)**, ensuring that you follow all necessary laws and regulations, or dealing with international tax or finance issues, you will certainly need to understand the legal issues affecting you as you work globally.
- **Partners.** As you think about expanding your business internationally, one approach is to find existing companies “on the ground” in those markets to partner with. This can make your entry far easier, help you understand local business customs and practices, and better serve your market.
- **Social responsibility.** The best international companies are good global citizens. As you work globally, make certain that you are always acting in a socially responsible manner—whether dealing with labor issues, human rights, the environment, bribery, or corruption.

What Motivates You?

Personal Satisfaction: The Four Cs

For smaller enterprises, sole proprietorships, or businesses in which one or two key members of management have primary control, issues of personal satisfaction can be a central element in determining long-term success. Some businesses fail, and others flounder, because their founders, owners, or key managers are uncertain what they really want to achieve or because they did not structure the company and their responsibilities in ways that satisfy their personal needs and ambitions.

It is useful to evaluate and consider your personal goals when deciding on the nature of your business development. For most entrepreneurs, these goals can be summed up by the Four Cs: Control, Challenge, Creativity, and Cash.

Control

How much control you need to exercise on a day-to-day basis influences how large your company can be. If you prefer to be involved in every business decision or are uncomfortable delegating or sharing authority, your business should be designed to stay small. Likewise, if you need a great deal of control over your time (because of family or personal demands), a smaller business without rapid expansion is more appropriate.

“First and foremost you have to have passion. You’ve got to understand why you’re in the business, you have to understand why you’re going to be wildly successful, and you have to be able to sell it to people. It’s very easy to write a business plan with lots of pretty charts and graphs and research quotes, and if you can’t present it to coworkers, employees, investors, and ultimately to the customer, you’re not going anywhere. You always have to have the passionate person who lives and breathes, eats and sleeps the idea.”

Andrew Anker
Venture Capitalist



Writing a business plan forces you into disciplined thinking if you do an intellectually honest job. An idea may sound great in your own mind, but when you put down the details and numbers, it may fall apart.”

**Eugene Kleiner
Venture Capitalist**

In a large company, you will have less immediate control over many decisions, and others will share in decision-making. Structure your management reporting systems to ensure that as the company grows, you continue to have sufficient information about and direction over developments to give you personal satisfaction. If you are seeking outside funding, understand the nature of control your funders will have and be certain you are comfortable with these arrangements.

Challenge

If you are starting or expanding a business, you are likely to be a problem-solver and risk-taker, enjoying the task of figuring out solutions to problems or devising new undertakings.

It is important to recognize the extent of your need for new challenges and develop positive means to meet this need, especially once your company is established and the initial challenge of starting a company is met. Otherwise, you may find yourself continually starting new projects that divert attention from your company’s overall goals. As you plan your company, establish personal goals that provide you with sufficient stimulation, while also advancing the growth of your business.

Creativity

Entrepreneurs want to leave their mark. Their companies are not only a means of making a living, but a way of creating something that bears their stamp. That’s why many businesses carry the founder’s name.

Creativity comes in many forms. For some, it is the creativity involved with designing or making a new “thing”—a fashion designer creating a line of clothes, a software developer writing a new program, a real estate developer erecting a new building. For others, it may be the creativity of coming up with a new business process. Creativity also comes into play in finding new ways to make sales, handle customers, or reward employees.

If you have a high need for creativity, make certain you remain involved in the creative process as your company develops. You’ll want to shape your business so it is not just an instrument for earning an income but also a mechanism for maintaining creative stimulation and making a larger contribution to society. But don’t overpersonalize your company, especially if it is large. Allow room for others, particularly partners and key personnel, to share in the creative process.

Cash

Understand how your personal financial goals have an impact on your business plan. For instance, if you require substantial current income, you may need investors so you have sufficient cash to carry you through the lean startup time. This means you will share ownership interest with others, and the business must be devised for substantial profit potential to reward those investors appropriately.

Likewise, if your aim is to build a very large company and accumulate substantial income or wealth quickly, you will need outside investors to

finance such rapid development or expansion. Once again, this means giving up more control over your company.

If, on the other hand, your current income needs are less demanding or your overall financial goals more modest, you may be able to forego giving up a piece of your company to investors and instead expand your business more slowly through sales or through loans or credit lines. Keep in mind there is sometimes a trade-off between personal goals: Wanting more cash often means having less control.

Examine your personal goals and those of key personnel using The Four Cs worksheet on page 16.

Chapter Summary

A successful business plan not only ensures that you achieve your short-term objectives, it also helps secure the long-term viability of your business. When developing your plan, keep in mind the underlying factors affecting business success and personal satisfaction. Make sure your business concept is clear and focused and your market is well-defined. Understand the key trends in your industry, both nationally and globally, and develop responsive, disciplined management procedures.





The Four Cs

Each founder or key employee in small companies or startups should complete their own copy of this worksheet. Check the level of importance to you in each area.

	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Not Important
CONTROL				
Over own work responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over own time, work hours, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over company decisions and directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over products/services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over other employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over work environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over social/environmental impact of products/services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over own future and business' future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____				

CHALLENGE				
Long-term problem solving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Critical problem solving (putting out fires)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handling many issues at one time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continually dealing with new issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perfecting solutions, products, or services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organizing diverse projects & keeping the group goal-focused	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____				

CREATIVITY				
Determining the design or look of products/packaging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creating new products or services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Devising new business procedures/policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identifying new company opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creating new business materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Devising new ways of doing "old" things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____				

CASH	
List approximate dollar ranges for each of the following. Measure wealth as the value of stocks or the company.	
Income needed currently _____	Wealth desired in 2–5 years _____
Income desired within 12–24 months _____	Wealth desired in 6–10 years _____
Income desired in 2–5 years _____	Wealth desired in 10+ years _____

Getting Your Plan Started

You find easy answers only by asking tough questions.

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Accomplishments

In this chapter, you'll:

- Develop your business research skills
- Identify the basic information and data you'll need to prepare your business plan
- Discover sources of data and information to help you make decisions
- Conduct basic market research and understand market research methods
- Evaluate data you've collected
- Analyze the feasibility and viability of your business concept



KEY TO SUCCESS

A great deal can happen in even a few years, so it's generally better to present data from the last year or two, if you can find it. Some exceptions exist though. U.S. Census data is considered to be useful and authoritative, yet it often lags a few years because such a large amount of data is collected and analyzed.



The Business Plan Process

Once you determine that a business plan is a necessary tool for your company, you may wonder, “Where do I start?” Because a plan requires detailed information on almost every aspect of your business, including industry, market, operations, and personnel, the process can seem overwhelming.

The business plan process entails five fundamental steps:

1. Laying out your basic business concept.
2. Gathering data on the feasibility and specifics of your concept.
3. Focusing and refining the concept based on the data you compile.
4. Outlining the specifics of your business.
5. Putting your plan in compelling form.

The first step is to lay out your basic business concept. In the previous chapter, you were provided a worksheet on which to delineate the various components of your business. With an existing operation, it may be tempting to skip over this step, but if you wish to develop strategies for future success, you must first examine the assumptions underlying your current efforts.

The focus of this chapter is on steps 2 and 3: gathering and interpreting the data you need. Solid information gives you a realistic picture of what happens in businesses similar to yours, as well as a better understanding of your own company. *You can then evaluate and refocus your concept in light of your newly acquired information; a worksheet provided on pages 39–40 will help you with this evaluation.*

Once you have compiled sufficient information and reevaluated your business concept, you can begin to actually write your plan. By following the chapters of this book and completing the Plan Preparation Forms, you can shape your plan into a compelling document.

Developing a business plan is much more a business project than a writing assignment. The process itself—not just the document produced—can positively affect the success of your business. During the everyday operation of your business, you seldom have time to think through the kinds of issues you'll examine while putting together your business plan;

the planning process gives you a rare opportunity to enhance your knowledge of how your company, market, and industry work.

Gathering Information

Knowledge is power. With accurate information at your fingertips, you make better business decisions as well as a more persuasive presentation of your plan when meeting with a banker, potential investor, or divisional president. Savvy investors use a business plan not merely to learn about a new business concept but as a means to judge whether an entrepreneur has the knowledge and exercises the **due diligence** necessary to run a business. So take time to do your homework. Sufficient research prevents you from placing inaccurate information in your plan—a mistake that can keep you from getting funded—and enables you to make informed decisions.

If you're new to an industry or to business management, allow yourself more time on your research efforts and start with general background information. Use the research project as an opportunity to educate yourself on the key issues of your industry, not merely as a way to find the specific details you need for your particular company.

To begin your information-gathering efforts, start by checking the resources listed later in this chapter and in the References & Resources chapters at the back of the book. First, seek general information about each of the areas you've identified in your Basic Business Concept worksheet from Chapter 1. As you progress, focus your research on more-specific issues, compiling the details necessary to make operational and financial decisions. Chapters 4 through 17 outline the data you need to complete each section of your business plan, and in some cases include suggestions of possible sources of such information.

How Much Information Is Enough?

It is relatively easy to get a great deal of information online; it is likewise easy to feel overwhelmed with so much of it. Conversely, you will also feel frustrated because some critical data is proprietary and unavailable. The difficult challenge is determining which information is important and how much information is enough to put in your plan, especially if you are seeking funding.

Don't try to be exhaustive in your research efforts; it's not necessary or possible. You are merely looking for information that will answer the key questions about your business. At the same time, your research must be thorough enough to give you, and those reading your plan, confidence that the answers are accurate and from reliable sources.

For example, if you are manufacturing dolls, you might identify your target market as girls between the ages of 4 and 10. One of the questions you need to address in your plan is, "How large is the market?" For this, you may have to consult only one source, the U.S. Census Bureau, to find a reliable answer. However, other questions that arise, such as, "What are the trends in doll-buying habits?" may require consulting three or four industry sources or undertaking your own market research to compile information you can trust.

key terms

Business Model Canvas

A tool for describing some elements of a new business in a one-page, visual format. It was originally created by Swiss management consultant Alexander Osterwalder.

Distributor

Company or individual that arranges for the sale of products from manufacturer to retail outlets; the proverbial "middleman."

Due Diligence

The process undertaken by venture capitalists, investment bankers, or others to thoroughly investigate a company before financing; required by law before offering securities for sale.

Milestone

A particular business achievement by which a company can be judged.

Profit Margin

The amount of money earned after the cost of goods (gross profit margin) or all operating expenses (net profit margin) are deducted; usually expressed in percentage terms.

Proprietary Technology or Information

Technology or information belonging to a company; private information not to be disseminated to others.

Receipts

Funds coming in to the company; the actual money paid to the company for its products or services; not necessarily the same as a company's real revenues.



A lot of entrepreneurs don't pay attention to the financial side of the house, and that's where we see a lot of them fail. They relegate finance and accounting to the back seat."

Damon Doe
Banker

Start Your Research by Asking Questions

Start your research by making a general statement that is the basis of your business (or a portion of your business). For example, if you are planning to open a sporting goods store in Chandler, Arizona, your statement might be: "There is a substantial need for a sporting goods store to serve the city of Chandler."

Next, make a list of questions that logically follow from and challenge that statement. Here are some questions you might then ask:

- How many sporting goods stores now serve the area?
- How profitable are the current sporting goods stores in the area?
- Are residents generally satisfied with the current sporting goods stores?
- Is there more business than current sporting goods stores can handle?
- What are the trends in the sporting goods industry nationally?
- What are the demographic trends in Chandler?
- How do Chandler demographics relate to national sporting goods trends and statistics?

As another example, your statement might be: "There is a profitable way to provide psychological counseling online." The questions following from and challenging that statement could include:

- What companies are already providing such a service?
- What is the size of the market for psychological counseling now?
- What indications are there that consumers would be willing to get counseling online?
- What portion of the existing psychological counseling market is it reasonable to expect would transfer to online counseling?
- How many consumers who do not currently get counseling could reasonably be expected to be attracted to online counseling?
- What are the key technology issues necessary to conduct such counseling, securely, online?
- What laws or regulations would affect the ability to offer such services?

After formulating your list of questions, look for answers. You will find some of your answers by searching government and trade associations' websites. Others you'll find by consulting reference material through a library or business development center or by contacting industry associations or hiring paid research services. To get some answers, you will have to conduct your own market research by talking to potential customers, meeting with other business owners, or observing foot traffic at similar or nearby establishments.

As you start the business plan process, use the Research Questions worksheet on page 21 to record the general questions you have at this point and the issues you will investigate. Look not only for specific current details but also for trends and patterns.





Research Questions

List the questions you will examine in each area of your business, using the categories below as guidelines.

Industry/Sector: _____

Products/Services: _____

Target Market: _____

Competition: _____

Marketing and Sales Strategy: _____

Operations/Technology: _____

Long-Term Considerations: _____



The first thing I did when I got serious about starting a business was delete the solitaire program on my computer. I had to get to work.”

Seth Goldman
Cofounder, Honest Tea

How much information you gather will be, to a large extent, a result of your resources, of both time and money. If you are working on a business plan for a one-person business while holding down a full-time job, you don't need to compile the same amount of information appropriate for a large corporation with a market research budget and staff.

Staying on Top of Your Material

During the course of your planning process, you will accumulate a great deal of information and many documents. Set up a way to organize the material you gather, such as your notes, ideas, and contact information, right as you begin.

Make individual files, either on your computer or in paper files, of the different topic areas corresponding to the chapters of this book. Add information to the files as you go along. Otherwise, you may find yourself unable to locate specific details you need when you are actually preparing your written document. As you gather data, write down the source and date of information; otherwise you may later find yourself with data and no way to verify or attribute it.

The planning process also enables you to meet many people who can be very helpful to you later, when you run your business. It is likely that you will interview potential customers, suppliers, competitors, and strategic partners, as well as other industry sources. Keep a file of all these contacts as you do your research, so you easily know how to reach them.

Sources of Information

If this is your first time conducting business research, you may be surprised at just how much information exists. Mountains of statistics and bookshelves of studies are available concerning virtually every endeavor and activity of American life. Without difficulty, you can find data revealing the average purchase in a fast-food restaurant, how many laptops and tablets were sold last year, and the likely number of new housing units that will be built in your community in the coming year.

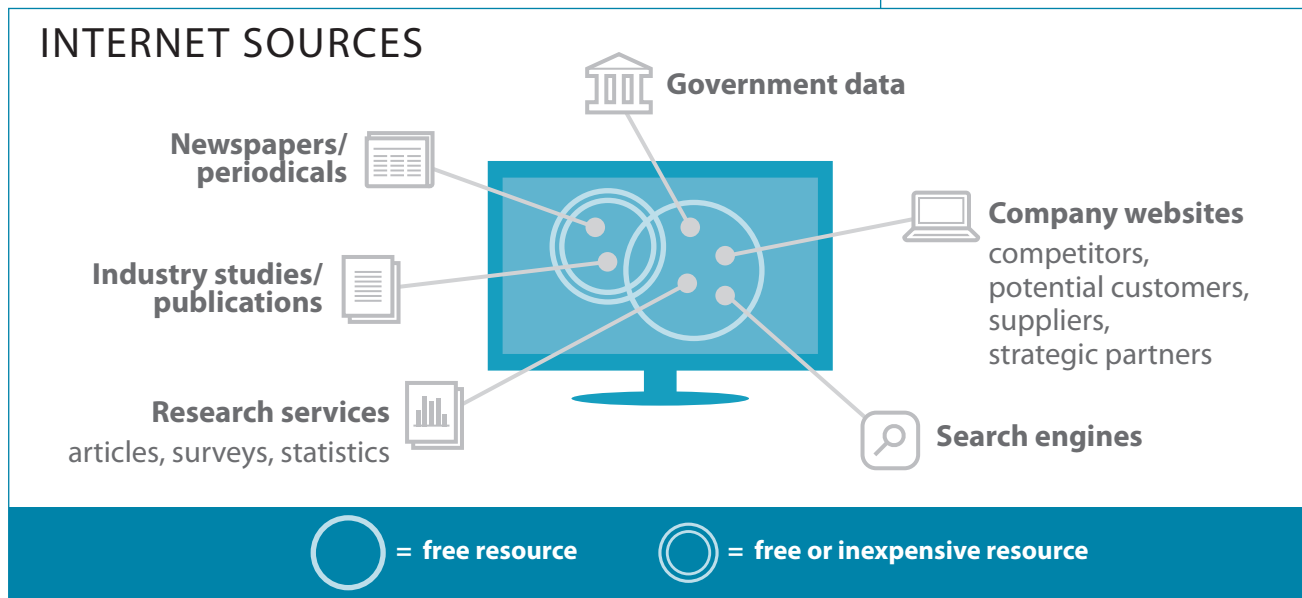
You can locate most of the general information you require from government sources, business publications, and trade associations. To find more specific information relative to your particular business or industry, you may have to undertake some market research. In a limited number of cases, when you either lack the time to do the research yourself or are involved in a new industry or one in which data is mostly proprietary, you may have to utilize paid sources of information.

Sources of general information are listed in this chapter and in the References & Resources chapters at the end of the book. Sources of more particular information relating to costs, equipment, or other specific areas of your business are listed in the appropriate chapters of this book.

Keep in mind that contact information, particularly website addresses, changes frequently.

Online

The best, easiest, and least expensive place to start your research is online.



Government Sources and Statistics

As a taxpayer, you've already paid for your government to collect vast quantities of information, so you'll be able to get more data free from government sources than from private research services or other sources. This is true not only for the United States as a whole, but for most state and some local governments, and many other countries as well.

Most of the information collected by the U.S. Government, as well as most states, is available online. As you begin your research, you may find it helpful to know your NAICS code. This may make finding specific information relating to your type of business easier.

NAICS CODES

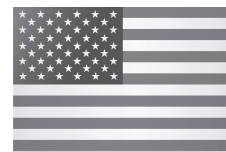
www.census.gov/eos/www/naics

NAICS is the abbreviation for North American Industry Classification System. It replaces the older Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes. Each industry—and subsector of each industry—is assigned a specific NAICS number.

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

www.census.gov

The U.S. Census Bureau, part of the Department of Commerce, is the government agency with the primary responsibility for collecting and disseminating in-depth data on all aspects of American life. You may be aware that the Census gathers data on the American people: population, income, housing patterns, levels of education, and so on. But it also accumulates an enormous amount of data on the economic activity of the United



U.S. Research Sources

U.S. Government

U.S. Census Bureau
 U.S. Department of Commerce
 U.S. Department of Labor
 Internal Revenue Service
 Other government departments
 appropriate to your industry

Small Business Administration
 Securities and Exchange
 Commission (Edgar database)

State Government

Sales Tax
 Franchise Business Tax
 City and County Governments

Planning Departments
 New Business Licenses

**Quasi-Governmental Sources
 Industry & General Business**

Regional Planning Associations
 Trade Associations
 Trade Publications

Corporate Annual Reports
 ThomasNet

Community Services

Chambers of Commerce
 Banks
 Universities
 Newspaper and Online Libraries
 Entrepreneurs Associations

Merchants Associations
 Real Estate Agents

Computer Databases

Business and Trade Information
 Individualized Research Services

Market Research Sources

Customers
 Suppliers
 Distributors
 Independent Sales Representatives
 Managers of Related Businesses
 Loan Officers/Factors/Venture Capitalists
 Competitors

Paid Services

Industry-Related Research Firms
 Survey/Polling Firms
 Market Research Consultants

Internal Data

For existing businesses

Canadian Research Sources

Statistics Canada
 Canada Business
 Canadian Industry Statistics (CIS)

International Research Sources

The World Bank
 International Data Base (IDB)

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