

Inside a healthy business plan

Like the human body, all parts of your business plan must fit together in order to perform a function. Start by figuring out what that function is – will you use the plan to attract investors, soothe lenders or simply guide your team?

The value of a healthy business plan

500 hours

Amount of time a management team should invest in building a solid plan.

[Source: Caycon.com]



Up to \$8,000

Optional cost to pay a business consultant to write your plan.

[Source: AZCentral.com]

2X



People who finished their business plans are twice as likely to grow their business, get investment, or secure a loan.

[Source: Bplans.com]

Check your plan for these vital signs

Don't be squeamish—take a look at the anatomy of a great business plan. Use the tips from this illustration to make sure your business plan is alive and well. If something's broken or missing, check the resources at the bottom of the page for a healing solution.

Well groomed

Pay attention to the visual appearance of your business plan. Insert illustrations, hire a graphic designer for layout and triple check spelling and grammar.

Clear vision

Get the reader excited about your plans by presenting your long-term vision for the business.

Good ears

Share what you learned by listening to future customers in your market research section. Explain the problem your business solves for them.

Breath of life managers

Qualify each business partner with a short bio and briefly explain how they will keep the organization functioning.

Stomach size

If your plan seeks to attract money from investors or lenders, identify the amount of money you need to start-up and how those funds will be digested.

Another kidney

Talk about your back-up strategy if your business runs into difficulty—like a new competitor entering the marketplace.

Bones of your operation

Explain how your systems will function together to produce output.

Smart numbers

Appeal to left-brain logic with conservative financial projections well-supported with industry statistics and your own market research. Ask an accountant to help you prepare an income statement, balance sheet and cash flow forecast.

Talk about sales

Your marketing and sales section should talk about your target customer and how you'll get them to buy from you instead of your competitors. Include your pricing strategy.

Your passionate heart

Share your personal reasons for starting your business: to solve a problem, change the world, feed your family or create jobs.

Busy hands

Clearly describe what your business will do and the product or service it will offer.

Walking away

Disclose your long-term plan to sell the business. Investors in particular want to know how and when they will reap a reward.



Get tested

Make your plan stronger by testing it first. Get it reviewed by your lawyer, banker, accountant and a few experienced business people.



Trim the fat

Keep your business plan brief—ideally 10 to 15 pages with supporting documents attached as appendices.



Nine months to grow a baby

Don't rush to develop your business plan. Allow enough time for research, conducting feasibility tests, consulting with experts, collecting cost estimates and figuring out marketing strategy.

Congratulations! All of your parts are now in place.

Check the overall health of your plan with these resources

- Make sure you've covered these 7 aspects of starting-up in the [Scotiabank Compass for business tool](#). Be sure to use the Business Action Plan on that page to work through your ideas and strategies.
- Put your business plan together using the [Scotia Plan Writer](#) for business tool.
- Share your plan with a [Scotiabank Small Business Advisor](#) so he or she can recommend helpful products and services.