

# Why Do I Need a Business Plan? I already know what I'm doing

By Robert Gerrish

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Good question. Maybe you don't. But then again if you're a tad stuck/stale/lost/confused/overwhelmed...(have I got to you yet?)...then just maybe you'd benefit from a plan; in fact I'll put money on it.

I'm not talking here of pages and pages of stuff that tell you where your office is and what your projected expenses on photocopying will be in 2010, I'm talking about documenting a path that excites you.

I call it my four step plan: P.L.A.N.

## 1. Ponder

First off, we need some space; time to think. I suggest putting aside blocks of three to four hours in which you can really concentrate; immerse yourself in your future. Ways to really make this happen are:

- block out the time in your diary and don't let anyone mess with it
- divert your phone to messagebank
- consider getting out of the office and go somewhere quiet - a library, a park, a café

Arm yourself with a blank sheet of paper and a pen and start writing words or doodling pictures that reflect your future dreams. For the purposes of this exercise let's say our dream is one we wish to reach in 2 years. Include thoughts on

- where you'd like to be
- how you'd like to be working
- what income you'd like

At this point be wild and creative; don't listen to your timid side. For a plan to mean anything we have to get 'buy-in' from the boss (you, dummy!) and excitement is the best motivator.

## 2. Look

Ok, now let's look at what opportunities for expansion exist within your current work over the next 2 years. What can we do to realise the dreams you have set?

Planning any move requires the clarification of a vision. If you're after really BIG changes try looking at each area of your business and imagine how trends and innovations will affect them.

Take each business offering (whether a product or service) and project it forward. How will you deliver this in 2 years? What new possibilities will exist?

Maybe when you look, you'll see yourself with ten times more clients, possibly ten times more profit or income. What shifts in focus would these require? Would you invest your time and energy differently? How would your priorities change? Perhaps you would have a different focus.

Look to the future, it will help clarify the steps to take now.

### 3. Articulate

It's time to share your thoughts with others and get their input. As a starter, try listing all the obstacles that may stand in your future path. Talk to friends, colleagues and your clients to help you identify turbulent areas, blind spots and barriers that may prevent you from growing. For each of the obstacles you identify, listen for possible solutions. Be creative and flexible and aim to come up with solutions that are fast and responsive.

When a problem arises, you want to be able zap it quickly and there's no better way to respond to a hurdle than pre-empting it. Keep your list of possible problems and alternative solutions handy.

Take as much advice as you can get. Show your plan to your accountant, your coach, your solicitor, your family and friends. This is particularly important for those of us who work alone. It's not always easy to believe in something all on your own. But with the support and insights of people whose opinion you respect, you have a much better chance of maintaining your own enthusiasm.

### 4. Nudge

Now you've got a picture of where you want to go and the opportunities that exist, you need to work out how to get there. My advice is to take the most direct route, the path of least resistance. With the dream as your goal, and with all your obstacles identified, begin detailing the steps along the way.

Make the steps small and achievable and diarise them over the weeks ahead. Start each week, even each day, with a small list of tasks. Nudge yourself into action or have friends appointed as nudgers.

You will also need to re-assess your plan from time to time. Conditions change – opportunities arise and disappear all the time. And inevitably, you will change. A good business plan is a dynamic one and includes plans for change. Take the time to step outside your business regularly, to redefine your most important tasks, and keep yourself on track – even if the nature of the dream has changed.

Robert Gerrish supports business owners on a path to loving their work. From his base in Sydney, he coaches clients from the US, Europe & Australasia. There's a mass of resources for those going it alone in business at his website: <http://www.solotalk.com>

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