

7 STEPS TO AN AMAZING BLOG BUSINESS PLAN WORKSHEET

This worksheet, along with the accompanying blog post, will help teach you how to create a Blog Business Plan that can turn your side hobby (and hustle) into your full-time business that pays all the bills and more.

Remember: More than 95% of successful mega businesses all use business plans, which experts have agreed factored in their success. It's also a must if you plan to approach a bank or other investor for a business loan. So you definitely need a blog business plan.

Quick sidenote if you are new to blogging... we don't want to lose you right here! So if you're brand new to blogging, don't go into panic mode. While it may be a bit harder to complete this worksheet, *you can still create your business plan*. On the plus side, even more so being new at this, keep in mind you are giving yourself a *much better chance of success* after creating your blog business plan than you were before.

Be sure to refer to the accompanying blog article to help you complete this worksheet.

Now let's get started!

FIRST STEP: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Mission Statement

Your Mission Statement is a brief explanation of what your business (blog) is all about.

➤ What is your mission statement?

2. Growth Highlights

This is where you mention the growth that you've already achieved. (If you're new at this, don't worry too much. If you have had a successful business before, perhaps include a brief example or two of growth highlights of that business to show you have indeed done it before.)

- What are your growth highlights?

3. Products And/Or Services

This is a brief summary of a couple of sentences about the products and services you'll be using to monetize your blog. (There's another section later to go much more in depth about your products and services.)

- What are your products and/or services?

4. Goals

Share your plans for the future of your blog, as well as any exciting goals you wish to achieve. What are those dreams keeping you awake at night? (Don't go overboard and list 100 goals in your business plan. Keep it realistic.)

- What are your goals? (If needed, attach a separate sheet.)

SECOND STEP: BUSINESS DESCRIPTION OF YOUR BLOG

Now let's tackle the organization and culture of your blog. Odds are you don't have a company culture yet, but it is similar to you building your brand, so no worries.

1. Differentiate Your Blog From Others

Spend quality time thinking about why someone would prefer to read your blog rather than a competitor's blog with similar content. (There's a spot later for serious competitor analysis, so keep it simple here.)

- How is your blog different from others?

2. Who You Serve

Your target audience! What you include here should basically revolve around your target audience. Be clear and very specific about who you server. Filling in the below questions will help you.

Remember: Most people erroneously assume blogging is just putting up whatever content comes to mind, then later figuring out the people who like the content. Blogging is very, very different from that. First focus on who you wish to serve, then creating content for them.

- What is their age?

- What is their gender?

- What is their educational background?

- What purpose does your blog serve?
- How and what do you want visitors to feel when they interact with your blog?
- What words describe your blog's personality?

4. Organizational Structure

It is worth mentioning here and not just in my blog post that this is one time when being a do-it-yourselfer can really bite you in the behind later (even if you use one of those handy dandy do-it-yourself kits you can find online). This is even more true if you are in a blogging industry that has some sort of high risk. If you start that route, at least have a licensed professional such as an attorney or accountant help you at the end. They can help you understand the tax and potential legal ramifications of the various choices.

If you are fairly new to blogging and will address this in the future, at least enter a date or a monthly revenue amount that will trigger revisiting this issue.

- What is your Organizational Structure?

THIRD STEP: ANALYSIS OF COMPETITORS

Before launching your blog, especially before turning it into a business, it is essential you research your competitors and similar blogs. However, be careful you are doing your research the right way.

Here are two things to watch out for. 1) You're there for research analysis and nothing else. Do not get distracted, even if it starts getting the creative ideas and juices flowing. 2) Feel motivated rather than discouraged if the competitor's site looks better or has more followers, more clients, or any other statistic that may make you feel inferior.

Remember: If your competitors have a lot of clients and followers, that's actually great! It helps reinforce that you've chosen a niche where people do indeed want what you have to offer!

1. Your Competitors

Be very specific. Make a list of each blogger you consider to be a competitor (typically others in your niche doing something similar with similar products or services). Include links to their websites. Without going overboard, be thorough rather than looking at just one or two. (Add more spots to the list below if need be.)

Here are some simple ways to find your competitors: 1) Join Facebook groups, 2) Make Google your friend, and 3) Be active on social media.

1) Competitor name: _____

Website Link: _____

2) Competitor name: _____

Website Link: _____

3) Competitor name: _____

Website Link: _____

4) Competitor name: _____

Website Link: _____

5) Competitor name: _____

Website Link: _____

6) Competitor name: _____

Website Link: _____

- What are their goals? (This can be tough to determine, but thorough research should get you at least a general idea of what each may be trying to achieve.)

3. Know Their Price Points And Ranges

Does your competition offer products, services or both? Make a list with price ranges for each of them. (Be reasonable. If they have 100 products, choose those closest to yours or perhaps just the top 10 or one or two of each "type" of product or service.) Your lists will be helpful when creating your own pricing.

Attach your results to this worksheet.

- What are the price points and ranges for each competitor?

4. List Their Strengths And Weaknesses

Select up to five competitors and write a detailed list of their strengths and weaknesses. This can help you create your own well-rounded strategy, as well as help you fill gaps the niche may have.

| <i>Competitor</i> | <i>Strengths</i> | <i>Weaknesses</i> |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

FOURTH STEP: AUDIENCE RESEARCH

In our second step I talked about needing to be clear on who you serve. Not it's time to dig a little deeper on that.

1. Conduct an Audience Survey

Surveys are a smart way to better know and understand your audience. It also eliminates guess work. Use a short timeframe such as two or three weeks, and be sure to mention the deadline to respond. If you have a small audience or don't have one yet, instead keep an eye on social media like Facebook groups and Twitter chats to gain valuable information about your target audience.

Creating surveys can be quick, easy and fun. There are free sites like KwikSurveys, SurveyMonkey or even Google Forms to help you.

- What tool (website) will you use to create your survey?

- How will you make your survey available (link in newsletter, a post, etc.)?

- How will you entice your audience to take your survey? (Hint: Making it a 20-question survey that will take an hour to complete isn't going to do it!)

- While you don't need to limit yourself to only these, what are 3 to 5 of the most important questions to ask? (Again, see hint above. You can always do more than one survey or have a follow-up survey for just one segment based on replies.)

2. Specific Ways You Can Help Your Audience

Consider your brand personality and the results of your competitor analysis in the third step. The key here is specific. What is that specific thing you can do to solve the problems of your audience that your competitors are not doing? (This is what will help make you stand out. If it's not original, even executing an existing solution in a fresh and easier way that is flavored with your brand's flair and personality!)

- What are some specific ways you can help your audience?

FIFTH STEP: BUILD A STRONG COMMUNITY

You need to grow your community (prospective clients) before launching a product for sale otherwise you have no customers to buy from you. So you also need to grow your traffic.

Here are a few way you can grow your traffic and build a solid community for your blog.

1. Social Media

This is usually the most common way to build a blogging community. As you proceed with drafting your blog business plan, it's equally essential you create your social media strategy. In doing that, let the following points guide you:

- On which platforms does your target market hang out on the most?

- How will you locate your target audience on each platform?

- What strategies will you adopt on each platform to grow your audience and community?

- On which platforms will your presence be the strongest?

2. List Of Subscribers

You know you don't really have control over your social media accounts, right? I mean, if Facebook or Pinterest pack up shop, you could be left without an audience because you don't really own those accounts.

Email is different. You own the list (and hopefully you also own regular backup copies!) and can reach your audience whenever, wherever. As you set up your list of subscribers, keep the following points at the front of your mind.

- What will you use as your lead magnet?

- What strategies will you use to grow your subscriber list?

- How often will you mail your subscribers?

- What kind of content will you send?

3. Humanize Your Brand

Customers want to know who they're dealing with and who they buy from. To really build a true blogging business and a strong community you must humanize your brand. This simply means you take candid steps to make your audience feel connected to you, and that they should also be able to relate to you as a person.

- What steps will you take to help your target audience be able to relate to you as a person?

SIXTH STEP: YOUR PRODUCT AND/OR SERVICE

It's exciting having a blog that fetches you a full-time income and pays all the bills! This step teaches you what to do to turn your blog into a rainmaker, a money spinner and your full-time business.

What will you do? Create a digital product? Offer some type of service? Below are tips to help get you on your way.

1. What You Will Sell

What will help your target market? This is where you should be completely detailed. To help you, use the following points below.

- What type of product will you offer, such as a webinar, workshop, or perhaps an ecourse?

- What is the purchase price?

- When will you launch?

- How many hours will the webinar or workshop run? How many modules will the ecourse have?

- What topics will be covered?

- Will you also offer services?

- If so, what kind?

- What are the components of your services (documents, recordings, etc.)?

- What type of package(s) will you offer?

- What is the price point for each?

- Within what timeframe will the services be delivered?

- What will you do to handle customer service?

2. Benefits Your Clients Receive

Always remember your blog business plan revolves around serving your audience. Without them you wouldn't have a blogging community or even a business! So instead of it only being about how to make money, your services and products should have an evident impact on your blogging community. What you offer must answer why they needed or wanted it in the first place.

- What benefits do your clients receive from your products and/or services?

3. Your Offerings Should Differ From Those Of Your Competitors

You're not the only one selling that product or service, so you need to research what makes yours different from the crowd. If there is no obvious difference, then ask yourself how you can make it different, or what extra value you can add to make it different. Be creative and think outside the box!

- How are your products and/or services different than those of your competitors?

SEVENTH STEP: SALES AND MARKETING STRATEGY

In this final step you'll be learning sales and marketing strategies for those services and products you've created.

1. Marketing Your Blog, Services And Products

As ideas come to you, write them down immediately, including every strategy which can be employed to promote and market your services and products.

Remember: It's easy to cross things off the list later, but it can be hard to remember a great idea you let slip away!

- What are the methods you'll employ when promoting and marketing your content?

2. Daily Hours To Spend On Marketing

If you fail to specifically plan this, you could end up overspending precious time that could have been better spent. Set realistic hours per day and per week, even if it involves making some sacrifices.

Don't choose the number of hours based on what you think you "should" spend. You may need to start slower, but you have a better chance of reaching your time (and effort) goals, and reaching goals is always great!

- How many hours per day will you spend on marketing?

- Will you also spend hours over the weekend?

3. Launch Strategies

Whether you are a blogging newbie or an experienced blogger creating a brand new blog, you need launch strategies. It's possible to launch your services and products even before you officially start your blog. Think of ways you can get your target audience excited about your "coming soon" blog. (And be sure to get them on your subscriber list while doing that!)

- What launch strategies will you use?

4. Your Growth Strategy

You also need strategies to continue recording growth because growth needs to be ever increasing. Yes, slow and steady still counts! Consider ecourses, webinars, guest posts on other sites, or hiring an assistant to free up your time for other tasks that make your blog money.

You also need to track your growth and what works and what doesn't, not just log in and look at numbers every once in a while.

- What are some overall strategies you will use to keep having growth?

- If there are monthly strategies you can implement, what are they?

- If there are quarterly strategies you can implement, what are they?

- If there are yearly strategies you can implement, what are they?

- What method will you use to track growth, your measurable numbers?

Now that your worksheet is done, draft that blog business plan and make it happen! Turn your blog into a money making rainmaker. Make it your full-time business and income generator!