**Innovator International**

**Business Plan Template**

This business plan template is designed to help applicants for Innovator International programmes develop a plan which provides the precise information we need to assess your application.

As any business plan (and particularly those developed using this methodology) has to be based on factual statements and supported by evidence, it is intended as a way to present the state of your business and your ambition in a clear and concise manner. This subsequently maximises your chances of being successful in your application for a position on an Innovator International programme.

It should be noted that using this template does not guarantee endorsement. However, it has been designed in a way to demonstrate how robust your plan is by showing consistency and cohesion between each of the sections.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact us at:

info@innovatorinternational.com.

**Disclaimer**

***This template may only be used to develop plans for applications to Innovator International. It may not be used, copied or distributed for any other purpose.***

***This is NOT a guide detailing how any individual or business can develop a plan which will result in an endorsement.***

***You do not HAVE to use this template to apply for a position on Innovator International programmes. This is an example of a template which you may find helpful in structuring your business proposition.***

**Setting the Scene**

Think of your business plan as you, at an interview. How do you look? How do you talk? How long do you have? What level of information is appropriate?

Bearing this in mind, let’s start with the following basics:

1. Your business plan should be the right length - **30 pages is a good length** to get your story across for our purposes, depending upon your style of writing.
2. What’s most important is the **quality of the content, not the length**. It’s OK to send a little more if you need to provide additional information, but you might want to consider placing it in an appendix or additional reference document.
3. It should be **smart and easy to read, like a good book**. Open with a punchy executive summary, and take the reader through a journey. Anyone reading your plan wants to be as excited about your idea as you are.
4. Add pictures where they’re necessary. A picture can help your reader visualise what it is you’re trying to achieve and make the document more readable.
5. Pick a decent font in a good size. **Don’t write everything in bold**, but do use it on your key points you want to be noticed.
6. Provide the information that the reader wants, but don’t go overboard by using too many words. **Every section should be short, impactful and let the reader fully understand the situation** without tiring them. Keep their attention!
7. Think about your **attention to relevant detail**. We don’t need to know if you’re spending £500 on a printer, but if you’re developing a product or software, we need some insight on the process, timeframe and costs. Tell us what matters!
8. Pay attention to your timeframe and **make sure it’s realistic**. You’re highly unlikely to achieve your optimum sales targets in Month 1. Especially if you have to develop something which takes 4 months.
9. Send your document as a PDF, not a word document – it’s much easier to access!

**Business Name**

Add a logo or image if you have one

**Your Name(s)**

**Date the plan was written**

**Your email address for contact**

Any disclaimer / confidentiality conditions

**Index / Table of Contents**

A list of the main document headings and the corresponding page number. It really helps the reader if you automatically generate this section using the “insert table of contents” function on Word.

**1. Executive Summary**

*“Can you tell me about your entire business in a minute?”*

A summary of your whole plan in no more than a couple of pages. This should be the last thing that you write. A good tactic is to write your whole plan, and work on it until it feels just right. Then go back through each section, copy and paste the most important paragraph and paste it here. Then, read through this section with all of the pasted paragraphs.

* Does it make sense?
* Is it a good representation of your plan?
* If someone read this and nothing more, would they have a good idea of what you’re trying to achieve?

That’s what your executive summary should be. Something that someone can read in order to make a decision as to whether they want to read the rest of the document. This is your first impression. If you don’t make it interesting or compelling enough, the reader probably won’t turn to the next page!

**2. Introduction**

*“What is the consumer pain point, and how are you going to solve it?”*

This is one of the most important parts of the plan. It tells the reader what the problem actually is, and how you’re going to solve it.

You might want to let us know:

* What is the problem you’re solving? (we call this the customer “pain point”)
* How are you going to solve it – i.e. what is your product or service?
* A little more detail on your solution – why is it so good, and what are the major challenges that you will face (or have faced) in creating the solution?
* What will the world be like for the consumer when you’ve solved their problem?

**3. Market Assessment**

*“Does the plan address the market maturity, wider sector position, scale, geographical nuances, and competitors?”*

Within this section we’re looking to see that you have a good understanding of the market opportunity, the prospective clients and the competition. There should be a clear opportunity for the given market.

While it is good to provide an overview of the global, national or regional market statistics thorough desk based research, it’s much more valuable to provide specific detail about your precise client base and demonstrate how you have engaged with them to develop your specific opportunity.

**Speak to your prospective clients, how do they feel about your offering?**

You might want to let us know:

* What the current solutions look like
* Any market trends – are things moving in a certain direction?
* Who you’ve spoken to about your specific offering
* What they’ve said – are they interested, what would they pay?

**4. Marketing Strategy**

*“Is there a clear and achievable route to market addressing any major risk points?”*

While the previous question addressed how well you know your market, this section asks how you will engage them. Having a website and social media campaign may be essential but they’re often ‘necessary evils’ - i.e. they don’t add great value to what you do, but you can’t not have one. The challenge with websites and social media is that no-one looks at yours unless they’re highlighted to what you do.

This is where the Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT) becomes highly relevant - that is, the moment that a potential customer makes a decision to emotionally invest time in finding out more about you. To achieve this they will have typically heard about you, read about you or seen you in several places - so how, and where, are you going to let people know about what you do?

The worst plans are those which provide information which is so generic it could fit in any plan. Their marketing strategy usually says “we’ll sell though a website, social media and networking” without providing any detail. Let us know HOW you’re doing to target your PRECISE client base!

You might want to let us know:

* Where do you find your clients (where do they “hang out”)
* How are you going to gain their interest (just having a website won’t work…)
* Are there specific things you can do to make you different from the competition?

**5. Sales Strategy**

*"Does the plan include the capability to identify, develop and achieve the sales required to meet the financial needs of the business?”*

You've told us how you’re going to make people aware of what you do - now you need to let us know that you have the sales process knowledge and skills to seal the deal. Sales aren’t something that you start once you’ve developed your offering; one of the wisest pieces of advice I’ve ever received is that **“it’s better to sell something you haven’t yet made, than to make something you can’t sell”**.

One of the biggest challenges we encounter with businesses is when they are highly skilled in the areas where they are delivering a product (or service) to their clients, but they lack the basic sales skills to achieve their ambition or worth. To look at the previous quote in a different way, making it is the easy bit - the challenge comes in turning the idea into an invoice.

You might want to let us know:

* How you turn client interest into a sale
* Do you have any specific prior sales skills (hiring a salesperson is not good enough, often you can’t hire until you have revenue in the first place!)
* Do you have any specific methods for clinching client sales?

**6. Skills Strategy**

*“Does the business have the skills needed to complete their given tasks? Consider the full set of vocational (50%) and commercial skills (50%) required to make the business a success.”*

We consider two key areas here and assign 50% of the total maturity mark to each. The first 50% is allocated against the applicants skills to understand and deliver the product or services within the business. **If someone is starting a business in HR for the engineering sector, you’d expect them to have a good level of understanding of HR processes and/or engineering businesses.**

The second 50% addresses whether the person or team have the skill set to run the business. Do they have business management skills, a sales capacity, and any other core skills required to make the business a success? This is key in determining the viability of the business - i.e. does the applicant have the skill set to make the business work?

You might want to let us know:

* What skills do you have which are relevant to the application?
* What jobs have you done previously which bring relevant experience?
* Do you have personal interests which have brought you relevant experience?
* What skills do you think you will need to develop to make the business a success?

**7. Resource Planning**

*“Does the business have access to all of the knowledge, equipment and supply chain contacts they require in order to complete their functions?”*

Now that we’ve built a picture of what skills you have, we move on to resources. This section asks what resources you have and those you will need to acquire (other than your people) to help make the business a success. Resources typically include:

1. the **knowledge you need** to do the job (remember this may come from other people)
2. the **equipment you need** to complete and deliver a job (this may be software you’re designing)
3. the **contacts that you have** (who may provide knowledge or perform tasks for you such as manufacturing, delivery, etc) and,
4. the **financial requirements** of the business.

You might want to let us know:

* Which of the above do you need within your business?
* How much of this have you already got?
* How are you going to get the rest of what you need?

**8. Project Plan**

*“Is there a project management plan which details how the key objectives are going to be achieved and in what timeframe?”*

This is key to helping us understand how you are going to achieve your goals. We’re not expecting a full project plan, but we would need to understand you key targets, the main steps you need to achieve your targets, and the time it’s going to take.

**The best way to present much of this information would be in a Gantt Chart**, such as the one shown below:



Within such a chart (which is easy to develop on any spreadsheet package), you’re able to identify your key tasks and plan how long each will take. This allows us to determine other information, such as when you will be in a position to raise revenue. We also have a downloadable template on our website.

You might want to let us know:

* What are the main things you need to do over the next 12 months
* How long are they going to take
* How do they tie in to your key targets

**9. Scalability Strategy**

*“Does the plan include details regarding the significant scaling of the business?”*

The term ‘scaling’ usually refers to how your business can increase revenue at a significantly higher rate than its expenditure. It could also be summarised as increasing growth while improving productivity.

However, in the context of the Start Up and Innovator Visa programmes, the term relates more to growth alone, asking **how the company will achieve national and international relevance, and raise the opportunity to employ people in the UK.** There are many ways to achieve this, from expansion to franchising. We want to know a little about your growth and scalability plans.

You might want to let us know:

* How are you going to grow the business nationally and internationally
* What do you need to do in order to achieve this?
* How many people are you going to employ?
* When are you going to employ them and what are their roles / salaries?

**10. Innovation Strategy**

*“Does the plan clearly demonstrate a current level of, and ambition to continue, a high level of innovation which is an integral part of the business proposition?”*

Innovation is a key talking point for Start Up and Innovate Visa applications. As an Innovation Agency, we understand that the definition of innovation can differ depending upon its context.

Bearing that in mind, for the purpose of our programme (and for the endorsement of Start Up and Innovator Visas) **we define innovation as “the provision of a benefit that is not readily available in the UK”.**

To clarify this, we ask a key question: “**Does the project really make a difference**”. By this, we mean does it provide the end user with a benefit which they can’t obtain through other existing providers of similar services.

What we’re looking for here is that the innovation is an integral part of the business, and not “added on at the end to make the plan appear innovative”. Innovation should be a factor that has driven the creation of the business, and will continue to be apparent through its development and growth.

You might want to let us know:

* What are you doing that your competitors aren’t doing
* Who ultimately benefits from your offering
* In what ways do they benefit
* How well developed is the innovative aspect of your proposition

**11. Financial Planning**

*“Does the plan demonstrate the need to meet all of the financial requirements of the business including contingency in the event of sales slippages, and how realistic are the key assumptions?”*

Every business plan requires a robust set of financial figures based on solid assumptions. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a business plan where the forecasts were met, mainly due to the fact that entrepreneurs naturally over-assume how fast sales will arrive. One way to account for this is to include a “sensitivity analysis” - a delay or percentage reduction which takes into account the things which inevitably go wrong, which aren’t seen in advance.

**A financial plan should always summarise the key assumptions,**as the person reading the plan does not want to have to make assumptions as to why figures peak or trough. A good way to help the reader is, prior to showing the cashflow, list your key assumptions - for example cost per unit and rate of sales for each revenue stream.

We think the most important financial document is your cash flow statement, particularly for the first 12 months. Be realistic about your sales projections in the first few months, and have contingency plans should the cash arrive later than hoped for.

You might want to let us know:

* What are you charging for your products and services?
* When do you expect the sales to arrive and in what volume?
* How does your cashflow look – monthly for Year 1, and in summary for Years 2 & 3?
* How does your P&L statement and balance sheets look - monthly for Year 1, and in summary for Years 2 & 3?

**12. Risk Management**

*“Does the plan assess the key risks and provide a robust management strategy to minimise probability and / or impact?”*

The final step - and another which is missing from most business plans - is a basic risk assessment and management plan. We’re not talking about risk in terms of compliance and workplace safety here - **we want to know what might go wrong, and what you’re doing (or going to do) to assess and manage it.**

Assessing risk is simple, using the following steps:

1. List down everything which might go wrong, from you becoming ill through to people not wanting what you’re offering.
2. On a scale of 1-5 (where 1 is very low, 5 is very high) what is the probability of the risk happening?
3. On the same scale, what would the impact be if it did happen?
4. For each risk, multiply your probability score by your impact score to get an overall risk score between 1 and 25.
5. If the score is 10-19, the risk is high. If the score is 20-25, the risk is very high. For each of the “high” and “very high” risks in these areas, state whether you’re going to take action to avoid, tolerate or repair the risk, and how.

You might want to:

* Look at the additional risk register which is available as a download in the support section on our website, and use this as a template.