

How To Compile A One-Page Plan (358)

Business planning can seem a daunting task. This is specially true when we think of the format of the document a bank may require to consider an application for business finance. As a result, we tend to avoid compiling a business plan when an outside party such as a financier is not asking for it.

But what if it was easy and quick to compile a business plan? What if we could do it on one page only, while it still addresses all the key elements of what we need to plan for? Would that be different? Would completing a plan such as the annual plan for a route not be something that would become possible to do?

In this Guide, you will be introduced to doing a one-page business plan by using the Flow Canvas Planning Tool. It offers a simple yet comprehensive method for completing a business plan that is summarised onto a single page.

Why is doing a one-page plan important?

In today's fast-changing world, we need to plan for the next step towards our goals without always knowing the full path of getting to the desired destination. This is rather scary, since you must acknowledge that you will never know for sure exactly how things will pan out, even after completing your business plan.

All our plans and actions will not come to much and we will not accomplish what we aim for if we are not capable of dreaming with conviction in concert with developing and implementing our detailed plans. A one-page plan can link our

dreams with our actions while showing us exactly what must be done next. When you have your plans summarised on one page, it becomes very easy to share with all the involved people, and for them to see where they fit into the bigger picture. It also serves as a handy tool to assess your progress and refine your plan, making changes to the one-page plan as the situation unfolds or as the conditions change.

What is involved in doing a one-page plan?

The challenge you face in planning is to combine your dreaming with the nuts and bolts of the activities and actions required to achieve good results. Your task is to relate the various activities you are planning to your organisational purpose so that you are sure that what you do is in fact contributing to the reason for your organisation to exist. This is why you should start your planning process with confirming your organisational purpose (see Guide: [How To Unite Your Route Behind A Shared Purpose or Vision](#)). When you have clarity on your purpose (the reasons for why your route exists and what the vision is you have of the future), you are equipped to define what you need to do to achieve this, when and where you need to do it with whom, and how you will be doing it (see Guide: [How To Understand Your Annual Route Planning](#)). The one-page planning format will come in very handy when you do your annual route plan (see Guide: [How To Organise A Workshop For Your Annual Plan](#)). You may identify the best one-page planning tool for you. In this Guide, we refer to the Flow Canvas One-Page Planning Tool, since it offers an easy-to-understand yet comprehensive framework organised around nine straight-forward questions (see [Video: How To Use The Flow Canvas One-Page Plan](#)).

What is the Flow Canvas?

Think of business planning like artists would when setting  out to create great paintings – they start with a clean canvas and a vision of what it is they would like to express. Then, within the confines of the canvas, they produce something of dazzling attraction that connects with the world out there, that gets people to respond, and that adds value to their lives. The same applies to business planning, where you create a “picture” of a business proposition that will add value to the lives of those who respond. The Flow Canvas provides a bit more structure to the picture/painting than an artist would – the “planning canvas” is divided into nine areas, each devoted to a specific question. In answering all nine questions, you complete the full picture of your route on a single page. The result is displayed on a one-page plan that everyone in the route can refer to in guiding their activities. They can all see what the route is setting out to achieve and how they fit into the picture.

How the Flow Canvas works

The Flow Canvas is based on three important principles. First, as with the surface of a canvas for painting, you must always cover the full extent of the two spacial dimensions – height (top-bottom) and width (left-right). On the Flow Canvas,  these are called the Planning Polarities, and are organised as follows:

- Top-bottom: At the top of the canvas, you answer questions oriented towards Thinking & Visualisation (create focused benefits, innovate within your business idea, and improve the way things are done). The bottom is oriented towards Action & Manifestation of ideas (produce value, deliver your product or service, transact and make deals).
- Left-right: On the right of the canvas, you address

questions oriented towards Differentiation & Visibility (be distinct and congruent, connect with the people you are meant to serve, and increase your desirability). while the left side is oriented towards Integration & Efficiency (utilise resources efficiently, lead/govern sustainably, and refine what you do).

Second, as proven in nature, working in a cycle is the most efficient and logical way of achieving results. There must be flow within a cycle so that progress unfolds evenly from the one stage to the next, without bottlenecks or leakage. This is the Flow Cycle. Third, when a cycle is completed, it leads  to a new cycle. Progress is achieved through learning from what was concluded, thus achieving upward movement, forming a rising spiral of growth. The cycle revolves around the centre of the business canvas, from where it moves up and clockwise around until it reaches the top again, ready to proceed to the next cycle. This growth path is called the Spiral of Intention, since it revolves around the central question of why the business exists – its purpose or intention – with each new cycle building on the previous.

Using the Flow Canvas as a planning tool

The Flow Canvas is a organisational planning tool based on answering nine questions. It is as easy to apply to both high-level strategic planning and specific activities. You can ask the questions about the business as a whole, or you can apply it to a project, or even a specific task. The starting point is the route's reason for existence – its Purpose – which is the glue that keeps together all the route's complexities. A clearly defined Purpose shapes the route culture, its relationships with other parties – in fact, every aspect of the organisation's DNA. The other eight questions follow the

Flow Cycle through the Planning Polarities, so that all the dimensions of the organisation are addressed.

The Questions To Answer

On the canvas, the core question of Purpose is appears in  red. The answer to this question does not normally shift much over the medium term. It is lasting! It is not at the centre of the canvas without reason – it has a direct and ongoing influence on all the other questions. The core question is:

- **Why does your business exist?** We can call this element of the Flow Canvas ‘Purpose’.

When the core question is clearly answered in the planning process, you can move on to what is called the four primary questions, indicated in yellow. In answering these questions, it is best to start with clarifying your business idea or focused niche, based on (and as a direct expression of) the answer to the core question. Then move on to when and where you will deliver value. This will unlock clues as to who the customers are you are meant to serve and how you will contribute to ecological sustainability and create ongoing profitability. The four primary questions are:

- **What gives you a unique focus within your niche?** Call this element Focus.
- **When and where do you deliver value to whom?** Call this element Transaction.
- **Who are the ‘fans’ you connect with and where are they?** Call this element Audience.
- **How do you lead/govern and sustain profits?** Call this element Culture.

With the primary questions answered, you can move on to the secondary questions, indicated in green. The secondary answers are “bridges” that connect the primary answers with each other. The four secondary questions are:

- **What are you noticed and remembered by?** Call this element Attention.
- **What are the promises your ‘fans’ respond to?** Call this element Desire.
- **How do you organise your teams, systems and money?** Call this element Delivery.
- **How and when do you measure your performance?** Call this element Improvement.

Interestingly, it is common for the nine questions to influence each other during planning. As a result, the process of answering the questions remains dynamic – when a new question is answered, it is important to revisit the previous answers to see if the newly gained insights do not influence the previous answers to such an extent that they must be refined or changed. There are many subquestions tied up in each of these questions, which are best dealt with in specific teams to provide detailed answers. However, the one-page Flow Canvas becomes a very handy summary of what the route really is about!

Who is involved in compiling your one-page plan?

The format of the one-page Flow Canvas Plan is easy to understand because it summarises the route plan and shows the relationships between the nine elements of the plan. This makes it easy to involve all your route members in the planning process. You may be well served in organising an annual planning workshop to compile the route’s year plan (see Guide: [How To Organise A Workshop For Your Annual Plan](#)). While input from all members is great to ensure that everyone shares the direction the route is taking, it is still the Route Forum’s task to steer the process, to summarise the input from members, and to fill the gaps. When the one-page plan is done, it is also the Route Forum’s job to go into detailed planning

for those aspects where more specific information is needed, such as the route budget or specific projects.

How to use your one-page plan in your route?

The nine questions of the Flow Canvas form a cycle (see the arrows in the graphic above). The cycle explains the flow from one stage to the next, as it is anticipated to unfold. You may note, however, that it is not a requirement to follow the sequential flow through the phases of the cycle when you do your planning. In fact, it is recommended that you first focus on the elements on which you have the most clarity after you have clarified your Purpose. The following sequence explains how the nine elements of the Flow Canvas follow each other in the Flow Cycle:

- **PURPOSE:** Your Purpose explains why your route (or organisation) exists and the difference you are making in the world. Purpose is different to the rest of the elements on the Flow Canvas insofar as your Purpose is lasting – with the others you attend to the activities for the next cycle of your plans. Your Purpose remains constant through many cycles and provides you with ongoing direction.
- **FOCUS:** Your Focus clarifies your uniqueness in terms of the specific idea that makes your route different from other destinations, and the distinctive value you create within your niche. Your Focus is all about the benefits you offer, rather than the people you serve, through what you do in your route.
- **ATTENTION:** While your focus clarifies your uniqueness, it is the element of Attention through which you explain this uniqueness and the benefits you offer to the outside world. You are noticed through delivering a congruent message, appropriately positioned so that you

are recognised where it matters.

- **AUDIENCE:** Your Audience are the people who benefit from what you offer. They are your biggest supporters. Since this element is about identifying who the people are you are meant to serve, it is also important to clarify who those people are you are not meant to serve – you cannot be everything to everyone!
- **DESIRE:** When you have attracted the attention of your audience, you need to draw them closer so that they cannot resist what you are offering. You achieve this by planning for the element of Desire, where you remove the objections and obstacles in the way of easy transacting with you.
- **TRANSACTIONS:** The element of Transactions is where you exchange value. It is turning the benefit described in your Focus into a value exchange. Here, you describe where and when you will be transacting with whom. However, it is about confirming the transaction but not delivering the value yet.
- **DELIVERY (also known as RESOURCES):** The element of Delivery is about making good on what was promised. It is all about organising your teams, systems and money. This element is about meticulous planning of your operations, logistics and resources.
- **CULTURE:** Your Culture is about functioning as a sustainable organisation and the values underpinning your governance. Here you clarify how you organise yourself and control your internal environment to maintain efficiencies.
- **IMPROVEMENT:** With the Improvement element you identify the best ways for you to measure your performance so that you ensure that you keep contributing to your Purpose. You also identify bottlenecks or inefficiencies in the flow of your Flow Cycle by quantifying key measures for each of the elements. The aim is to get better before you enter the next cycle.

In following the above sequence, you will see how the one element progresses to the next, which should not be surprising, since it follows the natural path of shifting energies, as described in ancient Chinese thinking about achieving good flow (see Guide: [How To Understand Your Natural Strengths](#)). This offers you a good picture of how the sequence of your planned organisational development will unfold. However, as noted, you are not obliged to follow this sequence when planning. You may move from the elements clearest to you to those you are less clear about. The big benefit of this dynamic influence between elements is that the clarity you have with one may help you define your plans for an element you may feel less confident about.

Other Fact sheets

You may also want to have a look at the following Guides and Examples covering related topics:

- Guide: [How To Unite Your Route Behind A Shared Purpose or Vision](#).
- Guide: [How To Understand Your Annual Route Planning](#).
- Guide: [How To Understand Your Natural Strengths](#).
- Resource: [Video: How To Use The Flow Canvas One-Page Plan](#).
- Example: [One-Page Flow Canvas Plans](#).

Other resources to use

There are several resources to your disposal to make use of:

- The Flow Canvas One-Page Planning Tool: www.flowcanvas.com
- Five Energy Dynamics: www.flowfinders.com/energy