



The Academic Business Plan

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Origination of this presentation

- Degree change
- Certificate program
- Move physical location
- Providing new service within department



Apologies

- To those who don't believe academic work is suitable to a business plan
 - Viability matters
 - Customer service matters
 - Resources matter
 - Money matters



What is a business plan?

- A plan for a new venture that states your opportunity clearly, and carefully looks at your business, your customers, your competition, threats, and the finances to support the venture.
- Encourages you to know where you stand today and what the future holds by developing strategies and alternatives that will increase success of your plan.



What a business plan is NOT

- A strategic plan
- A needs assessment
- Based solely on your knowledge
 - Utilize your team and references (human and evidence-based)
- Delusion or fantasy



Purposes of academic business plans

- Share strategies, priorities and action points
 - Program start-up
 - Program add-on
 - Certificate
 - New course(s)
 - Program expansion
 - Practice start-up



Business Jargon

- Make hay
- Bleeding edge
- Creative destruction
- Mind-share with customer
- Move the needle
- Open the kimono



Components

- Executive Summary
- Company (aka Academic Unit) Overview
- Internal/External Benefits
- Business Environment
- Description of Proposed Service or Product
- Strategy
- Financial Management
- Action Plan
- Appendices



Executive Summary

- Succinctly, what is your proposal?
- Goals
- Market opportunity
- Competition
- Funds required
- Exit strategy



Overview of your Academic Unit

- What is your unit's mission?
- How does the proposal fit within your mission? (context analysis)
- Why is your unit suited to this proposal?
- Are you qualified to provide this service?
- What resources do you already have to make this a good fit while minimizing costs?



Business environment

- What is the overall environment in which your unit competes, internally and externally?
- What is your marketplace? Who are your customers? What customers are you targeting with this new plan?
- What are the threats to your current service and what would be the barriers or threats in developing the new service or product?



Internal/External Benefits

- What will the sponsoring academic unit, the university and external constituents gain from achievement of new venture?
 - Ex: foster strong partnerships within operations, maintain flexibility in planning and delivery to meet new and emerging priorities, provide opportunities for enhancement of professional skills to internal and external constituents.



Description of Proposed Service or Product

- Detailed description of service or product
- Virtual or on the ground
 - Physical facilities
- Person power
- Timing
- Technology resources
- Marketing
- Operation



Strategy

- Marketing strategies
 - Responding to market changes
- Educational or financial contracts
- Grittier detail about the product
- Where will the product or service be within three years?
- What happens if the product or service fails?



Financial management

- Your unit's current financial status
- Do resources for the service exist?
- Will new faculty or staff be needed?
 - % FTE of current and new?
- Cost of expansion or contraction of service
- Line item of start-up costs and source of funding
- Consider intangible costs such as lost opportunities and political liabilities
- Net financial impact on your academic unit



Action plan

- How you will proceed
- What steps you will take
- Who is involved in planning and execution
- New policies or procedures that will be put in place
- New skills that will be required to make the plan work
- Generating buy-in for success



Evaluation/measures of success

- How you will know if your product or service is successful
 - Is interest high?
 - Enrollment or purchase
- Continuous Improvement
- How you will know what to change
 - Consumer evaluation
 - What has worked and what hasn't
 - What has changed in the marketplace



Appendices to the Business Plan

- Help the reviewer envision your project
- Examples:
 - Position descriptions
 - Draft course syllabus
 - More detailed budget
 - More detailed timeline for implementation



Pitfalls

- Not planning in the first place
- Ignoring mission and values
- Avoiding reasonable risk
- Not recognizing strengths
- Letting one person dominate a plan



References

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Discussion and questions