

Title:

Write A Winning Business Plan-The Neatest Trick In The Book

Word Count:

618

Summary:

"Writing a business plan" sounds really tough, and it can be. But there are a number of things the smart entrepreneur can do to make it easier.

For instance, justwhatkindofstuffyouthinkgetsreadlikethis? Imagine pages full of that, with virtually no margins, no paragraph breaks, no breathing room. Lenders, investors and angel investors are confronted with piles of business plans like that every day.

Take a breath. Then lure your reader into the plan with snappy headlines...

Keywords:

business plans, e-business, business finance, business investors, angel investors, presentations

Article Body:

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Take a breath. Then lure your reader into the plan with snappy headlines and easy to read formatting.

Do you know why the Wall Street Journal and USA Today use headlines? Because it's the only way anyone will read a story. More to the point, it's the only way anyone will buy their paper. (Mmmm, sounds like you may have something in common with newspapers.)

Take a look at your favorite newspaper. Those headlines tell a story. Sometimes they ooze with conspiracy, and once in a while they stand majestic. Note:

Martha Jailed

The War is Over

The Watergate Starts to Smell

Your business plan needs to do no less. The headlines and section heads need to draw the reader in, not with an announcement, but with an invitation. Compare these:

The Executive Team

The Audio Industry

The Advisory Board

with these:

Strong Executive Team is Led by Industry Insider

Audio - the Industry that Reinvents Itself

7 Top Scientists Lead the Advisory Board

So which set are you going to read?

Lenders of all ilk get far too many business plans - certainly more than they can possibly fund. Simply getting your business plan read is a big step in the right direction.

Try this trick. Imagine that you are indeed writing a newspaper, one that competes with another strong paper in your town. What headline would you put on that paper to encourage readers to buy yours, and not the other?

Honesty, of course, is essential. But within that honesty there are a thousand ways to make the same statement. How many ways are there to say that it is spring time?

- It is spring
- It is April 22
- Lilacs are in bloom
- Snow is melting in the mountains
- Baseball camps are in full force

And how many ways are there to say that your business idea is a good one?

- This is a good idea
- An innovative approach
- A sure-fire winner
- A strong contender for funding

- A strong team in an equally strong market
- Lots of community support
- This fills a need in the marketplace
- The company draws on the experience of each of its members
- Two years of strong growth
- Impressive projections

Now jot down some headlines for your company. You may or may not be able to use them. Try first just to jot down every idea, a brain storming session.

Now use the best of those headlines to help structure your business plan. If "Nobel Prize Winner Heads Advisory Board" is your strongest headline, then lead with that story. If "A Prime Location in a Prime Shopping Center" is your strongest headline, then that is your lead.

Let the strength of the headlines pull your business plan up a notch or two. The power of your business may surprise even you!

Before you actually begin writing, take the time to really look at a good publication, something like the Wall Street Journal. Look at the styling and the use of headlines and sub-heads. Note how the ideas keep a steady flow, with an invitation to read.

Your business plan likely won't look like the venerable WSJ, or any other major publication, but odds are that it will look a whole lot better than most, and it will therefore be read much more readily. And that, after all, is what you are after.