



## Help Businesses with their Planning by Being a Business Planner

**If you are good at helping people define their skills and dreams and putting them into a concrete business plan that they can follow step-by-step, becoming a business planner might just be for you. What do you have to do as a business planner?**

Basically, you want to sit down with your clients and figure out what it is they want to do, and then how they should do it. This includes the type of training, education or skills they'll need for the business they want to start, how much money they'll need, how they're going to spend the money they start the business with, how they'll generate revenue from that business and when, and in some cases where they might obtain startup financing.

### Background and education for you

Lest you think you can simply hang out your own shingle as a business planner, think again. First, make sure you have the right type of education. These types of [planning jobs](#) usually require that you have a significant background that dovetails with this type of work, and it's helpful if you've actually had 9-to-5 [corporate planning jobs](#) before you decide to hang out your own shingle as a business planner.

The educational background you will need to bring to the table should usually be in finance, accounting or business development. You'll likely have your degree in one of these areas, and you've probably done some significant "business structuring" for a previous employer prior to starting your own business.

When you talk to your clients, you'll need to be able to understand and make sense of their financial statements, make income and sales projections based on the data they give you, and write a clear, distinct plan that they can follow step-by-step. Remember that they're looking to you to help them organize their ideas into a plan that's clear and concrete. You'll also need to be able to research your clients' markets and develop what are called "positioning statements" for them. Networking skills are a must, too, because not only do you need to find clients yourself, but you may be in the position of helping them find financing for their dreams, too.

Not ready to hang out your own shingle just yet?

If you're not ready to hang out your own single as a business

planner just yet, it's possible to find a job that incorporates these skills in the 9-to-5 arena; there, you can develop these skills within the context of your job with an employer and then move on to self-employment later if you wish. One good way to do this is to search for corporate [planning jobs](#) and other [planning job opportunities](#) on the Internet with the keywords "business plan" or similar.

### Other skills you'll need

Besides a solid background in finance, business development or accounting, you'll also need to be good with people. You need to make your clients feel comfortable with you because you're going to be handling very sensitive information and they'll need to be able to trust you. You'll also need to be very organized, because your clients are looking to you to help THEM get organized. Finally, you'll need to write clearly and distinctly, and must be able to take what may be disorganized ideas coming from them, then break them down into clear, simple, step-by-step instructions that they can follow.

### Once you're ready to go out on your own

If you decide it's time to take the plunge and become a self-employed business planner, you can start with your previous employer; it's likely that they may be able to help you with networking opportunities in regard to some of your own clients. Of course, they're not going to take business away from themselves and give it to you, but you may be able to work with them on a consulting basis to continue many of the duties previously performed by you on your old job but on a consulting basis. This saves your employer money, too, since once you begin to work on a consulting basis, your employer is not going to have to pay benefits, overhead costs, and the like.

Put together a portfolio of your work and references from previous clients if you can (or from your previous employer if you can't) that you can show to prospective clients. This will



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help them get to know you better and to know that you really can do the job for them.

Finally, of course, you'll need some basic equipment, including a computer, high-speed Internet access, requisite programs (research the Internet for business plan writing programs available, and choose those that get the highest ratings), fax and landline phone, and a separate space to work. If you're going to be inviting clients into your home or office space to work with them on a one-to-one basis, the space is going to have to be large and comfortable enough to accommodate them; in this case, you may also want a table, chairs, and so on in addition to the requisite home office furniture, filing cabinets, etc. Expect startup costs to be at least \$5,000, in addition to ongoing costs month-to-month like Internet access fees and the like.

What can you make as a business planner?

Once you get established, there are lots of folks out there who want to get started with their own businesses but just don't know how. If you've got the skills and know-how, word-of-mouth should get you lots of clients, and of course you should establish a presence for yourself on the Internet as well with your own website.

Most business planners make anywhere between \$20,000 a year and \$100,000 a year depending on where they live and the type of clients they serve, as well as their level of experience and amount of exposure to date. Expect your first year at least to be quite spotty in terms of workload until you get established. In general, you're going to charge from about \$2000 to \$5000 per plan, depending on how much work goes into the plans you do.

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