

**Use your very own 'experts' to prepare your business plan. Who are they?
YOUR TEAM OF COURSE**

Have you completed your BUSINESS PLAN for the 2009/10 financial year yet? If not here's an idea that may help.

The concept of using your team (staff/colleagues) to help prepare your business plan may surprise many small business owners. Some would ask - "What would they know about business plans?" Others may ask "Why would my team want to help?" Your team's contribution to your business's success is often underrated.

The benefits of including your team to help prepare your business plan include:

- Your team are the people that know what is really happening in your business, what works well and what doesn't. They know which customers are unhappy & why. They operate at a different level to you the owner and they will see things that you haven't.
- Better still many of your team will have ideas on how to fix the problems or may have even seen opportunities that you're not aware of or just lack the confidence to speak up.
- Including your team in the business planning process can also be useful in other ways too, it gives them an understanding of the goals you are trying to achieve and if they have been part of the goal setting process it can make them more committed to achieving them. It also strengthens your teamwork and reinforces how much you value them.
- In these uncertain financial time where job security is an issue, your team has a vested interest in making the business succeed which is why they will also be keen to help.

So how do you include your team in the business planning process?

My suggestion is that, at the very least your Team should be part of the SWOT analysis.(Strength/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats).

This would include developing ideas that come from the SWOT analysis. Give them some time to consider these issues by sending out a questionnaire beforehand so they can come prepared. I would recommend using an experienced facilitator to help organise and run a session like this so that you get the maximum benefit. They will most likely recommend you run the session away from the business to avoid disruptions, if so include some social activities like a round of golf and have some fun too.

It also makes sense to have your team help implement the ideas that have come out of your business planning session, by allocating tasks to team members increases their ownership of the outcome and the chances of success. Just make sure you give them adequate time to complete the task and check their progress to help them overcome any obstacles they may be encountering.

If you need help completing your plan give me a call. ***Neville Hughes***