

The Capital Minute

Organizing Your Materials
to Build Stronger
Talking
Points

Is It Time to
Plan Your Exit
Strategy?

Going Public: The
Disadvantages

Finally, A Work
Option For Stay At
Home Moms



From the editor

MIKE ELIA, CPA, MBA



Organize for Success

THE PRICE OF DISORGANIZATION may be higher than you realize.

Yes. Time is money. Seems we spend hours redoing stuff, looking for stuff, and thinking about stuff. No body understands this better than a Mom, especially a Mom trying to start a business on top of it all. In this edition, four WAHM (Work At Home Moms) share insights about on-line businesses from their new WAHM-IT Masters Course in *If You Stay At Home, Why Not Work At Home, Mom?*

In last month's edition, we reviewed what to talk about in your plan, cover letter or face-to-face meeting with investors. In Part 2 of *Choosing The Right Talking Points For Your Business Plan And Cover Letter*, we drill down on how to organize your materials in ways that will speed up writing your plan.

Part of being organized is to know where you're going. You've heard the expression "start with the end in mind." Well, Andy Warren, also believes you need to start with the end, an exit strategy, in mind. See why in *Starting Your Business With Your Exit Strategy In Mind*.

Finally, the ultimate organization task: going public. Listen to what Robert Berman has to say about going public in his article *Going Public: The Disadvantages*.

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Insights

If You Stay At Home, Why Not Work At Home, Mom?

Four Work-At-Home Moms (WAHMs) discover a rewarding, exciting and soul-satisfying work solution that "fits" naturally with their family needs.

By Mike Elia

Children change you... your thoughts, your feelings, your relationships, your identity. Family now comes first.

If you are a parent you can appreciate this comment, if you're a Mom you live and breathe it.

Loving, nurturing, helping, guiding, playing, comforting, organizing, mediating, laughing, managing, healing, giving... stay-at-home moms are in constant motion. And, they love it!

So... if you stay at home, why not Work At Home, Mom (WAHM)?

There is no other place that you would rather be than with your kids. But, at the same time, you would also like/need to contribute financially to the family.

The regular options, though, are not inspiring...

Returning back to an old job or starting a new one outside the home is not the ideal solution (even at part-time status)...

The pressures are exhausting... child-care arrangements, schedules, deadlines, clothing requirements, transportation costs, sick days, domestic chores, school events.

Quality family time is constantly getting the squeeze.

A weekly paycheck hardly seems worth it.

You want to be a "WAHM," a "Work-at-Home Mom/Mother"... but not just any kind of WAHM.

Stuffing envelopes, or doing house parties, or making phone calls, does not appeal to you. How do you find work that "fits" naturally with your family needs and yet is rewarding, exciting and soul-satisfying for you?

You want more out of life, not less, for your family and for yourself.

Four ordinary WAHMs, three from the United States and one from the UK, are using what they consider the best "work" solution on the Internet...

Each one is building a profitable online business by providing quality information about a subject or theme that she knows and feels passionate about. There are thousands and thousands of people surfing on the Net who want to read about that theme - and spend money on it - now.

These moms follow a common-sense proven process that doesn't require prior experience or technical knowledge to be successful. They guide you through the process in WAHM-IT!, The Masters Course, using easy-to-understand language.

By creating an information-rich Web site that is based on something you know and love, you too can build a real, long-term business...

"It's all very do-able. We know, because that's how we work. Not only do we enjoy the benefits of staying home with our children, but our "beyond mom" needs are fulfilled, too. What could be better than earning money... on our time, doing work we love?"

An online business is affordable, flexible, and convenient. You can work at your Web site and business when you like, at the speed that suits you, and still put the all-important needs of your family first. In other words, you can take your family to work with you!

Elizabeth, Cate, Jennifer and Erin, and several other successful WAHMs, share their experiences

and advice in **WAHM-IT!, The Masters Course**. They are busy moms. They know what it's like.

So they have taken the time to share everything. And they do it in simple, short practical terms, building from the ground up.

They start all the way back at the "very beginning," from reviewing all your options and organizing properly. And they progress all the way to the final desired outcome, including the nitty-gritty of how to actually build a substantial income online, illustrating with well-explained case studies.

It's a cold, rainy day in England and I have just spent the last couple of hours reading your fantastic Step-by Step Guide.

Each part (of the 3) is inspiring, informative and most of all motivating! You have completely hit the right buttons.

I loved reading the individual experiences, especially when the money earned didn't brag huge Get Rich Quick amounts. I felt it was both honest but also realistic.

Tina Vickery,
stress-anxieties-solutions.com

Find out how to use the Net, the right process, and the right tools to achieve the kind of "work payback" that you have been dreaming about...

Be there for your kids, generate long-term income (that could very well become your family's primary income), fuel your own creativity and passion, and of course, have fun! CM



Click here for a free, no obligation download of...

WAHM-IT, The Masters Course

The Masters Course includes four files...

- 1) ReadMeFirst.txt -- to get you off to a flying start.
- 2) wahm-guide.pdf -- provides all the how-to information you need to successfully build a real business on the Net.
- 3) wahm-case-studies.pdf -- shares the inspiring stories of real-life SBI! WAHMs and their Web sites.
- 4) wahm-get-organized.pdf -- offers tips on managing your household and family successfully while you work.

Take a few minutes for yourself and check out WAHM-IT!, The Masters Course today at <http://wahmit.bizplansecrets.com>

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In Part 1, we talked about how to select your arguments and talking points. These are the key points that separate your business, products or services from other businesses.

We also touched on why a basic knowledge of human nature is needed to pick the points that will appeal most to your readers.

In this article, we drive deeper into organizing

your materials. Starting with ways to sort and keep what you gather in a way that you can grab it quickly.

In Part 3, we will talk about using your knowledge of human nature to select the right arguments that appeal to a specific prospect or class of prospects you want to reach.

Let's get started.

Choosing The Right Talking Points

In Your Business Plan or Cover Letter – Part 2

By Mike Elia



Has this ever happened to you?

You're writing your business plan. Just as you start to argue a major point, you think of an article that has some great supporting evidence in it.

So, you stop writing and start looking for the article.

You sort through the piles of hardcopies on your desk. No luck. Next, you try the electronic folders in your computer. Still no luck. You go back to the web and search for the article. For some reason,

your key word search doesn't seem to locate the exact article you had in mind.

Hours pass till you finally give up your search and go back to writing. But, without the information from the article, you are going to have to craft a less powerful argument.

Sorting and keeping the materials you find in a way that you can grab them quickly can help you avoid adding hours to writing your plan.

But, you already know this.

What you probably don't realize or put enough weight on is how not having the information weakens your arguments. Forcing you to relying on broad, sweeping statements, claims and clichés to sell your plan.

That's why it's good to have a filing system for the materials you want by your side when you write your business plan. It really doesn't matter what system you use. As long as it lets you find your materials quickly.

Finally A Tool To Make Writing A Business Plan Cover Page Easy!

PITCH-IT is a breakthrough MS Word template designed to ask mind-stretching questions. But that's not all. PITCH-IT organizes your answers into a logical outline! With the outline in hand, you know where you are going. You no longer have to face that agonizing blank page.

With PITCH-IT you can literally become MORE EFFECTIVE, INTELLIGENT, POWERFUL AND PRODUCTIVE!

- Zero readers in on the HEART of your business plan quickly so they'll want to follow-up with you to learn more about what you're doing!
- Can you imagine the persuasive cover page you could write with PITCH-IT at your fingertips!?
- Use PITCH-IT as checklist to jumpstart the writing of your business plan ----
- Or to be sure your current plan covers all the key topics of a POWERFUL, SUCCESSFUL PLAN

Click here to make your business plan come "ALIVE!"

<http://pitchkit.bizplansecrets.com>

One technique is to sort your original materials into each general business plan section. Then, write a summary of the materials within each section and file the summary with the original materials.

For example, jot down two or three pages of notes to summarize the information you find about:

1. The materials used in your product or service.
2. How your product or serve is manufactured or delivered.
3. The machines used to produce your product or provide your service.
4. Facts about your customers, competitors, and so forth.

Your notes can come from any of a thousand sources. They can come from web pages, interviews, extracts from articles, research reports, market studies, and so on.

Here's an old but reliable way to collect your thoughts. Use heavy, letter size manila sheets. On each sheet write your key thoughts, unique figures of speech, forceful arguments, graphic descriptions and statistical data relevant to writing your business plan. Note anything you feel might bring out key talking points.

These sheets are not hi-tech and are more bulky than paper but they are easier to handle than a notebook or computer files. And, you can lay them out in front of you as you write.

If you prefer a more free flowing style, try posting ideas on your office wall like a crazy mosaic. Whenever you find a word, a sentence, a paragraph or a page you want to keep...pin it on the wall or write it on a post-it note and stick to the wall.

As one writer explains, "I don't want systematic classification of this stuff. When I'm looking for a specific word or point that I want, I go over so many other words and points that I keep all the material fresh in my mind. No good points are buried in some forgotten folder. I keep reading

these things until they are as familiar to me as the alphabet."

You'll find much of the information for your business plan sitting in bulky reports or studies.

Obviously, these are too big to be pasted into a book or on separate manila sheets. When this is the case, pull out or copy only the pages or statistics you need and file them. It beats having to carry around the entire report. And, you'll find what you are looking for much faster.

Another favorite way to file talking points is by the importance of the argument they support. But remember, until you test your arguments, it is not always possible to tell which ones best build your case.

No matter what system you use, it must be a growing system.

By that I mean it must be kept up to date with new materials. Sure, you might never use much of the material you find and save. But, while its use might not be clear right away, it's the wise business plan writer who holds on to every anecdote, statistic, or forcible argument.

You simply never know which piece of information might save the day later. So, don't limit your material.

You never know when a story or fact might help you drive a key point home. Ideas spring from many sources. Even industries or companies different from yours can spark ideas for an original talking point.

In the end, your sources of material are limited only to your ability to see and connect a story, a figure of speech, or an item of news to your business plan.

The message should be clear. Like a forensic investigator, pull in as much data and information as you can to build your case. File the materials you find for easy reference. Now you're organized to write your plan.

But, pulling together and sorting materials to build your arguments is only the start. You must know human nature to select the right arguments that appeal to a specific prospect or class of prospects you want to reach.

Next month, in Part 3 of Choosing The Right Talking Points In Your Business Plan or Cover Letter, you'll learn what to know about your prospects to select the right talking points for your business plan. In the meantime, start organizing your materials for a more enjoyable and successful writing experience. CM

Mike Elia is a chief financial officer and an advisor to venture capitalists and leverage buyout specialists. For more information about business plans and raising capital for your business or to review his business plan manual, visit <http://www.business-plan-secrets-revealed.com>.

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Exit Strategies

Start Your Business With Your Exit Strategy In Mind

See your business as an investment and succeed like a venture capitalist.

By Andy Warren

If you're a business owner, the biggest mistake you'll make in preparing your exit strategy is not starting early enough. The best exit strategies are formulated when you start the business.

It's the same with any investment. The most successful investors go in with an exit strategy. That way they know when to come out and what profit they expect to make on the overall deal.

Many business owners begin their businesses with plans to grow and projections out into the future. However, most of those who begin their business don't put in place an exit point for the future. They may make some vague statements about what value they want their business to achieve but they don't set that as a true target. They don't treat the business as an investment, they treat it as an ongoing project.

The private equity world understands this and when they make an investment in a business they expect to make a specific return on their investment. Most firms will make their investment for 3 to 5 years and expect a return of at least 2.5 times their money.

When you see your business as an investment, you'll approach in a number of difference ways:

1. You'll see the value in creating and keeping long term, loyal customers
2. You'll plan the business to minimize costs and maximize profits
3. You'll use repeatable systems and processes
4. You'll build a management team who can run the business without you
5. You'll create a focused niche business that will be of value to others
6. You'll have a specific target valuation in mind from the beginning
7. You'll use a simplified capital structure to minimize taxes and make your exit easier

When you adopt this approach you get two main benefits. First, your business will be a lot more efficient and effective, which will serve your customers and your staff. Second, it will be a lot easier to sell when you reach your target because you've been preparing for it from the start.

Although it's likely you've already made the mistake of not starting your exit planning early enough, it's still not too late. You can start today by writing down what your exit plans are. Do you intend to keep your business as a lifestyle business until you're ready to just quietly end it, or do you plan to get out sooner and achieve the maximum value for selling it?

Once you've decided what your objectives are you need to step back and look at your business and view it as if it were another product or service that you planned to sell. How would a potential buyer view it? How saleable is it? How easy would it be for you to extract yourself? What do you think someone would be willing to pay for it?

Answering these questions is a good start. There's still a long way to go. But, if you let it go any longer, it may be too late. So, get start on building your exit strategy today.

You can visit <http://www.yourexitstrategist.com> for more information, support and guidance and you can find out how to take up a personal business consultation.

Andy Warren is a qualified chartered accountant, entrepreneur and consultant with business experience at director levels in blue chip companies, SMEs and start-ups.

Andy is a Master Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and has trained with Anthony Robbins in the US in behavioural sciences and life skills. He has extensive knowledge, skills and experience in the field of coaching and developing human behaviour.

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Financing

Going Public: The Disadvantages

There are a number of disadvantages for private companies seeking to go public. Management needs to be aware of the drawbacks to properly weigh the advantages and opportunities.

By Robert Berman

While going public is often touted as a cure-all, surefire way to gain funds for a company, it's not without its drawbacks. If a company is not in a good position to go public, the decision may actually hurt the corporation more than it helps. Even as money flows in from the offering, the costs of setting up and maintaining a public corporation are high, and should be taken into consideration before such a drastic step is taken.

Even before a corporation actually goes public, the costs are high. It's not uncommon for a company to spend a year beforehand just to get the company in shape and gather necessary documents. Day-to-day activities become difficult as employees struggle to perform preparation work and their normal duties. Since investors want to see a company in excellent financial health, every aspect of the corporation must be examined in advance. If a company decides to go public and the offering is unsuccessful, it loses legal and underwriting expenses in addition to the lost capital.

For many business owners, the biggest costs of going public are personal losses. Privacy vanishes in a flurry of disclosure requirements, allowing investors, competition, and the general public to peer into previously confidential details of the company. Cost of sales, net income, major customers, and management salaries become available to anyone who cares to look. In some cases, these disclosures could give a substantial competitive advantage to competitors, especially those that haven't yet taken the step of going public.

Those disclosures can also mean huge expenses after a company decides to go public. Quarterly and annual SEC filings are required, and regular tax preparation becomes more complicated than before. Additional legal and accounting staff may be necessary to keep up.

When a company decides to go public, decision-making privileges are quick to go. Instead of making instinctual, unilateral decisions, shareholders must be considered and it may be necessary to consult with the board of directors. The kind of decision-making that made the company successful can give way to actions borne out the desire to minimize immediate risk and maximize shareholder revenue. Unhappy shareholders can drive down the company's value, damaging employee morale, personal wealth, and company reputation.

If insiders of a company fail to hold onto a majority of the corporation's shares, the loss of control can be even greater. While this can be mitigated by limiting the number of shares made available, it's a costly option to a company that is attempting to raise money. Some corporations going public prefer to offer voting-restricted shares. Such restrictions reduce raised capital in a more subtle way. Investors pay less for shares with fewer privileges, so the total funds raised are lower, even though a large number of shares is being offered.

Despite the drawbacks, many corporations find that going public is the most effective way to expand a business quickly without the use of traditional debt financing. For those that have carefully considered the positives and negatives, the transition can be smooth and prosperous for everyone involved. CM

About the Author

Joel Arberman is the Managing Member of Public Financial Services, LLC. We help private companies through the process of becoming publicly traded via an initial public offering (IPO) or direct public offering. Learn more at Public Financial Services at <http://publicfinancial.com/> or <http://publicfinancial.com/index.htm>

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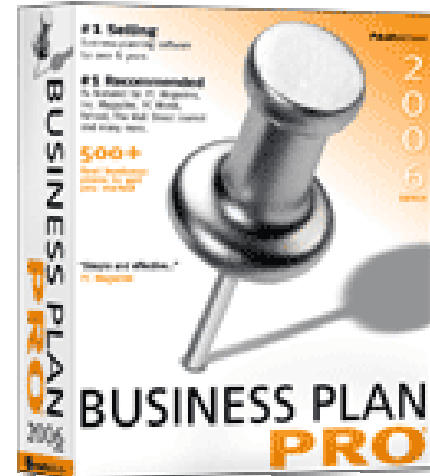
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