

Entrepreneurship

Is There Competition?

Most new ventures will face competition. It is rare for people to come up with truly original ideas, and many of these are adaptations of established markets (e.g. video streaming over rental stores). Once you know your market, your first job should be to identify the competition. Your main competition will be the closest to your product/service. For example, a coffee shop is not the main competitor of a restaurant.

Once you identify your competition, determine their strengths and weaknesses to give yourself an advantage. Pay close attention to their objectives and see how you compare. Some businesses focus on the customer experience while others are solely focused on low prices. Paying attention to objectives will show weaknesses that you can exploit.

Develop a Business Plan Outline

Once all the documentation is gathered, it can be used to create the outline. Like any other important document, the business plan should have an outline before it is written. In this case, the elements can guide the outline.

- **Coversheet** – includes the name, address, and title
- Table of contents
- **Executive summary** – overview, mission statement, opportunity, requirements, competitors, advantages, etc.
- **Market analysis** – target market, trends, research, strategy
- **Company description** – mission, business model, SWOT, strategic relationships, and strategy
- **Organization management** – structure, location, personnel, security, insurance, accounting
- **Sales and marketing** – method of sales, pricing, branding, networking, strategies, incentives
- Product/service – product definition and any plans for expansion.
- **Funding/financial** – financial needs, cash flow, dispersal, three-year projection, balance sheet, break even analysis, financial history, analysis
- **Supporting documents** – includes resumes, financial statements, credit report, references, legal documents, other documents.

Hire an Accountant

You should have a trusted accountant from the beginning. When finding an accountant, you want someone to do more than prepare taxes. You want someone who will advise your business. Keep a few things in mind when choosing candidates:

- Experience with your type of business
- Expertise in the industry
- Services offered
- Will you work directly with the accountant?