THE ULTIMATE BUSINESS PLAN TEMPLATE FOR BLOGGERS

Hey bloggers, here’s a potential newsflash for you. It’s OK to make money from your blog. You don’t have to feel guilty or like a “sell out” for doing so. Lots of people are earning a living from blogs these days and there’s no reason you can’t join that growing group.

But before you run off and slap some advertising on your site in hopes of making millions, let’s talk about the reality of earning a living from a blog.

**First, a blog isn’t a business.** A blog is simply a good way to reach an audience online. If you want to build a business around your blog, that’s completely doable, but you need to think about the business end of things just like you would with any other business.

**Second, a little planning can go a long way.** Yes, if you build a giant audience online, chances are you’ll be able to make money somehow even without planning. But most people don’t build giant audiences. Most people build modest audiences. Bloggers who plan ahead can still earn a comfortable or even great living from a modest-sized audience. Bloggers who don’t plan ahead are usually stuck with some unpleasant choices when they realize they aren’t on track to build the next Boing Boing or Zen Habits.
I built the simple and effective business plan template for bloggers below based on my own journey and from watching and helping dozens of other bloggers build real businesses over the past two years.

This isn’t your typical business-school type plan. It’s the kind of plan that aims to get you thinking about what matters instead of creating random 5-year revenue numbers out of thin air. Planning is guessing after all, but simple planning has been shown to increase a business’s chances of succeeding. Answer these questions and you’ll have a better shot at building a successful business around your blog.

Let’s begin.

**FOUNDATION - WHY SHOULD ANYONE READ YOUR BLOG?**

**Why are you starting this blog and why do you want to build this business?**

*It’s important to have at least two goals to build a successful business: you need to genuinely care about helping (or entertaining, or both) other people, and you need to want to build a business and support yourself. Think about your own reasons for starting this blog. List your honest answers here.*

**What goals do you have for your blog personally, both monetary and otherwise?**

*What would you like your blog to provide you with? How much money would you like to earn? List your answers for six months from now, one year from now, two years from now and three years from now. Also list intangible goals you might have, like lifestyle or emotional goals.*
What problem will your blog solve, or (alternately), what need or desire will it fill?
To build a business around your blog, it needs to follow the same rules that all successful businesses follow. Your site needs to solve a problem or address a need or desire.

Why should anyone read your blog vs. the millions of other blogs out there?
Whether you admit it or not, your blog will be competing for attention with thousands of other sites out there. Why should someone read yours instead of the other fantastic choices that exist?

How are you especially qualified to produce a blog on this particular topic?
You have to care about a topic and be knowledgeable about it (or have the ability to bring in experts to share knowledge) in order to produce compelling content. Are you qualified in this way?

How is your blog different from what already exists on the same topic?
Differentiation is the cornerstone of successful marketing. Without being different no one will have a reason to read your blog. How will yours be different?
What kinds of people will read your blog?
Who is your ideal reader? Describe the kinds of people who will read your blog. Where do they hang out online already? Do you consider yourself part of those communities?

What kinds of competition exist already in this space?
Competition isn’t necessarily a bad thing. It proves that there is demand. Without competition you may be making a crap shoot about whether anyone will actually care about your topic.

Have people demonstrated a willingness to pay for products or solutions related to this topic before?
Without proof that people are willing to pay for products or services within this particular space, you might not have a solid business potential.

Do you have any unique ideas for developing a brand and a site design that tie together your overall concept and that demonstrate your differentiation?
You don’t need to have this perfectly nailed down now, but it’s never too early to start brainstorming about compelling brand names, taglines and design ideas. It’s important that your brand and design are clear, compelling and unique.

Fizzle.co  Honest video training for online business builders.
How will you develop your brand and design?
It takes more than a boring brand and lackluster design to stand out. Consider working with professionals to develop parts of your brand, logo or design to give yourself an edge over the competition.

CONTENT - WHAT WILL YOU PRODUCE?

What types of content do you plan to create?
Written posts, video, audio, ebooks, software, anything goes. Describe your content plans here. Keep in mind which types of content are you best at producing.

How much of your personality and personal details will you share?
How much of yourself will go into your content? How much are you comfortable with? How much will be helpful in attracting readers? How much is too much?

Will you produce all of this content or outsource some of it?
There is no right or wrong answer, but if you do choose to outsource, how do you plan to maintain a high quality standard for all of your content?
How often will you publish content?
Again, there is no right or wrong answer, but you should have an idea before you start.

How will you make sure your content is different from competitors?
Differentiation doesn’t stop with your brand and tagline. It’s imperative that you reinforce why you are different within your content and that your content itself stands out from the crowd by being different.

Do you plan to educate, entertain or enlighten your readers?
Your content has to accomplish one of the three E’s to be effective. Better yet, combine two or more of the E’s to really knock it out of the park.

How much do you understand about headline writing strategy?
If you don’t know how to answer, it’s time to learn all about headlines. Headlines are insanely important in today’s online world.
How will you make sure your content is consistently high quality?
It’s easy to slack off and start producing fluffy content just for the sake of publishing something. How will you keep yourself (or your team) on your “A-game?”

What is your content’s “epic shit factor?”
Good content is just the price of admission. You need outstanding content to stand out online. What will you do to create “epic shit,” at least some of the time?

How will you convert readers to subscribers and customers?
Once you have readers coming to your site, you have to make sure they stick around, become subscribers, tell their friends about your or even buy your products. What is your strategy for converting readers?

REVENUE - HOW WILL YOU EARN?

How do you plan to earn revenue through your blog?
There are lots of ways to earn money, and perhaps you’ll choose a combination of things. Some common choices include affiliate marketing, selling products, offering consulting and advertising.
What is your timeline for putting the revenue opportunities into place?
If you’re planning to create a product, when will you build and launch it? If you’re making affiliate offers or implementing advertising, when will you do it? The same goes for consulting or any other revenue opportunity you plan to develop.

How much money do you plan to earn in the first 6, 12, 24 and 36 months?
How will you earn it?
Think about how you’re going to earn money. How many sales of each type will you need to make to meet your revenue goals? List specific figures for each time frame for each product, services or other revenue opportunity you’ll implement along the way.

What do you not currently know about the things you plan to implement to earn money?
What do you need to learn?
Make a list of what you need to learn here and some brief notes about how you plan to acquire the knowledge.
PROMOTION

How do you plan to get the word out about your blog and your content?
List the services and strategies you plan to use to get people to visit your site. Having great content is the first step, but you also need to work hard to get the word out.

What unique approaches do you plan to use to attract people to your site?
What tactics do you plan to use to attract people to your site (aside from the usual social media interaction, basic SEO, etc.)? Are there any unique techniques you plan to employ?

How do you plan to show your readers how much you care about them and appreciate the time they spend at your site?
The more you care about your readers and express that appreciation, the more they will want to help spread the word about what you do.

How do you plan to encourage your readers to help share your content with others?
Your readers can be your greatest marketing tool, but they might need a little help making it happen. How do you plan to help them help you?
Make a list of the top 10 most popular or influential bloggers who write about similar or related topics to yours. Creating strong relationships with other bloggers and entrepreneurs is an important key to getting the word out about your site. List some popular people you’d like to get to know here.

Now make a list of 10 bloggers who write about similar or related topics but who started their blogs more recently (people who could become your peers in the next six months).

What is your plan for reaching out to those two lists of bloggers? How can you connect with them in a genuine way and offer to help with projects each of them are working on? (make brief notes for each person listed in the above two steps)

Relationships always need to start from an honest, giving-without-expecting-anything place. How will you genuinely connect with the people you want to meet?
What do you not currently know about website promotion and audience building? What do you need to learn?

Make a list of what you need to learn here and some brief notes about how you plan to acquire the knowledge.

WRAP-UP

Those are all the questions I have prepared for you. What other questions would you ask yourself in developing your ideal blog business plan? Ask them below.