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**SIMPLE ONE-PAGE
BUSINESS
PLAN™**

Your #1 Tool for Clarity, Action, & Profit.

Guide and Template

The SIMPLE, One-Page Business Plan™ Planning Guide

There are literally hundreds of business plan guides, software programs, websites, and business planning consultants. And many business planning approaches have one similar flaw – they're far too complicated – even for business leaders.

Most organizations and leaders don't need a 200-page business plan that sits on a remote shelf in a corner office somewhere collecting dust never again to see the light of day.

What they do need is a ridiculously **simple, clear business plan** that outlines:

1. What you will do and what you will become.
2. How you will reach your goals.
3. Where you need to make improvements.

Clarity

The best businesses begin as simple ideas that are pursued with simple and fanatic clarity. [Tweet that.](#)

In fact, if there is one thing that leaders owe their team members, their organization, their future, their family, themselves, it's clarity. People may not agree with your perspective, with your decisions, with the direction, but they desperately want you to be clear.

When we're not clear about purpose, about vision, about goals. When we're fuzzy about outcomes and how we are going to evaluate, we frustrate people.

Fuzzy leader, fuzzier followers.

When you're not clear, your team becomes frustrated. Your customers become frustrated. Your family gets frustrated. And the collective frustration of all of these people who are most important to you creates drag on momentum. And destroys creativity and productivity.

People are trading the most valuable days of their lives to invest in you, in the vision, in the team, and in the organization. Are they trading their time for something worthwhile? If so, then we must make sure the business vision and business plans are clear.

It's scary

For many people, just the mention of creating a business plan causes anxiety. They've seen one-too-many two-inch binders with page after page of extensive plans for every minute aspect of the business.

Over the past twenty years of coaching and consulting with business and non-profit professionals, I've discovered that because of the anxiety and fear associated with business planning, **most people never create a plan for their business or their work** and those who do rarely review it or use it.

As a result, many leaders and many organizations, including large corporations, aimlessly chase any opportunity that comes along. Then they drop it when it doesn't bring immediate results.

As you might imagine – or maybe you've experienced like I have – this is not the most successful way to run a business.

So let's get really, really clear. And simple.

To help me with business planning, I developed *The SIMPLE One-Page Business Plan Template*. **The template includes 4 simple sections – End, Action, Change, Review.**

1. End

If you're not making a conscious effort to visualize who you are and what you value in life, then, by default, you're empowering other people and circumstances to shape you, your life, and your work.

Though it was more than 15 years ago, I remember it like it was yesterday. We chose a booth next to a window. The warm North Florida sun reflected off of the table. The smoky scent of freshly prepared barbeque hung in the air.

Our conversation soon turned to the reason I had requested the meeting. As a young leader, early in my career, I was struggling. I needed some direction. I knew that his experience – in life and as CEO of a Fortune 500 company – would be invaluable.

Prodding the brisket on his plate, he said, "Tell me about your current role." I sensed he was looking for some clue – any clue – to guide me.

I spent a few moments explaining my responsibilities and recent results we had experienced. I loved my job, loved my team, and loved the results we were seeing.

When I finished, he asked, "After this role, what do you want to do?"

I had thought about this question many times, so I responded immediately – "I'd love to advance within the organization to serve our leaders."

"Then what?" he asked, this time as if he sensed he was onto something.

"I love the growth we're seeing. So I'd love to lead an organization and serve a team that experiences significant growth."

"Then what?"

"With more experience, I'm confident I could lead a larger organization."

"Then what?" he continued to pry.

"At some point I'm going to retire." I responded. "I want to spend time with my kids and grandkids. Legacy is important to me."

"Then what?" he asked once more.

"I'm gonna die!" I laughed.

What he wanted me to consider was – **When you know what the future should look like, then you can work every day toward fulfilling that vision. [Tweet that.](#)**

Vision – or *the end* – gives you permission to begin each day, each task, each project with a clear vision of the desired direction and destination, and then work to make those things happen.

The SIMPLE, One-Page Business Plan™ Planning Guide

So this first section is foundational to your plan. **Identify what you will measure.** It may be revenue, it may be units, it may be clients – anything that **quantifies the outcomes** you want to reach.

So here are several questions to help you think about the End. In the template, write a simple, one-sentence answer for:

1. What does a successful business look like for you? Number of clients or customers? Annual net income?
2. What do you sell? or, What service do you provide?
3. Who will purchase it?
4. How will your organization, services, and products help people? The best organizations are clear about how they want to make life better for people and how they want to improve the culture.
5. How will you generate income?
6. How much money will you need to get started?

Once you know your numbers, you can begin looking at the actions required to reach them.

2. Action

Next consider – What disciplines will you perform (or commitments will you keep) on a regular basis to reach your goals?

These disciplines must be **clear, specific, and actionable**.

Consider this action plan – “Talk to loyal clients more.” Is it clear, specific and actionable? Is it a good action plan or poor action plan? Poor. Why? Because it’s not specific enough.

What about this one? – “Call 5 loyal clients on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings before 10 am”. Good action plan or poor action plan? Good. Why? Because it’s clear, specific, and actionable.

The most effective leaders and organizations have clear, specific, actionable, and repeatable disciplines.

So here are several questions to help you think through the Action you will take to move your business forward. In the template, write a simple, one-sentence answer for:

1. How will customers learn about your business?
2. How will you encourage referrals?
3. How often will you communicate with your team? With your clients and with customers

3. Change

To accomplish vision in any setting, change must occur in the culture. Change is what growth is all about! Because **change is at the core of leadership – if there is no change, there is no leadership.** [Tweet That.](#)

Otherwise, what are you leading people to do? Stay the same?

I’ve been asked occasionally, How do you handle change? Or, How do you respond when faced with change?

Since change is a constant in growing teams and organizations, I’ve found that change is best approached as an intriguing and energizing part of my work.

Effective leaders lead their teams to adopt the perspective that everything is an experiment. Many of our “experiments” work – some work wonderfully. Others that don’t succeed can be tweaked and improved until we maximize the return-on-investment.

Here's what I'm not saying – and this is important – while change IS at the core of leadership, EVERYTHING and EVERYONE don't need to be changed. We've all seen or heard of a leader who came into an organization and made ill-advised changes which resulted in the loss of key personnel and millions of dollars in revenue.

Leaders should first ask, What is already in place and functioning well? If you work in a large organization, ask everyone at every level of the organization. What is already in place and functioning well? Then invest heavily in what's working and change what's not working.

And I've learned that there are 2 types of change – and there are only 2!

1. Incremental Change

An executive friend of mine once said - When I come into a new organization or to a new department, I'm not interested in stepping on toes that don't need to be stepped on. But it is important to me to find out what personnel at all levels think and it's important that we develop an appropriate strategy to move forward together.

Incremental change considers, What could be done better? It occurs over time and is a key component of an organizations growth and development. And incremental change tends to be inclusive and collaborative. Because there's more time to involve more people and ideas.

2. Radical Change

There are times when better is just not enough. And when better is not enough the question becomes, What MUST be done differently? That's radical change.

Radical change considers, What must be different? It brings dramatic alteration to teams and organizations and often occurs quickly.

To help you think through the Change you will need to make to move your business forward, write a simple, one-sentence answer for these questions in the template:

1. What could be done better?
2. What must be different?
3. What is your current reality? Don't be afraid to admit to your team what needs to change...they already know anyway.

Movement starts when you admit your current reality. So identify what needs to change.

Identify new products and services that can be launched. Consider what can be better. Most things you are doing can be improved. And some things that you are doing may need to be eliminated or radically changed - programs, processes, and products.

Both types of change will REQUIRE unwavering leadership. And as a leader, you must have the courage to lead change when it's necessary. Because there is going to be pushback, negative feedback. The reason is – your team wants to know if you REALLY believe in the direction, in the vision.

So as you think about Change, **you're identifying the improvements that are needed to reach your goals.** These changes are not ongoing disciplines like in the Action section. Instead they are **one-time projects and improvements that, when completed, enhance the way you do business.**

4. Review

Now this is the most important thing part of your new, simple business plan. For your plan to work, you must commit to reviewing the plan weekly and using it to guide HOW you invest your time and HOW you make decisions.

I have an appointment on my calendar every Thursday at 9 am to review my business vision and business plan. It's the only way that I can stay on track. If I'm not reviewing them, something else will come along and grab my attention. And I may never get back on track.

Do you remember a time when that happened to you?

Like most people, I really struggle with staying on track. I'm easily distracted – by entertainment, by sports, by mindless activities like social media. And if I'm not intentional and purposeful about my life and work, weeks, months, and years slip by and I find myself no closer to my envisioned future.

For example, I've learned that it's very important for me to spend one-on-one time with those who directly report to me. In my role, some of these people are paid staff and many of them are volunteers. But, because these meetings require so much time to prepare for them, I have struggled to hold them regularly.

If I am not connecting with them on a regular basis, there is going to be trouble. Lots of it. Because I can't do everything myself.

So I recently contacted all of my key leaders and apologized. Then I scheduled a regular time to connect with each one of them.

So, set a day and time every week to review your business plan. It doesn't take long – maybe 5 to 10 minutes – but it makes a huge difference. Because you are reconnecting with what's most important to you and to your work.

Your NEW *Simple, One-Page Business Plan* can guide you and your team to extraordinary growth while allowing you the flexibility and freedom to adjust to changes in your market.

Bonus - Free Book

If you are going to successfully write a Business Plan, you'll need to first be clear on vision. My book, *Creating Your Business Vision*, is a step-by-step guide for designing the work you've always wanted to do. It's less a book and more an experience that introduces you to:

1. The story of a struggling leader and how to find clarity on what matters most in your work.
2. And, a four-step process for identifying where you are NOW, and how to get from there to where you want to be.

You can [read more about how vision impacts your business plan here](#).

If you haven't already, [download a free PDF copy of the book today](#). Or **get a copy from your favorite retailer** – [Amazon](#), [Kindle](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), or [Nook](#).

The SIMPLE, One-Page Business Plan™ Template

How to complete your *SIMPLE, One-Page Business Plan*

1. Save this document to your computer
2. Re-open the document
3. Type directly into the template, save, and print your *SIMPLE, One-Page Business Plan*!

How to Use the Template

The answers to the questions should all fit on one page.

Once you complete it, print it out and review it daily for the first 90 days. Hang it up where you will see it daily. After the first 90 days, you should review it weekly.

Notes

Your strategies and actions can become more detailed as you make progress in these areas. When you feel like your business is slowing down or you're struggling, come back to your *Simple, One-Page Business Plan*. Review it. Get reset. Then move forward again.

Your goals can be longer term – for a quarter, 6 months, or even a year. Just make sure you break them down into clear, specific weekly actions.

Investing the time today in your *Simple, One-Page Business Plan* will save you time, frustration, and pain in the future. It will significantly increase your chances of success of actually achieving your goals and growing your business.

Here we go – it's time to complete your *Simple, One-Page Business Plan*!

The SIMPLE, One-Page Business Plan™ Template

Use the sample questions to complete each section with simple phrases or sentences.

Business Name

End

When you know what the future should look like, then you can work every day toward fulfilling that vision.
What will you do?
What will you become?
What is the core purpose of your business?
What does your successful business look like?
What do you sell?
What service do you provide?
Why is your business necessary and important?
How is your business unique?
Who will purchase it?
How many clients or customers will you have?
What will your annual net income be?
How will your organization, services, and products help people?
How will you generate income?
What will you need to get started?

Action

What clear, specific, repeatable actions will you perform to reach your goals?
How will customers hear about your business?
How often will you communicate - with your team, with your clients, and with customers?
What 2-3 areas of personal and professional growth will you invest in this year?
What actions do I need to perform daily/weekly/monthly/quarterly to grow my business?

Change

Identify the improvements that are needed to reach your goals. These changes are not ongoing disciplines like in the Action section. Instead they are one-time projects and improvements that, when completed, enhance the way you do business.
What improvements need to be made?
What can be done better?
What must be different?

Review

Set a day & time to review it every week.

The SIMPLE, One-Page Business Plan™

Section Questions

Notes for My Business Plan



The **best businesses**
begin as **SIMPLE** ideas
that are pursued with
fanatic clarity.



MICHAEL NICHOLS has led unprecedented growth in businesses, colleges and universities, churches, and non-profits for more than 25 years. He has served as Chairman and CEO of an international marketing firm, an executive pastor, and a college and university executive. He is the author of *One-on-One Meetings that Work* and *Creating Your Business Vision* and has a Doctor of Education degree in Organizational Leadership.

Michael coaches leaders and teams through vision development, strategic planning, process development, and life and work balance. He speaks at conferences, churches, and on university campuses on a variety of topics, including Life Planning, Vision, Team Leadership, Organizational Growth, and Marketing.