



# Briefing Note for CLA members

## Business Planning (10)

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In order to assist members during the agricultural transition, the CLA has produced a series of briefing notes on business planning. These provide information on what members need to consider when they are either developing their existing business or are considering a new business venture.

### Presenting the business plan

If getting someone interested in the business plan is half the battle in raising funds, the other half is the oral presentation to the potential investor. However, without the ability to present the business plan, all the planning and research that have been undertaken will be futile.

Therefore, it is important to understand the value of presenting the business plan properly as well as putting into practice some general guidelines to make the presentation easier and tailored to the needs of the audience.

### The importance of body language

Research shows that subconsciously a person's body can reveal what he or she really means and thinks. For example, avoid sitting with arms folded and legs crossed as this presents a defensive posture and can indicate a hostile attitude towards the other person. Sitting with arms folded and thumbs up can give the impression of a superior attitude so should be avoided.

During the presentation, if you notice that the person you are presenting to is rubbing his or her chin it can suggest he or she may be thinking or making a decision and will therefore not be listening to the presentation. If this is the case, you will need to re-engage with the audience.

### Selling yourself as well as the business

Any organisation financing a business venture will insist on meeting the team involved so that the business plan can be presented and defended. It will be backing the people as much as the idea itself. It should also be stressed that the financiers will be as well-prepared as the presenter. They will have invested in many other businesses.

But as venture capitalist Sir Ronald Cohen has stated, many presenters make a common flaw: "The biggest mistake entrepreneurs who come pitching for capital make is that they deliver the pitch they have prepared instead of trying to find out what the person sitting on the other side of

the table with the money is really concerned about. You find entrepreneurs going on for 25 or 30 minutes without giving anybody a chance to breathe, instead of asking ‘Could you tell me what concerns you about my business plan?’”

## 10 key points

It is important to keep the following 10 points in mind when preparing the presentation of the business plan:

- **Plan the time effectively**  
Find out how much time the presenter will have and rehearse the presentation beforehand. Allow as much time for questions as the talk.
- **Use visual aids**  
Wherever possible, bring and demonstrate the product or service. A video, computer generated model or diagram can bring the presentation to life.
- **Have a clear strategy**  
Explain the strategy in a business-like manner, demonstrating a well-versed grasp of the market and the competitive forces at work. Listen to comments and criticisms carefully, and the presenter must avoid a defensive attitude in responding to questions.
- **Be as up to date as possible**  
Provide the latest information on sales, profits, product development, market tests and other evidence-based benchmarks. Some of this information may be too current to include in the written business plan so this provides the opportunity to add strength to the business plan.
- **Be concise**  
When replying to questions, the answers should be brief, to the point and relevant. If members of the audience want more information, they will ask. This approach allows time for the many different questions that will invariably be asked, either now or later, before any investment will be offered.
- **Create empathy between yourself and the audience**  
It is advisable to do some basic research on presentation skills. Eye contact, tone of speech, enthusiasm and body language all have a part to play in making a presentation successful.
- **Dress accordingly**  
Wearing more formal clothing will never upset anyone. However, wearing shorts and sandals when meeting potential investors will certainly not set the right tone.
- **Be prepared**  
It is vital that the person making the presentation knows the business plan inside out and can answer all the potentially difficult questions.

- **Refine the presentation to the given circumstances**  
It may be the case that the opportunity to present the business plan may arise at any given moment and, as such, it will be necessary to have in place, and to fully understand, a 5, 10 and 20 minute presentation.
- **Be gracious**  
At the end of the presentation it is crucial to thank those in the audience irrespective of how well or how badly the presentation may have gone. It is also useful to use this time to hand out business cards to those listening.

## A checklist

To make sure the business plan has the maximum impact, the following points should be considered:

- Keep the plan and presentation short. It is more likely to be read if it is a manageable length. Think about the presentation and keep it professional. A well-presented plan will reinforce the positive impression the business wants to convey.
- Make sure the business plan is realistic. Once the business plan has been drafted, it needs to be used, ideally as the strategic framework for the business. It also needs to be continually updated to take into account changing circumstances and changes in the market.
- Include a cover or binding and a contents page and section numbering.
- Make sure the executive summary is exactly that, a summary of the main points of the business plan.
- Ensure that it is legible and easy to read.
- If the business plan is to be emailed, ensure that it is in the correct format and easy enough to download.
- Edit the plan carefully and have at least two other people read it before it is finalised. Also show the plan to expert advisers, such as an accountant, and ask for feedback.
- Avoid jargon and put detailed information, such as market research data or balance sheets, in an appendix to the document.

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