4.1

CONTENTS OF A BUSINESS PLAN; WHAT MAKES A GOOD BUSINESS PLAN

• Writing A Business Plan

• Social Enterprise Business Plan Guide

• Constructing A Business Plan Exercise
At this stage, you have the idea for a business and have thought a little about how it might actually operate. Now you have to describe the business in much more detail and be able to show that it is feasible and properly planned. You will have to write the business plan.

The business plan is a planning tool. It is written for a purpose and describes an actual or intended organisation, what the organisation is trying to achieve or become and how it will achieve its objectives, including both timing and how tasks will be allocated.

What Do We Use A Business Plan For?

Drawing up a business plan helps an organisation to:

- Control finance, to get a realistic idea of the financial implications of a business idea and future finance needs;
- Establish objectives, especially directions for the future;
- Set targets, which can encourage better-directed and purposeful work;
- Define actions, priorities and the timetable for actions;
- Analyse performance, and correct weaknesses;
- Assess needs, in terms of human and other resources;
- Test assumptions, especially if the idea is realistic;
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.

A business plan has two purposes: firstly, to bring in extra resources; and secondly, to help us manage resources better.

It is designed therefore to influence the external environment and the internal environment. It is both outward-looking and inward-looking. A business plan is used to review the operations of an organisation, to draw up a list of necessary changes in a coherent and easily understood form, and to get the agreement and support of everybody required to bring about or live with those changes.

Proving The Feasibility /Making The Case

At the 'ideas stage' you probably chose the most feasible idea. Now you have to prove exactly how viable the business will be. This is the most important part of the business plan. The first stages of any feasibility study are straightforward and common-sense. It is only later that you may need to bring in the experts.
You need to look in more detail at the following questions:

**Can it be done?** If the answer to this is ‘no’ then you have to find another idea.

**Will it sell?** This question is also crucial as if there are not enough people your business will not be viable.

**Will it pay?** If the business does not pay enough, then your ‘outgoings’ will be more than your ‘in-comings’ and the business will fold.

**Can you get all the resources?** If not, you are going to be in difficulties and perhaps you have to think again.

The heart of the business plan is you describing your product or service, explaining how you will make and sell it, what it is going to take to do this and describing both the resources you have and the resources you will need to make it happen. **Can you do this?**

Calculating the costs is not complicated - but it can be disappointing to discover that there is no way you can do what you want to do at the right price and be viable. Too often the idea is possible, the market is there, but the sums just don’t add up.

**Writing The Business Plan**

The business plan is the document at the centre of your enterprise. It states what you intend to do, how and when you will do it, how much it will cost and how to fund it and keep it going. In looking in more detail at the feasibility of your idea you have now got nearly all the information to bring together into a business plan. Its first function is to demonstrate the potential viability of your idea to possible backers. Its second function is to give you a model plan for the development of your business and a model against which you can compare what actually happens.

**Ensuring It Will Pay**

Work out how much it will cost you over one or two years to provide a service or make your product. Include everything that will cost the business money i.e. raw materials, wages, administration costs, rent, rates, insurance, heating, lighting, maintenance, postage, stationery, telephone, travel, advertising, professional’s fees, bank charges, fixtures and fittings, plant and machinery, vehicles and staff training.

**Can the number of products you plan to produce be sold at a price to meet these costs and make a profit?**

**Will customers buy your services often enough to cover your costs and what price will they have to pay?**

**Presentation**

The presentation of a business plan is very important as it will be read and assessed by possible funders.

Leave nothing to chance and make sure that you make good use of photographs, graphics, tables, etc.

Be as meticulous as possible in writing the plan on a computer and make sure it all hangs together in a nicely presented form.

It is a good idea to try to get hold of other successful business plans to give you an idea of what is required.

Also enterprise agencies should be able to give you advice on the plan, its contents and possible ways of presenting information.
1 : Basic Information
Name of the business or organisation; What stage are you up to?
What is the business selling or producing?
What money or other resources do you need to start the business?
What do you hope to achieve?

2 : People Involved
Names, abilities, qualifications, experience of people involved
How will your business be managed?
Describe the jobs involved running your business and the skills required
Will people need training? What training do you need?

3 : The Product Or Service
Describe in detail what you plan to make/sell
What research have you done?
Do you plan to develop your product/service?
How well does your planned product/service fit the market?

4 : Marketing
Customers: location, age, spending habits and buying power
What are the trends in the market?
What share of the market will you need?
Who are your target customers (those buying often)?
Who are your main competitors?
Does the way you plan to price your product fit the market?
How will you prevent or deal with complaints?

5 : Production/Delivering Your Service
Premises needed, their layout and their suitability for producing/delivering the service
Machinery, equipment, fixtures and tools required
Suppliers, their terms and the availability of alternatives
Sub-contracting (if any)
Stock and quality control
6 : Legal Issues

Legal status of the business or organisation
Licences, permits, agreements needed, leases on premises
Ownership of assets, patents, commercial information

7 : Financial Issues

Prices and basic costs
Budgets or projections of your costs: labour, materials, overheads
Cash-flow forecasts: When will you break even? When will you start to be profitable?
How profitable is the business? How large will your mark-up be?
How much money will you need - grant, loan or overdraft?

8 : Other Information

Research findings, other information, CVs of key personnel
Publicity materials or photographs
Premises plans/layout
This is a simple exercise about planning to draw up a business plan. Participants must decide about the contents of the business plan, its structure and then allocate resources to it.

The Business
The Wood ‘N’ Tops furniture workshop provides work experience and training to people in joinery and carpentry skills, repairing and refurbishing old furniture with items sold or repaired for the cost of materials. Refurbished furniture has been given away on a ‘first come, first served’ basis. The local council is now insisting the furniture project become self-financing and it has been decided to draw up a business plan for a financially self-sustaining business.

A business plan consists of the following:
- Basic information
- The people involved
- The product or service
- Marketing information
- Operational information
- Legal, governance and management
- Financial information
- Other information

Exercise 1
A funder has told you that they will consider a business plan from the group so long as it is not more than 5,000 words long. Assign a number of words to each part of the business plan.

Exercise 2
The group has 45 ‘person-days’ to devote to drawing up a business plan. Look at the information you have. Then for each section assign a number of person-days which will enable the group to: a) gather more information, b) undertake analysis and c) prepare the information.

Exercise 3
Using the information presented overleaf, assign one part of the business plan to each member of the group. That person should write not less than 100 and not more than 300 words on the topic and present the information to the group. If they don’t have the information they need, they should list the things they don’t know and which the group will need to research before they can complete the plan.

Answers can be found in the appendix on pages 413 and 414.
The current time being worked in the workshop is 100 person-hours. The maximum capacity is 240 person-hours.

The following quotes for fitting out the showroom have been received: new floorboards £80; wiring £300; glazing £120; painting £100; carpets £250; laying carpets £50; making and fitting shelf units £180; painting sign £90; plastering £160; constructing office £250.

There is a Steering Committee consisting of Jack Haycox (Chair), Deirdre (Secretary), Frank (Group Member), Susie (Group Member), Brian (Group Member).

The workshop has a health and safety policy written in 1990, an equal opportunities policy adopted in 1995 and insurance is provided by the Council.

The Business

Wood ‘N’ Tops is situated in the middle of a depressed overspill estate. The main town, Shiverton, is three miles away but a busy main road passes along the estate. There are many families with young children and an old people’s home but people do not have a lot of money.

The workshop has the necessary equipment to make bookshelves, coffee tables, bedside cabinets, cots, bunk beds, office desks, wardrobes, dressers, TV cabinets and picnic tables. It does not have the equipment (a bandsaw) to make toys or sofas. A second-hand bandsaw would cost £800.

The workshop could sell sofas and picnic tables wholesale and all the rest retail.

It is anticipated that the showroom would be visited by 600 people per week of which 60 would purchase something.

The following are the direct unit costs of the products: bookshelf £10; coffee table £8; cabinet £8; cot £15; bunk bed £50; office desk £45; wardrobe £12; dresser £15; TV cabinet £18; picnic table £40; toy £3; sofa £70.

The following are the person hours to make each item: bookshelf = 3 hours; coffee table = 5 hours; cabinet = 6 hours; cot = 10 hours; bunk bed = 12 hours; office desk = 10 hours; wardrobe = 5 hours; dresser = 6 hours; TV cabinet = 4 hours; picnic table = 7 hours; toy = 1 hour; sofa = 15 hours.
4.2

BUSINESS PLANNING

- Business Planning
Once in business, key personnel can be overwhelmed by the day-to-day demands of managing. Yet there are many strategic decisions that have to be made as well. Periodic business planning and review can help to avoid sudden crises in the business, expensive problems developing, under-performance at critical times or over long periods that will kill the business.

When Do You Do Business Planning?

Business planning obviously takes place in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. Businesses generally plan when they find themselves in the following situations:

- Starting a new business or activity or launching a new product
- Developing new strategies to defend an existing market position
- When attempting to grow the business or maintain growth rates in changing situations
- Fighting back against new competitors or adverse market conditions
- Regular review of activities and forward-planning
- Risk and contingency planning to cope with unforeseen eventualities
- Preparing things likely to occur in the short-term: a recession, take-over or campaign by a competitor
- Coping with other events

Think about what sets your business apart before approaching potential investors and lenders. Develop a fall-back plan and consider other options and contingencies. Decide what your basic business strategy is, whether to develop a solid customer base, go for growth or seek to constantly re-shape the business to attract new customers chasing new products or ways of selling; then try to decide what this will take, whether it plays to your strengths and what resources will be required, especially those you don’t already have.

Growth-based strategies require the group to be experts on the market, on industry features and the products and services being sought by customers. You can’t rely on other people to do it since it’s this knowledge that can make or break a business.
Who Writes The Business Plan?

The chief executive, manager or a small executive group of the business’ management group should take overall responsibility. In some businesses smaller units will need to write their own development or business plans, in which case the chief executive will delegate responsibility to the service team while shaping its overall approach and conclusions.

The best approach is top down, bottom up, where the management group decides the strategy, the manager develops the plan in line with that strategy and the whole process is reviewed, changed, corrected and improved, then re-approved.

The key will be in how well ideas, strategies and proposals are communicated. A joint effort combining the strategic with the operational and between management and operational personnel, is a good way to get co-operation, understanding and commitment.

There is no point to planning if the people charged with implementation have no confidence in the plan, do not understand it or have different priorities, leading them to implement the plan in the wrong way. This means planning should involve everybody who will be involved in implementation, even if its only to hear objections which can be incorporated before the final version is produced. It should be your plan. If you do use outside experts, look for someone who understands your business, your abilities, the resources available to it, its aims and operating environment.

Planning - Getting Started

Business planning is a journey. The plan is your road-map. It describes a route from where you are to where you want to be. It identifies risks and barriers but if done well will also enable you to develop risk-avoidance and risk-minimisation strategies.

Start planning by thinking about two key questions: What are you trying to achieve? Why are you planning? When you have answered these questions, you have already begun the business planning process. A plan reviews the current status of the organisation and plots an overall business strategy for a particular period or set of events. The plan(s) should cover all areas of the business.
The Process Of Business Planning

Business planning begins by deciding what you are trying to achieve and the outcomes you are seeking or the problems you are trying to solve. Having identified these, planning proceeds by a series of steps, as follows:

- Describe your business activities or plans
- Outline the current status of the business or its planned activity in Year 1
- Describe the external market, any competition and where you place yourself in the market
- Decide the objectives of the plan over a given period of time
- Develop strategies for achieving these objectives
- Identify risks and opportunities of various strategies
- Develop coping strategies that limit risks and exploit opportunities
- Develop a series of working plans
- Calculate costs and income as part of an overall financial plan
- Ensure the strategy is set down clearly and concisely

Be flexible. Particularly when estimating likely risks and opportunities you may be forced to go ‘back to the drawing board’, selecting different strategies that might be less good but contain fewer risks.

The planning process and writing a business plan are almost the same thing. Document your plans and the planning process will have written most of the business plan for you.

Using The Plan : Implementation

The business plan creates the basic foundation from which you can build a business and something you can compare progress and development to. Are you achieving what you set out to achieve? Has implementation followed the plan and if not, why not? Were the risks properly predicted and have opportunities been realised? Have costs been in line with forecasts?
Making It Happen

1: Communicate the plan widely. Make sure that you have the widest possible understanding and commitment to its aims and delivery plans.

2: Organise the business in ways that ensure the business plan is at the heart of operations throughout the business.

3: Clearly define roles and responsibilities and communicate them to staff and other key people.

4: Set personal objectives for every employee and volunteer, agreed with that person.

5: Develop individual budgets to support various aspects of implementing the plan and assign responsibility for managing the budgets - with clear spending limits - to individual staff or staff teams.

6: Distribute the budgets and operational/delivery plans.

7: Monitor progress, performance and outcomes; control spending and timetables.

8: Reward successful performance.

9: Take corrective action as required. Revise strategies and plans if necessary.

10: Ensure people who need to know are kept informed and ensure that issues, outcomes and other information about implementation are available when the next planning exercise comes along.

While you are implementing the business plan, don’t forget to keep checking progress. Review developments against the plan. Learn from events; adjust the plan as required within the constraints of the business (time, money, and people).
4.3

PRESENTING A BUSINESS PLAN

- The Business Plan - Drawing One Up And Getting It Accepted
- Presentation Skills
- Controlling The Interview - Getting Outcomes
THE BUSINESS PLAN
- DRAWING ONE UP AND GETTING IT ACCEPTED

Why Have A Business Plan?
Organisations frequently draw up business plans because outsiders (especially sources of finance) expect or demand them. Great efforts are made to produce business plans which are then only superficially assessed and discarded once they have achieved their real objective (usually raising money).

Organisations need to plan far more than they do and need the focus and clarity a business plan can give.

If a business plan is drawn up it is vital that it is implemented. Implementation depends firstly on everyone understanding and having faith in the plan. Next, the people implementing it or having to change what they do must support the plan, and have the necessary time and skills to make the change.

The Role Of Outsiders
An advisor or counsellor can play a vital role in validating the business plan, effectively reinforcing the organisation’s faith in it. For businesses this has often been done by accountants, bank managers, marketing professionals etc. For community-based organisations this role has often been played by supporters, professionals, Local Authority officers or councillors.

However it is important that the business plan is not written by such people but by the organisation itself. The organisation must gather the information, evaluate and understand what it will mean to the organisation so that it can present the plan to outsiders and implement it afterwards.

An advisor or someone asked to draw up a business plan can take the lead role but must involve those affected by the plan. They must remain objective and not let loyalty blind them to reality. It is usually a good idea to be cautious but not to operate a veto on implementing the plan. And finally, to tell the truth, no matter how bad things are.

Basic Principles Of The Business Plan

- The business plan must be firmly based in reality. If it is not no-one will believe it and it is unlikely to succeed. The organisation may need to ‘go back to basics’ or ‘start with a clean sheet’ but hard as it is this has to be done.

- Knowledge and understanding are powerful tools when trying to create belief or faith or to win support. If the people drawing up and presenting the plan understand and can project their understanding at other people it is more likely to be accepted.

- The business plan helps to compare ‘what is’ with ‘what might be’, us with them. From this comparison pathways to improving performance can usually be found.
Presenting A Business Plan

- The business plan must be presented in a form the 'audience' expects and understands. If the proposals are complex or people have a low level of understanding (or cannot devote much time to understanding and evaluating the business plan) then it must be summarised (either in writing or verbally).

- Presenting a business plan in a particular way is intended to win support or create belief in it. Both the style in which it is presented and the belief and confidence the presenter has in the business plan will have a major impact on the business plan's chances of being accepted.

- However, a slick or spurious 'professional' quality is no guarantee of success, nor is something badly presented guaranteed to fail. If the Plan has been soundly drawn up and is based firmly on the experiences and principles of the organisation and its members, it is likely to be accepted.

- Winning the support of key players, talking with them and ensuring they understand and accept the business plan prior to formal presentation can be a major factor. However 'key players' are not always the people in charge. They could be shop-floor workers or union representatives, the man who cooks the meals or the woman who drives the van. They are people vital to the implementation of the business plan and/or who can play a key role in explaining the plan, building support or creating conditions for it to succeed.

- Presenting a business plan is a two-way process, a dialogue between you and the person(s) you are trying to influence. Not only must you be able to present your case well but you must have a thorough understanding and knowledge of your business plan. If you do you will be able to answer their questions and deal with any doubts they have.

Why Business Plans Don't Win

If business plans are rejected after first scrutiny, it is usually because they fail to reassure the reader that the marketing and sales strategies will deliver the promised outcomes. The second most-frequent problem is a lack of operational detail in terms of implementing the plan.

Both of these weaknesses derive from not having a clear understanding of your own strategy, lack of confidence or engagement with the strategy or a failure to communicate the strategy effectively.

A great deal of the potential for success lies in being able to get key people to engage with it and support it. This has as much to do with (justified) optimism and enthusiasm as it has to do with dry statistics and over-planned detail.
Ten Reasons Business Plans Fail To Convince

1: The business plan document or presentation is poor or too slick - it feels false.

2: The text is too long, with too much waffle and generalisation.

3: The text is too short, too weak, shallow or vague.

4: There are not enough hard facts, operational details or market information.

5: It’s just wrong about certain facts, information or conclusions.

6: Failure to cover everything expected in the plan suggests that skills, resources or knowledge to deliver it are missing.

7: There is not enough contingency analysis - What if sales are 10% less than expected? Or more than expected? If financial terms and conditions change?

8: The financial projections are overly optimistic or simplistic (for instance there is no seasonal variation or they take no account of finance required, labour or factory capacity etc). There should also be some alternative financial scenarios based on some (reasonable) pessimistic assumptions.

9: The plan has been to raise finance and doesn’t go into enough detail about business operations and management issues.

10: The plan was clearly produced by outside consultants, suggesting that the people responsible for the plan didn’t have the time, knowledge, expertise or ability to draw it up.
PRESENTATION SKILLS

Aside from actual techniques, confidence and experience are big factors. Making a presentation or a case for your business in public - even in a private office with someone you don't know - can be nerve-wracking. A common physical reaction is a release of adrenalin, which makes us both nervous and assertive (the fear and flight syndrome). The important thing to remember is that your audience probably wants you to succeed. Good preparation is the key to confidence, which is one key to success.

Some Facts About Presenting Information

Preparation and knowledge are the pre-requisites for a successful presentation, but confidence and control are just as important. Remember also that believing in yourselves and being persuasive can be far more important than reams of statistics churned out nervously. A good presentation will leave your target audience relaxed, positive and supportive.

Presenting a business plan or proposal should use every tool at your disposal. People access and retain information in particular ways: read it - 10%, heard it - 20%, saw it - 30%, heard and saw it - 50%, said it - 70%, said and did it - 90%. Simply giving someone a business plan without asking for an interview, showing them the product or touring the factory greatly reduces your chances of success.

You have four to seven seconds in which to make a positive impact and good opening impression, so make sure you have a good, strong, solid introduction. Try to win over your audience. Smiling will create rapport and confidence in you. If you don’t know the answer to a question say so and deal with it after. The average attention span of a listener is only six to eight minutes, so try not to stay on one topic too long. This requires you to control the interview and keep it focussed and moving along.
Preparing a Business Plan

4.3

Preparation

Think about your audience, your aims, their expectations, the surroundings and the likely process you will have to go through. What are your aims? To inform, demonstrate, prove and persuade. Think clearly about the information you want to get across, in what order and with what emphasis. Organise this information coherently and ensure that you and other members of the group have the facts and issues you want to focus on at your fingertips. Plan to start and finish strongly - this is when impressions can be most important.

Practise the interview, presentation or conversation. Get someone to role play your audience, run through the presentation. Ask for their comments and how you can improve, especially whether they understood everything.

Creating And Giving Presentations - Step By Step Guide

- Define purpose
- Gather content and presentation ideas
- Structure the subject matter
- Develop how to present it
- Prepare presentation
- Practise
- Plan, experience, control the environment
- ‘Dress rehearsal’ if warranted
CONTROLLING THE INTERVIEW - GETTING OUTCOMES

Presenting a business plan will usually consist of a series of interactions between you and funders or stakeholders. Some you will have no control over: an officer of the funding body will present the proposals for final decision to a distant committee, for instance. So its important that you do not let a decision be made until you have done everything you can to get the right information across. And that you use every opportunity you have to persuade and convince.

Planning Issues

- Do you know what you want from the interview?
- Who will decide what you want and by when?
- Where will the interview take place and when?
- Who will be present?
- Will notes be kept? By who? Why?
- What will you do if you don’t get what you want?

Control Issues

- Is the interview a negotiation, interrogation, introductory session or what? What attitude should you have to the process?
- How much time will you allow for the interview? When will you arrive?
- What attitude should you take to the interviewer?

Preparation Issues

- What information will you need to take to the interview?
- What will you wear?
- Will you want to take notes individually? Why?

- Will you try to take control? What will you do if the other party tries to take control?
- What outcomes do you want? How will you assert the importance of these outcomes?
- Is there an agenda agreed by all parties? Do you have your own agenda? How will you get it accepted?
- Who controls the outcomes? Who will take action to implement the agreed outcomes?
Outcome Issues

- Are you likely to be trading off outcomes? If so what value do you give to each of your outcomes?
- What will you do if you are unable to get your preferred outcomes?
- What outcomes will constitute an acceptable compromise?
- What will you do with the outcomes? What will follow from the decisions reached?
- Who ‘owns’ the outcome? Whose responsibility is it to take action?

Presenting a business plan requires a period of preparation, development of agreement on the kinds of outcomes being sought and agreement on who has the authority to make decisions. It might seem hard to have worked so long to produce a business plan and maybe you want or need a quick decision. But getting the wrong offer can be as dangerous as getting a refusal is disappointing. But at least with a refusal you can look elsewhere. Putting all your eggs in the wrong basket could be potentially disastrous.

Types Of Interview - Roles Played

The outcome of interviews and the way they play out are primarily governed by the following issues:
- Are the parties to the interview equal or unequal?
- Is there an imbalance in the relationship? For instance, is one party trying to get something from the other without offering anything in return?
- Is the aim of the interview to discover information? Get across a set of opinions, beliefs or perspectives to assert authority? Change a relationship in some way? Pass on information?
- Who initiated the interview and who has most say in the outcomes likely from it?

Most interviews are initiated by one party or the other. The person initiating the interview usually also controls it. They alone usually know the rules of the interview process, possess facts not known to the other parties, have a preferred outcome in mind and can control, direct and end the interview as they wish. When seeking a bank loan, for instance, a ‘levelling’ strategy can be to invite the bank manager to your premises to view operations and discuss finance; now you control the interview process.

Planning The Interview

- Decide what you want to get out of it
- Decide what facts you will need at the interview or get from the interview
- Draw up your own agenda for the meeting
- Decide how much time you will allow for the meeting
- How much time will you give to the other party’s needs?
- Decide your priorities for the meeting
- If able to, decide the time, place and atmosphere of the meeting. Is it to be formal or informal, for instance?
- Dress accordingly
- Decide what agreements you want out of the interview
Roles Played

In formal situations like interviews we tend to play formal roles. The roles being played often determine the outcome of the interview. Success at interviews can depend on you spotting and controlling the following types of roles being played:

The Controller

The interview agenda will have been prepared by this type and it is usually only their interests which get on it. They do not allow departure from the agenda. Strategy: You must take control, refusing to meet (if possible) until there is an agreed agenda.

The Dominator

Exerts authority in the interview, may intimidate, belittle or accuse to control process. School teachers are good at this as is anyone whose authority is under threat or diminished. Strategy: If you accept the points being raised ask what outcomes are wanted. If not, turn them back one by one.

The Silent Type

Gives up as little information as possible. If initiating the interview, keeps asking questions that involve complicated answers. Gathers information together but does not reveal outcomes. Solution: Try to change things, get him/her to do the talking.

The Supplicant

Will ask for help or information without knowing (often) what kind or why. Expects other party to come up with the answers. May have infinite needs or the interview itself is the outcome required, with no solution or benefit. Strategy: Keep interviews short and focused on one issue only.

The Helpless Babe

Similar to supplicant. Wants other party to take over interview, or to take responsibility for problem, project whatever. Primarily interested in avoiding work, blame, responsibility etc. Strategy: Keep asking what the problem is. Keep asking what stops other party from taking (appropriate) action. Put a limit on your involvement.

The Righteous One

Has rights/needs/demands and believes that having got this far, they should be settled here and now. May also have a long list. Wants to be allowed to recite a long list of grievances/excuses/injustices to force compliance. Strategy: Keep asking what it is they want - eventually outcomes rather than emotions will come to the fore.

The Prevaricator

Avoids issue by putting up (imaginary /petty) obstacles or trying to move on to other (irrelevant) subjects. If initiating the interview will avoid issue as long as possible to soften other party up, then accept any reason possible for ending interview. Strategy: Go with your own agenda and stick to it. Take control.

Many interviews are in fact a set of negotiations carried out in stages, not a continuous process. Its important therefore to clarify requirements and get agreement to decisions made or outcomes agreed at each stage. The most important time for this clarification is at the start when you should state clearly what your purpose is. Don’t allow the interview to end until all of the points on your agenda have been discussed. Don’t be afraid to go over what’s been agreed at the end.