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Pop Up Business

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Chapter 2

Developing Your Pop Up Plan

In This Chapter

- ▶ Coming up with a plan
 - ▶ Thinking about budgets
 - ▶ Dealing with risks
-

Planning a project is always a good way to spend your time. Planning makes the whole project less tricky, as you can see clearly who needs to do what, when. A plan breaks a big pop up into bite-size pieces.

The process of writing a plan also helps you understand why you're doing the project and the benefits it can bring to other people.

In this chapter, I tell you everything you need to know (and think about!) when writing a pop up plan.

Planning a Pop Up

A plan used to be a flat drawing on a piece of paper, such as a sketch of a building or an industrial widget. A plan then became broader and covered time as well as space. Planning is looking into the future. Business plans try to nail every possible alternative universe with data, market research and detailed analysis.

But plans for pop ups are slightly different. They tend to be much faster, for one thing, but they also include lots of uncertain things.

US politician Donald Rumsfeld said:

There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know.

Rumsfeld could have been talking about planning a pop up.

Writing Your Plan

Planning a project goes through many stages and is never really finished.



The best pop up plan is an adaptable working document that helps you by making sure you do the work you need to do. Having a clear plan also stops you getting distracted by things you don't need to do! It's not a set-in-stone definitive document that restricts you. Your plan should be short and simple enough that everyone involved in the pop up can read it, understand it and refer to it whenever they're uncertain.

Your plan should talk to an audience inside your business sector as well as possible partners outside of it, so avoid jargon and slang and use plain English. Author and journalist Peter Fryer wrote a book about how to write well called *Lucid, Vigorous and Brief* (Index Books) – the title is a good guide to writing, even if you don't read the book!



When writing a plan:

- ✓ Use simple English
- ✓ Be clear
- ✓ Excite people
- ✓ Keep it short



Although many people may have a passion for your project, it's best for one person to lead on the writing so that it conveys a coherent idea and a clear message. Of course, different areas of the plan may need expert input.

If one person in the organisation is responsible for the writing, that individual will also have enough of an overview to act as captain when needed – and can swing the biggest, most lumbering vessels around quickly when the wind changes direction.



Don't spend so long coming up with a plan that you're more involved with a plan than a pop up. Make your document adaptable and update it when your information changes. A business plan is a live document and always subject to change, not a set-in-stone list that you can't move away from.

Following the Agile Philosophy

The *Agile Methodology* started in software development, where it was used to describe a process that changed and adapted as software was built.

The simple idea behind the agile philosophy is that it's more important to get something up and running so that you can test and refine it with real people using it instead of planning it to the finest detail before launching it. If you plan for too long, you may be too late, you may be making something nobody actually wants or you may find that your competitors have got there first.



Key to the agile way of working is the idea of developing things that respond to the needs of people using it, rather than just the needs anticipated by the planners and designers.

Even a few years ago, software could be in development for years before being released with a big, thick manual to help users. Nowadays, it's common to see a website with the word *beta* on it, which means the product is an early release and is still being built and tested.

Agile in action

The agile philosophy is a style of working that you can apply to all sorts of disciplines. It's especially good for creating pop ups because pop ups are often planned and delivered in a short time and need a degree of flexibility.

Being agile also means that you can provide a service that feels much more tailored to your customers so they feel more valued.

The agile methodology is nothing clever, by the way. Every cafe is agile, serving the type of cake its customers want and brewing the blend of coffee that most of its customers want to drink!

To be agile:

- ✔ Aim to be up and running as early as possible.
- ✔ Welcome change.
- ✔ Get your team to work together daily throughout the project.
- ✔ Build projects around motivated individuals.
- ✔ Trust people to get the job done.
- ✔ Measure progress in actions, not words.
- ✔ Reflect on how to be better, and tune and adjust regularly.

Perfect for pop ups

An agile approach is perfect for pop ups because:

- ✔ **You may need to grasp an opportunity quickly** – for example, if a good location becomes available at short notice.
- ✔ **You may have to change your plans without much warning** – for example, if a long-term tenant rents a shop you were considering.
- ✔ **You may have to add new products** – for example, if supply of one you were planning to stock dries up.



Remember, though, that agile is still a form of business planning, and isn't an excuse for not planning! As the old business cliché has it, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Defining Your Pop Up's Purpose

Your project needs a clear, defined purpose – an *aim*. Your aim must be clear enough to focus your activity and easy to explain to other people. In addition, you need to make sure that you either have or can find the people and the resources to meet your aim.

If you're adapting an agile way of working (see preceding section), a clear aim ensures that, as you respond to opportunity or change, you're still achieving what you set out to do.

Pop ups have all sorts of different aims, such as the following:

- ✔ Provide a space for a seasonal sale or event.
- ✔ Offer a chance to test or prototype a new business.
- ✔ Carry out market research for a new product, range or service.
- ✔ Provide an interesting way to launch a new product.
- ✔ Reach a different audience than the usual one.
- ✔ Occur in a different place to the location where you usually do business.
- ✔ Be a special event to increase customer loyalty.
- ✔ Show how your brand stands out from its competitors by doing something different.

Of course, a pop up may have several aims from the preceding list. For example, you may host a Christmas event for your most regular customers and use it to launch a new service.

No matter which aims you choose or how many you have, each aim must:

- ✔ Say clearly what your pop up will do.
- ✔ Be short, interesting and brief.

Identifying Milestones and Objectives

After you've defined an aim, you can start creating objectives. You start by identifying milestones and then coming up with objectives based on those milestones.

To transform your aim (see preceding section) into a realistic pop up plan, you can't beat pen and paper – you can create a rough, visual plan in a matter of minutes:

1. **Start by writing the aim of your pop up at the top of the page.**
2. **Draw a timeline down one side of the paper, starting with today's date and ending after your pop up closes.**

Mark in the opening date and closing date.

3. **Sketch in key milestones leading up to the opening.**



These milestones are called action points, and they help create a To Do list. You want these milestones to be practical, measurable, achievable and timetabled. Keep them as simple as possible.

4. **Sketch in milestones for after you close.**

Coming up with milestones

Milestones may be to recruit staff to your team, contact the media, source fixtures and fittings, get the keys to your location and so on. Of course, the exact milestones will vary depending on the nature of your pop up.



Don't worry about capturing every last detail now and don't consider how you'll reach those milestones just yet. Write next to each milestone the things you need to do to reach it – the actual steps to that milestone.

Milestones for after you close may include restoring the shop to the condition in which you found it, returning keys, completing any evaluation for funders and so on. Table 2-1 shows examples of actual milestones.

Table 2-1 **A Timetable of Milestones**

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Milestones</i>	<i>Steps</i>
1 st March	Create plan	Write down aim, identify objectives, identify partners
7 th March	Research potential locations	Decide on the shop
1 st April	Recruit promotional team	Recruit graphic designer, website and social media team
13 th April	Confirm location	Sign property agreement
16 th April	Start marketing	Design and print leaflets and distribute press releases
30 th April	Source shop fittings	Find furniture and display stands
14 th May	Access shop and prepare it	Clean shop, decorate and put up signs
19 th May	Prepare to open	Send out launch invites, invite VIP to open and recruit staff
28 th May	Open	Enjoy!
11 th June	Close shop	Clean shop, make repairs and remove signs
15 th June	Return keys	

From this rough timetable and these milestones, you can develop your objectives.

Developing objectives

Objectives are specific steps to meet an aim and don't stand by themselves. They supply the details of what you must do and when you need to achieve that aim. Because objectives are specific and timetabled, you can identify when you've achieved an objective. And, of course, if you achieve all your objectives, you will achieve your aim!

In Table 2-1, each of the things you need to do is listed in the second column. These items are your objectives; you just need to fill in the details a little more.

For example, the milestone ‘Source shop fittings’ is too general and needs specifics to form an objective. Think about what you need. The objective may become ‘Source 10 tables and 40 chairs, tablecloths, shop counter and equipment to serve tea and coffee, available from 14th May–14th June’.

After you identify all the objectives, you have a very effective To Do list and can start to make your pop up a reality.

Looking at Budget Basics

A *budget* is the total amount of money you have; a *financial plan* is how you’ll spend it. I look at financial planning in Chapter 4 and at some of the ways you can raise the funds as well. A budget helps you make sure the funds you need are in place before you start.



Don’t confuse budgets with financial plans, although the two go hand in hand.

Initial costs

Start with the initial expenses, the stuff you need to get the project up and running and get the doors open:

- ✓ Materials to do the shop up – paint and polyfilla, brushes and sandpaper.
- ✓ Furniture, fixtures and fittings.
- ✓ Electrical items, such as a kettle, vacuum cleaner and portable heaters.
- ✓ Printed publicity, such as leaflets, posters and business cards.
- ✓ Signs, window vinyls and graphics and an A-board pavement sign.
- ✓ A website domain and a website.
- ✓ Media advertising and leaflet distribution.
- ✓ Administration costs.

At this stage, it's a mix of making estimates and making enquiries. You need to know the rough size of the shop you hope to use and have a vague idea of the location as well.

Ongoing costs

You also have to add the stuff that your pop up will use after you're up and running and work out a weekly or monthly cost for these items:

- ✓ Business rates (more about these in Chapter 5).
- ✓ Utility bills (usually only electricity and water).
- ✓ Insurance coverage.
- ✓ Tea, coffee and biscuits for staff.
- ✓ Toilet paper and soap.
- ✓ Window cleaner and cloths.
- ✓ Mobile phone calls.
- ✓ Pay-as-you-go broadband, whether it's a mobile broadband 'dongle' or a WiFi router.
- ✓ Website hosting.
- ✓ Media advertising and leaflet distribution.
- ✓ Staffing.



Expect staff costs to be the highest percentage of your budget, and you probably need to spend at least 10 per cent of your total budget on marketing and publicity.

Your funding

After you estimate the rough figures for the cost of your pop up, you need to work out the potential income, either from sales or from other funding. This amount is your budget. A rough estimate of the costs – the money going out on bills, staffing, marketing and so on – tells you whether this budget is enough or whether you need to look at increasing it. Write up all the money that's coming in. This income may include:

- ✔ Funding or budget found within an organisation.
- ✔ Public donations.
- ✔ People paying contributions to the project, such as artists paying to hang work.
- ✔ Small amounts of sponsorship from local businesses, including donations of goods to support your project.
- ✔ Grant funding from local authorities, Arts Council England or from trusts and foundations.
- ✔ Income from sales.

Crunching the numbers



TIP

Always be realistic about what you can do with the resources you have and include options for different levels of resources and budget. Scrapping a project because you haven't secured the maximum amount of funding is a bit like throwing the baby out with the bathwater – if the project's really good, you'll find a way to make it happen.

Does your income exceed your initial and ongoing costs, that is, your total outgoings? If so, your pop up's in business!

If not, you need to look at either where you can save some money from your expenditure or increasing your income to match.



REMEMBER

In some cases, you may have to accept that your pop up will lose you money. Your aims might make it worth losing money though, for example if you're delivering a community project or an experience for loyal customers.

Your income target

Now we come to the heart of your plan. How much do you have to sell if, as is very likely, your funding won't cover all your costs? Table 2-2 shows a sample income target plan.

Table 2-2 **A Sample Income Target Plan**

<i>Month</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Costs				
Initial	1,000			
Ongoing	1,000	2,000	3,000	3,000
Total costs	2,000	2,000	3,000	3,000
Less funding				
Donations	300	300	300	400
Sponsorship	500	500	500	500
Contributions		100	200	300
Total funding	800	900	1,000	1,200
Total costs minus total funding = income you have to make from sales to stay afloat	1,200	1,100	2,000	1,800



If you think your pop up looks like needing a serious amount of money, take a look at *Understanding Business Accounting For Dummies*, by John A. Tracy and Colin Barrow (Wiley), from which this table is adapted. There you can find all you need to know about cash flow.

Managing Risks

As well as financial issues, you also need to consider other risks inherent in running a pop up. To do so, you can carry out a risk assessment.

Although a risk assessment sounds like a scary venture, you actually manage risks all day, every day, and on most days, you manage just fine. Get out of bed, don't trip, head to the kitchen (full of risks) but make a cup of tea and some hot

toast without spills and burns, and so on. So don't worry about risk assessments, because they mean you don't have to worry so much about the risks themselves.



Managing a pop up's risks and the health and safety requirements largely comes down to common sense and being careful without being overly cautious.

You can do a risk assessment as you plan. In fact, looking at the broader issues during the planning process is a good idea. However, be ready to carry out a more detailed assessment when you have the keys to your premises.

Communicating the risks

After you assess the risks, make sure that you brief everybody working in your pop up about them and how you're managing them. You can convey this information through an informal induction as people come to the space for the first time – much the same as welcoming someone to your house and saying 'Mind the step as you come in'.



Keep a copy of the complete risk assessment in the shop, clearly labelled, for people to refer to if they want to. Be prepared to update this assessment if new risks are identified.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides lots of guidance, advice and even some useful templates to help you manage the risks in your workplace: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm.

Conducting a risk assessment

When you're assessing risk, you need to look at three areas:

- ✓ Fire safety
- ✓ Health and safety
- ✓ Security

The following sequence of questions makes risk assessment really easy:

- 1. What is the hazard?**
- 2. Who might be harmed?**
- 3. How could that person be harmed?**
- 4. How big a risk is it?**
- 5. How can I minimise that risk?**

The simplest way to carry out a risk assessment is to create a five-column table and complete it during a site visit. Label each column as shown in Table 2-3.

Using your table:

- 1. Walk around your pop up and look at what may cause harm.**
- 2. Ask other people who'll be using your pop up what they think.**
They may have noticed things that aren't immediately obvious to you.
- 3. Consider whether you can eliminate the hazard altogether.**
- 4. If you can't eliminate the hazard, think about how you can control the risks so that harm is unlikely.**



You don't have to be a health and safety expert to carry out a risk assessment, and the simpler it is, the easier it is for everyone to follow.

Table 2-3 shows a real example for a pop up event on Worthing Pier, which takes in some everyday risks alongside some unlikely ones.

Table 2-3 Risk Assessment

<i>Potential Hazard</i>	<i>Who Is at Risk?</i>	<i>What Is the Risk?</i>	<i>Level of Risk</i>	<i>Risk Reduction</i>
Falling off pier	Individuals may fall off and into the sea	Fall from height Drowning	Medium	Assess slip, trip and fall hazards prior to the event Place railings around the sides of pier
Pier collapse	Everyone at the event	Panic as individuals are crushed or fall into the sea, sustaining related injuries	Low	Know Worthing Pier evacuation procedure Engineers to check structure monthly
Weather conditions	Everyone at the event	Strong winds, heavy rain, lightning strike, squalls and so on	Low	Postpone event if the weather conditions cause concern Cancel event if the conditions are unsuitable



When carrying out your risk assessment, remember to be clear about hazards and risks, and how to manage them:

- ✓ A *hazard* is anything that may cause harm – for example, an oddly placed step, a kettle full of hot water or a slippery floor.
- ✓ The *risk* is the realistic chance, high or low, that somebody may be harmed.
- ✓ Most important is how you'll manage that risk, which in most cases is easy and comes down to common sense.

Fire safety

The risk of fire in your pop up is probably quite low, and the main thing to consider is how to evacuate staff and customers from the premises quickly. Make sure that fire exits and routes to them are clear and well-marked. Agree with staff where to meet after an evacuation.

To minimise risk, make sure that anything not in use (for example, packaging or surplus stock) is stored safely and sensibly.

Tidy away rubbish and remove it from the premises daily. Most pop ups generate surprisingly little waste, particularly if you encourage staff to take their own rubbish home to recycle it.



Check out the UK government's useful guide: 'Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Offices and Shops' (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/firesafetyrisk2).

Follow this fire safety checklist:

- ✓ Make sure that you have a phone available to make emergency calls.
- ✓ Clear away rubbish and safely store other materials and resources.
- ✓ Mark fire exits and ensure that routes to them are clear of obstructions.
- ✓ Test any alarms and equipment.
- ✓ Have an evacuation plan in place and make sure all staff and volunteers are aware of it.

Health and safety

Your risk assessment is a great help, but most accidents happen when people are careless or something goes wrong. Keeping your pop up neat and tidy minimises most risks and enables you to see quickly and clearly any that arise.



Carry out simple visual checks before you open your pop up every day and make sure that all staff are aware of potential risks and how to manage them. Remember to keep the staff briefing simple so that people don't get confused or unnecessarily worried!

In addition:

- ✔ Have a phone available to make emergency calls.
- ✔ Keep public areas clean, tidy and free of hazards, such as stacked boxes.
- ✔ Close and clearly mark areas not to be used by the public.
- ✔ Visually check electrics and any portable electrical items for damage, exposed wires or broken cables.
- ✔ Allow only responsible staff and volunteers to use any specialised equipment.

Security

Last but not least, you need to manage the security of your pop up and the people working in it. Again, common sense is the most important thing.

Here are a few tips to keep your pop up secure:

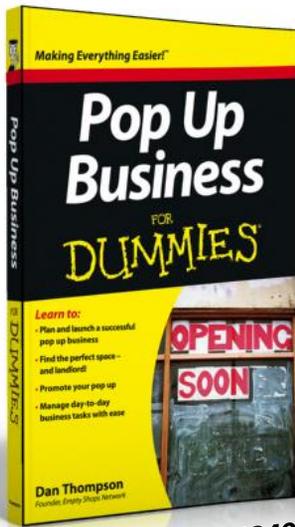
- ✔ Make sure that you have a secure or at least an inaccessible area to store personal goods, such as bags and coats, and encourage staff to use it.
- ✔ Set aside an area where stock or other unused goods are safe and secure and not open to the public.
- ✔ Ensure you can lock the property securely when not in use and don't store anything valuable where it may be stolen.
- ✔ Provide a phone for emergency calls.
- ✔ Close and lock doors and windows when premises aren't in use.

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Inside *Pop-Up Business For Dummies*, you'll find:

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- ✓ Finding the right space for you
- ✓ Negotiating with the landlord and sorting out the legalities
- ✓ Fixing up and fitting out your space on a budget
- ✓ Pulling in the punters - advertising and marketing your pop-up
- ✓ Managing a successful pop-up business day-to-day
- ✓ Closing up shop efficiently
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ISBN 978-1-118-44349-1

RRP £12.99

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