

## What is a personal and organisational history and why is it important?

The personal and organisational history is a summary or overview of two key elements of your enterprise: the people involved and the company's track record.

Your personal and organisational history will form an important part of your business plan. A good business plan is an important internal planning tool and a great way to communicate clearly with stakeholders. Presenting your personal and organisational history early on in the plan is an appealing way to introduce your audience to the business.

Personal history is all about you and your partners or colleagues: what you did before, what you studied, where you worked, what you care about, etc. Talking about personal history will immediately engage your audience by allowing them to relate to the human story behind the enterprise. It is an opportunity to demonstrate the strengths, skills and experiences that you and your team bring to the company and that will help make your business a success.

A personal history brings life and colour to the business plan because it encapsulates your passion and motivation for your enterprise idea and helps put the company in context by explaining how it came about. It also presents the values, insights or circumstances that led to its creation.

If a good personal history can win over hearts, a good organisational history can win over minds. Your organisational history is a way to demonstrate your credibility and potential for success by showcasing your enterprise's track record and achievements so far.

The organisational history should give people a sense of direction about your business. If you are trading, you should refer to successes in terms of sales, contracts, partnerships etc. If you are not yet trading, you can talk about other positive developments such as a successful pilot project, initial discussions with potential customers, encouraging feedback or anything else that supports your business idea.

## How to present your personal and organisational history

It is good practice to discuss personal and organisational history in a business plan because it tells the reader a little bit about the people behind the business and gives an idea of where the business is going. An effective presentation of your personal and organisational history will help minimise the perception of risk of investing in, or lending to your company.

Here are three simple steps you can use to present your personal and organisational history:

### 1) Talk about the motivations and values behind your products and services:

- What made you start this enterprise?
- What need(s) are you meeting or intending to meet and why is it important to you?
- How does this relate to your personal background, aspirations and values?
- How motivated/passionate/energetic/committed are you?

These questions will also help define and communicate the vision and values that are at the core of your enterprise (see our guide on vision, mission and values for further information).

### 2) Present the founder's history, relevant capabilities, skills and experiences

- What did you do before that will help make this enterprise a success?
- Have you managed a business or a team before?
- Have you got practical experience in this industry?
- What relevant skills and/or professional experience do you have?

If you have a strong board or industry experts in your team or your advisory committee, don't forget to mention them (see our guide on Board, Governance and Trustees for further information).

### 3) Demonstrate your enterprise's track record

- What have you achieved so far?
- How did you achieve it?
- How well did you do?
- How can you prove it?

You can present your sales figures and discuss any contracts and Service Level Agreements you might have. You should also refer to any improvements that have been made while reaching your market or product or service development, and include any awards or good public relations (PR) about your enterprise.

It can also be helpful to mention or quote external people that are advising you or believe in your idea, such as clients or key influencers in the industry (see our guides on customers, beneficiaries and key influencers for further information).

### Things to look out for when presenting your personal and organisational history

- keep it simple and to the point – there is no need to write a summary of the past 20 years unless it is strictly relevant
- always keep your audience and stakeholders in mind
- be transparent – even if this is new to you, there are ways to demonstrate the potential of your idea by building the story gradually and honestly
- showcase your strengths, balance weaknesses and mitigate risks by involving other people or organisations whenever possible
- show off – keep a record and communicate all the successes that your team or enterprise have achieved

### Further information

**Read our guide on becoming a Social Entrepreneur:**

<http://www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/Whataresocialenterprises/Becomingasocialentrepreneur.aspx>

**Read our guide on vision, mission and values**

<http://www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/SettingUp/Settingobjectives/Visionmissionandvalues.aspx>

**Read our guide on identifying your stakeholders:**

<http://www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/SettingUp/Firststeps/Identifyingyourstakeholders.aspx>

**Read our guide on beneficiaries, customers and key influencers**

<http://www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/SettingUp/Firststeps/Customersbeneficiariesandkeyinfluencers.aspx>

**Read our guide on Board, governance and trustees:**

<http://www.blondon.com/SocialEnterprise/SettingUp/Firststeps/Boardgovernanceandtrustees.aspx>