

Paid vs Free Business Plan Software: Which Is Right For You?

There's no shortage of free software online.

From email and apps to navigation systems and virus software, there's a virtual smorgasbord of no-charge programs to choose from.

But should you trust planning your business (and livelihood) to free software?

The answer to that question should really be based on your specific situation.

With so many free software and plan template options available, it's tempting to just grab the cheapest option available. But will that really help you achieve success?

Instead, we recommend asking yourself these three questions to determine whether paid or free business plan software (or a free template) is right for you.

(Full disclosure: our business plan software, LivePlan, comes with a 60-day money-back guarantee instead of a limited 'free' version. However, we also offer [free business plan templates](#) through our sister site Bplans.)

1) What do you want to accomplish with your plan?

When evaluating your software options, always keep your end-goal in mind.

Think hard about whether the business plan solution you're considering is really designed for what you need it do. LivePlan, for example, is built to help entrepreneurs accomplish three main goals:

- **Secure Funding:** Banks and investors expect to see [a polished business plan](#) that contains accurate financial information. It should follow a format approved by the Small Business Administration (SBA) and include clear details on [cash flow, sales projections and other financial data](#).
- **Build A Strategy:** A strategic business plan gives you a roadmap for success. It helps you clarify your vision and then provides an easy way to [create milestones](#) and [track your growth](#).
- **Test A Business Idea:** Writing a business plan helps you validate your idea, so you can determine whether or not to invest the time and money needed to make it work. [Forecasting your potential revenue](#) and comparing your idea to [benchmark data](#) helps make this decision easier.

What do you want to accomplish with your business plan?

Think about the answer to this question as you evaluate different software solutions. Research what's out there (be sure to scan [customer reviews](#)) so you can be confident that the tool you pick will be up to the task.

2) How much time do you have?

You don't need an MBA to write a business plan. But if you're creating one from scratch for the first time, you likely will need to invest some long hours in order to get it right.

From articulating your marketing plan to building accurate financial forecasts, creating a full business plan on your own will require plenty of research, writing and revision. If you're OK with that, you can use [a free business plan template](#) to help guide you.

But if you want to write a plan in half the time, consider investing in business plan software designed to make the job easier. With LivePlan, for example, you get a [step-by-step process](#) to follow that helps you write the plan quickly and painlessly.

3) How serious are you about starting a business?

Are you truly committed to starting or growing your business?

Is building up a successful company your dream? Or is it just an idea that crosses your mind every now and then?

These answers will probably give you the best idea of whether or not you should get paid or free business plan software.

Serious entrepreneurs should invest in professional tools: this holds true whether you're buying heavy-duty equipment, delivery vehicles or business software.

But maybe you're not sure yet about becoming an entrepreneur or you don't have a business idea. Perhaps you're just curious about what a complete business plan looks like at this stage.

In that case, grabbing a free business plan template or reading some [sample plans](#) would be a good first step.

It really comes down to results

Free software and templates might work fine in some situations. However, they are not the best tool for serious, growth-focused entrepreneurs.

Ultimately, what's most important is that the business plan software you choose delivers the result you want. This might be securing a loan, building a strategy or simply dreaming up some new business ideas.

So do a bit of research first. Read [verified reviews](#), scan [customer testimonials](#) and compare what business planning experts have to say about each solution.

And then decide for yourself which tool is most likely to make you a more successful entrepreneur.

Serious about starting or growing a business?

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