



A New Business Plan for 2004

Last year I had the privilege of reviewing Business Plan Pro 2003. My review generated a wave of positive feedback filling my Inbox. Users informed me how happy they were with their purchase of the program. The reason is simple; Palo Alto's Business Plan Pro software delivers a robust feature set at an attractive price (\$99). This formula fills a genuine need for creating Business Plans required for both starting and augmenting any business.

For 2004, I present to you Palo Alto's latest comprehensive edition called *Business Plan Pro 2004 Premier*. Below is a brief overview of what the more elaborate \$299 Premier edition includes, and who would benefit from its deeper and more collaborative features. Keep in mind if you haven't the need for the Premier edition, you can still purchase the new release of Business Plan Pro 2004 for \$99 (highly recommended for all entrepreneurial types).

Decisions, Decisions...Premier or Pro

Business Plan Pro 2004 Premier is not only a crowning achievement—it's the most powerful and easy to use planning software, period. The target audience is geared towards medium to larger size companies. Collaborative support features for multiple authors needing input from various departments are included (where you can track, review, and edit your plan as desired). As you would expect from the Premier edition, more corporate focused capabilities abound. The inclusion of expanded profit and loss statements, quarterly reports, and investment analysis tools round off a few of BPP 2004 Premier's proficiency. If you have any question on which version is right for you, be sure to visit www.paloalto.com and select the "Decision Wizard" to help you choose.

Business Plan Pro 2004 to the Rescue

What BPP 2004 does for creating and building Business Plans is what Henry Ford did for the Model T. First, BPP has won more awards than all of Tom Hank's Oscars combined. It's also the number one rated best seller in its category according to NPD Intellect, ZDnet, PC World, and PC Magazine. Whether you're a total newbie starting a business, or an experienced entrepreneur, BPP 2004 is simply the easiest and quickest way to create a successful winning business plan. Remember, your business plan is what your most staunch critics will judge you by. Those critics may just be potential bankers, investors, and venture capitalists.

Getting Down To Business...Plans

When you launch BPP 2004 you will be greeted with a small “Start a Plan” dialog box. Here you can choose to create a new Business Plan, open an existing plan, or just launch the Sample Plan Browser (more on that later). When you select create a new Business Plan, the “EasyPlan Wizard” will guide you through the step-by-step instructions complete with examples and advice. You start by filling out the basics about your business in the “Plan Setup” section. You can customize your plan to include your logo, graphics files, and spreadsheets. I started my plan based upon a fictitious business making a product called “LazerBug.” LazerBug allows you to humanely and instantly destroy roaches and bugs without having to smash them and make a mess (and suffer the ugly consequences). Okay, so my plan has a few bugs in it! To assist you in getting acclimated to the program, Chapter 3 of the manual walks you through a business plan and gives you an excellent guided tour and overview of working with BPP 2004 for the first time.

Need A Jump Start To Get You Going?

You’re in luck. There are over 400 sample plans to choose from that come with the program—plus over 10,000 industry profiles to help you with your plan research! You access the “Sample Plans” by selecting the Resources button from the main toolbar. The sample plans are stored on PaloAlto’s web site and your Internet connection is used to provide you with a .pdf version of the plan of your choice. After browsing and selecting a sample plan, you can import it directly into BPP 2004 (making your own modifications and edits)! The selection is comprehensive and you can search Sample Plans by Category or Keyword should you not want to scroll through the massive list of plans. PaloAlto is always updating the list of plans, so be sure to refresh the list under the Tools Menu in the Sample Plan Browser window. The tables and charts in BPP 2004 are simply outstanding. From the Forecasting Tool, Balance Sheet Tables, and graphs in between, you’re going to look very polished and professional. It may seem intimidating, but this software leaves no detail out. You will need those business ratios, cash flows, P&L statements, personnel costs, start-up costs... it’s all here! BPP 2004 is also compatible with QuickBooks—if you plan on importing financial data, the financials will be modified to accommodate the QuickBooks financials. There is lots of hand-holding and help for starting up your dream business. Plus, the “EasyPlan Wizard” will check your numbers and math as you go—the built-in spell check, search/replace, and advanced text editing features are nice touches too. The 328 page manual is absolutely top notch and broken down into 12 chapters. Keep in mind PaloAlto Software has been doing this type of thing for over a decade and this is the seventh version of BPP!

An Awesome Value!

Whether you decide on the regular BPP 2004 (\$99.95), or the indispensable business tools in BPP 2004 Premier (\$299)—it’s the best and most prudent business decision you can make in 2004. In the box you get the program CD, 328 page manual, the companion book “Hurdle: The Book on Business Planning” (\$20 value), and the “extras” envelope. This envelope contains discounts, coupons, and valuable resources for getting your dream off the ground. There is so much more to this program...I couldn’t list all the features and benefits in one article. How’s this for a finale: PaloAlto backs the program with a 60 day MBG. To learn more about BPP 2004, visit their web site at www.paloalto.com.

System requirements

- CD-ROM, Windows 98, NT4, 2000, ME, XP, Pentium or comparable recommended, RAM: Operating system minimum requirements, Free disk space: 150 MB, 256 color VGA or better, You will need Internet access to utilize the 400+ Sample Plans.