

Assessing commercial attractiveness and resilience of a plan for starting a new small business

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Abstract— The purpose of the article is to present a method developed by the authors, intended to increase the likelihood and number of cases of developing a plan for starting a new business by budding entrepreneurs. This is because in practice there is a clear gap in this area. The study uses the authors' didactic and empirical experience, the method of analysis and synthesis of literature and Internet sources, and the method of didactic experiment. As a result of the process undertaken, a simplified business plan method was developed and preliminarily verified as a remedy to the problem of the low level of development of planning documents by novice entrepreneurs in the situation of their establishment of business activities. Since the results of the conducted experiment seem promising, the authors hope to disseminate and effectively use the method in practice. At the same time, as a result of the publication of the article, they hope for its review and further verification among experts in science and practice.

Keywords— business planning, simplified business plan, model, CANVAS, starting a new business

I. INTRODUCTION

Micro and small enterprises are one of the cornerstones of the European economy. In Poland, for example, there are more than two and a half million microenterprises (2,669,110 in Q4 2024) and small ones about 100 thousand (97,920), which is more than 99% of the total number of enterprises in Poland (CSO, 2024). In other European Union countries, the figures differ slightly, but on average in Europe it is similar (Dębkowska et al., 2024). Of the approximately 10 million people employed in the enterprise sector in Poland, about 4.3 million are employed in the group of micro businesses, and more than a million in small businesses. At the same time, they make a significant contribution to the country's GDP (in Poland,

28.2% of micro, 8.1% of small enterprises) (PARP, 2024). Thus, it can be seen that the value of these enterprises to the national economies of the various EU countries is significant.

Despite the fact that micro and small businesses are so important to European economies, we still see a high percentage of their bankruptcies or liquidations. In 2023, 225,000 enterprises were removed from the register of enterprises in Poland (99% of which were micro and small businesses), while two out of three start-ups survived the first year of operation (the survival rate was 67.0%) (PARP, 2024, pp. 18-19). Based on this data, it is possible to hypothesize that a large percentage of start-ups in Poland are not well prepared to start their business (conceptually, financially or organizationally). On the basis of a search conducted in a signal manner among acquaintances of entrepreneurs from the Pomeranian Voivodeship, it can also be concluded that most of the entrepreneurs do not prepare professional business plans before starting their businesses. Business plans, i.e. planning documents that facilitate the calculation of business risks, or the development of a concept for the operation of a newly established enterprise. Research proves that entrepreneurs who prepare formal business plans are 16% more likely to succeed compared to those who do not (Archibald, 2023). Companies that prepare business plans grow 30% faster than those that do not (Burke et al., 2010). Business planning significantly reduces the likelihood of failure (Parsons, 2024). Unfortunately, but the biggest motivation for business plans by budding entrepreneurs has been the desire to tap into external sources of funding. And this is a mistake. If scientific research and practice prove that business planning is such a good instrument for managing the process of starting a new business, why do budding entrepreneurs make so little use of this instrument? The authors'



survey of a group of 20 one-person businesses in the Pomeranian Voivodeship shows that in only four cases did these enterprises have a business plan document, and the main reason for their preparation was the necessity arising from a program offered by the Labor Office. The most common reasons cited among the other respondents for not preparing a business plan before starting a business were:

- 1) First, ignorance. Few young entrepreneurs have economic knowledge and know how to write a professional business plan. Admittedly, this knowledge is available in various publications or on the Internet (e.g. *How to Write a Professional Business Plan*, 2013), but most people are structured in such a way that they prefer to act rather than study all sorts of theory. Even despite the fact that nowadays the creation of a document can be greatly facilitated by the use of modern AI (Artificial Intelligence) tools (McFarland, 2025).
- 2) Secondly, the low use of this instrument is influenced by its level of complexity - not least for those without economic knowledge. It is a very labor-intensive tool, and in conjunction with the first reason, most entrepreneurs do not want to waste time on its labor-intensive development. Besides, according to the principle of optimism heuristics, they are convinced that they will just happen to succeed (Bolesta-Kukułka, 2000, p. 71). Sometimes this is the case, especially if their idea is based on benchmarking similar businesses already operating elsewhere, but often, unfortunately, it is not.
- 3) Third - sheer laziness. Why develop labor-intensive and time-consuming business plans when you can act right away? Especially when we are intuitively convinced that we are right.
- 4) And fourth, the most rational behavior in this process (not preparing business plans) is shown by people who, having worked for someone, under the influence of experience (positive or negative), decide to start their own business, competing with the prototype. In such a case, their intuitive or experience-driven belief in the legitimacy of creating their own business is the most likely.

Starting from these assumptions, the authors of this article decided to conduct a teaching experiment at a higher education institution. The research problem they formulated was shaped as follows: Is there another, simpler way of ex-ante analysis of business assumptions than the traditional business plan and start-up method? (It consists in the fact that a group of enthusiasts develops an initial product proposal based on their own funds (MVP -Minimum Viable Product) and then, in cooperation with potential customers and investors, develops the idea in the directions suggested by them, at the same time obtaining from them further financial resources for the development of the business. Most often, it is suitable for introducing innovations from the IT area (Information Technology) or various types of new technologies (HT - High Technology) to the market) (Ries, 2017). As presented by the results of the survey of entrepreneurs and the authors' empirical experience, the traditional, elaborate business plan is too complicated a tool for young entrepreneurs (Skrzypek, Filar,

2007; Pawlak, 2008, Siemon, 2023). And the start-up method of establishing a new business is inappropriate for most traditional businesses (services, trade and manufacturing). Since the results of the teaching experiment proved successful, the authors decided to share them with a wider audience. Therefore, the main purpose of this article is to present the idea of the method developed by the authors. An additional purpose, on the other hand, is to subject it to further verification through discussion in the scientific community. The research methods that were used in the development of the publication are: analysis and synthesis of literature sources, diagnostic survey, teaching and empirical experience of the authors, and teaching experiment.

II. ASSUMPTIONS OF THE METHOD

The process of verifying a business idea under the developed method consists of three main stages. Stage 1 - selection of the business. Stage 2 - development of the business organization concept. Stage 3 - verification of the idea from the point of view of market attractiveness and its profitability.

1) Choosing the type of business

In order for a business to successfully enter and establish itself in the market, an idea is important. It shouldn't be just another cliché business that is abundant in the market - such as another same store, florist, service, gym or boarding house. A new business should stand out in some positive, innovative, customer-value way. We can look for business ideas in four basic situations:

- **There are unmet needs** (just what kind?). We look for ideas of this type by asking ourselves: are there still any unmet human needs? Not likely, but that's why we have the intelligence to investigate and market it.
- **Lack of product or service in a particular market.** Oh and this reason is already much better. We picked up an interesting idea somewhere, there is no such product in our country yet, no such service in our local area, why not launch it here? E.g. diet catering, fitness club, garden care service, etc. Another type of situation of this type is insufficient supply of the given services in a given market. Such a situation occurs most often in the case of various types of professional repair or installation services.
- **Insufficient quality of products or services found in the market.** This is another example of a situation where a young entrepreneur can successfully open a business. He just has to do it better than an existing competitor. This strategy is called building functional differentiation and is based on an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing competition. The new business should be organized in such a way as to stand out in a positive way in the eyes of customers, most often by providing them with a higher value-added product/service for a similar price or, even better, for a lower price. Business is full of such examples. E.g. Korean or Chinese electronics, Japanese or Korean cars, new restaurants, etc. A favorable case is when we are dissatisfied with our full-time job with our current

employer and decide to start a competitive business. Often knowing the mechanisms of the industry, technology, customer expectations and potential demand, we are able to organize such a business better. We just need to be convinced that we want to become an independent entrepreneur, which is not so easy, and then in the course of business development improve our management competence (cf. PARP, 2019) and our business. The market, not only in Poland, is full of such successful examples.

- **Creating a new need** (innovation). Smartphones, satellite navigation, healthy food, various rentals, OCR-type sports competitions, social networking, electromobility, etc. are examples of the many businesses that have changed our social and economic landscape in recent times. Perhaps a young entrepreneur will also come up with an idea that has the potential to change the world, especially in connection with the use of information technology, or AI?

In the search for ideas for a business in a situation where it is not testing one main hypothesis, a heuristic approach can help. Heuristic, that is, to help generate different kinds of ideas in a team or even individual way. A method that can be used, for example, in collaboration with family members

is brainstorming (Cybul, 2023). On our own, we can also behave like a heuristic team by generating ideas in a linear or lateral way (De Bono, 2007). In this case, the principle that "quantity goes into quality" works. Another way of looking for a business idea can be benchmarking. Walking down the street or traveling, just look around carefully and surely an idea will pop into your head.

- 2) Development of business organization concept
The idea of a planned business in a simplified way can be dissected using the CANVAS model (Osterwalder, Pigneur, 2022). This is a simple, yet internationally recognized way of analyzing the concept of operation of a given business. It consists of answering a series of questions in nine main areas of the planned business activity, which, on the one hand, make it easier for the future entrepreneur to understand the basic requirements for the way the established business will operate, on the other hand, to find answers to questions about the key aspects that distinguish this particular business from the competition, and on the third hand, to calculate the cost and organizational requirements that are associated with the opening of the planned business, which ultimately makes it easier to make the right decisions. This model is presented in the figure.

TABLE 1.: BUSINESS MODEL CANVAN

Business Model Canvas				
8. Key Partners Who are our key partners? Who are our key suppliers? Which key resources are we acquiring from partners? What activities do partners perform?	7. Key Activities What key activities does our value proposition require? Sales channels, customer service, revenue streams?	2. Value Proposition What value do we deliver to the customer? What customer problems are we solving? What customer needs are we satisfying? What product/service bundles do we offer to each segment?	4. Customer Relationships What kind of relationship does each target segment expect us to establish and maintain? How much will it cost?	1. Customer Segments For whom are we creating value? Who will be our customer?
	6. Key Resources What key resources does our value proposition require? Channels, customer relationships, revenue streams?		3. Channels Through which channels do we reach our customers? Which channels are most cost-effective?	
9. Cost Structure What are the most important costs inherent in our business model? Which resources are most expensive? Which activities are most expensive?		5. Revenue Sources For what value are our customers really willing to pay? What are they currently paying for, and how would they prefer to pay? How much do the different revenue streams contribute to overall revenue?		

Source: (Osterwalder, Pigneur, 2022).

Questions related to the analysis of individual business areas are as follows:

- 1) Customers: who is to be our customer, how broad is our service to be, what customer segments do we intend to serve?
- 2) Value proposition: what value do we intend to generate for our customers, what needs do we intend to satisfy, what problems do we intend to solve for our customers, and
- 3) Distribution and communication channels: how do we intend to deliver our product/service to customers, through what channels? Is it with the help of external partners or with our own forces? How do we intend to promote our business, how do we intend to reach our customers?
- 4) How we serve our customers: what kind of service do our

therefore what products and what services with what characteristics do we intend to offer?

customers/customer groups expect from us, what kind of relationship do our customers prefer, how do we intend to serve our customers, how do we intend to communicate with them?

- 5) Revenue streams: what will be our main sources of revenue, what are customers able to pay us for, what should be the method of payment and in what amount?
- 6) Key resources: what resources do we need to operate - physical, human, financial and information? How will we acquire these resources?
- 7) Key activities: what activities will we implement to optimally deliver value to our customers? How are the core processes (those that create value for our customers directly) to be carried out? What ancillary activities do we need to implement to efficiently meet our customers' needs?
- 8) Key partners: who will be our key partners? In what areas of operation do we choose to partner (outsource)? What relationships and how do we want to develop with our partners?
- 9) Cost structure: What costs does our business generate? Which ones are the largest? What capital expenditures do we need to make to start our business. Can these costs be reduced without losing quality? In what way?

You can, of course, try to analyze the requirements and necessary resources yourself, but what's the point when you have an uncomplicated and time-tested template?

III. VERIFICATION OF THE IDEA FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF MARKET ATTRACTIVENESS AND ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Developing a business concept based on the CANVAS model provides a basis for calculating its profitability in more detail. However, since in most cases we will be operating under dynamic conditions (retrospective data may already be outdated) and uncertainty (there is often a lack of reliable data on local market demand), our estimates may be subject to a large error anyway. Hence, performing even the most elaborate and labor-intensive calculations in a business plan will not protect us from market risk in the situation of making wrong assumptions. Therefore, the authors propose a somewhat simpler way, based on common sense, to calculate the profitability of a business project, with a simultaneous mechanism for minimizing market risk (point 1 of the verification). From the point of view of the purpose of this process, in practice it may turn out to be not much worse than performing extensive and complicated calculations. This process consists of answering 3 questions:

1) What should be the value we want to offer the customer? What will make our business different from the existing competition and will it be valuable enough to attract customers or draw them away from the competition? (Digression. When developing a concept for standing out from the competition, the benchmarking method mentioned above or the results of various types of research may be helpful.

According to research conducted by one of the authors in 2022 on a sample of 230 young people, "customers of the young generation, as the effects of the market activity of manufacturing enterprises, most value the overall quality of products, and especially their reliability/durability ... A very important factor in the market competitiveness of an enterprise is the price of its products. However, it is revealing that the opinions of other customers about the company or its products are a very valuable factor for the respondents. First of all, on the Internet. ... The design of products and the materials from which the product is made are important for customers of the young generation. ... The level of customer service and professional reviews of products (e.g. on YT) are more important to them than the brand (of the company/product). Similarly, delivery conditions. Customers of the young generation have probably become accustomed to the high level of innovation of the products offered to them, because in the conducted research this factor was ranked 11th (out of 14), but despite everything, the author of the study in the place of managers would not ignore this factor in practice. ...". The same as the least important in the study: purchase environment (but products, not services), warranty conditions or service availability. The least important, but that does not mean unimportant. Almost half of the respondents described these factors as important or very important, while the earlier factors received much higher scores) (Walentyńowicz, 2023).

What will be the price of our products or services (remember that this price should be in line with generally prevailing market standards) and are customers able to accept this price? In practice, the more the planned business differentiates itself from the competition from the side of the market attractiveness of the offer (quality, price, service, location, individual positive differentiating features), the more likely it is that the contender will gain new customers and/or draw them away from the competition. And competition, unfortunately, among small businesses is not small. One of the initial tests might be whether the entrepreneur, his friends or family themselves would take advantage of a given offer at a given price?

2) Will demand for the product or service be at the right level? Customer acceptance of price/value terms is one thing. But the right number of them is another. The income from a business resulting from the multiplication of the price and the number of goods or services sold must cover its costs (and these are often not small) and still provide an adequate profit. There is no point in doing business when we go out at "zero", or even worse, when we record losses. Such a situation is the easiest way to bankruptcy and waste of invested capital. So, care to make sure that there is adequate demand for our products or services in the market, or at least there is a high probability of it? How to do it? It is not simple. Unfortunately, but in a market economy, only a "fairy with a glass ball" can accurately predict the future. So then, what can we do? Those with more capital can outsource quantitative market research to specialized units. Those with less capital can try to do it themselves. Today with the help of the Internet. Specialized AI programs or with the use of social networks it is not that difficult. Benchmarking can also be done. That is, for example, in a similar locality, in a similar

type of premises or service business, obtain information on turnover and similarly determine the potential volume of turnover in the projected enterprise. Only under the condition that the quality/attractiveness of our business will not be at a lower level as the compared one. Also note that gross prices do not equal net. We calculate in net prices - that is, when we are obliged to pay VAT or excise taxes - without dues resulting from the size of these taxes. Detailed information on this subject can be found on the government websites on running a business. (<https://www.biznes.gov.pl>)

3) What will be the costs of our operations and can the projected revenues at least cover them? The costs that should cover revenues in the projected period and still provide the assumed profit include:

capital expenditures (for either start-up or business development),

Fixed costs (all the benefits a company incurs monthly regardless of the volume of production/sales/services - such as renting premises, leasing costs, subscriptions, energy or contracted employees)

Variable costs depending on the volume of production, sales, or the amount of services provided - e.g., raw materials and supplies, trade goods, salaries of contract/commission employees, etc.).

It is necessary to solidly count all the costs that will accompany our activities in accordance with the designed business model (CANVAS) and with a given organizational structure (company size). Do not forget about surcharges on wages, insurance, costs of repairing failures, repairs, legal advice or complaints, and calculate rates realistically, that is, not the lowest, but at least at an average level. If we focus on quality, then even at a higher than average level.

In the process of designing a new business, information obtained from the Internet (e.g., in the form of industry articles or various reports) or questions posed to AI-based language models can be helpful. Nowadays there are already many such supporting applications, only not every young entrepreneur knows about them (McFarland, 2025). Thus, especially beginners can expand or enrich their knowledge of the business being designed and use this knowledge in designing competitive advantages.

Only after these three questions have been answered in a positive way can one move on to the next steps in the process of starting a business. Among other things, it is necessary to consider from where to get financial resources for starting a business (own savings, loans from family/friends, getting a partner, aid funds from public programs) (Tokarski, Tokarski, Wojcik, 2019, p. 204). Bank loans are more likely to be available after a certain period of demonstrating good financial performance of the business being run, but leasing can be a good alternative to credit. On the other hand, another important issue, related to property security or comfort in running a business, is the choice of the appropriate organizational and legal form of this activity. The most popular form is entry in the business register. It is the easiest to obtain, there are favorable forms of taxation for the entrepreneur, but it involves much greater property risks than with other forms (Palinska, 2023, p.

139). Other organizational and legal forms available to the small entrepreneur include: general partnership, limited liability company or partnership. There are advantages and disadvantages associated with each of these, and the latter is dedicated to specific professions listed in the CCC.

Next, you can proceed with the physical organization of the project, a separately drawn up schedule will be helpful in this process.

C. Preliminary verification of the proposed method

As a result of the authors' teaching activities, many training business plans were developed. Several business plans were also developed by the authors in practice. While the latter, consultative approach provides greater predictability of future results in practice, the former unfortunately does not. Despite the fact that the second approach is much more costly, the authors nevertheless recommend seeking help from specialists when drawing up business plans in practice. This is because it is clear from their teaching activities that people who are not professional managers, and this situation is most common when starting a business for the first time, make the following planning mistakes (cf. Kuchina, Kitchenko, 2016):

- unrealistic business plan (poor, standard idea, not adapted to the needs of the market, lack of distinguishing features, unrealistic financial part),
- economic and financial data "sucked from a finger" - unproven revenues (lack of confirmation by marketing research) and unreliably developed costs (carelessness, laconicness, ignorance),
- lack of comprehensiveness and logical connection between the various parts of the business plan,
- the financial part detached from the others,
- little detail and precision in the various parts of the TAs, especially in cost-generating areas,
- lack of consideration of real legal considerations (taxes, VAT, wage surcharges, start-up costs, etc.),
- failure to take into account seasonality of demand, non-rhythmicity of daily and weekly service demand,
- exaggerated optimism about demand for the service,
- lack of sensitivity analyses that make financial data more realistic,
- excessive focus on the financial part (extensive financial analysis) with underestimation (laconic elaboration) of the business part (presentation of the essence of the project).

On this basis, too, the authors induce conclusions about the practice of preparing business plans by budding entrepreneurs.

The idea of a simplified model for verifying a business idea came about somewhat by accident. As part of the course Business Models and Enterprise Strategies at Pomeranian University in Slupsk, students were tasked with finding an attractive business idea and verifying its feasibility. Within the framework of this subject and its program, there was not enough time to develop a full business plan, so an abbreviated method had to be defined. The CANVAS method was proposed. However, without determining the probable income and costs of business activities, this verification proved impossible.

Therefore, a third point was added to the first two points of the task, and this time the task proved feasible. The intuitively profitable ideas were confirmed, the innovative idea was potentially verified positively (without confirming the hypotheses in practice in an ex-ante manner this is impossible), while the intuitively unprofitable idea was verified negatively. This is one of the advantages of the proposed model. The authors do not need convincing about the practical value of the CANVAS method (Pierścieniak, 2016).

An additional advantage of the proposed model is that those developing a concept for a potential business in the course of the process themselves come to the conclusion of whether it is worth it in practice, and if so, they begin to understand that the basis for success in business is to act professionally and stand out positively among the competition.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the didactic experiment, a method was developed that has the potential in practice to reduce the gap of inadequate verification of business ideas in a planning manner before they are started. The authors' empirical experience was not insignificant in this process.

The proposed method, consists of activities carried out in three stages:

- 1) Identifying a business idea.
- 2) Develop an organization model for the projected activity based on the CANVAS idea, which can then be developed.
- 3) Verification of the business idea from the point of view of its market attractiveness and economic and financial viability.

What detailed actions to carry out within the above stages - is presented in the body of the article.

The proposed method has several advantages. First, it is not as complicated as a professional business plan, so it will not be as difficult to implement for people who are just starting out in business or who do not have a specialized education. Second, it encourages you to think carefully about the concept of your planned business, so it can be more attractive and better organized from the start of your business. Third, it allows a more precise estimation of the costs of running it, coupled with a determination of the required revenues to make the business profitable, which also facilitates the decision to undertake it. And fourth, it reduces the risk of business failure (or increases the probability of success) as a result of the analyses carried out, which has been proven by the results of various scientific studies (Archibald, 2023; Burke, 2010; Parsons, 2024).

As for the disadvantages of the method, chief among them is the oversimplification of the approach in relation to uncertainty and the low level of predictability of business realities. But, on the other hand, these drawbacks can easily be eliminated by expanding the analysis with additional, situationally useful elements, or in the course of the implementation of the project flexibly responding to emerging changing market conditions. The designed concept will certainly assist in this process.

To conclude. There are many opportunities to learn how to

create a document to support the establishment of an enterprise, such as by reading relevant manuals, tutorials on the Internet, or even using an AI tool (such as <https://ideabuddy.com/pl/features/ai-assistance/>). However, entrepreneurs, in the flurry of work and responsibilities, have neither the time nor sufficient motivation to familiarize themselves with them. They create, and most often commission the development of business plans primarily in a situation of necessity. According to the authors' analysis, the main reason is the level of complexity of the traditional business planning tool. Thus, the presented model addresses these challenges, and in practice, once it becomes widespread, it can contribute to the degree of reduction of the negative phenomenon, especially once it is instrumented with IT support.

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