

**ABC Company**

**General Questionnaire**

**1. DESCRIPTION**

ABC provides excellent service and delivers a high quality product by using predominately local sourced products and companies.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1. What is your business name?

ABC

2.2. What does your business do?

Primarily we manufacture and sell a range of organically certified innovative [removed for privacy]

2.3. Where is your business located?

The offices are located at [removed for privacy]

2.4. When was your business established?

ABC began in 1985

2.5. How many people do you currently employ?

Our FTE is 4.6, with 3 full time staff along with part time administration and warehouse team members. Included is a seasonal contract driver.

2.6. What region do you cover?

We sell, distribute and spread our products across NSW, VIC and SA. The products are available and sold in all states of Australia in approx. 300 stores.

## 3. BUSINESS PLANNING (10 POINTS)

3.1. Do you have a current business plan and vision for your business? Explain its main objectives.

Our vision is to improve through education, demonstration and results. Our main objectives are to strengthen the growth of the business through developing opportunities, build strong communication pathways and develop avenues to present and educate our customers. Business plans for each sector are developed after reviewing the previous year's performance and market trends developing through arising opportunities. Division managers present business plan, budgets and vision for the upcoming year during January's team annual planning day.

3.2. How do you monitor performance against your business plan?

Performance is monitored through sales orders, business growth, social media analytics and website enquiry. Discussions are held with key personnel across all sectors including staff, distributors, end users and retailers. We measure the volumes and units sold in each sector along with a number of KPI's including new stores, presentations made, invites to special events.

3.3. How do you review your business plan?

Business plan objectives are reviewed quarterly and presented to the whole team. Analysis is done on projections of sales and growth. Results from this drives the marketing approach for the upcoming 6 months. We like to apply a level of flexibility to the business plan during the review to capture new markets and trends that may have been overlooked during the annual planning day.

## 4. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (10 POINTS)

4.1. Do you adopt a detailed income and expense budget prior to the commencement of each financial year? If so, how is it prepared?

Every year we analyse and review all major costs to ensure that our running costs are kept viable. We review insurances, phone bills, interest rates, fuel costs, all outgoings and general administrative costs. Cost reviews and budgeting goes right down to the costs of producing a sample bag as a giveaway.

4.2. What procedures do you have in place to control your work-in-progress and/or stock?

The business activity can show peaks and troughs throughout the year. Team managers plan and book jobs at the start of the week, forecasting the volume of product used for each job. On completion the drivers log the work and the stock levels of used product are recorded. Trigger points are set for the reorder of product to arrive on site. The stock levels are budgeted for a full 12 months for each state. Our finance system has a solid inventory count in which reports are produced monthly to analyse stock levels.

4.3. What procedures do you have in place to monitor and control your debtors?

Contract bookkeeping services maintain our debtors list which is updated weekly. Our accounts are COD, 14 days or End of Month. Close observation and response maintains an acceptable level of debt. The General Manager monitors these on a weekly basis. Each division manager is aware of their debtors lists and maintains the relationships to ensure these are minimised. Any client that has a debtor's history is moved to a COD account.

4.4. What benchmarks do you use to manage your business finances? E.g. ratio analysis, turnover and margins?

Monitoring our figures closely allows us to maximise efficiency and minimise waste. We have fixed margins in place for both divisions which are analysed annually. We also rely heavily on % of gross profit on sales. % of sales dollars spent on marketing and overhead expenses. We find the gross profit margin analysis of our business is the easiest way to measure our profitability.

## 5. PROMOTION (10 POINTS)

5.1. Do you have marketing guidelines in place? If yes, please detail.

Last year we hired a marketing group to conduct market research on our business. We received a report detailing our market brand, style guide, key words, swat analysis benchmarking us from our competitors and a general marketing guide. We knew that in order to grow our marketing messages our activities needed to be aligned across all divisions of the business.

5.2. How do you ensure that your service levels are compatible with your chosen position in the market?

We feel that we are a market leader in our industry sectors. We pride ourselves in being very responsive to our clients' needs and requests. Our customer service policy ensures that our response times exceed the expectations of our customers. Most of our clients are time poor and appreciate the rapid response we can deliver to their query. We conduct customer surveys and arrange regular meetings with our distributors to monitor that we are achieving all service levels.

5.3. Explain the various methods of promoting your business you currently or have previously used?

We select a variety of events to attend to promote our products to new and existing customers. We also accept many invitations as guest speakers with organisations, community groups and product specific events. We have soft promotion through national television programs. We have appointed state distributors to take on the sales, distribution and marketing in their area. Our product manager develops national and local marketing strategies in consultation with each distributor. We are also active on Facebook and linked into twitter. Through the development of a new website we encourage consultation with our end user customers. Additionally, we added videos into the website to support our story. We will be further adding to the video library with Q&A style videos as well as educational information. We supply samples as giveaways to encourage customers to measure the results of our products.

5.4. How do you ensure that your products and services are consistent with your brand?

We have a product and brand color suite and key words which we use consistently to ensure brand cohesion. Our product goes through testing so it maintains a consistent high quality product that aligns our brand and market image. Our policies and passion in what we do and the way we deliver the service to all our clients reinforces the brand and the image held in the market place. Any new product/service are rigorously tested, tried and evaluated before being added.

5.5. How do you seek to differentiate your business from your competitors?

Our products span across all states, which is supported by a network of distributors and agents. Many of our competitors are localized to their own geographic area and also tend to focus on one sector. Our product is sourced from the highest grade. Through our research, education, advocacy, partnerships and implementation we are:

1. Regenerating our product around the world
2. Stabilizing the climate

Our selection was based on our many years of product develop and research. In our market we have seen a number of new competitors enter this market. Our product has 35 years of research and support behind it. We constantly conduct trials and testing to support the quality and excellent results that our products give. This year we have joined federation Uni's internship program. Amongst the tasks that the students will undertake is to capture the end user's responses and feedback about our products and services and where they sit in the market place. This valuable insight will ensure that we are on target with our messages.

## 6. STAFF (10 POINTS)

6.1. How do you recruit new staff, and determine applicants' suitability?

Recruiting staff is generally through walk-in enquiries. We have a low staff turnover and access to a number of quality seasonal employees when required. Mandatory licences and required skills are a minimum in suitability. Staff are selected also on empathy and understanding of our core values. Passion, positive attitude and drive by the employee are strong factors in securing employment.

6.2. What formalised training processes do you have for new staff?

Induction into procedures and policies takes place over the first week of starting. Upskilling in required areas is available when needed. This is done through RTO's.

6.3. What training do you provide for existing staff to enable them to improve their skills?

Through performance reviews and discussions with staff, we isolate areas where both parties can benefit in moving the business forward. Both formal and informal training can be arranged in these cases. We look at skills gaps and where best those skills could be used.

6.4. What procedures do you have, either formal or informal, to listen to and learn from your staff? How do you feel this enhances the team spirit?

Most mornings we discuss the previous day and the day/week ahead over a coffee. We look at all aspects of the daily events including stock levels projected orders influence of weather and staff availability. Managers' report quarterly on business performance and plan any changes during these sessions. Each person holds an equal ranking in the discussion and group decisions are made for the betterment of the business. This creates a strong bond of unity and ownership within everyone's role and responsibility.

## 7. QUALITY (10 POINTS)

7.1. Do you have a quality standard of work or product you seek to meet (either formal or informal) and how do you ensure this standard is achieved?

We set a standard to respond to customer enquiries within 24 hours of receipt. We confirm stock orders and supply a ready date within 24 hours, we have despatched orders ready for shipping within 2 days of receiving the order. Our product quality standards are highly governed and audited regularly through our product specific certification.

7.2. How have you established that the quality standard you seek to meet is that required by your target market?

Forward planning and historical data along with budget planning. We have the capability of warehousing good levels of required stock. Working closely with distributors and retailers gives us the insight into their ordering patterns and we warehouse according to their needs.

7.3. How do you ensure consistency between the quality standards you seek to meet and the pricing of your product?

We benchmark our products against our competitor pricing on a yearly basis. We also set out to differentiate our business and product from the start, therefore giving us the opportunity in the marketplace to set benchmark prices for our products. We rely heavily on feedback from our customers, retailers and distributors to gather feedback on quality of product and pricing. We have an incredible opportunity to supply quality product from a smaller option all the way up to a wholesale load, thus ensuring all levels of pricing is available to suit a wide range of customers.

## 8. COMMUNITY BENEFIT (10 POINTS)

8.1. Does your business involve itself in the broader Ballarat community? If so, how?

This year we have committed to supporting a major community project within each state along with localised community support as needed and requested. The major community project will receive a [removed for privacy]% of sales of our products for that state which will go toward items that are needed for that group. We are involved in a number of local sporting groups specific to our product and community with donations of goods and services. We also assist in fundraising ventures in local kindergartens and schools. We donate our time as guest speakers in a range of clubs and groups. Over the past 12 months we have presented at over 20 community groups or events.

8.2. What policies do you have in place to ensure you support local suppliers whenever appropriate?

We strongly support B2B, and where applicable we preference local suppliers. Our products are available nationally; we use local transport companies to get our products to their final destination. We use a local Ballarat packing agency to pack our product. Our graphic designers and marketers are local businesses, our vehicles are purchased and serviced locally.

8.3. Do you monitor your business spend to ensure that any policies you might have with respect to local suppliers are complied with?

Our policy is to always seek local providers first. This is controlled and monitored monthly through our business manager.

## 9. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (5 POINTS)

9.1. How are your business practices contributing to the sustainability of our environment?

Our products contribute directly to improving the environment. From a production point, we recycle all packaging for repacking. We reuse and recycle pallets. We encourage all retailers and distributors to maximise orders and therefore cut down on the number of freight transactions occurring. Product postcards are printed with food dye; our small packaged product is in biodegradable packaging. We purchase local goods which reduces our carbon footprint. Our raw product is packaged completely on site or in Ballarat.

9.2. What new initiatives are you planning to make your business more environmentally sustainable?

More regular servicing of vehicles has optimised efficiencies with the fleet, thus cutting down on fuel use. With the growth of the business nationally we needed to be on the front foot on environmental awareness. We have implemented a strategy with our state distributors and retailers to be involved with groups for additional use of the product to offset carbon footprint.

## CATEGORY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS (10 POINTS PER QUESTION)

### *Small Business Award*

a) Does your business have a point of difference or a competitive edge to other businesses? If so, explain.

There are only 4 major suppliers in Australia of the same product, and we are the only certified company with distribution on a national basis. With over 30 years' experience in the industry our management team know and understand the needs of producer. Our team is passionate and knowledgeable about what we want to achieve.

b) What use do you make of the support organisations available to you?

We value support and leadership opportunities which we receive from Commerce Ballarat. [removed for privacy] gives our company an international presence and the opportunity to educate others. [removed for privacy] assists us with quality control and networking to other local organic businesses and customers. [removed for privacy] assists us with packaging but we also take great pride in supporting workers. [removed for privacy] is a local agribusiness organisation which keeps us at the forefront of local agribusiness, issues, innovations and concerns which helps us understand and help.

c) How do you manage the growth of your business and, in particular, the capital demands that growth may require?

Our regular informal and informal discussions demonstrate the need to plan early in our growth cycles. Building stock levels at a steady but manageable level maintains the steady growth. Regular contact with distributors and agents minimises the risk of stock and delivery shortages. Close monitoring on cash flows allows for adjustments in capital funds. We hold a reserve of funds should the business require access to cover growth. Additionally, we have set up a bank overdraft facility should the need arise to quickly draw down on funding.

d) Do you have formal customer/client service policies? If so, how do you monitor compliance with these policies?

We have policies in place for staff presentation, manners, phone etiquette, dealing with customers, complaints, action times for enquires. Operating in an open office, we are able to monitor customer interaction first hand for meeting compliance needs.

e) How do ensure that existing and new staff become and remain aware of your customer/client service policies?

We have a detailed induction program which covers all of our policies and terms as an employee. We even extend our policies to our distributors which form part of their contract. We are all here to drive the business forward to meet every success it deserves. Working strongly together as a team we will achieve these goals. We acknowledge the good work and actions of our staff and reward in positive ways. Should there be a gap in the understanding or knowledge by a staff member we quickly address this by product knowledge and policy reviews.