

NABC:

An important client or market need addressed by a unique approach with compelling benefits when compared against the competition or alternatives.

All proposals and business plans *need* to address the fundamentals that define a project's value proposition. The NABC *approach* described here helps focus on answering four basic questions. It is the first step in creating a more complete proposal or business plan.

The *benefit* of the NABC approach is that it creates a common format - a template - for gathering and sharing essential information. Since it includes the fundamental ingredients of a project's value proposition, it helps address all questions from potential investors.

An NABC can be iterated rapidly, helping to encourage a culture of brainstorming and continuous collaboration to create better solutions with less risk. After a series of iterations, an evolving NABC provides a concise business summary, an "elevator pitch," for prospective clients, or at chance meetings.

A *competing* approach to the NABC is the ad hoc format, where some of the fundamental questions are typically not addressed. This wastes time, because the fundamental questions must be answered eventually. Alternatively, one can develop a complete business plan, but the extensive effort required is premature and inefficient until the project's overall value proposition is clearly understood.

The NABC Efficiently Answers Four Fundamental Questions

An NABC comprises the four fundamentals that define a project's value proposition:

- **Need:** What are our customers' and users' needs? A need should relate to an important and specific client or market opportunity, with market size and end customers clearly stated. The market should be large enough to merit the necessary investment and development time.
- **Approach:** What is our compelling solution to the specific client need? Draw it, simulate it or make a mockup to help convey your vision. As the approach develops through iterations, it becomes a full proposal or business plan, which can include market positioning, cost, staffing, partnering, deliverables, a timetable and intellectual property (IP) protection. If you are developing a product, it should also include product specifications, manufacturing, distribution and sales.
- **Benefits:** What are the customer and user benefits of your approach? Each approach to user need results in unique benefits, such as low cost, high performance or quick response. Success requires that the benefits be quantitative and substantially better - not just different. Why must you win?
- **Competition/alternatives:** Why are your benefits significantly better than the competition? You must be able to tell your customers, partners and end users why your solution represents the best value. To do this, you must clearly understand your competition and to clearly state why your approach is substantially better. Your answer should be short and memorable.

Iterate Often to Achieve Success

Iteration is essential to the development of an NABC. One must go back and forth between customer and user needs, your approach and the competition or alternatives to come up with compelling, easily understood benefits. Answering these four interlocking questions takes dozens of iterations. Thus, iterate soon and iterate often. At each step in the refinement process, update your presentation, following the NABC philosophy that "if it isn't written down, it isn't real."

The *elevator pitch* is a good first test of a successful NABC. Can you sum up your value proposition to a client in the time it takes an elevator to travel a few floors and have that client ask you for a follow-up meeting? If not, iterate yet again!