

**Model Business Plan**  
**Courtesy of Neal Stephenson**  
**from Cryptonomicon, © 1999, pp. 238-240**

MISSION: At [name of company] it is our conviction that [to do the stuff we want to do] and to increase shareholder value are not merely complementary activities—they are inextricably linked.

PURPOSE: To increase shareholder value by [doing stuff].

EXTREMELY SERIOUS WARNING (printed on a separate page, red letters on a yellow background): Unless you are as smart as Johann Karl Friedrich Gauss, savvy as a half-blind Calcutta bootblack, tough as General William Tecumseh Sherman, rich as the Queen of England, notionally resilient as a Red Sox fan, and as generally able to take care of yourself as the average nuclear missile submarine commander, you should never have been allowed near this document. Please dispose of it as you would any piece of high-level radioactive waste and then arrange with a qualified surgeon to amputate your arms at the elbows and gouge your eyes from their sockets. This warning is necessary because once, a hundred years ago, a little old lady in Kentucky put a hundred dollars into a dry goods company which went belly-up and only returned her ninety-nine dollars. Ever since then the government has been on our asses. If you ignore this warning, read on at your peril—you are dead certain to lose everything you've got and live out your final decades beating back waves of termites in a Mississippi Delta leper colony. Still reading? Great. Now that we've scared off the lightweights, let's get down to business.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: We will raise [some money], then [do some stuff] and increase shareholder value. Want details? Read on.

INTRODUCTION: [This trend], which everyone knows about, and [that trend], which is so incredibly arcane that you probably didn't know about it until just now, and [this other trend over here] which might seem, at first blush, to be completely unrelated, when all taken together, lead us to the (proprietary, secret, heavily patented, trademarked, and NDAed) insight that we could increase shareholder value by [doing stuff]. We will need \$ [a large number] and after [not too long] we will be able to realize an increase in value to \$ [an even larger number], unless [hell freezes over in midsummer].

DETAILS:

Phase 1: After taking vows of celibacy and abstinence and foregoing all of our material possessions for homespun robes, we (viz. appended resumes) will move into a modest complex of scavenged refrigerator boxes in the central Gobi Desert, where real estate is so cheap that we are actually being paid to occupy it, thereby enhancing shareholder value even before we have actually done anything. On a daily ration consisting of a handful of uncooked rice and a ladleful of water, we will [begin to do stuff].

Phase 2, 3, 4, . . . , n — 1: We will [do more stuff, steadily enhancing shareholder value in the process] unless [the earth is struck by an asteroid a thousand miles in diameter, in which case certain assumptions will have to be readjusted; refer to Spreadsheets 397—413].

Phase n: before the ink on our Nobel Prize certificates is dry, we will confiscate the property of our competitors, including anyone foolish enough to have invested in their pathetic companies. We will sell all of these people into slavery. All proceeds will be redistributed among our shareholders, who will hardly notice, since Spreadsheet 265 demonstrates that, by this time, the company will be larger than the British Empire at its zenith.

SPREADSHEETS: [Pages and pages of numbers in tiny print, conveniently summarized by graphs that all seem to be exponential curves screaming heavenward, albeit with enough pseudo-random noise in them to lend plausibility].

RESUMES: Just recall the opening reel of *The Magnificent Seven* and you won't have to bother with this part; you should crawl to us on hands and knees and beg us for the privilege of paying our salaries.