

U.S. Network of Virtual Enterprises  
&  
Merrill Lynch  
National Business Plan Competition

In Collaboration With  
Working in Support of Education

**STUDENT  
GUIDE  
2009**



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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Fifth Annual U.S. Network of Virtual Enterprises & Merrill Lynch National Business Plan Competition, in collaboration with Working In Support of Education ([w!se](#)).

This competition represents an opportunity for the Virtual Enterprise community to motivate and reward its best performing Virtual Enterprise teams, while showcasing the sophisticated knowledge and skills that VE students acquire, which are often attributed to college students and business professionals.

Additionally, it builds momentum for an already fast growing, unique program, which has expanded from seven (7) New York City-based virtual firms in 1996, to more than 500 firms nationwide today, representing 8,000 students. Virtual Enterprises has become an integral part of the nationwide school reform movement.

[w!se](#), an educational not-for-profit, developed this manual to provide you with information about the Competition and to help participating Virtual Enterprise coordinators and students prepare for a unique educational experience. Carefully review this document; it includes Competition deadlines, logistical details, guidelines, rules and recommendations.

The Competition is a partnership between the U.S. Network of Virtual Enterprises and Merrill Lynch, a leading financial management and advisory company. Merrill Lynch is dedicated to helping young people of all backgrounds become financially literate, business savvy and economically competitive. Additional support for the Competition is being provided by corporations, institutions of higher education and many individuals who believe in enterprise education.

We look forward to seeing you in New York City and encourage you to call or email Eric Katzman at (212) 421-2700 or [ekatzman@wise-ny.org](mailto:ekatzman@wise-ny.org), if you have any questions or need additional information.

## 2009 DEADLINES

Date	Material
<b>Friday, January 23</b>	<b>Registration</b> Email to: Eric Katzman, <a href="mailto:ekatzman@wise-ny.org">ekatzman@wise-ny.org</a>
<b>Monday, February 2</b> Must be <b>received</b> , postmark not accepted	<b>1) One (1) Digital Copy of business plan,</b> <b>2) Twenty (20) Copies of business plan,</b> <b>3) One (1) Copy of negotiated contracts,</b> <b>4) Release Forms and Ethics Agreement for all team members and</b> <b>5) One (1) Digital Team Photo (1,200 DPI High Resolution)</b> Send to: Eric Katzman c/o Working In Support Of Education (w!se) 227 East 56 <sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 201, New York, NY 10022
<b>Friday, March 13</b> Must be <b>received</b> , postmark not accepted	<b>One (1) FINAL Copy of digital media</b> (e.g., PowerPoint presentation, video) Email to: Eric Katzman, <a href="mailto:ekatzman@wise-ny.org">ekatzman@wise-ny.org</a> , or Send to: Eric Katzman c/o Working In Support of Education (w!se) 227 East 56 <sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 201, New York, NY 10022

### DOCUMENTATION DEADLINE

Each team is required to submit the following by February 2, 2009:

- \* Twenty (20) hard copies and one (1) digital copy of their business plans
- \* One (1) Copy of negotiated contracts
- \* One digital team photo
- \* Each individual team member is required to submit a photo release form and ethics agreement

A digital copy of the FINAL digital media (i.e. PowerPoint presentation) is due to be received no later than March 13, 2009. No changes will be accepted after this date.

Send all of the required items mentioned above by their respective due dates to:

Email: [ekatzman@wise-ny.org](mailto:ekatzman@wise-ny.org)  
Mail: Working In Support of Education (w!se)  
c/o Eric Katzman  
227 East 56<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 201  
New York, NY 10022

### TECHNOLOGY

A high resolution (1,200 DPI) digital team photo, on a CD-ROM, must be received by **February 2, 2009**.

Teams may use PowerPoint presentations (Microsoft 2003 version or lower), video, slideshows, overhead slides and/or other visual/tangible aids. A digital copy of the presentation must be **received** by **w!se** by **Friday, March 13, 2009**. Teams are NOT allowed to make changes to the PowerPoint once it has been submitted.

**NO** Technology equipment will be provided by the Competition hosts. Teams **need** to provide a laptop and an LCD projector and all required connection devices for their presentation during each round.

**\*\*If your team will be unable to participate in the Technology Check, please make an alternate arrangement with w!se by March 13, 2009.**

At the Technology Check, please bring:

1. Two (2) copies of your PowerPoint presentation on two separate CD-ROMs and/or flash drives
2. One (1) copy of your presentation on paper.

All business plan materials should be sent to:

Email: [ekatzman@wise-ny.org](mailto:ekatzman@wise-ny.org)

Mail: Working In Support of Education (w!se), c/o Eric Katzman  
227 East 56<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 201  
New York, NY 10022

Phone: (212) 421-2700

The organizers of this competition will make every effort to minimize technical difficulties. It is strongly recommended that each team have an advisor and one team member attend the Technology Check on:

Date: **Friday, March 20, 2009** or **Monday, March 23, 2009**

Time: **12:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.** **9:00 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.**

Location: w!se w!se  
227 E. 56<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 201 227 E. 56<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 201  
(Between 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.) (Between 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.)

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Date & Time	Event
<b>Monday, March 23</b> 9:00 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.	<b>Technology Check</b> Working In Support of Education (w!se) 227 East 56 <sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 201 (Between 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenues)
<b>Monday, March 23</b> 2:00 – 7:00 P.M.	<b>National Competition Orientation &amp; Reception</b> <u>Orientation and Business Seminar (3:00 – 4:30)</u> Baruch College Vertical Campus 151 East 25 <sup>th</sup> Street (Corner of Lexington Avenue)  <u>Reception (5:00-7:00PM)</u> Baruch College Vertical Campus 151 East 25 <sup>th</sup> Street (Corner of Lexington Avenue)
<b>Tuesday, March 24</b> 8:00 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.	<b>Preliminary Rounds I &amp; II **</b> Baruch College Vertical Campus 151 East 25 <sup>th</sup> Street (Corner of Lexington Avenue)
<b>Wednesday, March 25</b> 8:00 A.M. – 12:45 P.M.	<b>Championship Round</b> Baruch College Vertical Campus 151 East 25 <sup>th</sup> Street (Corner of Lexington Avenue)
<b>Thursday, March 26</b> 9:45 A.M.	<b>Official Opening &amp; Ribbon Cutting Ceremony</b> <b>Merrill Lynch Announcement of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place &amp; Awards</b> Virtual Enterprises, International Trade Fair 69 <sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory 68 Lexington Avenue (between 25 <sup>th</sup> & 26 <sup>th</sup> Streets)

**\*\* LOCATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO AVAILABILITY**

## ELIGIBILITY

Competing teams are selected and registered by the Virtual Enterprises (VE) Central/Regional Office. One team may be registered to compete for every 30 VE firms per state under the guidance of the Central/Regional Office. There is a maximum of five teams per state that may compete in the national competition. Teams **must** be registered by their State Directors to compete.

Four (4) to six (6) high school students can participate on a team (includes team member, if any, responsible for technology). Each team member is required to give a substantive oral presentation related to the business plan AND to respond to questions from judges (includes team member(s) responsible for technology). All firms competing in the National Business Plan Competition are required to participate in the New York City Trade Fair.

## REGISTRATION

To register participating teams, eligible firms, as determined by the Central/Regional Office, must register through their State Director. The Registration Form can be found at [www.venetwork.org](http://www.venetwork.org) until January 23, 2009. If a team member cannot participate in the competition after registration has been submitted, w!se must be notified, in writing, of the substitution by the Central/Regional Office via email. The substitute must be a student-employee of the registered VE firm.

## COMPETITION GUIDELINES AND FORMAT

The National Business Plan Competition is an exciting educational experience in which participants utilize academic skills, business knowledge and public speaking to “sell” a business concept and secure funding for start-up, expansion, or to report to the board of directors, customers, etc.

The competition is based on both the written business plan and the oral presentation. The written business plan is worth 35% and the business plan presentation is worth 65% of the overall score for each round of presentations. (Business Plan documents and Business Plan Presentation Rubrics and Score Sheets are available at <http://www.venetwork.org/businessplanmaterials.htm>.)

The Competition has a total of three (3) rounds: two preliminary rounds and a championship round. In all rounds, teams are allowed 8-12 minutes for their presentation. Presentations that exceed 12 minutes or are less than eight (8) minutes will be penalized two (2) points per minute. Time over or under the limit is rounded-up. For example, a presentation that is over or under the limit by one second is rounded-up to one minute, for a two point penalty.

Teams may use PowerPoint presentations, video, slides, overhead slides and/or other visual or tangible aids (see Technology Check).

At the completion of the team presentation, judges will *pose questions to ALL team members*. Each team member is expected to participate in the presentation as well as in the question portion. The judges have 8 minutes to ask questions relating to the oral presentation or written plan. Any member of the team may choose to answer the question. Each member of the team should participate in answering a question. Team members may NOT confer with each other while formulating answers.

The outline of the event is as follows:

### *Preliminary Rounds I & II – Tuesday, March 24, 2009*

- \* The time schedule for Round I will be emailed, in advance, to each team’s VE Coordinator, and also distributed at the orientation on Monday, March 23.
- \* Each team is required to present their business plan **twice** on March 24.

- \* Teams must register and report to the competition waiting room, with their VE Coordinator, 30 minutes before their scheduled presentation time.

#### *ROUND I*

- \* Teams will be escorted from the competition waiting room to the judging room for their presentation.
- \* Team members should distribute appropriate presentation materials to the judges (six (6) copies should be sufficient for preliminary rounds)
- \* Team members may NOT shake hands with the judges prior to or after the presentation.
- \* Only the VE coordinator or school/central office staff members will be admitted to observe Rounds I and II. Unaffiliated persons will not be admitted.
- \* For each round, once a person observes a team presentation, he or she will NOT be permitted to re-enter the competition waiting room.
- \* To prevent distractions, individuals will be asked NOT to enter or exit the room once a presentation begins.
- \* **Teams are NOT permitted to ask judges to give them a one or two minute warning before their time is up.**
- \* Questions asked by judges will be directed to the team (Not to the CEO, as in previous years).

#### *BREAK*

- \* Upon completion of the Round I presentation, the team has the option of being escorted to the posting room or to the elevator to exit the building.
- \* The time slot and room number for the Round II team presentations will be available in the posting room forty-five (45) minutes after the end of Round I.

#### *ROUND II*

- \* ALL rules from Round I apply to Round II.
- \* After a team has completed their Round II presentation, they will leave the building.
- \* The VE Coordinator will be notified via phone if their team is one of the top six teams that have qualified to be finalists for the Championship Round (Round III) on Wednesday, March 25. The VE coordinators may call (212) 421-2700 if they do not receive notice from w!se by 8 P.M.

#### *Championship Round – Wednesday, March 25, 2009*

- \* Teams, who are not finalists, are invited to observe the Championship Round.
- \* VE Coordinators are permitted to watch the presentations of competing teams during the Championship Round **ONLY AFTER** their team(s) has presented.
- \* To prevent distractions, individuals will be asked **NOT** to enter or exit a Competition Room once a presentation begins.
- \* All finalist team members must be registered and present in the Competition Waiting Room by 8 a.m. Teams that are more than 15 minutes late shall forfeit the Championship Round.

#### *COMPETITION*

- \* Team members should distribute appropriate presentation materials to the judges, six (6) copies should be sufficient for this round.
- \* Team members may NOT shake hands with the judges prior to or after the presentation.
- \* **Teams need to give the Lead Judge a copy of contracts, and or agreements referenced in the business plan and/or oral presentation (each need to have been approved by the Central Office).**
- \* Team members are prohibited from speaking to friends and guests of teams, school affiliates, other team members or judges.

- \* Friends, guests of teams, and school affiliates **may** attend the Championship Round with advance notification to w!se, but may NOT communicate to or with any team members at any time.
- \* Questions asked by judges will be directed to the team. Each member of the team must attempt to participate in answering a question.
- \* After a team presents, they can wait in the Posting Room, observe other team presentations in the auditorium, or exit the building.

#### ***VIP BREAKFAST – Thursday, March 26, 2009***

- \* The six finalist teams who presented in the Championship Round are invited to the Virtual Enterprises International Trade Fair VIP Breakfast on Thursday, March 26, at 8 a.m.

#### ***OPENING CEREMONY - Thursday, March 26, 2009***

- \* The Twelfth Annual New York Virtual Enterprises Trade Show Opening Ceremony will take place, immediately following the VIP Breakfast at the 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory, Lexington Avenue at East 26<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City.
- \* First, second and third place will be announced at the Opening Ceremony.
- \* Finalist teams are invited to the VIP seating section by the stage to observe the opening ceremony. They will be seated in the first rows with their Coordinators.

## **COMPETITION RULES**

### Communication Devices

Participants are **NOT** permitted to have cell phones or communication devices at any time during the competition. The School Coordinator/VE Coordinator is responsible for collecting and bagging their team's cell phones and communication devices prior to registration. Any team member breaking this rule will cause the entire team's disqualification.

### Business Plan Document

Business plans cannot exceed 20 pages (20 single sided or 10 double sided; not including cover and executive summary), plus an additional 5 pages of supporting documents. Written plans must be presented in size 12-font and be one-and-a-half or double spaced.

Business plans (20 copies + 1 **electronic/digital copy**) must be received by **February 2, 2009**. Once the business plan has been submitted for the Competition, no changes can be made to the document. The written score is determined by judges who read and rate business plans prior to the oral presentations.

One set of contracts with real-world companies **MUST** be included with the business plan submission, have a seal of approval from the Central Office, and show evidence of negotiation (include name and phone number of business contact(s) and letters, emails or other documentation). The submission of non-negotiated contracts is **NOT** permitted. **The total of all negotiated contracts with real-world companies should not exceed 75% of the total yearly salaries.**

Business plans and presentations must reflect the original work of current students from the firm. **Plagiarism** is the act of using the ideas or work of another person or persons as if they were ones own, without giving proper credit to the source. w!se reserves the right to disqualify a firm, at any point during or after the competition, if any aspect of the business plan has been plagiarized or if the written plan or the oral presentation significantly reflects a plan or presentation from a previous year.

w!se reserves the right **NOT** to return the submitted business plans.

## **DRESS CODE**

All team members are expected to dress in standard business or professional theme-related attire for all competition events. Sneakers, jeans and other casual clothing are not acceptable. Men are to wear suits or sport coats and ties. Women are to wear dresses, suits, or pant suits.

## **RULES OF CONDUCT**

- \* VE Coordinators need to be with their teams at all times.
- \* Team members are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. This means that every courtesy, both in speaking and behavior, should be extended to all team members, advisors, faculty members, judges and dignitaries at the competition.
- \* Use of cell phones and other communication devices are prohibited and may not be carried by a participant during the competition.
- \* Smoking, by law in New York City, is not permitted in office buildings, public institutions, restaurants, trains or buses.

**Good Sportsmanship-** It is expected that all teams demonstrate proper sportsmanship during the competition. You demonstrate good sportsmanship when you show respect for yourself, your teammates, your opponents and the judges. A part of sportsmanship is playing clean and handling both winning and losing with style and dignity. Sportsmanship can have a positive influence on everyone. Good sportsmanship suggestions include:

- \* Stay cool. Even if others are losing their tempers.
- \* Cheer your teammates with positive statements. Avoid trash talking the other team.
- \* When officials make a decision, accept it gracefully even if it goes against you.

## TIPS FOR THE ORAL BUSINESS PLAN PRESENTATION

The following guidelines will assist teams' preparation for the Business Plan Presentations.

### Know Your Business Plan

- \* It is important that all members of the team are thoroughly familiar with all aspects of their business plan.
- \* When presenting the industry analysis, be sure to analyze the real industry as well as the virtual one.

### Review the Rubric and Scoring Sheet

- \* Carefully review the Rubric and Scoring Sheet available on [www.venetwork.org](http://www.venetwork.org).

### Note:

- \* Teams **MUST** include a clear *Statement of Purpose* (the purpose of the business plan) early in the presentation, identifying one of the following:
  - √ Request for funding for a new loan
  - √ Request for funding for expansion
  - √ Purpose of business plan, e.g. a report to the public, the Board of Directors, customers or senior managers (if not requesting a loan)
- \* Additionally, new firms need to provide a *Start-up Budget* showing that attention has been given to the resources needed for the first year (start-up phase) of the business. After one year of operation, firms are no longer in a start-up phase and do not need a Start-up Budget. Instead, for these existing firms, the relevant financial document used to forecast income and expenses is an operating budget, or a projected income statement. For firms that have existed for more than 2 years, it is suggested that the business plan be based on a new division or product.
- \* Be sure that students properly identify and label the financial documents being presented in their oral presentations.
- \* **Avoid having too many PowerPoint slides or having team members "rush" through their presentation.**
- \* Non-negotiated contracts are **NOT** permitted. Sales reported on an income statement cannot be the result of imaginary transactions. Sales transactions need to be real transactions that are documented/supported by sales invoices for which payment has been made or is expected. Except for the sale of services, sales must be supported by wholesale purchases which must be actual transactions between firms or the Central/Regional Office (that may serve as a wholesaler) and must be reflected in the VE firm's financial statements.
- \* Students and VE Coordinators are encouraged to review the written and oral rubrics to ensure that all financial elements are covered correctly and thoroughly.
- \* w/ise reserves the right to conduct an audit of any documentation used to support the business plan.

If you have any questions regarding the rubric, please call or email Eric Katzman at (212) 421-2700 or [ekatzman@wise-ny.org](mailto:ekatzman@wise-ny.org).

## **Practice**

*Each team member is expected to participate in the presentation, as well as the question portion. This includes any team member that would be designated as a technology person.*

Practice your presentation in three ways: individually, as a team and in front of an audience.

### Practice Individually

- \* Each team member should review their presentation to make certain that it makes sense. Rehearse in front of a mirror, your parents and friends. This helps you to feel confident and find your style.

### Practice as a Team

- \* Rehearse your presentation as a team multiple times. Be sure to use your visual aids while practicing so that technology becomes a seamless part for your presentation. Critique each other constructively.

### Practice in Front of an Audience

- \* Present your business plan in front of an audience. This helps your team to become comfortable in front of “strangers,” develop “eye contact” skills, and receive valuable recommendations to improve your presentations.
- \* Some people who can be included in your audience are VE colleagues, teachers, principal and business partners. If possible, request that members of your audience read your business plan and develop questions to be posed to your team after your presentation.
- \* It is strongly recommended that the team work with an industry coach/partner who can provide valuable professional guidance.

### Suggested websites

- \* PowerPoint format: <http://www.research.ucla.edu/era/present/>
- \* Public speaking:
  - √ [http://www.impactfactory.com/gate/public\\_speaking\\_training\\_course/freegate\\_1552-1104-88327.html](http://www.impactfactory.com/gate/public_speaking_training_course/freegate_1552-1104-88327.html)
  - √ <http://www.aresearchguide.com/3tips.html>

## **Be prepared to answer questions**

- \* It is recommended that the team members practice responding to questions posed.
- \* Questions can be related to any aspect of your business, written plan, or oral presentation.
- \* Consider familiarizing yourself with:
  - √ concerns of a business today (e.g., interest rates, outsourcing, and ethics).
  - √ current events and how they may affect your business (e.g., prices, supplies, market availability, customers, employees, profits).
  - √ the names of your key customers and suppliers.

## **Notes**

Presenters may use notes or an outline for reference during the presentation. Visual aids, such as PowerPoint presentations, are for the audience and judges to follow your presentation. Avoid facing the screen or using the PowerPoint presentation on the screen as your notes.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOTAPING

- \* The Release Forms must be sent with the Business Plans, which are due **February 2, 2009**.
- \* **Advisors may NOT photograph or videotape or record their teams during presentation in the Preliminary Rounds of the competition.** They may photograph, videotape or record their teams during the Championship Round. Flash bulbs are **not** permitted. No one will be permitted to roam the room causing a distraction.

**Any action that distracts or interferes in any way is to be avoided.**

## SECURITY

Photo identification is required for admittance to all event facilities. Students, chaperones and guests must have photo I.D. available at all times during the competition.

The safety, well-being, and behavior of students are the responsibility of chaperones and the VE coordinator. We recommend that students always:

- \* Travel in groups.
- \* Have photo identification available.
- \* Carry emergency contact information as well as the hotel name, address and phone number.
- \* Additional information that may be helpful to the coordinator:
  - √ New York City has a 24-hour information system. For non-emergencies call 311.
  - √ If you need emergency assistance, call 911.
  - √ w/ise office: (212) 421-2700

## TRAVEL WITHIN NEW YORK CITY

The New York City transit system uses a MetroCard for entry to subway trains and buses. You may purchase a MetroCard at the nearest subway station. For more information, visit the New York City MTA website at [www.mta.info](http://www.mta.info) or [www.hopstop.com](http://www.hopstop.com).

## RECOGNITION AND PRIZES

	VE Program Business Prize	Team Prize *	Individual Team Participants
1 <sup>st</sup> Place	\$3,000 & Trophy	\$7,500	Trophy
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	\$2,000 & Trophy	\$5,000	Trophy
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	\$1,000 & Trophy	\$2,500	Trophy
Finalists (3) (Excludes prizewinners)	\$400	\$1,000	
Participants	Certificates	Individual Certificates	

*\* To be distributed to participating team members.*

***Failure to comply with any of the above guidelines may lead to disqualification or removal from the Competition.***