

Leadership skills in entrepreneurship



‘Ignite the Imagination, engage the senses’

Business Plan:

## Sensory Stimulation: What is it?

Have you ever wondered how we can better support the unique needs of autistic children? As a parent, practitioner, or caregiver, navigating the world of products tailored to their specific requirements can be challenging. This is the reasoning behind the launch of Sensory Stimulation. A revolutionary solution designed to enhance the lives of autistic children through stimulation and play personally specified to each child.

My name is Laura Lenihan and I'm passionate about creating positive change in the lives of children with autism. With the launch of Sensory Stimulation, we have been able to develop a ground-breaking idea in which allows children and families with children with autism to experience monthly subscription boxes filled with sensory specific toys and activities to fulfil their sensory needs. As a practitioner I have first-hand witnessed the challenges faced by families seeking products to support their children's development and overall well-being. In world where the needs of autistic children are often underserved, I recognise significant gaps in products which are able to cater for each individual child's unique requirements.

British Medical Association (2020) state 1 in 100 children in the UK have a diagnosis of Autism. My product could make a difference to every one of these children, if given the chance. One of the most crucial abilities for children with autism to acquire is sensory integration as this makes it easier for them to comprehend the world around them and become more conscious of their emotions as stated by the genius of play (no date). As a practitioner I have witnessed and worked with children with autism who struggle to regulate their emotions, causing them to be distressed while in school which results in them



becoming dysregulated in the classroom environment. Following my research, I was able to discover the benefits of sensory toys for children with autism. I was able to purchase some products and put them to use within the classroom, while giving the children a calm environment to relax and allowing them to have access to the sensory toys, they have begun to independently self-regulate. However, when searching for and purchasing these toys and products, the cost was overbudget. In which is something many parents have agreed upon, alongside the struggle of finding toys which fit their Childs interests. I then began developing my idea. I want all children and families of children with autism to feel supported, to have a product which will allow their child to develop, regulate their emotions and provide them with curiosity to further discover the world that they live in. I strongly believe children with autism deserve the chance to experience a world of sensory stimulation in which will enhance their engagement through aspects of emotional regulation. Sensory stimulation has the development of children with autism at the centre of the brand, it is child focused and is a current problem with our brand being a potential solution. The brand is unique as there is nothing similar on the current market, with parents of children with autism struggling to keep up with their children's current fixations, finding and buying toys to suit their interests. Sensory stimulation allows parents to take a step back, each box is

### Sensory stimulation subscription box

The product I am offering is a Sensory stimulation subscription box. As a current practitioner in the early years, I believe my product will fulfil a gap in the current market for sensory specific toys aimed at children with autism. The concept behind the Sensory subscription box is to allow autistic children to gain enriching experiences in which promote their development and



engagement, while having fun. Orders are placed online via the website, to allow my product to be unique to each individual child an order form is to be completed upon purchase. The order form consists of the child's likes and dislikes, as well as age.

The box consists of sensory toys, textured materials, engaging, and educational activities linked to the child's likes to interest them, communication enhancement as well as parental guidance to enhance autistic children's development through the use of sensory stimulation for example sensory therapy. Play learn (2022) state sensory toys are beneficial to children with autism as they contribute to their cognitive and social development, while meeting their needs which are sometimes unmet in their daily environment. Sensory stimulation allows children with autism to gain more opportunities to further explore the world in which they live in.

The sensory stimulation box can be a one-time purchase or a monthly subscription plan. This can allow parents to build a range of sensory stimulating toys and activities which are suited to their child's needs and interests, allowing their children to be given a choice to create their own endless opportunities of play and development.

## Marketing

The product will be for sale on our website [www.sensorystimulation.co.uk](http://www.sensorystimulation.co.uk).

Our product will retail for £15 for a single purchase or £12.99 a month when subscribing. To begin marketing I will use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and tik Tok. These are the 3 social media platforms with the most active users. I will begin by advertising my product on my company's tik Tok page. Due to tik Tok becoming a global phenomenon, it has 2.051 million users worldwide according to what's the big data (2023). Unlike all



other social media platforms, due the viral nature of the algorithm of videos being shared tik tok is a beneficial marketing strategy as an account with 0 followers can still gain a large number of views in short space of time. After gaining a following and views, I will begin sending out sample forms and subscription boxes to influencer parents with children with autism to review the product within a video in return for the free sensory stimulation box. I will also pitch my idea to local primary schools with Special Teaching Facilities, as practitioners they understand the importance of a product like Sensory Stimulation being on the market, I will begin by offering them deals within bulk buys. I will then offer them our leaflet to share with parents.



### Possible issues and solutions

A possible issue I could face would be lack of sales/profit. The reasons behind this could be the target audience- as although it could be, it is not targeted all children is specifically targeted to children with autism. To solve this problem, I could offer a similar product, still including sensory toys- as these are suitable for a majority of children, as well as toys, activities, and games in which are age and interest related. Another reason for could be my marketing strategy, not being able to grow a clientele at a fast pace. To improve my marketing strategy if it does not work as well as planned, I could personally go to schools/ local community centres and run workshops for parents of children with autism while discussing with them my passion for my product and why I think it would have a positive impact on their children. Another issue could be the current cost of living crisis in the UK, with parent struggling with financial issues the price of the product could be unaffordable, however, to be able to make a good profit from the sensory stimulation boxes I would not be able to reduce the price.



## Sensory Stimulation- Ignite the Imagination, engage the senses'

Sensory Stimulation is a revolutionary proposal, that can undoubtedly change the lives of autistic children. To offer children with autism a new opportunity into a world of development, engagement, and sensory stimulation. My goal is to make that difference to those children's lives, with a background as a practitioner I understand the importance for the demand of a product such as sensory stimulation for autistic children. After firsthand witnessing the distress within autistic children when overwhelmed in a classroom environment, and further then seeing the difference in their emotions and behavior when given the opportunity to regulate their emotions with sensory toys, I am certain my product will positively effect children with autism's lives. I believe that my product can be a success, an evolution in the world of sensory stimulation.

Sensory Stimulation is a monthly subscription service that offers curated boxes containing an array of sensory toys and activities meticulously tailored to accommodate each child's individual interests. These thoughtfully selected items aim to foster the developmental growth and emotional regulation of children diagnosed with autism.

Sensory Stimulation is a unique brand with a practitioner as the creator. Sensory stimulation is customized for each child, with a personalized form to be completed upon ordering to ascertain the child's preferences and aversions this is a crucial aspect of the product as according to Raising Children (no date) autistic children often have strong interests in which further aid them to cope within stressful surroundings, the use of their special/certain interests can be used to help them develop which was the concept behind Sensory Stimulation. Extensive research online indicates a notable market void for subscription boxes specifically tailored to provide sensory stimulation, catering primarily to the demographic of autistic children. This attribute substantially strengthens the brand and provides a strategic benefit by establishing a line throughout a market environment where competitors are less present.

By distinguishing "Sensory Stimulation" aside from its competitors in the market, this unique characteristic enables to accelerate its introduction into the market this aligns with Start-ups (no date) which states recognizing and embracing your uniqueness distinguishes your business from the masses, drawing in customers, partners, and opportunities that align with your singular vision and core principles.

As well as this when researching the current market for sensory subscription boxes, despite the target market for these being infants and toddlers, the prices are significantly higher than Sensory Stimulation pricing. This is an advantage, despite the high-quality products offered in the subscription boxes the price is affordable. This is essential during the current cost of living crisis in the UK, with 63% of parents over the Christmas period worrying about their ability to pay for Christmas presents according to Comic Relief (2023), as well as 58% of parents stating the decrease of their disposable income. This observation implies that parents facing financial challenges may find it impractical to allocate funds towards the purchase of toys and similar items, particularly when they are grappling with meeting fundamental necessities for their children, such as sustenance and adequate heating provisions. This highlights the importance of sensory stimulation being a beneficial and affordable product.

Sensory stimulation benefits early years development, Cleveland Clinic (2022) state Sensory play entails a range of activities deliberately designed to stimulate the sensory faculties of a child, thereby facilitating the advancement of language proficiency, motor abilities, and cognitive development. Additionally, it serves to cultivate social engagement and interpersonal interactions while nurturing a disposition for experimentation and exploration.

Sensory toys play a pivotal role in facilitating relaxation, concentration, and emotional regulation for children diagnosed with autism when confronted with various scenarios or stimuli. As edx education (2022) state children with autism need sensory toys to help face an array of challenges, as they become more aware of their emotions and better understand the environment they are surrounded by, their stress levels can be reduced, while improving self-awareness. It often teaches children with autism the causes and effects of their dysregulation- allowing them to realise when stressed, they can have access to sensory toys to aid them to regulate their emotions again. These specialized playthings contribute significantly to mitigating sensory challenges, thereby fostering an environment conducive to improved engagement and participation. By enabling individuals to interact with objects with reduced apprehension and discomfort, sensory toys afford them the opportunity to engage in play activities with greater ease and naturalness. Also, the utilization of sensory toys serves as a valuable tool in nurturing essential social learning competencies among children with autism. Through playful interactions with these tactile and multisensory tools, individuals are provided with avenues for developing skills such as negotiation, planning, and sharing. This holistic approach not only promotes the development of crucial social skills but also cultivates a sense of inclusivity and cooperation within diverse social contexts. The incorporation of sensory toys into therapeutic and educational interventions represents a strategic and effective means of supporting the holistic development and well-being of children with autism suggests Autism Centre of learning (no date). This is a strength towards the product as it unveils the developmental aspects of Sensory Stimulation.

While the primary objective of offering sensory stimulation through a subscription box service is to positively impact the lives of children with autism, it inherently creates a limited target market. This constraint imposes limitations on the potential customer base and

subsequently curtails growth opportunities for the business venture. The niche nature of catering specifically to the sensory needs of children with autism restricts the breadth of potential consumers, limiting the scale at which the business can operate and expand its market reach.

Children with autism often struggle with Sensory processing disorder, in which can result in oral fixation states Barkley (2023). Oral fixation is when children with autism feel the need to chew, suck or hold onto an object in their mouth. Children with autism can do this when seeking texture and taste, when overwhelmed within an environment or experiencing a sensory overload. As a brand focused on sensory stimulation for children with autism, ensuring the safety and regulatory compliance of the toys included within the subscription boxes is paramount. Given the specialized nature of the target market and the unique sensory needs of children with autism, sourcing appropriate products that adhere to stringent safety standards and regulations presents a multifaceted challenge. Sourcing toys that not only comply with regulatory mandates but also effectively address the specific sensory requirements of children with autism adds an additional layer of complexity. It necessitates collaboration with reputable suppliers and manufacturers capable of producing toys that are not only safe but also conducive to sensory development and therapeutic engagement for children on the autism spectrum.

In essence, while prioritizing the sensory needs of children with autism, the brand must navigate the intricate landscape of regulatory compliance and safety assurance to deliver products that not only meet stringent standards but also foster positive sensory experiences and promote holistic development within this specialized market segment.

Sensory stimulation represents a crucial avenue for catering to the developmental needs of autistic children, thereby offering a unique opportunity to foster heightened awareness and understanding of autism within the United Kingdom. Engaging in initiatives that prioritize sensory experiences not only serves to address the specific requirements of autistic individuals but also serves as a platform for broader societal education and advocacy. Collaborative endeavours with local primary schools hold immense potential for enriching the brand's outreach efforts. By actively participating in such initiatives, the brand stands to gain invaluable insights and feedback from specialized educational institutions catering to children with special needs. This engagement fosters an environment conducive to the

exchange of candid perspectives and constructive critiques, thereby facilitating the refinement and enhancement of the brand's offerings tailored to the autistic community.

While the pursuit of a unique brand identity offers positive benefits, it is essential to remain vigilant to the threats posed by brand copying. Through proactive measures aimed at safeguarding intellectual property rights, fostering innovation, and nurturing customer loyalty, the brand can effectively mitigate these risks and preserve its competitive advantage in the marketplace. As Sensory Stimulation is currently such a distinct brand within the current market, it is possible to be an easy target for brand copying.

Given that sensory stimulation is an expanding venture, it stands particularly susceptible to negative publicity, a reality often amplified for novel enterprises in their first stages. The heightened scrutiny accompanying a new launch, with uncertainties and risks of venturing into uncharted territories, renders such endeavours notably vulnerable to adverse public perceptions and criticisms. This stems from several factors inherent to the early stages of business development, including the lack of established reputation and brand trust, limited operational experience, and potentially unforeseen challenges in meeting consumer expectations. Consequently, any misstep or perceived shortcoming in product quality, service delivery, or ethical conduct could swiftly escalate into negative publicity, potentially impeding the brand's growth and undermining its market viability.

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