



How to write a simple, but effective marketing plan for your product, service or website.

A good marketing plan provides a compass that you can use to navigate your company in the right direction. Without a compass, you may be moving fast, but not in the right direction. You can develop a simple one page marketing plan if you wish or choose a software program that will let you input relevant data and generate a plan for you. The marketing plan is generally developed for one of the following reasons:

1. As part of the business planning process for a certain time period.
2. As part of a strategy introducing new product or service, entering new markets, or a change of strategy to fix an existing problem.
3. As a component within a business plan, such as a new business proposal to the financial institution.

An effective marketing plan would help you:

- Identify target markets and ideal clients.
- Evaluate company information against your industry or market.
- Track and analyze results so you learn what works and what does not.

1. Gather information, describe current market conditions.

Good sources of information:

Industry related blogs. News Articles. Newsletters. Books. Message Boards and Newsgroups.

Research Sites. Press releases, executive summaries and newsletters on these sites can provide relevant research findings and statistics.

Search Engines and Directories. Subject Sites.

Pay attention to sites relating to your industry or product.

Trade Publications. You will find industry information, statistics, and membership lists online.

White Papers.

Organize your information so you know what is going on in the marketplace. Get to know your competitors and current trends. You can position your product or service accordingly

1. Current market conditions:

2. State your marketing objective.

Describe what you would like your ideal customer to do after hearing or seeing your marketing message. Your offer and call to action should provoke them to take notice.

3. Describe your competitive advantage.

Make it look as if your product or service is the right solution for a problem that has not been solved yet. Studying your competitors' marketing efforts in Step 1 will enable you to identify what markets your competitors are missing.

4. Tell who your target audience is.

It is very important as well as beneficial to get laser sharp in focusing on a very specific market. In order to create relevant marketing messages, get to know your target market segments and how they make purchasing decisions. Address customers' unique needs. Create customer profiles

using common features such as buying behaviors and longevity (for example: business customers who have been in business more than 4 years). Describe the personas of the individuals you are trying to reach. Are they Internet savvy or fearful of new technologies? Will you use an existing list or customers or purchase a targeted list from a broker/ Can you use your website to develop a list?

5. Position yourself.

How will you, your product, or your company be remembered? What will your ideal customers and prospects think when they hear your company name? Identify your niche, What makes you different from any other firm serving that niche – is it price, value added, or speedy service? Highlight your experience and working style.

6. Describe your marketing message vehicles.

How will you get your company/service/product in front of your ideal customer? How are your competitors achieving their goals? Use the information you gathered in Step 1 and choose marketing mediums. Do your ideal customers prefer newsletters, networking events, email or other forms of communications. If your goal is to promote your company website, then you can start with free press releases, articles, blogs, ads in trade publications, social networks, etc.

7. Develop your identity/voice and let it show.

Logo and business cards may convey your image, but there is something else that makes your prospects as well as customers know, like and trust you – it is YOU. Be very professional, but not all business – if you are a REAL person with real life stories, people are more interested in communicating with you. Document your experience and story.

8. Develop your marketing budget, preferably as a percentage of projected gross sales.

In 2007 the average business in the United States invested 4 per cent of gross revenue in marketing. You may need to do invest double of that number during your first years in business. Revisit your marketing plan and review your numbers each year, make adjustments as needed.

9. Create a marketing calendar.

Outline the timeline and resources. Test before spending a lot of finances and energy.
