



Marketing Plan Format

A marketing plan is a focus tool. As you work through this plan, keep in mind that the process of thinking it through and then committing is what makes this a useful exercise. Remember to always keep the customer in mind while completing this plan.

Think of marketing as an umbrella word for promotions, sales, prospecting, advertising, networking, collateral materials, cross marketing, public relations, branding and marketing tools. Use this outline to work through your plan.

Market Opportunity

The best business opportunities are based on the most compelling needs of the marketplace. What are some needs of the marketplace your business can solve?

Define your Target Market

What is the size of this potential market? Who are they? Profile your target market here, including demographics. The larger the target market, the harder it will be to take market share. Keep this target manageable; if you are not willing to prospect or market to entire target, reduce target.

How can we segment market?

What message do they want to hear?

Do we have a tag line; is it consistent with our message?

What image do they want to see?

Where do we find their contact information?

What networking groups or organizations will we find them in?

Sphere of Influence or Warm Market

Definition of Sphere of Influence: The people who know you or your business by face or name. They have done business with you or would do business with you. They may refer you; you want this group to grow as you move people from your target market through your lead follow up systems and into this group.

How many contacts do we have in our Sphere of Influence? What is our percentage of referral from this group? Do we have a good referral base for our services? The objective of every marketing/prospecting activity is to grow this group as large as possible.



Contact Management

Do we have an efficient way to systematically market and prospect? Are they in a usable CRM i.e. Act!, Goldmine, Top Producer, Sugar, Salesforce? Do we need one? Want one? What actions can be taken here?

Competition

Who are they?
What is their image?
What are they doing right?
What could we do better?
Are they formidable?
What is their unique value proposition?
How is our value proposition unique?
How do they obtain business?
Will we do it differently?

Collateral Materials

Do our collateral materials fit/align with our target market?
Does the message in our collateral materials match the message our target market wants to hear?
Does the image of our collateral materials match the image our target market wants to see?
Do our collateral materials clearly express our business message and image?
Do they sell the company/business?
Do they sell the products/services and benefits?
Do we have the materials we need?
Do our materials go together? For example: business card matches flier, website and brochure?

Marketing and Prospecting Systems

Definition of Marketing for this category:
Long-term passive activities such as advertising, direct mail, submitting articles, e-mail campaigns, website, promotions, all web 2.0 (internet marketing). How will we market to our target market? How often?

Definition of Prospecting:



Short-term, pro-active activities such as networking, cold calling, office visits, industry conferences, "shaking hands and kissing babies."
How will we prospect our target market? How often?

Lead Follow-Up:

Which leads will need a follow up plan? What is our process for follow up? Do we need more than one plan? How do we systematize this so leads are not lost?

How do we systematize all these marketing/prospecting activities in our CRM?
Do we need to catch up with technology? What is expected from our target market in terms of technology?

Pricing Strategy

Are we charging appropriately for our service and products?
How do we know?
How can we track this?
Are we tracking this?
What areas do we need to track?
Are we bundling or packaging services and products?
Do we have a plan like incentives to up-sell and retain clients?
What do we up-sell? How to we encourage up-selling?

Internet

Do people in your target market look for your business on the internet? If so, how is your internet marketing presence? Do you have a website that is aligned with your target market? Is it easy to navigate? Are you tracking your web statistics? Do you have a way to capture names and e-mails? Are you utilizing blogs? Are you utilizing free profile services? Are your key words up to date and accurate? What about pay per click ads like Google, yahoo.local.com, or CitySearch? Audio and video clips online?

Promotional Strategy

Sales Promotions:



A sales promotion strategy is an activity that is designed to help boost the sales of a product or service. This can be done through an advertising campaign, public relation activities, a free sampling campaign, a free gift campaign, through demonstrations and exhibitions, through prize giving competitions, through temporary price cuts, and through door-to-door sales, telemarketing, personal sales letters, and emails. The importance of a sales promotion strategy cannot be underestimated. A sales promotion strategy can be important to a business boosting its sales. What promotional ideas do we have?

Website Promotion:

Such as search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click advertising (PPC), linking campaigns, online auctions and top shopping sites, email marketing, classified ads, blogging, online publicity, and affiliate strategies.

Company Promotions:

Promotional Activities

Sponsorships for special events (like fun runs)

Participation in community projects and boards of directors

Trade Shows - Your product or service might be one that is suited to exhibiting at a trade show attended by your target audience. Trade shows are typically one- or two-day events that allow businesses to set up exhibits or booths showcasing their products or capabilities.

Fairs (like Health Fairs, Job Fairs)

Give-a-ways (like baseball caps and mugs with your logo)

Coupons and free samples

Conducting contests

Public Speaking and Conferences:

Making speeches at conferences, professional association meetings and other events positions you and your company as an expert in your field. Attending conferences is also an opportunity to make valuable contacts that could lead to sales.

Media Relations Campaigns:

A campaign is your overall plan for contacting and staying in touch with targeted members of the media (reporters, editors). You might want to develop a media relations campaign if it would benefit your company to be mentioned in newspaper, magazine or TV broadcasts viewed by your target audience. Developing press releases, press kits and public service announcements could be included in your media relations campaign.



Sales Team

Who will be responsible for sales? Are they qualified, are they trained? If not trained, what kind of training will they need? What is our process for accountability? What numbers should they focus on? Is there a history of lead to sale conversion we can use in creating an economic model? What other conversions ratio could we use?

Outline projected costs for plan above. How will we monitor or measure marketing dollar return on investment?

List assumptions to be aware of here.