

Marketing Plan Template

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The purpose of writing a marketing plan is to focus your efforts and money towards what will most increase the profits of your business. The point is not to write a large 100 page plan that is too complicated to put into practice. It's better to write a 5-page plan that is tight, focused and will keep you on track for the next 12 months. You should write and publish a new marketing plan every year.

This template is designed to be printed out and used as a guide as you write and develop your marketing plan.

Section 1: Company Mission statement

Your marketing plan should start with your company mission statement. If you need to review steps on how to write a mission statement, review the article below.

[How To Write A Mission Statement](#)

Section 2: Short-Term Marketing Goals

List 3-5 short term marketing goals that you plan to accomplish over the next 12 months. Below are the rules you should follow when identifying and listing your goals. Your goals should be realistic and achievable but be sure to challenge yourself.

1. The goal must be specific and focused on one item.

Wrong: We will increase our profits over the next 12 months.

Right: We will increase our profits by 3% over the next 12 months.

Wrong: We will introduce a new product line and add 3 people to our sales force

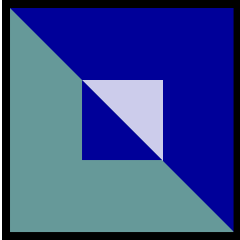
Right: We will introduce a new ebook by the end of the year focused on helping customers invest their money.

2. The goal must be measurable.

If your goal is to increase your market share by 5% over the next 12 months, make sure you have the ability to measure this information. If you can't measure it, you're better off reframing the goal so it can be measured.

3. The goal must be time bound.

All goals in this section should be achievable in 12 months or less. In the next section, you will list your long-term company goals. If a goal is to be achieved in 6 months as opposed to 12, be sure to state this time frame.



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Section 3: Long-Term Marketing Goals

List 3-5 long-term goals for your company. The same rules apply in this section as the previous one. The only difference is that now you are listing goals you wish to achieve within the next 3 years. The purpose of listing longer term goals is to get you thinking in advance about the overall direction and growth you want your company to take. Remember, you long-term goals will eventually become your short-term goals. Be specific, focused and realistic.

You will want to review your long-term goals each year in order to fine tune and modify them based on the results of the previous 12 months. In some cases, you may decide to make a goal more aggressive. In other cases, you may need to back off a certain goal because of changing internal or external market conditions.

Section 4: Review of Products & Services

In this section, you will list out each of your services and products and give a brief description of each. Be sure to list any special benefits as well as any future products/services you plan on developing.

Below is an example entry to get you going.

Phone Consultations: This area of our business was just introduced last year and has grown quickly. It involves customers purchasing phone time over our website. When a customer pre-pays for a phone consultation, they fill out an informational form along with their contact info and one of our consultants calls them at a prearranged time to help them with their investment issue. We plan on increasing the breadth and scope of our phone consultation services over the next three years. The majority of our phone consultations are conducted with individuals but we feel this service would also benefit small and mid-size companies. We will expand our services with this in mind, working to include features and benefits that will attract more corporate clients.

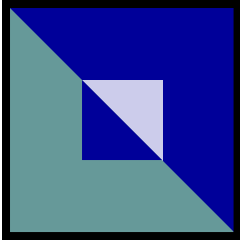
Section 5: Buyer Persona Profiles

I've seen companies spend a lot of money on expensive market segment research reports and then not know what to do with the information to help grow their business. So, instead of spending lots of time and energy trying to define your market segments and the dollar value associated with them, concentrate on defining your various buyer personas. A buyer persona is simply a description of a particular type of buyer that would be interested in your business. You may find you have 2-3 definable buyer personas or as many as a dozen. Rarely will you find you just have one.

You're probably already familiar with some very well known buyer personas. How about the Soccer Mom or the NASCAR dad. Yes, these are buyer personas that were created by companies in order to focus their marketing message.

So how do you define your buyer personas? You conduct your own research over time. You may have some of this information already. If not, it's time to start crafting website, email, and direct mail surveys in order to better understand and define your customers.

On the next page, I'll describe the steps a real company went through to identify one of their buyer personas.



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Section 5: Buyer Persona Profiles (continued)

As a real world example, here are the steps one company took to define a buyer persona.

Step 1: Before this company's actual website was launched, they put up a pre-launch page that explained what the site was about and allowed people to enter their emails if they were interested in receiving more information.

Step 2: The company collected several thousand emails through their prelaunch page and then sent these people an email survey. The survey contained questions relating to age, gender and other descriptors that were pertinent to the company's products and services.

Step 3: The company received over 800 responses and used this information to create biographies of typical buyers—buyer personas! This company learned that one of their personas were married females between the ages of 29 and 49 that made most of the decisions at home on who to hire for various services. These women made most of the decisions regarding the best healthcare providers, babysitters and other home-related services.

Step 4: The company went on to develop several other buyer personas and successfully used this information to target their marketing messages to the appropriate personas.

Do you see how powerful this can be? Once you have defined and segmented your buyer personas, you will be in a much better position to understand the needs of each group and can then develop the proper marketing materials to better engage them.

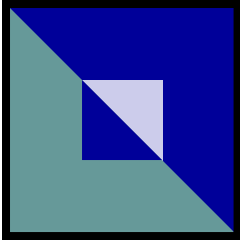
Start crafting your buyer personas in this section. Do the best you can and realize that your buyer personas will need to be updated as new information becomes available through talking to more and more of your customers. Don't underestimate the power of buyer personas when crafting your marketing plan. [Click here for a comprehensive article on Buyer Personas.](#)

Section 6: Competitive Analysis and SWOT

In this section, you will research and place your competitor information, being sure to include a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. It is critical that you know and understand who your competitors are, how they price their products and services, and what they can do better than you.

You may already know who your competitors are but I would still suggest you research this further using the Internet. Type in some search phrases people would use to find your products and services and start looking at the websites that come up. You can get a lot of information in this manner. Take your time. Yes, it's tedious work but it will give you many ideas of what products and services you might want to add to your own business. Don't be shy about signing up for your competitor's newsletters. Find out what sort of information they communicate to their customers and prospects on a regular basis.

On the next page, I have created a form you can use for your competitive analysis research. You will notice that the first column will be your company and the other columns will be your competitors. By summarizing the information in a table like this, you will be able to see how you measure up at a glance.



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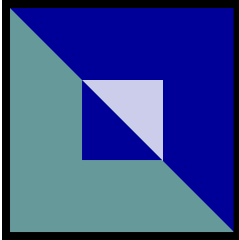
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Section 6: Competitive Analysis and SWOT (cont.)

Competitive Analysis Worksheet (SWOT Analysis)

Category	Your Company	Competitor A	Competitor B	Competitor C
Strengths				
Weaknesses				
Opportunities				
Threats				



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Section 7: Competitor Profiles

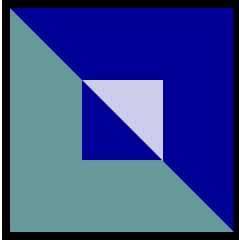
Now that you have done your basic SWOT analysis, you are in a position to write a short profile on each of your competitors. Think of this profile as a short biography that gives details on the company's product lines, services, price points, market share, revenue, customer service, reputation, quality, delivery, warranty, financial strength, profitability, number of employees, advertising themes, image, branding strategy, and anything else you feel is relevant. You may not have access to all this information and that is fine. Just work to include everything you can find out at this time. As you uncover more information, come back to this section and update the info.

Section 8: Sales & Growth Goals

Place your sales & growth goals in this section. I suggest you break it out by category as shown below. In addition, you should forecast out for the next 12 months, 2 years and 3 years.

Sales & Growth Goal Example

Category	Next 12 months	Year 2	Year 3
Corporate Consulting	\$70,000	\$85,000	\$100,000
Individual Consulting	\$40,000	\$47,000	\$58,000
Phone Consultations	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$50,000
Product Sales	\$15,000	\$22,000	\$30,000
TOTALS	\$145,000	\$184,000	\$238,000



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Section 9: Strategies and Action Plans

There are four main areas this section will address; Internal Marketing, External Marketing, Company Image, & Customer Retention. These four areas make up the **Four Marketing Quadrants** within my **Integral Marketing System**. [Click here to read more about the Integral Marketing System.](#)

As you develop your action plan over the next 12 months in these four areas, you may find you want to revise the goals you listed in Section 2 or at least make them more detailed. This is normal as you now have a lot more strategic information than you had when you first started your marketing plan. Go ahead and rework your short-term goals as you fill in the action plan details in this section.

You will create an action plan worksheet for each of the following four sections sections. I will give a brief introduction of each section and then a template you can use to fill in the details.

Internal Marketing

I call this section Internal Marketing because it is really the important work that is done behind the scenes. Successful internal marketing allows for successful external marketing. Internal marketing focuses on the infrastructure that allows your business to thrive and grow year after year. Your strategies in this section might include creating & maintaining a customer database and using it to rank your customers by profitability, having the infrastructure to run a website and online store, optimizing your web pages for the search engines, being able to send out monthly emails, hosting webinars, maximizing the profit margin of your hard goods, securing the tools to create new hard goods or downloadable digital products, pricing strategies, and the ability to measure and act on customer activity.

External Marketing

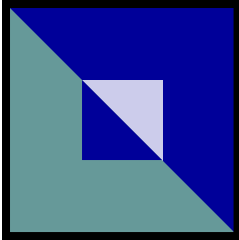
In this section, you will list all the promotional ideas relating to external direct marketing programs. Maybe you want to mail your house list twice over the next 12 months with some special offers. Maybe this is the year you finally get your monthly ezine up and running. Perhaps you plan to run some website specials and do some email marketing. This is the place to put it. You will want to write down a list of all the action items you plan to execute over the next 12 months. Keep it simple and focused. Three well executed strategies in this section are much better than a dozen that are poorly executed.

Company Image

In this section, you will list strategies that will help build your corporate brand and identity. Maybe your business cards, printed fliers, and website all have different designs and messages and you want to have them redone in order to emphasize a single voice and consistent look and feel. Maybe you need a logo or revised tag line in order to more succinctly communicate your corporate message. Perhaps your homepage doesn't clearly project the benefits of doing business with your company. Everything you project out to your customers will affect your brand image. This includes the quality, look and appeal of your products, your customer service, timeliness of product delivery, and whatever else your customer may perceive in their minds about your company. Conducting regular surveys will help you uncover additional strategies for this section.

Customer Retention

This is where you will place all programs related to customer retention. Examples include using your customer database to build retention models, surveying customers to discover their needs, ensuring customer problems are identified and corrected quickly, and creating a compelling product and/or service guarantee.



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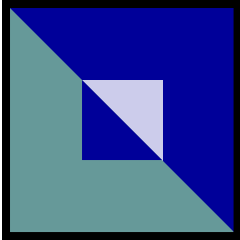
Section 9: Strategies and Action Plans (cont.)

You will notice that the last column in the sheet is labeled "Project Cost." You may find that there are quite a few projects that will not have a large hard cost but will require a lot of your time. Things like writing new content for your website doesn't cost much but certainly requires a large investment of time. If you can estimate the hard cost for a particular project, place it in this last column. This will help you keep track of total project costs. If you find yourself exceeding the amount of money you wish to spend for marketing over the next 12 months, you can either postpone the project or replace it with a less costly version. For example, instead of doing 4 direct mail fliers per year, maybe you do 2 direct mail fliers and 2 email promotions instead. Also notice that there is a column marked "Results" where you will go back after the project is finished and make any important comments on the results. This information will help you when you revise your plan each year.

I recommend you design your marketing action plan in a program like EXCEL. The below template shows an example of two entries under the **External Marketing** category. Create additional worksheets for **Internal Marketing** as well as **Company Image & Customer Retention**. Depending on your company and how aggressive your goals are, you may have 3-4 items in each section or as many as a dozen. Remember, quality is much more important than quantity.

Example entry for External Marketing

Project Description	Target Audience	Action Steps to Completion	Date of Completion	Results	Project Cost
Monthly ezine	Entire email list	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create ezine template 2. Write content 3. Split list in half to test offer 4. Send email at the beginning of each month 5. Monitor open rate and offer click-through 	Beginning of each month	January—30% open rate 1% conversion on offer A 2.3% conversion on offer B	\$15/month
January direct mail promo	Students in college	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Come up with offer 2. Select house list 3. Contact list broker 4. Work with designer to create piece 5. Design envelopes 6. Use tracking promo code 7. Mail out by end of January 	January 23rd	2.53% response rate on promo. Mailing made a profit of \$4700.	\$1600



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Final Words

If you methodically follow this marketing plan template, you will have a much better understanding of the following:

1. Your customer's behavior, wants and needs.
2. The types of customers that are interested in your products and services (buyer personas.)
3. Your short and long-term corporate and sales goals.
4. How you stack up against your competition and what products/services you need to introduce to stay competitive.
5. A comprehensive list of strategies, action steps, dates of completion, costs and results.

In the end, the whole purpose of a marketing plan is to help you discover what it is that your customers want and how you can communicate the solution to that customer need. You can have a great theoretical knowledge of the four P's of marketing (product, price, place of distribution, and promotion) but that knowledge is completely irrelevant if you don't understand the needs and desires of your customer base. Remember, your number one goal is not to sell your product, it is to provide relevant information and solutions to your customers.

Spend some time with this plan. Don't try to get through it in a day. In fact, the plan is really never finished. It should always be a work in progress.

Even though I have provided quite a bit of detail in the various sections, be aware that this is a marketing template only. This document was not designed to take you step by step through the marketing plan writing process. It assumes you have the knowledge to research the content required to complete each of the nine sections.

If you have further questions or would like additional information on small business marketing, please visit www.Small-Biz-Marketing-Tips.com where you will find an ever growing list of marketing strategy articles.

Have fun crafting your marketing plan!

Corte Swearingen
Small-Biz-Marketing-Tips.com