

Marketing Plan Outline

Staff Writer

Thousands of powerful, informative books and articles have been published to assist business people with marketing their goods and services. And that may be part of the problem. Just where do we start, especially if we are just beginning a new business or have been running our businesses for a while and want to make a change? Just what are the basics that will deliver the biggest bang for our buck? This section of our site is devoted to just that: Maximizing your rate of return on your marketing investment.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines marketing as "the act of purveying goods and services to the marketing place". Marketing includes the act of sales and negotiation of contracts or transacting a sale. It includes all forms of advertising and promotional activities. Marketing is found in anything that represents your business, from paperwork to people, from location to accessibility, from signs to customer service. Almost every aspect of your business incorporates an element of marketing.

The number one way to maximize your marketing effectiveness is to plan to consistently capture opportunities. Check out our simple guidelines for a Mini Marketing Plan.

Simple Guidelines For A Mini Marketing Plan

Keep your planning process as brief as possible. Keep answers short. Be sure to collect samples of everything you can in your travels, representing others' successful materials. File them for later retrieval as reference. Remember to bookmark your favorite websites. Set up subfolders on your web browser by subject for quick retrieval.

Set up a folder or binder and assemble your plan with samples. You will want to keep copies of your answers to these questions divided in your binder using tabs reflecting the bolded items below.

POSITIONING | What makes our business special?

Services, equipment, people, club or organizations affiliation, special training or education, unique clients, trade shows, premiums, uniforms, vehicle signs, advertising, etc.?

How do we compete--experience, delivery method, price?

How do we want to be known?

What are our three primary markets? (Who are our customers?)

Type/current percent?

What are our three secondary markets?

What services do we provide?

PROMOTION | How does our business spread the word?

Clubs, organizations, trade shows, premiums, uniforms, vehicle signs, advertising, etc.

What paperwork do we use to close a sale? (list)

What materials do we use to present our services? (list)

How do we handle our database and contact management?

What are our maintenance marketing activities?

SALES | What Is Our Marketing Process ?

How do we sell?

How do we qualify new clients, customers or projects ? Go- no-go?

Proposals, interview, techniques needed to be customized--what are they?

NEGOTIATION | How Do We Close The Deal?

What are our trained skilled negotiating activity requirements?

What materials do we use to close the sale?

How do we teach and use these materials and procedures within our business?

DELIVERY | How is marketing delivered by everyone in the company?

Who is lead sales? What is their plan? What are their special skills?

Who are secondary sales agents, field people, office people, etc. and how do they sell?

What are our customer service methods?

FOLLOW-THROUGH | What is the last impression we leave with customers?

How do we check to make sure our performance matches our image-surveys, schedules, goal versus actual comparisons, meeting notes reviewed with individual employees identifying changes in behavior or company policy changes needed. thank you letters to new clients or for new projects, invitations to return with incentives to purchase additional services or products, when executed effectively, leave a lasting positive impression.

If you're going to take the time to ask for customer input, it is imperative you act on it. If you do not intend to act on it, don't bother to ask. Poor follow-through only accentuates the negative.

Timely follow through including customer surveys can complete the circle of a great customer service experience and offer customers with a not-so-great experience the opportunity to help you do a better job next time. During the survey process, you also get the opportunity to impress the client in the best way possible--leaving one final positive impression as well as an opportunity to invite the customer back in the future.

Perform your survey in person if you can, or on the telephone during business hours, if at all possible. Maintain easy to access and use records including names, addresses, phone numbers and detailed customer feedback with response follow up actions and deadlines for correcting actions or implementing suggestions. Always thank survey participants with a letter or special offer, reinforcing their value to your business. Even if you don't perform a survey, send a thank you to new customers, either in a letter form, post card and include an invitation or incentive to use your services or buy your products next time.

<end>