

MARKETING PLAN

A marketing plan is your road map for finding and keeping customers. By planning your marketing step by step, you give your company the best chance of success in today's competitive marketplace. From establishing a strong brand to understanding your ideal customer to creating a compelling buying experience, the time you put into planning now will pay off many times over in the months and years to come.

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MARKETING PLAN

Part 1

Define your brand

A strong brand is the foundation for your company's success. To build a great brand, you need to be clear about why you're in business and where you want to take your company.

You may find yourself returning to this section to fine-tune and adjust as you work through the full marketing plan and clarify your understanding of your target customers, competition and market opportunities.

What is your vision statement?



This is typically two or three simple sentences that explain what you want to achieve, your core values and how your brand reflects them.

What is your value proposition?



What value does your organization provide to customers that no one else can?

What is your positioning statement?



How do you want to be perceived in the marketplace?

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Part 2

Identify your customers

The purpose of a business is to create and keep a customer. This makes understanding customers the top priority of any business.

Your top three personas



Create three personas or imaginary individuals. They should correspond to the most important customer segments you want to attract. For example, a coffee shop near a university might be going after students, parents of young children and the local business crowd.

Your personas will help you visualize the customers you are targeting and develop brand messages and marketing tactics that will resonate with them.

	PERSONA 1	PERSONA 2	PERSONA 3
What is their demographic profile? Age, sex, profession, income, social status, education, etc.			
What are their values, attitudes, interests, needs and lifestyle choices? What is important to them?			
How do they like to do business? Online or face-to-face? How much do they spend? What kind of products do they buy? What do they want in terms of features, functionality and cost?			
Where are they located?			
Why would this person buy your product or service			

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Part 3

Understand your competitors

You must understand what your competitors are doing and how their products or services stack up against yours. Analyze your competitors' websites, product documents, brochures and catalogues. Talk to their customers about their needs. And don't overlook the opportunity to learn more by talking directly to the competition.

Your top three competitors



Use the following chart to analyze your top three competitors.

	COMPETITOR 1	COMPETITOR 2	COMPETITOR 3
Where are they located?			
How long have they been in business?			
What are their target markets?			
What are their unique selling points, competitive differentiators?			
What are their strengths, weaknesses?			

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Part 4

Analyze your business

Now it's time to take a hard look at your own business. You do this with a classic SWOT analysis—defining your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Strengths



What characteristics does your business possess that give it an advantage over others?

Weaknesses



What places your business as a disadvantage versus others? Address these weaknesses immediately.

Opportunities



What conditions or situations in the marketplace or in your competitors' offerings could you exploit to your advantage?

Threats



What conditions or situations in the marketplace, or activities by your competition, could work against you?

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Part 5

Define your difference

You're ready to craft a unique selling point (USP), a description of what makes you distinct in the marketplace.

A USP must articulate a compelling and decisive advantage you have over the competition. Consider writing your USP as an "only statement" as in: "We are the only business in the city/the country/the world that does X." Refer to your vision, values and positioning statements in Part 1.

What is your USP?



What is your elevator pitch?



Succinctly explain who you are and what you bring to the market that no one else does.

MARKETING PLAN

Part 6

Map your customer's journey

Your goal is to deliver the right messages, to the right people, at the right time. It's essential to communicate your brand consistently throughout your customer's entire journey with you—from discovery to purchase to after-purchase support and repeat business.

The key is to understand, at each point in the journey, what customers hope to achieve from the transaction and what their expectations of your business are. By referring back to the customer personas you completed in Part 2, complete the following chart to clarify what marketing activities at each point on the journey are necessary for creating a loyal customer.

Your customer's journey



	PERSONA 1	PERSONA 2	PERSONA 3
ATTENTION How will we make this person aware of our business?			
INTEREST How will we get them interested in our business?			
DESIRE How will we create a desire to purchase?			
ACTION How will we get them to take action and buy?			
LOYALTY How will we make them loyal to our business?			

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Part 7

Create your action plan

You've done the hard work of defining your business and its market. Now it's time to bring it all together by planning the marketing tactics you will use to attract and keep customers. Describe how you will promote your product or service, remembering that not every tactic makes sense for every business. Consider what will resonate with those customer personas you completed in Part 2, given your budget and human resources.

But first, start with some basic information about the resources and strategies you will use.

What is your marketing budget?



How much can you afford to spend this year?

Who is on your marketing team?



Who is responsible for what?



What is your pricing strategy?



How will you distribute your goods or services?



MARKETING PLAN

Part 7

Create your action plan

How will you create or update your website?



DESIGN

How will you get a modern, attractive, effective website?

CONTENT

What kind of content will you produce? Who will be responsible for regularly producing and managing it?

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

How will you optimize your site so your content ranks high on search engine results?

What is your social media strategy?



What platforms make sense for your business? Who will plan and manage your communities and respond to questions?

What is your email strategy?



What will be your email marketing strategy (keeping in mind CAN-SPAM law)

What is your advertising strategy?



PAY-PER-CLICK

PRINT/TV/RADIO

MARKETING PLAN

Part 7

Create your action plan

What is your public relations strategy?



Public relations includes efforts to woo editors or journalists to cover your business, and also having an action plan to protect your brand in a crisis scenario.

What is your after-the-sale strategy?



How will you ensure customers remain loyal and happy for the long-term?

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Part 8

Monitoring, measuring and improving

To measure the return on investment from your marketing plan, you must track the effectiveness of your activities. Generally, you do this by monitoring customer conversion metrics (e.g., sales, quote requests, e-newsletter sign-ups, eBook downloads, etc.) and by gauging the impact of specific tactics and campaigns. If something is not working, you must adjust to improve.

How will you measure the effectiveness of your marketing activities?



How will you adjust to improve?



For more tips by Zorays Khalid visit www.zorayskhalid.com
