

MARKETING PLAN

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

You don't have to be a marketer to create a successful marketing plan but you will need to invest some quality time, research and a level of detail to make it worthwhile.

Be prepared to complete it gradually over a number of hours and review it every few months to ensure it stays relevant. Here is a copy of our small business planning template that we have refined to work for any business or industry.

1) GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1) *What do you want to achieve?*

Why do I need to do this?

It's important that you set goals so that you're clear on the purpose of your marketing plan and what you need to do step by step to achieve them.

What information do I need to include?

Start by writing down your biggest goal and then set smaller objectives that you want to achieve. Your goals and objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely eg x% more sales, x new customers, x website visitors). Make sure that your goals excite you and keep them somewhere visible so that you're always reminded of them.



2) TARGET CUSTOMERS

2) *Who are they and how do they behave?*

Why do I need to do this?

Your marketing activity is likely to be ineffective if you are targeting the wrong people. It's important to know exactly who your ideal customers are so that you can understand the best way to reach them through marketing. Once you are clear, you can segment them down further which will enable you to target different groups of people with different messages.

What information do I need to include?

Carry out some research on your target customers and prioritise the ones that have the highest potential for your business. Create a customer profile (using the Be Social template in the resource hub) to create a visual one page picture of your typical customer. This would include their age, lifestyle, their earnings or their location. Use this customer profile when planning any marketing campaign to remind yourself what your audience really wants from you.

3) COMPETITION

3) *What do your competitors offer?*

Why do I need to do this?

Your customers are likely to be very aware of your competitors so it is important that you are too. This section will help you gain clarity on what makes you stand out from other businesses in the market and as a result, more likely to connect with your target audience.

What information do I need to include?

Carry out some research on your main competitors and compare your business with theirs. Try to understand why customers might choose them over you.

4) UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

4) What makes you special?

Why do I need to do this?

It's a very crowded marketplace, more so than ever since the growth of social media. Your unique selling point (USP) is what makes you stand out from your competitors and should be at the heart of all of your marketing communications.

What information do I need to include?

List all of your unique selling points with reasons why a customer would choose your business. What makes your business and products/services different from others?

5) SWOT

Why do I need to do this?

A SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and is a useful tool to audit your current marketing plan.

What information do I need to include?

STRENGTHS- What is your business good at?

What does your business do well, and what makes you stand out from the competition? Your strengths will help you when creating your marketing messages.

WEAKNESSES- What could you improve at?

What could be improved within your business and what do you need to address before launching any new marketing campaigns? Have you had any negative customer feedback or are you struggling with resource?



5) SWOT

OPPORTUNITIES- What opportunities are out there?

What trends or gaps in the market are there right now that could open up new businesses opportunities for you?

THREATS- What threats are you facing?

What external factors are currently affecting your business, or could in future?

6) MARKETING CHANNELS

6) *Which channels will you use?*

Why do I need to do this?

There are so many channels available to market your business but you don't need to use all of them within your marketing plan. This section will help you become clear on which channels you can use to communicate with your target audience more effectively.

What information do I need to include?

Start by identifying 4-5 marketing channels that are relevant to your business and appropriate for your target audience. Once you have a list of which channels you will use in your marketing plan, you can use the marketing channel template to ensure you are clear on how you will measure the success and cost of each one.

6) KEY MESSAGES

7) *What message will you communicate?*

Why do I need to do this?

You should now be in a position to come up with the desired messaging and calls to action for your campaigns.

7) BUDGET

7) What do you need to spend?

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GET CLOSER THAN EVER TO YOUR CUSTOMERS. SO CLOSE THAT YOU TELL THEM WHAT THEY NEED WELL BEFORE THEY REALISE IT THEMSELVES.

-STEVE JOBS-

**Need help with
your marketing plan?**

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