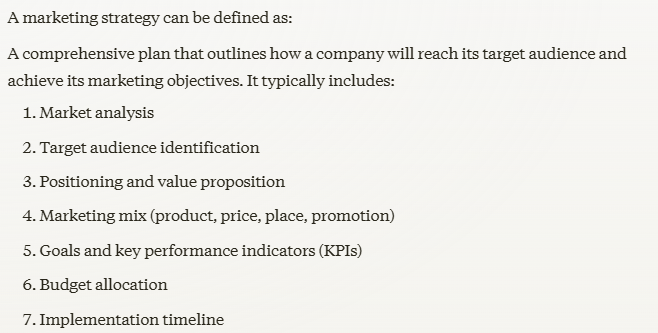
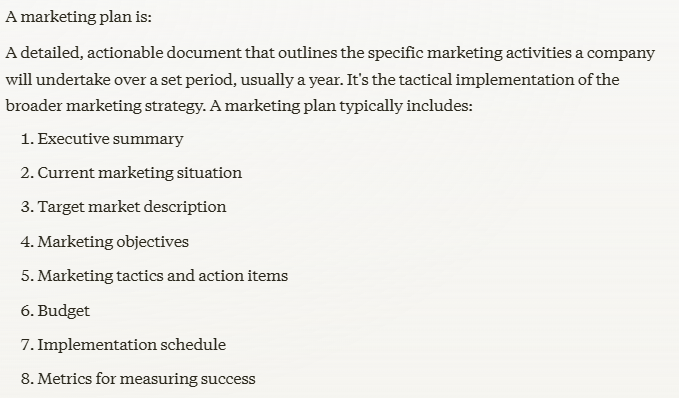
**Marketing Notes:**

Marketing activity: at its most basic, is everything about your business that makes a difference to your customers.



In order to make your marketing strategy happen, you need to work out how you’re going to achieve it, which involves writing up a marketing plan.



One important thing to remember is that you need to find out what customers want from you and then create a product to meet those needs. This view is the difference between being what the experts call product-orientated and customer-orientated.

Much like where successful writers know the audience and produce writing at that level, in marketing it is vital to know who your audience is. You need to understand your customer on two levels: the rational, functional dimension of making a purchase decision, and the irrational, emotional dimension. Often, this means addressing two questions:

1. How do they feel about the product?
2. What do they think about the product?

There are three fundamental approaches toward selling to the customer:

1. The informational approach in marketing is a strategy that focuses on providing consumers with detailed, factual information about a product or service to influence their purchasing decisions. This is very often the approach with business-to-business (B2B).
2. The emotional approach in marketing focuses on appealing to consumers' feelings, desires, and psychological needs rather than relying solely on logical or factual information.
3. The balanced mix approach in marketing combines elements of both the informational and emotional approaches to create a more comprehensive and effective marketing strategy. This approach recognizes that consumers often make decisions based on a combination of rational thinking and emotional factors. This is the recommended approach to use if you are unsure about the other two options.

Some formal elements that might comprise marketing are include: marketing may include sales, service, product design and packaging, all marketing and media communications and anything else that helps win loyal customers. There can be hundreds of aspects involved. The best thing to do is to write out a detailed profile on your customer to get a focus on what elements will need to be utilized in marketing to that customer. Segmentation is the term used to describe the process of identifying distinct groups of customers, and the products and services that may appeal to them.

Be aware of whether a customer emphasizes attracting new customers, or retaining and growing an existing user base.

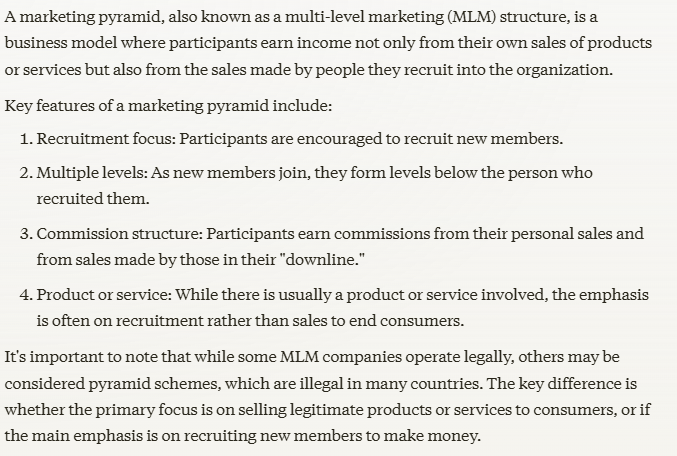
For a company to successfully market a product or service, they must explicitly define what their special strength or advantage is. Trying to meet a competitor on their turf otherwise results merely in being second place. Take a minute to think about what makes your firm or product special and different, and why customers have been attracted to that excellence in the past. Then make sure your marketing leverages that strength wherever possible.

Another careful consideration to make is to consider what the best way is to attract new customers. Some options may include:

* Referrals
* Trade shows and professional association meetings
* Sales calls
* TV, Radio, or print ads
* Product demonstrations, trail coupons, or free samples
* Websites, social media, or newsletters

Usually, only one or two ways are most effective in attracting customers. Once a business knows what these are, they can put one third or two thirds of resources into those methods, leveraging the most effective means.

More often than not, effective marketing actions take on only three labels- works best, helpful, or doesn’t work. By answering many of the elements discussed above, a company can decide if they are budgeting in a way that focuses resources where they will have the most effect. This is often the basis of a marketing pyramid:



In marketing, each customer interaction, exposure or contact is what we call a touchpoint, where good marketing can help build customer interest and loyalty. It can be very useful to list out the touchpoints that may be experienced by customers so that you can be mindful of these areas. The “7 Ps” of marketing comprises seven common aspects that help in making those determinations. Some of the elements in the “7 Ps” also make up a marketing mix, areas that comprise a marketing plan.



Some businesses use customer feedback or industry experts for their input about which of the “7 Ps” have the most impact on their customers and purchasing decisions.

Don’t be tempted to make price the main focus of your marketing. Many marketers emphasize discounts and low prices to attract customers. But price is a dangerous emphasis for any marketing activity; you’re buying customers instead of winning them.

By realizing weak spots, or uncontrolled aspects of the “7 Ps” in a business, the business is able to address those areas with more consideration and how they may be increased at vital touchpoints.

Base sales are what you can reasonably count on if you maintain the status quo in your marketing.

Your base, if you don’t change your marketing, may even be a negative growth rate, because competitors and customers tend to change even if you don’t. When you have a good handle on what your base may be for a status quo sales projection, you can begin to adjust it upward to reflect any improvements you introduce. If you’re trying something that is quite new to you, be very cautious and conservative about your projections at first, until you have your own hard numbers and real-world experience to go on.

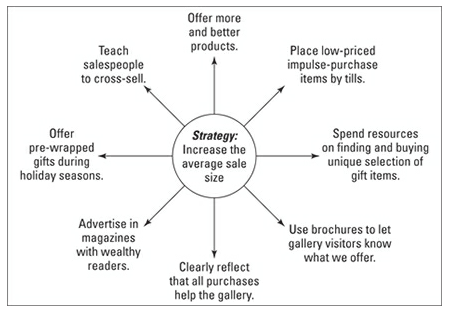
Don’t expect to solve all your company’s problems through your marketing. If the product is flawed from the customer’s perspective, the best thing you can do as a marketer is to present the evidence and encourage your company to improve the product.

Some ways to improve on marketing include:

* Get feedback from customers
* Thank customers for their business with small gestures
* Narrow marketing regions or customer type for a region
* Get more referrals
* Work to make your marketing more attractive by honing your materials
* Be pleasant to do business with
* Devise some way to make it memorable for your clients to do business with you
* Determine what you want to be best at, and put your energy in that direction
* Try cross-selling products or services
* Talk to customers that no longer use your product or services to see where it went wrong

Strategies are the big-picture insights that guide your marketing activity and make sure all its elements add up to success. A good strategy gives a special kind of high-level direction and purpose to all you do.

Your Core Strategy is literally the pillar of your business. It gives you focused direction and helps you make informed decisions for the future. This is the pillar upon which all other business revolves. Looking at the below example, you can see how a strategy provides an organizing central point to a range of marketing activities.



As you create your own core strategy, make sure you can draw a solid arrow from your chosen strategy to each of the activities on the rim. Also try to explain in simple words how the activity helps implement your strategy and achieve your strategic goal.

Market expansion is the most common strategy in marketing and the idea is disarmingly simple. Just pick some new territory and head out into it. The market expansion strategy has two variants: you can expand your market by finding new customers for your current products or you can try to sell new products to your existing customers and market. The faster you get through the transition and achieve your growth goal, the better, because extra costs are usually associated with any expansion.

Risk increases if you experiment with new products – defined as anything you’re not accustomed to making and marketing. So, you need to discount your first year’s sales projections for a new market by some factor to reflect the degree of risk. A good general rule is to cut back the sales projection by 20 to 50 per cent, depending upon your judgement of how new and risky the product is to you and your team.

Risk also increases if you enter any new market – defined as new kinds of customers at any stage of your distribution channel. You should also discount those sales projections by 20 to 50 per cent if you’re entering a new market to reflect your lack of familiarity with the customers.

What if you’re introducing a new product into a new market? Start-up firms – those just setting out in business – often run both these risks at once, and need to discount sales projections even further to reflect them.

Sometimes a market expansion strategy is so risky that you really shouldn’t count on any revenues in the first year. Better to be conservative and last long enough to work out how to correctly handle the marketing than to over-promise and have your marketing die before it succeeds.

A market segmentation strategy is a specialization strategy in which you target and cater to (specialize in) just one narrow type or group of customers. A segmentation strategy has the advantage of allowing you to tailor your product and your entire marketing effort to a clearly defined group with uniform, specific characteristics.

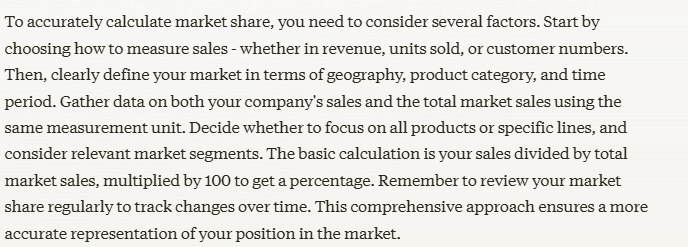
Use the segmentation strategy if you think your business can be more profitable by specializing in a more narrowly defined segment than you currently service. This strategy works well when you face too many competitors in your broader market and you can’t seem to carve out a stable, profitable customer base of your own. Also use the specialization strategy if it takes better advantage of things you’re good at.

Expanding is an option where a company runs out of customers and market, targeting a new segment to grow into.

Another common and powerful strategy is to increase your market share through your marketing activities. In essence, this means taking some business from your competitors.

Market share is how much of an industry's sales a company gets. To calculate market share, divide your company's sales by the total industry sales.

To accurately identify your market share, you need to consider what units to use to measure sales, the total sales in your market, your product category and more.



Defining your market category is crucial for accurately measuring market share. It ensures you're comparing yourself to the right competitors and products, giving you a true picture of where you stand. A well-defined category helps you understand your real competition, target audience, and potential opportunities. It also prevents the mistake of comparing yourself to an irrelevant or too-broad market, which could lead to wrong conclusions. By clearly outlining your specific market, you can set realistic goals, allocate resources effectively, and make better strategic decisions for your business.

Customer perception is crucial to market share because it shapes how people view and value a company's products or services compared to competitors. A positive perception can boost sales, attract new customers, and foster loyalty, all of which contribute to a larger market share. Conversely, negative perceptions can decrease sales and shrink market share. Customer opinions influence purchasing decisions and word-of-mouth recommendations, directly impacting a company's ability to capture and maintain its portion of the market. Therefore, businesses often focus on improving their image and customer satisfaction to enhance their market position and grow their share of the industry.

To determine total sales in a market, try obtaining it from an industry trade association or marketing research firm, many of which track sales by year in different product categories.

A down-and-dirty way to determine market size is to:

* Estimate the number of customers in your market
* Estimate how much each person buys in a year
* Multiply those two figures to get the total size of the annual market
* Divide that figure by your sales units to determine your share

Market share gives you a simple way of comparing your progress with that of your competitors from period to period. If your share drops, you’re losing; if your share grows, you’re winning.

A strategic market share goal is a target percentage of industry sales a company aims to achieve. It guides business strategies and resource allocation, helping the company grow or maintain its competitive position. This goal focuses efforts on increasing the company's portion of the market over time, driving growth and measuring performance against competitors.

A market share post-mortem is a thorough analysis conducted after a specific period or campaign to understand why a company's market share changed. It's crucial because it identifies successful and unsuccessful strategies, reveals market trends and competitor actions, and provides insights into customer behavior. This analysis helps companies learn from their experiences, adapt their approaches, and make informed decisions for future strategies. By conducting post-mortems, businesses can improve their performance and make more effective plans to maintain or increase their market share.

Many experts believe that market share is a good long-term predictor of profitability, arguing that market-share leaders are more profitable and successful than other competitors.

Business units in marketing are distinct divisions within a company that focus on specific products, services, or customer groups. They're important because they allow large organizations to be more agile and responsive to different market needs. This structure enables better targeting of customer segments, quicker adaptation to market changes, and more efficient resource allocation. It also facilitates clearer performance measurement and accountability. By fostering specialization and innovation, business units help companies manage diverse product lines or markets more effectively, potentially boosting market share and profitability across various segments of the business.

Return on Investment (ROI) in marketing measures the profitability of marketing efforts by comparing the revenue generated to the amount spent, helping evaluate strategy effectiveness and justify budgets.

PIMS (Profit Impact of Market Strategy) in marketing is a research program that analyzes how business strategies affect financial performance across industries. It's important because it provides data-driven insights to guide strategic decisions on market share, product quality, and pricing, helping companies improve profitability and market position. Some PIMS data suggesting that a gain in market share seems to lead to a corresponding gain in ROI.

Loss of market share more often than not leads to loss of ROI.

If you’re a small firm with a narrow market niche, trying to grow your share by expanding aggressively can get you in trouble. Balance share growth with the need to avoid excessive risks.

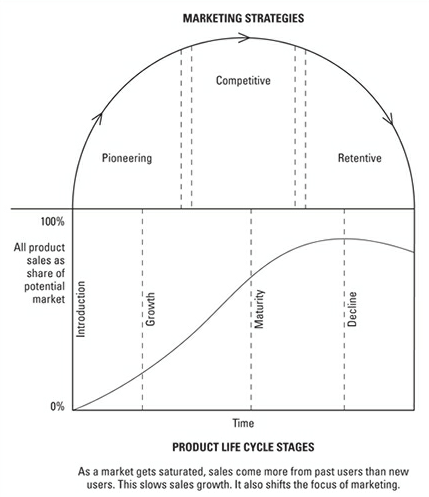
A distributor needs retail shelf space, so you may need to push to win a larger share of shelf space from retailers, especially if you’re dealing with large supermarkets. To earn the right to this shelf space, you may need to produce some consumer advertising or publicity, provide the stores with good point-of-purchase displays or signs, improve your product packaging or do other things to help ensure that consumers take a stronger interest in buying your products.

A sales projection is a forecast of expected sales revenue for a future period. It's crucial in marketing as it guides budget decisions, goal-setting, and resource planning, allowing marketers to align strategies with business objectives and measure campaign success against predictions.

Try collecting information about your competitors: current news, announcements, website changes, etc. This information can help you make strategic decisions about your own products and services.

Product category – the general grouping of competitive products to which your product belongs, be it merchandise or a service. Product categories have a limited lifespan due to the constant introduction of new products.

Over time, sales for a product follow a sigmoid, or “S” shaped growth curve. Typically, it levels off when the customer base grows. These fall off when replacement products enter the market.



There are three stages to the advertising life cycle:

1. Pioneering- when the majority of prospects are unfamiliar with the product
2. Competitive - when the majority of prospects have tried at least one competitor’s product
3. Retentive- when attracting new customers costs more than keeping old customers

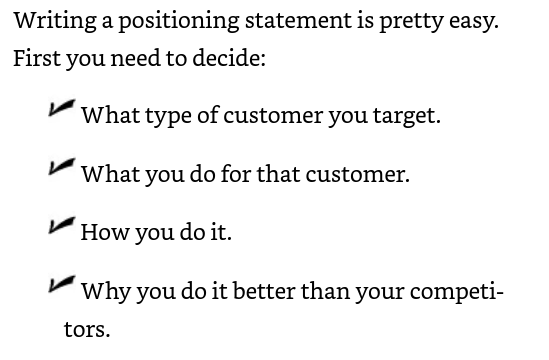
In the upper half of the above illustration, is the advertiser’s version of the life cycle with its helpful emphasis on what to do to win sales. It has been redrawn it slightly to make it tie into the product life-cycle drawing. Put the two together, and you have that finest of combinations: situation diagnosis plus practical prescription.

When a market is saturated, you can no longer grow just by finding new customers. Your ambitions are limited by the rate at which customers replace the product and your ability to steal customers from your competitors. Competitive, share-orientated marketing is the way to go, and you need to focus on refining your points of difference from competitors and communicating them clearly to customers.

A positioning strategy takes a psychological approach to marketing. This strategy focuses on getting customers or prospects to see your product in a favorable light. The positioning goal you articulate for this kind of strategy is the position your product holds in the customer’s mind.

Some options for positional strategy include:

* Take a position against your competitor
* Emphasize a distinct benefit
* Affiliate yourself with something the customers value



Simplicity marketing is a marketing approach that values clarity and concision, communicating complex ideas in a straightforward and easy-to-understand way. By using clear messaging, simple language, concise storytelling, and visual clarity, simplicity marketing helps customers quickly grasp the value and benefits of a product or service. This approach increases clarity, engagement, and credibility, ultimately building a competitive advantage in a crowded market. By stripping away unnecessary complexity, simplicity marketing makes it easier for customers to understand and do business with a brand, leading to stronger connections and a more effective marketing strategy.

All else being anywhere near equal, a majority of customers choose the higher-quality option. You can’t just say you’re better than the competition; you really have to deliver. But if customers see you as superior on even one dimension of quality, by all means emphasize this in your marketing.

A reminder strategy is good when you think people would buy your product if they thought of it – but might not without a reminder.

Point-of-purchase marketing (POP) is often an effective way to implement the reminder strategy. POP marketing simply means doing whatever advertising is necessary to sway the consumer your way at the time and place of their purchase. For retail products, this strategy often means a clever in-store display or sign to remind the consumer.

Take some time to write your marketing strategy down clearly and thoughtfully. Put your strategy in summary form in a single sentence.

After you develop a marketing strategy, make sure you follow it. You may need to write your strategy down and display it so that you- and others- can’t forget it. In fact, we highly recommend that you do some formal planning to figure out exactly how you’ll implement your strategy in all aspects of your marketing.

Most successful businesses– small or large, new or old – write a careful marketing plan at least once a year. Every successful business needs a marketing plan.

Marketing plans usually have these components:

* Current market position
* Results accomplished in previous marketing period
* Current marketing strategy
* Details of the marketing activity
* Numbers: sales projections and costs
* Determining results to new plans that need to happen before committing to a higher level of action

Economies of scale refer to the cost advantages a business achieves by increasing production and operating at a larger volume. As a company grows, it can reduce fixed costs, negotiate better prices, improve efficiency, and lower marketing costs, leading to lower average costs and increased competitiveness. This can create barriers to entry for new companies, making it harder for them to match the efficiency and cost structure of larger businesses.

Aim for an 80% match in marketing, this means targeting a sweet spot where your product or service meets about 80% of the target audience's needs, wants, or expectations. This realistic goal acknowledges that perfect matches are rare and allows for flexibility and compromise. By focusing on the essential 80%, you can develop a product or service that meets critical needs, craft effective marketing messages, and make adjustments based on customer feedback, resulting in a more efficient and effective marketing strategy.

Some things to avoid in marketing:

* Don’t ignore details
* Don’t imitate competitors
* Don’t be confined by last period’s budget and plan
* Don’t engage in unnecessary spending

You may find that you need to work up one plan for selling products and another plan for convincing product buyers to also use your services.

To break planning down into smaller, easier, chunks for processing:

* Analyze, plan, and budget by territory
* Project revenues and promotions by individual product and industry
* Plan promotions by product line or broad category
* Plan and budget publicity by the company as a whole
* Plan and budget for publicity materials

A good executive summary should be a powerful advertisement for your marketing, communicating the purpose and essential activities of your plan in such a compelling manner that everyone who reads it eagerly leaps into action and does the right things to make your vision comes true. Draft and write this document early in the year to guide your thinking and planning.

It’s helpful to include a paragraph in the executive plan outlining what is the same, and different, in the current year’s plan.

Be sure your executive summary is clear on whether it is efficiency oriented or effectiveness oriented.

Objectives are the quantified, measurable versions of your strategies. A well-written objective is a clear and specific statement that defines a measurable and achievable goal, aligned with overall values and constraints, and includes a deadline or timeframe for completion. It should be concise, yet detailed enough to provide direction and focus for achieving a specific outcome.

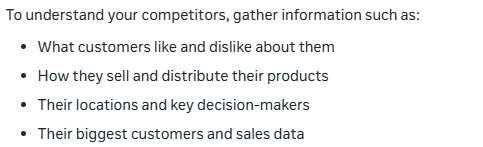
If you write clear, compelling objectives, you’ll never get too confused about what to write in other sections. Try to write this part of the plan early, but keep in mind that you’ll rewrite it often as you gather more information and do more thinking. Objectives are such a key foundation for the rest of the plan that you can’t ever stop thinking about them.

A situation analysis examines the context, looking at trends, customer preferences, competitor strengths and weaknesses and anything else that may impact sales. At its most basic, it says “what’s happening?” Only if your situation analysis is better than your rivals’ can you gain market share on the competition.

A situation analysis that is effective includes:

* You should know as much as your leading competitors
* You should have insights into the market that your competitors don’t have

A pro forma situation analysis is a thorough examination of a company's internal and external environment, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This analysis is crucial in marketing, informing decision-making, strategy development, and market understanding, and in helping marketers gain a competitive advantage.



A useful tool may be a competitor analysis table consisting of: company name, key personnel, financial information, sales/distribution/and pricing information, product/service analysis, scaled assessment of product/service, a rating that objectively compares yourself to that competitor.

In marketing, the cash position refers to the amount of money a company has available to spend on marketing activities, such as advertising, promotions, and other campaigns. It's an essential consideration in marketing planning, as it determines the scope and scale of marketing efforts.

Defining marketing objectives and strategies can be a challenging task for some writers. To clarify: an objective is a specific goal that a business aims to achieve within a certain timeframe, typically a year. In contrast, a strategy outlines the overall approach and plan to accomplish that objective, providing a roadmap for success. In other words, the objective defines what you want to achieve, while the strategy determines how you will achieve it.

A marketing plan is a written document outlining a company's marketing strategy, tactics, and goals for a specific period. It defines target audiences, marketing mix, budget, and performance metrics.



Your strategies accomplish your objectives through the tactics (the seven Ps) of your marketing plan. Make sure that your strategies are achievable!

Include a summary of each competitor’s strategy in the “Strategy” section of your plan. Add a note explaining how your strategy differs from each of them.

Strategies that involve doing a lot of things you have little or no expertise in are really start-up strategies, not marketing strategies. Don’t put your entire marketing plan at risk by basing it on a strategy that takes you into unfamiliar waters.

Your marketing mix refers to the blend of marketing activities designed to persuade a specific target audience to buy a product or product line. To create a cohesive marketing mix, start by analyzing your touchpoints - the various interactions customers have with your brand - and then integrate the right combination of marketing elements to effectively reach and engage your target customers.

Prioritize by picking a few primary touchpoints – ones that will dominate your marketing for the coming planning period. This approach concentrates your resources, giving you more leverage with certain components of the mix.

Determine the initial cost for each component of your marketing plan, and then calculate the total cost. Assess whether the total cost is realistic, considering your projected sales. If the cost is too high, revise your budget until you reach a figure that works from both a financial and practical standpoint. This process may involve some back-and-forth adjustments until you arrive at a budget that meets both your needs and any financial constraints.

If your marketing plan targets multiple customer groups, you'll need to create separate marketing mixes for each group, as their needs and preferences may differ. To organize this, use multiple spreadsheets, one for each customer group, to outline the unique marketing strategies and tactics tailored to each group's specific needs.

Focus on the marketing elements you can control and avoid elaborating on aspects that are outside your scope, such as pricing policy, product development, or distribution strategy, if those decisions are made at a higher level or are fixed. Instead, concentrate on the marketing components that you can influence and adjust to achieve your goals.

In your marketing plan's “Situation Analysis”, include a "Constraints" section to identify any limitations or restrictions that may impact your marketing efforts, such as budget, resources, regulations, company policies, or external factors. Acknowledging these constraints upfront enables you to develop strategies that work within them, ensuring a more realistic and effective marketing plan that minimizes potential roadblocks and maximizes success.

The “Management” section of a marketing plan outlines the key activities required to execute the marketing mix, and assigns specific responsibilities to individuals or teams. This section considers factors such as each person's strengths, workload, and supervision needs, ensuring that everyone knows their role and responsibilities in bringing the marketing plan to life.

Cash basis: an accounting method that records revenues and expenses when payment is received or made, focusing on actual cash flow. In marketing, this approach is crucial for tracking customer payments, measuring campaign effectiveness, managing budgets, and analyzing customer behavior. By using the cash basis, marketers can optimize sales strategies, evaluate financial impact, allocate resources effectively, and refine targeting and messaging. This approach helps marketers make informed decisions that drive business growth and revenue generation, providing a clear picture of a company's financial health and marketing performance.

Some techniques for projecting sales includes:

* Build up forecast: A method of sales forecasting that starts with a base amount and adds or subtracts factors like market trends, seasonality, and pricing changes to arrive at a forecasted amount
* Indicator forecast: A method of sales forecasting that uses economic or industry trends, or market indices, to predict future sales
* Time period forecast: A method of sales forecasting that predicts sales for a specific period, such as a month, quarter, or year

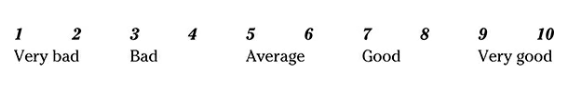
The last section of a marketing plan typically includes tracking. Identify some benchmarks and state them clearly. These will give you a way to monitor performance and implement your plan.

If the marketing plan you wrote at the start of the year is no longer relevant because business conditions have changed quickly, tear it up and start again – don’t stick rigidly to something that’s no longer relevant just because it’s there.

Many companies conduct market research through focus groups, where a small, diverse group of potential or existing customers gather to share their thoughts and opinions about a product. Led by a trained moderator, the participants engage in an open discussion, unaware that their conversations and body language are being recorded by hidden video cameras, providing valuable insights for the company.

Embrace research because it’s the first step to making your company customer-orientated rather than product-orientated. Choosing the most effective advertising medium, making a more accurate sales projection or working out what new services your customers want are all examples of important decisions that research can help you make.

Customer surveys are useful in getting feedback to see what customers are thinking. These often feature a scale of points the customer can use to score your services, and which can be later calculated to determine customer satisfaction. These can help identify areas for improvement.



A few things to keep in mind while gathering customer ratings:

* Graph results to get a visual idea of your findings
* Offer customers a reward of some kind for completing a survey

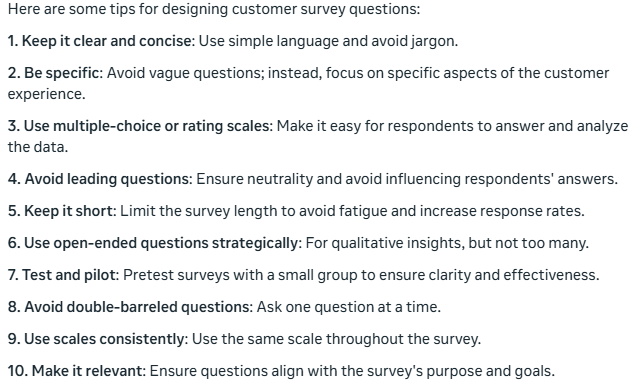
Start research with a careful analysis of the decisions you must make. This might include looking at whether to expand on product offerings or introduce new products, if your current marketing plan is effective, or whether to change product imaging. For questions that might give way to a risky decision, consider other questions that may help reduce the risk.

Primary research gathers data from people by observing them to see how they behave or by asking them for verbal or written answers to questions.

Going “back to the floor” is a tactic where management engages the public at the sales level. This is often done to get a first-hand experience and to help management fully realize issues they can then address.

Professional research firms can provide a location for customers to visit and use your products or can even put their people into the homes of willing customers. This allows for valuable insights into how the customer directly interacts with the product, perhaps leading to new ways to meet customer needs.

Try to design a customer satisfaction measure that portrays your company or product in a realistic light. You can measure customer satisfaction with survey questionnaires or with the rate of customer complaints; measures combining multiple sources of data into an overall index are best.



You can find useful guidelines on how to design a questionnaire on the website of the Market Research Society.

The life cycle of any piece of research should last no longer than your next marketing plan – any longer and the market or competition will have moved anyway.

When you compare your marketing approach to your competitors’, you easily find out what customers like best. Make a list of the things that your competitors do differently to you.

Where technical writers often develop personas to study an audience, decision makers involved in marketing could utilize this method to develop a profile of customers to know how best to address their needs.

Another way to get customer input is to have some sort of event where you can interact and talk about products or services.

Email surveys are another useful tool in gathering customer feedback.

A secret shopper is a trained individual who poses as a regular customer to evaluate a business's customer experience, service, and quality. This marketing tool provides authentic feedback, helping businesses identify areas for improvement, evaluate employee performance, and enhance customer satisfaction. By using secret shoppers, companies can gain valuable insights, benchmark against industry standards, and make data-driven decisions to improve customer retention, loyalty, and overall experience.

Email salespeople, distributors, customer service staff, repair staff or willing customers once a month, asking them for a quick list of any important trends they see in the market. You flatter people by letting them know that you value their opinion.

As important as it is to do research to find areas for improvement, it is also important to do research to determine what the strengths are for the business. This allows the business to make sure they continually deliver on those strong points.

Short surveys, asking three focused questions, is a very simple way to get feedback where the customer is not off put by lengthy processes. Even a 5 per cent response rate gives you a steady stream of input you wouldn’t otherwise have.

Marketing materials are also an important facet where feedback is important. Often, companies will seek input at the beginning of material creation to allow for them to fix/address any discrepancies before rollout. Getting customer feedback on this aspect is useful in knowing what did or did not work for future campaigns.

Lost customers or clients hold the key to a valuable piece of information: what you do wrong that can drive business away. Talk to enough of these lost customers/clients and you may see a pattern emerge. Sometimes, these efforts turn these individuals into fervent supports because it shows you are trying to get their input and make changes to make your product/service more effective.

One other tactic in staying ahead in the world of marketing involves getting input from younger people. They often know what the new trends are and it can help the business to grown and adapt with those changes.

A world of free data exists out there, if you know where to look for it. Also keep in mind that free data generally falls into a category known as secondary data – meaning the information has already been collected or published by someone else – so you get it second-hand. While this data’s useful stuff, remember that it isn’t specific to your company and your competitors can easily access it too.

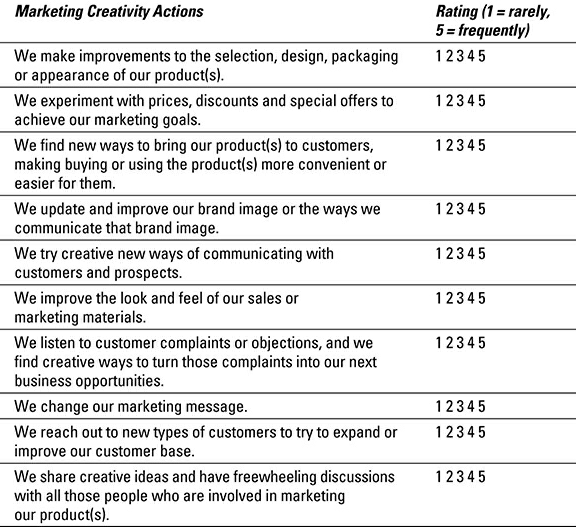
Internet searches, libraries, and governmental sources can provide ways to find valuable marketing information.

Four simple steps for turning an idea into an action:

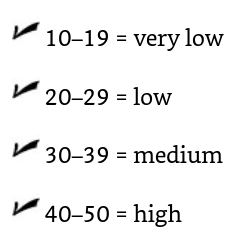
1. Recognize a need or opportunity and ask questions to begin the process
2. Think up ideas based on those opportunities or questions
3. Taking your ideas, develop a focused plan for how you physically can put your idea in motion
4. Take action by implementing your plan

Harnessing creativity in your business allows you to do things differently. This means not only differently from before but also differently from your competition.

A marketing audit is a simple way to determine if you may need to get more creative in marketing strategies.



Add up all the numbers you circled to get a score between 10 and 50. See where your score falls in the range following this paragraph to find out what your Marketing Creativity Score means.



The easiest way to determine creative roles is to determine your general temperament:

* Entrepreneur: Sees a need and asks "Why?" to initiate the creative process. Excels in stage 1 of the creative process.
* Artist: Imaginative and free-thinking, generating many alternatives. Excels in stage 2 of the creative process.
* Inventor: Practical and detail-focused, refining an idea until it works. Excels in stage 3 of the creative process.
* Engineer: Practical and businesslike, making inventions workable. Excels in stage 4 of the creative process.

Try soaking up information, questioning issues, tossing ideas back and forth with an associate and then setting the whole thing aside to incubate in the back of your mind while you do something else. This can help with creative thinking, which can help revitalize marketing strategies and draw customer interest.

Some simple approaches toward generating creative new ideas include:

* Look for ways to simply
* Think like a customer
* Make changes to things and observe the effects
* Reduce pricing
* Look for new ways to distance yourself from the competition
* Take inspiration from other business examples
* Find new places to advertise
* Find agents to generate interest

Brainstorming is a great way to increase the number and variety of ideas. The goal of brainstorming is to get people to generate a very long list of unusual ideas beyond their normal thought patterns or experience. To brainstorm, you first state the problem and then ask participants to offer solutions. Any solution that comes to mind is fine; the more creative the better. Each solution is written down or recorded.

When brainstorming is used in a business environment, there are a few rules to keep in mind:

* Quantity is what you’re looking for, never mind if quality seems off
* No one should critique any other person’s idea
* All ideas produced are thrown out and not “owned” by any one person

Free association is when participants allow their mind to wander from one concept to another, no matter what the association may be between the old and new concept.

Advertising benefits from the use of a creative brief, an information platform on which to do your creative thinking. A creative brief lays out the basic purpose and focus of the ad, and provides some supporting information that provides helpful grist for your creative mill.

Creative briefs contain these three elements:

1. An objective statement
2. A support statement
3. A tone or character statement

The creative brief is useful for any marketing material or for any situation in which you must design something creative to communicate and persuade. The creative brief gives you a clear focus and some good working materials as you apply your creativity to developing a great ad or other promotional piece.

A brand image refers to the perceptions, feelings, and beliefs that customers have about a particular brand. It's the sum total of all the experiences, interactions, and exposures that customers have had with the brand. A strong brand image is crucial in marketing as it helps to establish trust, credibility, and loyalty with customers. It differentiates a brand from its competitors, makes it more relatable and memorable, and ultimately drives business growth. A well-defined brand image also guides marketing strategies, advertising campaigns, and overall brand messaging, ensuring consistency and coherence across all touchpoints.

Impact is the single most important difference. Good communications have the desired impact; bad communications don’t. The key to this idea is the word ‘desired’. You can easily make an impact for all the wrong reasons.

A powerful ad is nothing if customers don’t remember what it was trying to tell them and which brand it was promoting. Equally, a turgid explanation of why your product is worth buying won’t grab the customer’s attention for long enough to even begin to get that message across. So you need to combine stopping power with persuasion.

Clarity is the first job of the marketer. Creativity, excitement and persuasion are actually secondary to clarity.

To create a compelling marketing message:

* Position the marketing in the customer’s minds
* Craft a motivating message that gets your positioning across
* Find a creative idea that is appealing and includes your message
* Develop, edit, simplify, and clarify your idea

Deciding whether to appeal to logic or emotion in marketing is important because it determines how effectively you connect with your target audience and drive desired actions. Logical appeals resonate with customers who make rational decisions, while emotional appeals engage customers who make intuitive and impulsive decisions.

Each person tends toward one end or the other of this range and makes decisions more rationally or more emotionally. So, you can pitch your marketing communications at the rational buyer or at the emotional buyer. You can even segment your market based on this difference, and design separate marketing campaigns for each.

An image strategy shows people your product and its personality – it presents a good image of your brand, product, service or business.

An information strategy communicates facts that make your business appealing.

A motivational strategy builds a compelling argument or feeling that should inspire prospects to take action and make a purchase.

A demonstration strategy leverages the fundamental appeal of the product itself simply by making that product available to prospects.

Stopping power is the ability of an ad or other marketing communication to stop people in their tracks, make them sit up and take notice. Communications with stopping power generate ‘What did you say?’ or ‘Did you see that?’ responses. These communications generate a high level of attention.

Pulling power is the ability of marketing communications to draw people to a place or event.

Your ads need to have much more stopping power than most if you hope to get a significant number of people to remember and think about your product.

To make an ad with strong stopping power:

* Make it naturally dramatic and broadly appealing
* Demand audience participation
* Force an emotional response
* Stimulate curiosity
* Surprise the audience
* Communicate expected information in unexpected ways
* Purposefully bend the rules and defy category traditions

For maximum pulling power, give people a strong reason to act.

For most local and regional advertising, print probably provides the most flexible and effective all-around marketing medium, although Internet advertising is fast eating into this lead.

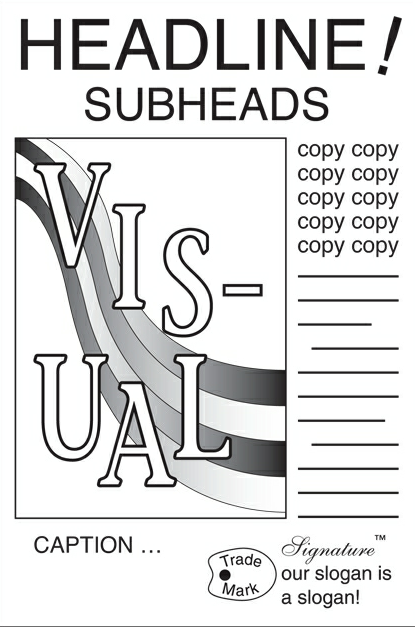
Print advertising and print-based marketing are the backbone of most marketing campaigns, even in today’s high-tech world.

The basic elements of good print advertising are good copy and visuals alongside eye- catching headlines.

Try to make any print materials related to a campaign with consistent style and colors for recognition by the customers and clients.

Print materials often contain these parts:

* A headline: the prominent title that grabs attention, conveys the main idea, and entices readers to engage with the content.
* A subhead: a secondary headline that provides additional context and supporting information to the main headline, usually appearing below or beside it.
* Copy- also called body copy: the main text of an advertisement, article, or content piece that provides detailed information, explanations, and messaging beyond the headline and subhead.
* Visuals: illustrations or images associated with the message or story being conveyed.
* Captions: copy attached to a visual to explain or discuss that element.
* Logo: a unique design representing the brand or company.
* Signatures: a company’s trademarked version of its name.
* Slogan: an optional element consisting of a short phrase evoking the spirit or personality of the brand.



Design is an aesthetic concept and, thus, putting it into precise terms is difficult. Simply put, design refers to the look, feel and style of your ad or other printed marketing materials.

Great advertising has to rise off the page, reach out and grab you by the eyeballs. In the cluttered world of modern print-based marketing, this design goal is the only one that really works.

Whether you design your own print materials or have experts do the work for you, you want to be familiar with the design stages. These are:

* Thumbnails: usually small, quick sketches in pen or pencil
* Roughs: full-size sketches with headlines and subheads drawn carefully enough to give the feel of a particular font and style
* Comprehensive layout: a comp should look pretty much like a final version of the design, although designers produce a comp on a one-time basis, so it may use paste-ups in place of the intended photos, color photocopies, typeset copy, and headlines
* Dummy: a form of comp that simulates the feel – as well as the look – of the final design

Designers refer to a computer-made comp as a full-color proof.

The traditional way to submit a design to a printing firm was to generate what printers call camera-ready artwork, a version of the design suitable for the printer to photograph with a large-scale production camera in order to generate color keys (to convert colors to specific inks) and films, clear sheets for each layer of color to be printed. You (or the designer) would produce this camera-ready art by making a mechanical or paste-up, in which typeset copy, visuals and all the other elements of the design were transferred on to a foam-core board, using a hot wax machine. If you’re quick and able on a computer and like to work in design and layout programs (such as Adobe InDesign or Quark XPress), you can do the same kind of creative rough designing simply by searching for images on the web.

Plates are metal or plastic sheets with your design on them – the printer applies the ink to the plates when the printing press does its thing.

A font is a particular design’s attributes for the characters (letters, numbers and symbols) used in printing your design. Typeface refers only to the distinctive design of the letters (Times New Roman, for example). Font, on the other hand, actually refers to one particular size and style of a typeface design (such as 10-point, bold, Times New Roman).

A reverse font (light or white type on dark paper) may be just the thing for a bold headline, but if you use it in the body copy, too, nobody reads your copy because doing so is just too hard on the eye.

A clean, sparse design, with a lot of white space on the page and stark contrasts in the artwork, deserves the clean lines of a sans serif typeface – meaning one that doesn’t have any decorative serifs (those little bars or flourishes at the ends of the main lines in a character).



A richly decorative, old-fashioned sort of design, in contrast, needs a more decorative and traditional serif typeface, such as Century or Times New Roman. Some of the more popular fonts are listed below.



You can change just about any aspect of type. You can alter the distance between lines – called the leading – or you can squeeze characters together or stretch them apart to make a word fit a space.

Stick with popular fonts, in popular sizes, except where you have to solve a problem or you want to make a special point.

When designers and printers talk about point sizes, they’re referring to a traditional measure of the height of the letters. Ten-point type is too small for most body copy but you may want to use that size if you have to squeeze several words into a small space.

Your eye can’t distinguish easily between fonts that are only one or two sizes apart, so specify a larger jump than that to distinguish between body copy and subhead or between subhead and headline.

To avoid creating an attractive, but pointless, brochure that doesn’t achieve a sales goal, make sure that you know:

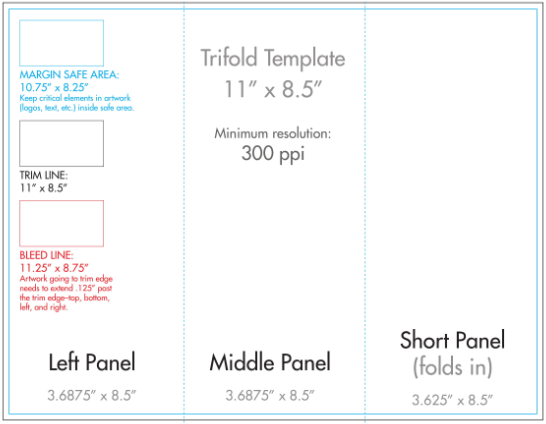
* Who your audience is
* How they will obtain the document
* What you want them to know and do after reading the document

Fact base: the essential information being communicated in a brochure or pamphlet.

Your copy should read as if you’re listening to customers’ concerns and answering each concern with an appropriate response. You can write subheads in the format: ‘Our Product Doesn’t Need XXX’ and ‘Our Product Brings You XXX’ so that salespeople or prospects can easily see how your facts (in copy and/or illustrations) overcome each specific objection and highlight all the major benefits.

Don’t forget to communicate in a punchy headline and a few dozen words of copy, along with an appropriate and eye-catching illustration.

The most common brochure is simple and inexpensive because you print it on a single sheet of 490mm × 210mm paper that you then fold three times.



Media buying: purchasing print ad space.

Rate card: a table listing the prices of ads by size and also showing the discount rate per ad if you buy multiple ads instead of just one.

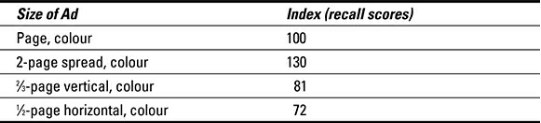
Schedule or forward features list: tells you when ads for each issue need to be placed and what the topics of future issues will be.

If a single ad costs 5 per cent or more of your marketing budget for the entire year, throw the rate sheets away and forget about advertising in those publications. Your business isn’t currently operating on a large enough scale to be able to do this kind of advertising. Instead of blowing that much money on a single ad, spread it over more economical forms of advertising and marketing, such as brochures, mailings, search engine advertising and emails.

One great way to advertise for less is to take advantage of the tens of thousands of newsletters published by professional groups and interest groups. You can buy ad space in 10 or 20 such newsletters for far less money than buying one ad insertion in a national daily newspaper.

Also explore local newspapers. You can find hundreds of newspapers and weeklies with circulation (readership) only in the tens of thousands, which means their rates for ads are one-fifth to one-tenth the price of a national newspaper.

Remember: the bigger the ad, the bigger the impact. But also consider the fact that the percentage of readers noticing your ad doesn’t go up in proportion to the increase in size. Doubling the size of your ad gives you something like a quarter more readers, not twice as many.



Direct response ads: ask readers to participate in a measurable action such as calling, texting from a mobile phone or going to a shop, gives you a clear indication of that ad’s effectiveness within days of its first appearance.

Indirect-response ad: an ad that creates or strengthens an image or position in order to encourage sales. A great deal of brand advertising is indirect, leaving it to the retailer or local office to close the sale. To know if this type of ad worked, you can go to a market research firm and have your ad tested for effectiveness.

Pretesting: exposing people to the ad in a controlled setting and measuring their reactions to it.

Ask people to look at your ads for 20 seconds, and then quiz them about what they remember. If they missed much of the ad, you probably need to rewrite it.

Outdoor advertising reaches people outside their homes through billboards, bus shelters, mall displays, and more. It's important in marketing because it offers a wide reach, increases brand awareness, and complements other marketing channels. Outdoor advertising also includes what the experts call ambient advertising, which means putting an ad in an unexpected place to catch people by surprise.

Signs are displays with brand or company names on them and sometimes a short marketing message or useful information for the customer, too.

Most basic signs are normally permitted for outdoor display, but some others will require planning application consent from your local authority.

If you rent retail or office space, your landlord may have put some restrictions regarding signs into your lease. Research these possible constraints.

To stand out next to those shiny, high-tech signs and project a quality image, have your sign designed and painted by an artist or consider hiring a cabinet-maker, stained glass artist or oil painter. Most signs have little real art about them so unusual and beautiful ones tell the world that your company is special. signs can and should promote your image and brand name.

At its most basic, a sign should have two sections- a header that grabs the public’s attention and pulls them in, and a section that communicates essential information about your product or service and how to obtain it.

Signs permit innovation in two interesting areas. You can be innovative with the copy and artwork, just as you can in any print medium, from a magazine ad to a roadside billboard. But you can also innovate in the form of the sign itself. Experiment with materials, shapes, lighting, location and ways of displaying signs to come up with some novel ideas that help your sign grab attention.

Movement is eye-catching. So, think of flags as more dynamic kinds of sign, and try to find ways to use them to build brand awareness, to make your location(s) more visible or to get a marketing message displayed in more forms and places than you could otherwise.

For retailers, awnings and canopies often provide the boldest and most attractive form of roadside sign. Awnings combine structural value with marketing value by shading the interior and can even extend the floor space of your shop by capturing some of the pavement as transition space.

If you’re planning to use posters to advertise, one of the first things to think about is how much time customers will have to read your ad and how far away they’ll be. This information will help you decide how much you can say in your ad and how to say it.

Sometimes you need to limit your message to a few, bold words and images to avoid your poster becoming a mess that no one can read. Especially take this into consideration at times when people may be viewing these posters from a distance or while in movement.

Some outdoor venues to consider for signs, posters, or other advertisements:

* Roadside areas such as bus stops
* Transportation sites like airports and train stations
* Retail and other point-of-sale locations
* Non-traditional formats like reusable grocery bags, thermoses, and floor stickers

Consider consulting with outdoor advertisement companies rather than services that charge subscription fees for information about the effectiveness of different advertising materials and places.

Transport advertising is any advertising in or on railway or underground systems, airports, buses, taxis, on the sides of vans and more. These can work well since people in traffic may take interest in advertisements as they move to and from work locations. It typically delivers high frequency of viewer impacts in a short period of time. Public transport vehicles generally travel the same routes over and over, and so almost everyone along the route sees an ad multiple times.

Ambient advertising is one of the fastest-growing sectors within outdoor advertising because you can create a lot of impact for relatively little outlay. The nature of ambient advertising also means it can offer you precise targeting by area or by audience type. Car park tickets and chalk advertisements on sidewalks are a few examples of creative ambient advertising.

T-shirts, bumper stickers, and umbrellas are all classic ways of branding objects as a means of advertising. While they may seem very boring and conventional, they are actually easy to implement and almost everyone likes to have a t-shirt or umbrella around.

When designing advertising, don’t be afraid to use wordplay, interesting images and logos, and large lettering to catch the attention of your audience.

Media marketing through video is a great way to get some attention. But it is also very expensive. An alternative may be to consider web advertisements which can cost less and still reach a large audience.

When creating audio advertising, make sure that you try to paint mental images for your audience so they have a conception of what service or product you offer, and include a call-to-action to request your audience to act on. Also- be sure to include information about how/where they can locate additional information to order or participate.

One thing to keep in mind with audio advertisement: be sure to explicitly identify all sounds used in the advertisement so that the audience is not left guessing about what you want them to hear.

Experts often talk about how the traditional media environment is fragmenting, with fewer people watching TV and more people accessing entertainment online and through their mobile phones. While radio will be affected by this development, in many ways it will also benefit. Radio fits with people’s increasingly mobile lives. It allows people to listen to it while doing other things – like cleaning, driving, sitting on the bus or getting stuck in a traffic jam.

Here’s another option for radio advertising that you may not have considered. How about running ads over the internal broadcasting systems used in many shops? This opportunity gives you another great way to target a particular audience going about a particular task.

Many marketers don’t realize that the limiting factor in inexpensive or homemade video is usually the sound quality, not the picture quality. So as long as you plug in a remote microphone and put it near anyone who’s speaking, you can probably make usable video yourself.

If you choose to try and create some video advertising, some simple suggestions include:

* Have a clear script for use
* Try to reduce clutter and background items that are not necessary to your shoot
* Shoot everything more than once, in case you later feel that your initial take is not good
* Try to shoot in quiet environments with a good microphone to ensure clean dialog and effects
* Consider drafting locals and volunteers into your advertisements to save money

Hire an experienced production company to help you do the ad or do what many marketers do and hire a big ad agency (at big ad agency prices) to design and supervise its production. This choice costs you, but at least you get quality work.

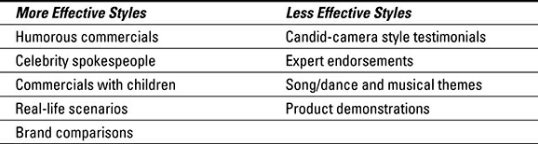
One other consideration for creating video advertisements: sometimes local students are able to help small businesses get the results they might expect from a bigger company. This is mutually beneficial: they help the business to put together an ad, and the ad itself becomes an advertisement for the services they can offer other people.

Emotion is a particularly powerful tool to use in advertising. Try to pair the emotions you’re trying to evoke with visuals that embody and amplify those emotions to reach your audience.

Also keep in mind that video is a great way to demonstrate how well your product or service works. Being able to show the product or service in action is a great way to get viewers interested.

A storyboard is an easy way to show the key visual images of film, using pictures in sequence.

Style is a consideration that must be planned for in effective advertising. Certain messages may call for a limited palette of expression to be considered respectful and fitting. Be sure to research the different ways that something can be said, as well as newer innovations in how it can be said, to find a way to communicate your message appropriately and with maximum effect.



TVRs is industry jargon for television ratings. Audience delivery for advertising is measured in TVRs. Insights into the particular audience that subscribes or tunes into a particular station can prove vital when deciding the best venue for your advertising. Timing for advertisement is also an important factor to take into consideration. The actual number of times viewers are exposed to a commercial break is called impacts.

Some additional factors to consider with advertising on television:

* Season
* Length of your advertisement
* The size of the region being broadcast across

Because of the complexity of some of these calculations, think hard about using a media agency to plan and buy the airtime. You can let a media agency know what you’re trying to achieve with your ad and what type of people you need to target and then let their experts do the rest. Many of these agencies buy up chunks of airtime in advance, so you benefit from an agency-wide deal and don’t have to negotiate individually with the TV sales houses.

Branded content: a term used to describe something that’s not quite an ad but which can be used to communicate a commercial message. The official term for which is advertiser-funded programming or AFP. This type of communication is becoming increasingly frequent, although many restrictions are still in place about what you can or cannot say about your product. But asking your agency, or the radio stations and channels themselves, about these opportunities is worthwhile because they allow your message to stand out from the clutter of all the other ads.

Sponsorship is an alternative to AFP. Relevant programs can help you to advertise related products or services for mutual benefit.

Interactive TV advertising gives you a lot of opportunities to do things a traditional 30-second spot won’t. You can give additional product information, issue a call to action, or capture your prospective customers’ data. This market is still developing and trials of ‘red button’ advertising that loads information ‘behind’ the viewed show, to be watched later, seems promising.

Even huge brands use YouTube to generate interest in their products and marketing. YouTube is a useful tool for research, feedback, and promotion all in one.

Digital or e-marketing includes online advertising, email and also using text, pictures or even video to reach customers through their mobile phones.

You’d certainly advertise on TV if your budget stretched to it, but not everyone’s does, so you need to have a presence on the other most-used medium. Importantly, advertising online is something you can afford to do. In fact, you can’t afford not to. First you need to find and register a web address (also known as a domain name or URL). A good address:

* A good address relates to your business or product
* A good name is memorable
* A good name is not easily confused with other addresses
* A good name will not violate trademarks

To check if anyone has a name you want to register, either enter it into an internet search, type it in your address bar and see if it goes anywhere, or locate an online domain registration service that will check to see if it is available.

If someone has registered the name you want with one or most of the main extensions, but left the more obscure.biz, org.uk or even.me.uk extensions, seeking another name is wisest because customers could forget your extension and go to someone else’s site instead.

When the web’s an important sales route for your business, aim to own most or all of the possible extensions and versions of your web address.

A good website will be attractive and easy to navigate it should also offer plenty of information to answer likely questions and move visitors toward a purchase.

To keep customers engaged with a site once it has been established, share relevant information and update the site with new features or information regularly.

Websites can be created in several ways: they can be created by the owner using code, they can be created by the owner using templates, or they can be created by a site designer or service. Costs for site creation often depend on how intricate they are.

WordPress is a common alternative for creating a website these days. It offers many customization options and allows for the user to easily add new information such as blog-style writings and images. It can also be set up to sell products.

Consider using your domain name and provider to create your own email addresses, too. An example is jane@janesmithflowers.com if your website is www.janesmithflowers.com. Having your email reflecting your own website URL looks so much more professional than going through a public domain does.

Good website design is harder than it looks and going to a reputable design firm and asking them to do it for you is probably best. We recommend a business relationship (spelled out on paper in advance) that specifies that you, not they, own all content and designs at the end (so that you can switch to another vendor if it doesn’t work out or they go bust) and also specifies an hourly rate and an estimate of the site’s size and complexity, with a cap on the number of billable hours needed to design it.

Don’t create a site that needs the user to register to gain access to basic information – after all, you want to sell something to them. Instead, a handy trick is to offer some extra content – the latest product updates, exclusive content or a weekly newsletter – in order to get your customers to sign up with their details. All online businesses want to find out who their customers are because this information allows them to target them more effectively with products and services.

Google Analytics is the most widely used analytics service online because it’s free and offers lots of data on your website’s traffic – such as visitors’ geographic location, what they view on your site and how long they stay there.

Make sure that you capture information about your visitors in a useful form that gets sent to you regularly. Ask your web provider what kinds of reports they can offer you – probably more than you imagined possible. With these reports in hand, you can track traffic to your site.

Companies providing web media services (meaning web page design) can also design and place banner ads and pop-up ads for you.

Basic banner ads can be created using off-the-shelf design software such as Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro. Not surprisingly, the web is a good starting point for finding templates for banner ads. Because the format is now so common, a lot of sites allow you to use their standard designs for free.

The best design for starters is a banner that flashes a simple one-line offer or headline statement, shows an image of your logo or product and then switches to a couple more lines of text explaining what to do and why to do it.

An online ad can be tactical, by alerting customers to a special offer, or it can help with brand-building, by raising awareness of your product or service.

“Rich Media” is a form of ad that covers page content until the user clicks to close the ad or reads it. This is not recommended because most of the time, the user is frustrated and clicks away from the page completely.

You may find click-through statistics a useful and easy-to-get indicator of how well an ad or search-engine placement is performing.

There are some things to be leery of with online ads:

* Ads often are paid for according to “clicks” they receive, and some ads count a “click” when they first appear, even without user interaction
* Some ads have multiple “clicks” by having sections that load separately, costing more without actually being selected by a user

Affiliate marketing is another term for ‘finder’s fees’ or ‘lead fees’. They work by rewarding websites that deliver users to other websites. For small companies, it is recommended that they seek to join an existing affiliate network. Every network will also likely show you the three arms of its business on its homepage: merchants (advertisers), affiliates (publishers) and agencies.

Early affiliate deals rewarded on a click basis, so that every click that went through to the destination was paid for, this system has changed in recent years and nearly always uses a performance-based remuneration model.

Some things to consider when selecting an affiliate are:

* Find out what their expertise is in your chosen sector
* Check out any client lists or testimonials they can provide
* Ask about the size and breadth of their network
* Use the internet to research their ranking amongst similar organizations
* Immediately find out about prices and costs
* Be wary of hype they may generate as part of a proposal
* Inquire about what kind of support they offer clients
* Look at which organizations competitors use
* Find out details about what they use to track clicks to your site

At its most basic, blogging is a way of recording thoughts, collecting links and sharing ideas and content with other people via a very simple website. In effect, blogs are online journals for individuals or organizations.

Blogs should be kept up to date, remain relevant, and provide interesting content to keep visitors coming back. Also- have a clear aim as to what you intend to provide for visitors to your blog, and stick to that theme or vision. Also keep a consistent tone and style.

It is important to provide visitors the opportunity to comment on posts. It’s almost an expectation that negative comments will be made. Sometimes that will be in the form of respectful disagreement, other times it originates from people that just like to act out. Either way, respond with decency and class. Avoid getting into online words of war that might make people want to stop visiting.

When blogging, avoid “corporate speak” as it sounds very insincere and fake. The company’s official website is the place where the company should be trying to “sell” itself.

The same rules for blogging tend to generally apply for social media posting. You want to have a consistent, respectful, and honest reputation.

“Spam” is the term for junk emails and there are laws that marketers must follow to avoid violating these restrictions.

Use email as much as you can for legitimate, helpful, one-to-one contact and support of customers or prospects.

Buying email lists in marketing is a strategy used to quickly acquire a large number of contacts for email campaigns.

Sending out an email to a list rather than an individual is also possible, but ensure that you have a clear purpose that benefits those people on the list. Also be sure to:

* Send email only to the people that ask for them
* Immediately remove people from your email list when they ask
* If you buy an email list, be sure to test it beforehand
* Respect the privacy of your subscribers
* Send your lists through a real email address so they can reply to you
* Make sure your subject line is descriptive and not deceptive
* Keep your lists up to date

Mobile marketing is a digital marketing strategy aimed at reaching a target audience through their smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices via websites, email, SMS, social media, and apps. Its advantages include high engagement rates, as users are often on their mobile devices; personalized marketing opportunities based on user data and location; and real-time communication. However, disadvantages include privacy concerns, as users may be wary of sharing personal data; the potential for ad fatigue from constant notifications; and the need for marketing materials to be optimized for various devices and screen sizes.

Search engine marketing can be one of the most effective tools in a marketer’s armory and is vital to success if you’re running an online business.

Search marketing is one of the more complex skills that a web marketer can master, but with a little basic knowledge getting decent results is quite easy. Its relative low cost also means search marketing is a fantastic medium in which to experiment and learn from your mistakes.

Building and maintaining a website that features high in the listings on a search engine results page isn’t an exact science, but you can follow guidelines to ensure that you do get listed towards the top of the results when someone searches using terms relevant to your business. Search engine optimization (SEO) covers a vast number of different techniques that can be used to ensure that your website is found and indexed by a search engine, so that when consumers type in your name or the name of your products, they find you.

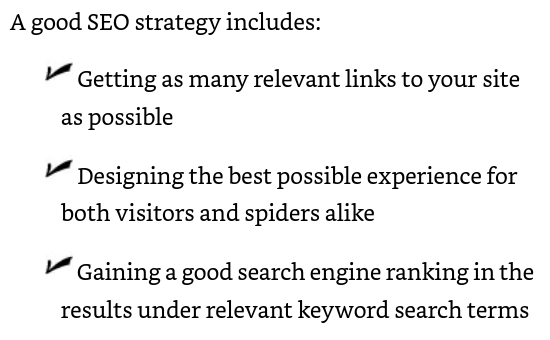
Search engines like Google use crawlers, or spiders, to automatically scan websites, reading both visible content and metadata embedded by web creators. This metadata describes the page's content and helps spiders determine how to index the site. Crawlers follow internal and external links, returning the gathered information to a central database, which is queried during searches. They periodically revisit sites to check for metadata updates.

A page ranking in the search engines listings is determined by the relevance of the metadata and visible web page text to the request, and also by the quality and number of links that link to that page. Every search engine has a slightly different algorithm it uses to determine its page ranking, so SEO can become a very complicated art.

Link building – getting other relevant sites to link to your site to improve its relevancy in search listings – is vital. You can create links through deals with other sites, or an SEO company can organize them for you.

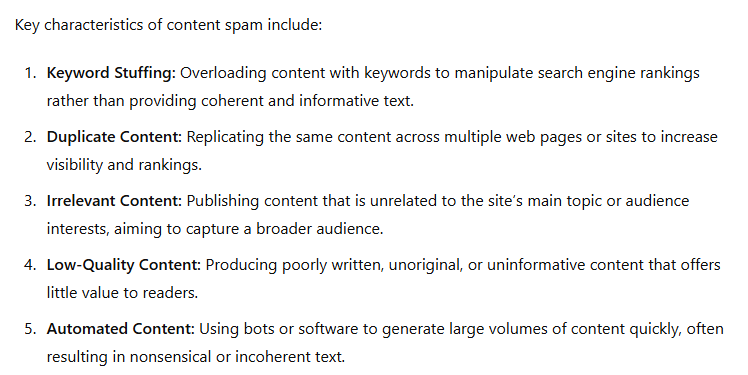
Search engine optimization falls under the wider banner of search engine marketing. SEO specifically relates to how your website is read and ranked by search engine spiders.

Obviously, a badly designed site is hard for people to navigate and the same is true for the search engine spiders that collect information and rank your site. A clear structure, with relevant content, keywords and easy navigation helps to improve your site visibility to search engines and so achieve a better ranking in their search results pages.

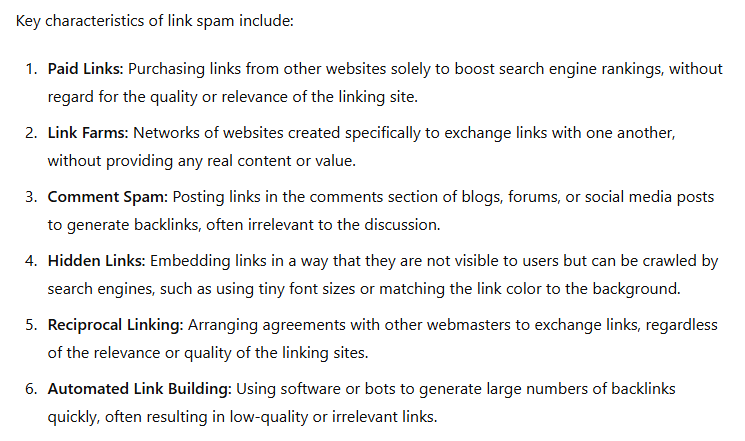


Set up your site so that spiders can crawl through your pages without having to accept cookies – packages of text that get swapped between a site and its users – doing so allows them to do their job much faster and takes up less resource.

Spamdexing, a mixture of spamming and indexing, falls into two categories: content or link spam. Content spam in marketing refers to the practice of creating and distributing large amounts of low-quality, repetitive, or irrelevant content with the primary goal of manipulating search engine rankings, increasing website traffic, or promoting products or services in a deceptive manner.



Link spam in marketing, also known as spamdexing or link manipulation, involves the creation and dissemination of a large number of low-quality or irrelevant backlinks to a website. The goal is to manipulate search engine rankings by artificially inflating the site's link popularity.



In marketing, particularly in the context of search engine optimization (SEO) and digital marketing, "black hat" and "white hat" practices refer to different approaches to improving a website's performance and visibility.

Hiring an agency that can handle both your SEO and your paid search needs is the best way to go. A number of agencies can provide this dual service, so do your homework and make sure that you find a partner that meets your needs. Some tips for finding an agency include:

* Conducting an internet search for SEO companies
* Reading through agency websites to learn about services
* Research for agency reviews
* Request a site review to get an idea of what they may suggest
* Discuss pricing to determine whether they are affordable
* Are they open to discuss white hat/black hat practices
* Can they give a good accounting of the work they propose to do
* Do they make claims that seem overstated
* Do they fit with other company marketing processes

Paid search is the service offered by search engines that allows a business to advertise next to search results that have been requested by a user. The system works on an auction basis using keyword bidding, meaning that a business can bid on relevant keywords that are entered into the search engine by users. The difference between paid listings and natural listings is that you can’t buy your way to the top of the natural listings; this can only be achieved by building a good website, generating lots of links and most probably, employing a reputable SEO agency.

Paid search isn’t a technique that can be set up and left to run because it’s in a constant state of flux. Competitors can upweight their bids on certain keywords around promotions or products or simply try to price other competitors out of the market. So, if you decide to undertake paid search marketing, ensure that someone within your company is keeping an eye on your keyword bids to make sure that they’re working as hard as they can for you. If you’re going to carry out any search marketing, you must use Google’s service AdWords or you’ll miss out on almost the entire market.

A few basic rules exist when it comes to choosing your keywords for your paid search marketing. Ensuring that the words you decide upon match the product or services you offer is the main rule. Start by talking with colleagues and employees to find out what people most associate with your business and which words are most commonly used about your products.

Google offers a “keyword matching” option for their paid search marketing. Using the service, you can ‘broadmatch’ your keywords, this allows ads to be displayed for searches that include misspellings, synonyms, related searches, and other relevant variations of the targeted keywords.

One of the biggest decisions you have to make is whether to carry out your paid search in-house or to outsource to a specialist search marketing agency. If you carry out your paid search marketing in-house, you have more control over what’s happening, but you may not necessarily have expert skills. Employing a specialist agency may cost you more money than handling it in-house, but the agency may make your marketing budget work harder for you and save you money in the long run.

If an in-house effort is made for search marketing, your team must be able to keep up with- and implement- new products and techniques because it is a very fast moving and constantly evolving area.

How you optimize your paid search campaign will determine how effective your paid search budget will be. A number of different ways of optimizing your campaign exist, with both the agencies and the search engines offering their own services and technologies. Some of these techniques are listed below:

Keyword Optimization

1. Keyword Research:
   * Use tools like Google Keyword Planner, SEMrush, or Ahrefs to find relevant keywords with high search volume and low competition.
   * Identify long-tail keywords that are more specific and often less competitive, leading to higher conversion rates.
2. Match Types:
   * Utilize different keyword match types (broad match, phrase match, exact match) to control which search queries trigger your ads.
   * Regularly review search term reports to refine match types and add negative keywords to exclude irrelevant searches.

Ad Copy Optimization

1. Compelling Ad Copy:
   * Write clear, concise, and compelling ad copy that highlights your unique selling propositions (USPs) and includes strong calls to action (CTAs).
   * Use ad extensions (sitelinks, callouts, structured snippets) to provide additional information and increase ad visibility.
2. A/B Testing:
   * Conduct A/B testing on different versions of your ad copy to determine which performs best.
   * Continuously test and iterate to improve click-through rates (CTR) and conversion rates.

Landing Page Optimization

1. Relevance and Quality:
   * Ensure that your landing pages are highly relevant to the keywords and ad copy, providing a seamless user experience.
   * Optimize landing pages for speed, mobile-friendliness, and ease of navigation.
2. Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO):
   * Use CRO techniques like clear CTAs, simplified forms, and trust signals (testimonials, reviews) to increase conversion rates.
   * Employ A/B testing on landing page elements to find the most effective design and content.

Budget and Bid Management

1. Budget Allocation:
   * Allocate budget to high-performing keywords and campaigns while reducing spend on underperforming ones.
   * Use dayparting and geographic targeting to allocate budget more effectively based on time and location performance data.
2. Bid Strategies:
   * Choose appropriate bid strategies based on your goals (manual CPC, target CPA, target ROAS, etc.).
   * Monitor and adjust bids regularly to stay competitive and maximize ROI.

Audience Targeting

1. Audience Segmentation:
   * Use audience targeting options (demographics, interests, remarketing lists) to reach specific segments of your target audience.
   * Create custom audiences based on website visitors, email lists, or customer match data.
2. Ad Personalization:
   * Personalize ads for different audience segments to increase relevance and engagement.
   * Use dynamic search ads or responsive search ads to automatically tailor ad content based on user behavior and preferences.

Performance Tracking and Analysis

1. Analytics and Reporting:
   * Use tools like Google Analytics and built-in ad platform analytics to track campaign performance metrics (CTR, conversion rate, cost per conversion).
   * Set up conversion tracking to measure the effectiveness of your ads in driving desired actions (sales, leads, sign-ups).
2. Regular Audits:
   * Conduct regular audits of your campaigns to identify areas for improvement.
   * Analyze historical performance data to uncover trends and adjust strategies accordingly.

Utilizing Agency and Search Engine Services

1. Agency Services:
   * Consider hiring a digital marketing agency with expertise in paid search optimization to manage your campaigns.
   * Agencies can provide advanced tools, insights, and strategies to maximize your campaign performance.
2. Search Engine Technologies:
   * Take advantage of search engine services and technologies like Google’s Smart Bidding, automated ad creation, and machine learning algorithms to optimize campaigns.
   * Stay updated with the latest features and updates from search engines to leverage new optimization opportunities.

Also referred to as ‘Web 2.0’, social media are one of the most exciting and important areas of the Internet for a modern web marketer to get to grips with. Companies in the Web 2.0 world aren’t just using technology to sell things but also to build their brands and create a two-way dialogue with consumers.

Web 2.0 has three main factors:

* The web is a great tool for establishing community
* The web is a very flexible and powerful tool for communication
* The web offers access to a variety of content types

A social network is just a fancy name for a very simple idea. It means websites that combine lots of services that allow people to stay in touch with each other, swap messages and photos, play games and lots more. Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are a few good examples.

Different social media apps and networks exist throughout the world. What is popular in one place may not be so in another. Almost every different form of social media exists to fill a specific purpose. What is acceptable and common on one site may not be on another site. For example: picture sharing may be out of place on a site like LinkedIn since that is a professional development site, whereas a site like Instagram thrives on that sort of content since that is what it was created for.

Social media marketing represents a difference from advertising as people usually perceive it. A lot of the usual forms of advertising on other media, such as radio, TV and outdoors, can be summed up as ‘push’ advertising. The marketer pushes (or shouts) out the message to people and they passively accept (or ignore) the communication.

A profile page for your business is the bottom rung of the social ladder, but it does establish your organization in the social world online and gives you a spot to send people looking for information on your business to and a place where you can interact with customers.

Using aggressive 'push' advertising tactics on networking sites is inappropriate. However, you can attract attention effectively if you provide value in exchange for people's time.

* Tell people about your social media efforts
* Create interesting and relevant content
* Advertise your presence- most often this means building connections with others and advertising your social media presence in other media, such as print and physical ads

Apps can be used to draw people to your social media outlet. Apps are the little tools, services and games created by third parties. Apps can be added to blogs, homepages, desktops or any other place on the web where people control the content. Apps are also called widgets or gadgets, depending on where they’re found online or on mobile phones such as the iPhone. If you create your own apps, you can create content or services that mean consumers spend time with your brand. Doing so will generate a positive feeling about your company with the users of the app, which will help you to market to them and hopefully sell them products or services. Second, you can use other people’s apps to advertise your services or products.

All social networks that use apps have released tools to help people create services that use the best parts of their social network platforms. However, these software development toolkits (SDKs) don’t really help you if you have no experience in writing code. This is where partnering with a developer is helpful.

Always maintain a conversation with a customer or client, even after a campaign has ended. Bad word-of-mouth happens when customers or clients feel they are no longer important after participating in a purchase of a product or service.

Advertising in the social space is a relatively new phenomenon, but people have been interacting with each other online for some time, so they often view it as a personal space. Many companies have decided the best way to market in this personal medium is to disguise who they are and their intentions, rather than trying to add value by being up-front and adding value to the user’s existing experience. *It is important to avoid falling into this mindset.*

Using SMS (Short Messaging Service)- also called texting- is a great way to communicate to customers. There are only 160 characters allowed, so an effective message offers an incentive for the customer to do something – get more information, get a coupon or take advantage of a time-sensitive offer. *Very important: you must ensure that those people you contact have opted-in to receiving communication from you via this channel.*

As with any type of communication: do research to understand who you are marketing to before you engage in further planning.

“Cold” prospects- people that are not already your customers- typically are not interested in hearing a marketing message by text. In those cases, it is often recommended to use another medium such as email to approach your new prospect.

SMS Gateway: a term used to describe SMS service packages. These services often include a certain amount of analytical information on your SMS campaign as part of their offering too – be sure to check out what they can tell you about the SMS campaign once you have pressed the ‘go’ button. Look for data on aspects such as delivery and open rates.

Where mobile web is concerned, make sure that your website is optimized for display on small screens. Test your site on a few different mobile devices to determine whether they function well. If adjustments need to be made, there are many different services available to contract with to help reformat a site.

At the advent of a new technology, brands always seem drawn to use it in an attempt to appear cool and cutting edge. Sadly, this has resulted in a lot of rather useless apps that offer no real value to the consumer. If an app provides no benefits, not only will it not be used, it will also probably create a negative view of that brand in the consumer’s mind.

Replicating your marketing efforts to make them work on each different device and operating system means your effectiveness in reaching the desired number of people may be compromised. Being able to participate in the most ecosystems is important when competing for business.

Besides SMS and apps, QR codes are a popular way of making it easy for a potential customer to use their phone to quickly navigate to your website or social media outlet.

LBS (location-based services) is a technology where tailored information is delivered to a recipient through their mobile device based on where they are located. Cinemas are a good example of a business that uses this to tell potential customers where they can find a nearby theater and what showtimes are.

NFC (near-field communications) is a technology for simplified transactions, data exchange and wireless connections between two devices in close proximity to each other, usually by no more than a few centimeters.

Shortcodes are phone numbers – significantly shorter than full phone numbers – that can be used to address SMS and MMS messages from brands to consumers. When consumers use, or respond to, shortcodes the advertiser usually pays.

Bluetooth is a technology that can send information between devices over a short distance. In some places, it has been utilized by advertisers to send ads and short videos to consumer devices with open Bluetooth settings.

The MMA provides a Global Code of Conduct for its mobile marketing members. This code, together with the legal rules concerning privacy, should be rigorously followed when engaging in any mobile marketing activity. The tenets are:

1. Mobile users must be given notice regarding terms and conditions
2. Mobile marketers must respect the right of the consumer regarding what messages they receive
3. Marketing must be targeted appropriately
4. Mobile marketers must protect any/all user information collected
5. The MMA expects that these rules will be followed, and will enforce them diligently

Customer relationship management (CRM): The MMA provides a Global Code of Conduct for its mobile marketing members. This code, together with the legal rules concerning privacy, should be your guiding light when engaging in any mobile marketing activity. Includes things like:

* Contact management
* Sales force automation
* Marketing automation
* Customer service and support
* Analytics and reporting

Direct Marketing (also known as relationship marketing or one-to-one marketing) is a form of marketing that involves directly communicating with targeted customers or prospects to promote a product, service, or idea. The goal is to elicit a response, such as an order, inquiry, or visit to a website.

If you aren’t accustomed to dealing directly with customers, you’re likely to mess up your attempt at direct marketing. Being too direct is the most common way to mess up marketing. Direct marketing should build a bridge between you and the customer. No matter what direct marketing you do, keeping it civil and polite gets much better results. Avoid impolite calls, errors on address labels and anything else that may offend the average person. Cull lists to eliminate duplications and errors.

Practice makes perfect in direct marketing if you make sure to keep records of what you do and track the responses. That way, you can tell when a change improves response rates.

Direct marketing doesn’t generate very high response rates, and you have to make realistic projections before deciding to embark on any activity.

Some simple startup activities might include:

* Send out a letter, special announcement, or brochure to everyone on your customer list to gauge responses
* Run an ad with a web page or other contact point you can monitor for engagement
* Replace any existing ad copy with testimonials and monitor sales metrics for response
* Give away some small gift and monitor sales metrics afterward for responses
* Send out birthday greetings to current customers and monitor for any responses

Regularly update your mailing list. Not only will doing so keep your postage costs down, it is also your legal responsibility.

Behind every effective direct-marketing campaign stands a well-managed database of customer and prospect names.

Direct-response ads are ads that stimulate people to respond with an enquiry or purchase. You see direct-response ads most commonly in print media such as magazines and newspapers, and in online advertising.

People that respond to direct-response ads are self-selecting as they are choosing to become engaged with the product or service. There are two things that can/should be done here:

* Try to get the sale
* Find out as much as you can about that person and put it into your database for future marketing

A direct-response ad must do more than the typical image-building or brand-orientated ad. A direct-response ad has to create enough enthusiasm to get people to close the sale, on their own initiative, right now. Some things that can be done include:

* Appeal to target readers
* Support your main claim about the product
* Speak in language that your target audience will understand
* Make it easy for your audience to respond

Highly selective publications work better for direct-response advertising. A special-interest magazine may deliver a readership far richer in targets than a general-interest magazine or newspaper.

Direct mail is the use of personalized sales letters, and it is really no more than a form of print advertising.

Channel refers to the pathways you create to get your product out there and into customers’ hands.

A few important things to keep in mind when using direct mailing:

* It is important to keep in mind what the target audience will see when they receive your advertisement. Sending it in a format that gets them curious or grabs their attention helps reduce the chance that the ad will be disposed of without consideration.
* The second ad sent to the target audience is only effective if the first one has gained the recipient’s interest.

Your direct response ad should represent creative copywriting and design at its best; don’t make anything about your letter formulaic.

The most successful of direct mailings:

* Bait the recipient to investigate further
* Provides a sound argument why your product or service is necessary
* Has a call to action

The three elements above are often thought of as the star, the chain, and the hook (listed in order of bullet points above).

Even an envelope can mean the difference between the recipient being interested or not. Some tricks:

* Make the envelope plain so that the recipient opens it out of curiosity
* Have some benefit printed on the front to entice them to look farther
* Offer them something special to investigate farther
* Think of some unique way to get them interested enough to commit to reading your advertisement

What else should go into your mailing? In general, a letter combined with a simple catalogue of your product(s) pulls more strongly than a letter alone. Also make sure to provide some means for the recipient to reply, such as a pre-paid envelope to send back.

For small-scale organizations, it is sometimes worthwhile to partner with some sort of mailing agency to handle the folding, stuffing, and eventual mailing of advertisements.

Purchasing or renting a mailing list provides a marketing company with immediate access to a targeted audience, significantly speeding up the process of reaching potential customers. It allows them to quickly launch campaigns without the time-consuming task of building a list from scratch. With access to segmented and relevant contacts, companies can tailor their messages for higher engagement and conversion rates. This approach can also enhance brand visibility and expand market reach, ultimately driving sales and improving return on investment.

One-time use means that you don’t own the list, just rent it. But you do own the replies. As soon as someone contacts you from that mailing and you begin to interact with and gather information about them, you can add that person to your own list.

You can buy lists from list owners (those who first developed the list and rent it out), list managers (who manage it on an owner’s behalf), list compilers (whose business it is to create bespoke lists from a wide range of sources) or list brokers.

So, try to find lists of people who’ve purchased something similar to what you’re selling, preferably through the mail, rather than people who fit your customer profile in other ways.

A call center is the place where telephone calls from your customers are answered. A call center can be a real, physical place – a big room full of phones staffed by your employees, or it can be a virtual place – a telephone number that rings to whatever subcontractor you’re currently using to handle telemarketing for you.

Every business is a call center, but most don’t realize it. If you have telephones and people calling in and out on them, you need to manage this point of customer contact very carefully.

A perceived minute is the time period a customer on hold thinks she’s waited for a minute – and that time typically is more like 40 seconds when you measure it on the clock. Don’t leave people sitting on hold for more than what they perceive to be a moderate amount of time.

Inbound telemarketing: receiving calls from interested leads. Important in marketing as it nurtures and educates potential customers, building trust and driving sales. Unlike outbound telemarketing, it's about guiding leads through the buying process, improving customer engagement and driving revenue growth.

We recommend you keep customer records, even if only a name, address and list of transactions held on a paper form. You can quickly identify who your loyal consumers are and treat them accordingly – doing so makes good business sense and will win you even more repeat customers.

Inbound telemarketing: receiving calls from interested potential customers, often in response to ads, allowing businesses to connect, build trust, and drive conversions. Inbound telemarketing is crucial for businesses to engage interested prospects, nurture leads, and drive conversions. It helps build trust, improve customer experience, and ultimately boost revenue growth, giving companies a competitive advantage.

Every direct-response ad should have a phone number as one of the contact options – with a trained telemarketing sales force or an eager entrepreneur at the other end.

Everything you send out that could have your phone number and web address on it, should have it displayed prominently.

To avoid sending out marketing items without proper contact information, use audit & order:

* Start by reviewing your mailings and customer communications to identify any gaps where contact information is missing.
* Get stickers with your brand's contact info (phone, address, website, email) and stick them on everything - folders, boxes, cards, products, and notes - so customers can easily get in touch with you.

Outbound telemarketing involves proactively calling potential customers to promote products or services. It's valuable for generating leads, expanding reach, and increasing brand awareness. When executed well, it effectively fills the sales pipeline and drives revenue growth by targeting specific audiences with personalized messages.

Cold call lists are databases used for unsolicited telemarketing, but they're no longer recommended. They can lead to low conversion rates, damage brand reputation, and violate privacy regulations. Instead, marketers should focus on inbound strategies and targeted outreach to engage with interested prospects, avoiding annoying calls and potential legal issues.

Preference services, such as opt-out lists, enable consumers to avoid unsolicited marketing. They help marketers comply with privacy laws, reduce waste, and build trust. By respecting these choices, marketers can improve relationships with their audience and focus on willing recipients. Examples include the National Do Not Call Registry and GDPR opt-out requirements.

Some new tactics for telemarking include:

* Using the phone to follow up on leads instead of using it to find them
* Save calls for issues that really deserve personal contact from the prospect’s perspective, and try to call people who actually know you or your firm
* Being respectful by remembering that you’re disturbing someone’s normal routine by contacting them
* Be human: use natural language instead of scripts when speaking to the recipient
* The telemarketer is paid to build a relationship instead of destroying one by trying to make a sale that contributes to a commission
* Focus telemarketing on building on existing clientele loyalties by contacting them to see what you can do to improve products or services
* If a script must be followed: try to build in jokes, short stories, or pleasantries to make it less robotic and more human

In marketing parlance, "clean data" refers to accurate, up-to-date, and properly formatted customer information in a database. It's free from errors, duplicates, and irrelevant entries. Clean data ensures effective targeting, personalization, and analysis in marketing campaigns, leading to better decision-making and improved ROI.

There are a few principles that can be used to ensure that you’re properly using personal data:

* Make sure the data is fairly and lawfully processed
* The data is processed for limited purposes
* Data must be collected adequately, and relevantly and not excessively
* The data collected must be accurate and up to date
* The data should not be kept any longer than necessary
* The data should be processed in accordance with the rights of that individual
* The data should be securely kept
* The data should not be transferred anywhere else without adequate protection for that individual

The ‘fair and lawfully processed’ principle in the DPA is the one that most relates to you and your direct marketing, because here is where you must be able to prove ‘prior informed consent’ before contacting customers.

While allowing your customers and prospects to easily opt out of further advertising from you may pain you, the fact that you’ve weeded out those customers from the ones that are happy to hear from you means your marketing campaigns will become much more efficient.

You can give customers the chance to opt out of or opt in to your information – worded properly, both count as informed consent.

Always use opt-in boxes when designing new forms or web pages. While opt-out boxes have always been popular with marketers because they mean people have to actively choose not to receive ads or promotional material, this approach is a pretty poor idea. Having people signed up who are genuinely interested in receiving your messages is better.

You, as the sender of email, must not conceal your identity and must provide a valid address for opt-out requests. The second rule is that you cannot send unsolicited email marketing messages to individuals without their prior consent.

When you enter into an agreement with a consumer (not another business) to supply your product or service without having met face to face, you enter into a distance contract.

Follow-up marketing disclosures provide additional transparency, ensuring compliance and informed decision-making. They address concerns, build credibility, and strengthen customer relationships. This approach enhances customer loyalty and retention, ultimately supporting business growth.

Independent endorsements for your product or service can be so much more powerful than ‘pure’ advertising, for the simple reason that consumers are more skeptical about a message that’s been paid for and is self-serving.

Public relations and word of mouth have traditionally been vastly underrated techniques for communicating with your customers but, these days, companies are realizing their power. The ease with which information can be passed between people on the Internet means that your messages can be spread further and more quickly than ever before. These endorsements belong in the front line of your marketing plan because of their ease of use, simplicity, low cost and potential.

Publicity is coverage of your product or business in the editorial portion of any news medium.

When you use publicity, remember the all-important factor – the quality of your product innovation and production/delivery. You can gain positive publicity simply by designing and making a truly superior product.

Public relations (PR) is the active pursuit of publicity for marketing purposes. You use PR to generate good publicity and to try to minimize bad publicity.

Marketers or general managers wear the PR hat in smaller organizations, large companies generally have a dedicated PR person or department. PR consultancies are agencies that can work for a number of clients, planning and delivering messages to the press or reacting to incoming enquiries.

A good story is anything that has enough public interest to attract readers, viewers or listeners and hold their attention.

Most of what you want to communicate to your market doesn’t fall into the category of a good story. For that reason, you need to develop your story (by collecting the right facts and quotes and writing them down clearly and well) to a level that may qualify as good editorial content. And when you think of good editorial content, think like a journalist would.

The hook is what it sounds like: the compelling bit of information that snags your reader’s interest and draws him to the story. These usually:

* Provide new information
* Are relevant to the reader’s activities or interests
* Catch the reader’s attention by providing some surprising information
* Promise to provide some benefit to the reader

You need to design hooks to make your marketing message into stories that appeal to journalists. Your hooks need to be just like the ones that attracted your attention to those newspaper stories, with one exception: you need to somehow tie them to your marketing information.

For communicating a news story, the most basic format is the press release. A press release is a concise official statement distributed to media outlets to announce newsworthy information. It's a crucial marketing tool that generates publicity, controls messaging, and enhances company credibility, effectively reaching a wide audience at minimal cost.

Working with Journalists can be important in marketing. Here are a few tips to make that collaboration productive:

* Offer exclusives: a particular journalist will get the story before anyone else
* Do some background research before the collaboration, so you both are informed
* Build up and maintain a list of media contacts
* Try to be creative in offering a story that is interesting for readers and good PR for your company
* Offer your assistance to your collaborator as an expert in particular areas for any stories they work in the future
* Keep your collaboration brief: journalists are extremely busy
* Make sure to post any press releases through your website
* Send letters/releases along to other media distributors
* Do *not* do follow up calls or pester your collaborator- they will get to you when they need to
* Don’t ask journalists for clippings- they are easy to locate without asking the journalist to personally tend to it
* Don’t make typos, erroneous, or misleading information- that’s a good way to sour that relationship and get a bad reputation amongst other journalists
* Make sure you always give complete contact information so you are easy to find
* When a journalist asks for resources, be sure to help them by doing that research

You, or your PR consultancy, need to get close to the journalists that are most relevant to your business – this usually means calling them with the story first to discuss it and then sending the press release if they’ve shown an interest.

Press releases can also be done as video or digital formats for more efficiency and expediency.

Being interviewed is also good for marketing and often comes on the heels of PR efforts. A few tips for being interviewed:

* Give no more than three key messages, telling more will be difficult for the audience to remember
* Do some research and know as much about your audience as possible
* State your message in a positive way
* Avoid wearing very pronounced patterns- cameras don’t capture them well
* Speak as though you’re having a normal conversation with another person

Word of Mouth (WOM) is often considered the most credible source of information about a services or product. It also helps in keeping prior and existing customers engaged and invested.

A few other strategies for generating positive energy and good word of mouth for a product or service:

* Involve yourself in charity or not-for-profit organizations that do important work
* Stage events for children
* Allow employees to take sabbaticals to do volunteer work

Any positive deeds you do are much more credible, memorable and impressive if they have some association with what your organization does.

Decision Influencers- often simply called influencers- are people that often affect the opinions of many. To take advantage of decision influencers, develop a list of who falls into that category for your product or service and then make a plan for cultivating them. Match these people with appropriate managers or salespeople who can take them to events or out to lunch, just for fun. You just need to make sure that people associated with your business are in the personal networks of these decision influencers. Consider developing a series of giveaways and mailshots to send to these decision influencers.

Blogs refers to personal web publishing based on a topic or topics that attract a like-minded community of online participants. In other words, blogging is word of mouth on the web. Blogs exist dedicated to pretty much every subject you can imagine, from cars to politics to chocolate. You need to know about blogs because you can use them to your advantage. Blogs are run by enthusiasts and are usually independent of corporate ties: that’s their point, as well as their appeal. A few ways are:

* Start a blog
* Get in on the discussion by sending products or offering services to bloggers to review

Regulations now exist to control corporate blogging. These regulations ensure that consumers aren’t fooled into thinking that corporate remarks are those made by ordinary people.

Face-to-face marketing is a term used to describe the way your business can have a personal impact on individuals and groups. Face-to-face marketing’s personal, warm and human element gives it special marketing leverage.

Face-to-face marketing serves many purposes and can take a number of forms. You can sponsor someone else’s event or stage your own. You can buy exhibitor space in a trade show – a special kind of face-to-face marketing designed to put you in front of a lot of prospects in a hurry. And with the web at your command, you can inexpensively connect people via virtual face-to-face marketing. Some other examples of face-to-face marketing:

* Client appreciation day
* Musical performances
* Weekend golf with top clients
* Fundraising dinners
* Community events
* Having a presence at a trade show
* Attending a workshop

At the highest level of commitment, you can plan and manage your own events. Depending on the scale of the event, that process can be costly and difficult, but sometimes organizing it yourself is the best solution; especially if you want to have enough control to keep any other marketers from using the audience attention that the event generates. But you may also choose an event that others are organizing and sign on as a sponsor.

Relying on other businesses and industry opportunities has the benefit of collecting your prospective customers altogether in one place in common. Whatever the business-orientated opportunity, remember that you’re still trying to attract and hold the attention of people, not businesses. You’re interested in the people in any business who make the purchase decisions.

Being a part of a special event doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to be the primary host- it is possible to make some positive marketing just by cohosting or piggybacking on someone else’s event. Just be sure to decide- up front- exposure level between your company the other companies at the event. You can find local organizations by following the events notices in local papers and on regional radio stations. A number of web-based companies now help you locate possible events to sponsor.

You can attract a lot of positive attention from the media and your local community by sponsoring a fundraising event for a charity. This event sponsorship is, for obvious reasons, called cause-related event sponsorship. You can generate extremely valuable goodwill through cause sponsorship if the cause and event are appropriate to your target market. Donations to controversial causes or to political campaigns are likely to offend people. Stay away from anything contentious.

Too much money is thrown away on events that appeal to somebody at the sponsoring company but don’t appeal to its customers. Be careful to pick causes that appeal not only to you and your associates, but also to your target customers.

Be careful to examine the charity’s books and tax-exempt status before offering sponsorship or running an event to benefit it. Make sure it has full charitable status.

Be careful to pick a cause-related or other event that reaches your target customers efficiently. Like any marketing communication, an event sponsorship needs to deliver reach at a reasonable cost. So, ask yourself how many people will come to the event or hear of your sponsorship of it. Then ask yourself what percentage of this total is likely to be in your target market. That figure’s your reach.

If you think the event sponsorship is more credible and convincing than an ad because of its affiliation with an appealing cause, you can adjust your cost figure to compensate. Doing so is called weighting the exposure.

Sports aren’t the only option for sponsorship – consider arts initiatives or even TV and radio programs. To decide on the best approach for your company, use the three-step selection process:

1. Explore all options
2. Run the numbers
3. Screen for relevance (how closely the event relates to your product and its usage by customers)

Companies often stage custom events for their products and customers. Inexperienced firms should hire experts to avoid alienating customers and overburdening employees. Consider co-sponsoring with companies targeting similar audiences. Seek sponsors for relevant, novel events that attract their target demographic. Alternatively, hire an event management firm to handle sponsorships, organization, and execution.

Many companies may have an interest in the same event as you do, but for different reasons, and these firms make good co-sponsors. Basically, if the event is relevant, novel and likely to draw in their target audience, then you have a good pitch. Now you just need to go out and make sales calls to potential sponsors. Or consider hiring an event management firm that can sell sponsorships as well as help to organize and run events.

If an organization is involved in B2B situations, it is always recommended that they have a presence at trade shows and exhibitions to avoid potentially losing business to competitors. If you spend 20 per cent of your budget on trade shows, you need to beat the average and get more than 20 per cent of your leads from them. That means being a savvy event manager – selecting appropriate shows and staging excellent booths at them.

You can generate leads, find new customers and maintain or improve your current customers’ perceptions of you at trade shows. You can also use them to introduce a new product or launch a new strategy. It is also a great way to make connections within the industry.

Some questions that should be answered going into a trade show:

* How to attract the right people to the stand?
* What do you want visitors to the stand to do?
* How to communicate to the visitors?
* How to figure out who those visitors might be?
* How to capture information about those visitors?
* How can a relationship be built and maintained?

Qualitative interviews: conversations with customers or attendees at trade shows to gauge effectiveness of your stand.

Intercept interviews: walking up to random people to answer a few questions about your stand and how it measures up to others at the trade show.

Trade shows are often advertised in industry magazines: this is probably the best place to learn of upcoming events.

Companies that make trade show stands often also produce many other kinds of displays, such as those designed for the lobby, conference room and tabletop. These smaller-scale displays can be effective in the right spot and often cost you less than a trade show booth. We recommend getting opinions and quotes from multiple vendors (and asking for credit references and the contact names of some recent clients) before choosing the right company for your job. We also recommend sharing your budget constraints up-front to find out if the company you’re talking to is appropriate for you.

Offering some small, free, products with company branding is a good way to attract trade show attendees. Another way to do so is to offer some kind of snack or free bottled water. These are often referred to as: premium items, promotional items, or incentives. Some of the best- most memorable- incentives aren’t everyday items like pens and magnets, but some sort of puzzle or toy. Easy-to-carry items are best since attendees may have many things they are carrying throughout the show.

Field marketing or experiential marketing are terms used for when a demonstration of a product or service is performed at an event to draw the attention of people in attendance.

Sampling is the technical term for providing small samples of a product to invite the public to purchase more.

It is recommended that companies that offer demonstrations that feature samples provide realistic portions of the product for the public to gain a proper appreciation for that item.

Some ways to reinvigorate existing products include:

* Update the product’s appearance
* Update the product’s packaging
* Poll the public to ensure that your product is both attractive and easy to use
* Look for ways to enhance the readability of the product’s packaging
* Define your product’s best quality and emphasize this
* Define who your product is made for and what it can do for those people
* Revise or create a logo that is memorable
* Purchase a related- but not competing- product from another company to repackage and add to your product line

Developing and bringing new products to market is necessary to maintain viability. Looking at what other companies are doing and talking with consumers is a great way to get ideas of new product offerings. Old ideas or dead products, repackaged and presented in a new way, can be another method of producing new products.

A business may have both homeowners and businesses as customers and the marketing- specifically the product offering- needs to be different for each.

Many companies generate inventions that fall outside of their marketing and sales focus. They don’t want to take their eyes off their core activities. These companies are often willing to license to someone specializing in the target market.

A patent protects a design, a trademark protects a name or logo and a copyright protects writing, artwork, performances and software.

Trade Secrecy Laws protect confidential and valuable information (like formulas, software code, and business methods) from unauthorized use or disclosure. To qualify for protection, the information must be kept secret, have economic value, and be subject to reasonable secrecy measures. These laws provide remedies for misappropriation and are designed to encourage innovation while preventing unfair competition.

Benchmarking is the process of measuring and comparing your company's marketing performance, strategies, and tactics against those of competitors, industry averages, or best practices. It helps identify areas for improvement, sets realistic goals, and tracks progress over time.

Researchers who study new product success use the term intensity to describe this phenomenon – the more intense the difference between your new product and old products, the more likely the new product will succeed.

Branding is the process of creating a unique identity for a product, service, or company, encompassing visual elements, tone, messaging, and values. It aims to differentiate, build recognition and loyalty, and create emotional connections with customers. Effective branding communicates value and sets a company apart from competitors.

A product line is any logical grouping of products offered to customers. You usually identify product lines by an umbrella brand name, with individual brand identities falling under that umbrella.

Considering depth and breadth when designing new product lines is important because it allows businesses to meet specific customer needs (depth) and appeal to a wider range of customers (breadth). This balance enables companies to increase customer loyalty, market share, and revenue potential while staying competitive and efficient. A well-balanced product line ultimately enhances customer satisfaction and drives business growth.

If your distribution channels can’t display the full product line to customers, you need to decrease your depth or breadth (or both). Often, distribution becomes a bottleneck, imposing practical limits on how big a product line you can bring to the customer’s attention.

A Star Brand is a high-performing brand with high market share, sales growth, and profitability. It has a strong brand image, customer loyalty, and is often a leader in its industry. Star Brands drive business growth and are a priority focus for companies due to their exceptional performance and market position.

Secure legal protection for your brand by registering a unique identifier for your product, product line, or company. This safeguard can cover names, taglines, and logos, all of which are considered marks that represent your brand's identity. Specifically, a product's name and logo can be trademarked, while a business name is considered a word mark, both offering legal protection.

Consider registering as many different aspects of your product’s identity as you think are important to its commercial success (you can even register colors and smells, though companies have had mixed success with this).

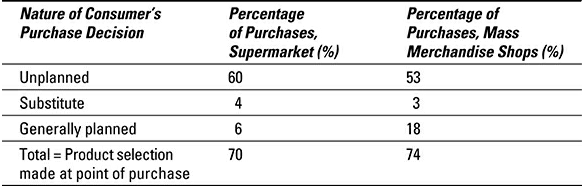
Your product must be noticeable, enticing and appear to be better than (and better value than) the competition.

Marketers must give careful thought to package design, regardless of the product. Services, ideas and even people are included because they can all be products in the right context.

Setting the stage, creating the set, and designing the costume are all elements comparable to creating a package that sells.

Point of purchase (POP) – The time and place at which a consumer actually buys something.

By focusing 90–100 per cent of your marketing attention on the point of purchase, you can handle this stage better than less focused competitors. You may want to at least think about this option, if for no other reason than its radical nature means your competition probably won’t think of it.



Some simple ways to get packaging to catch the eye of consumers:

* Choose a color that contrasts with those of your competitors
* Provide concise and clear language that the target audience can understand
* Use a companion website to list out technical information and extra information
* Show an example of a replacement item on the packaging for a complimentary sale
* Use emotional appeals on your packaging to draw in consumers
* Do something unconventional to add excitement and draw attention
* Design the packaging so that it can function in some helpful way

Champions are those customers who really love your product, who insist on buying it over others and who tell their friends or associates to do the same.

When, and if, a product appears to be nearing the end of its marketable life, then do not wait to kill it. The resources used to try and keep it going could be better used in support of a new product that will be able to carry itself in production cost and profitability.

Saturation means that you and your competitors are selling replacement products. You don’t have many new customers around to convert. Growth slows, limited by the replacement rate for the product, plus whatever basic growth occurs in the size of the target market.

The term product, in the marketing sense, usually extends to include whatever you’re offering, whether goods, services, ideas, or people.

If product engineers ever have reason to advise of some problem which may endanger others, *always* make the commitment to fix or recall that product- no matter the expense. Doing otherwise could be more damaging later if there are injuries or bad press that come about due to ignoring the situation. In fact, acting in a manner that takes customer safety into consideration before expense often results in a stronger reputation and commitment from the customers.

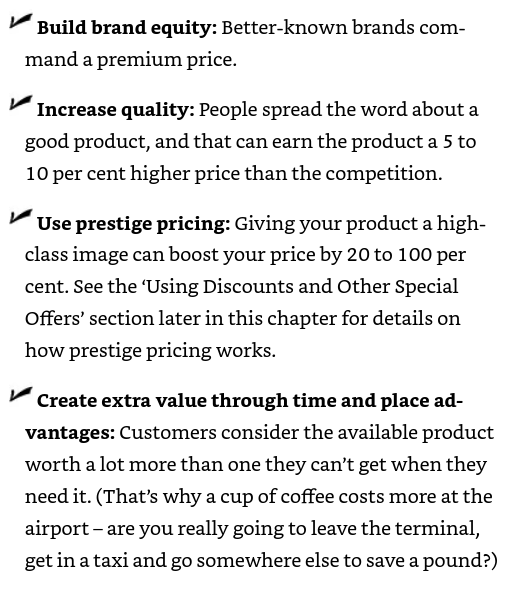
In some countries, the “coat-tail strategy” means that a new product can immediately follow a product that is being retired, thereby moving existing customers to the new product. Sometimes, the two products may be packaged together for a limited time, so that users of the old product can be converted.

The product line placeholding strategy, also known as the product line filling strategy, involves introducing new products within the same product line to fill gaps and offer a more comprehensive range of choices to consumers. This strategy aims to enhance market coverage, meet varying consumer preferences, and prevent competitors from filling those gaps.

Price lining, also known as product line pricing, is a pricing strategy where a business sets a limited number of prices for a specific group or line of products. This approach is designed to simplify the buying process for consumers and to maximize profit margins by strategically positioning products at different price points to target various market segments.

Some marketers believe businesses often fail due to prices being either too high or too low. Setting the right price is one of the toughest challenges, but finding the optimal pricing strategy greatly enhances the chances of success.

Some tips to raise or maintain a price, and still sell product:



Some customers may even assume that price correlates with quality – in which case, they don’t buy your product unless the price is high enough. Instead of assuming that you need a price cut whenever you want to boost profits, start by experimenting with a price increase.

Price sensitivity is the degree to which purchases are affected by price level.

Qualitative indicators are non-numeric measures that help assess consumers' price sensitivity. These indicators provide insights into how customers perceive and react to price changes. Here are some common qualitative indicators used to gauge price sensitivity:

1. **Customer Feedback:** Direct feedback from customers through surveys, interviews, and focus groups can reveal their perceptions of value and how sensitive they are to price changes.
2. **Perceived Value:** Understanding how customers perceive the value of a product relative to its price. If customers feel they are getting good value for their money, they may be less sensitive to price changes.
3. **Brand Loyalty:** Assessing the strength of customer loyalty to the brand. Strong brand loyalty often means customers are less sensitive to price changes, as they are more willing to pay a premium for a trusted brand.
4. **Competitor Comparison:** Observing how customers compare your prices with those of competitors. If customers frequently mention competitors offering better deals, it indicates higher price sensitivity.
5. **Purchase Intentions:** Evaluating how likely customers are to purchase at different price points through hypothetical scenarios or choice modeling.
6. **Customer Complaints:** Monitoring the frequency and nature of complaints related to pricing. A high number of price-related complaints can indicate sensitivity to price changes.
7. **Salesperson Insights:** Gaining insights from sales staff who interact with customers daily and can provide anecdotal evidence about customers' reactions to prices.
8. **Market Trends:** Observing broader market trends and consumer behavior changes that might impact price sensitivity, such as economic conditions or shifts in consumer preferences.
9. **Social Media Sentiment:** Analyzing social media conversations to gauge customer sentiment about prices and any perceived changes in value.
10. **Focus Groups:** Conducting focus groups to explore how different segments of the market perceive pricing and what factors influence their purchasing decisions.

Price sensitivity is the degree to which purchases are affected by price level – that is, how willing are customers to pay the price you’re asking.

Qualitative indicators in marketing are non-numerical factors that provide insights into the effectiveness of marketing strategies and the overall health of a brand. These indicators are often derived from observations, opinions, and subjective assessments. The more boxes are ticked from the below questions, the less price sensitive your customer is. If you tick multiple boxes, you probably can raise your prices without hurting sales significantly. The considerations are:

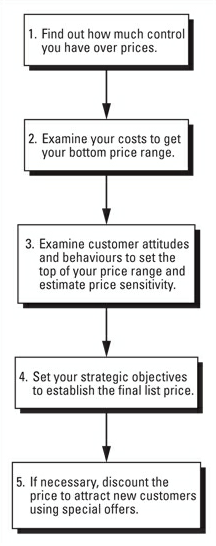
* Does the customer view the price as reasonable
* Is the product valuable at prices higher than an imitation product
* Is the product desperately needed
* Are substitutes unavailable
* Is the customer unaware of substitutes
* Does the customer consider comparing options difficult
* Does the product seem inexpensive to customers

Test price increases in a small area, if they seem to be working- roll that out to the surrounding market.

Some ways to raise profits without raising prices:

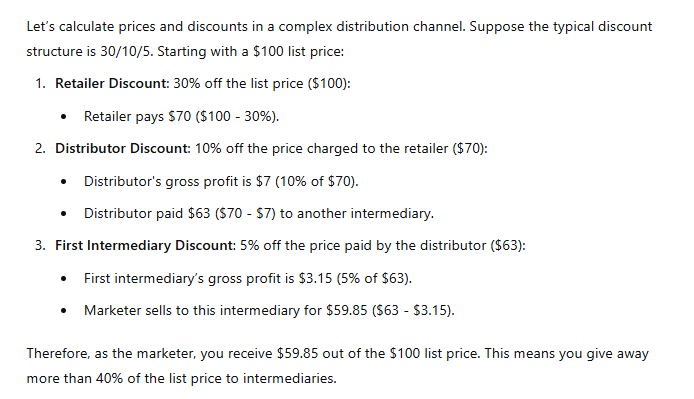
* Check to see if vendors are paying on debts within 45 days
* Look at discounts and allowances being offered
* If you charge a base price plus fees for extras, how do you assess these additional fees
* Is your fee structure out-of-date and not reflecting your cost structure accurately

A process to decide upon price setting is described below:



A trade discount structure specifies the percentage discounts given to intermediaries at different stages of distribution. For example, in a 30/10/5 structure, retailers receive a 30% discount, distributors get a 10% discount, and the first intermediary gets a 5% discount. This helps manage pricing and profits across the supply chain.

In a 30/10/5 discount structure, retailers get a 30% discount on a $100 list price, paying $70. Distributors then get a 10% discount on what they charge retailers, earning $7 and paying $63. The first intermediary receives a 5% discount on the distributor's price, making $3.15 and paying $59.85. Ultimately, the marketer receives $59.85 from the original $100 list price.



A multilevel distribution channel involves multiple intermediaries between the producer and the final consumer. Each intermediary, such as wholesalers, distributors, and retailers, adds a level to the distribution chain. This structure helps distribute products widely but involves various markups and discounts at each stage.

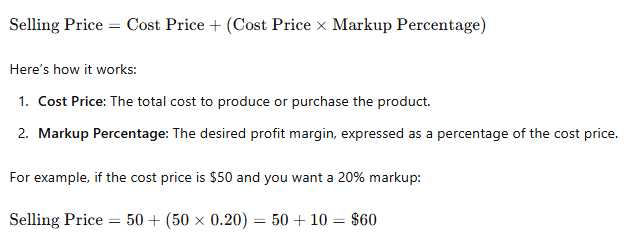
A trade discount is a reduction in the list price offered by a seller to buyers in the distribution channel, such as wholesalers, distributors, or retailers, to incentivize bulk purchases and streamline the supply chain.

A loss leader is a product sold at a loss to attract customers into a store or business, with the expectation that they will purchase additional items at full price.

Customer preference in retail refers to the specific choices and tastes of shoppers regarding products, brands, or shopping experiences. It includes factors like preferred product features, brands, pricing, store layout, and shopping channels. Understanding these preferences helps retailers tailor their offerings to meet customer needs and enhance satisfaction.

Pricing experts refer to the range where customers are indifferent to price changes as the indifference zone. In this zone, customers do not react to price increases or decreases. However, this zone shrinks as the product price rises.

Retailers should define their pricing range by balancing the cost of goods and desired profit margin with market research and customer value perception. They need to consider competitor prices and how customers perceive the product's value, choosing a pricing strategy that attracts customers while ensuring profitability.



You should be pricing at the top of the range and using the extra revenues to invest in quality and brand-building marketing promotions in order to increase market share.

To "skim the market" means to set a high initial price for a new or innovative product to target customers willing to pay a premium. This strategy aims to maximize profits from early adopters before eventually lowering the price to attract a broader customer base. It leverages the high demand from customers who are willing to pay more for the latest product. Don’t use a skimming strategy unless you’re sure that you’re safe from aggressive competition in the short term.

Odd-even pricing is a strategy where prices end in odd numbers (like $9.99) to make them appear lower than they actually are or even numbers (like $10) to suggest higher quality. The idea is that odd prices seem like a better deal, while even prices convey a sense of quality and consistency.

The only downside to using prices ending in 9 is that customers sometimes associate this pricing with cheap, low-quality products. So don’t use odd–even pricing when your customers are more quality than price sensitive.

Price lining, or product line pricing, is a strategy where a business sets different price points for products within the same category. This caters to various customer segments by offering economy, mid-range, and premium options, maximizing market coverage and encouraging upgrades to higher-priced options.

Competitive pricing is a strategy where a business sets its prices based on the prices of similar products or services offered by competitors. This approach aims to attract customers by offering better value compared to competitors, either by undercutting their prices or matching them while providing additional benefits. It helps businesses remain competitive in the market, respond to price changes by rivals, and potentially gain market share by appealing to price-sensitive customers.

Sometimes you should just price exactly at a competitor’s price. You may want to match prices if you plan to differentiate your product on the basis of some subtle difference.

Special offers are temporary inducements to make customers buy on the basis of price or price-related factors. Special offers play with the price, giving consumers (or intermediaries) a way to get the product for less – at least while the offer lasts.

Maintaining your list price and offering a discount is a good idea if:

* You have a short-term reason such as for countering a competitor
* When you want to experiment with a price before committing to a permanent price
* When you want to stimulate customers to try your product
* When the list price needs to stay high to signal quality or to maintain consistency with other products in your line
* When competitors are offering lower prices and you have no choice but to do so to remain competitive

Sometimes, special pricing and deals flood the market and this can attract price switchers- those people who are not loyal to a product and will switch to another brand based only on price.

As you decide on a promotion strategy, be sure to check that the promotion is legal. Legal constraints do exist. You can’t mislead consumers about what they get. And a sweepstake or contest has to be open to all, not tied to product purchase.

Any certificate entitling the holder to a reduced price is a coupon, which is a pretty broad definition – and that means you have a lot of room for creativity in this field. Collect a handful of recent coupons from your own and other industries to get an idea of available options and how they’re utilised.

When it comes to coupons, it is recommended that a business look at all kinds of competitor coupons to see what offers may be viable. Then: don’t flood the market with them. Issue them sparingly and they will have more impact.

Redemption rates in marketing measure the percentage of distributed coupons or offers that consumers use. They indicate the effectiveness of a promotional campaign: higher rates mean more engagement, while lower rates suggest less appeal.

If you’re distributing coupons via the Internet or email, make sure you explicitly state who can use the coupon and whether it can be used once or multiple times.

Marketers should be cautious when partnering with companies like Groupon because the deep discounts required can erode profit margins and attract deal-seekers rather than loyal customers. This can negatively impact brand perception and overwhelm operations if redemption rates are high. Additionally, Groupon takes a significant share of the revenue from these deals, further impacting profitability.

Self-liquidating premiums are promotional items sold to consumers at a reduced price, with the cost covered by the consumers' payments. This marketing strategy boosts sales, engages customers, and builds brand loyalty without significantly impacting profit margins.

A premium is any product that you give away to customers or sell at a discount as a reward for doing business with you.

Price fixing is an illegal practice where businesses agree to set prices at a certain level, rather than letting competition in the market determine them. This is bad in marketing because it stifles competition, leads to higher prices for consumers, reduces market efficiency, and can result in legal penalties and damage to a company's reputation.

Exchanging pricing information is bad in marketing because it can lead to price fixing, where businesses collude to set prices at agreed-upon levels. This undermines competition, results in higher prices for consumers, reduces market efficiency, and can lead to severe legal penalties and reputational damage for the companies involved.

Bid rigging is an illegal practice where businesses collude to predetermine the winner of a bidding process. It undermines fair competition, inflates prices, reduces market efficiency, and can lead to legal penalties and reputational damage. This harms consumers and other businesses by preventing fair market practices.

Parallel pricing is when companies in the same industry set similar prices without directly agreeing to do so. This often happens in markets with few large competitors. It can occur naturally as companies watch and respond to each other's prices, or due to shared market conditions. While not illegal on its own, regulators may investigate if it harms competition or consumers.

Companies with a wide and efficient distribution network are often the most successful because it gives them access to so many potential customers.

Some distribution strategies to consider are:

* Adding distributors or expanding networks helps your product reach a wider audience
* Increase sales by boosting the visibility of your products within distribution channels
* Increase the availability of your products to distributors
* Create a list of important distributors, and develop a relationship with those entities
* Use distributors as a low-cost way of expanding by giving them deals to sell for you
* Consider deeper discounts for distributors if you feel your business hasn’t achieved it’s full potential

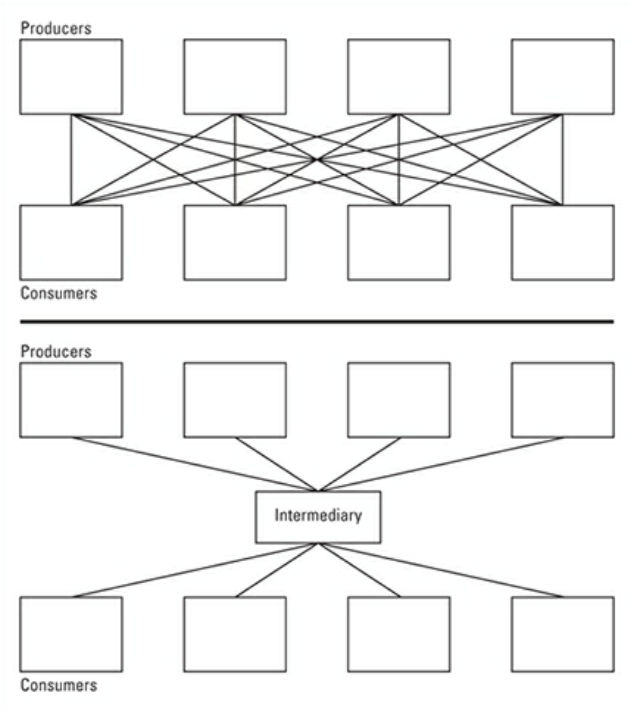
To locate distributors to work with, try local trade associations, internet searches, industry conventions, and identify local retail trade associations that can lead you to these distributors.

Distribution channel design involves creating efficient pathways for products to move from producers to consumers. It is crucial in marketing as it ensures product availability, enhances customer satisfaction, reduces costs, and provides a competitive edge. Effective design enables broader market reach, better coverage, and adaptability to changing consumer demands, essential for business growth and success.

Intermediaries are vital in marketing as they bridge the gap between producers and consumers, enhancing distribution efficiency and market reach. They streamline processes, reduce costs, and provide expertise in logistics and customer interactions. By managing inventory and offering customer support, intermediaries allow producers to focus on manufacturing, ultimately contributing to improved customer satisfaction and overall business success.

Although intermediaries add their mark-up to the price, they often reduce overall costs of distribution because of their effect on the number of transactions. Adding a level of intermediaries to a channel reduces the total number of transactions that all producers and customers need to do business with each other.

Be suspicious of multi-level channels. The longer and more complex they grow, the more types of intermediaries they have. It is recommended a company have only one layer between themselves and their customer to assure positive communications between the two.



The trend is toward simpler, more direct channels and marketers need to be prepared to handle a large number of customer transactions on their own without as much help from intermediaries. Database management techniques alone do much to make this future possible.

When deciding how to distribute your product, draw up a list of tasks you want distributors to do. You’re more likely to get a good match if you decide what you’d like them to do and then seek out distributors who say they want to do those things for you. Some of these things may be:

* Finding new customers
* Researching customer attitudes and desires
* Managing point-of-purchase promotions
* Transporting products
* Local advertising
* Sharing in the risk of doing business
* Combining your products with other products for appropriate assortment

Market coverage increases as you add intermediaries to your distribution channel. As you increase market coverage, you increase your availability to customers, which in turn maximizes your sales and market share.

Thinking about the issue of market coverage in terms of intensity, defined as the extent of your geographic coverage of the market, can help you work out how many and what types of distributors to use. There are three general strategies here:

* An intensive distribution strategy aims to maximize product availability by placing it in as many retail outlets as possible, ensuring wide market reach and accessibility for consumers
* A selective distribution strategy involves choosing a limited number of retail outlets to sell a product, balancing market coverage and control over the brand's image and sales efforts
* Exclusive distribution is a marketing strategy where a manufacturer or supplier grants a single distributor or retailer the exclusive right to sell their product within a specific geographic area or market, limiting availability to only one channel