

Writing the Winning Marketing Plan in 2024

Many people believe that the basic objective in marketing is *convincing* prospects that you have a better product, and that in the long run of good and not-so-good products, the best products and service will win in the marketplace.

Simply not true! Marketing is not about “convincing”!

That concept was not true before the dynamic changes caused during the Covid years of 2020-2022, nor is it true today and in the still unfolding unknowns of the marketing rich B2B and B2C environments of 2024! In fact, the world of marketing will be at the very center of the generative AI revolution providing a wide spectrum of brand-new processes, tools, and technologies and even new mediums that will reshape our interpretations of marketing. Having come through the best and the worst of 2020-2023, we definitely know today that the entire essence of marketing has dramatically shifted from “convincing”, and “pushing” to providing more definitive, more transparent, more human and more objective value propositions for the people we want to have buy our products and services. Somewhere during the massive changes we’ve experienced both personally and corporately during the last three years from the impact of Covid to the wars in Ukraine and Israel, we’ve now come to expect more access, and more immediate and transparent access, to data and “the truth”
...assuming that there’s “truth” in marketing.

In our consulting practice at [Derby Management](#) and in my classroom and lab at [The Derby Entrepreneurship Center at Tufts](#) where I teach two courses-one in Marketing and the other titled “The Science of Sales”, I’ve experienced multiple years of extraordinarily exciting change in my approach to everything about Marketing, and I’m looking forward to an even more dramatic environment of change during 2024.

In 2020 through 2023, and so far into 2024, we know that the old 2019 rules as they applied to both Marketing and Sales have been turned upside down such that our corporate B2B buyers are dictating just how and when they want to be marketed and how they want to be sold to...and not how we think that they should listen to us.

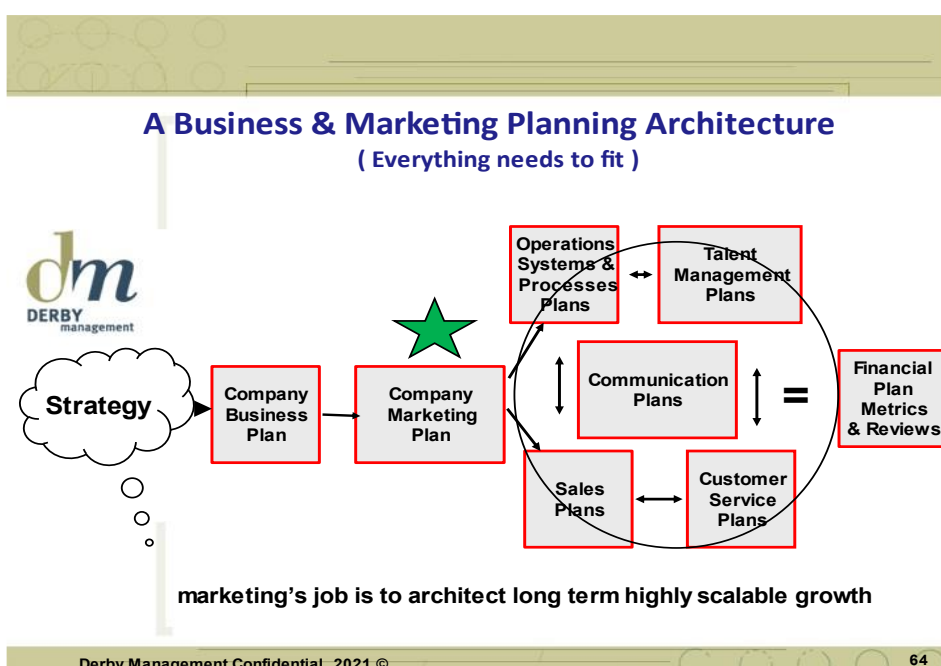
Individual people, or “personas” as we refer to them, buy our products and services no matter if we’re marketing in a corporate B2B world or directly to individual consumers. Personas... not “consumers”, “targets”, “populations”, or the very worst and most inhuman B2B word: “leads”. Personas are real people, and it doesn’t make any difference if that person is the CEO of a major corporation, and she is making a decision on manufacturing machinery for millions of dollars or the person is a consumer, like you and me, who is scrolling through websites, social media, and blogs to buy just the right pair of hiking shoes for \$115.

“Marketing is Everything” is my favorite phrase when talking about Marketing, Marketing is all-inclusive in every medium, every process, every campaign and in every techstack that ensures that at the end of that consideration, that research, and that period of education that some person, *some real human being*, will make a decision to purchase your product or your service...*or not*.

The focus of this most 2024 edition of our Writing the Winning Marketing Plan is heavily tilted to the world of B2B Marketing and Sales since that’s where my experience resides with a few notable exceptions of running an outerwear apparel company and also a medtech device company focused on selling to chain pharmacy. Having said that, I’ve found that many of the same marketing tactics will apply to both B2B and B2C with the most significant being our focus at our consulting company on building detailed definitions of the personas who will make the decisions to purchase and the value propositions that apply to those specific personas. These two fundamental building blocks of persona creation and the process of constructing specific value propositions for each of those persons are baseline principles that underpin our entire strategic approach to marketing. Any company, any business and any management team needs to be marketing and selling specific value and the accompanying trust that their company will deliver that value consistently.

I’m often long-winded both in my writing and speech, so I thought that I would get right down to specific hard tactics and decision making for you as you go about creating or updating your annual marketing plan. Of course, you probably already have a marketing plan today at some level. You may be updating that right now given the huge amount of change that’s resulted from 2023, and the continuing tsunami of change and unknowns that we will be going through in 2024.

You may also be thinking through the annual rhythm of your company's 2024 business planning cycle, which probably began last October or November and which formed the foundation of the strategies, processes, details, and the costs of your company's 2024 business plan. At the very center of that business plan would sit your marketing plan. It defines market direction, product definition, customer focus and sets in motion the tactical success of your salespeople. In essence, your marketing plan is the most critical component of your entire 2024 business plan! Nothing...not product, not engineering and not your sales organization is more important!



The rhythm of business never stops its annual planning cycle whether that's for Marketing, for Sales, for Customer Success, for Engineering or for the entire business since they are all tightly interrelated. But at the core of every business is the criticality of your marketing strategy which set the plan for the market penetration, the product definitions, your pricing plan, and the model and shape of your sales organization for the year ahead.

The 10 bottom-line B2B guidelines as you think about your 2024 plan:

1. Marketing's #1 job is to create qualified leads for your salespeople.
2. Begin with detailing the markets, then personas, and then value propositions.
3. Focus on more leads, of course, but focus more on better conversion rates.
4. Everything must be planned out in detail with a consistent focus on ROI.
5. "Value Marketing" focuses on personas and the specific value for them.
6. Never has real trust and empathy been more important than now.
7. Everything is an experiment: try it, if it works, continue! If it doesn't, stop!
8. Inbound Marketing tactics outweigh Outbound. Digital-First!
9. There are more marketing tactics and choices than ever before.
10. Your choices of those strategies and tactics constitute your marketing plan

Marketing is not about "convincing"!

1. First, it would never work, and, if "convincing" were to work, it would be for very small volumes, and the opportunity to get repeat business would be minimal. Just think about your own experience where you were talked into purchasing something, but ultimately realized that neither the personal nor the business value was there. Not only that, but the process itself when you reflected on it left you feeling "cheated" or made to feel "*less than*" in some manner. Think about that statement of "*less than*", and it happens far too often to all of us especially in some consumer markets like car-buying! Personally, I would rather endure a root canal, which is exactly why I've bought my annual (I drive a ton of miles every year) Subaru purchase for the past 10 years directly online.
2. By itself, the word "convincing" carries with it immediate negative connotations. Neither you nor I want to be convinced! We want to buy something that has value for us personally or for our business...and preferably both.

For each of my marketing courses at Tufts and at MIT, I always begin the first class with a very large whiteboard and ask the simple question... **"Just what is marketing?"** ...and then I begin to write out those words on the whiteboard that are shouted out from the students.

I certainly hear “convincing” a lot, along with “advertising”, “selling”, “branding”, “promoting”, “storytelling”, “designing”, “communicating” plus a host of singular phrases defining the mediums that would be used social media to billboards to TV to trade shows and probably another ten channel mechanisms.

I frequently joke that if you’re sitting in a board meeting with other directors or you’re around the table in any academic discussion with professors, and if you want to chew up time on the clock, all you need to do is to throw into the mix, that very same question- **“So, just what is marketing anyway?”** Then just sit back and count the definitions.

In fact, all of these definitions answering the question of “just what is marketing?” are correct, but and also incorrect since these particular words define only fragmented pieces of the much larger ecosystem which is that **“Marketing is Everything!”**, which I purposefully have borrowed from the title of the iconic [Harvard Business Review article](#) written in February, 1991 by [Regis McKenna](#), one of the very small number of real pioneers of what today we know as California’s Silicon Valley, the tech center of the world. Over the past 20 years in my teaching and in my sales and marketing consulting with hundreds of our customers at [Derby Management](#), I have always returned to the simplicity of this singular phrase that **“Marketing is Everything”**.

It’s a phrase that for me simplifies the discussion about what marketing is since it provides a common foundation on top of which we can build whatever specific components we want constrained only by our own sales objectives, our expense budgets, and our own schedules of what we are planning to impact in that specific period of time defined by our business plan.

By specific periods of time, I am referring to the standard business plan measures of months, quarters, and the complete fiscal year. Normally, in most years, you want to build out your marketing plan for 12 months measured by quarterly and annual metrics based on a series of marketing tactics that align with your objectives and fit into both your overall business strategy and, of course, into your budget. During the abnormal periods of 2020-2022, we knew that our timeframe for marketing campaigns of any kind needed to be reduced to very short periods while we experimented with what would and would not work.

In fact, there were very few long-term “campaigns” of any kind, and marketing “strategies” were shortened to one-two and three-month tactical experiments. Although, we are not much more stabilized in 2024, we are conditioned to work in abnormal times, and, as such we will continue to be much more short-term focused and very concentrated on immediate lead generation of highly qualified leads. Perhaps as we look into 2025, we can look out again to 12 and 18-month marketing strategies and longer-term campaigns...once we declare 2024 a success! But personally, I don’t think so even though our forecast for 2024 is positive with more upsides than downsides although it’s going to be a bumpy ride given the geopolitical wars and the craziness and finger-pointing of the U.S. elections. Given that, 2024 is going to be a year in which as managers we need to put our hard hats on and buckle up!

Marketing today is the process of creating a balance between the objectively factual half of our brain with the emotional other half. In reality, there’s never a balance between the two since in the real world, this process always becomes an overweighting of one side or the other. From my own background, I grew up in a non-digital world with very limited choices of just a few media channels, billboards, snail-mailed documents, expensive conferences, and trade shows.

Nowhere is this principle of balance between hard facts and emotional satisfaction better exhibited than in the world of cars. The reality of my car life in the 40,000 miles I drive each year is the annual purchase of a new Subaru which is a very practical purchase triggered just before that mileage period when I would need to put money into new tires and new brakes. The [Subaru Outback](#) is very practical ranking at the top of most lists for safety, economy and resale value, and overall, it’s not a bad looking car. Subaru’s marketing is based primarily on safety and economy with lots of videos showing multi generations of diverse families driving in bad weather.

The Subaru marketers have chosen their personas very carefully such that they can apply their marketing perfectly to their carefully chosen personas by blending the practicality of economy and safety and high trade-in value on one side balanced nicely with the emotions of being outdoors with the family on the other.

Then I think about the other car I owned up until last November when I traded in my 2014 Corvette Stingray. I loved that car, but its purchase was totally all emotion based on a really great marketing campaign which was all about the return of the iconic Stingray from the 1960's. I am sure that there are a few paragraphs in the car's manual car about its practical side and safety features, but 98% of that purchase was based on its unbelievable styling and the perceptions of owning an American legend. As to "the facts" of the car, yes, just once, I did actually test the claim of the 0 to 60mph in 2.8 seconds. I actually achieved closer to 70mph, and I know that since the very nice police officer clocked me in a 30mph zone. Not my proudest moment, but it did not stop me from trading in for a 2020 Corvette. Clearly no factual reasoning behind a candy-apple red car with only two seats sitting directly in front of a massive engine...except that it makes me *feel good* when I take it out in the summer.

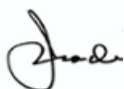
We have a lot to cover in this book, so I wanted to outline here what will come in the following pages:

1. This is a “how to” guide on *how to* write a marketing plan for a B2B company selling products through salespeople, distribution partners and/or direct online in a digital-first world of purchasing.
2. It’s a structured approach in creating a document or a series of PowerPoint slides and Excel sheets which take the reader from choosing markets to defining personas to creating value propositions while figuring out the tactics and their related expenses that will be used to apply the messaging of those value propositions to those personas.
3. It’s a structure used in my classrooms at Tufts for years given that my juniors, seniors, and graduate students are required to deliver complete marketing plans to their clients in a period of a 13-week semester. Each student becomes a member of a four-to-six-person team working each week with the senior management of real companies typically between \$1 million and \$50 million in annual revenue. If you’re interested in participating in this process at some time, just connect with me directly, and we can discuss this very unique and structured approach to creating marketing plans. To make sure that this process of teaching is similar to the real world of business, the senior management of the companies provides 40% of the semester’s grade for their team while I and my TAs provide the remaining 60%.

I hope that you enjoy reading this, and if you have comments or want to made edits or additions, just connect with me, and we can set up a time to talk.

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“Best of Success” in creating your own 2024 Marketing Plan.



Head Coach, [Derby Management Site](#)

-Sales & Marketing Productivity Experts

-Business & Strategy Planning Specialists

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Derby Management User Manual/Marketing Planning 2024

Background

As part of our marketing and sales work with customers at Derby Management and my own teaching at Tufts, where I've been the Director of what was then call the Tufts Entrepreneurship Center, and now very proud of having the Center renamed as the ["Derby Entrepreneurship Center@Tufts"](#), I introduced a common marketing planning process in 2019. It served its original purpose, and, in fact, it continues as the second section of this book. At that time, I was more concerned with the actual planning *process* of the annual marketing plan itself, plus my focus was oriented to "larger" companies where the best companies look to the head of marketing to lead the process of their annual business plan.

Yes, of course, the CEO or the President of most companies is going to kick off the annual business planning process for the entire company in September or October, and the CFO could very well be *"the task master"* in keeping everyone on schedule so that the plan and budget end up in the board of director's hands in December. But it's the CMO or the VP of Marketing who should begin this process by detailing what is happening in the market, providing an overview of competitors, and summarizing customer research while bringing everyone together to think through an annual update of the company's SWOT assessment. That simple marketing tool of a SWOT analysis actually becomes one of the critical foundation blocks for both the company's business and its marketing plans.

This 2024 edition of our ebook on writing a marketing plan is a "how-to" book. It's a book written on the basics of what it takes to construct a baseline marketing plan. I wrote it really as an actual construction book, not on the overall marketing process per se (that's the second half). The first half of this book is focused on what a marketing plan should include in its various components and what the flow of your plan should look like.

- The components of the plan-what it includes and does not include.
- The flow from beginning to end-what comes first, what goes last.
- A fundamental that Marketing is the most critical component of any business plan.

This is not a book about the subject of marketing per se. It's assumed that the reader will have an understanding of many of the basics of marketing, which may extend to the details of the importance of and the differences between Inbound and Outbound Marketing...*although this specific is not necessary*. In fact, I provide an overview of this right below. For my purposefully simplistic way of thinking strategically about marketing, this is a critical understanding of what marketing is in 2024!

Inbound Marketing is...



Inbound Marketing which is the integration of:

- SEO in all site content
- Blogging
- social media
- email marketing

Basically Inbound is **“Permission-Based”**
“I gave you permission to market to me”

To really understand Inbound, where we heavily focus, we encourage you to read our friend, David Meerman Scott’s classic book titled [The New Rules of PR & Marketing](#). It is **the** perfect read. It’s also an easy and comfortable read. Authoritative and responsible! A definite “must-read” if you want to be in marketing of any kind today.



Outbound Marketing is basically *“everything else”*. It also includes a type of email marketing, which is usually those annoying spammed emails, which never seem to go away even after we try repeatedly to block any future sends.

Basically, it is **non-permission** based as in...

“I did not give you permission to market to me, but you did it anyhow.”!

Inbound is:

“I gave you permission to market to me”.

“I gave you my email and signed up for blogs, videos, social media posts and podcasts”

“I searched using keywords that were SEO-optimized on your site”

“I clicked on Accept in your cookie statement”

Outbound is...

“I did not give you permission to market to me, but you did anyhow”

- spam emails from purchased lists
- robocalls
- junk snail mail and flyers
- TV, radio, billboards, outside signs
- trade shows, industry conferences although some will be Inbound

Just an added note of clarification as to “email-marketing” since it is in both categories of Inbound and Outbound. Where it actually fits as to Inbound or Outbound is defined by whether *permission* was given to the person to whom you were emailing, or it is just spam that was blasted out and results in the recipient clicking on “block sender”. As an example, I’m a big user of both Home Depot and Orvis, and sometimes their very frequent email ads seem like spam, but the fact remains that I gave them permission. I love the products and the companies. I use their products all the time, and it takes 5 seconds for me to quickly look an email that just maybe will have a special deal or a new product.

By the way, think about that comment of “5 seconds”.

- First, 5 seconds for a review is above the average for a B2C or B2B product that actually made it into your Inbox.
- Second, you read most probably and acted on it in 5 seconds...probably less unless it was one of your current trusted suppliers. On the other side of that receipt of an ad or a blog post or a CTA (Call to Action) with content that you made a decision on in 5 seconds, was a marketing person and department where it most likely took a full workweek to create the material, get approval for it and then review those analytics to measure its ROI in terms of actual purchases and its brand impact.

It’s very important to point out that Inbound and Outbound Marketing is...

- ...**not** “old” compared to “new”.
- ...**not** “digital” compared to “non-digital”.

The definition is all about the simplicity of “permission” and “no-permission”, and one thing that I keep focused on regarding marketing is keeping the decision making simple even though the actual application of the tactics will be complex.

This book, my consulting and my teaching of marketing is very heavily weighted to Inbound, but I also understand the importance of Outbound in many companies and their respective personas, but tactic for tactic, impact to impact and cost to cost, I will always lean heavily to Inbound.

- It's far less expensive on a cost-per-lead basis especially for blogs and posts.
- Business decision makers spend 3x more time reading blogs than emails.
- They spend 10x more time looking at short-reel videos than blogs.
- It's much more immediate and therefore more-timely relative to any CTA.
- It can be experimented with, measured, changed again and again all instantly.

[Inbound Marketing vs. Outbound Marketing \(hubspot.com\)](https://www.hubspot.com/marketing/inbound-vs-outbound)

Why is Marketing Planning important?

The process of planning out your marketing strategies (your “primary overarching directions”), your marketing tactics and your month-by-month activities is governed first by your business objectives for that quarter, for that year, and then by your own most limited resources, which are always Time & Money.

Creating the plan itself needs to be a formal process, and it needs to be accomplished within the framework of bringing together an annual business plan while at the same time being responsible for the daily, monthly, and quarterly lead generation required by your Sales department. Add to that, the requirement that your marketing plan must be tightly integrated with all the other management functions of the business since it’s impossible to complete any marketing plan without the input and full buy-in of the senior managers of sales, engineering, operations, and finance.

All of this work of architecturally figuring out the plan needs to be within the overarching framework of satisfying the needs of your customers by providing them with the best business and personal value (not just products and services) that they need to provide value to their customers. At the end of the day, we need to be selling specific personal and business value to real people.

At the end of this thinking about marketing and executing on whatever marketing planning process you decide to employ, the two fundamental baselines in any marketing plan will always be “Time & Money”, as in:

- *“I don’t have enough.”*
- *...and “I need more.”*

Marketing Planning is about an orderly transition into the future.

Back-in-the-day in the normality of 2019, as a manager, you might have enjoyed letting some of your marketing activities “*just happen*” since the economy in general and your business results specifically were “*pretty good*”. If the pandemic had not occurred, you might be spending the beginning of 2024 dusting off your 2023 plan and reformatting it based on where you ended in 2023 and as you looked out to your company’s expanded growth objectives for 2024. Normal marketing in normal times.

Today, everything has changed because of Covid, which makes the quarter-by-quarter planning for marketing...and for your business...more imperative than ever before. Today, if you want to fully understand and manage your growth, improve your revenue line, boost your margins, and improve your profits while scaling your company's future, then planning your marketing plan is not an option, it's mandatory! With the crisis and absolute fear surrounding Covid now somewhat reduced, that same sense of market unknowns is again top of mind as a result of the geopolitical wars and the U.S. election, both of which will affect your marketing plan.

Planning of any kind...your business planning, marketing planning, sales planning, or product planning...is not something set apart from the rest of the business; it's at the very heart and soul of how you manage your business. The result of business planning of any kind, and especially marketing planning, is that you and your team, in a very organized manner, will be able to define and then execute real value creation for both your own business and the businesses of your customers. It's that fundamental a basic need for any business today made even more emphatic by the radical changes brought on during 2020 and now into the unknowns and cautions of 2024! On the very positive, rather than just cautionary side, are all of the potential advances in marketing through the use of generative AI.

The discipline of your marketing planning also requires you to continually research, survey, and interview both your prospects and your current customers, along with consistently reassessing your various markets in order to develop and test alternative options for growing your business. This process allows you to be more prepared for the unexpected, the essence of which was very efficiently summed up by Pasteur... *"Chance favours the prepared mind."*

The Marketing Planning Process

Objectives and Expectations

Your marketing plan will serve several purposes and contains a variety of categories since it will serve a variety of business functions from strategy to sales to engineering and product development to finance.



This graphic to the left is overly simplistic but does define the primary categories which will need to be included in your marketing plan. The key will be to make sure that your marketing plan takes the various readers from high level general strategy down to usable tactics which impact forecasted revenue and everyone's integrated responsibilities.

The most important aspect of your own marketing plan is to keep at the top of your mind as you are creating the actual document which will often be a PowerPoint deck, the overarching statement driving the annual business plan that "our company's business objectives for this year (or better stated "these quarters" are) are...". Always focus on the end points whether those end points are financial or brand awareness or tactical implementation or lead gen...and most probably multiple combinations of all of these.

In fact, those objectives should be clearly stated at the very beginning of your marketing plan and most probably summarized again at the end. For example, pricing, one of the infamous "4 P's" (which term I personally dislike as being much overly simplistic, out-of-touch and way out-of-date) may not be important to that year's business plan and therefore the marketing plan, so there would be no sense in working through your pricing strategies, one of the most complex aspects in creating any marketing plan. Having said that, if you have decided not to change your pricing for 2024, there should at least be a comment in your marketing plan as to why you did not go into any depth of a pricing analysis at this particular time.

If I were to create a more inclusive graphic of the primary components of a classic marketing plan, it would look somewhat like what I've outlined below. The degree of which these components would be detailed in the plan, would again depend on the objectives of your business and the specifics of your marketing plan for that period of time, which, would most probably be for twelve months.



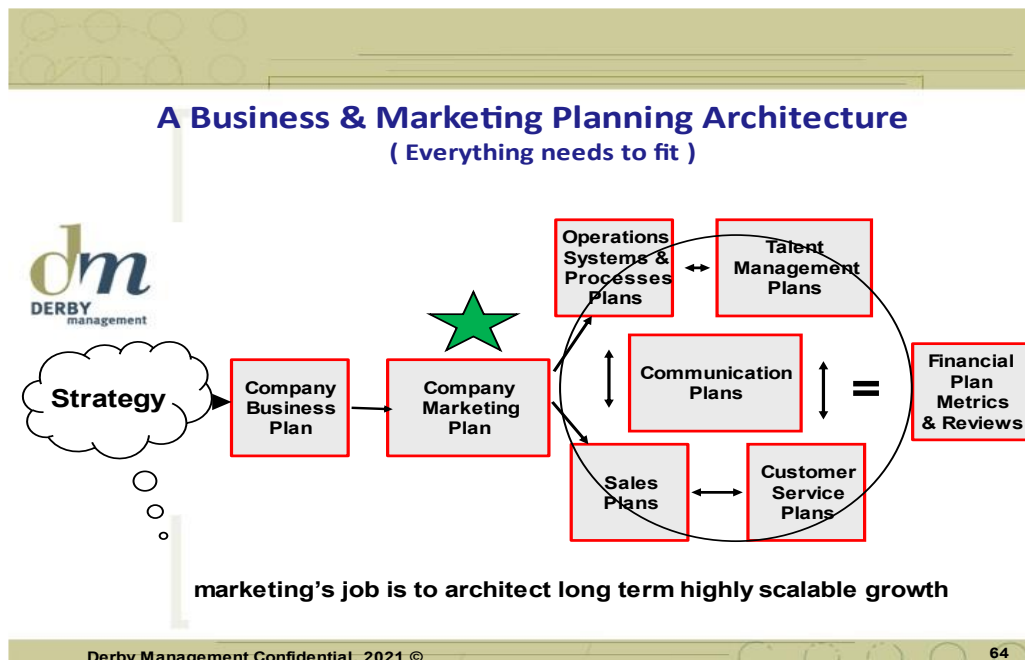
Your Marketing Plan will therefore have a diverse set of many readers.

Your company's marketing plan will be read by all the internal managers in your company and, most probably, by your company's outside directors to help them understand the overall strategy of the business as a whole, the specific marketing strategy and the primary marketing, sales and products tactics that will be employed along with the budgets and sales forecasts for the year. In 2024, this is more important than ever so rather than 12 months at a time, our recommendation is that your marketing plan should be looking out for the next six months incorporating a set of quarterly tactical pillars. One quarter into 2024, then regen your plan for the remaining nine months since by that time, you will have more specifics as to the impact on your business from the wars and the potential outcomes of the U.S. elections.

Marketing success in 2024 is about employing the basics of marketing but layered on top of that is a new baseline about adopting and implementing rapid change when either your business or the market...or both...require change, and it is our belief that this year of 2024 will continue to change very quickly in both of the worlds of marketing and of sales as a direct result of employing AI tools.

The senior management team will all participate to some degree in the company marketing plan to ensure that the company's business objectives can be achieved as a result of the longer-term strategies and especially the quarter-by-quarter tactics and campaigns that will be launched as the company's investment in marketing for that next period of time year. Again, our baseline is always that *"Marketing is Everything"*, and marketing sets the direction of any business!

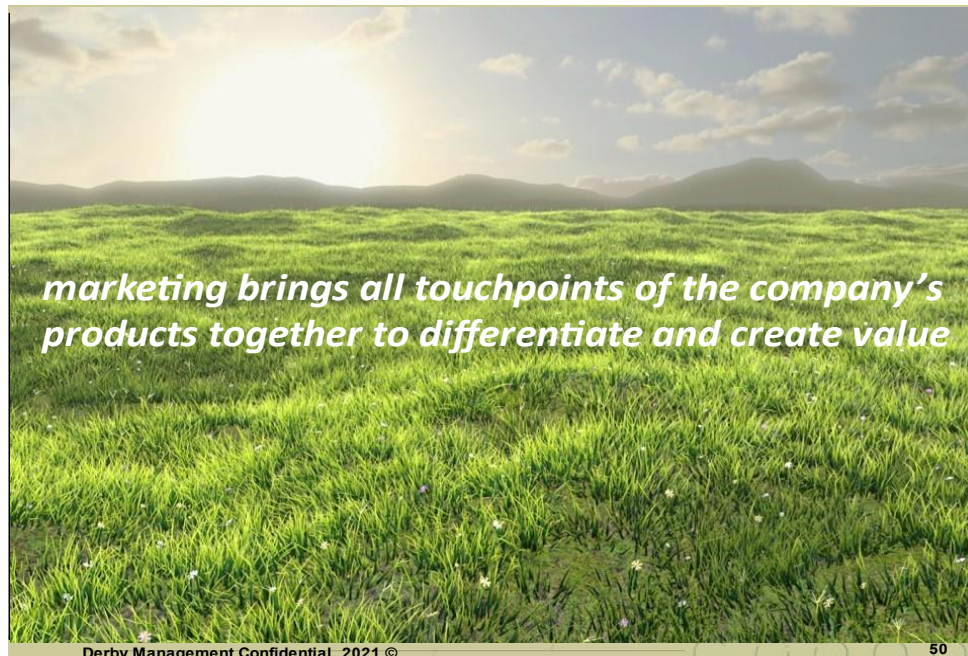
For me the connected structure of any company...and therefore any planning of any kind...pulls together all the various big block components of the business.



One could argue that the overall strategy of the business sets the primary directions/initiatives/thrusts of the company, and, yes, that's correct that strategy is the Alpha Dog in any business. While strategy defines the overarching 12 and 18-month primary directions, everything in your marketing plan needs to move management of the business down from the lofty clouds of strategy into the real world of month-by-month, quarter-by-quarter tactical implementation such that everyone is unified around a detailed marketing playbook on how to win.

Your marketing plan defines everything from markets to personas to products to tactics and sales forecasts. It becomes the core component of the company's business plan providing both direction and scope of all the other functions of the company. Finance's job then becomes the measuring, the reporting, and the future modelling of the results. Overly simplistic? Yes, and it's meant to be, since the critical takeaway is that *"Marketing is Everything"*!

[Chris Colbert](#), a friend of mine, and a noted marketer, author, and worldwide speaker on marketing and leadership, best describes marketing both simply and elegantly as...



This importance of this word, **“value”** I first learned from Chris a decade plus ago, and it has now become a core principle of what I know, how I think, what I focus on in our work with our clients and an underlying principle of how I teach at Tufts and MIT.

For decades, in Sales and in Marketing, we’ve focused on the Seller side of the table between buying and selling with an overabundance of words, graphics and tactics directed to the “features” that we provide through our products and services. In fact, we extend that thought process even further by immediately telling our “targets” about the specific “benefits” that they will achieve by purchasing our products, and our products compared to our competitors.

We will discuss “Value Marketing” and “Value Selling” in great detail as this book unfolds, since delivering value to the individuals who decide to buy and use our products and service is at the very heart of the decisions you will make in your own marketing tactics and, in fact, in the structure of your sales organization. But, before we get there, I want to first lay out two additional concepts.

The first is to take another look at the criticality of the use and the timing of your marketing plan.

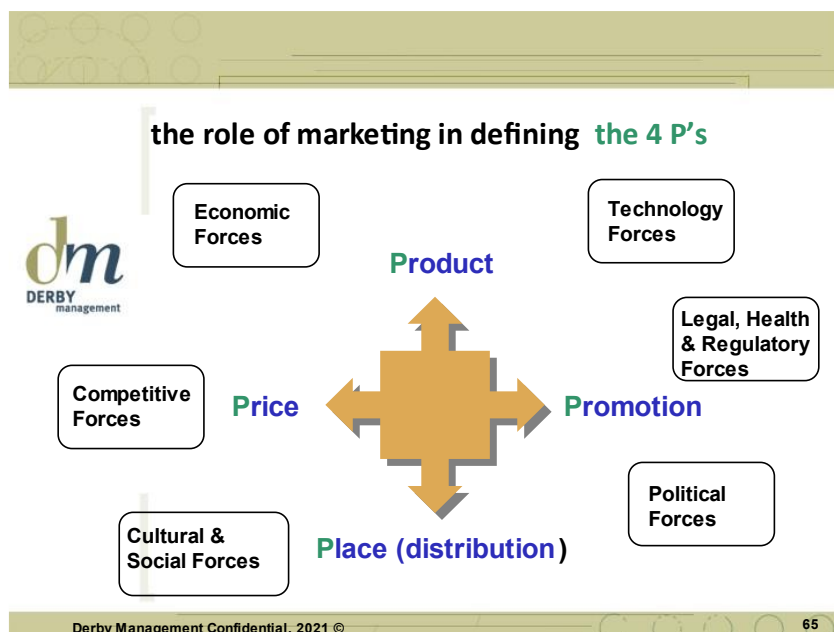


The simplicity of the graphic above comes back to the underlying function of any business plan, and therefore any marketing plan, and that comes down to the word, "movement". You want to move either your new "smaller" company or your new product or service in a more established "older" company, from a point of concept to a level of stability as quickly, as efficiently and as effectively as possible. The way you do that is through revenue growth, and the means through which you enable the most efficient and most effective revenue growth is through making the best marketing decisions.

And then, once that point of *stability* has been realized as outlined above in having experienced management and tactical playbooks in place, you again want to move to what you have defined in your business plan as specific levels of *growth* and ultimate *success*. By thinking this way, the planning process allows you and the rest of your management team to take those lessons that have been learned from the reviews of each quarter's results and continue to roll the calendar and the planning process forward always stretching for new levels of growth while correcting from speeds bumps and mistakes that have been made.

Before we go further, I'd like to simply note and immediately get rid of "The 4 P Thing". The reasons that I dislike the 4P concept are:

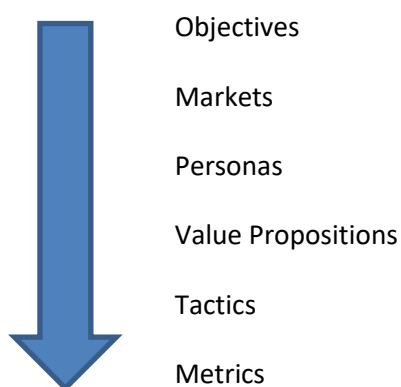
- It's overly simplistic.
- It's archaic and out of touch with today's value driven marketing.
- The "Place P" really means "Sales" or "Distribution" and is not a "P" at all.
- There's nothing that talks to value to the customer.
- ...and finally, the concept does nothing to help me write my marketing plan.



In fact, just to deal with the lack of meaning of having to deal with the 4 P's, there are countless books and articles on the 5-6-7-8-9-and 10 P's. The bottom line here is to forget the "P" concept and focus your own time and decision making on today's marketing that moves you quickly from high level strategies down to the real world of deciding on and executing tactical decisions. In the real world of marketing, there's no time for the old, meaningless, and outdated 4P concept.

With those two points out of the way, let's get into the actual construction of your marketing plan, work through the order of the structure, the specifics of what needs to be included and the details you need to consider. Through all this hard work, you need to keep in the forefront of your work that you're writing an exciting, entertaining, and exacting book for your readers, who, in this case, happen to be your own peer managers in charge of their various departments, your boss who runs the company and most probably the members of the board of directors of your company. Not only is the document in itself critically important to the business as the playbook everyone will use to achieve the company's objectives for this year, but it is also the mechanism, the glue in fact, through which everyone will work together.

The flow of your marketing plan begins with a clear definition of the company's objectives and then moves, component by component through an orderly process working its way to the execution of the planned marketing tactics and how those will translate to the metrics which you and the team need to achieve in order to meet the objectives that you identified at the beginning. For simplicity, I'm going to continue to refer to this going forward as a six-step flow from Objectives to Metrics, when, in fact, it should be a circle, but the stepped ladder-like functionality works better for the way I think.



Add to this six-section flow a solid opening statement at the beginning outlining the current state of the business and an equally solid summary page at the end defining the monthly and quarterly measurement and recalibration process, and you have a perfect marketing plan!

The Funnels and Funnel-Math:

Let's introduce the concepts of Marketing and Sales Funnels here since the concept will provide a graphic and therefore an understanding of a Marketing and Sales structure as raw marketing "Awareness" move from the top of the marketing funnel to highly qualified leads (MQLs) at the bottom of the marketing funnel, which are then handed over to salespeople to do their thing. Internally, we often refer to the marketing section of the two funnels as TOFU (Top-of-the-Funnel) for marketing tactics and BOFU (Bottom-of-the-Funnel) for sales activities. Overly simplistic, I know, but in today's very complex world of both marketing and sales, for our own consulting work internally, "simple" is often very helpful in sorting through tactics.

What are important takeaways from the funnel concept are:

- Both Marketing and Sales have formal **Processes** customized to your personas.
- Each process has specific **Steps** built into it, again customized to your Process.
- Each Step has various marketing and sales **Tools**.
- The tools will reside in a **Technology Platform** that will record and measure.
- That platform will be a **CMS** (Content Marketing System) for marketing.
- And a **CRM** (Customer Relationship Management) for Sales

Always our business model chant is...

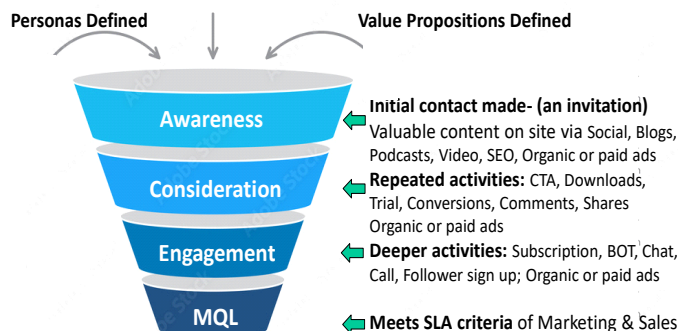
"Process-Tools-Technology-Metrics & People".

Taking a higher-level view of its overarching purpose, the Sales and Marketing Funnel architecture outlines that the sole purpose of marketing is, through a formal stepped process, to deliver Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) to the Sales organization.

If the salesperson assigned to that lead agrees that that MQL fits the definitions that have been agreed to, then that MQL transitions to an SQL (Sales Qualified Lead) and Sales continues to move that new prospect (or a repeat opportunity with an existing customer) through the buying journey moving down through the sales funnel to a close.

Using the adage of a picture is being worth a thousand words, let's take a look at what's below:

Inbound Marketing Funnel-(Permission Based)



Process-Tools-Technology-Math & People

Awareness-Consideration-Engagement

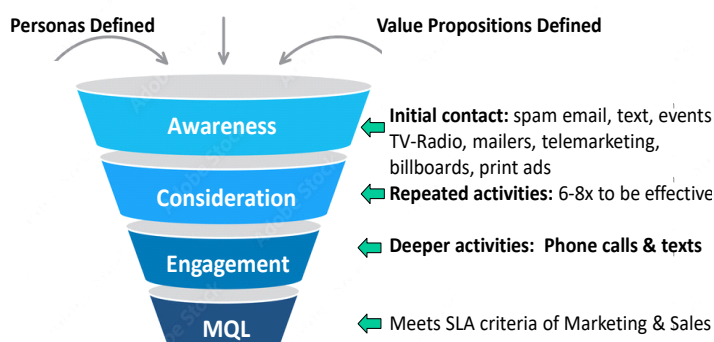
-These two graphics to the left -one for Inbound, the other for Outbound are meant to introduce the importance of the words “**Process**” which moves the three Marketing “**Steps**” from the top to the bottom by the use and the measurement of “**Tools**”.

Through the use of Inbound tools of website Content, SEO, blogs and social media, and CTA (Call-to-Action) tools moves the Persona from “Awareness” through “Consideration” and then to actual “Engagement” at which time there is an agreement to take action in some activity or ideally to a Discovery meeting with a salesperson or product specialist. Any engagement activity then become an MQL.

There are, of course, different tools for Outbound, all of which can be employed at any time depending on the choices of the various tactics and their related expenses.

Rarely will you find that a company is exclusively in either funnel, and even our favorite company, Hubspot, who invented the concept of “Inbound Marketing” uses both with their 4-day Inbound Conference drawing thousands paid attendants.

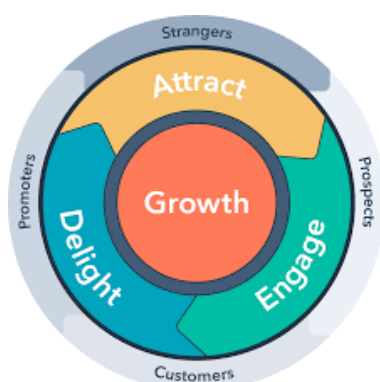
Outbound Funnel-(No Permission)



The Hubspot Flywheel

The formalized thought process of sales and marketing funnel management has been around in the general marketplace of formalizing the understanding and the use of sales and marketing measurement and forecasting tools for 15 plus years. My own introduction to the concept came from [Hubspot](#) 18 years ago during one long summer spent reading 100% of everything that the two founders, Brian and Dharmesh, had created. Matter of fact, during my own drinking through a fire house of everything that was being published by this then-young startup, my original understanding of Hubspot was that it was a consulting company and not a software subscription business. Since that time, of course, I've become not only an active user, but a loud apostle and strong partner to the company as to the benefits of their products. Not surprisingly, more than 100 of my Tufts alums (including the heads of sales and partnerships) currently work there mostly in sales and marketing positions since I use the Hubspot platforms in the teaching of my marketing and sales courses.

I provide the short background outline above since Hubspot about four years ago moved from Funnels to their Flywheel concept for a couple of reasons.



The first is the concept that defined opportunities in Marketing should move into Sales and that a certain percentage of those leads should become actual customers. The next step in that process after the sale has been made is that customers should be consistently nurtured (marketed to and supported by people in Customer Success) with additional content such that they will buy more products (the sales tactic of "Land & Expand") and if the sales is a subscription sale, customers will resubscribe on an annual basis.

The second reason is that Hubspot has expanded its own product offerings to now include a robust library of Customer Success tools and applications that move a customer who has purchased a piece of software...using the example of subscribing from Hubspot...to a highly engaged and delighted "promoter" of the product to others. With this concept in mind, the flywheel is set into motion, and it continues to turn again and again.

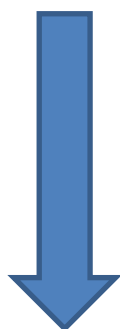
A tiny example of the flywheel effect is our own company where we moved from “a user” of the tools (blogging, social media, SEO, and others) to a highly engaged “customer” of the platform (CRM, CMS, and the hosting of our site) to a “promoter” in that I and my students actually teach the subject at Tufts where we use the entire suite of products.

For now, I clearly buy in to the flywheel concept, it’s importance and its various moving parts. Having said that, I grew up as manager in a world of sales and marketing funnels, and I like the less-complicated nature of funnel math from top to bottom, so in our consulting practice and at Tufts, I will continue to use funnels and not flywheels.

If you want to learn more about Hubspot, just connect with me at any time. In the meantime, you can look at [this](#) Hubspot video, for more detailing on the flywheel.

Now, let’s return to the prior discussion of the six primary components that need to be defined in any marketing plan.

Objectives



Markets
Personas
Value Propositions
Tactics
Metrics

Objectives

Since your marketing plan is the core component of your company's business plan, the marketing plan...its strategies, its tactics, its actions, and its activity plans...will be reflective of what you, your employees, your peers, your bosses, and the directors on your board want to achieve in 2024.

Obviously, there's a large number and a wide diversity of general business metrics, but the metrics that will clearly define the success of your marketing plan will always come back to the most important, which will always be the amount and the velocity of change in the increases in profitable top line revenue. As a result, the number, and the cost of handing qualified leads over to salespeople over time will always be one of the top three primary metrics of any company!

You may or may not use all of these, but MQLs are critical and used in most companies.

of MQLs: The absolute number of Marketing Qualified Leads over a period of time

of SQLs: The absolute number of Sales Qualified Leads accepted by Sales

of TQLs: Not that common, but some use Total Qualified Leads as an easier metric

SLA: The Sales Lead Agreement between Marketing and Sales defining lead metrics

CAC: Cost of Customer Acquisition. Typically, this is the total cost of all Sales & Marketing expense. CAC can also be used just for Marketing expense ratioed against the number of SQLs. CAC is then often used as a percentage of revenue as a metric for your business and for your business related to other companies in your market or industry.

LTV: Customer Life-Time Value. Typically, used as a business metric, not just Marketing.

Those metrics above are merely the baseline of measuring and are commonly used in most companies. There's also a large number of detailed sub metrics that are very useful in running marketing experiments, in conducting A/B testing models, in running actual campaigns and in measuring the impact of events, blogs, social media posts, PR and everything else. To me if a marketing tactic cannot be measured, then it's just not worth doing no matter what the expense is since the hidden cost is the use of someone's time internally at the company and the potential risk of confusion in the messaging externally to the company's personas.

Ultimately, the total business will be measured by the principal metrics of revenue, gross profit, and EBITDA. In terms of the revenue metric and its planned increases year over year, the number one responsibility for the lead generation that enables the revenue objective is that of Marketing.

If there is a dedicated salesforce, either direct sales through your own employees and/or sales through distributors or partnerships, Marketing should be the primary supplier of qualified leads...but not necessarily all leads. It's expected that Sales should be doing its own work to generate its own leads. This dividing of responsibilities for lead gen comes back to the formal agreement (the SLA) between Marketing and Sales which is structured as part of the annual marketing planning process. For example, it would be very common to have an agreement that Marketing is responsible for generating 80% of the required SQLs while salespeople would be generating the remaining 20%. But, even in that equation, Marketing's job is to supply the salespeople with the Marketing-approved tools, the correct graphics, the agreed-on Value Propositions, and the messaging materials so that salespeople are efficiently using their time outreaching to their own leads. The worst thing that could happen is to have salespeople spending their time making up their own content! One, it's a waste of time. Two, it's not their skill. Three, they will end up confusing the persona before the persona is ready to buy.

The criticality of having agreed on metrics is not just the metrics themselves, but the monthly review by the senior management of the company such that there is a common understanding and agreement on the progress that has been achieved, and most importantly, there's a detailed review of what's working and what's not. As a result of that consistent monthly review, there are then common takeaways as to where to apply or adjust Marketing resources.



To ensure that your next Marketing Plan meets your expectations, you must ...

1. Define your target markets:

Sure, it's important to understand what the overall TAM (Total Available Market) and the SAM (Served Available Markets) are since that research provides you and all of the management with an understanding of the overall markets, the growth opportunities and the degree of competition. From that data, your marketing plan must then clearly define which specific sub-markets the company will be marketing and selling into *for the specific period of time* you are writing your marketing plan for. That period of time is typically going to be your annual marketing plan presented at the time of your annual business planning cycle. The ability to do specific targeting becomes a critical business decision and marketing tool, which will be first based on objective research and secondly on your company's business objectives and the financial abilities to launch whatever specific marketing tactics you are planning into those specific markets.

Gone are the old days of "spray & pray" where marketing messages were launched to large audiences and then the praying began that something somewhere would stick. [John Wanamaker](#), a very successful merchant and one of the true pioneers of marketing provided the quote of ...***"half the money, I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half."*** Obviously, the world of marketing has significantly changed both in its tactics, and its metrics and the ability to measure those metrics, but still today there are many companies that cannot measure marketing's impact.

Clearly identify the opportunities and sources of competitive advantage through more intimate and shared understanding of the overall markets that you are involved in today and want to be involved in in the future. All of this unfolding and detailing of your differentiated Value Propositions becomes your marketing plan!

Let's take an example of the well-defined hospice industry. It would be relatively easy to define the overall size of the U.S. market for hospice and the large competitors in that market. The definitions that would then need to be detailed in a hospice marketing plan would be such sub-market definitions as the following since it would be very difficult to market and sell to the entire hospice market unless the company was massive in scope and had the resources to service the entire market. Having been in the hospice I know that that would be an extremely complex and demanding objective.

Considerations for market definitions:

- Size measured in whatever definitions are important to you.
- Geography on a sub-regional basis within specific states or even cities.
- Persona types, quantities, and demographics within those regions
- The specific services provided to those personas.
- The specific value propositions provided for those personas.
- Detailed understanding of the competitors within those markets

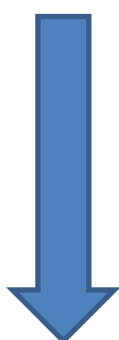
For consumer products, considerations could include any of the following outlined in the graphic below:

| DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES | GEOGRAPHIC VARIABLES |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Age •Gender •Race •Ethnicity •Income •Education •Occupation •Family Size •Religion •Social Class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Region •Urban or Suburban •Rural •City or County or State Size •Market Density •Climate •Terrain |

| PSYCHOGRAPHIC VARIABLES | BEHAVIORISTIC VARIABLES |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Attributes • Motives • Lifestyles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume Usage • End Use • Benefit Expectations • Brand Loyalty • Price Sensitivity |

Looking at a typical B2B market segmentation, an analysis would include many of the following. In both these examples, it is not necessary to include all of these parameters. They are shown here as examples of the categories that you may want to include in your own segmentation.

| TRANSACTION TYPES | CUSTOMER ATTRIBUTES | CUSTOMERS' PRIMARY ISSUES |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Orders • Expensive Items • Extended Negotiations • Reciprocity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed personas • Technical specs • Partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price • Quality • Service • Delivery • Relationships |
| METHODS OF BUYING | TYPES OF PURCHASES | DEMAND |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description • Inspection • Sampling • Negotiation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Task • Straight Rebuy • Modified Rebuy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derived • Inelastic • Joint Demand • Fluctuating |



Objectives

Markets

Personas

Value Propositions

Tactics

Metrics

I'm not totally sure when I was first introduced to the word "PERSONAS", but I do know how I was, and that was through Hubspot, its incredibly focused marketing and sales teams and its [Hubspot Academy](#), where their official definition of personas is:

Personas are semi-fictional representations of your ideal customer based on real data, and some select educated speculation about demographics, behaviours, motivations, and goals.

In my Tufts marketing course and also in my Science of Sales course, the technologies we use are both the Hubspot CRM and CMS platforms. Students are strongly recommended to get certified before the course begins and required to be registered by the second class in order to remain in the course. 90% of the students are certified before the course begins, which makes life in the classroom and for their company projects that much easier.

Core to our beliefs in marketing today is this word "persona". At the very essence of this one simple word is the clarity of the message of marketing in 2024

- We market and sell to humans and to individual people and persons.
- We no longer market to "targets", "leads", "prospect" or even "markets".
- As much as possible, we should be marketing to the "N of 1" ...*that* person.

Once we can define who those personas are, their demographics, what constitutes value to them and where they go for their information...*their watering holes*...then we have a much more comprehensive definition of how, where, and when to market to them.

Before we talk more specifically about how to do this, I want to provide three examples just for clarity. The first one below comes from Hubspot, and I like the overall clarity of it. The next two were created as a result of an assignment we were engaged in 2021 in at a wealth management company looking to broaden its reach beyond the typical “older retiree” persona.

This is Hubspot’s classic definition example, which we feel is very descriptive:

personas are people. get to know them!

Example Buyer Persona: Marketing Michelle



BACKGROUND:

- Manages a marketing department with 3-5 employees
- Married with a couple of children
- Been in her role for five years

IDENTIFIERS:

- Drives a modest vehicle
- Achiever
- Determined individual and a natural leader
- Stylish trend-setter

GOALS:

- Has high ambitions for her team
- Wants to exceed expectations for driving ROI
- Likes to be her own boss

CHALLENGES:

- Generating enough leads for the sales team
- Managing brand communications
- Looking for ways to streamline processes
- “I never feel like I have enough time.”

DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Late 30s-early 40s
- Income \$70K+

SPENDS ONLINE TIME ON

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Etsy

FAVORITE BRANDS

- Apple
- Sephora
- Volkswagen
- Zappos

FAVORITE WEBSITES

- Vanity Fair
- Fast Company
- Mashable
- AdWeek

FAVORITE TECH

- Kindle
- iPhone
- Amazon Echo
- MacBook
- Fitbit

INTERESTS

- Pop music
- Romantic comedies (movies & TV)

4

The two personas outlined below are examples we provided to the senior management of an established wealth management firm wanting to expand their prospect base from their traditional focus on retirees to a younger and more diverse audience. Working from these examples, we used the Hubspot Checklist to develop more customized personas for the marketing campaigns we launched with them.



Marketing Michelle

Background

- 35-45
- Married, 2 younger children
- Undergraduate from BU
- 1 house w/mortgage; 2 SUVs
- Husband is a lawyer, mid size firm



Job: Director of Marketing

- Manages 15 people
- Skills: Inbound, analytics
- Reports to VP Sales & Mktg
- \$60m revenue business
- Earns \$155K plus \$50K bonus

Preferences

- Communications: email, Zoom, phone
- FB, Instagram, Etsy, Sephora, Zappos
- All news/industry news online
- Kindle, iPhone, Apple, Alexa
- Amazon-1st for most everything

Success & Challenges

- Promotions; exceed annual objectives
- Values: family, challenging work
- Challenges: not enough time



Manufacturing Manager Mike

Background

- 45-55
- Married, 1 kid at UMass, 1 in HS
- Undergraduate & MBA from UMass
- 1 house w/mortgage; 1 car, 1 truck
- Wife works in professional job



Job: VP Manufacturing

- Operations efficiency
- Skills: analytics, people
- Reports to CEO
- \$20m revenue business
- Earns \$175K plus bonus

Preferences

- Communications: email, phone
- Uses Internet for buying research
- Updated news/industry news online
- Industry associations online
- Social media: LI for work, FB for family
- Nike, Carhartt, Patriots, Red Sox,

Success & Challenges

- Promotions, good raises, vacation time
- Values: security, family, church
- Challenges: changing employee pressures

We always begin our persona work with the Hubspot checklist below as a baseline, and then work through a planning session or two with the marketing team giving them “homework assignments” (sorry about the homework” word, it’s the professor in me) to work together as a brainstorming team offline. We then follow that work with a final planning session where we all commit to the final agreement on the four to five key personas.

PERSONA PROFILE CHECKLIST

| Persona Detail | Questions to Ask |
|----------------------|---|
| Role | What is your job role/role in life? Your title? How is your job/role measured? What is a typical day? What skills are required? What knowledge and tools do you use? Who do you report to? Who reports to you? |
| Company/Organization | What industry or industries does your company work/is your role in? What is the size of your company/organization (revenue, employees)? |
| Goals | What are you responsible for? What does it mean to be successful in your role? |
| Challenges | What are your biggest challenges? |
| Watering Holes | How do you learn about new information for your job? What publications or blogs do you read? What associations and social networks do you belong? |
| Personal Background | Age, Family (married, children), Education |
| Shopping Preferences | How do you prefer to interact with vendors? (email, phone, in person) Do you use the internet to research vendors or products? If yes, how do you search for information? |

Hubspot also provides this link for working by yourself as a beginning step.
<https://www.hubspot.com/make-my-persona>

Just plugging my students and the opportunity to provide your own semester-long marketing project in a future semester, they take this concept of Persona Identification and drive it to incredible detail...which is the point of the tactic anyhow. The more I know about my personas, the easier and the more impactful it is to market to them.



The concept of Value Propositions was introduced to me by my partner, George Simmons, about 10 years ago. George is an interesting guy, and we met 20 years ago while I was doing a business planning process for the owner of a tech company where George was CFO. We orchestrated a very successful exit for the company, and George approached me when it was done and asked if he could join me at Derby Management.

George is a wicked bright guy with a strong analytical background in finance and tons of experience in entrepreneurship and building successful companies. Given his financial, analytical and decades of experience in operational processes, George brought that same intensity and focus to the world of sales and Marketing and specifically to the building of a practice around creating Value Propositions for our clients.

In its most simple form, a Value Proposition, is exactly what the words say. It is providing a business case to someone that defines the value that will result if that person buys what you have to sell. It sounds simple, and it's meant to be exactly that within the context of the overall simplicity being the purpose of this book. The reason for my overstated simplicity here is that the reality of how we have been marketing and selling for years has been that we have focused heavily on the products and the services we want to sell, rather than the value that they provide to the personas and the persona's business on the other side of the table. Persona value first, not products, not services!

In order for a Value Proposition to be a Value Proposition, it must have three components:

- What's the business driver that your product/service can change for your persona?
- What's the verb that defines the movement of that value? Increase? Decrease?
- What's the metric that will define the expected result?

So, when we look at these three components as an equation, it looks like this below:



The Big 3 Components in Value Propositions



1. **Business Drivers** – the primary objectives
2. **Movement** – a verb
3. **Metrics** – by how much

So that there is an equation...

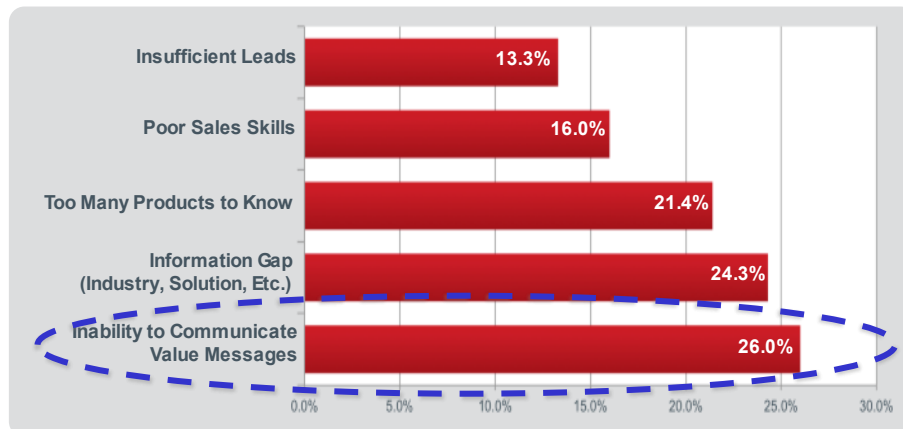
Business Drivers + Movement + Metrics = an example
 1 + 2 + 3 => 6

An example of a value proposition for our own company, Derby Management, would be:

“At Derby Management, we can increase (*that’s the verb*) the productivity of your salespeople (*that’s the business driver*) by approximately 25% in about a year (*that’s the metric in both quantity and in time*). Let me give you an example of a company similar to yours... (*that’s the example*).

The primary reason that we have become so engrained in the science of value propositions and especially value propositions applied to specific personas is that they really work, and that’s not just me saying that. It’s the leading sales and marketing research and consulting companies like Sirius Decisions who published the following a few years ago:

Biggest Problems in Achieving Quota



Add to this the following data to add more muscle to the point that both marketing and selling today is all about defining in specific terms the tangible value that will result.

Biggest Problems in Achieving Quota

Sales Effectiveness Challenges

SiriusPerspective: Salespeople believe their biggest challenge is their ability to communicate value effectively in a compressed sales cycle.

Greatest Inhibitors to Sales Effectiveness



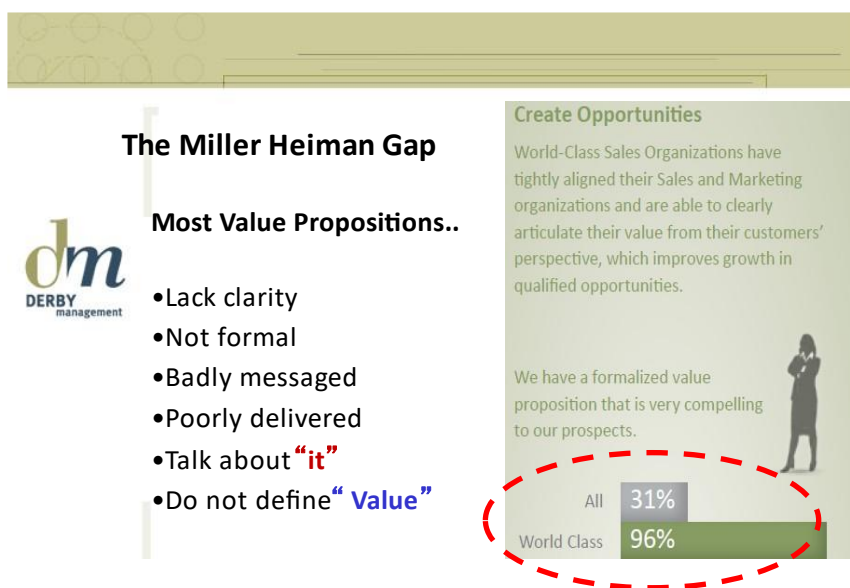
We know from our work with Sirius Decisions that the #1 determinant of success between the “A” and “A+” level salespeople compared to the “B” level salespeople across every industry is the ability of the “A” levels to effectively deliver the company’s value proposition exactly and comfortably all the time to both new prospects and current customers.

We also know from research done by Forrester and from Miller Heiman that the majority of sales presentations made to prospective buyers focus only on the seller’s side of the table using worthless words such as...

- “We’ve been in business for 30 years.”
- “We have high quality”, or “we have good people who care.”
- “Our customers include companies such as..”

The bottom line to these bullets above is that they have nothing to do with the buyer or the buyer's business!

What is happening by using hollow words such as these is that the seller is bringing their product or service down to a level where the only thing to talk about is price.



Value Propositions well delivered always result in what we call “Value Pricing”, which result in higher margins compared to pricing merely based on costs and competitors.

One of the very simple tests we apply to every marketing message that we hear and specifically to value propositions is the test of...

- **“So What?”** do I really care about what I just heard or read?

or...

- **“Can you tell me more?”**

Considering the fact that we, as consumers and as managers, receive hundreds, if not thousands of marketing messages every day. Couple that fact with the reality that my weeks (and yours) are already way overloaded, In the reality of time management, I'm only going to pay attention to those messages that will increase my own value as a manager and the potential value for my company. Everything else is a simple DELETE.

The actual work of creating Value Propositions is not easy, and, in fact, it's a relatively complex and difficult task. You may find it useful to review the following:



<https://www.brainshark.com/derbymanagement/vu?pi=zEbzi5vjMzFFz0>

Through this building of your own value propositions, remember that each Value Proposition is tied directly to a specific persona. You might create an overarching Value Proposition for the business as a whole, which in our own case of Derby Management, we will always point out that we can increase the efficiency of the effectiveness of the management team. We then take that broad brush of a general value proposition and refine and customize it to specific personas such as the following. These three just happen to be our core personas at the consulting firm.

- Carol CEO if we are working with the senior team on business planning.
- Sales Manager Steve if we are implementing sales processes and plans.
- Marketing Manuel if we are building marketing plans or selling Hubspot.

All of that work is very direct in its simplicity, but also very complex in its creation since everyone on the management team must buy into the process and the resulting wording of the completed Value Proposition statement with a full 100% commitment.

And then the really hard work begins in making sure that those Value Propositions get used everywhere both internally and externally in the company. The “easier” work begins internally with the marketing department using the appropriate messaging correctly on the website and in all the media that radiates out from the site-blogs, social posts, and materials of every kind. They all must reflect the same exacting Value Propositions.

The more difficult work becomes in working with the individuals on the Sales team to make sure that...

- (1) they are comfortable with the Value Proposition wording in their phone calls, emails, and personal Linked In and X posts,
- (2) and that they are not altering the message, or worse, making up their own. Unfortunately, that happens way too often even after agreeing that no changes will be made.



Discussing Marketing is a lot of fun that cycles on and off in a sine wave-like fashion in ups and down excitement from the heights of blue-skying strategic concepts down to the detailed tactics of buying social media ads on a daily basis.

The really hard part is the requirement for you to make the hard choices of exactly what you are going to do in terms of marketing costs and the use of your own time in order to produce the correct number of marketing-qualified leads that you committed to deliver that particular week and month. All of which brings us back to the beginning of the critical importance of bringing the senior management team together and agreeing on the specific marketing objectives that run the revenue machine.

To make it simpler for me, I always take a step back...*or maybe a step above*, and I jump up 100 feet off the deck and look down in order to more clearly understand the problem I am trying to solve or the opportunity I am trying to take advantage of. And then I ask questions such as...

- What do I need to meet marketing's objectives and the business plan for the short term for this quarter and the longer term for the balance of this year?
- What's the budget I agreed to for that time period?
- Where are the inherent marketing skills I need? Inside or consultants?
- Are these objectives in line with what Sales needs for two quarters?
- Should we do more intensive research on a market sector or persona?
- To what degree can we afford to experiment with new tactics or themes?

I then divide the world into Inbound and/or Outbound Marketing knowing full well that I will lean toward Inbound given my experience over the past five years even though I grew up in an Outbound world of trade shows, conferences, white papers, snail mail and expensive collateral materials.



The issue then always comes down to making the correct choices. Back-in-the-day, the B2B choices were relatively narrow, and those choices were typically limited to...

- Printed materials and printed brochures, loaded into a salesperson's car trunk.
- Conferences, trade shows and conventions
- Radio, TV and probably a billboard or two
- Mailed newsletters, postcards, and unsolicited reminders with stamps.

Since that was the only world we knew, we just kept doing it with random stories of success or failure and maybe a metric such as the number of bingo cards (signed lead forms from people who visited our trade show booth) we would bring back from the trade show. On that one example, if the cost of the show was \$100K, and we had 600 bingo cards of mixed quality, then the cost of the lead was \$166/each. What that superficial number did not bring into the equation was how many of those people who came to our booth just stopped by to "touch & feel", kick the tires, and pick up the free swag.

I remember consulting on the overall business strategy for a large brand name company with a very expensive product, and they had never calculated their cost-per-lead until the new chairman asked that question of the VP of Marketing & Sales in a business strategy session I was conducting. Caught off guard, he was not able to answer the question, which in itself was a strong and very uncomfortable negative. It took about an hour to come up with the 95% accurate estimate of \$75/lead including both serious buyers and casual visitors who came to the company's semi-annual selling events at their dealers.

With that knowledge of \$75/lead, management kept their presence at events, but then required their suppliers to participate in the overall expense of the events in trade for showcasing their own brand. Additionally, management developed a very innovative set of tactics for their top two levels of dealers, all of which drove the cost of a qualified lead to less than \$25.00 in two years. Today, a decade later, lead generation, largely online coupled with a very different type of events is less than \$1.75.

Looking at marketing choices in 2024, we have a very different issue, and a very exciting opportunity in every industry, and that is that we no longer 10 or 50 choices, we have hundreds and with variations, we have thousands for both Outbound and Inbound marketing.



I think about those choices relative to the complexity of buying milk. It used to be that I could buy only pasteurized and unpasteurized with chocolate thrown in every once in a while. For a [recent blog I wrote](#), I visited my local NH Market Basket and counted 26 different types of milk, not manufacturers, but 26 actual categories of milk. This very expensive shelf space takes up 40 feet of consumer decision making from the perspective of the buyer, but also slotting fees charged to the manufacturers.

Plain old, normal "milk" was manufactured by four different companies, which further complicates the choices moving exponentially across the baseline of the 26 separate categories. Categories ranging from 1%, 2%, fat-free, skim, ultra-filtered, organic-reduced fat, ultra-pasteurized, grass, organic protein, lactose free-both 1% and 2%, chocolate and chocolate low-fat, oat and oat vanilla, soy and soy vanilla, rice, flax, almond, and organic coconut in three different flavors.

Looking at the milk aisle is how I used to feel in thinking about which marketing choices I needed to make. A simple equation of making the right decisions was good, and making the wrong decisions was not. The problem was that there were never any real, metric-detailed, quantifiably defined objectives, so that the border line between good and bad decisions was usually subjective and personally reactive to simply what people liked or did not like.

To put that into perspective, the entire 20 year run of "Got Milk" campaign classified as one of the top five marketing campaigns in the U.S. and recognized by 80% plus (I've seen data as high as 90%) of Americans, was an abysmal failure in that milk sales remained flat and then continued their downward trend. One can argue that without this iconic marketing campaign, sales would have continued to decline, and there's data and surveys to back that up. On the other hand, there was no new revenue from actual milk sales overall, plus there is an argument that the continuing promotion of milk has had some part in the rise during those two decades in cardiovascular disease and obesity.

The bottom line with milk is that it needs to taste good and provide those specific personas with some level of satisfaction in that they are making a healthy choice balancing the positives of consuming added vitamins and minerals against the fears of the potential of increased cardiovascular disease and obesity.

The bottom line with marketing is that our choices need to result in both efficient and effective qualified leads that lead to revenue purchase and the retention of happy and loyal customers. Once the detailed business objectives are absolutely clear and are agreed to among the senior team and there is an openly transparent agreement between Marketing and Sales as to the required metrics, then the process becomes one of tactical experiments. Those experiments then need to be measured in real time and assessed daily, weekly, monthly over the period of the quarter using whatever marketing software platform and CRM system your company has invested in.

The very good news is that making tactical choices in Marketing is much easier, much more objective, much more metric-driven and much quicker to change and modify in the digital-first world of Inbound Marketing. Think of marketing today as a giant experiment in a lab, where you can change the formulations, the timing, the degrees, and the expense you incur and be rewarded in a few hours or weeks at the most with the results. You then have the choice of increasing or decreasing with the twist of your expenditure dials, the volume of the dials to experiment with improved results.

You can do this somewhat instantly with content in your blogs and social posts, with organic and paid ads, with referrals and testimonials and with authority-driven content from your own company or others. Frequency and authority being two of your key drivers to experiment with.

To aid in our own decision making, with our work with our customers and with my students at Tufts and MIT, I use the simple table below most of the time as a calculated mathematical approach to the objectives I plan to achieve and sometimes merely as a reminder. Not perfect and purposefully not complete, but it does cover the larger decision-making categories and allows me to have a baseline to work with others on the team to figure out where we should be spending our time and money.

Given that the font size here is ridiculously small, ping me for the Excel file:

| Tactics | Cost | Frequency | Reach | % of Target Impact | Risk | Lead Potential | Brand Impact | Competition | Ease to do | Time to do | Expected |
|--------------------|------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|-------------|------------|------------|----------|
| Direct | \$ | | % exposed | Affected | Scale 1-5 | Scale 1-5 | Scale 1-5 | % Unique | Scale 1-5 | # of days | ROI |
| Website | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design/Redesign | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ease-Structure | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SEO Ranking | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Content Creation | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Paid Analysts | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Outbound | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Print Ads | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Print Collateral | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Events-F2F/Virtual | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PR Agency | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trade Shows-F2F | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brand Gifts | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Promotions | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Email lists | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Banners | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Radio | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TV | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sponsorships | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Billboards | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Placement | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Inbound | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SEO | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Media | | | | | | | | | | | |
| By Channel | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Paid Ads | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Webinars | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Podcasts | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Systems | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SW Platform | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Install/Training | | | | | | | | | | | |

For a quick outline of the columns:

- **Cost** is the total direct cost. If it is a radio spot for example, it would include the production plus the cost of the radio spot. If it is in an online ad, it would be defined as the cost per thousand-CPM-to run that ad.
- **Frequency** is the number of times that this tactic will be used. For an event, it might be once per year for a large convention, F2F or virtual. For an ad online or with radio or TV, frequency may be multiple times per day.
- **Reach** is the total number of people who have seen your ad. Related, but different, are **impressions**, which are the number of times, your ad has been displayed on screen.
- **Impact** in its purest form is the estimated psychological effect on viewers such that they will remember your product or service. Use a rating scale of 1-5.
- **Risk** is the estimated risk of potential negative reaction to your ad on 1-5 scale.
- **Lead Gen Potential** is the estimated expected result on a scale of 1-5.
- **Brand Potential** is the estimated degree of positive impact on your brand.
- **Competition** is the degree of similarity to competitors' ads on a 1-5 scale.
- **Ease of implementing** is just that. A blog would be 2, while video could be a 5.
- **Expertise** measures the degree to which the ad fits with your company's skills.
- **Return Rate is the ROI** (return on investment) of the ad, event, or campaign.
- **MQO is Marketing Qualified Opportunities**, the actual number leads created.

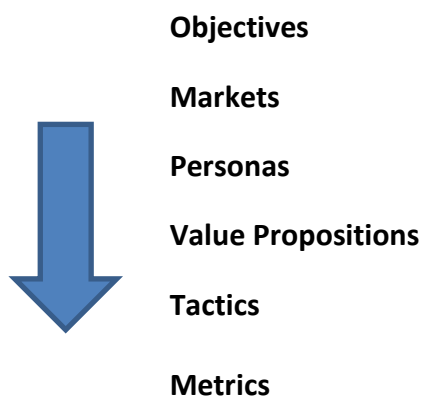
Since, at the end of any marketing activity whether it be a single ad or a yearlong campaign, there needs to be a measurement of the return of the direct costs related to creating and displaying that ad measured by the number of MQLs (Marketing Qualified Leads) or MQOs (Marketing Qualified Opportunities) generated. First, you only need one of these, and second, the exact definition is up to the heads of Marketing and Sales to define. Once that is done, and the salesperson accepts that MQL, that lead then becomes an SQL (Sales Qualified Lead). That sets the sales funnel in motion. In all of these examples, it's obviously critical to track and transparently display performance, and most importantly to meet in a monthly management review between the various sales and marketing managers to review what took place and twist the marketing expense dials if necessary.

Having said that, I do want to add more definition to the term of ROI, and there is no better way to do that than by watching my close friend and marketing guru, [Jamie Turner's](#) exacting video on this subject. Make sure that you click [here](#) and take the time to watch this...twice!

Summing it Up

So, that's it for what I would expect to be in a solid marketing plan!

Six primary sections and quite frankly not that hard to do. More importantly, if you do not go through this process from starting with the objectives that you need to achieve and ending with the specific tactics and their costs and timing that you will employ, then there really is no plan. What you would be left with instead is a series of often disconnected activities that have no interconnectivity and cannot be measured on a meaningful basis that fits into your business plan.



With that as the six-point baseline foundation of the critical components of what absolutely needs to be in a marketing plan, I would personally prefer to see a somewhat fuller document by adding two more sections- a meaningful introduction at the beginning and a concluding summary at its end.

One additional component for an even fuller marketing plan is that I would prefer that the marketing and sales team leaders work together in the creation of the plan document by collaboratively working through a tactical SWOT assessment. A SWOT is not absolutely necessary with every marketing plan since it depends on the specific objectives of why the plan is being created in the first place, which, as we have said numerous times in this book, it's for creation of acceptable leads for the salespeople to work with and close more orders such that the business plan is achieved on time and on budget.

Actually, in my teaching of Marketing planning at Tufts and at MIT, what I would prefer to see is a marketing plan document that follows this 12-point outline providing the reader with a more cohesive storyline from beginning to end.

The 12 Point Outline of a solid marketing plan

1. a short introduction explaining why and how you are writing the plan.
2. your objectives for the plan and for the business for that period of time.
3. a summary of the current state of the business and its performance
4. a SWOT highlighting three or four (no more) prioritized factors in each quadrant.
5. a definition of the specific markets/competitors/issues and opportunities
6. the persona research and value propositions for each persona
7. your market positioning in with these personas in the specific market segments
8. pricing strategies and tactics
9. the Inbound & Outbound tactics you have chosen and what you will measure.
10. the expenses related to those tactics.
11. a sales forecast by quarter for the next 12 months developed in concert with Sales.
12. a solid summary at the end

This brings us to the end of this first section of the book which has been a “how-to” approach of what the plan needs to contain.

If you plan to stop reading here, just skim through the balance of the book to get an understanding of what should be involved in “larger” companies typically in excess of \$100m in revenues with both more people and more complexity.

The Marketing & Business Planning Process

This next section of this book has been designed for those management teams that are typically “larger” and more process-focused to working within the structure of planning annual business plans and their corresponding budgets. As a primary component of that annual business planning cycle, Marketing would be expected to start the process with research and summarized interpretations of...

- ...the detailed performance of the existing business/products in its current markets
- ...market research outlining growth and competitor positioning.
- ...customer surveys
- ...a SWOT
- ...current product assessments
- ...current sales channels assessment; market observations on channels
- ...status of new product timelines in concert with Engineering

While we religiously believe in the formality of annual business planning processes which are architected to involve all the senior management team, this detailed process for the marketing department would be overkill certainly for a startup and most probably not necessary for “smaller” companies.

It is presented here for your review, dissection and use where you see the fit in your own business.

Your Marketing Planning cycle must be in sync with your annual business planning schedule. In a normal time, that business planning schedule would be on an annual cycle ending in most cases with a calendar year at which time the management of the company and most probably the directors of the business would approve the go-forward marketing operating plan in concert with the approval of the company’s overall business plan. The Marketing Plan becomes the most important ingredient of the entire business plan sits it sets the strategies and the tactics for driving product and sales actions in order to achieves the objectives of the business. Simply said...” ***Marketing is Everything!***”

The Marketing Process...all the plans must fit together

Marketing management will present a global analysis of the market situation, from which it will identify the key issues critical to the company's success on a regional, national, and perhaps on a global basis. These key issues will then drive the company's objectives and its strategies, which company management will want to see deployed consistently throughout all its markets.

Simply said, the most critical component of any company's business plan is the Marketing Plan...and especially today as move further into 2024. Even though Sales and solid margin revenue ultimately drive the success of the business, every component of the company's business plan from customer need to market definition to product design and the appropriate messaging of the Value Propositions and all of the tools to be used by Sales will come through Marketing.

Not only is the alignment of the marketing plan of critical importance, but also the relationship of the marketing plan with the plans of all the other functional areas of the business from Product Development and Engineering to Sales and Customer Success, to Operations, Talent Management and to Finance in order to ensure coordination and integration of cross functional activities at all levels.

For example, the Marketing Plan defines the customer segmentation for that period of time that is then used and developed by the Sales and Customer Success teams in the preparation of both their sales and key account plans. Keeping this example, if one of the primary objectives of the company was to increase the satisfaction level and the retention of existing customers and sell more products and services to these same existing customers, then the marketing objectives and action planning would be quite different than if the primary objective of the business was to primarily focus on obtaining new customers for that period of time.

In that scenario, that would not be to say that Marketing would not care about existing customers and their satisfaction levels; it would be that there would be a lesser focus in the use of marketing time and money spent on existing customers than on obtaining new customers. In fact, Marketing needs to do both, but it is the degree to which the marketing activity dials are turned, and the corresponding campaigns are run.

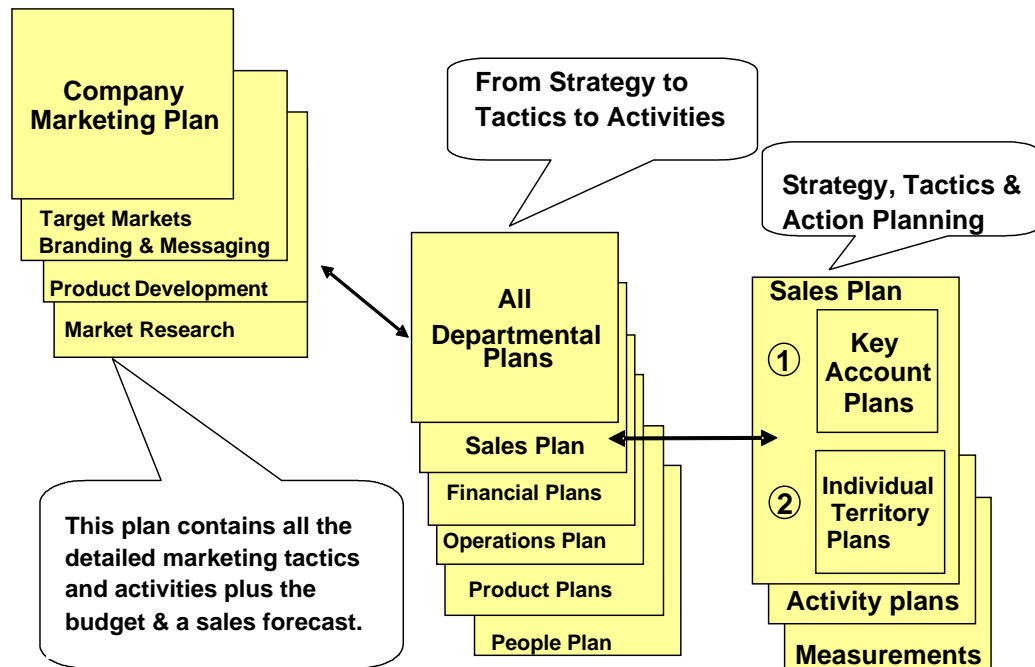
The Planning Cycle

If we were in “normal times”, we might have a planning cycle that would look like this assuming the company was on an annual calendar fiscal year. Today, given where we are with lots of geopolitical unknowns and the upcoming U.S. elections, we would expect that...

1. These timelines could easily be drawn out.
2. The planning horizon would be in six months bursts at the longest.
3. The tactical plans and activities would be monthly in an overall quarterly plan.

| Marketing Planning Cycle Schedule of Events-Assumes a Calendar Year | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Planning Activities | Month |
| Kick-off the marketing planning cycle | September |
| Extended team planning meetings, Brainstorming, Whiteboarding | September-November |
| Marketing presentation of plans to Sales & Finance | November |
| Marketing Plan completed in concert with the Sales Plan | November-December |
| Initial submission to the complete senior team | December |
| Draft Business Plan completed with preliminary financial, sales, marketing, and product discussions with company directors | December |
| Submission to Board for final review and approvals | January |
| Management roll-out meetings for Sales and for Marketing | January |
| Quarterly review of progress against all operating plans | 1 st week of each quarter |
| In depth half year review. Adjust as necessary | Third week in June |

Alignment of all the departmental plans to the Marketing Plan is critical!



Writing and Presenting Marketing Plans

The first half of this book outlines the various components that must/should be in any marketing plan to be of use to the senior team in its business planning process. The graphic below outlines the same flow of a process plus three additional components:

1. An emphasis on SWOT

Not totally necessary in every marketing plan, but always a solid marketing process that (1) involves the entire senior team bringing everyone together into the overall business planning process and committing to both the document and the annual timetable of preparatory the business plan.

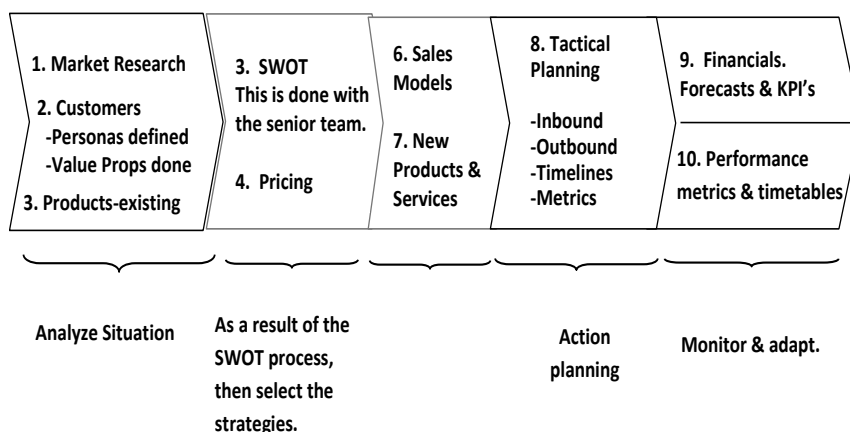
2. Forecasting and Financials.

I believe strongly that if Marketing is taking the responsibility of defining strategies, tactics and campaigns all focused to lead generation, and if that lead generation commitment is transparently done in close collaboration with Sales, then the revenue forecasting belongs jointly both to Marketing and Sales together.

3. Performance Metrics

This requirement would be a list of the expected metrics over the planning period.

A 10 Point Architecture to Consider



Facilitating the Marketing Planning Process

The objective here in this section is to describe a possible planning process of **“How-to-Plan-the Plan”**. It is presented as guidance only, and it is expected that each planning team will adapt their own process as necessary to best fit their requirements and the specific environments of 2024, which in most cases will be shorter term and focused on significantly increasing revenue and profitability.

This particular process has been designed for larger and more mature companies and it involves four key group activities. Having said that, even in emerging companies, while entrepreneurs or small business owners would find the formality of this process to be cumbersome, the thought process behind the categories should be thought through and considered.

- Planning initiation
- Analysis agreement
- Strategy selection
- Action Planning

The VP of Marketing should form a marketing planning team with representation or input from Sales, Customer Success, Finance, Product Management, Engineering and Talent Management.

By operating in this way, the maximum leverage is made of departmental expertise and, most importantly, a direct link to the other critical departments and especially to the Sales department is ensured.

Marketing management needs to kick this process off in September in “a normal year” bringing the representative heads of the departments together for the purpose of planning and discussion, and then between each group activity, the team members will work individually to develop plan materials and write their individual plan sections.

Meeting 1 - Planning Initiation

The initial team meeting is required to establish roles, responsibilities, time scales and the overall planning approach that will be taken. This should cover not only the overall activity but in particular the details of rewriting or updating the situation analysis section of the plan. The following objectives are suggested for this first meeting.

Objectives:

- Agree on the team.
- Agree on the overall timetable.
- Agree on the team meeting schedule.
- Agree on how the work will be split among the team for the various sections.

Process.

It's suggested that the VP Marketing or the Team Captain prepares suggestions for the first three objectives before the first Zoom/Teams meeting and may choose to circulate those to the proposed team members before the meeting. In any case, these items should be agreed on rapidly so that the main part of the meeting can be focused on the situation analysis. The team next reviews what resource materials they have available including:

- Previous company strategies, the current situational analysis, and a quick review of the performance against the existing marketing plan.
- Available sources of market research data.
- The actual structure of the Marketing Plan including the use of the Google or Microsoft platforms and specific toolboxes that will be used to create the plan.

Then the team can decide what can be achieved and which approach should be taken. In particular, the team should consider which of the planning templates from the toolbox should be used. Having decided on the approach, the work of filling in the templates, graphs and developing the plan text should be allocated between the team members. A team member should also be appointed to consolidate and integrate the various outputs.

A possible strategy is for team members to develop the templates and key bullet points, and for a single team member to write the overall section. Once this is agreed the team can disperse and work individually.

“Situation Analysis” or “The Business Review”

The situation analysis itself is best done by team members working on their own but in communication with others using e-mail, Google Docs, Microsoft tools or preferably Slack.

There are four primary activities for the Situation Analysis:

1. **Data Gathering:** locate data sources and updating the situation.
2. **Individual Analysis:** extract the key “*So what?*” bullet points from the data.
3. **Consolidation:** bring the contributions together to integrate into a “story”
4. **Individual Review:** team members critically review the integrated output.

If these are completed successfully, then the team is well prepared for the next Zoom/Teams group session. During the situation analysis, issues could be compiled on an ‘Issues Worksheet’ to help compile issues on an on-going basis.

For the “Business Review”, you must know data for the following examples and more:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Corporate mission and culture | -Description of the business |
| • Product definitions | -Organization structure |
| • Current target markets | -Personas/target markets |
| • Value Propositions/Personas | -Product usage/persona |
| • Sales data & trends | -Market share data |
| • Direct and Indirect Competitors | -Product benefits & customer value |
| • Product life Cycle | -Sales models & Sales strategies |

Meeting 2 - Agree on the Analysis

The purpose of Meeting #2 is to ensure that the quality of the data analysis and the key issues identification is high, by using the team to challenge and build on the individual ideas that have been generated between the meetings.

Objectives:

- Agree on and fully understand the various analyses and data collections.
- Generate and get full agreement from everyone on a SWOT assessment.
- Agree again on the marketing plan objectives, the timetables, and on the overarching primary business growth objectives since if there is no growth, there's no business, and then there's no real need for a marketing plan. Only kidding here since even in a negative performance situation such as many companies in 2020-2023, there will always be a need for marketing at the very least to generate qualified leads.

Process:

The VP of Marketing or Team Captain should first test for a team consensus on the materials and give opportunities for the team members to explain to the group what choices they made and why. Allowing for constructive changes on the material is very important at this stage. On this point, it's critical that everyone on the team has expressed their full agreement. If not, go back to square one, start over and get to full agreement. Full agreement is just that; everyone fully agrees. This is not "consensus".

Once the basic analysis is agreed on, the team should work on producing a SWOT, again, ensuring that there is total agreement on the output. Once the SWOT has been completed, the team should identify a small number of key issues that need to be improved on and growth opportunities that need to be exploited for the upcoming year.

- Know the prioritized strengths so that the plan continues to maintain them.
- Understand prioritized weaknesses in order to take them away.
- Decide on the prioritized opportunities in order to invest in their growth.

The final activity of this session needs to be to agree on the pre-work that each team member should do, based on the results of the SWOT before the next team meeting.

Prepare for Strategy Development

Before the group strategy making activity, each team member should do some level of individual preparation, the amount and content of which depends on the outcome of the analysis that's been done, and the agreements reached during the SWOT meeting.

The following are general issues that should usually be considered:

- Have the issues changed since last quarter? How? Why? Expected or not?
- Did the tactics work then? To what extent? What can be learned?
- Have the Company's primary business strategies changed from the prior period?
- How and why and what does this mean for Marketing in terms of tactics?

Taking this preparation activity seriously is critically important as it enables a much more productive strategy selection meeting, but it is often practically difficult to find the necessary time to accomplish this section since it does require "thinking time" and a fair amount of strategic back and forth discussion among the team members.

Add to that factor the issue that many people tend to overestimate their capacity for contributing and may not spend the necessary individual preparation time prior to the group meetings.

Meeting 3 – Selecting the Marketing Strategies

Meeting #3 is required to ensure that the objectives answer the key issues and that strategies are developed to meet these objectives. The specific purpose of this team meeting is to provide some level of "out-of-the-box" thinking and challenge to the current business and marketing strategies and to get total agreement on the tactical directions that will be taken going forward. Detailed development of the strategy and tactical sections is best done both during and after this team meeting through assignments given to one or two team members to write out what they believe were the takeaway strategies.

Process:

The Team Leader should ensure that the meeting starts with a restatement of the key issues and opportunities. This is a constantly repeated theme throughout the entire planning process, and that these remain visible and accessible to the team through the development of the plan. Objectives need to be developed to address these key issues and opportunities and meet corporate requirements. This can be done with a simple four stage process:

1. Assess and state the company constraints.
2. Restate the key issues and opportunities from the SWOT.
3. Set objectives with timelines, responsibilities, and metrics.
4. Review and provide the final detailing of the objectives.

Brainstorming strategy and tactical options at this time is a good approach as it helps people to think outside the current strategies. Comparison with the existing approaches also helps to generate further opportunities. Options can then be considered in terms of:

- **Feasibility:** Can we afford this? Do we have the right resources and skills?
- **Suitability:** Will it meet our objectives? What's the risk? Is it effective and efficient?
- **Acceptable:** Will management or stakeholders object?
- **Robustness:** How sensitive are the metrics of success?

Strategic Marketing Choices

The most difficult task for any management team and for the members of the Sales and Marketing teams is to make choices among a variety of strategic and tactical options. Brainstorming and discussing the various options is exciting and fun, but the real critical management task of any senior team is to make the strategic and the tactical choices that will define the success for the business through the choosing of just a relatively few marketing strategies.

Just to be clear on the use of this term “marketing strategies”, these are the primary directions that the marketing department is making. Tactics fit into Strategies and Activities fit into Tactics. Typically, unless these strategic decisions are proved to be wrong within the timeframe that has been agreed on, these strategic choices will be in place for 18 months, but not in 2023. This is a period of time that will be heavily weighted to quarter-by-quarter tactics and activities since in most cases, they will only be in place for the period of one to two quarters before they need to be recast.

Merely to identify a few of the strategic choices that need to be considered:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| -Build a market or steal share | - National, regional, or local strategies |
| -Seasonal strategies | - Competitive strategies |
| -Target Market strategies | - Product strategies |
| -Packaging strategies | - Pricing strategies |
| -Distribution or Coverage strategies | - Promotion strategies |
| -Spending strategies | - Messaging (advertising, PR, Media) |
| -Merchandising strategies | - PR strategies |
| -Engineering | -New product strategies |

There are many more, but we just wanted to show you some of the most common.

Final strategy selection can be made by eliminating extreme options and ranking the remainder. Once a strategy has been agreed to by the team, work can be allocated to team members to develop the ideas further and write the strategy section of the plan.

Finalize the Strategy Section

Developing the details of the strategy section is probably best done either by all team members working individually or by using a nominated team member as a writer and the rest as reviewers. Whichever way it's done, this section will need to be consolidated and reviewed before any action planning is started.

Meeting 4 – Tactics and Activities Planning

Meeting #4 is required to ensure that the activities and tactics are coordinated across the area, and that the linkage to the planning for Sales is explicit and effective. A key requirement is to check that the planned actions fit within the selected strategies and meet the objectives.

Objectives:

- Translate strategies into tactics and activities.
- Agree on the exact linkage to Sales Planning where the joint objectives must be...
 - Challenging - Attainable - Measurable
 - Time specific - More than dollars - Customer-focused
 - Market-relative - In line with trends - Innovative

Process:

In translating strategies into actions, resource constraints will always be the key consideration. For this reason, the planning team needs to identify early any “exceptional” or one-off activities that will need to be accommodated within the plan. Marketing planning of a new product launch, or even product and service extensions, is the most common of these events. The planning process could then be approached as follows:

- Plan for product launch activities and other “one-off” events.
- Plan for in-market product marketing activities.
- Develop linkage to sales planning.
- Review and agree responsibilities for plan elements.
- Review and agree in outline resource requirements.
- Check that plan elements meet the objectives.

If agreement can be achieved on these major points, detailed planning and refining resource requirements is best achieved by working on an individual basis and consolidating and integrating the results.

Plan Consolidation and Integration

Integrating and consolidating the final plan is probably best achieved by one or two team members working on the total document to ensure consistency. However, before finalization of the plan, it must be reviewed by all the team members. A final face-to-face meeting using Zoom/Teams will be required. Once the plan is reviewed and agreed it can then be issued.

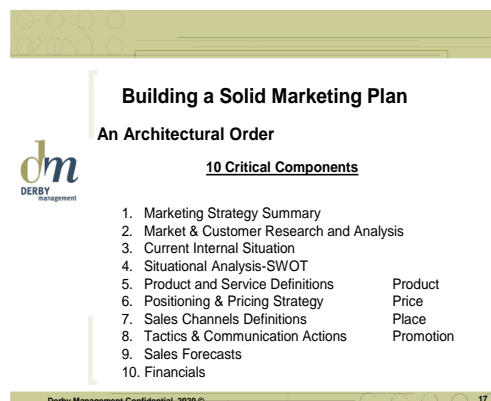
Just a couple of words about “flow”

Just like reading any novel, there should be a patterned flow to this storybook, which after all is telling the other readers “A story” and architecting “a plan” which is complete with all of the details as to how your business objectives will be achieved.

All of this

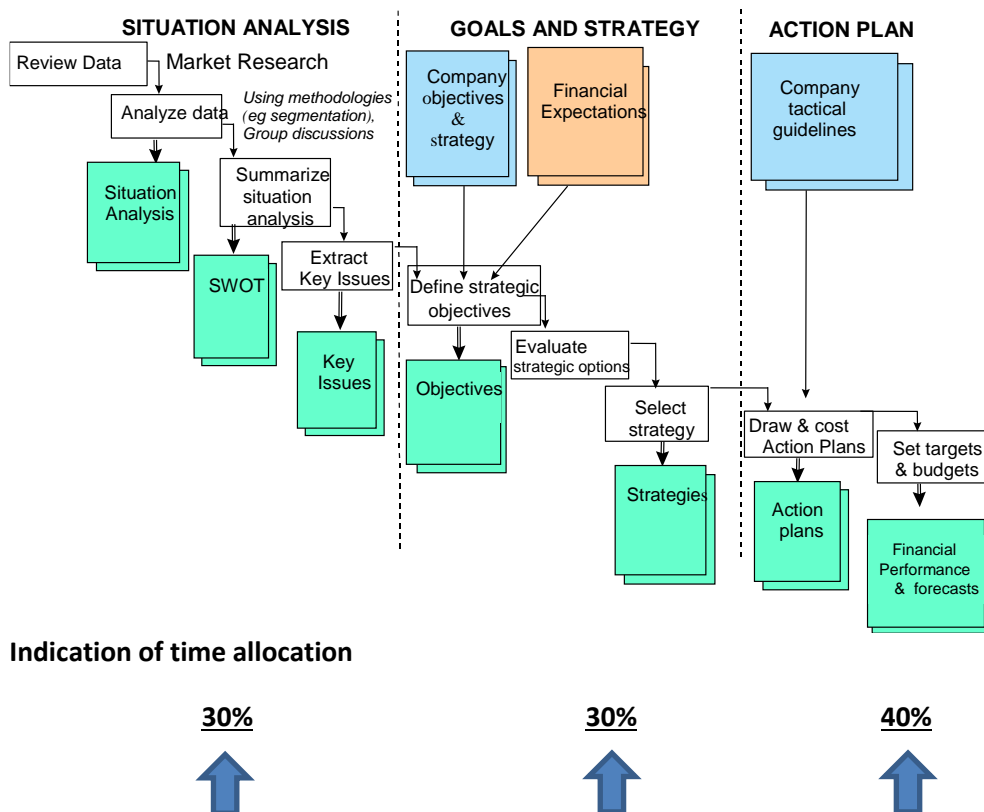


Flows into this



Graphical summary of the Marketing Planning

The following graphic summarizes the main steps in the process of preparing and writing Marketing Plans. It also gives indicative estimates of how much time you should spend at each stage.



Positioning

By “positioning”, we mean creating an image for your products in the minds of the target customers and the personas within those customers in their target markets. Within the target market, you must establish the desired perception of your products relative to the completion. Remember, it is to the specific target market and its personas, not the whole world, that positioning is used to differentiate your product.

Positioning is the basis for all your communications-branding, messaging, advertising, packaging, value propositions, sales tools, merchandising, PR and publicity

Three Factors to Consider:

1. The inherent Value Proposition for the specific persona of what you are selling.
2. The needs and wants of the target markets.
3. The direct, indirect, and share-of-wallet competition.

Of these three, #1, the Value Proposition is the most critical!

You must sell to customer value! In 2023, nothing else counts as much!

Types of Positioning

- Position by product differences to perceived value to the persona.
- Position by Key Attributes and Benefits that be consider meaningful?
- Position (very carefully) by price
- Position by types of users-direct messaging to the specific personas
- Position by the specific usage: when, how will it be used, ease, frequency?
- Positioning counter to another category.
- Position by association-Associate with a cause or another brand name
- Position by problem

To do a positioning assessment objectively, consider a mapping exercise.

First, list the product attributes-a few examples would be Quality, Value, Price, Selection, Service, Delivery, Appearance-of your product or service by importance as perceived by your target personas today. Then rank these on the vertical axis of a grid from 'Most Important' at the top, to "Least Important" on the bottom.

Then, at the bottom of the grid, ranked horizontally, create a "Competitive Rating" moving from the left, marked "Worst", and to the far right, marked "Best".

When you've completed this, then do the same for two or three of your primary competitors.

You are then going to build two series of maps here for both your existing customers and for those new customers or categories of customers that you are going after.

Once you have completed both of those maps, then mark on the maps the positions where you want to move to in the future, which is the time horizon allocated to this marketing plan. You may choose a future position which is three years away (the maximum time you want to plan for), but your marketing plan will need to allocate resources that will be devoted to achieving this position over time. More helpful is to create a time period of 6, 12 and 18 months.

Once this basic mapping is completed, then it's time to write out your positioning strategies (primary directions) that you are going to use. It's expected that you will most likely write out more than one positioning strategy so that you can compare strategies with those being used by the competition and reflect meeting the customers' needs the best.

These positioning statements should be short, to the point and very succinct.

Creating Meaningful Value Propositions

A Value Proposition is a marketing tool of a perfected message that is typically used consistently in all your marketing campaigns and is also formally provided to the Sales organization. Rather than the salespeople talking to prospects about their products and services, discussing the actual customer value that is provided by those products or services has been proven again and again to be the most effective tool used in the selling process.

In terms of construction, the Value Proposition is a short statement of the actual business or personal value that is provided to the customer stated in terms of “The Business Drivers” that are affected, the “Movement” of those Drivers and the “Metrics” by which the Business Drives will be affected.

Or a simple equation of ...

Drivers + Movement + Metrics = an example

Revenue + Increase + 25% =

“In a company similar to yours, we increased sales productivity by 30% in 12 months”

Here’s an example:

“Our software significantly increases (Movement) sales productivity (Business Driver) by approximately 20% over the period of 12 months (Metric) following a successful installation and training process.”

“The [Product Name] food processing equipment decreases (Movement) the switch out time (Business Driver) by 25% (Metric) while also decreasing (Movement) wastage (Business Driver) by up to 10% over the period of a 12-hour shift (Metric).”

Value Propositions sound very easy, but are quite complex to construct, but even much more difficult to get the salespeople (who love to talk about their products or their services) to consistently use them. **In fact, our research shows that the #1 sales tool used by the most successful B2B salespeople is their effective use of the company’s Value Propositions created by marketing.** Conversely the #1 reason weak salespeople fail is they do not effectively and consistently use their Value Propositions, and they wander off talking about unsubstantiated claims that do not focus on the value that they will provide to the prospect or existing customer.

Segmentation and Branding Methodologies

One of the key objectives for any Marketing Plan is to better understand the needs of the customers. In support of that aim, there are two critical marketing methodologies:

1. Customer Segmentation
2. Branding & Messaging

For both customer segmentation and branding, the company's strategies should provide guidance on the extent of a global implementation, for example. Should this marketing plan and company strategy be worldwide, focused on countries that would be less than worldwide or be specific merely to the U.S. or even to specific regions in the U.S., not in theory, but in practice and to what extent and over what time period?

Guidance:

For customer segmentation, the planning team should first outline segmentation criteria for customers based on qualitative factors (e.g., group/segment customers based on their behavioural characteristics that help determine prescription patterns). The planning team needs to define the various personas to whom they are selling naming each of them so that they clearly understand the buying factors.

Having done this, the planning team then needs to develop local segmentation criteria based on quantitative factors (e.g., unit sales by type of customer) Finally, the planning team needs to apply to the selected qualitative segmentation factors a tactical approach that reflects customers' needs and provides an effective means of selecting and targeting the most attractive segments for the Company.

For branding, the planning team should define the brand values that meet the needs of the various personas in all markets meaning both in each of the U.S. regions and in other countries. The team then needs to deploy a corporate branding strategy where applicable and adapt it and the related messaging where required, to meet the local needs of the market.

At this point, the segmentation and branding processes come together. This then allows the positioning of products within the targeted customer segments, to implement the brand locally and to develop a marketing mix that meets the needs of the customer segment.

Customer Segmentation Methodology

What is Market Segmentation?

This is the process of splitting customers, or potential customers, within a market into different groups, or segments, within which customers have the same or similar requirements.

Why Segment?

A company that decides to operate in a broad market recognizes that it normally cannot serve all the customers in that market. The customers are just too numerous, dispersed and varied in their buying requirements. The company, instead of competing everywhere, needs to make decisions to identify the most attractive segments that it can serve effectively and efficiently. Therefore, segmentation has many benefits:

- To assess the attractiveness of customers' segments
- To help define focus that will be critical in messaging and in action planning.
- Not every customer or every customer group has the same potential.
- To get more out of limited resources by focusing on high potential customers.
- Each segment-specific strategy will require specific tactics and action planning.

The Best Segmentation:

The segmentation process is one of the first steps in approaching a market and a good segmentation scheme must be such that:

- the needs within one segment are similar.
- the needs from segment to segment are significantly different.
- the segments are measurable (definable), accessible and actionable.
- the segments should make sense for the local market.

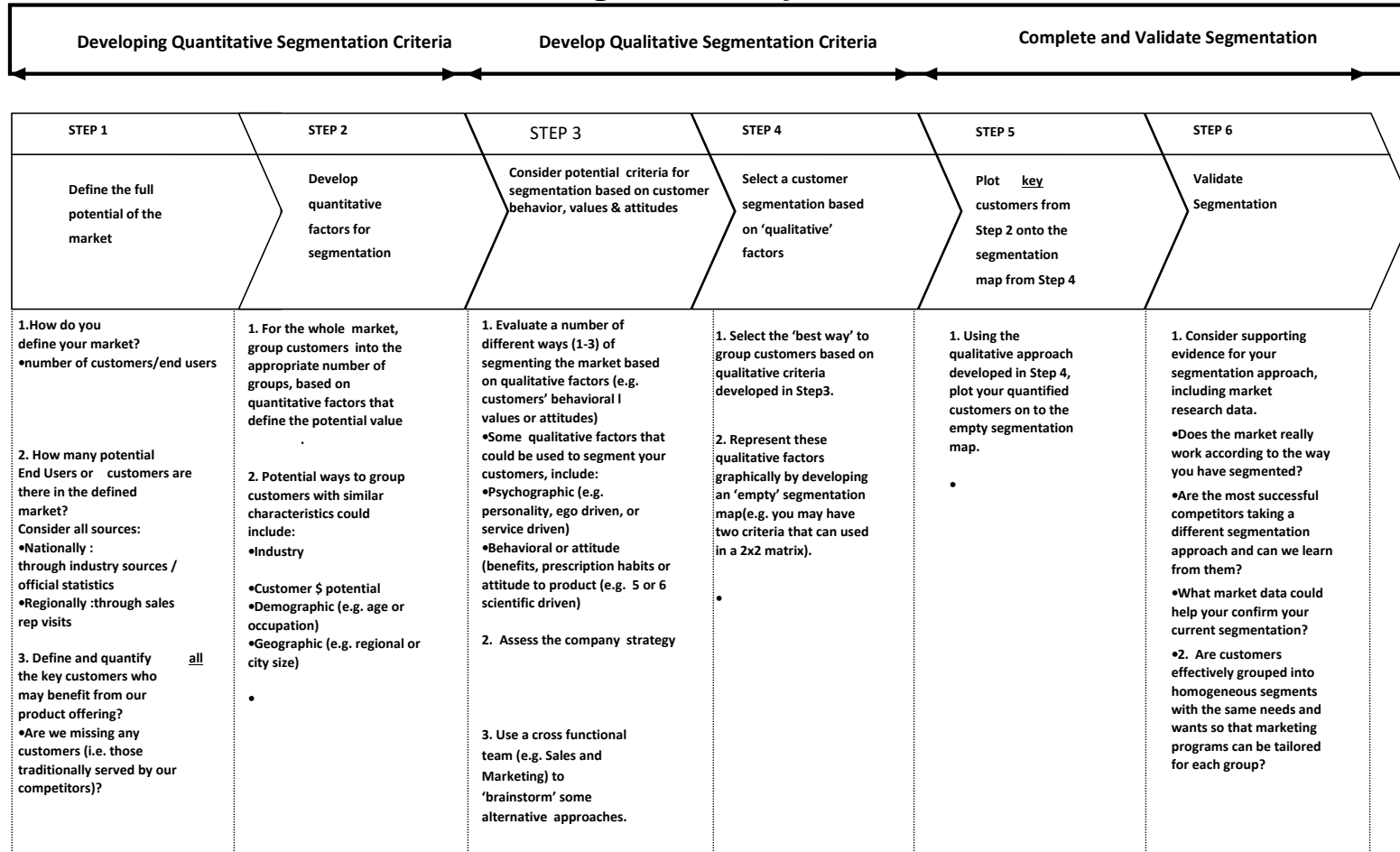
How to Segment:

A common customer segmentation targeting, and positioning process has been developed here (see the two figures-Sections #1 and #2 below). This methodology has been developed as a tool to help you segment customers. In this way, the process is designed to be as practical as possible, to provide a systematic way of approaching the segmentation of your market. The process has been split into two parts, Customer Segmentation (described in the first section) and Targeting and Positioning described in the second.

I realize that these sections look overwhelming complex, and I agree that they are, but then, this marketing process is the most critical process you will undertake in planning your company's future. It's critically important to the future growth of your business and deserves detailed attention. For an early stage or emerging business, I cannot see the value of going through every section of what is outlined below, but even for a small company, there needs to be some consideration of the primary factors that are outlined here.

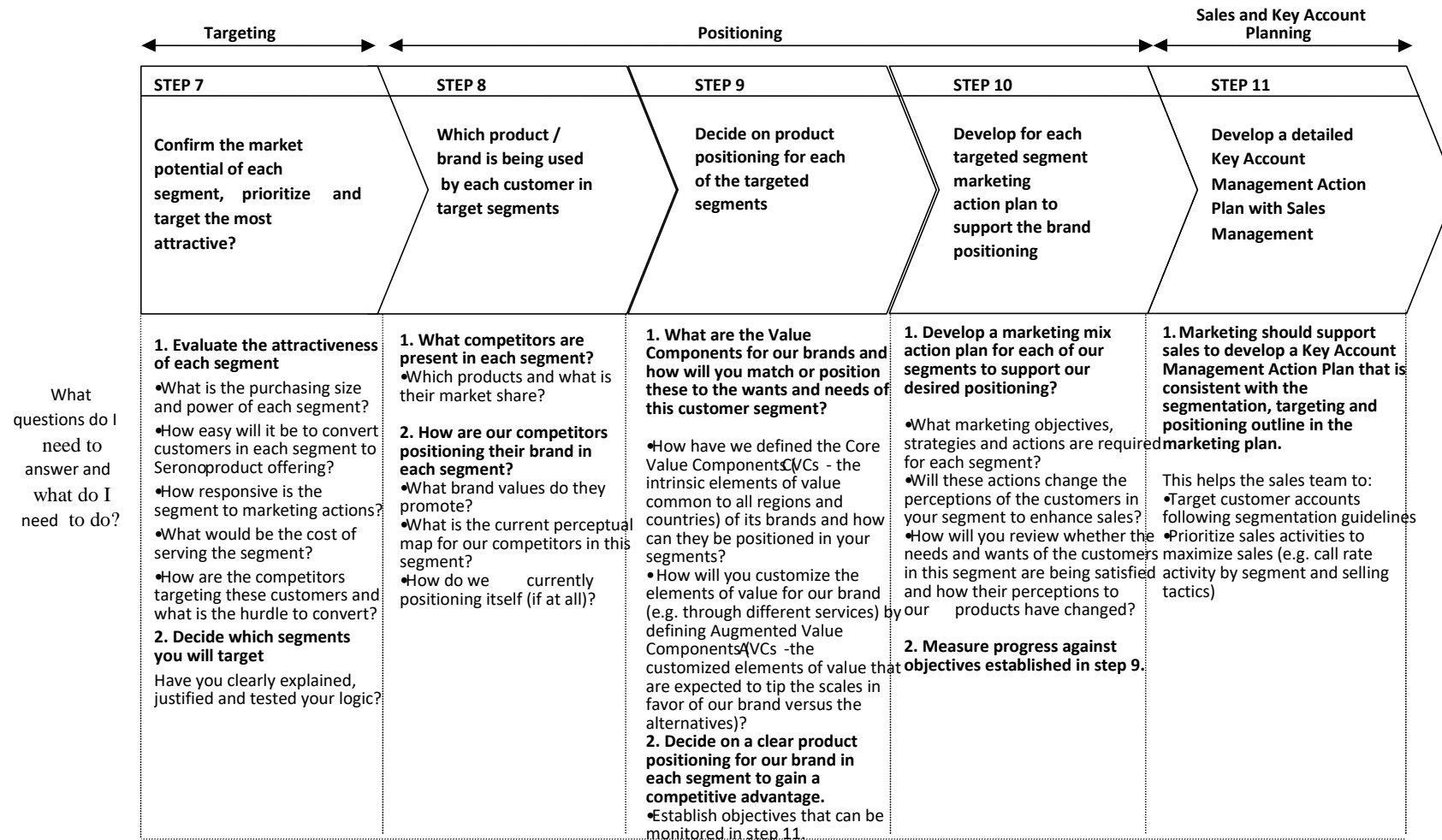
Clearly for a "small business"-you decide what that means-or a middle market business, we highly recommend the full use of what is on the next pages even as overwhelming as it looks. Just take it slowly section by section and connect with us at any time for questions.

Section #1: A common customer segmentation process



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Section #2: Targeting and positioning process



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The Customer Segmentation Process (Section #1-Steps 1-6)

Developing customer segmentation using quantitative factors (Steps 1-2):

The first two steps of the segmentation methodology involve the gathering of quantitative information (unique to the market) to define the full potential of the market and to develop a way of segmenting the market, based on these quantitative factors.

Developing customer segmentation using qualitative factors (Steps 3-4):

Steps 3 and 4 of the segmentation processes consider and select additional ways of segmenting customers based on qualitative factors such as customer behavior, values, or attitudes. As these qualitative factors may be common across all or many of your global markets, you should first look for guidance from within your own company business strategy before you develop your segmentation. This part of the process should develop a framework or a 'segmentation map' based on qualitative factors that quantified customers can be plotted on to in Step 5 of the process.

Plot key customers to the segmentation map and validate (Steps 5-6):

The next stage of the segmentation process is to complete and validate the chosen qualitative segmentation.

Target segments and positioning within segments (Sections #2, Steps 7-11)

Once segmentation is complete, the next consideration is to decide which segment(s) to target and how to position your product offering into that target segment. Steps 8 to 10 of the process consider the positioning of the brand(s) by segment and are the key links to the branding process as well as to developing a marketing mix by segment.

Branding Methodology

What is effective Brand or “Perceptual” Marketing?

Intimately knowing the values and needs of our customers... and then...ensuring that every element of the marketing mix is aligned behind creating, delivering, and communicating the values which will trigger customers to prescribe your brand over your competitors.’

Why is Perceptual Marketing or Branding important?

Products often struggle to demonstrate major differences in terms of their technical benefits highlighting the need to obtain greater insight into the customers’ perceptions of the brand and the factors motivating them to actually purchase and use. It’s our unrelenting focus that marketing is critical, and branding is critical as specific process, but the end result must, absolutely must be to define meaningful value creation for the customer. As a result, the company that fails to examine and monitor the equity of its brands as they related to customer value creation in the rapidly evolving markets of today, does so at its own peril. Marketing managers who don’t take account of the emotional factors in brand choice miss the opportunity to maximize the value of their brands.

How Do We Become More Customer Focused?

Effective brand or “Perceptual’ Marketing” is about intimately knowing the values and needs of our customers, which is customer and value focused compared to being product and service focused.

| Product Focused | Customer Focused |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Segment by products▪ Scientific, clinical, or academic focus▪ Relies on relationships and has difficulty disciplining sales force to provide useful reports & intelligence▪ Talks about product performance, factory volume/sales achieved▪ Knows competitive product features▪ Checks Marketing Plan only when it’s time for a new version. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Segment by customer personas▪ Focus on the customer needs and related value provided▪ Tracks market changes & modifies strategy based on market research & systematic collection of sales reports▪ Knows competitor strategies, primary assumptions, cost structures & objectives▪ Uses Marketing Plan to manage activities & invest effectively |

The Key Elements for Brand Equity

1. The physical element: perceived functionality

- The relative effectiveness of the product or service is very important.
- How well the product advantages are communicated so that customers perceive that these products or services offer superior value to themselves and/or their companies rather than those offered by competitors.

2. The emotional element: developing affinity to a brand

- Trust and innovation
- Brand identification by means of nostalgia, pleasant association of successful treatment, bonding and an actual sharing of the users' values and culture.

The Challenges with Branding

Consumers buy products, but they choose brands. Consumers form relationships with brands, not products, and not corporations.

The performance of the product, what it does, and how it does it, is the core identity of the brand. But the brand also has a distinctive personality and character that makes an emotional and trust-based connection with the consumer and distinguishes it from competitive brands. *Source: "Winning with P&G"*

How to most effectively brand

A common branding process has been developed (see the graphic figure below) as a key methodology to assist marketing teams to prepare their Marketing Plan. This process has been designed to be as practical as possible, to provide a systematic way of considering branding in individual markets. This process is primarily driven by the senior management planning team to develop a consistent world-wide brand image. The branding process is not limited to a particular section of the marketing plan; it has components that are located in the situation analysis (e.g., understanding customers' perceptions and values), objectives and strategies (e.g., How are we going to close the perception gap?) and action plans.

The Branding Process (see Figure A below, Steps 1-8)

Again, a fair amount of detail here and not applicable to all companies. Having said that...again...marketing is not supposed to be easy and focused only on the fun stuff of creating designs, logos, and slogans.

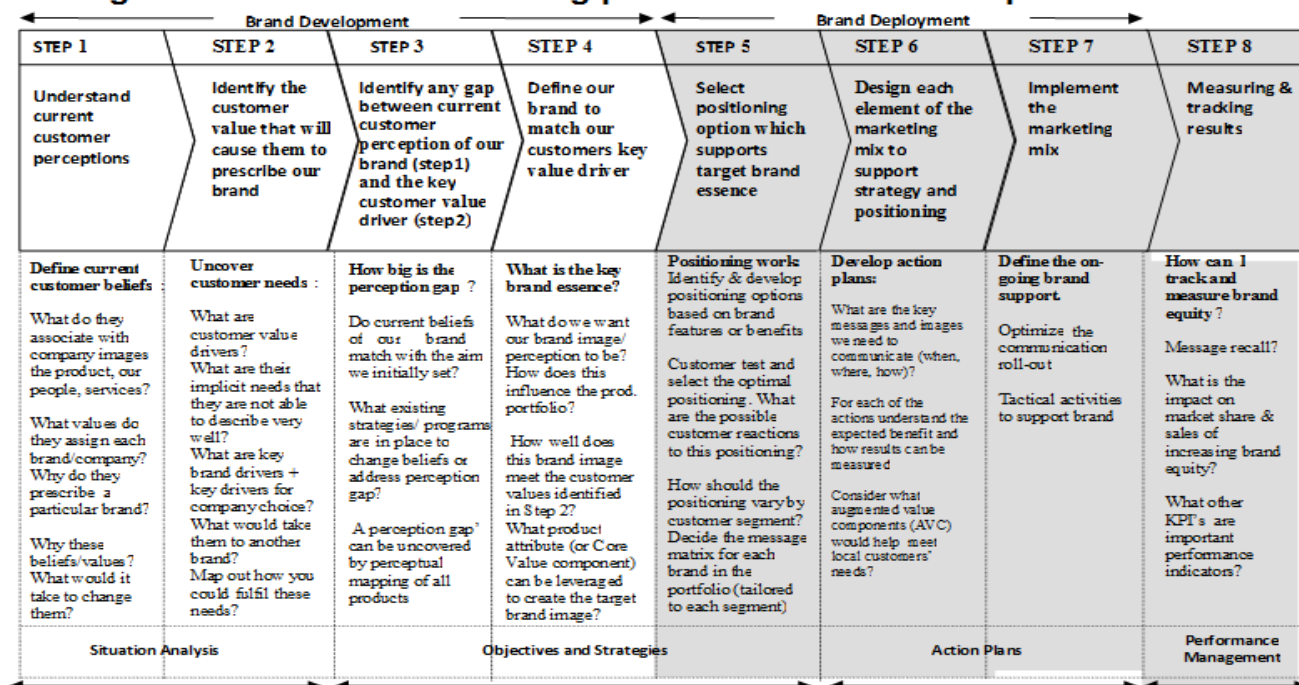
Brand Development (Steps 1-4):

The starting point for the branding process is to understand the customer's current perceptions of brands, and the customer's values that cause them to prescribe a particular brand (e.g., market research to help map out customer's perceptions of brands). The next step is to identify any gap between current customer perception of our brand (step 1) and the key customer value driver (step 2). Indeed, this gap can be visualized through the use of a perceptual map... The final step of brand development is to define the key brand essence of our brand to match customers' key value drivers (step 4). What product attribute (or Core Value Component (CVC) can be turned into an advantage and match customer beliefs / needs?

Brand Deployment and Tracking (Steps 5-8):

Steps 5-8 of the processes are then deployed. The brands need to be positioned by customer segment and a marketing mix developed to support the positioning.

Figure A: A common branding process for established products



Glossary of Terms Worksheet

Glossary of Marketing Planning Terms:

AVC (Augmented Value Components). The AVCs are the customized elements of value for the brand that are expected to tip the scales in favour of our brand versus the alternatives from the competitors. These are often developed locally.

Assumptions. The major market assumptions (e.g., estimated future market growth rates) on which the Marketing Plan is based.

Core Marketing Model. One of the tables, diagrams or graphs that is considered an essential component of the Marketing Plan.

Customer. An individual or organization that can materially impact the process of delivering prescriptions.

Critical Success Factors (CSF). The relatively few factors that determine success.

CVC (Core Value Components). The CVCs are the intrinsic elements of value for the brand common to all regions and countries.

Implications. The potential result(s) arising from a particular action.

Issue. Opportunities for which the company is not competitive, and or/threats.

Key Issues. The few most critical market issues (typically 3-5 identified from the SWOT analysis) that need to be addressed and overcome for business success.

Market Segment. A group of actual or potential customers who can be expected to respond in approximately the same way to a given offer. A finer more detailed breakdown of a market.

Marketing Objectives. A statement of the targets or goals to be pursued and achieved within the period of the Marketing Plan. Where do we want to go/be?

Marketing Plans. The outcome of the Marketing Planning process. A good discipline in preparing 'internally consistent' Marketing Plans is to use the following format:

SWOT/Issues > Objectives > Strategy > Specific Actions or Tactics

Marketing Plan Skeleton. A formatted word document to assist Marketing Planning.

Marketing Actions Tactics/Programs. The actual concrete steps to be taken to achieve the marketing strategy.

Marketing Strategy. A description of the course of action to be taken to achieve a specific marketing objective. The strategy is often referred to as the connecting link between marketing objectives and marketing tactics.

Measure. Quantitative (not necessarily financial) measurement of the impact of the activity.

Opportunity. A feature of the market environment that is commercially attractive.

Product Positioning. The process of selecting and matching the customer segment of the market with a product that will be most compatible (to meet the needs of those customers). One of the major objectives of product positioning analysis is to discover how well your product is perceived by customers to meet their needs in relation to the competition.

Qualitative Segmentation criteria. Criteria used to segment the market, which are not derived from quantified market statistics (e.g., customer behaviour).

Quantitative Segmentation criteria. Criteria used to segment the market which are based on a definite amount or number (e.g., geographical market statistics such as patient numbers by region.)

Segmentation. A finer more detailed breakdown of a market, by splitting customers or potential customers into different groups or segments, within which customers have the same or similar requirements.

Situation Analysis. Reviews the business environment (with attention to market, competitive and economic aspects) as well as the company's own internal operation.

Strength. Elements within the company's control that are considered stronger than those of its' competitors.

SWOT Analysis. The SWOT is a summary of the Strengths, Weaknesses (of the company), Opportunities and Threats (from the market environment) emanating out of the marketing audit.

Threat. A feature of the market environment which is unattractive because it could have a damaging impact. It could be either through reducing market potential or through closing the window of opportunity.

Value Proposition. A short statement of the actual business value that is provided to the customer stated in terms of the Business Drivers that are affected, the movement of those Drivers and the Metrics by which the Business Drive will be affected. Typically, the Value Proposition of Drivers + Movement + Metrics is then followed by an illustrative example.

Weaknesses. Elements within the company's control that are thought to be weaker than that of its competitor(s).

Summary:

What we have provided in this second section of our book is a rough draft framework for your actual planning process to think through. As we noted at the very beginning, the focus of this book is to take a “how-to” approach to creating a Marketing Plan format.

For example, it purposefully does not go into any details regarding the tactical choices of Inbound or Outbound Marketing since there are very good books, blogs and other sources on those tactics plus that world of marketing changes too quickly today for this to be relevant.

Similarly, we did not go into the complexities of pricing. Again, here there are hundreds and hundreds of solid sources in books, articles, and blogs.

At the very least, it’s our belief that this framework will provide you with the necessary questions that you need to answer if you expect to be able to use your Marketing Plan for something more than a document that you prepare once a year for the purpose of presenting it to your board and investors.

From our experience, we’ve found that the real benefit of creating a Marketing Plan is for marketing management and all the managers on the senior leadership team to be able to have a robust and actionable set of highly integrated plans that should be able to change the direction of your company over the long term and provide a roadmap for success in the short term.

We also don’t expect that you will be able to use this document without questions or your own set of ideas, so make sure that you give us a call or email us. We are planning to significantly modify this document over the balance of the new world of 2023 and whatever that brings, so your comments and ideas are very much appreciated,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack'.

[Head Coach, Derby Management Site](#)

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