

Services-oriented Marketing Plan

Defining Service

A service is an activity, experience, process, or performance. It is frequently intangible, and can be variable or repeatable, which means that the most recent exposure to that experience is the one that will remain in the mind of customers (the recency effect). Service-based businesses should approach marketing differently to those selling goods. The unique challenge with marketing services is transferring the abstract to reality. Here's the basic outline for a thorough marketing strategy for any service-oriented business:

Marketing Plan: The Elements

- 1 Market overview
- 2 Competitor analysis
- 3 SWOT analysis
- 4 Primary target market and segmentation
- 5 Marketing objectives
- 6 Communication objectives
- 7 Marketing strategies
- 8 Action plans and calendar of activity
- 9 Financials and evaluation

Market Overview

Understanding your environment is essential. A market overview needs to take into consideration:

- ▶ A "helicopter" view of the market and which products, services and brands exist
- ▶ Environmental analysis including economic, political and legislative climate
- ▶ Market level analysis for each product and service.

Competitor Analysis

Quickly identify your three primary competitors, as well as their positioning.

Key activities:

- ▶ List each major competitor(s) in relation to key segments
- ▶ Include a SWOT of each competitor

- ▶ Understand their market positioning
- ▶ Review their current and expected strategies
- ▶ Define your unique selling proposition (USP) against each competitor.

Given that many corporate structures involve overlapping levels of specialisation, this exercise may need to be repeated a number of times. You may want to compare and contrast, internally as well as externally.

SWOT Analysis: Get Down To It

List out all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for your service business.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Primary Target Market & Segmentation

You should pay attention to both the primary target market and segmentation. There is more than one way to slice a target. Consider:

- ▶ Demographic and psychographic
- ▶ Socio-economic
- ▶ Geographical
- ▶ Attitudinal and personality
- ▶ Lifestyle/lifestage
- ▶ Expectations, benefits sought, repeat purchaser

Think primary, secondary, intermediated and direct. What's the best way to define, then meet the needs and expectations of your segmented customers?

Marketing Objectives

Your marketing objectives will revolve around the following:

- ▶ Improve perceived market positioning
- ▶ Increase brand strength in the eyes of intermediaries and end customers
- ▶ Increase the strength of and buy in to our brand by our staff
- ▶ Improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of marketing strategies/activities within each business unit to drive top line growth and return on capital

Communication Objectives

- ▶ Define these by each division or product line

Marketing Strategies

In services, positioning is “what you do to the mind of the customer.” It’s all about people, service processes and physical appearances and comfort. Services marketing mixes strategies from the 7 Ps and 1 D:

- ▶ Product
- ▶ Price
- ▶ Place
- ▶ Promotion
- ▶ People
- ▶ Processes
- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Differentiation

Your business may contain a number of attributes that identify it. Determine the attributes that are differentiating and unique, and consider what is most important to customers. You can list these out in terms of what is uniquely special, advantageous to have, and necessary to have about your business:

Unique

First, best, only

Advantageous

Good to have. Competitors may copy easily in the short to mid-term.

Necessary

Price of entry to the market.

Action Plan and Marketing Activity Calendar

This essentially comprises of marketing activity e.g. what, when, how and who. It should contain a wide mix of elements such as events, web, sales tools, PR, advertising and so on.

	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN
Advertising – Media								
- Press								
- Magazine								
- TV								
- Other								
Advertising – Online								
Direct								
- Mail								■
- Email		■						■
PR	←							
Brochures	←							
Newsletter			■			■		
Seminars						■		
Sponsorships	←							
Web	←							
Budget								

Financials and Evaluation

List your budgeting by each marketing activity, and the money that’s been allocated to that. It will also help to get procedures and timeframes in place to assess success and maintain control. As time goes on, make changes to your marketing activities as appropriate.