

Writing the Winning Marketing Plan

Many people believe that the basic issue in marketing is *convincing* prospects you have a better product, and that *in the long run*-the best product will win.

Simply not true!

That was not true before 2020, and in the chaotic and unknown clinical and financial environments of 2020, which will unfortunately extend well into 2021, it is certainly not true now, while we are still trying to figure out what the new normal will be.

The 10 bottom-line basics right now as you think about your 2020 plan:

- Everything has changed except the marketing of trust, honesty and empathy
- Everything is an experiment. Try it, if it works, continue! It doesn't work, stop!
- Everything should be planned out for no more than 90 days at a time.
- Marketing's #1 job is still to create more qualified leads for salespeople
- Focus on more leads, of course, but focus more on better conversion rates
- Inbound Marketing heavily outweighs Outbound this year and in 2021
- Trade shows are gone forever.
- Conferences and events will all be online well into 2021
- There are more marketing tactics and tech choices than ever before.
- Your choices constitute your marketing plan

Marketing is not about “convincing”! One, it would never work, and, if it were to, it would be for very small volumes. Two, by itself, the word has negative connotations. Neither you nor I want to be convinced! I want to buy something that has value for me personally or for my business...and preferably both.

For each of my marketing course at Tufts and at MIT, I always begin with a very large whiteboard or a Zoom/Teams blank pane and ask the question... *“Just what is marketing?”* ...and then I begin to write out those words. I certainly hear “convincing” a lot, and also “advertising”, “selling”, “branding”, “promoting”, “storytelling”, “designing”, “communicating” along with a host of singular phrases defining the mediums from social to billboards to TV to trade shows and 20 other channel mechanisms.

I frequently joke that if one wants to slow down any board meeting or any academic discussion, all that you need is to ask that same question- *“just what is marketing?”*

In fact, all of these definitions answering the question of *“just what is marketing?”* are correct, 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](#). Over the past 20 years in my teaching and in my Sales and Marketing work with the partners at Derby Management, I have always returned to the simplicity of this phrase that *“Marketing is Everything”*. Plus, I use this phrase not only with my juniors, seniors and graduate students, but also with the senior management of a wide variety of our companies which operate in a very diverse set of markets.

“Marketing is Everything” is a phrase that for me simplifies the discussion about what marketing is since it provides a common foundation or platform on top of which we can build whatever components we want only constrained by our budgets, our objectives and our schedules of what we are planning to impact in that specific period of time. Normally, I would want you to plan out for 12 months breaking that up into quarterly metrics and a series of tactics that fit into both your overall company strategy and, of course, your budget. Today and for the next six to twelve months is not “normal” and has little to do with overarching long-term business strategies. Today, we need to be very focused on shorter-term lead generation of highly qualified leads. Once we make it out of the clinical and financial chaos, we can plan out longer term strategies over longer periods of time.

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 is rarely a balance of half and half since in the real world, this process typically becomes an overweighting of one side or the other.

Nowhere is this principle better exhibited than in cars. The reality of my 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 I would need to put money into new tires and new brakes. The [Subaru Outback](#) is a darn good and very practical car ranking at the top of every list for safety and economy, and overall, it’s not a bad looking car.

Their marketing is based primarily on safety and economy with lots of shots of the outdoors and multi generations of family. Somewhat of the perfect blend of both sides of the brain-the practicality of economy and high trade-in value on one side balanced nicely with the emotions of being outdoors in the country on the other.

Take a look at the other car I owned up until last November which I traded in my 2014 Corvette Stingray. I loved the car, but its purchase was pretty much all emotion and a really great marketing campaign all about the return of the iconic Stingray from the 1960's. I am sure that there are a few paragraphs in the manual that came with the care about its practical side and safety features, but 95% of its purchase was based on its unbelievable styling and the perceptions of owning an American legend.

The writing of this manual was based on attempting to create a document that I could use with my students at Tufts University, where I have the privilege of teaching a course in entrepreneurial marketing. I hope that you enjoy 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. email: jack@derbymanagement.com text: 617-504-4222

Best of Success in creating your 2020 Marketing Planning. Connect anytime!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack', with a stylized flourish at the end.

[Head Coach, Derby Management Site](#)

- Sales & Marketing Productivity Experts
- Business & Strategy Planning Specialists
- Senior Management Coaches

[What We Do & the Value We Add](#)

Professor of the Practice, [Tufts University Center of Entrepreneurship](#)

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Background

As part of our work with both our customers at Derby Management and my teaching at Tufts, where I've been the Director of the [Tufts Entrepreneurship Center](#), we introduced a revised common Marketing Planning Process and a single common format in 2019. As a result, we thought that it might provide a framework for others to consider.

This ebook is a "how-to" book. It's a book written on the basics of what it takes to construct a fundamental marketing plan. It really is a construction book on "how-to".

- The components of the plan-what it includes and does not include
- The flow from beginning to end-what comes first, what goes last
- The understanding that it is the most important component of any business plan
- The process through which it is assembled
- The integration of the plan with the other departments in any company

This is not a book about the subject of marketing per se. It's assumed that the readers will have an understanding of many of the basic principals of marketing plus an understanding of the importance and the differences between Inbound and Outbound:



[Inbound Marketing](#) which is the integration of:

- SEO in all site content
- Blogging
- Social Media
- email marketing

Basically it 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. An easy and comfortable read. Authoritative and responsible! A definite "must-read" if you want to be in marketing today



Outbound Marketing is basically “everything else” and 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 future sends.

Basically, it is non-permission based. “I did not give you permission to market to me, but you did anyhow.”

Inbound and Outbound is not “new” and “old”; it is not even “digital” and “non-digital”. It is all about permission!

This book and my practices and my teaching of marketing is very heavily weighted to Inbound, but I also understand the importance of Outbound in some companies and with some personas, but tactic for tactic, I will always choose Inbound.

- It is far less expensive
- It is much more immediate and timelier. In most cases, it operates in real-time.
- I can track exact results and make decisions quickly as a result.
- I integrate my content and my tools around a marketing platform.
- I speak, blog, write and video in human terms and treat people as people.

Why is Marketing Planning important?

Marketing Planning is concerned with managing your business responsibilities in the future in order to make the best use of your two most limited resources-**Time & Money**, and to generate the planned profits for your business by satisfying the needs of your customers by providing the best value for that customer. At the end of this thinking about Marketing and exacting whatever marketing planning process you decide to employ, the two fundamental baselines in any marketing plan will always be “Time & Money” *...as in I do not have enough, and I need more.*

Marketing Planning is about ensuring an orderly transition from today into the future.

Back-in-the-day in the normality of 2019, as a manager, you might have enjoyed letting marketing activities “*just happen normally*” since business and the economy in general were “*pretty good*” as you took a view 100 feet off the deck. If the pandemic had not occurred, you would be spending the fall of 2020 dusting off your 2019 plan and reformatting it based on where you ended the 2020 quarters-to-date and as you looked out to your company’s expanded growth objectives for 2021.

Today, everything has changed, 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 control your growth, improve your revenue, boost your margin and improve your profits while scaling your company’s future, then Marketing Planning is not an option, it’s mandatory!

Planning of any kind-your business planning, marketing planning, sales planning or product planning-is not something apart from the rest of the business; it is the very heart and soul of your business. The result of 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!

The discipline of this process of Marketing Planning also requires you to continually research your prospects and your current customers, along with consistently reassessing your various markets in order to develop and test alternative options for your business. It allows you to be more prepared for the unexpected, the essence of which was effectively 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 components:



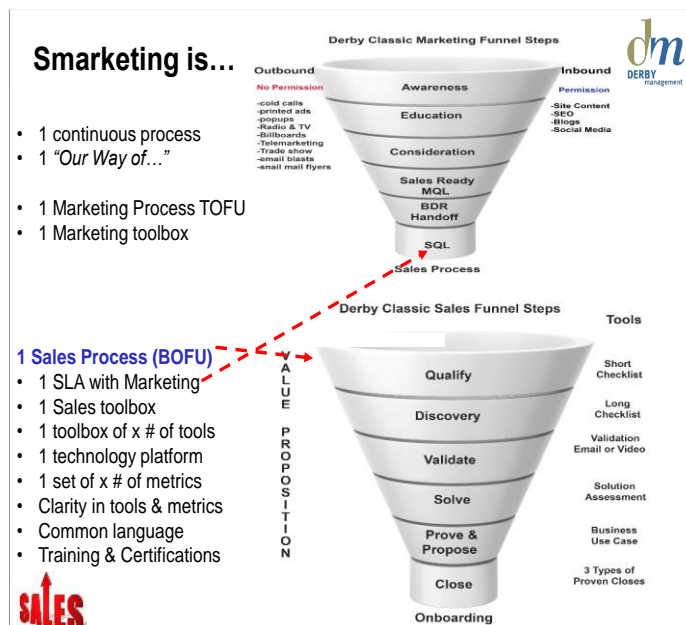
Your Marketing Plan will therefore have a diverse set of many readers.

Your company's marketing plan will be read by all the internal managers and, most probably, by the company's outside directors to help them understand the global 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 2020, this is more important than ever so rather than 12 months at a time, your marketing plan should be based on a foundation of the next six months with three-month pillars of tactical pillars. 2020 and 2021 is all about change!

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. Everything is Marketing, and it sets the direction of any business!

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

- 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!
- Clearly state your prioritized and focused objectives, tactics and metrics to achieve your expectations, consistently aligned across both the Marketing and Sales organizations so that you can efficiently plan your resources based on creating very focused and detailed action plans, budgets and forecasts for both Sales and Marketing. In order to take a higher-level view of its overarching purpose, let's introduce our Sales & Marketing Funnel structure with Marketing on top whose sole purpose is to deliver Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) to the Sales organization. If the Salesperson agrees that that MQL fits the agreed-on definitions that both Marketing and Sales have agreed to, then that MQL becomes a Sales Qualified Leads (SQL) and Sales takes over.

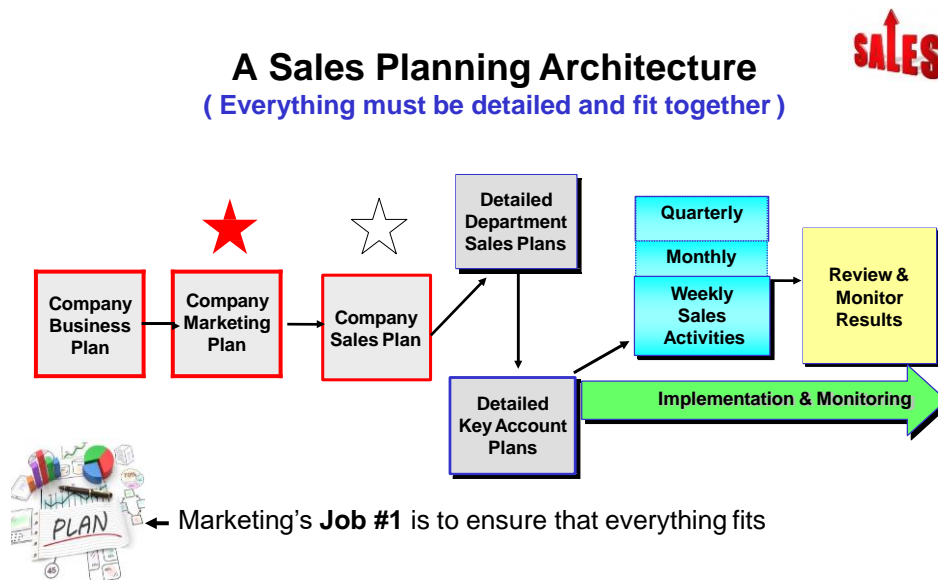


-“Smarketing” is a meant-to-be-acute term that connotes that Marketing & Sales are joined at the hip with common objectives

-This graphic is also meant to introduce the importance of the words “processes” which moves both Marketing and Sales “steps” from the top to the bottom by the use and the measurement of “tools”. For example, Marketing starts with the steps of both “Awareness” and “Education” which through the use of Inbound tools of Site Content, SEO, blogs and Social Media, moves the prospect from just being “aware” to actually “considering”

The Business Architecture

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 since it sets the strategies and the tactics for driving product and sales actions in order to achieve 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 in 2020 and as we look into 2021. 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.

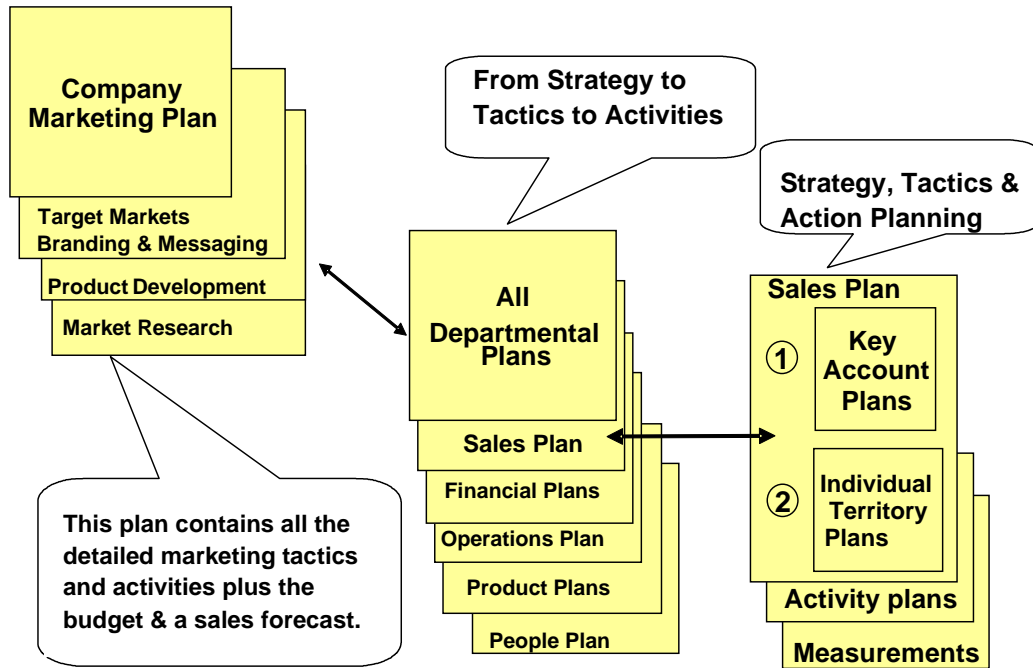
The Planning Cycle

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 and we expect to be for the next year, we would expect that...

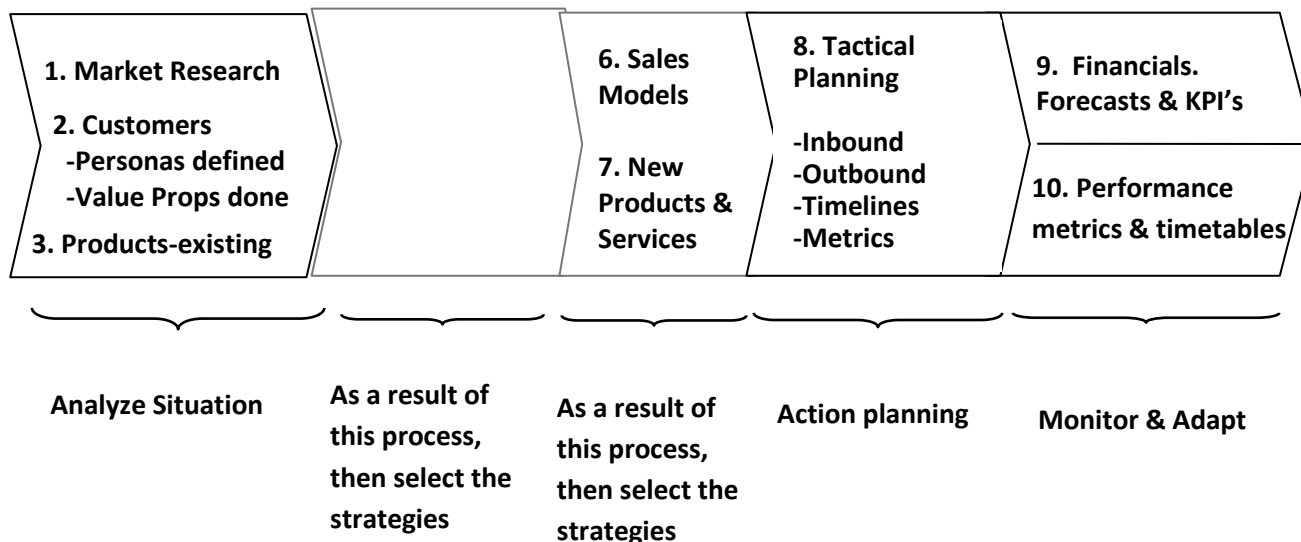
1. All of these timelines would be compressed
2. The planning horizon would be six months at the longest
3. The tactical plans and activities would be monthly in an overall quarterly plan.

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 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 2020 and 2021, 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 2020-2021, 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 a just a relative 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 2020 or 2021. 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.

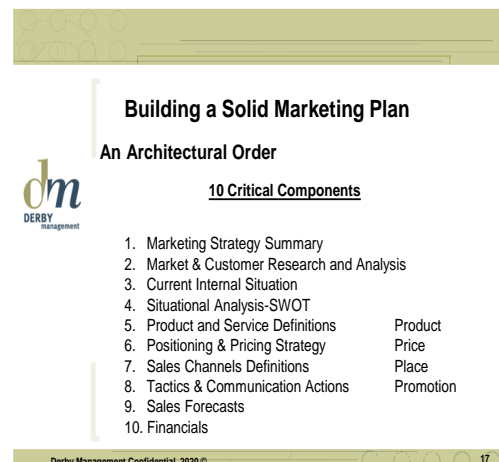
Just a couple of words about “flow”

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

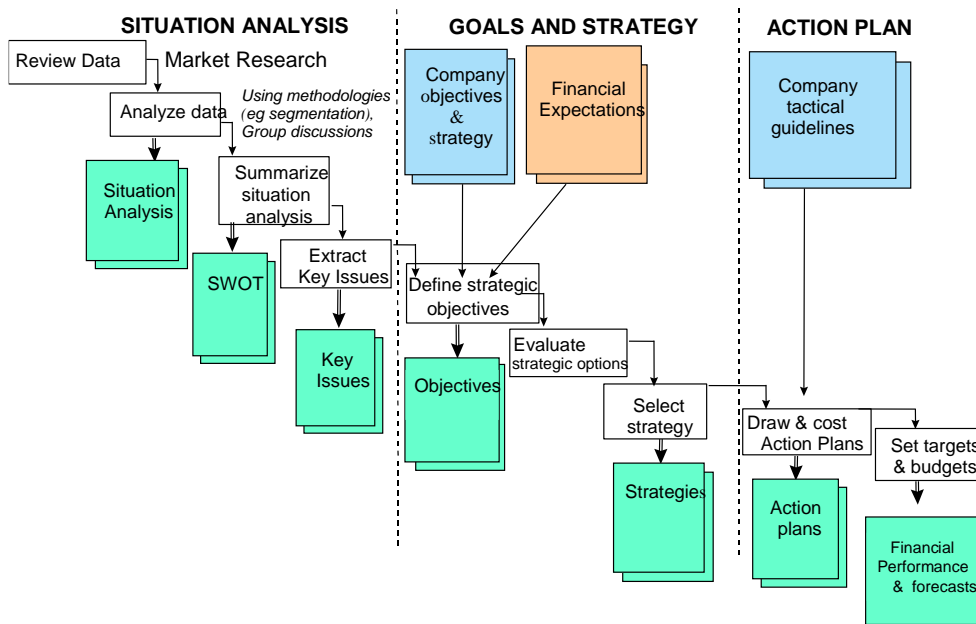


Flows into this



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.



Indication of time allocation



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 2020, nothing else counts as much!**

Types of Positioning

- Position by product differences
-What is meaningful different to perceived value?
- Position by Key Attributes and Benefits
-What is it that customers will 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 a category
- Zipcar compared to owning or leasing
- 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.

Typically, “The Value Proposition Equation” of **Drivers + Movement + Metrics** is then followed by an illustrative example of successful customer (who may or may not be named) in either the same or a tangent industry.

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 in 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.

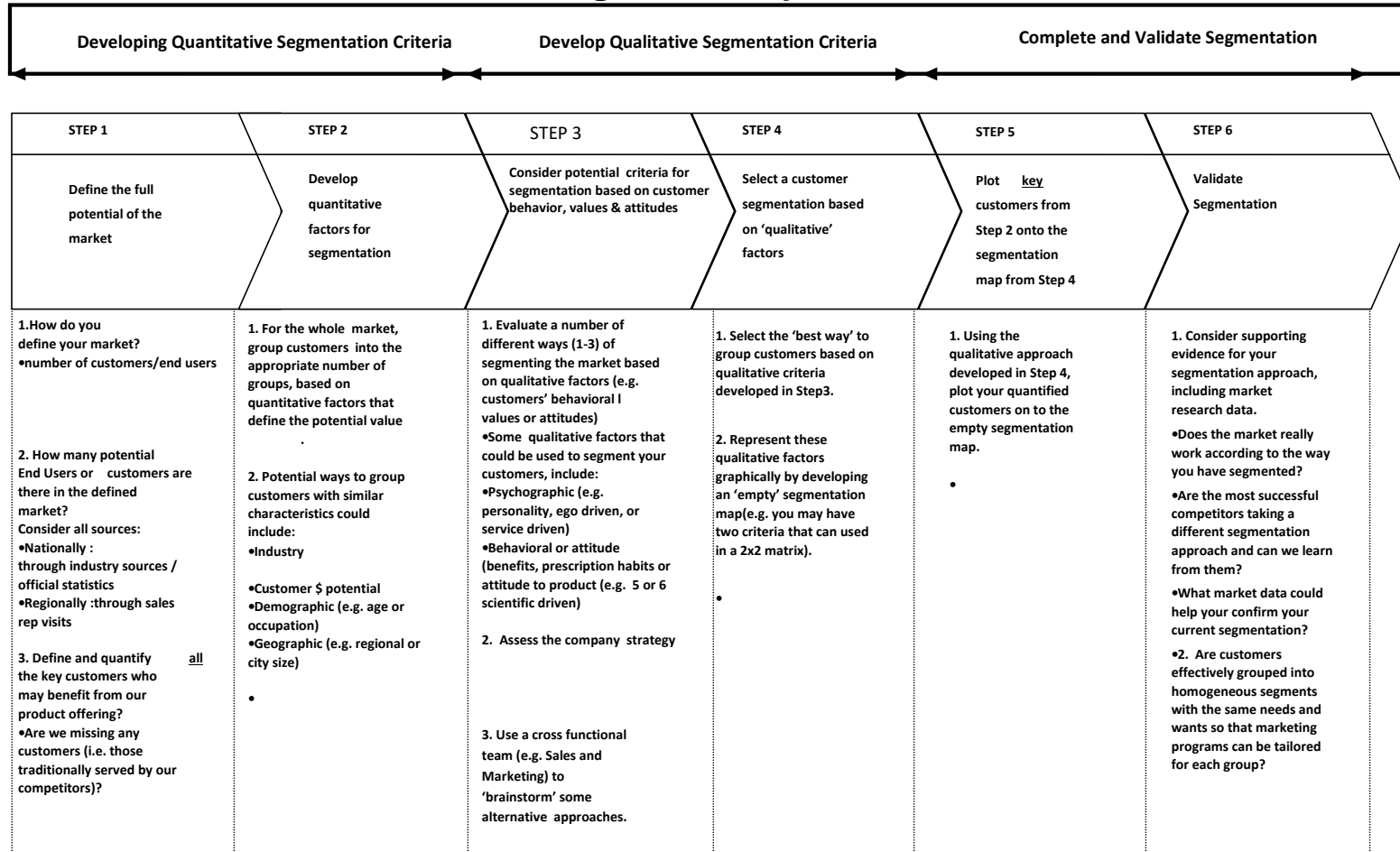
How to Segment:

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.

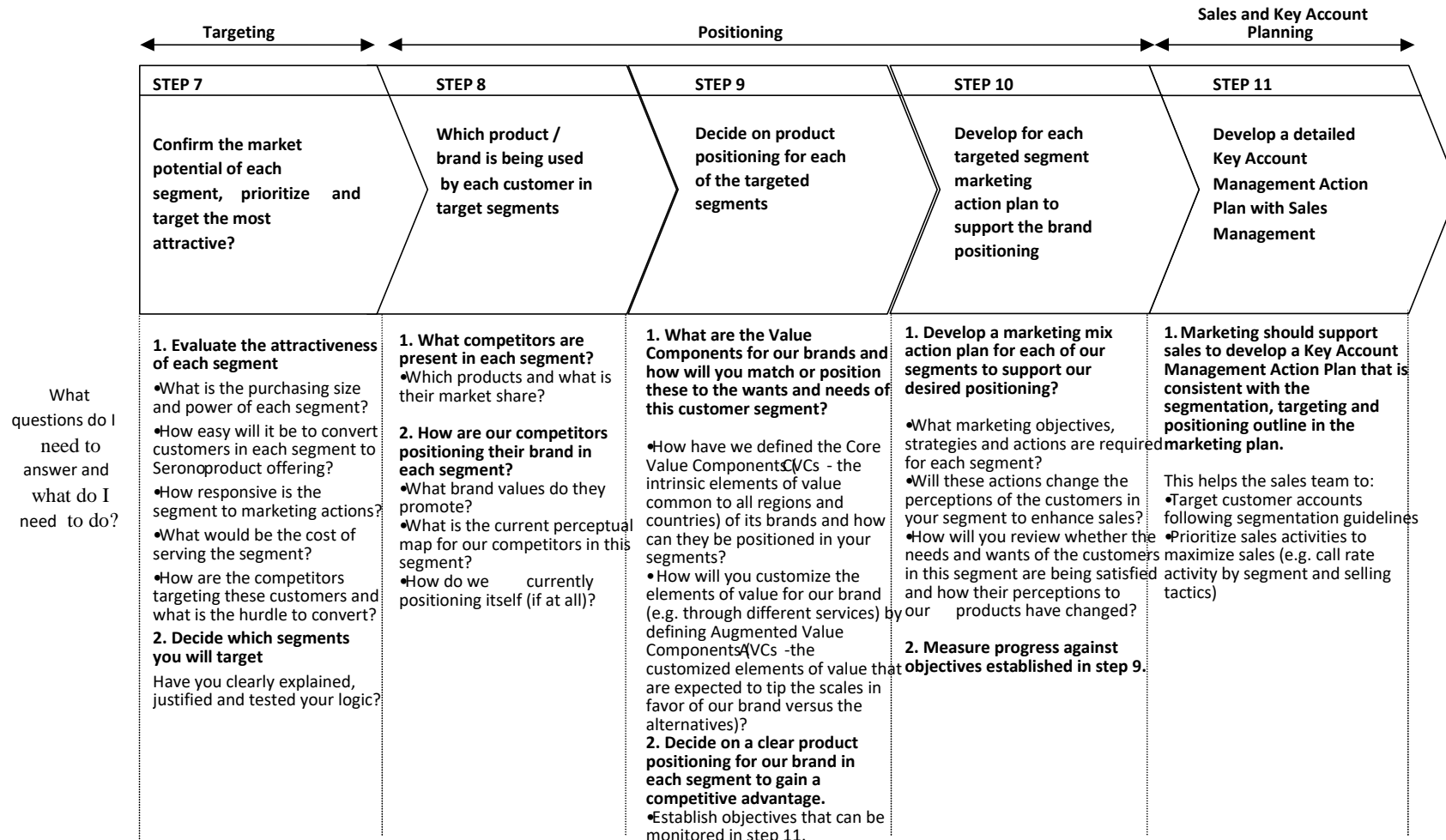
Clearly for a "small business"-you decide what that means-or a middle market business, we highly recommend the full use of what is on the next pages even as overwhelming as it looks. Just take it slowly section by section and connect with us at any time for questions.

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

Brand Development				Brand Deployment			
STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7	STEP 8
Understand current customer perceptions	Identify the customer value that will cause them to prescribe our brand	Identify any gap between current customer perception of our brand (step1) and the key customer value driver (step2)	Define our brand to match our customers key value driver	Select positioning option which supports target brand essence	Design each element of the marketing mix to support strategy and positioning	Implement the marketing mix	Measuring & tracking results
<p>Define current customer beliefs</p> <p>What do they associate with company images the product, our people, services?</p> <p>What values do they assign each brand/company? Why do they prescribe a particular brand?</p> <p>Why these beliefs/values? What would it take to change them?</p>	<p>Uncover customer needs :</p> <p>What are customer value drivers? What are their implicit needs that they are not able to describe very well? What are key brand drivers + key drivers for company choice? What would take them to another brand? Map out how you could fulfil these needs?</p>	<p>How big is the perception gap ?</p> <p>Do current beliefs of our brand match with the aim we initially set?</p> <p>What existing strategies/ programs are in place to change beliefs or address perception gap?</p> <p>A perception gap can be uncovered by perceptual mapping of all products</p>	<p>What is the key brand essence?</p> <p>What do we want our brand image/perception to be? How does this influence the prod. portfolio?</p> <p>How well does this brand image meet the customer values identified in Step 2?</p> <p>What product attribute (or Core Value component) can be leveraged to create the target brand image?</p>	<p>Positioning work:</p> <p>Identify & develop positioning options based on brand features or benefits</p> <p>Customer test and select the optimal positioning. What are the possible customer reactions to this positioning?</p> <p>How should the positioning vary by customer segment? Decide the message matrix for each brand in the portfolio (tailored to each segment)</p>	<p>Develop action plans:</p> <p>What are the key messages and images we need to communicate (when, where, how)?</p> <p>For each of the actions understand the expected benefit and how results can be measured</p> <p>Consider what augmented value components (AVC) would help meet local customers' needs?</p>	<p>Define the on-going brand support</p> <p>Optimize the communication roll-out</p> <p>Tactical activities to support brand</p>	<p>How can I track and measure brand equity ?</p> <p>Message recall?</p> <p>What is the impact on market share & sales of increasing brand equity?</p> <p>What other KPI's are important performance indicators?</p>
Situation Analysis		Objectives and Strategies		Action Plans		Performance Management	

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 Comments:

What we have provided here is a rough draft framework for you to think through. As we noted at the beginning, the focus of this document is to create a Marketing Plan format. It purposefully does not go into any details the tactical choices of Inbound or Outbound Marketing since there are very good books, blogs and other sources on tactics plus that world of marketing changes too quickly today for this to be relevant.

- Again, we recommend diving into the deep end of the pool with David Merman's newest edition of [The New Rules of PR & Marketing](#), which we referenced at the beginning of this book.
- We would also recommend that you begin taking the Marketing courses detailed in the [Hubspot Academy](#). Incredible video content which can be done at your own pace! We are huge fans of Hubspot, which is why 71 of my personal Tufts alums currently work there, and Derby Management is an authorized Agency Partner creating sites and installing their platforms and tools for our customers.

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 should 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 this year and into the new world of 2021 and whatever that bring, so your comments and ideas are very much appreciated,

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

[Head Coach, Derby Management Site](#)

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