

## Marketing Plan Worksheets Notes

These worksheets will assist you in writing a formal marketing plan. Worksheets are a useful planning tool because they help to ensure that important information is not omitted from the marketing plan. Answering the questions on these worksheets will enable you to:

1. Organize and structure the data and information you collect during the situation analysis.
2. Use this information to better understand a firm's strengths and weaknesses, and to recognize the opportunities and threats that exist in the marketing environment.
3. Develop goals and objectives that capitalize on strengths.
4. Develop a marketing strategy that creates competitive advantages.
5. Outline a plan for implementing the marketing strategy.

Set up your plan following the same topics as the Worksheet Notes; however, use subtitles of two or three words and not sentences. It is crucial that you cover all Roman Numerals and all letters; however, there may be some information within the letters that is not applicable to your chosen company. For example: if you are creating a marketing plan for a small coffee shop, most likely it would not have political issues (II.C.). If there are areas that are not applicable, leave out.

## **I. Executive Summary**

The executive summary is a synopsis of the overall marketing plan. It should provide an overview of the entire plan including goals/objectives, strategy elements, implementation issues, and expected outcomes. The executive summary is easier to write if you do it last, after you have written the entire marketing plan.

## **II. Situation Analysis**

### **A. The Internal Environment**

#### **Review of marketing goals and objectives**

Identify the firm's current marketing goals and objectives.

Explain how these goals and objectives are being achieved.

Explain how these goals and objectives are consistent or inconsistent with the firm's mission, recent trends in the external environment, and recent trends in the customer environment.

#### **Review of current marketing strategy and performance**

Describe the firm's current marketing strategy with respect to products, pricing, distribution, and promotion. Which elements of the strategy are working well? Which elements are not?

Describe the firm's current performance (sales volume, market share, profitability, awareness, brand preference) compared to other firms in the industry. Is the performance of the industry as a whole improving or declining? Why?

If the firm's performance is declining, what is the most likely cause (e.g., environmental changes, flawed strategy, poor implementation)?

#### **Review of current and anticipated organizational resources**

Describe the current state of the firm's organizational resources (e.g., financial, capital, human, experience, relationships with key suppliers or customers). How are the levels of these resources likely to change in the future?

If resource levels are expected to change, how can the firm leverage additional resources to meet customer needs better than competitors?

If additional resources are not available, how can the firm compensate for future resource constraints (lack of resources)?

## **Review of current and anticipated cultural and structural issues**

In terms of marketing strategy development and implementation, describe the positive and negative aspects of the current and anticipated culture of the firm. Examples could include:

- The firm's overall customer orientation (or lack thereof)
- The firm's emphasis on short-term versus long-term planning
- Willingness of the firm's culture to embrace change
- Internal politics and power struggles
- The overall position and importance of the marketing function
- Changes in key executive positions
- General employee satisfaction and morale

Explain whether the firm's structure is supportive of the current marketing strategy.

## **B. The Customer Environment**

### **Who are the firm's current and potential customers?**

Describe the important identifying characteristics of the firm's current and potential customers with respect to demographics, geographic location, psychographic profiles, values/lifestyles, and product usage characteristics (heavy vs. light users).

Identify the important players in the purchase process for the firm's products. These might include purchasers (actual act of purchase), users (actual product user), purchase influencers (influence the decision, make recommendations), and the bearer of financial responsibility (who pays the bill?).

### **What do customers do with the firm's products?**

How are the firm's products connected to customer needs? What are the basic benefits provided by the firm's products?

How the firm's products are purchased (quantities and combinations)? Is the product purchased as a part of a solution or alongside complementary products?

How are the firm's products consumed or used? Are there special consumption situations that influence purchase behavior?

Are there issues related to disposition of the firm's products, such as waste (garbage) or recycling, which must be addressed by the firm?

### **Where do customers purchase the firm's products?**

Identify the merchants (intermediaries) where the firm's products are purchased (e.g., store-based retailers, ecommerce, catalog retailers, vending, and wholesale outlets, direct from the firm).

Identify any trends in purchase patterns across these outlets (e.g., how ecommerce has changed the way the firm's products are purchased?).

### **When do customers purchase the firm's products?**

How does purchase behavior vary based on different promotional events (communication and price changes) or customer services (hours of operation, delivery)?

How does purchase behavior vary based on uncontrollable influences such as seasonal demand patterns, time-based demand patterns, physical/social surroundings, or competitive activities?

### **Why (and how) do customers select the firm's products?**

Describe the advantages of the firm's products relative to competing products. How well do the firm's products fulfill customers' needs relative to competing products?

Describe how issues such as brand loyalty, value, commoditization, and relational exchange processes affect customers' purchase behaviors.

### **Why do potential customers not purchase the firm's products?**

Identify the needs, preferences, and requirements of non-customers that are not being met by the firm's products.

What are the features, benefits, and advantages of competing products that cause non-customers to choose them over the firm's products?

Explain how the firm's pricing, distribution, and/or promotion are out of sync with non-customers. Outside of the product, what causes non-customers to look elsewhere?

Describe the potential for converting non-customers into customers.

## **C. The External Environment**

### **Competition**

Identify the firm's major competitors (brand, product, generic, and total budget).

Identify the characteristics of the firm's major competitors with respect to size, growth, profitability, target markets, products, and marketing capabilities (production, distribution, promotion, pricing).

What other major strengths and weaknesses do these competitors possess?

List any potential future competitors not identified above.

## **Economic Growth and Stability**

Identify the general economic conditions of the country, region, state, or local area where the firm's target customers are located. How are these economic conditions related to customers' ability to purchase the firm's products?

Describe the economics of the industry within which the firm operates. These issues might include the cost of raw materials, patents, merger/acquisition trends, sales trends, supply/demand issues, marketing challenges, and industry growth/decline.

## **Political Trends**

Identify any political activities affecting the firm or the industry with respect to changes in elected officials (domestic or foreign); potential regulations favored by elected officials, industry (lobbying) groups or political action committees, and consumer advocacy groups.

What is the current and potential hot button political or policy issues at the national, regional, or local level that may affect the firm's marketing activities?

## **Legal and Regulatory Issues**

Identify any changes in international, federal, state, or local laws and regulations affecting the firm's or industry's marketing activities with respect to recent court decisions, recent rulings of federal, state, or local government entities, recent decisions by regulatory and self-regulatory agencies, and changes in global trade agreements or trade law.

## **Technological Advancements**

How have recent technological advances affected the firm's customers with respect to needs/wants/preferences, access to information, the timing and location of purchase decisions, the ability to compare competing product offerings, or the ability to conduct transactions more effectively and efficiently?

Have customers embraced or rejected these technological advances? How is this issue related to customers' concerns over privacy and security?

How have recent technological advances affected the firm or the industry with respect to manufacturing, process efficiency, distribution, supply chain effectiveness, promotion, cost-reduction, or customer relationship management?

What future technologies offer important opportunities for the firm? Identify any future technologies that may threaten the firm's viability or its marketing efforts.

## **Sociocultural Trends**

With respect to the firm's target customers, identify changes in society's demographics, values, and lifestyles that affect the firm or the industry.

Explain how these changes are affecting (or may affect) the firm's products (features, benefits, branding), pricing (value), distribution and supply chain (convenience, efficiency), promotion (message content, delivery, feedback), and people (human resource issues).

Identify the ethical and social responsibility issues that the firm or industry faces. How do these issues affect the firm's customers? How are these issues expected to change in the future?

### III. SWOT Analysis

#### A. Strengths

Strength 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Strength 2: \_\_\_\_\_

(Repeat as needed to develop a complete list of strengths)

How do these strengths enable the firm to meet customers' needs?

How do these strengths differentiate the firm from its competitors?

#### B. Weaknesses

Weakness 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Weakness 2: \_\_\_\_\_

(Repeat as needed to develop a complete list of weaknesses)

How do these weaknesses prevent the firm from meeting customers' needs?

How do these weaknesses negatively differentiate the firm from its competitors?

#### C. Opportunities (external situations independent of the firm—not strategic options)

Opportunity 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Opportunity 2: \_\_\_\_\_

(Repeat as needed to develop a complete list of opportunities)

How are these opportunities related to serving customers' needs?

What is the time horizon of each opportunity?

#### D. Threats (external situations independent of the firm)

Threat 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Threat 2: \_\_\_\_\_

(Repeat as needed to develop a complete list of threats)

How are these threats related to serving customers' needs?

What is the time horizon of each threat?

### E. The SWOT Matrix

<u>Strengths:</u> • • • •	<u>Opportunities:</u> • • • •
<u>Weaknesses:</u> • • • •	<u>Threats:</u> • • • •

### F. Developing Competitive Advantages

Describe ways that the firm can match its strengths to its opportunities to create capabilities in serving customers' needs.

Are these capabilities and competitive advantages grounded in the basic principles of operational excellence, product leadership, and/or customer intimacy? If so, how are these capabilities and advantages made apparent to customers?

Can the firm convert its weaknesses into strengths or its threats into opportunities? If not, how can the firm minimize or avoid its weaknesses and threats?

Does the firm possess any major liabilities (unconverted weaknesses that match unconverted threats) or limitations (unconverted weaknesses or threats that match opportunities)? If so, are these liabilities and limitations apparent to customers?

Can the firm do anything about its liabilities or limitations, especially those that impact the firm's ability to serve customers' needs?

### G. Developing a Strategic Focus

What is the overall strategic focus of the marketing plan? Does the strategic focus follow any particular direction, such as aggressiveness, diversification, turnaround, defensiveness, or niche marketing?

Describe the firm's strategic focus in terms of a strategy canvas. How does the firm's Strategic thrust provides sufficient focus and divergence from other firms in the industry?

#### IV. Marketing Goals and Objectives

- A. **Marketing Goal A:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Should be broad, motivational, and somewhat vague)

Objective A1: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Must contain a specific and measurable outcome, a time frame for completion, and identify  
The person/unit responsible for achieving the objective)

Objective A2: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Must contain a specific and measurable outcome, a time frame for completion, and identify  
The person/unit responsible for achieving the objective)

- B. **Marketing Goal B:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Should be broad, motivational, and somewhat vague)

Objective B1: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Must contain a specific and measurable outcome, a time frame for completion, and identify  
The person/unit responsible for achieving the objective)

Objective B2: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Must contain a specific and measurable outcome, a time frame for completion, and identify  
The person/unit responsible for achieving the objective)

(Repeat as needed to develop a complete list of goals and objectives)

#### V. Marketing Strategy

- A. **Primary (and Secondary) Target Market**

Primary target market

Identifying characteristics (demographics, geography, values, and psychographics):  
Basic needs, wants, preferences, or requirements:  
Buying habits and preferences:  
Consumption/disposition characteristics:

Secondary target market (optional)

Identifying characteristics (demographics, geography, values, and psychographics):  
Basic needs, wants, preferences, or requirements:  
Buying habits and preferences:  
Consumption/disposition characteristics:

- B. **Product Strategy**

Brand name, packaging, and logo design:  
Major features and benefits:  
Differentiation/positioning strategy:  
Supplemental products (including customer service strategy):  
Connection to value (core, supplemental, experiential/symbolic attributes):



### **C. Pricing Strategy**

Overall pricing strategy and pricing objectives:  
Price comparison to competition:  
Connection to differentiation/positioning strategy:  
Connection to value (monetary costs):  
Profit margin and breakeven:  
Specific pricing tactics (discounts, incentives, financing, etc.):

### **D. Distribution/Supply Chain Strategy**

Overall supply chain strategy (including distribution intensity):  
Channels and intermediaries to be used:  
Connection to differentiation/positioning strategy:  
Connection to value (nonmonetary costs):  
Strategies to ensure channel support (slotting fees, guarantees, etc.):  
Tactics designed to increase time, place, and possession utility:

### **E. Integrated Marketing Communication (Promotion) Strategy**

Overall IMC strategy, IMC objectives, and budget:  
Consumer promotion elements  
    Advertising strategy:  
    Public relations/publicity strategy:  
    Personal selling strategy:  
    Consumer sales promotion (pull) strategy:  
Trade (channel) promotion elements  
    Advertising strategy:  
    Public relations/publicity strategy:  
    Personal selling strategy;  
    Trade sales promotion (push) strategy:

## **VI. Marketing Implementation**

### **A. Structural Issues**

Describe the overall approach to implementing the marketing strategy.

Describe any changes to the firm's structure needed to implement the marketing strategy (e.g., add/delete positions, change lines of authority, change reporting relationships).

Describe any necessary internal marketing activities in the following areas: employee training, employee buy-in and motivation to implement the marketing strategy, overcoming resistance to change, internal communication and promotion of the marketing strategy, and coordination with other functional areas.

**B. Tactical Marketing Activities (be *very specific*—this lays out the details of the marketing strategy and how it will be executed)**

Specific Tactical Activities	Person/Department Responsible	Required Budget	Completion Date
Product Activities 1. 2. 3.			
Pricing Activities 1. 2. 3.			
Distribution/Supply Chain Activities 1. 2. 3.			
IMC (Promotion) Activities 1. 2. 3.			

**VII. Evaluation and Control**

**A. Formal Controls**

Describe the types of **input controls** that must be in place before the marketing plan can be implemented. Examples include financial resources, capital expenditures, additional research and development, and additional human resources.

Describe the types of **process controls** that will be needed during the execution of the marketing plan. Examples include management training, management commitment to the plan and to employees, revised employee evaluation/compensation systems, enhanced employee authority, and internal communication activities.

Describe the types of **output controls** that will be used to measure marketing performance and compare it to stated marketing objectives during and after the execution of the marketing plan.

Overall performance standards (these will vary based on the goals and objectives of the marketing plan). Examples include dollar sales, sales volume, market share, and share of customer, profitability, customer satisfaction, customer retention, or other customer-related metrics.

Product performance standards (these are optional and will vary based on the product strategy). Examples include product specifications, core product quality, supplemental product quality, experiential quality, new product innovation, branding, and positioning.

Price performance standards (these are optional and will vary based on the pricing strategy). Examples include revenue targets, supply/demand balance, price elasticity, yield management, or metrics based on specific price adjustments.

Distribution performance standards (these are optional and will vary based on the distribution strategy). Examples include distribution effectiveness/efficiency, supply chain integration, value (time, place, and possession utility), relationship maintenance (collaboration, conflict), outsourcing, or direct distribution performance.

IMC (promotion) performance standards (these are optional and will vary based on the IMC strategy). Examples include communication objectives; brand awareness, recognition, or recall; campaign reach, frequency, and impressions; purchase intentions; and public relations, sales, and sales promotion effectiveness.

## **B. Informal Controls**

Describe issues related to **employee self-control** that can influence the implementation of the marketing strategy. Examples include employee satisfaction, employee commitment (to the firm and the marketing plan), and employee confidence in their skills. If any of these controls are lacking, how can they be enhanced to support the implementation of the marketing plan?

Describe issues related to **employee social control** that can influence the implementation of the marketing strategy. Examples include shared organizational values, workgroup relationships, and social or behavioral norms. If any of these controls are lacking, how can they be enhanced to support the implementation of the marketing plan?

Describe issues related to **cultural control** that can influence the implementation of the marketing strategy. Examples include organizational culture and organizational rituals. If any of these controls are lacking, how can they be enhanced to support the implementation of the marketing plan?

**C. Implementation Schedule and Timeline**

Activities	Month												
	Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<i>Product Activities</i>													
<i>Pricing Activities</i>													
<i>Distribution Activities</i>													
<i>IMC Activities</i>													

**D. Marketing Audits**

Explain how marketing activities will be monitored. What are the specific profit- and time-based measures that will be used to monitor marketing activities?

Describe the marketing audit to be performed, including the person(s) responsible for conducting the audit.

If it is determined that the marketing strategy does not meet expectations, what corrective actions might be taken to improve performance (overall or within any element of the marketing program)?

If the marketing plan, as currently designed, shows little likelihood of meeting the marketing objectives, which elements of the plan should be reconsidered and revised?