**Marketing Plan Template**

**1. Executive Summary (Do This Last)**

Bear in mind that not everyone will read every page of your marketing plan. So your executive summary should highlight the *most important parts*. Think of this as an overview of your marketing plan.

We suggest that you complete your Executive Summary last because as you go through the process of writing your plan your ideas will be refined and you may even develop new strategies. So by writing the executive summary at the end you will be in a better position to provide a holistic overview of your marketing plan.

We recommend that you include the following in your executive summary:

* ***A brief description of products or services***
* ***Define your target market***
* ***Identify your competitive advantage***

Every business must tailor its offering so that your target customers believe that it is superior to what is offered by your competition - this is known as your competitive advantage.

Competitive advantage can come from any element of your marketing mix. Some examples include:

* Creating a better product
* More attractive designs
* Better service
* More effective distribution
* Better advertising
* Better after care
* More competitive pricing
* Better quality

Obtaining a competitive advantage comes down to understanding what your customer values, delivering it and doing it better than your competitor.

* ***Positioning statement***

Positioning is the way your product or service is defined by consumers.

For example a consumer would describe a Rolex as a prestige, supreme quality watch. This perception by the consumer is due to a strategy developed by Rolex to position itself in the prestige segment of the watch market with a competitive advantage based on high quality, precision mechanics and exclusivity.

After you have worked on the rest of your marketing strategy you will know where your business is positioned in your market and how you are different to your competitors.

* ***Anticipated sales, profits and market share***

Review your financial planning documents, which you should have completed as part of your business plan and include your anticipated sales, profit and market share.

**2. Market and Situation Analysis (SWOT)**

* ***Economic environment***

What affects your customers’ purchasing power and spending patterns? What is the economic environment that you are operating in? Is it a growth, recovery or recession market? Will it be easy to find staff? What is the current interest rate i.e. is it increasing or decreasing? What is consumer confidence like?

* ***Social environment***

What are the social and demographic trends? Is the population aging? Is there an increase in the number of people who have English as a second language? Are family structures changing? Are there changes in the level of education?

* ***Technical environment***

The technological environment changes rapidly. You need to make sure that you are aware of trends in your industry and any other industries which could affect your business. New technologies can create new markets, can disrupt existing markets and can influence your consumers and competitors.

* ***Industry environment***

What are the trends in your industry? Are there any other new entrants in the market? Has a substitute product been introduced? Are there changes in industry practices or new benchmarks to use?

* ***Competitive environment***

What are your competitors doing? How many competitors do you have? What is your advantage over your competitors? Is the market large enough to support you and your competitors?

* ***Political environment***

Consider the political environment for the areas that your business will trade and operate in. Is there a stable political system? Are there any licences and regulations that you should be aware of? Do you need to win support to be able to operate?

***SWOT Analysis – including some examples***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strength*** superior customer service
* excellent store location
* a unique product
 | **Weakness*** poorly trained staff
* undifferentiated product or service
* poor stock management system
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| **Opportunity*** entering a young developing market
* introduction of a government grant to increase consumption of your product (eg: solar power)
* acquiring distribution rights for a complimentary product
 | **Threat*** new competitor entering your market
* new regulations
* increased trade barriers
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**3. Market Segmentation and Customer Analysis**

* ***Market segmentation***

When you look at your market you’ll find that your customers fall into different groups or ‘segments’.

Although all of your customers use your product or service they will value different aspects of it such as price, design, or ease of access. You can segment your market by customers that have shared values.

For example, if you were selling computers your market could be segmented by how consumers use it e.g. in the office desktops, on-the-go laptops, students (lower cost laptops) and general use. Each of these segments will have different requirements and may vary in price they are willing to pay.

By understanding the needs of your customer segments you can tailor your marketing mix to deliver what your customer values. Each segment will offer growth and profit opportunities so the trick is to deliver the best offer to the best segment.

* ***Target market/segment characteristics***

You can profile your target market/segments using four main categories:

*Geographic:* e.g. location, population size or climate.

*Demographic:* e.g. age, gender, family size, family life cycle or income.

*Psychographic:* e.g. social class, lifestyle, motivation or personality.

*Behavioural:* e.g. product benefits, frequency of use or brand loyalty.

* ***Market research findings***

Provide an overview of your market research findings. This could include:

* Products and services and their customer fit;
* Customer profiles;
* Customer characteristics; and
* Customer needs and wants.

Utilise available market research reports for this section of your report. Reports such as those provided by relevant industry bodies or business support organisations.

**4. Objectives and Goals “Where the business needs to be”**

* **Mission Statement**

This is a statement of your businesses purpose, what you want to achieve. Your mission statement should be market orientated.

For example Thompson Holiday’s mission statement is “To make holidays special” while Virgin Atlantic’s mission statement is ‘To embrace the human spirit and let it fly”.

* **Objectives for volumes, sales, market shares, gross margins, net profit, return on investment**

Your mission is then broken down into achievable objectives. Achieving each objective should take you a step closer to achieving your mission.

Working on the above examples, an objective of Thomson Holiday’s could be “to be the most popular UK based travel operator”.

An example of Virgin Atlantic’s Objective is: “to fly a profitable airline that people love to fly and where people love to work.”

* **Convert objectives to goals by defining targets and dates**

Your goals outline how you are going to achieve your objectives. They should be easy to measure and evaluate.

In our examples above a goal of Thomson’s’ could be to: “increase market share of bookings of international tourism visitors by 10% in the next 2 years”.

An example of an objective that Virgin Atlantic might have could be: “to improve customer service rating levels to above 94% in the next 12 months”.

The following spreadsheet can be used to help you define your monetary goals for the first few months of your business. Double click in the table below to access the embedded Microsoft Excel sheets to input your figures; Microsoft Excel will automatically update the total for you.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**5. Strategies and Tactics "How to get there"**

* **Pricing strategy**

When developing your pricing strategy consider the following:

* + Your customers sensitivity to changes in price
	+ What revenue you need to break even
	+ What the price says about your product e.g. value, quality and prestige
* **Product strategy**

When developing your product/ service strategy answer the following questions:

* + What level of quality and consistency does the product/ service have?
	+ How many features does it have and can they be removed or added?
	+ Does the design and/or service deliver what the customer wants / needs / values?
* **Place strategy**

When developing your place/distribution strategy answer the following questions:

* + What distribution channels and methods you will use?
	+ If you will have a retail outlet and if so where it will be located?
	+ The geographic area your product/service will be available in
* **Promotion strategy**

Your promotional strategy will ensure that potential customers find out about your product or service. There are four main methods of promotion:

* + Advertising (online and offline)
	+ Selling
	+ Sales promotion and packaging
	+ Public relations
	+ Digital and social media
* **People strategy**

Think about the people who will be selling your product or service and are involved in its delivery. Your people strategy is not just about your internal staff, it should also cover associates and strategic partners, channel partners and suppliers. What training might they need?

* **Process strategy**

Your process strategy covers the planning, development, implementation, documentation and review of the systems that help you achieve the other aspects of your marketing strategy. If you have the right processes you’ll have the right product, in the right quantity to the right place at the right time.

* **Priorities, responsibilities and timeframes (what/who/ when)**

Assign responsibilities to yourself and staff members to make sure your strategy gets implemented. Ensuring that there are set processes / tasks to achieve during quiet periods for example, will ensure that your products/ services always meet a high standard.

Don’t forget that physical evidence such as staff presentation and even your premises are often the first thing a customer will see and stands as physical evidence of the quality of your products / services.

Make sure you set timelines so that everyone knows when action points need to be achieved.

**6. Resources and Evaluation**

You should detail the resources your business will need, when you are likely to need them, the cost and how you will fund them.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Resource | When | How funded | Cost |
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* **Contingency plans and risk management**

You should consider the possible risks to your business and make contingency plans to address them. You will have noted some possible risks under the “weakness” and “threats” sections of your SWOT analysis. Try to identify all of your risks and work out what you can do to either reduce them or work around them if they occur.

* **Evaluation**

Marketing plans need to be organic documents allowing them to change and evolve as your business grows. It’s important that you review your marketing strategy at least once a year to ensure that your strategy remains representative of your business and the market it is operating in.