



*Success Through Strategy*

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## **10 Must Do's For an Effective Marketing Plan**

Here's a 10-step process to developing communication/marketing plans that will provide you with the direction you need.

### **1) Have a champion from as high in the organization as possible – preferably your CEO.**

The organization owns your strategic plans, not the planning department or the marketing department – or any other department. CEO support for your efforts will help to minimize resistance, second-guessing and negativity as you move through the process. In addition, your CEO can help to manage the expectations of employees, board members and other stakeholders and limit the potential for negative feedback by supporting the plan and its resulting messages and tactics.

### **2) Involve a broad cross-section of people from the organization in the process.**

Your planning efforts should involve individuals from all areas of the organization, including administration and operations, and as many “opinion leaders” as possible. Not only is their input and wisdom valuable to

the process, but their involvement provides you with a group of “ambassadors” who can help to support the direction you take – in essence, a way to “share the credit and the blame.”

Don't hesitate to include potential “detractors” in this group. They can sometimes be the most powerful allies once they become educated about the process and begin to understand how and why certain decisions are made.

### **3) Select a skilled facilitator to lead the process**

You may be able to fill this role yourself. If not, consider whether there are other individuals in the organization who have strong facilitation skills and would be willing to participate in the process. Or, you may choose to outsource this role – or perhaps the development of the entire plan – to an experienced consultant.

### **4) Use an organized approach to planning**

There are a number of critical elements that will help to drive the development of your plan. Your facilitator should lead the group in discussions about your target market; your competition; the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by the organization; and, ultimately, the development of goals, objectives, strategies and tactics. Much of this information is readily available within your organization, but needs to be gathered, organized and shared.

### **5) Assign responsibility for accomplishing the plan.**

While your planning committee will be a very useful resource throughout the plan development and implementation process, the “committee” is not the appropriate place for accountability to rest. You

should identify an individual who has overall responsibility for ensuring that the plan is implemented and who will be accountable for follow-through, reporting and updating.

**6) Keep employees informed throughout the process.**

Employees can be cheerleaders and ambassadors for your efforts – or they can be your greatest detractors. Your best chance for the former is to make sure employees are as involved and informed as possible throughout the process. Then, when they see your ads, or hear comments from friends and relatives they're in a better position to support your efforts instead of grumbling, "I don't know what they're doing. I don't think they do either."

**7) Expect, and be prepared to respond to, negative feedback.**

You absolutely *can not* please all of the people, all of the time – and you shouldn't expect to. Seek feedback, respond non-defensively, and make sure your committee is united in its support of your efforts – and willing to admit when they've made a mistake or when something didn't work as well as expected.

**8) Make it measurable – and provide feedback (good and bad).**

Your plan should build in methods for measuring effectiveness in both qualitative and quantitative ways. This helps to support your position and to lend objectivity to a fairly subjective process. Targets may be built around sales goals, consumer awareness of key messages, market share, etc. Results can be based on "before and after" statistics or on awareness surveys.

**9) Review and modify your plan regularly.**

A strategic plan is a living document. In the rapidly changing environment within which we all operate, it is unrealistic to expect that your plan will remain unchanged and that strategies and tactics developed today will still be applicable several months – or years – from now.

## **10) Have fun with it!**

Planning can be an exciting process and one that lends itself to creativity, enthusiasm and innovation.

Don't hinder the creative energies of your team by developing a process that is overly bureaucratic or formalized. Have fun with the process. Be willing to hear and consider ideas that may be "outside the box" and take time to celebrate your successes.

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