

Your Marketing Plan

Introduction

Until a plan is written down, it is little more than a set of ideas. Writing your marketing plans makes you commit to it, makes it more organised and is something that you can refer to, action and measure against.

Check out our step-by-step guide to thinking about and writing an effective marketing plan.

1. Start with the end in mind

Set specific objectives: for example, winning new customers, retaining existing customers, increasing order sizes or selling new products.

Make sure you think about the implications of your marketing plan for the rest of your business – for example, production / capacity, training requirements and cash flow.

Try and put together some basic, realistic sales forecasts and budgets.

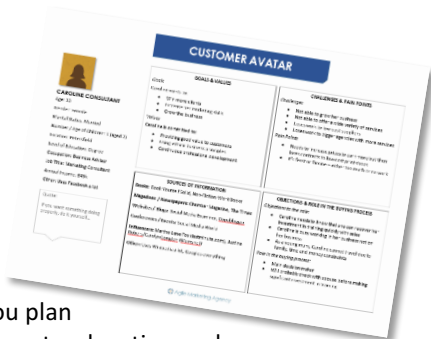
2. Develop your ‘Customer Avatar’

To make your marketing effective, you need to have a clear idea of your ideal target customer. This description is sometimes known as a ‘customer avatar’.

If you plan to sell to individuals, how would you describe them? Describe them by gender, age, marital status, occupation, income, location, how many children they have and anything else that may be useful. If you plan to sell to businesses, think about company size, sector, location and what sort of person in the business you are targeting (Office Manager, Accounts Department, Managing Director etc).

Think about the things that affect their buying decision: what, when, how and why they buy.

- Describe your market and the characteristics and size of each market segment; what are the key market trends?



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- Describe your ideal customer. Are they individuals or businesses? Consider age, gender, shopping habits, social etc. For businesses, consider size, industry, location, job title etc.
- Where are your customers based?
- What prompts or motivates your customers to buy your products or services?
- What might trigger a potential customer to think of you – this can help you think about *where* to do your marketing and the *message* you give.
- Have you sold your product/services to customers already or do you have customers waiting to buy? If so, try and describe them in detail.
- Think about the profitability and sales potential of different groups of customers (known as market segments) and of different products or activities.

FREE WORKSHEET DOWNLOAD: Download our customer avatar worksheet with examples at www.agilemarketing.agency/syob

3. Your Product or Service ‘Before & After Grid’

Be clear on your products and services. Don't try and be all things to all people. When marketing your product or service, think about the **benefits not the features**. For example, if you are selling firewood, you are selling the warmth (or decorative effect!), *not* the wood.



- Describe your product or service using as many trigger keywords as possible.
- If you think about features, think ‘so what’? Always ask the extra question: **‘Which means that?’**. For example, I am a garden maintenance company and cut your lawn? So what? Which means that...you get your weekend back with more free time.
- Think about the **benefits and value** of people buying your product or service. Facts are great but appealing to peoples’ emotion is better. I cut your grass so you can spend more time with your family enjoying the garden.
- Think about **‘pain points’** – how will you improve their life or business? Often it is useful to put this down as a ‘before and after’ list.
- List some key action words about what you do to solve your customers’ problems (these are useful for your marketing copy and **keywords** for your website and search engine optimisation).

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- Think about the **profitability and sales** potential of different groups of customers (market segments) and of different products or activities. Most companies make 80% of their profit from 20% of their products.
- Produce a **'before and after grid'** in terms of **haves, feelings and emotions** – for example; before – you have to cut the grass, after, you do not have to cut the grass yourselves. Before, you feel stressed, after, you feel relaxed. Before, you never have time at the weekend to be with your family, after, your family life is better and happier. Selling, more free time, being relaxed and being happier is far more powerful than just offering to cut the grass!
- Avoid thinking about Unique Selling Propositions (USP) which are inward looking. From your 'before and after grid', you can produce a **'benefits and value statement'** which focuses on the impact you have on your customer.

FREE WORKSHEET DOWNLOAD: Download our before and after grid and sample value statement (with examples) at: www.agilemarketing.agency/syob

4. Marketing Research

Try and do some basic marketing research - if you know which 'niche' you want to target, carrying out marketing research enables you to build up a customer profile, which can be used to guide future marketing activity.

- Ask some potential customers basic questions about what they think about when deciding to buy
- Research what customers think and value, such as product features, quality, service and image. It is not just about price.
- Look for factual evidence, information and data online or using your local library or business support agencies (such as your Chamber of Commerce).
- Check that there is sufficient customer demand in your target area to sustain your business.
- Most importantly, when you get started, get as much customer feedback as possible.

5. Communicating with and reaching your customers

Think carefully about how you are going to promote your business and deliver your products or services. Consider the points below:

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- When writing marketing materials, you should always use **YOU** in your text...never refer to 'them' or 'our customers' otherwise the person reading the text does not identify with what you are saying. Using 'you' makes it more personal and more effective. Try reading some blogs and tips on writing marketing copy and effective headlines.
- Consider how you can communicate with your customers – what publications do they read? Can you use the local parish magazines? Do you have a mailing list or e-mail list? Advertising is often too expensive but can work if it is very targeted. Download our free list of '73 tools to communicate with customers' for ideas of the different methods of communication.
- Consider how you are going to deliver your product or service to your customers (known as distribution channels). Will you sell direct, through retailers, online or via a shop?
- Think about what messages you are going to give your potential customers in order to engage them and encourage them to buy (remember have, feel, emotions)
- How will you measure customer satisfaction?
- What marketing methods will you use to reach your potential customers? Consider both online and traditional marketing methods.
- Identify customers' buying cycles so you can time your marketing activities – are they seasonal? Are they time-sensitive based on some other factor?



FREE DOWNLOAD: Download our free list of '73 tools to communicate with customers' at: www.agilemarketing.agency/syob

6. Pricing and Costing

Think carefully about how you are going to price your product or service in the marketplace. Remember, it is not always about the price and some of the most successful companies are the most expensive!

If possible, you should ask some potential customers or existing customers their views on price – are they very price sensitive or is it quality that matters more?

When thinking about pricing, you should consider:

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- How you will price each product or service?
 - Market pricing – pricing similar to competitors
 - Penetration pricing - gaining market share through very low margins
 - Cost plus pricing - adding a margin to your production cost

7. Competitor Analysis

- Who are your competitors and how many are there?
- List your direct and indirect competitors and look at what they do in terms of their products, their marketing activities and their marketing messages.
- Consider why people will choose to buy from you rather than your competitors.
- Think about your 'benefits and value statement' and how your products and services compare to those of your competitors.
- What do your competitors do well? Can you do better?



FREE DOWNLOAD: Download our free 'Competitor Worksheet' at:
www.agilemarketing.agency/syob

8. Pulling this together as a simple Marketing Plan

A single page marketing plan that is regularly updated and used is far better than a 30-page plan that is left in the cupboard. In the last few pages, we have covered a lot to think about and hopefully, you have now looked at your customer, your product and your marketing communications.

Now it is time to pull this information together into a simple marketing plan.

Our simple, one-page marketing plan helps you to summarise:

- Who your customers are
- What is most important to them
- Your marketing objectives
- The key actions to get you there

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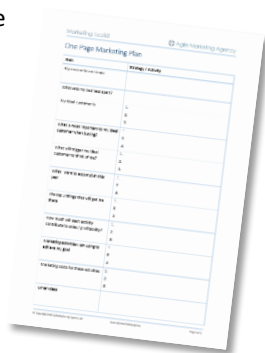
By completing this simple plan, it will help you to set some goals and activities which you can actually get on with.

You can then revisit your plan to see what worked (and what did not!) and update it.

It is then a matter of 'rinse and repeat'...pick what worked from your plan, set some new actions and then continue to refine and improve your marketing.

MORE FREE DOWNLOADS:

- Single-page marketing plan template
- Marketing Calendar



Download these at: www.agilemarketing.agency/syob

'Marketing is a journey, not a destination'

Online Resources

< Insert Top 10 Marketing Startup Resources >