



Marketing How-To Guide

Marketing How-To Guide:
Your Template for Creating
Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

◆ Exclusively for Premium members



MarketingProfs

Marketing How-To Guide

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Effective marketing campaigns don't necessarily require big-company budgets. By being smart in the up-front planning stage, you can maximize the greatest value from your budget, regardless of its size.

In this How-To Guide, we explore the three stages of effective marketing, how you can determine which approaches will give your company the greatest short-term bang for the buck and how you can create a lasting positive impact from all your marketing efforts. We also include eight specific low-cost tools you can implement immediately to give your



marketing program an instant shot in the arm.

Every marketing effort should include three distinct stages:

- Planning
- Implementation
- Post-audit

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Introduction ... continued

In the busy workday of most marketers, all they can do is implement a program, so planning and post-audit become casualties of the marketing war, which is a shame. These two stages are critically important in deciding how, when and where to get the greatest benefit from the marketing effort. It's not just about the money, but time and management attention as well.

- **Planning** includes all the up-front work—determining the objective, what strategies will best accomplish the objective, how much the objective is worth and whether the budget is sufficient to do an effective job, what resources are available, who needs to be involved and so forth. This step keeps you from falling victim to the “ready, fire, aim” syndrome.
- **Implementation** is the actual—and highly visible—part of marketing, where you actually *do something* that can make a difference in generating sales. Implementation can make or break a promotion plan. Even the best strategies can be rendered completely ineffective (and very expensive) by sloppy implementation.
- **Post-audit** is important because it is how you learn what works and what doesn't. Marketing isn't an exact science, and what works in one industry (or market or competitive climate) may not work in another. Your company and your objectives are unique, and the marketing tools that are most effective for another marketer may not be optimal for you.

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PLANNING

There are six independent variables that help determine the most cost-effective strategies for any business. Before you jump to a “solution,” it’s a good idea to spend a few minutes to ensure that you have



thoroughly analyzed your situation and understand each of the variables as they relate to your company and its objectives situation. Think of it as a mini-situation analysis. If you do a careful job in this review, you’ll minimize the chances that you will spend hours—and a chunk of your marketing budget—implementing a flawed strategy.

- **Objective.**

The single most important planning step is to be clear about what it is you want to accomplish. Is your goal to generate qualified leads? If so, how many, in what timeframe and what is the value of the leads? Do you want to position your company so that it will be top of mind when new prospects are ready to buy? If so, what is it that you want them to remember about you? What is the “trigger” that will evoke your company name? What is the timeframe? And how will you know if you’ve accomplished the objective?

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

As with any business objective, it is important to be clear. An objective should be specific and measurable, with a timeframe and unambiguous success determinants that won't change or become arbitrary in a few months.

- **Industry/sector/category.**

Be clear about your target audience and competitive set. Most likely you compete with other companies who market what you do, but you probably also compete with some not-in-kind solutions and perhaps a do-it-yourself or status quo solution. The right promotion for reaching a customer with a not-in-kind incumbent may be quite different from the one you would use when there is a directly competitive solution.

Focus your marketing plans on the narrowest possible industry segment. It is always more cost-effective to do a great job of marketing to a niche audience than a mediocre job of marketing to a broad one. If you have multiple industry sectors in your target audience, consider splitting them into narrower slices and marketing to each with the most appropriate approach. Your marketing success increases when you pursue a more specific audience.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

- **Target audience.**

Within your industry segment, it is important to understand your specific target audience. Who is the decision-maker? What are their most important needs and considerations? Where do they typically learn about brands and options in your category? Are they actively seeking product alternatives, or are they loyal to an incumbent? How frequently do they purchase?

Many times a simple market-research survey—even a one-on-one interview to gather information—can help you plan the marketing effort so it is on target with your objectives. This approach helps improve marketing effectiveness and efficiency.

- **Geography.**

Many companies attempt to serve clients across a broad geographical span, even when they have an ample pool of prospects in their immediate vicinity. *It's almost always an advantage to concentrate your efforts (and budget) in a limited geography before expanding to a wider market.* Such an approach lets you test and refine your strategy at lower cost and helps you better understand your customer base. Moreover, some marketing approaches work better in certain areas than others. Having a strategy that is exactly right on average could produce one that is exactly wrong in most places.

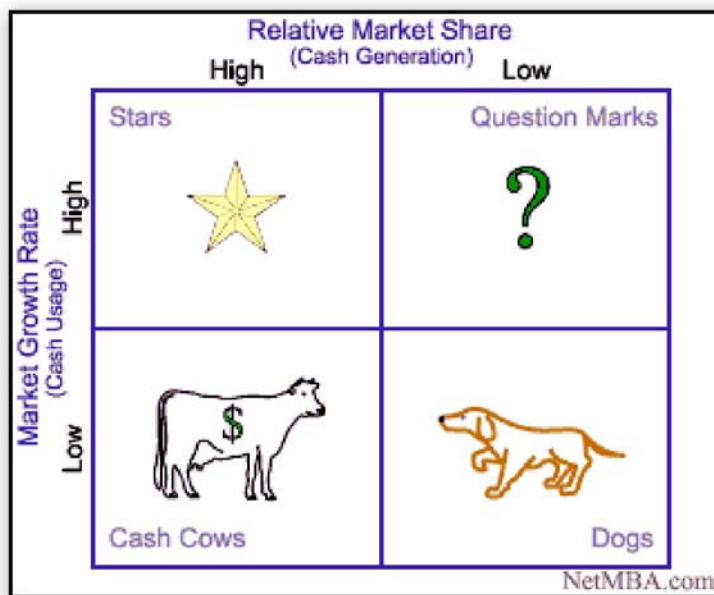
Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

- **Position on the product life cycle.**

Be sensitive to where your product (or company) falls on the life-cycle continuum. This helps you approach the marketing decision in a context that will be most relevant to your target audience.

A good starting point might be to use this portfolio-management matrix created by the Boston Consulting Group:



Horizontal axis:

relative market

share—This serves as a measure of strength in the market.

Vertical axis:

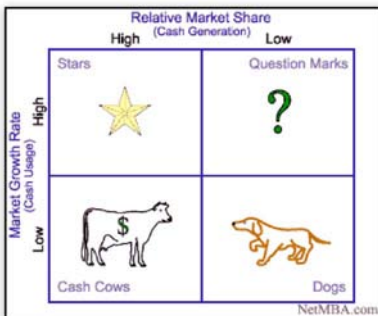
market growth

rate—This provides a measure of market attractiveness.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

By dividing the matrix into four quadrants, four types of products/businesses are differentiated and described:



Stars: High-growth businesses or products competing in markets in which they are relatively strong compared to the competition. They often need heavy investment to sustain their growth. Eventually their growth will slow and, assuming they maintain their relative market share, they become “Cash Cows.”

Cash Cows: Low-growth businesses or products with a relatively high market share. These are mature, successful businesses with relatively little need for investment. They need to be managed for continued profit—so that they continue to generate the strong cash flows that the company needs for its “Stars.”

Question marks: Businesses or products with low market share but that operate in higher growth markets. This suggests that they have potential but may require substantial investment to grow market share at the expense of more powerful competitors. Management has to think hard about “question marks”—which ones should they invest in? Which ones should they allow to fail or shrink? (This quadrant is often referred to as “problem children.”)

Dogs: Not surprisingly, “Dogs” refers to businesses or products that have low relative share in unattractive, low-growth markets. Dogs may generate enough cash to break even, but they are rarely, if ever, worth investing in.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

Which quadrant best describes your product? If you have more than one product, place each in its appropriate quadrant and promote them separately. This makes your efforts more targeted, more effective and, ultimately, more cost-efficient.

- **Time and expertise available to manage.**

Some marketing tools are inexpensive but can be extremely time-consuming to manage. Others can be outsourced or “put on autopilot” yet can be very expensive. As you consider your needs, objectives and budget, identify how much time and energy you have, how important the project is and whether you have the necessary expertise to do a good job. If you spend a week learning the ropes before implementation, you want to be sure the time investment generates a payoff for your company and that you feel confident that the time invested provides the expertise you need.

It is often a cost-effective strategy to use outside experts to plan and implement a marketing effort the first time, and perhaps the second time, while you watch “over their shoulder.” This lets you learn from them, and you can take over later when the specific approach has proven successful. If the strategy is not a big winner, at least you won't have spent a lot of your time reading books, listening to seminars and experimenting with an unfamiliar tool.

Use the following worksheet to organize your thoughts and create a useful “situation analysis” for your product and company. Make a copy for each product or service you intend to promote.



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Planning ... continued

MARKETING SITUATION ANALYSIS PLANNING FORM	
Key Consideration	Specifics for Your Company
<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear • Measurable • Time-delimited • Realistic 	
<p>Industry/sector/category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the alternatives? • Who are the competitors? 	
<p>Target audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics • Habits/practices • Attitudes/awareness • Psychographics • Values • Other commonalities 	



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Planning ... continued

MARKETING SITUATION ANALYSIS PLANNING FORM	
Key Consideration	Specifics for Your Company
<p>Geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local (specifics) ● Regional ● National ● Multinational ● Global 	
<p>Life-cycle position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Question mark ● Star ● Cash cow ● Dog 	
<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time ● Budget ● Manpower ● Management 	

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Establishing Reasonable Objectives

So far we have worked on the premise that your marketing budget is realistic for accomplishing your goals. If this is not the case, not spending money may be the optimal approach. Why? If you spend your budget and the program does not deliver the objectives, the marketing effort will have been a

frustrating exercise that would have been better discarded at the outset.



The other option is to adjust the objective so it is achievable within the budget and implement according to plan. The *real issue* should be to determine how to spend the money to achieve optimal results—identifying the most cost-effective strategies. You should plan to either exceed the objective and stay on budget

or achieve the objective and come in under budget. With either approach, you will be successful.

The message: *Understand the objective and ensure that the budget is in line with it.* More marketing plans fail because this step is skipped than for any other reason.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

Your Target Audience

The next thing to consider is your target audience. Who are the people you want your marketing program to reach? What are their needs, and how do they make purchasing decisions? Don't fall into the trap of pushing what you have at them without first understanding how it can benefit them. You want potential customers to know you have the solution to one of their important problems and are focused on meeting their needs as a way to start an ongoing relationship or initiate the sales process. Do not start the conversation by touting your product features and benefits.

Many marketers, particularly in smaller businesses, get a tremendous and immediate benefit from simple market research about their primary target audience. There are a number of ways to approach this, and some are very low cost (or even no cost) approaches, with immediately actionable results.

For example, you can structure an open-ended moderator's guide and conduct a series of interviews with customers and potential customers to find out what they value in suppliers, how they make their purchasing decisions, what unmet needs they have, what items are on their wish lists for new products or product improvements, and so on. If you prepare properly, develop a questionnaire that gets at the high-gain issues and do an effective job of conducting the interviews, the payoff is generally worth far more than the time and effort invested. (Note: A high-gain issue is similar to the type of issue that is often masked.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

For example, a prospect claims to be happy with their current service provider. The high-gain issue can be uncovered by having the prospect rate the provider and then asking the prospect what it would take to get that provider to the highest rating.)

GET TO KNOW WHAT MAKES YOUR CUSTOMERS TICK

Develop a moderator's guide with high-gain questions, then interview 12 to 15 customers and prospects. Take great notes. Don't sell; just ask and listen. You'll be amazed how much you learn. If you can't do this yourself, find a professional who will do it for you and report results in a format you can use immediately.

You might consider setting up your questionnaire with one of the popular online-survey tools—such as Survey Monkey or Zoomerang—and invite your target audience to click on a link to participate in your short survey. You might offer them a small incentive—a downloadable white paper or how-to guide—to thank them for their participation. Just ensure that you have thought through the objectives, and avoid using the research as a thinly disguised sales pitch.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

CONDUCT PRIMARY RESEARCH ON UNMET CUSTOMER NEEDS

Simple surveys have never been easier to conduct. Get professional help to structure the questionnaire, implement it and analyze the results—or do it yourself. Deliver the findings to your customers and they will recognize your expertise and thank you for the information. You will learn as well.

If you like the ideas but don't have the time or expertise to do the job properly, you can hire a market-research professional to coach you, or you can outsource the project entirely. The cost will vary by how much work you expect the researcher to do, but it's usually quite reasonable—and worth every penny—especially if you've never done something like this or don't have the time to learn the ins and outs.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued



Positioning

Be clear about your positioning benefit. Why should someone buy your product or service? What's in it for them? What unique benefit do you provide that is not available elsewhere?

Done properly, the positioning becomes the foundation of the entire marketing plan. If you skip this step, you may discover that you built your marketing structure on a shaky foundation. Sharpen the saw before you begin the job. It will make everything that follows much easier.

There are a number of books and articles about positioning, and there are consultants who specialize in branding strategies and positioning. You may want to use those specialized services the first time you go through the exercise. If you do it right, you may never have to deal with that issue again.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Planning ... continued

A sound positioning platform often serves the business for years.

POSITIONING YOUR BRAND IN THE MARKETPLACE

The positioning process starts with a positioning statement that clarifies the key benefit promise your customers should expect and the “reason why” they should believe you can deliver it.

Keep in mind these important criteria when creating the positioning statement:

- It should be focused, single-minded and memorable.
- It should be benefit-oriented.
- It must be true ... not exaggerated, not a wish list.
- It should be believable ... not challenge credibility.
- It should be unique and competitive.
- It must be substantive, relevant and important to the target audience.
- It should capture and reflect the most important source of competitive advantage.

IMPLEMENTATION



Quite often these up-front activities use 10% to 20% (or more) of the marketing budget if you have not dealt with them explicitly before. We can't emphasize enough the importance of doing the homework before you begin to develop specific strategies and plans.

Once you have, it's time to consider your options for fast-acting, low-cost tactics that can really make a difference to your business *NOW*.

Following are eight areas that offer ripe opportunities for cost-effective marketing with fast results.

1. Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising

New media—email marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, and Web site design—are all vehicles that can have a significant impact on short-term marketing results. SEO takes longer to be thoroughly effective, but if you do everything else properly, you may get a good organic search ranking with minimal additional effort after a few months.

Perhaps the fastest results come from PPC advertising. Open an account with one of the search engines, pick specific keywords, write three-line ads and you're in business within hours. More important, you pay only when someone clicks through the ad to your Web site.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

There's a body of knowledge about how to do this in the most cost-effective manner, and there are consultants who will do it for you. However, you can also gain experience and generate pre-qualified traffic to your site on your own before lunchtime tomorrow.

Will your first ad be the most effective and efficient use of the medium? Probably not. But if you stick with it and learn as you go, you can improve the results dramatically in a few weeks. The sooner you jump in, the sooner you'll be able to gauge what PPC can do for your business.

You can start the process with as little as \$50 to \$100. However, you will learn faster and more quickly with an initial investment of \$500 to \$1,000. Of course, you need a good Web site with targeted landing pages to convert your new visitors, capture their email addresses or accomplish whatever objectives you set.

PAY-PER-CLICK (PPC) ADVERTISING

Establish an account with one of the major search engines, pick your keywords and advertise online in 24 hours. Set daily spending limits and track results. With careful planning and execution, you can get thousands of targeted visitors to your Web site in a week.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

2. Local Internet advertising

You can generate surprising results with local campaigns on the Internet. The fact that everyone connects to the same Internet is not a valid reason not to direct your effort. If all your target audience is in South Florida, why pay for click-through traffic from northern Florida, California or Australia? There are companies that specialize in local on-line advertising. They're cost-effective, too, when you consider that you pay for only qualified click-throughs or phone calls.

Budgets for localized service are generally in the \$500-to-\$1,000 range to start, although it is possible to begin with just \$200 to \$300. (You may want to optimize your Web site or create specific landing pages to maximize the chances of success.)

LOCAL INTERNET ADVERTISING

If your market is local or regional, target your online message only to the people you want. Get listed in online directories and use paid-search ads specific to your marketing area. You might outsource the entire process and pay for only bona fide leads.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

3. Email marketing

The temptation to use free email services to deliver your message can be tantalizing for a cost-conscious marketer. And, when used properly, email campaigns can be one of the most cost-efficient approaches—but they are not free.

There are four areas to master to make effective use of email marketing. You will notice a similarity to the keys to effective direct marketing—before the Internet entered the picture.

- **Copy:** The creative message that tells your target audience why they should buy or try what you're selling.
- **Offer:** The specific offer you're making to add immediacy and close the sale.
- **List:** The mailing list you use to deliver the message.
- **Delivery:** The mechanics of how you get your message to the list.

EMAIL MARKETING

All you need is great copy, an attractive offer for immediacy, a list of target-audience opt-in addresses and a mailing service to handle the implementation. All these are available for a price, and it's surprisingly affordable.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

There are agencies and consultants who can help with each step. Before you start, make sure your landing pages and Web site are optimized for the email marketing campaign. Once you've mastered the channel, you'll find that email marketing can be among the most cost-effective marketing tools in your arsenal. It's well worth the time you'll invest to learn the ropes and manage the process.

4. Promotions and special offers

The opportunities for generating short-term sales increases have risen dramatically with the information age. Customers value information—delivered in hardcopy or via the Internet—that helps them solve real-world problems and addresses the issues facing their businesses. They eagerly seek useful newsletters, white papers, research reports, how-to guides and templates that provide meaty information to help them do their jobs better and help their companies increase sales and profit.

Once you understand your value proposition and your customers' real needs, you can create those kinds of helpful documents and offer them as incentives to convert prospects into customers at a variable cost that will make your CFO smile.

Even if you hire a writer or consultant to create the documents, the cost-benefit relationship is attractive, and the lead time will usually be days or weeks, not months or years.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

SHOW OFF YOUR MARKET KNOWLEDGE

White papers are a great way to demonstrate how well you understand your target audience and to build trust and credibility with them. If you provide useful information in a reader-friendly format, you establish the type of relationship in which customers will ask for your help.

5. Traditional advertising

There are a number of examples of low-cost ways to reach your target audience with radio, television, direct mail and print advertising.

Historically, the cost of traditional advertising has made it difficult for small businesses to compete. But in recent years the tide has turned, and there are a number of cost-effective ways for a small business to advertise to niche audiences.

One way is via local cable TV. Cable companies often produce a simple commercial at no charge if you buy a minimal schedule on stations that cater to your target audience. B2B companies often find that their business customers respond to this kind of advertising. Don't make the mistake of assuming that just because you're a B2B company with a limited budget that cable TV isn't right for you. Look into the possibilities, and you may be pleasantly surprised.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

To compete with low-cost cable-TV advertising, radio spots have become less expensive in many markets, and targeted local papers and trade journals continue to offer cost-effective options. Direct mail is an option as well, and that can be targeted precisely.

Budgets usually start between \$2,000 and \$3,000, and, if the vehicles prove effective, you can expand the effort. These vehicles work best when you have a geographically concentrated target audience, and a strong value proposition—not just a commodity product with a low price.

The creative product—advertising copy and graphics—are key determinants of success. You may want to engage a small advertising agency or creative team to give your project the greatest chance of success.

YOU CAN BE A TELEVISION STAR!

The Internet has changed the way you can produce TV commercials and buy local cable spots. It happens online at a cost that is competitive with traditional print or radio advertising. You specify your target audience demographics and budget, and the media-buying software does the rest. As for production, you can use stock footage and add your logo, or produce a low-cost commercial from scratch.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

6. Sales support

Once you invest time and money to generate sales leads and brand awareness, be sure you give the sales force the support they need to maximize the closing ratio, or conversion, of prospects to customers.

Depending on the nature of your business, this might take the form of professionally prepared collateral material, brochures, spec sheets, Web site content, catalogs, or lead-generation and prospect-qualification tools.

In most cases, the format and quality are as important as the content. It projects a first-class, professional image and does not look as if you left these supporting materials until the last minute. Design and copywriting, as well as production values, can create that image and increase your chances of sales success—at a cost that will look attractive if the results improve the closing ratio.

7. Publicity and public relations

The explosion of online newsletters, blogs, trade journals and association Web sites has created unprecedented demand for content and articles about newsworthy developments in just about every industry. If you have truly interesting product features or novel applications that will attract readers in your business, you'll be amazed at how quickly they'll be picked up, repeated, endorsed and discussed—usually by the very people you'd want to reach with your message.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

Start with electronic media the same way you do with traditional media: Create a set of customized press releases that reflect your understanding of the target publication and its audience. You can use a generic release if you customize it for the really important target audiences. The pros can spot a generic press release a mile away, and they are unlikely to spend the time it will take to “make it theirs.”

Select your targets carefully and set priorities. For example, you might create an A list for really important clients; a B list for important but not critical clients; and a C list for nice-to-have but probably not important clients, at least not in the short term. Spend two-thirds of your time working the A list, a quarter on the B list and less than a tenth on the C list. Follow up with the A list, too, to see if there’s anything else they need or if there’s a way you can help them.

Don’t forget to include the most important hardcopy targets, too—perhaps a widely read trade journal or local business paper.

Finally, create a “press center” on your Web site, and post your generic release there. You never know when a reporter will need the information you provide and find you through a simple online search.

Implementation ... continued

CREATE BUZZ WITH TARGETED PUBLICITY

Getting the implied endorsement of respected trade journals and online media (blogs, email newsletters, etc.) is easy to do because good content is in high demand. Find the most compelling story you can—a case study, a new product feature, a strategic partnership and what it means for your customers—and send a press release to the online press release distribution services and key publications serving your industry. (For really important publications, you may want to customize the content to encourage acceptance.)

8. Trade shows and events

Trade shows, conferences, symposia and other corporate events present a conundrum for marketers, because the costs are high and the time demands are even higher. Moreover, it is difficult to measure effectiveness, and the planning, implementation and follow-up can be time-consuming.

That may be one reason that online seminars, or webinars, and virtual conferences, podcasts and meetings have become so popular with both sponsors and attendees. They don't require elaborate travel, extravagant booths and non-stop staffing with talented sales professionals. It's just solid and valuable interaction between buyer and seller.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Implementation ... continued

If you haven't considered an online seminar as a way of addressing your customers' needs and showcasing your solutions, it's probably worth a try. For less than \$500 and a week or two of your time, you can set up a meeting or conference facility online and get great tutorials that show you how to put on a top-notch presentation. Then all you need are a few dozen (or a few hundred) of your best customers and prospects, and the show is on.

HOST A WEBINAR

Showcase your expertise and important product features by sharing what you've learned with interested prospects. Invite them to an online event, or webinar, that addresses the issues that are important to them, and provide really helpful information. They'll thank you with genuine interest in your product or service.
(Don't forget to include an incentive to get additional information if they're really interested.)

As with most of the low-cost and cost-effective marketing ideas, you can always hire professionals if you don't feel comfortable executing on your own, or if your time demands are such that it makes sense to outsource the project.

POST-AUDIT



The previous section was a quick sampling of some popular and cost-effective tools. It covered only a few of the areas in the traditional marketing mix.

For example, we assume that sales salaries, commissions and expenses are not fair game for these quick-hit marketing campaigns. We also assume that pricing and the product/offering elements are shared responsibilities (with general management, R&D and so forth), even though they are very much elements of the traditional marketing mix.

And we've not addressed the longer lead-time items such as packaging and long-term brand building. It's not that these elements are not important; they are. It's simply that it's not easy to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of activities in these areas, and they typically are not considerations when you need a fast marketing solution.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Post-Audit ... continued

Evaluating what you've done

You probably noticed we have not dealt with the immediate profitability of each element. We simply identified tools that are low-cost and generally cost-effective. Every business is different, and what's "generally cost-effective" may not work as well for your business.

Most likely you will want to try a variety of tools and measure the results from each to find out what's most effective and efficient given your objectives and other elements in your profile. If you don't, you'll never know whether you're meeting your objectives, and you won't know which tools work best for you. It's a missed opportunity, whether a particular campaign tool works or not.

You need a feedback mechanism because marketing is more of an art than a science. It's a sophisticated trial-and-error dance. Try things that seem right, track results, then modify or delete based on your experience. Then try other things, and repeat the process. There is no such thing as the perfect allocation formula. Different things work in different industries and different situations, and even at different times in a brand's life cycle. Any consultant who tells you otherwise doesn't understand marketing.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Post-Audit ... continued

A bonus tool that will make the tools work better

There is one free step that will make your time and money work harder for you—the creative brief. The creative brief is a document—usually one or two pages—that explains to a creative team the objectives for an ad, promotion or other creative marketing campaign. The document ensures that the people who create and plan marketing campaigns, whether they are internal or external, understand what you’re expecting and how success will be measured.

Having a well-thought-out creative brief increases the chance that you will get what you want the first time and minimizes the chance of having to re-work the creative product over and over. Evaluating submissions becomes an objective process, not subject to personal whims or irrational preferences. The creative brief also encourages you, the marketing manager, to accurately express the goals, sub-objectives and constraints for each project.

Finally, the creative brief sets up the metric for the marketing post-audit—how you know whether the effort is working and how cost-effective it is. That’s important because the ideal marketing mix and budget allocation will be unique for each situation—even for different brands or audiences within the same industry or geography. You must test your way to an optimum strategy. If you do things without measuring results, you’ll never know if you’re making progress.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Post-Audit ... continued

THE SECRET TO SUCCESS: A GREAT CREATIVE BRIEF

A creative brief includes all the information a copywriter, art director, designer or other marketing professional needs to develop advertising, promotions, packaging or other materials that meet your objectives. Be sure to give this document the time and focused attention it deserves. You'll be rewarded with high-quality and effective creative executions that would take two or three times as long—and cost at least twice as much—to generate without it.

If you can't measure effectiveness and efficiency, any marketing program will be less effective and efficient than it could be. And that affects the bottom line directly.

The synergy of mix and match

If you're like most people, either your eyes are glazing over at this point because the total task looks too daunting, or you're starting to think you'd like to do everything at once, so you can get to the destination of a perfect marketing plan as quickly as possible.

Relax. Neither of those extremes is going to be a winner.

Instead, pick two or three marketing ideas and put them together into an integrated campaign. Implement the campaign, and then evaluate the results. If it worked well, repeat it and test another combination to see if it

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

Post-Audit ... continued

does as well or better. Keep repeating the process so you know what works best for your business—and what doesn't work and why.

Using just one approach in isolation makes the effort look feeble, much like a one-handed clap. Having too many approaches is not only hard to manage and evaluate, but it also looks like a marketing free-for-all to your target audience. You don't want to convey the impression that you're all hype and no substance.

That's why we recommend trying a simple campaign with just two or three elements at first. For example, you might create a white paper and then host a webinar to discuss and review the elements in the paper. Or host the webinar first, and provide the white paper free to attendees. If you record the webinar, you can offer it in conjunction with the white paper as downloads on your Web site, or put it on a CD and give your sales representatives copies for hot prospects who might benefit from the information. If you're ambitious, you can even add a third element—say a direct-mail campaign—to promote the webinar and white paper.

You could also combine an email marketing campaign with an aggressive publicity effort to make each look more important than either would alone. After a person has read about you in the trade press, email newsletters and popular industry blogs, your email may provide just the motivation a prospect needs to click on the link to take you up on an irresistible offer.

You get the idea. It's a mix-and-match strategy to create marketing synergy. It allows you to learn the right combination that will help you reach your objective.

Your Template for Creating Cost-Effective Marketing Strategies

APPENDIX

Here is a short list of resources to consider for elements suggested in this guide.

PPC advertising

www.pepperblue.com

www.rimmkaufman.com

Local television advertising

www.reachlocal.com

www.blueherondesignstudio.com

Email marketing

www.myemma.com

www.cheetahmail.com

www.reggiebrady.com

www.ruthstevens.com

One-on-one customer interviews

www.alliumresearch.com

www.dialoguemarketinggroup.com

Market-research surveys

www.zoomerang.com

www.surveymonkey.com

www.alliumresearch.com



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Appendix ... continued

Webinars

www.adobe.com (Adobe Connect)

www.gotomeeting.com

Press-release distribution

www.prnewswire.com

Positioning and marketing strategy

www.dialoguemarketinggroup.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Michael A. Goodman is a veteran marketing management consultant with Dialogue Marketing Group Inc. (www.dialoguemarketinggroup.com). Dialogue clients include micro businesses, startups, Fortune top-50 companies and cover a variety of product categories, industries and business situations—both B2B and consumer-oriented.

Goodman began his career in brand management at Procter & Gamble and then moved into director and vice president roles at Frito-Lay (a subsidiary of PepsiCo) and International Playtex, respectively. In his role as a consultant, he has dealt primarily with positioning and branding issues, along with strategic planning for all areas of the traditional marketing mix.

He has taught market research and marketing strategy at the undergraduate and MBA levels and is the author of several books, including ***The Potato Chip Difference*** (www.potatochipdifference.com) and ***Rasputin for Hire*** (www.rasputinforhire.com). He has been a leading expert on the MarketingProfs Know-How Exchange for several years.

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