

Marketing Plans

Your company needs a vision, the vision demands a strategy, the strategy requires a plan, and the plan requires action. A Japanese proverb says: “**Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.**”

You need to prepare a detailed marketing plan. But it makes more sense to call it a *battle plan*. Your plan should give you confidence that you will win the war before you engage in the first battle. If you aren’t introducing something better, newer, faster, or cheaper, you shouldn’t enter the market.

A marketing plan consists of six steps: situational analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, budget, and controls.

1. *Situational analysis*. Here the company examines the *macro forces* (economic, political-legal, social-cultural, technological) and the *actors* (company, competitors, distributors, and suppliers) in its environment. The company carries out a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). But it should really be called a TOWS analysis (threats, opportunities, weaknesses, and strengths) because the ordering should be from the outside in rather than the

inside out. SWOT may place an undue emphasis on internal factors and limit the identification of threats and opportunities to only those that fit the company's strengths.

2. *Objectives.* Based on identifying its best opportunities from its situational analysis, the company ranks them and sets goals and a timetable for achieving them. The company also sets objectives with respect to stakeholders, company reputation, technology, and other matters of concern.
3. *Strategy.* Any goal can be pursued in a variety of ways. It is the job of strategy to choose the most effective course of action for attaining objectives.
4. *Tactics.* The strategy must be spelled out in great detail regarding the 4Ps and the actions that will be taken in calendar time by specific individuals who are to carry out the plan.
5. *Budget.* The company's planned actions and activities involve costs that add up to the budget that it needs to achieve the its objectives.
6. *Controls.* The company must set review periods and measures that will reveal whether it is making progress toward the goal. When performance lags, the company must revise its objectives, strategies, or actions to correct the situation.

To facilitate the planning process, your company should work out a standard plan format to be used by all the divisions and product groups. This will make it possible for the plans to be reviewed, compared, and evaluated by the planning or strategy office. One large multinational corporation has a planning office that scores the various plans before they are approved. The office applies such criteria as:

- Is the situational analysis fairly complete?
- Are the goals reasonable and reachable in the light of the situational analysis?
- Does the strategy seem adequate to deliver the stated goals?

114 Marketing Insights from A to Z

- Are the tactics well aligned with the stated strategy?
- Is the expected return on investment sufficient and credible?

Deficient plans are returned to division or product groups for revision along suggested lines. The use of a standard software planning program enables the planners to quickly revise their plans in response to criticism or unforeseen circumstances. In an advanced case, a company builds a model to estimate how hypothetical revisions in its advertising budget, sales force size, or prices will affect sales and profits. The Hudson River Group, for example, has developed *marketing strategy simulators* for different companies to help guide the allocation of marketing resources to their best uses.

The benefit of planning may lie less in the plan than in the process of planning. Dwight Eisenhower observed: **“In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless but planning is indispensable.”**

No battle plan survives the first battle. It will need constant revision as the battle proceeds. You may have to redesign your airplane while you are in the air.

Make sure that you are not spending more time preparing plans than achieving results. Professor James Brian Quinn noted: **“A good deal of corporate planning . . . is like a ritual rain dance. It has no effect on the weather that follows.”** The battle plan is nothing unless it progresses into work. Plan your work and work your plan. Marketing plans will not produce a dollar of profit if you don’t implement them. But don’t confuse motion with action.

Winning companies are those that do more of the right things (effectiveness) and do them better (efficiency).