



### BEST CASE

Your marketing plan is a detailed roadmap to meet your goals.

You recognize that the time you invest to create a solid plan is perhaps the best time you'll invest all year – it helps you work through new strategies, issues, ideas, and numbers.

When it's done, your team focuses on executing the plan and measuring your progress all year long.

As a result, you've been able to hit your goals, grow your business, and enjoy the journey.

### NEUTRAL CASE

You're incredibly busy, so it's difficult to invest the time in a detailed marketing plan. Instead, you develop a basic plan that's based on last year's version.

You include general revenue goals, general sales strategies, and basic campaigns; you stick with proven techniques. Budgets are based on last year's numbers.

You could be more ambitious with your revenue goals if your company was willing to try new things, but each year you stick with the tried-and-true.

### WORST CASE

You don't typically create a marketing plan. You have a budget, but the numbers are haphazard. Things change so quickly – why spend the time?

You take a similar approach with the strategies that should drive a marketing plan. You probably don't have a positioning or brand strategy; you're missing out on distribution channels or partnerships; your campaigns are ineffective and you may not invest in customer retention.

A plan is a compass. Without one, you may be traveling in the right direction, but it's incredibly difficult to stay on course – and that can drastically limit your success.

## Key concepts & steps

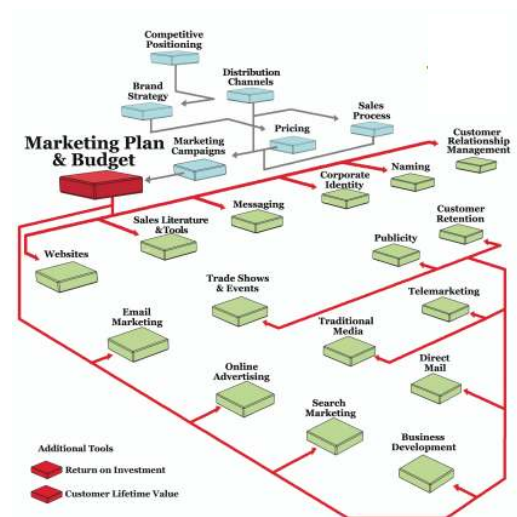
### Before you begin

A marketing plan should address all of your strategies, tactics and budget, so you'll need to review your **brand strategy**, **pricing strategy** and **distribution channels** beforehand. You'll also outline your major **marketing campaigns** for the year since they'll be in your budget.

### Set your annual goals

Build your entire marketing plan to achieve the goals that you define:

- ▶ Quantitative (numeric) goals such as total revenue, profit, number of customers, units sold, and breakdowns by product or channel as needed.
- ▶ Strategic goals -- for example, you may want to expand into a new market with a new distribution channel, or you may need to reposition your brand to reflect a change in your business.



## **Highlight your competitive position, value proposition and brand strategy**

- ▶ Your positioning strategy defines how you'll differentiate your offering from your competitors.
- ▶ Your value proposition defines the primary value you deliver: operational efficiency, product leadership or customer intimacy.
- ▶ Your brand strategy defines what you stand for and how you'll communicate with the market.

## **Outline any plans for your products & services**

If you need to do anything to strengthen your product line and better deliver on your value proposition, address those issues in your plan.

## **Develop your tactical sales plan**

- ▶ The number of sales reps you'll need and the markets they'll target
- ▶ Whether you'll need to hire, train, or develop new compensation plans
- ▶ Top priority markets, industries or customer segments; if you have a list of key prospects, include them
- ▶ Your plan for managing current customers
- ▶ Plans for launching any new distribution channels and driving revenue through existing channels

## **Outline your major marketing campaigns**

You don't need to list every campaign -- just outline your major promotional plans for the year. You'll need to set your budget too, so the more planning you do now, the better. Your plans should include:

- ▶ The top three campaigns you'll run to generate leads, nurture customers, close, and/or market to existing customers
- ▶ The media you'll use (for example, email, online, print, telemarketing, trade shows, publicity, etc.)
- ▶ Tools, technologies or resources you'll need – for example, a new website, an email service provider, a new piece of software
- ▶ Your ROI and other financial goals

## **Develop a budget**

- ▶ Budgeting can be a difficult process. Many companies just estimate or base their budget on last year. An estimate is better than nothing, but if you've defined your major campaigns and needs, you can develop better numbers.
- ▶ You can also use ROI to determine the appropriate total budget for your marketing efforts.

## **Revisit your plan regularly**

- ▶ The planning process itself is incredibly valuable, but if you don't review the plan regularly, it's easy to lose focus. Continually revisit the plan and measure your progress.

# What's next?

When you've finished your plan, it's time to execute. You may need to create new **messages, literature, website** or **other tools and processes** for your campaigns, but after that, focus on **generating and managing your customers**.

