Building Block Basics of Marcom Plans

To achieve success, you must first define what success is to your company. This is the purpose of a strategic marketing communications (marcom) game plan. It may be tempting to just get on with the tactics; however, it would be a shame to head in the wrong direction and waste your valuable time, money and resources on activities that will not achieve success.

With the right data, you can build a strong, actionable marcom plan in three to six weeks. This paper provides brief descriptions of the basic building blocks of the strategic marcom plan. With this information, you can determine the most effective and efficient marcom strategies and tactical activities to achieve success for your company.

Background. Document any data relevant to the company that will help you determine the most appropriate marcom strategies. Key challenges? Brand awareness and equity? Positioning? Historical marcom activities – what's worked; what hasn't? Upcoming product launches?

Business goals. Define what the company needs to achieve over the next year or two.

Business objectives. Define how the company knows it will have achieved the goals. Objectives must be measurable and trackable. An example of the template I use is at the bottom of the page. Let's say the business goal is: Grow the professional services side of our business.

The offer. This is where you describe the product or the service. Include product positioning.

Target audience. Who will buy your product or service? Are channel partners needed to get to the end buyer? Describe their motivations, fears, challenges, pain points, drivers, what they value, hot buttons, media preferences, influencer, decision maker, target geographies, any info you can get.

Competitive landscape. What other companies are competing directly or indirectly for your target customers' dollars within your product category or similar space?

What	Measurement	Tracking Method	When
Number of prospects that meet our definition of 'qualified' each month	20 in the pipeline	Salesforce.com	Last day of each month
Number of prospects-turned-customers each quarter	10 customers	Signed contract	Last day of each quarter
Revenue	$7.5M CDN	Financial reports	December 31, 2007

About the Author

Irene Crosby, Founder and Principal of Target Insight, is an accomplished marketing communications consultant located in Ottawa, Ontario. Services include marketing communications strategy development; hands-on implementation of marketing communications activities; website planning and project management; and copywriting. Irene works with CEOs, VPs, and marketing managers to develop and executive communications plans that resonate with target audiences, engage customers, and drive business. Her 20 years of experience span high tech, life sciences, education, health care, insurance, financial services, and the public sector. Irene is adept at managing projects and keeping clients up-to-date every step of the way—no surprises. *You and your customers deserve insightful communications.*

SWOT analysis. Look internally for your strengths and weaknesses, and externally for opportunities and threats. What you identify here will be taken into consideration as you work on the marcom strategies and tactics.

Marcom strategies. This is where creative brain power is required. You need to come up with the top strategies that will achieve the business goals and resonate with the target audiences.

Marcom tactics. Once you've identified the strategies, it's time to define the actual tactics the company will execute to achieve the very specific business objectives. Considerations are connecting with the target audiences, staying on brand and hitting the budget.

Budget. What will your plan cost over 12 months? Compare the total to the marcom budget you have been given. You may need to narrow your strategies and tactics to accommodate the budget.

Calendar of activities. Plot your tactics over a 12-month period. You are now ready to execute each tactic with confidence.

And don't forget to evaluate your plan at the end of the year. What worked and why? What didn't work; why not? Were the objectives achieved; why or why not?

Strategic marketing communications game plans are to be treated as living documents. As you gather more data, add it to the plan.

Target Insight

STEPS

- ☐ Research
- ☐ Write
- ☐ Socialize with key players
- ☐ Revise
- ☐ Approval stage
- ☐ Generate final Calendar of Activities
- ☐ Generate Action Plan for each tactic as it approaches and execute!
- ☐ Track results

RESOURCES

- ☐ Internal subject matter experts (SME)
- ☐ External SMEs (customers, channel partners, etc.)
- ☐ Data: business plans, product plans, marketing plans, historical results, brand guidelines, websites, third-party objective sources like analyst reports

HOW TO GET DATA FROM SMEs

- ☐ One-on-one talks
- ☐ Facilitate topical discussions
- ☐ Facilitate brainstorming sessions

TIPS

No one will read a lengthy document, so:

- ☐ Summarize the plan in a 1-page Executive Overview. This should be the first content page of your plan.
- ☐ Capture details in separate files. I call these "worksheets".

CHECKLIST

Please visit my website, www.targetinsight.ca, to get "Checklist | Building Block Basics of Marcom Plans."

Learn More

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