



white paper

Marketing management

Marketing is the process of directing an organisation to be successful in selling a product or service that people not only desire, but are willing to buy. If you also capture details of how customers and prospects think and behave, it helps you deliver the right message to the right people at the right time - as efficiently as possible.

This Sage white paper will provide guidance on how to promote products or services to existing and new customers and how software can help sales and marketing teams be more effective.

sage

Why marketing matters

Marketing your firm involves more than simply advertising in a local paper. It requires research into all aspects of your market, your customers and your competitors. A marketing strategy should form a significant part of your business plan as ultimately it is the ability to sell which will make the difference between success and failure.

What is the need that your company serves and who are the people or organisations out there in pain at this very moment as a result of not having access to your product? And how do you differentiate yourself from your competitors? Identifying exactly who you need to target with which marketing messages will ensure you get the maximum returns.

Creating marketing momentum for your business isn't nuclear physics, and it doesn't need to be extremely expensive. However, it can require a significant investment of time.

Brand building

Your brand encapsulates every way that you want your business to be perceived by customers to set you apart from your competitors. Every experience your customers have with you should reinforce your brand, encouraging them to build a relationship with you and come back for repeat business.

The key areas that make up your brand include:

- Your business name and the name of your products and services
- Any slogan you use
- Your logo
- Your product packaging
- Any branded goods, such as promotional stationery
- The appearance and behaviour of your employees
- Your business website

If all of these are in line with the look and feel of your brand, each time a customer comes into contact with any of them the brand will be strengthened.

- Employees can be vital to maintaining your brand value. If your customer service is bad, the brand will suffer. Make sure the values you promote are fully understood by your staff
- Get regular feedback from customers to ensure that what you promote as a brand is in line with their perception of you as a business
- Make sure you keep it simple. And don't promise what you can't deliver

The Chartered Institute of Marketing provides sound advice on branding at: <http://www.cim.co.uk/KnowledgeHub/MarketingKnowledge/>

Reaching potential customers

There are various ways for you to deliver your marketing message and it's a good idea to consider as many of these as possible. Effective business marketing is often spread over a number of channels; potential customers are more likely to make a purchase if they've read about you in the paper, received a mail-out brochure then been to a local event which you've sponsored or seen you speaking at an industry exhibition. Achieving the correct mix is more of an art than a science, but you should be able to make decisions based on the research you've done as part of your marketing strategy.

Rather than an expensive and unsustainable all out assault, a steady trickle of regular contact is more likely to yield success; it's a marathon, not a sprint. The results of your activities, especially where a financial investment is required, should be measured. Inevitably, some methods are more easily measurable than others, but a simple way to keep tabs on what's working is to ensure that every customer enquiry is presented with the question, "How did you hear about us?"

Staying in touch with your customers and prospects

It can take a lot of work to manage all the data you assemble about customers and prospects via emails, mailshots, telephone conversations, spreadsheets and notes. If you're not careful, you can lose track of important prospects, send out conflicting messages, or alienate potential customers by contacting them too often.

Contact management software such as Sage 50 ACT! can help you avoid such problems by bringing all the relevant information together for you in once place. Good software can make it easy to call up background data and contact histories as you talk to customers or prepare for sales meetings. If you're serious about your marketing strategy, software such as Sage 50 ACT! provide a central storage facility for all your customer information that can help in several different ways:

- Less time wasted searching for important information or proposals and documents you or colleagues previously sent to a customer.
- An electronic diary that can remind you of forthcoming appointments and deadlines.
- Tools to automate the creation and delivery of customer communications.
- Management reports to help gauge the size and quality of your sales pipeline, or to measure the effectiveness of your marketing campaigns.

If your business requires only occasional, isolated contacts with customers, then a simple personal information manager program may be suitable. But if you're in a more relationship-driven business, you may need to explore more powerful tools that will support marketing activity designed to stimulate growth and profitability. Download our 'rate your need' white paper from

www.sage.co.uk/actresource

Direct marketing

Direct marketing (DM) is any form of direct unsolicited contact you make with a prospective customer. It could be a direct mail leaflet drop, email-shot, or a telemarketing call. DM is the most cost effective and accurate way of targeting customers, and allows you to accurately measure your success through the level of response generated.

However, there are risks involved and it's important to think carefully about what you include in order to get enough responses to justify your investment. DM is widely used by many organisations, so in order to avoid becoming lost in the cacophony of marketing messages you need to pay careful attention to what you send.

- No one will spend more than a minute deciphering your marketing communication. What is required is a swift and easily understandable explanation of the benefit your organisation can provide.
- Direct marketing costs money and time. Don't jump in with both feet without testing your intended communication on a small portion of the targeted prospects. This might save you from wasting time and money on something that doesn't work.

Direct Marketing Association – B2B Direct Marketing Guide
<http://www.dma.org.uk/DocFrame/DocView.asp?id=222&sec=-1>

Do PR – it's free

Public relations (PR) is all about developing relationships with trade and local journalists who can help you get media coverage for your business. Getting press coverage is not as difficult as you may think. It is a free and relatively simple way to promote yourself. A piece written by a journalist carries more weight with customers than an advertisement as it's perceived as impartial. The delivery of your message is out of your hands though, and control rests with the writer.

Decide on the publications you want to target. Which are the papers or magazines that your potential customers would read? Consider trade titles and local newspapers and radio stations, find the name of the journalist who deals with your particular area and send them a press release.

Journalists receive numerous press releases every day. You can't just send them some information about how great your firm is; it has to be newsworthy. Don't erode your credibility by sending them rubbish.

If you're writing for a local paper, they might be interested in a human story about how one of your employees is running the London marathon, or how you're sponsoring a local community event. Look at the type of stories they cover and try to formulate one that fits with these criteria. If it's a trade title, you could offer your services as an expert commentator in your field or offer to write a series of non-advertorial articles about your industry.

Resources for locating news hounds

Newspaper Society database
Commercial radio stations
BBC radio stations: England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland
The Guardian Media Directory

Writing a press release

- Make sure it's newsworthy
- Keep it concise
- Avoid unnecessary jargon
- Stick to the facts
- Ensure it covers the 'five Ws' - Who, what, when, where and why
- Include useful quotes
- Add an Editor's Note at the end containing company and contact details
- Grab the reader's attention by including a good headline
- Proof read before sending

Advertising

Advertising can seem prohibitively expensive when compared to other marketing options, but the crucial difference is that you pay for the total control of the message, what it looks like and when and where it is published.

As such, whether you're going for print radio or have the budget for TV, it's important to ensure that your message is the correct one.

If you have the budget, it is advisable to hire an ad agency. Try to appoint an agency on a recommendation from someone you trust, preferably with experience in your particular industry.

Communication is the key ingredient in working with an agency. If both parties are blinkered, busy fulfilling their own roles, the process will suffer. Set clear objectives at the start of a project. This will iron out any problems from the outset, giving each party the chance to air their views.

However, if you opt to go it alone, remember to concentrate on conveying the benefits that you offer with a headline that virtually jumps off the page or grabs the listener's attention.

Once you've finished your ad, look at it from a customer's perspective and ask yourself if the benefits your company offers can be explicitly and easily understood. The classic formula used by advertisers is this: Attention, Interest, Desire, Action.

The advertising formula

Attention: Your ad needs to attract a reader's attention with a catchy headline.

Interest: Create an interest in your product or service by clearly communicating the benefit.

Desire: Their interest needs to be transformed into desire for the product.

Action: At the end of the ad include a call to action. Tell customers exactly what they have to do and make it easy for them.

Advertising

Exhibiting isn't cheap. The average cost of a national exhibition stand is around £6,000, though many local events are much cheaper. You want to be able to get the most out of your investment, so think carefully about what kind of event you want to attend and make sure the people who attend are likely to be looking for the products or services you supply.

- How much cash can you realistically spend on the exhibition? Besides the obvious payments for the space and stand itself, you also need to consider other running costs such as transport, literature, display materials and staffing.
- For your first trade show stand display, consider renting the smallest possible stand. That way you can learn what works and what doesn't while keeping costs down and gaining valuable experience for future shows.
- Make sure any leads you get at the show are followed up soon after the event. Many companies take too long to get back to potential customers that have expressed an interest.

Do

- Define message and audience
- Look at regional and national events
- Choose the right type of show
- Optimise stand space
- Use eye-catching graphics/lighting
- Have the right staff
- Follow-up leads after event

Don't

- Stick up a display without doing homework
- Blow budget on stand space
- Choose size over quality
- Dismiss international events
- Just concentrate on sales leads
- Follow-up visitors with generic mails
- Forget to evaluate your original objectives

Online marketing

It's rare to find a small business without some kind of web presence these days, and while many small companies dream of the marketing budgets of some of their multinational counterparts, using new technology effectively can increase your marketing efficiency and generate numerous new business opportunities.

The great thing about internet marketing is that it's incredibly measurable, meaning that it's success, and therefore return on investment can be easily calculated.

For instance, if you're selling online, Google Analytics is a free statistics package that lets you analyse your website's traffic. In the same way as you could if you owned a high street shop, you can monitor customer behaviour and decide what's working on your site and what's not. If the stats show that a large number of people are leaving the site on a particular page, it's a safe bet that you need to change something there.

Register for this service at <http://www.google.com/analytics/en-GB/>

It will enable you to determine:

- How many people visited your website every day
- What the most popular entry and exit pages are
- How many new visitors it gets and where they most often come from
- How long people spend on your site and what the most popular day and time is

Free and easy ways to promote yourself online

- Visit relevant online forums and make useful comments, using your company name and web address as your signature. Make sure you have something worthwhile to say, as 'spamming' will do you no favours.
- Include a data capture function on your welcome page and ask visitors if they'd like to receive an online newsletter detailing the latest developments with your product, business and industry.
- Once you have a prospects list, you can target potential customers with marketing e-mail. Always include an 'unsubscribe' link and keep the message short and snappy. People will easily ignore marketing email, so convey your benefit as quickly and simply as possible.
- Register with online directories like www.thomsonlocal.com and www.touchlocal.com as basic listings are free.
- Place free ads on sites like www.gumtree.com and www.craigslist.com on which the public can perform localised geographical searches.
- "Link baiting", is where you post content on your site that's so interesting or practical that other sites will want to link to it; for instance, a well written business article or a free game. The more other sites link to yours, the higher up you will appear in search engines like Google.

More online tips

<http://www.ukbusinessforums.co.uk/forums/showthread.php?t=32162>

Online marketing cont.

Search engine optimisation (SEO)

SEO is the process by which you can drive your web-page up the listing of search engines like Google and Yahoo! when someone performs a search using keywords and phrases relevant to your business.

Working out what these keywords are and including them in the text on your site can dramatically improve your listing. There are no real costs involved, but the process is quite complicated, and dependant on the constantly changing search processes that the engines employ. Also if you're operating in a competitive sector, it may be difficult to get yourself into the top listings.

However, SEO is a process that no business operating online should ignore. The National B2B centre provides an interactive SEO tool that allows you to analyse your web-page and will help you formulate your SEO.

It's free to register at: <http://www.nb2bc.co.uk/seo/>

Free keyword suggestion tools

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

Sage 50 ACT! is a simple, best-selling, low-cost contact management solutions for businesses of all types. It has all the features a small business needs to get your sales, marketing and customer service operations in order. It is easy to set up and use, organising you, your contacts and your business. To find out more call **0800 44 77 77** or for a free tour and TestDrive visit <http://www.sage.co.uk/acttestdrive>