



Do you hear the words '**marketing plan**' and wish for the ground to swallow you up? Confused by all the jargon surrounding marketing plans? ***Fear not, we are here to help! This is part two of this series of blogs.***

A marketing plan sets out how you are going to put your marketing strategy into practice. The marketing plan ensures that everyone within the organisation knows what you are aiming to achieve and what they need to do to help make it happen.

**Include objectives, budgets and deadlines in your marketing plan:** An effective marketing plan must set clear objectives that will help you towards your longer term strategic goals. Where your marketing strategy includes targeting a particular-customer segment, your marketing plan should have specific, measurable objectives for helping you achieve this goal, such as increasing sales by a target percentage. Setting deadlines and agreeing marketing budgets to work with helps you focus on your priorities and commit to achieving them.

You should make sales forecasts and targets, which are key areas of your marketing plan and feed them into your overall business plan. However, other performance measures could be just as important. For example, you might set targets for numbers of enquiries, numbers of new customers, average transaction value, and so on. Or you might simply wish to maintain a positive cash flow.

You can choose targets like these to reflect your strategic goals. They can also help you identify where your marketing is and isn't working; for example, if enquiry levels meet targets but sales do not.

**Planning your marketing:** Your day to day marketing activities are likely to be focused on communicating with existing customers and prospects. Your marketing plan should set out when and how you will do this.

Start building a schedule, by identifying key times of the year - for example, when customers plan the next year's budget or seasonal purchasing peaks (such as Christmas). Time your marketing campaigns to fit with these dates and look for other opportunities, such as trade exhibitions, that you can take advantage of.

If there are significant gaps in your marketing schedule, include cost-effective activities to help maintain customer awareness. You could send out a newsletter, for example. If you rely heavily on a small number of important customers, consider developing individual account management plans for them. Rather than mailshots and other forms of general

marketing communications, key accounts merit regular phone calls, meetings, corporate event invites and a great customer experience.

**Marketing mix:** As well as marketing communications, your marketing plan should span the full mix of marketing activities. For example, developing new products and building your distribution network might be important parts of your strategy. You will also need to plan carefully for any price increases or tactical moves such as end of season sales.

You might also want to strengthen your marketing capabilities. Note in your marketing plan whether you intend to give staff sales training or introduce new customer relationship management (CRM) technology. You may need to introduce more efficient systems or measure customer satisfaction more efficiently. Including activities like these in your marketing plan helps ensure that they are identified as priorities and that you dedicate time to them.

Please feel free to call our helpful and knowledgeable team on 01843 572600 if you would like any advice about your marketing. You can also email us at [marketing@365itsupport.co.uk](mailto:marketing@365itsupport.co.uk) – we are always happy to help and provide advice for your IT requirements, including your marketing.