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Choosing Tactics for Your Web Site Marketing Plan

By Bobette Kyle

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Based on the strategic marketing plan book "How Much for Just the Spider?"

Objectives, strategies, and tactics – these are the parts of a solid strategic marketing plan. Your site objective defines the big picture, strategies provide the framework, and tactics fill in the details. Tactics are where the action takes place – these are the things you will do to bring your plans to life.

There is no shortage of Internet-related marketing tactics. Many have great potential. The challenge is to sift through and choose the ones that are right for your situation – the ones that have the *greatest* potential to support your strategies. Randomly ricocheting from one "proven technique" to another will frazzle and disjoint both you and your business.

Examples of promotional tactics are numerous, as are sources of advice. Public relations, search engine optimization, affiliate programs, reciprocal linking, advertising, direct email, newsletters, and customer incentives are all promotional tactics that may be appropriate for your plan. To learn more about each, explore the expert resources linked from the Promotional Tactics Resources page at <http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/promotions.htm>.

A key to knowing which tactics to choose involves thoroughly understanding your target audience(s) and your positioning relative to each. Other elements in your marketing mix (price, product, and place/distribution) come into play as well. Once you have addressed these strategic issues, you will be better able to choose tactics with the most potential to increase your business.

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Target Audience  
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A target audience is an identifiable group of people that could benefit from purchasing your product, visiting your site, and/or responding to some other call to action. You can define your target audience(s) according to some combination of behavior, demographics, psychology, and/or social

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influences. You are likely to have several potential target audiences; focus on those you can most profitably help.

Marketing to a target audience involves understanding how you can help them, developing effective messages, then reaching them via appropriate tactics. By using this approach you can focus your resources on tactics that are most likely to increase sales for your business. Hence, earning the greatest return from your marketing activities.

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Positioning  
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Positioning defines your product, business, and/or site for those in your target audience. It sets the stage for your image – how your target audience perceives your business – and shows your audience the benefits you provide.

The positioning process involves first understanding the needs and wants of your target audience. You should also know the positioning strategies of your competitors and have a thorough knowledge of your own product's features. Armed with that information, you can better develop tactics that will most closely fit your positioning.

Another factor to keep in mind is your online positioning will be tightly interwoven with your off-line positioning. Because your business and products are a reality in both the physical and virtual worlds, your positioning should be consistent across both. Accordingly, your marketing tactics should be consistent as well.

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The Four P's – Price, Product, Place, and Promotion  
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Too often, we tend to focus on "promotion" to the detriment of the other marketing mix elements. When choosing tactics for your Web site marketing plan, consider *each* of the four P's in your marketing mix – price, product, place (distribution), and promotion. You are likely to find the results much better than if you include promotions alone.

The opportunities for incorporating all four P's into your plan are numerous. You may find, after studying the competition, that increasing or decreasing your price is likely to result in better profits for your business. Perhaps there is a distribution channel (electronic delivery or mailorder, for example) you haven't fully integrated into your business. With respect to products, developing a new product or giving an existing product a facelift may be an effective business-building tactic.

By considering the Four P's, your target audience(s), and positioning, you can be better prepared to choose effective tactics for your Web site marketing plan. Once your tactics are chosen, you are ready to begin implementing and evaluating results.

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Other Articles in this Series  
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In the first three article of this series, I discussed the marketing plan in general, then developing Web site objectives, and thirdly, developing strategies to support your objectives. This, the final article is devoted to choosing tactics for your plan.

Part One: "Developing a Web Site Marketing Plan"

Part Two: "Your Web Site's Objectives"

Part Three: "Strategies for Your Web Site Marketing Plan"

Developing a Web Site Marketing Plan

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Developing a Web Site Marketing Plan

Part One of a Four Part Series

Based on "How Much for Just the Spider?"

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For many of us, finding the time and commitment to complete a marketing plan for our Web sites is difficult. There are so many other obligations vying for our attention it is tempting to push planning to the back burner. Giving into that temptation, however, means putting your business at a disadvantage. Your marketing plan is the compass by which you navigate. As opportunities arise or your business environment changes, the objective and strategies in your marketing plan will point you toward the best action. Without a marketing plan, you risk becoming unfocused in your marketing and are only guessing what might be best for your business.

In this article, you will learn the parts to a marketing plan. I will also point you to some marketing plan resources. In parts two through four of the series, I will discuss objectives, strategies, and tactics for your Web site marketing plan.

To be most effective, your Web site marketing plan should be a part of your business marketing plan. By aligning online marketing with your offline efforts, you can better achieve overall company objectives. Additionally, you will present a

consistent style and message across all points of contact with your target audience.

Your Web site marketing plan's focus will be partially determined by your site's status. If you already have a site in place, your plan can focus strictly on marketing issues – how to most effectively market using your existing site. If you have a site that needs improvement, your plan should incorporate enhancements into the site's design in conjunction with marketing activities (While you may not think of these enhancements as "marketing", in this case, they are instrumental to an effective plan.). If you do not yet have a site, you can create one while developing your Web site marketing plan, with your plan focused on launching the site. In any case, remember that your objective, strategies, and

tactics will change over time as your situation and focus change.

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Parts of a Marketing Plan  
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The Web site marketing plan is similar to a business marketing plan, but with a narrower focus. Completing a marketing plan includes developing strategies and tactics (also called action plans) that, when implemented, will help you reach your marketing objectives. Objectives, strategies, and tactics are each progressively narrower in scope.

The objective addresses the "big picture". In general terms, your objective answers the question "How will I overcome my main marketing challenge(s)?" If your company's main site-related challenge is figuring out how to use your Web site to help build client business, for example, an objective for your Web site marketing plan could be "To enhance online client service as well as build site awareness and interest with clients."

Strategies support your objective. Your strategies define the general approaches you will take to meet your objective. For example, strategies to support the above objective could include 1) improve online communication, information, and education, 2) build awareness of and interest in your company on the Internet, and 3) communicate the Web site's existence and advantages to existing clients.

Tactics are where the action takes place – these are the things

you will do to bring your strategies to life. Tactics for strategy 2 in the above example (improve online communication, information, and education) could include 1) sharing experience and observations in your industry through participation in discussion boards, 2) offering an email newsletter, and 3) listing/submitting your site to targeted search engines and directories.

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Marketing Planning Tools  
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The specifics of developing a marketing plan vary according to the source. All can be effective when used correctly. Some sites and software that can help you in developing your marketing plan are below.

Sites

eSOLO's Marketing Action Plans, <http://www.esolo.com/mapslist.php3> , can help you to come up with strategies and action plans (tactics) to support common marketing objectives.

The Web Site Marketing Plan's Marketing Plan Resources page, <http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/sr3.htm> , includes several links and descriptions of sites with marketing plan information.

Software

Each of these software titles takes a slightly different approach to developing a marketing plan.

– Plan Write® for Marketing, http://www.businessplansoftware.org/marketing_plan.asp

– WebQuest Pro, <http://www.webquestpro.com/>

– Marketing Plan Pro, <http://www.bplans.com/marketingplans>

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Other Articles in this Series  
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In this, the first article of the series, I discussed the

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elements of a marketing plan – objective, strategies, and tactics. In the remaining three articles I will take a closer look at objectives, strategies, and tactics you can consider for your Web site.

Part Two: "Your Web Site's Objectives"

<http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/sr8.htm> autoresponder:
mailto:ObjectiveArticle@WebSiteMarketingPlan.com

Part Three: "Strategies for Your Web Site Marketing Plan"

<http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/strategies.htm> autoresponder:
mailto:StrategiesArticle@WebSiteMarketingPlan.com

Part Four: "Choosing Tactics for Your Web Site Marketing Plan"

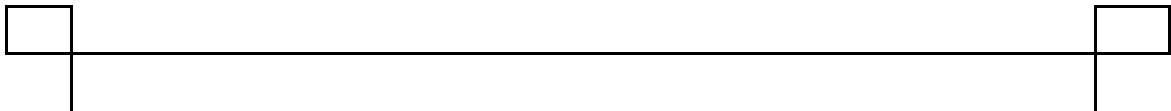
<http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/TacticsArticle.htm>
autoresponder: <mailto:TacticsArticle@WebSiteMarketingPlan.com>

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