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How to Get Started on Your Marketing Plan

By Bobette Kyle

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When developing or updating a marketing plan, knowing where to start is often a challenge. To better develop effective marketing strategies, begin by gathering information about both your business and the larger business environment (competition, trends, statistics, etc).

Internally, the amount of information you gather about your own business will depend on your company size. Information can include business strategies and plans; company marketing plans; pricing; and income statements. Employee knowledge is also a valuable resource. As you gather information, if you at first turn to internal sources then expand your understanding through external resources you will do fine.

External information about the business environment often takes the form of existing research, articles, competitive information, and industry news. While these are often available in both print and digital, the focus here is finding information online.

Gathering Information Online – Getting Started

The numerous news sources and billion or so Web pages available on the Internet make finding information much easier than in pre-Internet days. Before the Internet, gathering information meant trips to the library, purchasing expensive publications and reports, and commissioning your own primary research. Now, it is a matter of knowing where to search.

You can start searching the Internet by looking in each of the general areas below. Organize useful material as you find it. Purchase, bookmark, or file each resource so you can draw upon it during marketing plan development.

These external resources, together with your internal company information, will be your initial knowledge base as you develop your Marketing Plan. As you progress along the planning process and

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the specific information you need become clearer, these initial resources are likely to be jumping-off points for gathering more specific information.

Information Sources

Annual Reports and other SEC Filings. These documents are required by publicly held U.S. companies and often include statistics and other industry information.

Books. Books can often provide detailed insight and analysis you cannot find elsewhere.

The Government. At last count 100 U.S. Federal agencies had statistical programs, many with data available on the Web. You can find the complete list at fedstats.gov/agencies/index.html.

Message Boards and Newsgroups. You can pick up on trends, hot topics in the industry, and competitor information by following discussions.

News Articles. These often give clues to the business environment and can lead you to additional information sources.

Newsletters. By reading and subscribing to competitor and industry newsletters you can get insight into current promotional tactics and other activities.

Research Sites. Archives, press releases, newsletters, and executive summaries on these sites can provide relevant research findings and statistics.

Search Engines and Directories. Search by keyword or drill down into directory sub-categories to find information.

Subject Sites. There are some general sites – suite101.com, about.com, and business.com to name three – with numerous topic-specific pages. Check for pages relating to your industry or product.

Trade Associations and Publications. You will often find industry information, statistics, and membership lists online.

White Papers and other Company Publications. Companies will sometimes publish free white papers that summarize the industry trends or other information.

Search these resources and follow a sound marketing plan strategy for greater business success. For more about developing marketing plans read the articles at

Bobette Kyle draws upon 10+ years of Marketing/Executive experience, Marketing MBA, and online marketing research in her writing.

Bobette offers a range of marketing plan tools to fit your business and budget. Find out more at

or visit the Web Site Marketing Plan Network at

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Dust Off Your Marketing Plan

By Robert Wardrick

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Do you have a written marketing plan?

Are you following your plan?

Your written marketing plan serves as a road map to reach your target market.

Many entrepreneurs who spend time and energy developing a marketing plan, will soon abandon it if the plan don't produce immediate sales.

Marketing can be Time-Sensitive, 1) It takes Time for you to learn your market niche. 2) It can take even more Time for consumers to get your marketing-sales-message.

Elena Fawkner (<http://www.ahbbo.com/niche.html>) wrote an article "What's Your Niche" that is MUST reading for anyone markeking products and services ON or OFFline.

Whether your marketing plan is 1 page or 100 pages, refine it and update it. but don't leave your marketing-base without it.

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