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The 5–Step Web Site Marketing Plan

By Bobette Kyle

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Do you have a marketing plan for your site? If not, it may be time to think about developing one. A marketing plan helps you make the right day–to–day and long term decisions. Without one, your site is less likely to be a success.

Creating a marketing plan need not be scary or difficult. It does not require a marketing degree or a lot of experience. You do, however, need to put some quality time into your plan. Building your plan is a five step process.

**** Step 1: Gather and analyze information. ****

You will need information about your company, competitors, customers, and other industry players. This includes all you can find about how the Internet is currently being integrated in your industry with respect to products, promotions, pricing structures, and distribution channels. From this information, you can complete industry and SWOT analyses as well as identify your target customers.

**** Step 2: Verbalize your main challenge(s). ****

Write down the main Internet–related challenges you want to overcome. Referring to these main challenges will help keep you focused while developing your plan. You may even want to write your challenges down in question form – "How do we _____?" When completed, your Web site marketing plan will answer the question "How do I address these challenges?"

**** Step 3: Develop your Web site objective(s). ****

The objective addresses the "big picture". Your objective answers the question "How will I overcome my main marketing challenge(s)?" in broad, general terms. 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."

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** Step 4: Create strategies. **

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.

** Step 5: Choose tactics. **

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.

** The Write–Up **

Once you have your plan developed, there are numerous ways to do the write–up. If you are a company employee, there may be standards you must follow. If you are an entrepreneur, go with a style you find usable. For some ideas on what to include, read one of my previous articles, "What to Include in Your Marketing Plan Write–Up" at <http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/Arts/WritePlan.htm> .

After your initial plan is developed, you should treat it as a work in progress. Tweak and adjust as needed in response to changing conditions. Many companies update their marketing plans annually when developing budgets for the coming year and reviewing the company's business plan.

Whether you are a one–person shop or part of a good– sized company, having a Web site marketing plan can help your business prosper on the Web.

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Easy Marketing Communications Planning Steps

By Claire Cunningham

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ˆTis the season to be planning. Most business people are familiar with strategic planning. But what about your marketing communications program? Do you have a plan for that?

For those of you with marketing communications anxiety, here's a step–by–step guide to follow to create a plan.

The 5-Step Web Site Marketing Plan

1. Begin with the basics. Marketing communications involves what you say about your business (message) and who you say it to (audience). Start your plan with this information.

2. Solidify your identity. Define your logo and colors and use them consistently. Make sure they're on your signage, business cards, web site - anywhere you're seen by your audience. Invest in a professionally-produced logo. It will reflect positively on your entire operation.

3. Provide basic information. Every business needs a brochure and web site -- professionally-done materials that cover the basics, like products, services, people, facilities, etc.

4. Be visible. Most businesses need to attract new customers. Advertising, direct mail, publicity, trade shows, even the right promotional items are ways to stay visible.

5. Strengthen your ties with current customers. Keeping the customers you've got is often as important as attracting new ones. A regular newsletter, a client-specific section of your web site, and relevant information sheets can strengthen customer relationships.

6. Keep your sales force informed. Be sure sales reps and distributors know how you're promoting your products. A newsletter or IntraNet work well.

7. Set a budget. Establish a timetable. These will keep you on track throughout the year.

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