



The Seasonal Marketing Plan

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Sales are Right Around the Corner

New England Fall season is predictably wonderful for its changing leaves, incoming brisk winds, and fruits (apples, pumpkins, etc.) ready for picking. I was always particularly amazed by native animal behavior during that season in those areas. Take the squirrels for example. They would frantically scurry through parks and neighborhood trees nervously seeking the next nut for winter storage. It seemed as if each were on a mission, knowing exactly where to go, what to get and how they would ultimately achieve their objective. As to if they had enough, too few or more than needed, I'll never know. However, I have to believe the most diligent squirrels were best prepared and used their time with precision and efficiency. Perhaps they had a seasonal plan that helped...

Travel South for the Fall and professionals of all types ready for their own season; a season of increased business activity. Whether it's temporary residential visitors (or snowbirds), holiday shoppers or a stimulated ongoing customer network, if you're a professional in a touristy southern town, you are likely to see some sales spike in the coming months among these customers. Just how big of a spike is really up to you. So, how will you stand out in the crowd of competitors? What tactics will help you gain valuable market share? What piece of the pie can you realistically expect? What can you strive for? What executable strategies will be necessary to get there? Tis high time to dust off that marketing plan and get to work. (*record skipping sound here...*)

What? You don't have a marketing plan? Don't fret. Here are a few tips, revisited (from The 24-Hour Marketing Plan), to writing an abbreviated version of a marketing plan. It should only take a couple of hours. The value of doing this exercise will help streamline your efforts and optimize your sales at the time it matters most—season. Be sure to write it all down and visit it often.

- **Define Your Company Background:** This process starts easy with the one thing you know better than anyone else – your business. So just who is Company ____? What is your business? What do you promise? What is your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) or the dramatic difference that makes your company unique? Although this might seem elementary, be sure to not skip this step as your business has likely changed over the years and you might be surprised at how you define it, these days.
- **Understand Your Market and Your Competition:** Solicit trade publications or the Chamber of Commerce for some 'general' information on the size of your market and key market segments for your product or service. Pay particular attention to seasonal data for accuracy. Is there a clear need? Is it growing/shrinking? Is the need currently unmet or underserved by the competition (determining the profitability of that market)? Who is the competition? (List the top three competitors and how they position themselves)



- **Know Your Customer Intimately:** Who are they? (List their profile information such as age, sex, geographic region, household income, or, if a business, title/function, industry, company size)? When will they arrive and leave? What do they want? What motivates them and what do they respond to? (promotions, low prices, etc.) How do they purchase similar products/services? Who is the decision maker? Are there any key influencers that should be noted? What types of media do they read and/or subscribe to?
- **Develop Your Key Marketing Message:** This is *very* important and is usually that “elevator speech” (in most cases a run-on) that is translated into everything you do. It should include your value proposition, the problem you are solving and need to solve now for your customers. In addition, the key message should include the benefits you offer and your USP. For example, “SMART Marketing Solutions, a leading full service integrated marketing agency, delivers to medium to large-sized businesses over seven years of strategic, high-return, marketing execution and experience (Playtex, Bic, Rogaine, NYU, and others) in marketing planning, website development, email marketing, and other tactical marketing services at competitive prices to support clients looking to gain and/or sustain a competitive advantage.”
- **Identify Hurdles/Obstacles/Risk:** What are some of the hurdles and obstacles we need to overcome with our marketing? Could it be that we’re new to the market and suffer from little to no awareness? Do we have a negative past that we should admit to in our document and will need to combat with our marketing? I’m not suggesting an opportunity for a pity party here. However, it does help to know ‘internally’ what marketing risk, if any, we are truly up against and how we intend to overcome any and all obstacles to success.
- **Decide on Your Media Weapon(s):** Determine how you want to reach your target audience and what media you plan to leverage (in order of priority) that will yield the greatest return on investment. Some examples include television, radio, classified ads, email marketing, word-of-mouth, tradeshow, direct mail, telemarketing, etc. Be sure to include contemporary forms of marketing that you may be using or want to utilize including social media, mobile and/or integrated (online & offline) mixes.
- **Set Sales and Marketing Goals:** This is critical to your success and probably the most intimidating part of any plan. Be sure to include financial elements such as revenue, gross profits, revenue per sales person/territory, etc. In addition, you may include non-financial goals such as customers acquired, customers grown, units sold, press received. If you don’t know specifically, take a guess and write it down. Spread it out first by the first year’s months or quarters and then five years out, if you can. Even though this may be a guess, be sure to make it sensible, attainable, realistic, and measurable. Some like to start with this piece as it sets the framework of importance for the entire plan.
- **Determine Your Marketing Budget:** What’s your cost to acquire one customer? And/or, what’s your cost to sell one product? If you’ve executed some marketing over the past year you can compute this by dividing annual sales and marketing costs by the number of units sold (or customers acquired). Then, simply take



your cost to sell one unit or acquire one customer and multiply it by your respective sales/marketing goal (units or customers). This should give you some idea on what it will take to meet your goals for the upcoming period.

Like the diligent squirrel, it's critical to your business success that you plan and prepare now. How well you plan and then execute will determine if you have enough, not enough or beyond enough for the subsequent 'down' months that follow. There's no time to wait. It's your business to lose. So, get on it!

About the Author

Angelo Biasi is General Manager of SMART Marketing Solutions, LLC, a leading full-service integrated marketing company in Naples, FL since 2001. He has helped create and execute marketing plans and integrated marketing solutions for companies such as Playtex, Bic, Rogaine, Tauck, and over 35 colleges and universities, to name a few. Angelo has an MBA in Marketing from the University of Connecticut and teaches Marketing at New York University where he has for over five years. For more information or to learn more, email him at abiasi@smartmarketingllc.com, visit www.smartmarketingllc.com or call 239.963.9396.