

## BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS AND MARKETS BY PLANNING YOUR PROCESS – PART 1

Sign World – John Hadfield, KiM (Knowledge and Information Management)



**T**HERE'S been a consistent tide of questions I have received over the more than 10 years of seminars I have been presenting, face to face consulting and, mentoring with sign and print clients. They are age-old questions for our industry, "how can we increase our market share?" "we have a new high-speed printer and want to increase our business to match our newly acquired machine" and "how can we build our business and grow our markets?" They can appear seemingly mystical and unsolvable. Well, I am here to prove to you they are not – and not by using smoke and mirrors. Rather, a set of clearly defined goals with measurable outcomes and deliverables!

### SO, WHY ISN'T EVERYBODY DOING IT?

One of the most common problems for businesses is that they do not set up the foundation for most of their structures or business activity strategies. Business owners are often side-tracked by the day-to-day seemingly urgent offerings and issues. Building your business and markets requires a different approach and clear focus on what is important, rather than just urgent issues. Funny thing is most business owners are the first to admit those urgent issues can be delegated, postponed and rarely add to the bottom line. Wondering why? Well, take a minute to think when you gave yourself time to plan and ponder about the BIG issues – if you are like over 80 percent of people, you are so caught up in the day-to-day you can't ever get to the year to year. It's the 20 percent of companies who do make the time that are the highly successful ones; the ones you probably look at in awe and say "how the hell did they achieve that?"

In a single article, we will only be able to cover a few high-level overview subjects and some practical steps, and offer you further support via downloadable worksheets from <http://www.controlzone.com.au/links>.

### LET'S GET STARTED...

A clearly defined approach to building your business and markets relies on an integrated approach from operational and organisational functions to sales and marketing functions. While understanding the big picture is an essential



cornerstone for your business to thrive in today's economy.

### IT IS NOT THAT DIFFICULT IF YOU JUST ATTACK THE MISSION IN SMALL CHUNKS.

Aim to work towards achievable and realistic goals in the same way you would approach other parts of your organisational planning and on a scale to suit your business structure and the people within it.

For definition purposes 'building your business and markets' is an operational and organisational approach for your business to approach, as an agile operational process and system has become the norm.

### CONSOLIDATE WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT

Review or develop the business' vision & mission statements.

Rather than a motherhood statement being just a bunch of warm fuzzy words that sound good but mean little, this short statement must clearly explain to the staff and clients the market position the company wants to fill and the way it intends to achieve this. It must be able to be used as a direct reference in all decision making throughout the company and should serve to assist management and staff alike to better qualify and measure actions.

For example – answer the question "will what I am about to do directly assist the company to achieve its stated goals?" Below are a few in each area, to get you thinking:

### VISION STATEMENT

- What do we want to achieve/become within 3 to 5 years?
- What image do we want to portray to the client – How will they define us within the market?
- What financial outcome do we want to achieve – is growth as (or more) important than profit?

### MISSION STATEMENT

- How will we go about achieving our vision statement?
- What sort of company culture will we work within and promote to the market?

*NB: Be prepared to have a few attempts to get these statements set – it is easily the most difficult part of the plan. Words such as leading, best, biggest should not be included.*

### BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

- What "must" we do to achieve our vision statement?
- Consider objectives to be attained for the following three perspectives.

*NB: You may also consider other perspectives that apply to your particular business.*



Ok, from here it should be fair to say that once you complete the above tasks you will know "Who and What" your business is all about. Now for the fun part – deciding your best path forward – from the following three options choose a heading that most suits your future direction. Select one heading over the other two, as you really cannot be "everything to everyone".

#### 1. Operational excellence – defined as:

- Premium Quality – of products and services provided by your business.
- The ease of order placement and the processes by clients.
- Assured on time delivery and in line with your promises. Sound product knowledge and understanding of client requirements.
- The ability and willingness to correct errors in a timely manner.

*NB: Most suited to mature markets experiencing price sensitivities.*

#### 2. Product Leadership (Niche) – defined as:

- New ideas – forging new product and services for the market place you service.
- The understanding of better than average

quality products or services as benchmarked against your competitors.

- Equal or greater variety of products than leading competitor.
- Competitive prices for existing products (short bell curve).

*NB: Most suited to emerging and high growth markets subject to fashion trends.*

#### 3. Customer Intimacy – defined as:

- Knowledge of clients' operation – expectations.
- Personality compatibility between you and your people and your clients' people.
- Ease of ordering and personalisation of the whole end-to-end process.
- Extended credit or trusted relationships between you and the client.

*NB: Most suited to limited product/service markets that are price sensitive with fewer competitors.*

#### INTERNAL PROCESS PERSPECTIVE

In what activities must we excel in order to deliver our valued proposition as described in the previous three customer perspectives, and finally reach the objectives in our financial objectives?

By ensuring all staff have a clear understanding of the company vision and mission statements as well as how the company has defined and intends to meet the customer value proposition, then most day to day issues will have a relatively simple solution and should not require to be referred back to senior management.

#### THEN WHAT? – THE 'M' WORD

It sounds simple but if we know who and what we are all about, then really isn't it an obvious step to develop your marketing plans and strategies to match the customers' requirements. Perhaps it's a little like promoting long term permanent signage to a client base who only require short term solutions – the results will never match the aims.

#### SUMMARY:

Marketing drives business, the coolest thing in the sign and print game is that few companies ever invest in it. Rather many fail as they run out of work or contract because typically they state "We tried it and it didn't work", I would ask "compared to what?"

As a tempter we will offer a few words about marketing and a great quote – "Many of life's failures are people who did not realise how close they were to success when they gave up." – Thomas A. Edison

Let's face it; this industry doesn't focus on marketing, although much of the output created is allied to other campaigns.

Due to limited budgets we are going to offer you some steps and directions aimed at target or even micro marketing to drive your business. In hard or recessionary times, historically most business switch from brand advertising to direct marketing and specific digital media channels where they can see more measurable results. Bad news sells newspapers and is headline material, everyone is talking gloom and doom – it's now you that needs to step up as a business leader who can help your customers build their business by using your products – signs and prints! [vi](#)

## WHY MARKETING IS CRITICAL FOR GROWTH – PART 2

**C**ONTINUING on from part 1, we will look at some action steps about marketing activities specifically tailored to the sign and print business. In my experience, many small business owners are action types, not necessarily long or medium range planners. Actions are great – it's a real lifeblood and the energy of the business. However, many find that without planned direction, the average SME may tend to grab a random marketing idea – and it may not succeed. This in-turn leads to a lack of faith in marketing and potentially derails any future

chance the small business has for real growth through focused marketing. Like the old adage 'failing to plan is planning to fail!'

#### REVIEWING YOUR BUSINESS PLAN TO ASSIST IN DEVELOPING A MARKETING PLAN

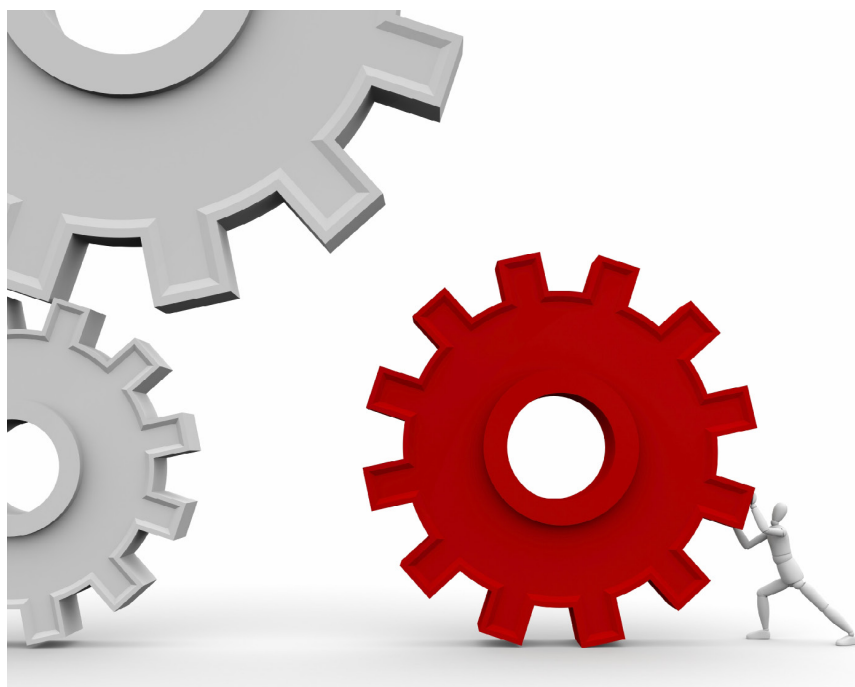
A business plan aims to identify the goals of a business, while a marketing plan identifies how these goals can be achieved. Although clearly separate you need to consider when developing a marketing plan, just what, where, when and

how your business plan will synchronise and develop unity between current actions and future deliverables.

Actions steps in building your marketing plan. In simple terms a marketing plan puts forward the following actions steps:

#### 1. PLAN – Create an Action Plan

Good research is a cornerstone to the process, therefore once you have completed your knowledge search and created a list of objectives



that address the goals of the business plan, then you're ready for the next steps:

- Create a point of difference, also called a unique selling point.
- List the participants in your business.
- Allow them the time to perform their list of objectives.
- What is it that you do best? Maybe it's servicing a niche, a form of service, or a way supply your products.
- Call and talk to five or more clients and ask them why they buy from you?

## 2. WHO – Know Your Audience

Understand your offer in relations to the audience. There is little point aiming to sell 'ice to Eskimos' or in sign parlance if you're promoting a digital window print – it's wise to know your proposed clients have windows! Is the plan able to provide in writing just how you aim to raise your clients' interest and potentially why they need you as a part of their sign and print logistics.

- Determine your target audience or groups.
- Ensure the audience is able to be engaged by your product or service.
- Anticipate their interest.
- Explore how you can add value to their purchase.
- Create the conditions that will maximise add on sales.
- Be focused and narrow your offers to specific narrow markets.
- Who or which type of clients are you doing most of your business with?
- Understand why they do business with you and what about them is different or unique.

- Who is your best client/s and types – define 10 characteristics about them in writing?
- Take a look at the other types of clients and compare them to the list – how do they rate?

## 3. EDUCATE – Develop Marketing Literature and Support Materials.

The purpose of quality educational tools is to act as a part of your sales team or process. You could enlist your own digitally printed mini signs. Remember it's not about you it's about creating killer samples that persuade and educate that your offer is worthy of asking more details or better still placing an order. Reinvigorate your materials:

- Look at your website – is it?
- Is your email marketing up to par?
- Recreate your literature, brochures and flyers.
- Are you social marketing savvy?
- Are you using YouTube?

## 4. WHAT – Is the offer? Are you planning your promotion of a product or service that is scalable in your outputs or is your strategy to leverage suppliers:

- Is your current output able to be increased if a positive outcome is achieved?
- Have you integrated your promotion with your production people?
- Are you promoting one product or a line of products?
- Is the offer a single offer of a series of linked offers?
- If you had a huge success, what is the worst delivery times?
- If the success is poor – are you stuck with stock?

## 5. POSITION – Does the plan take aim at which of your prospects needs the services or products you provide?

- Position your business.
- Engaging your target market about your defined service is getting them interested and wanting to know more.
- The message must be concise and clear. It needs to promise a clear and valuable outcome.
- Figure out what your target market needs and tell the world that you do that like no one else ever thought of.

## 6. WHEN – Is your timeframe planned to take action on a single promotion or better still, a series of events. The seasonality of the offer may impact on your success, or can you sell Easter eggs at Christmas time? OK, OK I know you will not try that one.

- When is the correct time for your offer to occur?
- The best results are by focused energy and acknowledgment of your timing.
- If you're marketing to specific groups, are there holidays or events that will impact negatively on your timing.
- Is their market segment busier in a time of the year versus another time?
- Is your ability to supply influenced by your yearly events, holidays or your work flow?

## 7. INTERNAL SUPPORT – Communication of your marketing strategies to your vested interest groups ensures ownership and support in achieving the best-desired outcomes. When developing a marketing plan, remember the importance of consultation with all stakeholders including:

- Clients.
- Staff.
- Suppliers.
- Partner organisations.
- Last but not least the plan needs to include people in a way that everyone in your business, network, and client base clearly understands the goals.

## 8. HOW MUCH – Importantly, how do you plan to pay for it? Yes, the hard bit, but when it gets tough it's time to invest. Will the funding come from a budget from the existing budgets or is it time to invest clearly in the future?

- In difficult time, many instinctively withdraw – the tortoise syndrome.
- Think positive – act decisively.
- Most customers are happy when every one is making money. When things get tight, most companies will be prepared to listen to proposals otherwise ignored.
- A rule of thumb is to look at a percentage of your turnover. Very low is 1 percent or less and that is normal, so you don't have to be a rocket



scientist to understand 3 percent will deliver results or 7 percent will and should rocket your sales if your offer is correct.

**9. PERFORMANCE** – How are you going to measure its successes or failures? An effective marketing plan will outline performance targets and accurate budgets to ensure high-quality outcomes.

- Set aims and outcomes as a percentage of investment made.
- If you invest \$1000 what is your expectation?
- How many new customers have come to you?
- Are they new customers?
- Have existing clients started to spend more with you?

**10. ARE THEY COMING BACK?** – Expect referrals.

Have an informal chat or conversation with qualified prospects who are ready to learn more and are open to explore working with you.


- The sale process should convert prospects into paying clients.
- Building raving fans or even advocates for your business is great referral business.
- Referrals give your business increased levels of business that will build a consistent and desirable growth.



- Create a referral process that systematically turns clients and referral networks into your 24-hour marketing powerhouse.

Ok, it's fair to say you can make it as simple as a few bullet points on a page or a more complex document – it's all dependent on the project.

Suffice to say – KISS is a good rule to live by 'keep it simple stupid!'

In summary – Marketing your business growth is up to you. Get on with it and enjoy the ride. 

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