

## Marketing Plans

A marketing plan may be written as an independent document, or marketing may be a separate section of an overall corporate business plan. Because some marketing objectives will be derived from broad corporate objectives (e.g. increased sales, better quality products, and customer service) it is important to:

- ◆ Review your organisation's strategic business plan to see which objectives have marketing implications.
- ◆ Ascertain that goals or objectives identified by the marketing group are in line with the overall corporate plan.
- ◆ Look at financial objectives to see how marketing activities will contribute to corporate goals.
- ◆ Identify any areas of potential conflict or overlap which will require input from other management sectors.

Your marketing plan should be in writing. In smaller organisations it does not need to be a lengthy document, but it is important that it helps the management, staff, and volunteers understand what the organisation is trying to achieve.

## Informal Planning Processes

Sometimes the jargon used in business documents can be intimidating to people without a strong business background. The best way to approach the task of writing a marketing plan is to ask three simple questions:

- ◆ Where are we now?
- ◆ Where do we want to go?
- ◆ How do we get there from here?



## ***Where Are We Now?***

This is the starting point. Include your mission statement, the SWOT and PEST analysis, the facilities audit, information on competition, and any information available on consumers.

## ***Where Do We Want To Go?***

What would you like to achieve in the short-term (6–12 months) and what are your long-term goals (3–5 years). It could be a written description or bullet points and will usually mention:

- ◆ attendance numbers;
- ◆ sponsorship;
- ◆ income and profitability;
- ◆ profile/visibility;
- ◆ reputation.

It is important to be precise — use numbers rather than vague descriptions. Increase visitor numbers by 15 per cent is more useful than saying increase visitor numbers significantly.

## ***How Do We Get There From Here?***

This is the action plan which will enable you to achieve the goals which have been set. It is not enough to talk in generalities at this point. Increase visitor numbers by 15 per cent is a goal. The way it will be achieved now needs to be spelled out in detail.

These three questions are the essence of marketing planning. For planning and discussion purposes they may be enough to work with. However, if a business or marketing plan has to be presented to a potential sponsor, a funding authority, or a government department, this informal approach will not have the appropriate professional tone.

## Formal Planning Processes

Although the concept is the same, a formal marketing plan will usually use different language. The marketing plan should be divided into segments:

- ◆ Situation analysis (Where are we now?):
  - mission;
  - environment analysis;
  - market sector analysis;
  - current performance.
- ◆ Marketing objectives (Where do we want to go?):
  - short-term (1–2 years);
  - long-term (3–5 years and beyond).
- ◆ Action plan (How do we get there from here?):
  - strategies;
  - research;
  - activities:
    - a. product and services actions;
    - b. pricing issues;
    - c. sales strategy;
    - d. promotion activities;
  - timing;
  - budgets;
  - staff responsibilities.
- ◆ Review and assessment.

By working through this structure you will be able to develop a comprehensive, integrated marketing plan.



## Implementing Marketing Plans

**W**riting a marketing plan is not enough. The major problem with formal planning processes is that too often, once they are completed the report is filed away and not referred to again until next year, when the planning process begins again, and the document is used as the base for the following year's report.

Because the marketing plan has specific goals and objectives, it is important to monitor activity regularly to ensure the objectives are being met — or that corrective action can be taken to improve the situation.

The marketing plan includes information on timing, staff responsibilities, and budgets. These should be reviewed regularly in individual and team meetings. Staff should report on their activities, and at a regular interval, calendars should be checked to ensure target dates have been met. Budgets need to be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure there are no cost overruns, and also to ensure that money allocated for specific projects is being drawn and that the project has actually begun.