

HOW TO WRITE A
MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
TAKE-HOME WORKBOOK

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ELEMENTS OF A MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Your marketing communications plan consists of strategies for advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing and any other communications strategies. It flows out of the marketing plan, which flows out of the overall company business plan, which flows out of the company's mission statement. The marketing communications plan is not a marketing plan, which contains marketing objectives such as targeted sales, profits and return on investment. The marketing communications plan is part of the marketing plan and contains the advertising, public relations, promotion and direct marketing plans. It usually consists of:

I. Executive Summary

1 or 2 pages summarizing the most important parts of your plan

II. Situation Analysis

Includes company strengths, weaknesses and objectives, product characteristics, buyer characteristics, past experience with communication elements, and competition

A. Relevant history of the product or brand

1. Background of the product or brand

2. Past marketing communications budgets

3. Past marketing communications themes

4. Patents or technological history

5. Significant political or legal influences

6. Current creative theme being used in communications

7. Current problems and opportunities facing the brand

8. Major events or activities that might affect the brand in the coming plan period

9. Relevant marketing data from the marketing plan that might be helpful in understanding why the marketing communications plan is prepared the way it is

B. Product Evaluation

1. How does the product compare to the competition in terms of features, ingredients, uses, computer acceptance, etc.?

2. What has been added or improved, deleted or dropped in the last few years? New uses, new markets, etc.

3. Do consumers perceive the product to be new and modern or old-fashioned? Is it a fashion product and affected by changing consumer mores?

4. How does the product stack up in terms of value? The price-value relationship?

5. Are present users satisfied?

6. Is distribution widespread? Is the product available?

7. How do retailers feel about the product? Do they want to stock and sell it? Is distribution adequate?

8. What about packaging? Labeling?

9. Is the brand name well known? How well accepted it?

10. What about service, if provided, with the product?

11. What problems do consumers have with the product, if any? Are they correctable?

12. Is there anything in the product or its features unique or different from those of the competition?

C. Consumer Evaluation

1. Demographic profile. Occupation; marital status; household head; race; education; age; household income; presence of children in household; social class; locality type; geographic region; other geographical or market breakdowns.

- 2. Psychographic profile. Any VALS data available? Any psychographic information from Simmons or other lifestyle databases? Any user data from previous primary research? Any data on lifestyle or how your product fits into the lives of your present customers or prospects?

- 3. Analysis of present customer's behaviors. Information on consumption, such as social influences, where used, how used, frequency of use, average amount used; attitudes about product, such as quality, price, packaging, styling, reputation of the brand; percentage of consumer awareness of present advertising or promotional activities. What problems does the product solve for the consumer? Is the consumer aware of these benefits? How loyal are present customers? Does brand-switching occur? If so, among this brand or others? Who are the best prospects for the brand? Where are they located? Can they be influenced? Include any and all relevant information about the present customers and prospects whom you have identified for your product or service.

- D. Competitive Analysis
 - 1. Direct competition

2. Indirect competition

3. Communications strengths and weaknesses of competition

4. Current and past competitive communications themes

5. Strengths or weaknesses of competitive packaging, branding, etc.

6. Past competitive communications expenditures

7. Any research on effectiveness of competitive expenditures

8. Trade acceptance of or influence of competitive communications programs

9. Any apparent weaknesses in competitive programs

10. Any geographic concentration of competitive expenditures

11. Any comments or feelings from the sales force or trade as to unusual strengths of competitive programs

III. Marketing Goals

Marketing goals can be taken directly from the marketing plan. What marketing objectives have been set in terms of sales, margins or profits for the period the advertising will cover? How does the marketing communications plan fit in with the overall marketing strategy? Include information on expected market share or share improvement, current and proposed market penetration, and where changes should occur.

IV. Advertising Recommendations

A. Target market

This may be a summary of the Consumer Evaluation section. Support the recommendations for selecting this particular target market segment.

B. Advertising communications objectives

What is advertising supposed to accomplish?

1. Problem statement (one or two sentences)

2. Primary marketing problem that advertising can solve (one half page or so).

C. Creative strategy

Defines the message to be communicated.

1. What is the product or service?

a. In reality

b. As perceived

2. Who are the prospects?

3. Who are the principal competitors?

4. What is the competitive consumer benefit?

5. What is the support for the benefit?

6. What is the target market incentive statement?

7. What is the tone of the advertising?

8. What is the communication objective?

a. What is the main point?

b. What action should be taken by the target market?

9. What are the divisional or corporate requirements (any legal, company policy or graphic elements that must be included in advertising)?

D. Executions

How the creative strategy has been fulfilled. The actual elements to be used in the campaign.

1. Print layouts and copy
2. Radio scripts
3. Television storyboards
4. Theme lines and art
5. Package designs, illustrations, etc.
6. Brochure or catalog layouts
7. Outdoor board designs
8. Advertising specialties

E. Advertising plan

Production schedule, commitment timetable for production cost elements and at what point they will be approved, etc.

V. Media Recommendations

What media will be used to impart the message to the target market?

A. Key media problem

B. Media objectives

1. Target audience

2. Budget available

3. Reach and frequency needed

4. Effective reach levels needed

5. Continuity needed

6. Pattern of monthly and yearly continuity

7. Special geographic weighting needed

8. Merchandisability of media if necessary

9. Flexibility needed

10. Degree to which media will have to support promotions

11. Creative strategy implications

C. Media strategy

1. Media classes selected (television or magazines)

2. Strategy for allocating the budget to geographic areas

3. Allocation of budget to media classes (dollars and percentages)

4. Allocation of budget by months and/or quarters

5. Reach and frequency levels desired by months and/or quarters

6. Effective reach and frequency levels per typical months

7. Size of primary and secondary target markets

8. Weighting of strategic targets

9. Geographical weighting requirements

10. Cost-per-thousand standards

11. Explanations of why a strategy is different from previous ones

12. Size of media units to be used

13. Criteria to be used for selecting or scheduling of media

14. Relationship of strategy to that of competitors

15. A rationale for each strategy statement

D. Media plan

1. A statement of criteria for determining media values

2. Proof that vehicles selected are the best of all alternatives for the budget

3. Data showing net reach and frequency for targets reached by a combination of all vehicles, including frequency distributions

4. Data showing gross impressions for a combination of all vehicles, especially for target audiences

5. Cost per thousand shown for all vehicles selected or considered

- 6. Cost summary tables showing each vehicles, number of times use per month, cost per insertion and total cost per month

- 7. Yearly cost summary

- 8. Yearly flowchart (or schedule) showing vehicles, weeks of insertions, reaches, frequencies, and cost per month for the year

- 9. Any other data that will help buyers implement the plan

VI. Advertising Budget

VII. Evaluation
How the campaign will be evaluated

VIII. Conclusions

Review of why the advertising recommendations meet the needs of the brand

Sales Promotion Plan

I. Sales promotion objectives

II. Sales promotion strategy

A. Consumer sales promotion strategies

1. Coupons
2. Contests and/or sweepstakes
3. Bonus packs
4. Stamp and continuity plans
5. Price-offs
6. In-packs, on-packs, near-packs and reusable containers
7. Free-in-the-mail premiums
8. Self-liquidating premiums
9. Refund offers
10. Sampling
11. Point-of-purchase materials

B. Trade sales promotion strategies

1. Trade deals
2. Trade coupons

B. Special events

III. Sales promotion executions

- A. Coupon advertisements or mailers
- B. Trial or sample packages
- C. Layouts of sweepstakes ads
- D. In-store take-one pads or display material
- E. Illustrations or sketches of premiums proposed
- F. Sketches of bonus pack labels or stickers

IV. Sales promotion plan

V. Budget

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Public Relations Plan

I. Summary

II. Objectives

III. Strategy

IV. Executions

V. Plan

VI. Budget

VII. Evaluation

VIII. Conclusion

Direct Marketing Plan

I. Summary

II. Objectives

III. Strategy

IV. Executions

V. Plan

VI. Budget

VII. Evaluation

VIII. Conclusion

USE THIS PAGE FOR YOUR NOTES

