

The Integrated Marketing Communications Plan

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An IMC plan consists of three elements: Marketing, Creative and Implementation.

The marketing function may be referred to as the 'plan', and includes all research, analysis and recommendations.

Creative includes all advertising, copywriting and design functions. Implementation is the guideline for putting the plan together, ensuring that it is effectively executed and that a detailed follow-up process is put in place.

The implementation must include strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to measure accountability.

The IMC plan is a tangible plan for the future, a way of measuring whether or not the stated goals and objectives are being met, and a system to adjust the plan to ensure effectiveness.

What Should You Expect From Your Company's Integrated Marketing Plan?

Planning is key to the success of any endeavour. Nowhere is planning more important than in business.

Many of the problems associated with failed businesses have their roots in poor planning. Marketing is one of the most important business functions and must be planned thoroughly. A comprehensive IMC programme defines the nature of the business, and outlines what it will do to fulfil its customers' needs in the marketplace.

Marketing is concerned with customers and meeting a need in the marketplace. Marketing is not selling -- it is creating the right environment so that making the sale is the appropriate next step.

What kind of results can your company expect from a marketing programme? Here are nine ways to evaluate an IMC programme:

- 1 An effective integrated marketing programme will clearly differentiate your company from the competition.

With so many similar companies, a customer today faces a difficult decision in deciding what companies to do business with. In most instances, a customer's final decision is based on price, and price alone. Looking alike is a 'disaster' in today's marketplace.
- 2 An effective integrated marketing programme will create a continuing flow of quality leads.

Remember that leads precede sales, and leads develop from marketing.
- 3 An effective integrated marketing programme will keep your company in the minds of the customers.

The business or company who comes readily to mind during a customer's decision-making process is a step ahead. Reinforcing awareness is an essential element of good marketing.
- 4 An effective integrated marketing programme will give your company prominence in the marketplace.

Being recognised as a serious player in the industry is important to your future success. To be accurately perceived by customers and prospects, you must carefully and thoroughly plan, shape and foster a consistent image.

5 An effective integrated marketing programme will communicate your company's experience and knowledge.

Too many companies fail to recognise or highlight their unique characteristics. Your special qualities attract customers and prospects, and make them want to do business with you. Your unique selling proposition (USP) will set you apart from the competition.

6 An effective integrated marketing programme will give your company a long-term outlook.

You must plan and implement strategies to ensure that your customers will be your customers in the future. A solid marketing programme will keep your business focused on implementing these plans so you are in business years down the road.

7 An effective integrated marketing programme will be customer-oriented.

Customers are the heart of all businesses.

8 An effective integrated marketing programme will retain customers.

Sometimes a company focuses so much on getting new business, or expanding, that the existing business is easily forgotten or taken for granted. It is a mistake to think that marketing simply means attracting new customers. Marketing means providing for present customers so they remain loyal.

9 An effective integrated marketing programme is our business.

The Marketing Edge has the experience, resources and technology for reaching local, national and international markets, along with intelligent, professional expertise in marketing and strategic planning.

CONCLUSION

Five Steps in Designing Your Marketing Plan:

1 Get an Overview...

...of your company, your products, your customers, and the risks you take.

2 Analyse the Market...

...including industry trends, your company's strengths and weaknesses, target market trends, competitors and client case histories. Research trade publications and attend trade shows to gather more information.

3 Outline Marketing Strategies...

...using the research as a base for your strategy. Using market perceptions, company strengths and weaknesses and internal goals as guides, position your product/service and price accordingly. Create a distribution strategy, include selling tactics and tools, promotions, customer service programmes, follow-up procedures and set specific time frames with marketing budgets to achieve your goals.

4 Target Your Communications...

...directly at the proper target market, determine your message and tone, the media you will use, the programme cost and budget.

5 Map Out Your Action Plan...

...and assign tasks to employees, know what help you'll need from outside (third) parties and detail tasks for them to complete with appropriate timelines. Stay flexible, review your plan often and update it based on any changes.

Related TME REPORT(s)

- "Why? - Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)
- "What? - Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)