

# Plan Your Work...Work Your Plan.

By Howard Theriot

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**Get Started.** Start with a simple list of questions appropriate to any type of ad or campaign to give you the flexibility to generate and expand on ideas. What's going on in the market? Anything special happening with the consumer side? Who are you talking to, and what do you need to say? Narrow it down to very specific goals and you've got the answers that will spark project-specific solutions.

**Get Specific.** What is your objective? Develop a concise statement demonstrating the effect your message should have on consumers. Stay focused on what you want them to think, feel, or do.

What do you need to say? What is the single most important thing you can say to achieve your objective? A simple sentence or two expressing a specific idea is all that is needed. You must avoid generalities because they result in ambiguous communications.

What support do you have? Develop a list of the rational and emotional reasons for your audience to believe what you want them to believe and to do what you want them to do. This includes all the major points, in order of relative importance to the consumer.

Who are you talking to? The more precise the better. Go beyond simple demographics and include specific psychographics, then pare it down to the best prospects to reduce the mass-marketing gamble.

What do you need and when do you need it? You must determine all production requirements: media, size, color, anything that applies. Then you can establish realistic deadlines for review of initial concepts, review of revised designs, final approvals, print production, mailing, media placement, everything.

**Get It Together.** Take time to gather information: previous ads, brochures, competitor ads perhaps books and websites for reference. If you're working on a content-heavy project, write an outline that includes all the important copy points, as well as an indication of possible visuals. It is also important to include any raw data and images specifically relevant to your product.

**Get Real.** Feel like all this is too much work? Don't think you have enough time? Just remember that working from verbal input, without a written plan, is how non-professionals waste time and money.

**Summing Up And Moving On.** A good creative work plan leads to imaginative and persuasive ads. A bad one starts you off in the wrong direction. You have to stop, figure out where the heck you're

going, and start again. Or follow through and end up back at square one. Or worse completely lost.

**The Marketing Plan.** When you're ready to optimize your marketing efforts for maximum effectiveness, you should start with a complete historical review of your company. Use this information to generate an industry analysis and business evaluation, which will become the foundation for your marketing plan. From this information you can develop a twelve month marketing plan or one to serve the needs of a single long-term campaign. A well developed marketing plan will guide you in organizing, scheduling, and budgeting your projects for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. From there, all work should be handled on a per project basis with the total marketing plan always at the core of your goals.

**The Project Brief.** You should meet, in person or over the phone, with your marketing firm to discuss raw thoughts and ideas. This is not a brainstorming session, but rather an information gathering meeting to see that you are in sync. Through a simple Q&A, you should be able to gather all the information necessary to establish goals, timeframe, and budget. From this information, your marketing firm should produce a creative work plan.

**The Proposal.** Using the information gathered, your marketing firm should prepare a proposal for your approval. This should outline development, production and delivery costs and schedules.

**Development.** Once you have approved the proposal, development of your strategy and creative content begins. The process should go something like this:

1. Two initial concepts are presented for your review.
2. A consultation is held to discuss the direction to be taken.
3. A single revised design is submitted for your review.
4. Together, you determine if the concept effectively meets the goals of the project, and your marketing plan.
5. A revised proof is presented for your review.
6. You proof the job for accuracy and state any corrections.
7. The final proof is presented for your review.
8. You proof the job for accuracy and give your approval.
9. The marketing firm checks the job for technical quality and sends it into production.

**Production.** When the development stage is complete, the design will be submitted to vendors for firm production and delivery costs and, upon your approval, the project is sent into production. If the project is out of budget, the marketing firm should make necessary adjustments at no additional cost to you.

**Delivery.** This is the final stage. Whether it's a mailing, a billboard, or magazine ad, this is where the message is delivered to your audience.

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Howard Theriot is principal of Catch Light Productions, a full-service hub agency based in Southeast Texas since 1989. Be sure to visit Sparkle!, their free interactive marketing webzine. Subscribe today and receive a free copy of the PsychoTactics eBook by Sean D'Souza.

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