

# How To Write a Profit-Producing Marketing Plan in Three Pages or Less

By Susan Carter

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Answer this question:

When you plan a vacation, one you'll take by car, what do you do first?

Most people determine three things: where you are going, how you're going to get there and how long it's going to take. You use a map to determine a route. You'll decide how far you need to travel each day to successfully reach your destination. You may even decide which hotels you'll stay in along the way and budget for gas, meals and entertainment. And all these decisions are put down on paper so you can monitor each leg of the trip for successful completion.

You can also change parts of the plan as you go along - if you're having more fun than you expected in one place, extend your stay. If an event isn't all you hoped it would be, then leave early. If you encounter road construction, reroute. Even though you change your mind, the directions - and the map - help you to quickly adjust and route a revised course. If you write it down, map it out and refer to it along the way, you have more time to simply enjoy the scenery!

Now answer this question:

How many of you have a written marketing plan for business success?

If you've got one - bravo!! If you don't have one, you're in the 98 percentile of all the entrepreneurs I've ever asked.

Why is it that we're willing to take the time to map out directions for getting from point A to point B when we're driving our cars to a specific destination, but we'd rather "wing it" when it comes to driving our businesses to success?

It boggles the mind.

Here are the two things I can just about guarantee for the future of your business:

A. Having a written marketing plan will continually lead you toward financial gain.

B. Not having a written marketing plan - or having one you keep in your head - will not.

In the true spirit of my ever-continuing mantra of finding ways to do more with less, I want to present a perspective for a written plan that will help get you what you need to move you closer to your goals - in just three pages or less. Here's the simple four-step outline for a successful, business-building marketing plan:

Step 1: Choose your destination and mark your checkpoints.

To reach financial goals, you first have to have them!

How much do you want to pay yourself each year? How much business do you need to generate to be able to write that check? Now, break that figure down into a monthly figure, then a weekly figure. If it makes sense for your business, break this down into a daily figure. The more immediate the goal is, the more likely we are to feel the urgency to attain it.

For example, if you're an independent contractor and \$150,000 a year salary seems reasonable to you as you look ahead, what does that mean to you right now? It means \$12,500 profit each month, approximately \$2885 each week, \$577 each day (5 business days) or \$413 each day (7 days a week).

Are you hitting your monthly/weekly/daily target to ensure that you reach your yearly goal?

Step 2: Chart the course.

The written marketing plan is established to generate prospects and clients you need to meet your financial objectives. If you've been in business at least a year, you can create a plan based on previous results to help you hit your targeted goals. If you're new to business, research "norms" and statistics for your type of business to help establish a starting point.

For instance, if you're in the service business, what does it take to acquire a new client? How many phone calls do you have to make? How many appointments do you need to set? How often do you need to follow up before you get to "yes"? What type of client generates greater profit? What type of client is most "typical" or requires less effort? How many of each type of client do you need to acquire to hit your daily/weekly/monthly target to stay on your financial track?

What tactics or strategies for attracting new customers have worked in the past? How many new or recurring customers did you acquire with a specific promotion? Did you generate interest by giving a workshop or seminar? What kind of advertising did you do? What new strategies would you like to try?

Choose precise marketing vehicles you will use, when you'll use them (dates and frequencies), the cost of using them and how many sales you need from each one to break even.

Step 3: Track and log results.

If you don't know which marketing efforts are working for you and which are not, how can you possibly determine a better and more cost-effective plan?

Don't get caught up in focusing on the ingenuity of a particular tactic and its potential for gain while forgetting about measuring actual results. It will cost you money! You must "tag" every effort in order to measure its results. For instance, if you get a phone call from a prospective client, ask the person how he/she heard of you - from a colleague? Yellow pages ad? Other ad? Directory listing?

Promotion? Seminar or workshop you participated in? An interview you did with a local radio station or newspaper? Document the answers.

If you do print advertising, mark the ad with a department number or ID number that responders need to refer to in order to get the information (or product) advertised.

Tracking results actually lets you SEE what direction your marketing efforts are currently going and where they need to go to get the financial reward you seek. And once you can see the "map" to successfully marketing your business, it will be easier to keep moving toward your goals.

Step 4: Review and change the plan to get better results.

A great marketing plan is ever-changing. You learn from it, modify it and re-introduce it.

Using results you get from Step 3, determine if the plan is working or if it could do better. What profits resulted using each of these tactics? Which worked best? Can you recreate them? Which produced the least? Can you modify them to be more effective? What products or services are drawing the most interest from potential customers/clients? Should you promote them more heavily? Is there a specific industry that responds more than another?

Is a tactic or strategy costing more to use than the gain you experience from its use? If so, drop it! Don't continue to use an ad that doesn't produce just because you paid a lot of money to have it created. Move on. Try something else. Review results and change your course at every opportunity.

Summary:

Writing an effective marketing plan doesn't have to be a daunting task. It's not for anyone else, it's for you. Don't waste your time with a fancy cover, rambling or self-serving text and an impressive vocabulary. If you're intimidated by grammar and sentence structure - write in fragmented phrases if you want to. All you need is a clear goal, broken into specific checkpoints, supported by efforts that you can track and change as you go.

Put in the effort and you'll pull out the profit.

Susan Carter helps business owners "do more with less" to operate and market their small and growing businesses. She is the author of *How To Make Your Business Run Without You*, and distributes free business-building advice in her twice-monthly ezine, *SuccessExpress Press*, available at <http://www.successideas.com>

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