

Developing a Web Site Marketing Plan

By Bobette Kyle

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Web Site Marketing Plan <http://www.websitemarketingplan.com>

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For many of us, finding the time and commitment to complete a marketing plan for our Web sites is difficult. There are so many other obligations vying for our attention it is tempting to push planning to the back burner. Giving into that temptation, however, means putting your business at a disadvantage. Your marketing plan is the compass by which you navigate. As opportunities arise or your business environment changes, the objective and strategies in your marketing plan will point you toward the best action. Without a marketing plan, you risk becoming unfocused in your marketing and are only guessing what might be best for your business.

To be most effective, your Web site marketing plan should be a part of your business marketing plan. By aligning online marketing with your offline efforts, you can better achieve overall company objectives. Additionally, you will present a consistent style and message across all points of contact with your target audience.

Your Web site marketing plan's focus will be partially determined by your site's status. If you already have a site in place, your plan can focus strictly on marketing issues - how to most effectively market using your existing site. If you have a site that needs improvement, your plan should incorporate enhancements into the site's design in conjunction with marketing activities (While you may not think of these enhancements as "marketing", in this case, they are instrumental to an effective plan.). If you do not yet have a site, you can create one while developing your Web site marketing plan, with your plan focused on launching the site. In any case, remember that your objective,

strategies, and tactics will change over time as your situation and focus change.

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Parts of a Marketing Plan  
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The Web site marketing plan is similar to a business marketing plan, but with a narrower focus. Completing a marketing plan includes developing strategies and tactics (also called action plans) that, when implemented, will help you reach your marketing objectives. Objectives, strategies, and tactics are each progressively narrower in scope.

The objective addresses the "big picture". In general terms, your objective answers the question "How will I overcome my main marketing challenge(s)?" If your company's main site-related challenge is figuring out how to use your Web site to help build client business, for example, an objective for your Web site marketing plan could be "To enhance online client service as well as build site awareness and interest with clients."

Strategies support your objective. Your strategies define the general approaches you will take to meet your objective. For example, strategies to support the above objective could include 1) improve online communication, information, and education, 2) build awareness of and interest in your company on the Internet, and 3) communicate the Web site's existence and advantages to existing clients.

Tactics are where the action takes place - these are the things you will do to bring your strategies to life. Tactics for strategy 2 in the above example (improve online communication, information, and education) could include 1) sharing experience and observations in your industry through participation in discussion boards, 2) offering an email newsletter, and 3) listing/submitting your site to targeted search engines and directories.

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Marketing Planning Tools  
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The specifics of developing a marketing plan vary according to the source. All can be effective when used correctly. Some sites and software that can help you in developing your marketing plan are below.

Sites

eSOLO's Marketing Action Plans (<http://www.esolo.com/mapslist.php3>) can help you to come up

with strategies and action plans (tactics) to support common marketing objectives.

The Web Site Marketing Plan's Marketing Plan Resources page (<http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/sr3.htm>) includes several links and descriptions of sites with marketing plan information.

Software

Each of these software titles takes a slightly different approach to developing a marketing plan.

- Plan Write® for Marketing (http://www.businessplansoftware.org/marketing_plan.asp)
- WebQuest Pro (<http://www.webquestpro.com/>)
- Marketing Plan Pro (<http://www.bplans.com/marketingplans>)

Bobette Kyle has over 10 years experience in Corporate Marketing; Brand and Product Marketing; Field Marketing and Sales; and Management. She helps small-budget businesses - both traditional and Web based - include the Internet in marketing strategies. For a step-by-step approach to developing a Web site marketing plan, read her book "How Much For Just the Spider? Strategic Web Site Marketing for Small-Budget Businesses", available April, 2002 (<http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/sr.htm>).

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