

Start Your 2006 Tactical Marketing Planning Now

5 tips to help you construct an action-oriented marketing plan quickly

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October is the optimal time to start thinking about your 2006 marketing plan. It's tempting to stay unswervingly focused on Q4, waiting until December or even January to think about 2006. Unfortunately, companies that wait too long to plan for 2006 will find they have missed important business opportunities in Q1. These 5 tips for success will help you prepare a well-targeted tactical marketing plan for the future without taking your eye off of the Q4 goals.

1. Let your strategy drive your tactics and budget.

A good marketing plan is more than just a budget that reflects last year's tactics. Instead, the process for crafting a winning tactical marketing plan starts with strategy discussions between the marketing and sales teams. Take time to confirm your business hypothesis: Who are your target customers? How can you best reach these customers and prospects? What information do they require prior to making a purchase decision? What type of leads, and how many, does the Sales team really need? Sometimes budgeting is confused with planning. It's an important element of the plan, but it should be the last step, not the first.

2. Follow a tight and focused outline.

If improperly managed, the preparation of a tactical marketing plan can become a cumbersome exercise that is more academic than tactical. We've seen carefully crafted plans that took months to complete left unread and gathering dust. Why? Because by the time the plan is finished, the information is out-of-date, or so much time has passed that the team was forced to move ahead without benefit of a completed plan.

A good tactical marketing plan doesn't have to be a "10 step" plan. Instead, you want to follow a pragmatic and focused outline. Not only will a tight outline help you accelerate the planning process, you will also find it easier to gain agreement and ensure widespread communication of your plan to the Sales team. We recommend your tactical marketing plan outline include five elements:

- A summary of **primary marketing and sales goals** and objectives – include both financial objectives as well as appropriate marketing metrics. For example: We need to increase sales by 17% in the US widget market; we need to provide Sales with 400 A-B leads per quarter.
- A summary of your **key marketing initiatives** that indicates and ranks target markets and your likelihood of success. For example: A new market for

2006 are Operations Managers in the manufacturing sector. Acting as a thought-leader, we want to educate them on trends shaping their business and how we can help speed their time-to-market.

- Your **value proposition** summarizing your target markets (including industry segments), the category you are competing in, key messages and benefits, and your points of differentiation.
- A **6-month action plan**. Plot out an integrated marketing campaign and summarize your primary marketing events and activities (e.g. direct mail, tradeshow and seminars, press relations, promotional offers) and map them to the expected results you hope to achieve. Each activity in the campaign must have its own objective and measure for success. And, each activity should become part of an ongoing dialog with a customer or prospect to encourage them to qualify themselves for more dialog, or to disqualify them out of your marketing and sales funnels.
- A **budget** with realistic estimates of fixed and variable costs, and any related assumptions.

3. Make your plan action-oriented.

A marketing plan is only as good as your ability to execute it. The best tactical marketing plans detail campaigns that are time-based, with expectations clearly set and communicated throughout Marketing and Sales teams. You'll be able to better measure success when you specify campaign leaders and launch managers and present a timeline of milestones for executing your plan. It will be tempting to list dozens of marketing activities, perhaps more. But, it's best to be focused and list only those marketing activities within your budget and ability to execute. It is better to be wildly successful in 5 activities that drive sales, than to attempt to undertake 50 and fail to provide any meaningful results.

4. Involve Sales and Channels.

Don't build your plan in a vacuum. Instead, make your tactical marketing planning process cross-organizational. A successful planning team, usually led by the CMO, involves sales and channels management as well as the functional marketing leaders and experts. Team-based planning will help you build a plan that will be executed effectively across the company. And it will ensure that the Sales team gets what they need—not what the Marketing team thinks they should have.

5. Augment your staff with a planning expert.

To help CMOs and Marketing teams stay focused on Q4, many companies hire a facilitator or planning expert to help them kickstart the planning process. Facilitators can bring the executive team together and guide them toward an agreement on the 2006 strategy and the identification of marketing initiatives. By using a facilitator, many companies have cut their planning timeframe in half.

KickStart Alliance Makes 2006 Planning Easy

We are experts who provide the templates, tools, and methodologies for the planning process. We have models that fit both start ups and the Fortune 500; with planning processes that can yield results in a few months or less.

Contact [Mike Gospe](#) at mikeg@kickstartall.com or 650.464.7662 to help kickoff your 2006 planning cycle.

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