



Assembly Required – Why You Can't Build Marketing Success Without a Plan

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One of my favorite things to do as a child was to assemble LEGO® sets. I would look for the most intricate and complex structures to construct—things that would take time and care to erect properly. No matter how many pieces the set contained, I was confident the end result would match the photo on the box because *I had instructions*. My Taj Mahal LEGO set had 5,922 pieces and still gives me nightmares, but I had the plans necessary to put it all together.

Most folks would be hard-pressed to assemble LEGO Taj Mahals and other splendid creations without assembly instructions. If they tried, it's a good chance the result would be a hodgepodge. Likewise, it makes little sense to devise marketing strategies and deploy marketing tactics without knowing how they fit in a broader marketing framework and work in tandem to accomplish specific marketing goals. Doing so will yield a similar hodgepodge, and while it may be interesting, it won't be effective or generate successful results.

Every business looks for ways it can improve and grow. From innovating new products and services, to gaining production efficiencies, enhancing sales through better marketing and more, a company that works toward advancement is better positioned to become successful, or remain so. Whatever path your business pursues, success depends on great ideas and relentless execution—and that takes a plan. Marketing is no different.

Marketing is typically the last business function addressed in a business plan, and when that's the case, it tends to be handled with an impromptu approach. Many businesses figuratively throw ideas against a wall and see what sticks when it comes to marketing instead of investing the necessary time and resources to foster a well-conceived plan.

Whether it's inclusive of all annual activities, or geared around a specific promotion, a sound marketing plan includes the following:

- A specific goal or goals (e.g., increase revenues by X percent)
- A practical strategy or strategies to pursue the above goals (e.g., build a winning social media program using appropriate platforms)
- Specific tactics (e.g., create and nurture a Facebook company page, create and share relevant thought leadership on LinkedIn every day), along with a list of appropriate marketing tools to support those tactical initiatives

- Key performance indicators (KPI) or marketing metrics to track
- Processes and workflows assigned to team members
- Content strategies and performance metrics
- Dependencies and risks

This is simply a quick overview, but it helps illustrate the purpose of devising a plan – to help a company understand the market that it targets, results of marketing decisions and direction for future initiatives.

Crafting a marketing plan may seem like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be as complex as the Taj Mahal set. There are lots of resources – even templates – to help you get started. For example, HubSpot recently provided a list of five marketing plan resources to help you write your own.

Just like a LEGO set, no one marketing plan is created the same. Depending on the goals that determine success for your business, a marketing plan can be tailor-made to fit your objectives and help you achieve whatever you strive to construct.

Do you have questions about creating a marketing plan, or other marketing questions? Please contact Donéa Boiner at 440-449-6800 or dboiner@skodaminotti.com.