

Marketing & Marketing Strategy

Marketing Plan vs Marketing Strategy: What's the Difference?

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You're posting on social media, you have blog posts but you're not seeing any results. What's the deal? The problem isn't what you're doing, it's why you're doing it. If your marketing efforts are not backed up by a strategy then that's probably why you're not seeing results. Before posting content, you should always start with your marketing strategy and then use it to support your marketing plan and efforts.

What is the difference between a marketing plan and a marketing strategy?

Our Co-Founder, Laura Laire, has a quick overview of this topic:



Sometimes these words are used interchangeably, but they actually mean two different things. We've found that the simplest way to explain the difference is:

Marketing Strategy

Shaped by your business strategy, your marketing strategy is your purpose; it's the offering you deliver, how you will deliver it, and why your marketing efforts will help you achieve your company's mission and strategic goals. While many people think about jumping into action when it comes to marketing, having a clearly defined marketing strategy is incredibly important for your business growth. Once you have your strategy, only then will you be able to develop an effective marketing plan.

Marketing Plan



Driven by your strategy, your marketing plan is the execution; the roadmap of tactical marketing efforts that will help you achieve your marketing goals. Your plan is your detailed campaign of what you will do, when you will do it, when you will implement it, and how you will track success.

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Marketing Strategy vs. Marketing Plan

What's the Difference?

The main difference is that your strategy is the “why” behind your efforts, while your plan is how you’re going to execute your strategy. This chart details the differences between your marketing plan and marketing strategy.

MARKETING STRATEGY VERSUS MARKETING PLAN

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

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The "Why" Behind Your Marketing Efforts

Its purpose is to describe how your marketing goals will help you achieve your business goals

What offering you will deliver, who you will deliver it to, how you will deliver it and who your competitors are

It helps you make the most out of your investment, keep your marketing focused, and measure your sales results



The Roadmap, the Execution "Plan"

Its purpose is to lay out your marketing campaign efforts on a tactical level

What you will do, where you will do it, when you will implement and how you will track success

It supports your strategy and is the action plan you'll use to implement your marketing efforts

What's included in your marketing strategy?

Executive Summary



The outline of your marketing strategy. This is your marketing strategy from a high level. Consider it the skeleton of contents before you jump into the entire strategy.

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Background

The background describes your business goals, marketing goals, and challenges. The background can also include your previous marketing activities and initiatives.

Market Analysis

Your market analysis describes the opportunity, market sizing, market segments, and impacts that could affect your market (trends, economics, seasons).

Target Audience

The detailed version of your market segments and their characteristics (from their demographics to psychographics, goals, pains, buying patterns, and positioning of benefits and unique selling proposition). In this section, you will also want to include examples of segments you are not targeting and how your offering is better than competitors.

Competitive Analysis

The different categories of competitors and their characteristics including threats, market share comparison, differentiation, barriers to entry, etc. An overall look at what your competitors are doing digitally and how their activities seem to be performing from a keyword, paid advertising, and social perspective.

Offering

This includes what you deliver or offer to the market, what the need is, the feature and benefits for each segment, and how you intend on delivering those features or benefits.

Message

Uncover what the audience knows or believes about your company today. Determine the most important message to all segments and provide evidence supporting that claim. This is a great opportunity to provide information from happy clients - what do they say that supports your message? Why are they happy?

Selling

Write down the channels you sell through, and who is involved in selling through each step of the sales process. This is a good place to document whether this is an impulse or planned purchase. Additionally, describe the steps they take through each stage of the buying process and understand their buying criteria, this informs the content you can create and use in your marketing materials.

- **Pricing** - Every customer has unique needs. In some cases, the price may not be an important criterion in the process. Is this true for your segment? What is your pricing model? Is it tiered? Are there discounts? Make sure to include competitive pricing, the perceived value of your product or service compared to the price, services that you include in the price, and how the consumer trends could drive the price up or down.
- **Communication and promotion** - What is the communication pattern with customers? Can we add any marketing activities from that? What other materials could help them? How else would they like to hear about us and our services? What key channels are useful and relevant? What are the most effective channels?

If you have your marketing strategy, are you executing your plan to meet those goals? If not, this may be the reason why you're not seeing results.



Now, let's take a look at a marketing plan. Unlike your marketing strategy, you'll use the marketing plan frequently; referring back to it as you implement your plan and monitor your findings. Learn more about reviewing your findings in this blog: [5 Steps for Successfully Reviewing Your Marketing Plan](#).

What's included in your marketing plan?

Executive Summary

Provide a brief overview of the marketing plan. A high-level overview of your goals and how you intend on achieving them.

Target Market

Provide an overview of your target market, their pains, goals, buying patterns, and messaging. In other words, who is your ideal buyer persona, what challenges are they facing, how do they connect with your business, and how can you create language that speaks directly to them?

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Your KPIs measure the success of your marketing campaign. Here are some examples of KPIs for your marketing campaign:

- Sales Revenue
- Cost Per Lead
- Client Value
- Inbound Marketing ROI
- Website Traffic-to-Lead Ratio
- Lead-to-Client Ratio
- Landing Page Conversion Rates
- Organic Traffic

Situation Analysis

Describe your goals, strengths, weaknesses, environmental factors, and market analysis to clearly articulate your challenges and impacts on your business moving forward.

The 4 "P"s of Marketing

- **Product** - What you are offering in the marketplace and how it is different than competitors.
- **Price** - How is your pricing model different? What is the dollar amount and structure? Why will customers choose your product or service over others?
- **Place** - Today's digital environment demands a shift toward online sales. Is online the first place that your buyers will see your product? What other avenues will you sell your product?
- **Promotion** - Where will you be promoting your product? Through online advertising? Email marketing? Blogging? Ensure that each avenue selected will truly impact your revenue.

Marketing Plan

From your website to social media, to content, and the channels you will engage with potential clients, your marketing plan is a critical component to achieving your business objectives and producing results for your company. There are many best practices when it comes to creating a successful marketing plan, but they should all include the following:

- **Website and Branding**

Does your website messaging resonate with your personas? Is it set up to generate leads for your business? Even if a potential buyer isn't ready to purchase your service or product today, doesn't mean



they won't later. Establish yourself as a thought leader, providing helpful content on your website to bring leads in until they are ready to buy from you.

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- **Content Strategy and Plan**
What content already exists? Does it make sense for your marketing campaign? Do you need to update the messaging so it captivates and engages your audience? (If you need to review content marketing basics, [check out this blog.](#))
- **Channels**
What channels will you use to reach your audience? Where are they most active? Ask your personas which channels they are on.
- **Social Media Plan**
How are you using social media? Are you engaging with thought leaders? Replying back to happy clients? What is your posting frequency? What KPIs are you tracking to measure success?
- **Timeline**
Ensure that you have a timeline for your campaign. Over time this will help you measure the overall success and effectiveness of your marketing efforts.
- **Resources/Budget**
What is the amount you will allocate to advertising, digital, website, event marketing, etc.?
- **Responsibilities**
Identify who is responsible for each part of the implementation. Is one person creating all the designs? Do you have a content writer that is responsible for blogging, social media posting, etc.?

In Summary

Your marketing plan acts as your roadmap, clearly identifying the plan of action for your marketing efforts. Your marketing strategy, on the other hand, describes the overarching reason for how your marketing efforts will help you achieve your goals. Remember, to be successful and generate results, you must ensure that your team is executing a plan that backs up your strategy.

Understanding the current state of your digital presence can identify what you really need from a digital marketing strategy. Our free marketing assessment allows you to have a real conversation with our experts and will show you how you're ranking against your competitors, opportunities for improvement, and more. Sign up today!

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Improve Engagement and Business Results With a Buyer-Focused Content Strategy

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