



# What is marketing and why is it important?

By Mike Robson

Marketing is at the core of any business activity. The key strategic and tactical marketing tasks and activities are covered in this article.

## Strategic Marketing

1. **Defining the business space in which the company has the opportunity to be successful.** This is not description of what the organisation does but rather to define and understand the full spectrum of needs that the company's products or services have the potential to satisfy.
2. **Evaluating competitors.** What are their strengths and weaknesses and what gives you a competitive edge over them?
3. **Selecting the space or spaces** within (1) in which the business can most effectively and most profitably operate.
4. **Creating and Developing the Company's Brand or Brands** to appropriately address the spaces defined in (3). A brand is not about the logo but rather your ethos and values which are the heart and soul of the company and what makes you unique. Once these are recognised and fully understood everything the company does must be consistent with them.
5. **Developing Products or Services** that will provide sustainable competitive advantage in the selected business space and are in line with the brand. What is it?

How long does it last? How much does it cost? Why would someone buy it?

6. **Distribution Channels** – Evaluate the routes to get your products or services to the customer is one of the key decisions that need to be considered when organising your business.
7. **Sales Structure** – In conjunction with the development of the distribution channel the form and structure of the sales resource will need to be decided to provide the possibility of achieving the revenue objectives. The choice will also depend upon the financial and physical resources available and may change over time.
8. **Environment** – your company does not work in a vacuum so account must be taken of external macro-environmental factors including Political, Economic, Social, and Technological that could have an effect on your business.

All of these elements are designed to fulfil the company's overall objectives. It is sensible to create a formal 3 year strategic marketing plan which should be reviewed on a regular basis, annually at the minimum.

## Tactical Marketing

Having completed the strategic marketing and an understanding of what you are selling, to whom and in what quantities, the next step is to plan and implement the marketing activity that will deliver the business.

The purpose in producing the tactical marketing plan is to demonstrate how the targeted level of business will be delivered and provide the blueprint for doing it. What quantities of the products or services; at what prices; through which distribution channels; using which activities to gain the customers attention; at what cost. Where the responsibility for sales is separate from marketing, the tactical marketing plan should provide the optimum environment for the sales staff to succeed.

These plans should be reviewed and updated on a monthly basis to take account of the success/failure of the activity to date and the changing realities of the marketplace.

A tactical marketing review will often include consideration of the past effectiveness and future use of the following:

1. Any changes to the products or services offered
2. Advertising levels
3. Public Relations activities
4. Direct marketing
5. Electronic marketing
6. Networking or trade shows
7. Marketing Collateral for use by the sales team and others, including testimonials, case studies and examples of the clients return on investment if appropriate
8. Promotions
9. Distribution Channels and alliances
10. Sales channels
11. Web-site
12. Social Media

None of the above is difficult, but it does have to be done well. We at Azure have years of marketing experience in both B2B and B2C and have the skills and knowledge to help you:

- To develop your all important strategic marketing plan and activities to deliver your business objectives
- To develop a practical and effective tactical plan
- In the effective delivery of your tactical plan.

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### About the Author

Mike Robson is an experienced and entrepreneurial businessman with Board level experience as Chief Executive or Chief Financial Officer in a number of industries both in the UK and internationally. Mike joined Azure Partners 2004 and now enjoys actively assisting a range of owner-managed businesses to develop and, where appropriate, exit their businesses.

For seven years Mike has actively helped business owners through the different development stages (growth, plateau, and exit) and with people issues including management structure and the sourcing, hiring, assessing, rewarding and motivation of senior staff. He specialises in merger evaluations, non-financial due-diligence, setting KPIs, dealing with banks and auditors, and helping to run effective boards. With colleagues at Azure Partners he is involved in developing efficient and effective marketing and sales capabilities and processes for clients.

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