



Creating the Ultimate Strategic Marketing & Communications Plan

Compliments of

NANCY MARSHALL **NMC** COMMUNICATIONS

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At NMC, we use our trademarked, 65-step Marshall Plan[®] process to set the stage for our clients' marketing success.

As a friend of our agency, we are providing you with exclusive access to the 10 most important steps that should be followed in creating a strategic marketing and communications plan for your business or organization. These same 10 steps form the foundation of our comprehensive and customized Marshall Plan[®] process, an approach to marketing strategy development that has resulted in increased marketing ROI and sales growth for clients in a wide variety of industries.

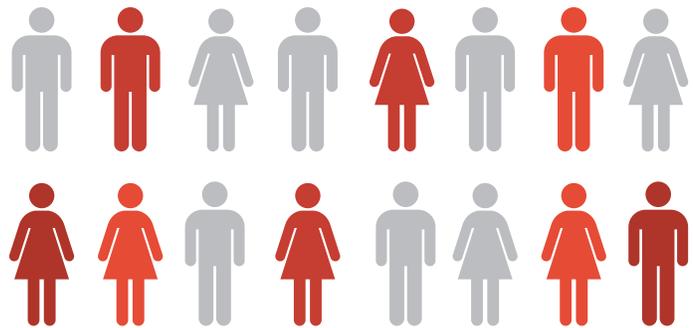
1

... Be Inclusive

Don't try to create your plan in a vacuum. Be sure to include as many opinions and perspectives as possible, from top management and those that work on the front lines, to customers, board members and donors. The individuals you choose should be part of the marketing plan development process from start to finish, from the first brainstorming meeting through implementation. An inclusive process ensures the development of a well-rounded final strategy that maximizes the knowledge and experience of a broad spectrum of brand ambassadors.

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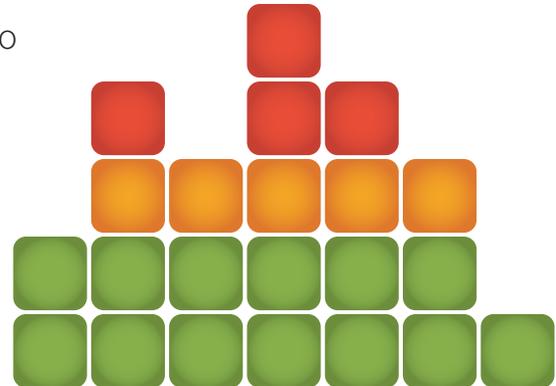
... Get Buy-In



You want people to **get excited about your new marketing strategy** and the significant growth potential its implementation will create. The first step in establishing buy-in from your stakeholders is to create an inclusive marketing committee as described above. Then, you want to make sure you keep all employees apprised of the progress the marketing committee is making to make them feel part of the process as well. Giving as many staff members as possible a role in

carrying out the plan, no matter how small, is also a great way to get everyone on board. Once the marketing and communications plan is complete, consider hosting a kick-off event where key goals, branding components and strategies are shared with your stakeholders.

Incorporate elements like upbeat video and audio, and lots of great graphics to build enthusiasm and support.



3



Begin with Your Brand

Your brand represents what you are, what you do, and what you represent through words and imagery. It includes key messages, your logo and your tagline. It also often includes something we at NMC call a “brand manifesto”: your “story” told in narrative form in a way that will resonate with your target audiences. Strong brands enable marketing success. Depending on where you are

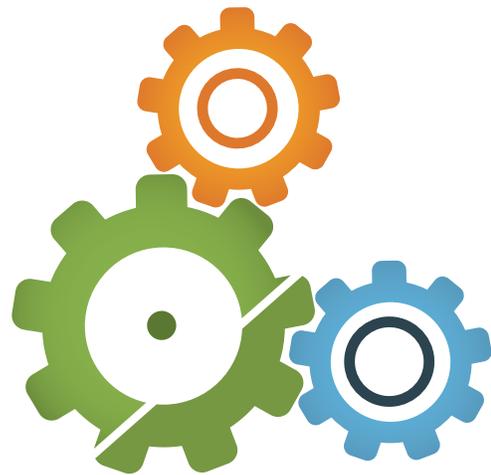
in your marketing program, you could be building a brand from the ground up, revamping a brand to reflect a new offering or new direction for your company, or strengthening the look



and feel of a brand that's been around for years. Establishing a strong brand that truthfully reflects the heart of your organization will enable you to create an organic connection with those you are trying to influence. Repeating the same key brand messages and using the same brand-related visuals (like your logo) over and over will breed recognition and affinity, making it that much easier for you to convert prospects into customers.



Have an Overall Strategy



Establishing an overall strategy

is the **primary goal** of The Marshall Plan® process. After nearly 25 years in the business, we at NMC know a scattershot approach to marketing just doesn't work. All the tools in your marketing arsenal must be interconnected, working together to achieve the same overall goal. Establishing a strategy that drives the direction of all your marketing tactics at the outset of the planning process will enable you to do this. Your strategy should identify exactly what you want to achieve and why. Strategy development involves research, as detailed below; conducting a thorough SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats); establishing an overall goal and supporting objectives; and drafting a path-forward narrative that fleshes out the direction the plan will take and the thought process behind it.

5

... Ground Your Strategy in Research

It's never a good idea to assume you know what your target audiences think of you. With the many great online survey options out there today and the ease with which a focus group can be pulled together, why not ask them directly? The

process is not as costly or time-consuming as you might think, and it will generate valuable input that can be critical to the success of your marketing approach. With survey data in hand, you will establish benchmarks for improvement as well as critical areas of focus where public opinion or awareness needs to be immediately addressed.



6

... Take a Multi-Faceted Approach

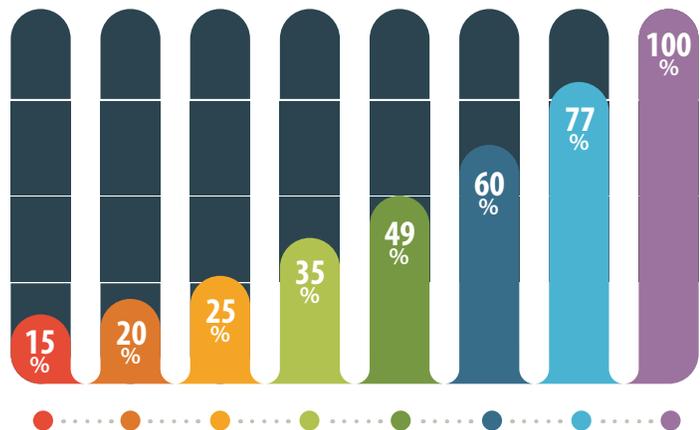
The best marketing strategies rely on a variety of marketing tools to communicate key messages and influence target audiences. Keep in mind that a person has to hear a message a minimum of three times before it registers and can be easily recalled. Implementing tactics including public relations, social media, Internet marketing,

traditional marketing, community outreach, advertising and more that are interconnected through an overall strategy will ensure your target audiences will be exposed to your brand messages repeatedly via a variety of communications channels. The more exposure your brand has, the better.

7



Measure It



If you can't measure something, you can't really know if you are improving it. Every tactic in your plan should be tied to some form of measurement that will enable you to gauge its success. For example, you might count how many times key brand messages were repeated in news coverage over a given period of time. Or, you could determine how many leads and, ultimately, sales an Internet popover campaign generated for your company. Thanks to the Internet and overall advancements in technology, there are more public relations measurement tools than ever before. Some of these are CisionPoint, Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Simply Measured, and Google Alerts. With the help of these tools and others, you can get a good grasp on how well your marketing endeavors are paying off.

8

Have a Checklist

Include a **timeline in your marketing and communications strategy**, breaking it into quarters or months depending on the level of detail you desire, as well as the period of time the plan encompasses. The timeline will prioritize your tactics and list out exactly what needs to be accomplished and when. It will serve as a checklist to make sure your marketing endeavors stay on track. You can even take it a step further and assign responsibilities within the timeline to specific individuals within your organization. Every Marshall Plan® we create comes with a detailed timeline, and our clients have found this to be very helpful in terms of breaking the plan into manageable, easily-achievable parts.



9

Include Tools to Make Implementation Easy

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Doing as much work as possible in advance of implementing the plan will **simplify the process** of carrying it out and lessen the time required to do so. This is particularly important if you do not have a full-time, in-house marketing team at your disposal. Helpful

tools we often include in The Marshall Plan® we create for clients include media relations templates, sample public service announcements, a crisis communications plan, networking contact lists, social media posting catalogues, a list of speaking engagement and/or trade show opportunities to target with deadline/contact information included, and awards to apply for with deadline and entry process detailed. With these tools in hand, you can really hit the ground running when it's time to carry out your marketing tactics.



Make it Flexible

In business and in life, nothing is certain. New opportunities can emerge overnight. Changes in the economy can create the need for refocusing and the reallocation of resources. That's why it's important that you **remain flexible and open minded** when it comes to your marketing strategy. The contents of your plan should not be seen as set in stone. If it benefits you to diverge from the path, do so. All good marketers constantly scan for issues, trends and other developments that could affect their strategy and then readjust their approach accordingly.

We hope these 10 steps will help set you on the right path toward creating your marketing and communications plan.

Follow NMC on Facebook (facebook.com/nmcmaine) and subscribe to our email list to receive more helpful marketing and PR-related tactics and case studies.

Visit our website to learn more about The Marshall Plan® process. We'd love to meet with you to discuss creating a Marshall Plan® for your business.

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