

Easy Steps to Developing a Marketing Plan

Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Developed for
Indiana's
Local Soil
and Water
Conservation
Districts and
Watershed
Organizations



IASWCD
225 S. East Street
Suite 740
Indianapolis, IN 46202
Phone: 317.692.7325 / Fax: 317.423.5607
www.iaswcd.org
Visit us on Twitter and Facebook



Eric Kurtz and Jason Kauffman, Elkhart County SWCD, left, with the Goshen County library director.

This statement at the left and Stephen Covey's philosophy may very well serve as your guide as you develop your Marketing Plan and design your elements of marketing. What end result do you envision?

The very process of developing the Marketing Plan forces us to be targeted in our work. Keep in mind that delivering your message to your audience does not mean that they will act as you may hope. To ensure the best possible chance of getting the results that you desire requires that 1) you've identified the correct product/service that will meet the wants needs of your customers 2) delivered the correct message 3) to the correct audience 4) at the correct time. To increase your opportunity for positive results requires intentional research, planning and evaluation. But first, what end result do you envision, what is the desired outcome?

Marketing is about wants and needs. We can't make people want or need unless they agree. First, we have to find out what our customers want and need and then give it to them. This sounds so simple; yet, so often our good intentions fail. Keep in mind, deliberate research and planning will move you closer to the development of a successful marketing plan.

Authentic "Marketing Plan" Components

If you are new to writing a Marketing Plan, don't be put off by the assumption that it has to be elaborate, a 50-page document, or take months to complete. Your Marketing Plan is unique to your organization and your needs. Include your board and/or other supporting groups in the Marketing Plan development; most certainly, this will ensure greater support for your project(s) and improve the probability of success. However, if you are the only person on this "one-person marketing venture," you will most likely have a shortened version of a Marketing Plan. Even though it may be scaled down, it is wise to include (at some level) the various components of an authentic Marketing Plan. Those components entail:

1. **Understanding your market:**

What's out there, who is out there and are we competing for the same support, etc.? What do I already know and what do I need to know? The Internet can give you some valuable demographic information about your community, county and/or state. What features of my organization's Business Plan will guide this process? Make a list of what you find and what you already know. What are my organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)?

2. **Understanding your customers:**

Who are they, where are they, what do they "want or need" and what motivates them? Again, your Business Plan and your community/county demographics will give you helpful information. Make a list of what you find and; equally important, what you already know about your customers.

3. **Develop a timetable or calendar of events:**

This helps keep your project and/or plan on track. What end result(s) do you envision? At the very top of your Marketing Plan actually write out what you want to achieve. Begin with the end; start at the finish line and work backwards.

4. **Set goals:**

You set your goals to achieve your desired outcome(s). When creating your goals make sure they are realistic, measurable and achievable. Will you know when you've achieved your goals? Absolutely, because you've defined them, they

are realistic, measurable and achievable!

5. **Develop a budget:**

This critical step will keep you from major financial surprises. It's just like home or work; if it's not in the budget then we don't do it! Just like home and work – we have to be creative.

6. **Summary:**

Based on the above five Marketing Plan components, write your summary last. Frequently, refer to your summary and



Megan Benage, Tippecanoe County SWCD, discusses how the District promotes their book on native plants.

use it as a guide in all of the development phases of your plan. Important note: state your organization's mission at the beginning of the summary. This will keep you mission driven and on course with your organization's purpose. As you refer to your summary, your goals and mission will help keep you on the right track.

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

How does the SWOT analysis fit with my Marketing Plan? The SWOT analysis is an excellent opportunity for you and your organization to look at the external and internal issues impacting your organization. However, a SWOT analysis is very subjective and is used as a tool or guide; it is not your final course of action. A SWOT analysis is best suited in the initial planning stages and arms you with some valuable insight.

Internal Factors: Strengths and Weaknesses



External Factors: Opportunities and Threats

In the SWOT analysis, the **S**trengths and **W**eaknesses are the internal factors and the **O**pportunities and **T**hreats are the external factors impacting your organization. Defining your strengths and weaknesses helps you determine what opportunities are open to your organization and how you can benefit from your strengths. The SWOT can be used with other tools or audits. Brainstorming can be a useful tool as well.

Social Marketing or Product Marketing?

Even though, the basic concepts are really quite similar, the greatest difference between Social Marketing and Product Marketing is purpose. Do you want to change attitudes or behaviors, or do you want to promote a product/service? Keep in mind, the “product” in product marketing can be

tangible or intangible. Both social marketing and product marketing will give you many opportunities for awareness. “Social marketing is audience driven, whereas commercial marketing is product driven.” (Getting Your Feet Wet With Social Marketing, Jack Wilbur

2006). For resources containing more in-depth information about Social Marketing, consult the bibliography page.

Steps 1-6 Writing Your Marketing Plan

Define and list:

1. Who/what is out there competing for your market share
2. List the various features of your customers, and their wants and needs
3. Establish a calendar of events/timeline/milestones
4. Establish a budget
5. Set realistic, measurable and achievable goals
6. Using the above information, write your summary

You are well on your way to writing a Marketing Plan!

Now, let’s begin with the end in mind. What are you trying to accomplish? What outcome do you envision? Do you want to change behaviors or attitudes? Do you want to enhance, elevate the public’s opinion of your organization? Do you want to sell trees, rain barrels or tee shirts? Or, do you want to do all of this and more? Whatever you’ve decided is your desired end result(s), that decision will guide you through the remainder of your Marketing Plan development.

Refer to your summary and (beginning with the end in mind) list your end result, your desired outcome. A tool you may want to use for this process is the **Outcome Logic Chart**. Certainly, any modification of this type of chart will be

Outcome Logic Chart				
<i>Outcome(s) (End Result)</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Activities/Tasks</i>	<i>Measure of Success</i>	<i>Milestones/ timetable</i>
Outcome tells us “what happened” as a result of ...	Your goals are steps to the ultimate outcome. Your goals are realistic, measurable and achievable. You will know when you get there.	Events, promotional pieces, PSAs, products sold, number of classes etc.	How will you measure? Number of responses, number of attendees, number of newspaper articles...	Begin with the end in mind. Set realistic dates/milestones.
Examples:				
(example) Reduce surface water runoff in the county through use of BMP, increased public awareness of surface water runoff impact, increased public actions and perception.	15% of households in the county will have and use a functional rain barrel	Rain barrels sold Sale day events News Releases PSA’s Flyer/Brochures Distributed Community Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotary • Kiwanis • Neighborhood Groups • Classroom Ed. 	3,500 rain barrels sold 12 community presentations to 545 people 12 news releases published 52 PSA’s broadcast 100 attendees –four “rain barrel day events” held	January 1-December 31 2010 January 1 – December 31, 2010 Monthly Weekly February, April, June, July

useful as you begin this process. Most importantly, use the tools or process that works best for you. This is but an example.

Marketing is satisfying peoples' wants and needs. Determine what customers want and need and then give it to them!

It is so important to understand that marketing is more than any "one" of the marketing components. It is very common to think of marketing as just the promotional (news releases, PSA's, advertisements, etc.) piece of the package. Although, the promotional piece is critical to your success, it is but one feature of the total plan. The research and planning are the most important elements. Once you have that part done, you are ready for the fun to begin!

The Four "P's" of Marketing

The easiest way to think of the marketing mix is if we remember the "4 P's" of marketing

1. **Product:** This is what you are marketing. It may be tangible and/or intangible.
2. **Price:** This is the cost to the customer. It may be dollars or other resources.
3. **Place:** This is the place/location of the project, event, etc. Where will it happen?
4. **Promotion:** This takes us to the how, who, where, when and what, or the vehicles you will use to communicate or promote your product and/or service.

It is not by chance that the "P's" are in this order. First, think about your product and/or service. After you've decided on the product/service, price and place; only then, are you ready for the promotion.

Product	Price	Place	Promotion
This may be a tangible product and/or intangible service, opinion, behavior, etc	Cost to the customer	Where will it happen or take place – office, school, fairgrounds, etc.	List the communication vehicles you will use to promote the product/service.
Examples:			
Rain Barrels	\$100/barrel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWCD Office • County Fair Booth • Rain Barrel Seminars • Local Garden Center • Fall Festival Booth • Holiday Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Releases • Community Presentations • Seminars • Public Service Announcements • Flyers / Brochures • Classroom Presentations

"It is impossible to be everything to everyone in one message. You need to be targeted to be effective."
(Getting Your Feet Wet with Social Marketing, Jack Wilbur, 2006)

The communication, promotion vehicles you choose will be whatever gives you the "most bang for your buck!" That does not necessarily mean just in dollars and cents – if your communication vehicle (news release, PSA) is free and the message is regarding attitude or behavior, then the cost is quite minimal. Though the list of communication vehicles is long, the key is to match your message to your target audience using the right

communication vehicle(s). This process takes you back to #2 **Understanding your customer.** Where are they, how do they get their information, who or what influences them and what communication vehicle(s) are they most likely to use? The media is an excellent resource for getting your message out to the public. However, the message plus supporting communication tools will increase your probability of success. **As an example: Your message regarding rain barrels may be a mixture of 1) A 30-second PSA with a brief tag line and what, where and how much. 2) Your presentation at the local Rotary Club will feature more**



IASWCD's executive director Jennifer Boyle Warner examines a rain barrel at the Elkhart Environmental Center.

in-depth rain barrel information about the benefits and impact to our environment. That presentation may also feature a Power Point, flyers and rain barrel order forms for distribution to attendees. 3) A rain barrel direct mail piece may reach all or some of the same audiences. One communication tool supports the other and each tool/vehicle gives you an opportunity to reinforce your organization's product, purpose and impact.

The following are just examples of the many communication vehicles; the list can be quite long:

- Radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Newsletters (yours and others)
- Billboards
- Brochures
- Movie Ads
- News Releases
- Posters
- Public Speaking Engagements
- Yellow Pages
- Newspaper Advertisements
- Television Advertisements/ Trailers
- Web site
- Direct letter mailings (U.S. mail, fax, emails)

"Far and away the best prize life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

Theodore Roosevelt



The DeKalb County SWCD Board of Supervisors and staff.

In Summary

Whether your project(s) is targeted to a classroom, a specific demographic/group or all of your county's residents (rural and urban); whether your Marketing Plan is for a specific project or your overall organization, you will have designed a Marketing Plan that fits your organization's needs, goals and mission.

The information in the *Easy Steps to Developing a Marketing Plan* was compiled for you as a quick and easy guide to begin or enhance your marketing efforts. It is by no means a complete marketing manual. You have many resources available to you; one of the most easily accessible is the internet. One quick resource for marketing information is the IASWCD Web page at <http://www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/conferencepresentations.html>. Click on the presentations by **Charlie MacPherson**. Additionally, your IASWCD staff will gladly support or assist you with the development of your Marketing Plan.

Pilot – Pre-test

If, after you've gone through the six components of developing your Marketing Plan and you are prepared to begin your project you have: **1) understanding of your market** and **2) understand your customers**; you've developed a **3) time table/time-line** for your project(s), you've set your **4) goal(s)**, developed the **5) budget and you've written your 6) summary**. To help ensure that you're on tract with this project (especially if it is a large project), before you spend many hours and dollars, is it possible/feasible to pre-test or pilot the project? Depending on the size of the project, and the risk or cost involved, it may or may not be feasible. This step is totally your call depending on the project, budget and your resources.

When you think of piloting / pre-testing, don't think of this in a negative light. If the project does not get the results that you anticipated, then you can evaluate what piece of the equation needs tweaking. This is in no way a sign of failure on the part of the project, it is however; an excellent opportunity to make changes (large and / or small) to move you toward success. If after you've piloted/pre-tested and you find that this project is just not succeeding as intended, then you have some valuable information and tools to help you as you re-think your project(s). (As an example: You have decided, after careful research, that you will offer a county-wide rain barrel campaign. The product inventory is in place, you've set some lofty goals, and you have all of the Marketing Plan pieces in place. Perhaps it would be wise to "test/pilot" this project on a smaller scale, possibly in a neighborhood or with a specific identified group. After you've piloted the project, glean all pertinent information from your outcome chart and the project evaluation and make adjustments accordingly.)

Evaluation

When you set your marketing goals (Authentic Marketing Plan - #4 Set Goals), it is indicated that your goals need to be realistic, measurable and achievable. Because you took the time to create the Marketing Plan and because you've set realistic, measurable and achievable goals, you also included important measures to know if your plan is working.

You will need a process for evaluation. It can be as simple as listing your stated goals and lining them up with your achievements. Or, you may use any number of worksheets, procedures, etc. Evaluation can take place at any place in the implementation phase of the project(s). It is always important to include a process for evaluating and that process is tied to your goals.

One of the quickest and easiest ways to evaluate your marketing is to "just ask." Ask your customers how they heard about your organization, product or service. If you are already doing this, then you have a baseline to determine if your new marketing project is successful. Either way, you will glean valuable information from your customers. Another simple way to evaluate is to count the number of phone calls/inquiries; products sold; requests for information; requests for services, services provided, etc. Again, develop a baseline and track the numbers for further evaluation. What did you indicate as your "measure of success" for this project?

Citations and Bibliographic References

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- Perreault, William D. and McCarthy, E. Jerome. *Essentials of Marketing: A Global Managerial Approach*. (9th Edition) Irwin McGraw Hill; ISBN 0-07-289482-2

Easy Steps to Developing a Marketing Plan was developed for Indiana's local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Watershed Groups. Contact the IASWCD with any questions at info@iaswcd.org or 317.692.7325.