

ABC Inc Marketing Plan 2017

Executive Summary

ABC AV's Value Proposition is to be the gateway to our local market for the best in service, products, and support for the meeting and events industry. We provide the technology and expertise that allows meetings to be more successful.

We will market directly to our target segments by offering tools, ideas, resources, and support that distinguish our firm as the market leader for high quality events.

We will intentionally grow our full service event staging business by adding products and services to better meet the needs of targeted meetings and event customers. We will de-emphasize our dry-hire rental business by reducing product choices and tightening availability. In other words, our specialized corporate event tools and resources will not be made available to rental-only customers.

We will focus on three key customer segments:

- Meeting and Event Planners employed in regional corporations, non-profits, and houses of worship.
- Independent Meeting and Event Planners that are seeking a credible partner for their projects
- Out-of-town Meeting and Event Planners that are bring project to our regional venues

Furthermore, we will continue to support our traditional B2B rental customers, but only to the extent that they are a resource to us. We will no longer rent to non-commercial end-users and will require that all rental customers fill out a commercial credit application.

The successful execution of the plan outlined below is projected to shift our income from 50% rental and 50% events to 20% rental and 80% events by the end of the upcoming fiscal year.

Our total budget for attending networking events, sponsorships, client engagement (entertainment), and printed materials is \$75,000 for the year. We are budgeting a 3:1 return on revenue in year one with increasing gains in future years.

Target Customers

Our ideal customer is the person that is ultimately responsible for the successful execution of the event in question. This person is not always the economic buyer, and while working directly with the economic

decision-maker would be valuable, we find that the Meeting or Event Planner responsible for outcomes is a better influencer for repeat business and ongoing relationships.

Having said that, in some circumstances – in particular, multi-year agreements – our ideal customer will be the executive or stakeholder that controls such decisions, which is often not our on-site contact.

When it comes to verticals and segments, we are less concerned about the end-customer's industry than we are with meeting the needs of the event planner. Our Marketing Plan will not focus on any specific vertical with one exception: We have found the meeting and event planners in the Houses of Worship (HOW) vertical specifically seek suppliers that tailor offerings to HOW segments. Additionally, we know that in the HOW market, committees make most spending decisions. Therefore, our approach to HOW will be defined separately in our overall Marketing Plan.

Products and Services

Our Marketing Plan specifically focuses on Meeting and Event Planners, but we have a legacy customer that we are not abandoning – just de-emphasizing. Here are the products and services we have traditionally provided to Rental Customers and our revised offering:

Traditional Product or Service	New Direction	Comment
Audio Visual Equipment Rental includes all products in our inventory at competitive prices. The goal is to increase the utilization of the equipment.	Non-integrated AV products, user-friendly systems, and accessories are rented on an as-available basis. Event customers are a higher priority than rental customers.	We will reduce the product catalog to items that are easily operated or used by the amateur customer.
Delivery and Setup is offered as a value-add service. Fees are based on what similar AV rental companies offer. The goal is to encourage more rentals.	An integrated rental is worth more than the sum of its parts. Delivery fees are commensurate with weight and volume of the product, location, and time window for the delivery. Setup charges are in addition to delivery.	If we choose to utilize a technician to make the delivery and perform the setup, we do not pass that savings on to the customer. Delivery fees are based on market rates for courier or trucking services.

Accessories and Expendables will be included as needed complete the rental package.	Accessories will be charged on a per-rental basis. Expendables will only be provided as a “sale” items.	The rental customer is responsible for whatever items they receive. We will not be responsible for their lack of knowledge in how to use the product or its appropriateness for their needs. However, we will continue to provide the best advice we can to the prospective rental customer.
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In contrast, here are the products and services we will emphasize with our newly-defined target customers:

Product or Service	Target Segments	Comment
Rental Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B2B support for other AV companies • End users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support last-minute use of available stock without creating shortages for core business • End users have limited selection
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End users and other rental customers that do not have their own transportation or personnel resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t compete on price. Delivery is a limited resource • Offer referrals to courier companies as an alternative
Integrated Rental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting and Events customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packaged pricing • Integrated rentals have a broader selection of products and support items are calculated in the package rates • Must include delivery and set-up • Exceptions considered for well-qualified customers
Meetings or Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting and Events customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes our Operator in addition to delivery and set-up
Productions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting and Events customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes our Project Manager and full production team

Value Proposition

In transitioning from our traditional target rental customer to the more complex needs of the Event or Meeting Planner, we have had to examine our true value to these buyers. After many conversations with ideal customers, we came to learn that our marketplace lacks a definitive expert supplier in the meetings and events space. As a result, buyers are forced to piece together multiple vendors and then project manage the event themselves and trust that everyone can work together.

We see this as a huge opportunity to better position ourselves as the key resource for best in class services. Because there are not necessarily reliable, high quality suppliers for all services required to stage a successful event, we will initially employ project managers who will consolidate the information that will be used by many different suppliers on behalf of the customer.

Our response is to become the gateway to our local market for the best in service, products, and support for the meeting and events industry. To that end we will employ Project Managers and develop customer support resources that will ensure that Meeting and Event Planners can engage the best supply chain elements in our market.

What do we do?/Which Buyers?	Event Planner	Meeting Planner	Executive in Charge	HOW Committee	Event Producer
Produce flawless events	X	X	X	X	
Consolidate buying power for client			X	X	
Create impactful themes	X	X	X	X	
Provide highly skilled technical support	X	X	X	X	X
Specify and provide event technology	X	X	X	X	X
Provide overall event coordination		X	X	X	
Design technical solutions	X	X	X	X	X

Channel Plan

Our legacy business will continue to be served by rental agents, however we will slowly reduce the number of these customer service personnel as we move the more experienced reps to full service event production sales. What this means for our legacy rental customer is that they may eventually be serviced by someone other than the person they are familiar with. We definitely expect that this will cause some customers to take some or all of their rental business to other suppliers, but to reduce the likelihood of a mass exodus, we will invite preferred rental clients to meet the rest of the team and use that opportunity to better position our rental products as best in class.

For our event planning customers, we will be able to offer them a sales representative that can devote more time and attention to complex and detailed projects. Furthermore, we allow customers to have access to multiple sales representatives so that they can work closely with anyone they choose – or – recognize that they have access to multiple sales people and therefore never need to wait to receive assistance.

Most importantly, we will create an online resource that will allow customers to research and develop ideas, needs, and plans for their event. Our intent is to partner with an existing online planning tool that will allow us to brand a portal for our users. We will use this tool to actively share ideas and innovations with the public and create dialogue and engagement with prospective and existing customers.

Finding New Business

ABC has not traditionally sought new business. Answering the phone has always been enough – until *now*. Going forward, we will hire a Business Development person to actively reach out to current and past clients to seek referrals and leads as well introduce our new products and services. Additionally, Business Development will engage inbound events business by mining Convention and Visitors Bureau resources, web searches, and networking with venue liaisons. (See Referral Strategy)

Pricing and Positioning Strategy

In developing our Marketing Plan, we asked a Public Relations expert to interview twenty core customers and ten buyers that chose not to do business with us. The results were illuminating. What we found was that the way we present our heritage rental business minimized the perception that we are experts at events. Our rental message has been in effect “Low prices! Available now!” whereas our event services message touted that we were experts in large projects. In practice, our customers pointed out that our event experts were also busy in our rental business, which made them look less like

event experts! The non-buyers shared that the dichotomy made us look less credible at either line of business.

Going forward, our plan is to emphasize our expertise in both areas while reducing the perception of overlap. Our first goal is to position our events business as an innovation and market leader. At the same time, we will reduce the market footprint of the rental business by limiting the products and services that are available. When a rental customer's needs exceed the rental model, our customer service team will refer the buyer to our event sales team.

Once we feel we better understand our two market positions, we will begin to adjust pricing. Rental products and services will be re-named and priced differently from events products and services to reduce conflicts with customers that happen to do both kinds of transactions. More importantly, these distinctions will help our employees better understand the differences in value we are trying to convey.

Special Offers

ABC AV Rental has chosen to provide Special Offers selectively across our two key business units. This chart details our new approaches.

Special Offers	Rental Segment	Events Segment
Discount Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We expect 50% of rental transaction to be retail pricing High volume customers with consistent rental history will qualify for higher discount rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High volume customers will earn a quoted discount, but in general Events will be quoted at a negotiated package price Sales Reps will be expected to negotiate minimum profit margins on a project by project basis
Seasonal Pricing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discounts will increase in traditionally slow months of December through March Exceptions include the Christmas through New Year's weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our traditional slow months for events are January, July, and December. Expected negotiated margins will be lowered in these months
Bonus Offers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an incentive for clients to try new products, we will on occasion offer product-specific upgrades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't compete on price. Delivery is a limited resource Offer referrals to courier companies as an alternative

Incentives for Confirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All rental quotes will have a ten business day guarantee on price but not availability • The discount bonus for confirming the order on day 1 is 5%, Day 2 is 4%, Day 3 is 3%, Day 4 is 2%, and Day 5 is 1% • Confirmation and reservation requires a non-refundable paid deposit of 10% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All quotes will have a 30-day expiration • A quote can be offered with an additional discount for confirming by a specific date
Terms and Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All quotes will be delivered with Rental Terms and Conditions • Open accounts can have up to thirty day terms • Non-account customers must pay the rental order balance upon delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open account customers must pay 50% deposit one week prior to the event and the balance in thirty days from event start • Additions, credits, and changes are negotiated and paid separately • Non-account customers must pay the deposit one week prior and the balance by event start. A credit card must be provided to secure payment for additions or changes.

Conversion Strategy

In 2014 our company moved into new office/warehouse space and took great care to build a professional-looking office and an inviting place to work. At the time we felt this would be a good investment for the business as the new office should bolster our credibility in the marketplace. To date, we have not generated the customer traffic to take advantage of our new building.

Our Conversion Strategy is best described as “Get them into the building.” We will create three distinct avenues to encourage direct engagement with our prospects and most importantly, introduce them to our staff and work environment, which are our best marketing tools!

Passive Web Connections: We will offer valuable information, ideas, and resources to individuals that “opt-in” on our website or social media. Several times a year, we will invite this exclusive group to events at our offices. These will include ‘lunch and learns’, business networking, and seasonal celebrations.

Active Sales Connections: We will encourage our sales team to offer to host in-person meetings for project participants whenever possible. Additionally, active customers will be invited to the same events as the Web Connection group.

Biz Dev ‘Bowtie to Diamond Meeting’: We will replace our traditional “Capabilities Pitch” with an innovative meeting to demonstrate how we collaborate with clients. Our Biz Dev team will work towards hosting this event on our premises to meet more of the customer team and introduce ours. This meeting does not need to be tied to a specific project.

Subsequent to the Diamond Meeting, the engagement process continues with a systematic series of interactions that involve alternatively: High-value content, social events, and networking opportunities. We will in effect treat prospective clients like our best customers and make client socialization and education our top priority.

Advertising or Promotions Strategy

Our review of promotional spending has shown that we overspend for the business we are developing from those efforts. Our plan going forward will be more clear, concise, and measured.

We have tried to generate press releases on a variety of topics and find that our click-through rates are much lower than our blogs or even social media posts. Unless we have a compelling reason to issue a press release, we will not be using this tool any longer.

Likewise, we will not allocate any funding the traditional media advertising. We will not renew our relationship with the regional business journal magazine.

Our participation on Trade Shows will be divided into 1. Networking Opportunities and 2. Direct Access to New Buyers. When we send anyone to a networking event, they will be responsible for documenting new leads. If a particular event (or our representative) proves to be unproductive, we will end participation. Our measure for success at a networking event is no more than \$50 spend for a qualified lead. A Qualified Lead is an influencer or buyer that engages in a follow-up conversation about our services or their needs. For a list of currently approved events, see the marketing calendar and budget.

Having direct access to qualified buyer at an industry event is far more valuable than a networking lead. This applies to many of the trade shows we attend. We are willing to spend up to \$200 per qualified lead in the form of exhibition, sponsorship, social events, or a combination of these. At this time, we have identified only two tradeshow that fit our needs: The Regional Events Council held in August will have a

budget of \$5,000. We expect to directly engage no less than twenty-five NEW qualified buyers for our services.

Our second event is the statewide Meeting Planners convention in March. As this event attracts over one thousand corporate meeting and event planners and we typically get fifty leads with a basic tabletop display, our plan is to increase our presence to reach over one hundred buyers. The budget for this event will be \$20,000.

Marketing Materials

Henceforth, all customer-facing documentation will be considered a type of marketing material. In the coming year we will review everything from business cards to email signatures to proposals and brochures to standardize our brand messaging. Particular attention will be paid to maintaining consistent brand representation and standards.

Online Marketing

We agree that our website needs work. Our plan is to engage a reputable web developer and a marketing strategist to better convey our brand. We want simple and low maintenance, but will leave the door open to a more actively managed website as we refine our marketing plan. We expect the web and brand development process to take at least six months.

In the meantime, we are working with a freelance website manager that is familiar with our template to perform minor upgrades to imagery, reduce unnecessary pages, and add an email newsletter opt-in that includes a free white paper on “How to Leverage Technology for More Engaged Attendees.” This article was written by an industry expert and will include her byline in exchange for our promotion of the piece.

The revisions to the existing site will be completed by October 1.

Joint Ventures, Partnerships, and Strategic Alliances

We will form two important strategic alliances:

1. Join the American Rental and Meeting Affiliates (ARMA). This is an association of owner-operated businesses that serve the meetings industry. Our region covers the four state area and our partners in this region include 123 Tent and Party Rentals, AAA Outdoor Entertainment, and LED Portable Video Systems. We will work with our regional partners to include our products and services in their catalog as well as having theirs in our sales tools.

2. One product that is missing from our ARMA relationship is mobile stages. While this only comes up during the summer months, we struck an agreement with Jumbo Stages (a major mobile stage manufacturer) to house two of their demo units at our facility. In exchange, we can book those units for events in a 50-50 revenue plan. We will have exclusive access to these units from mid-May to end of August.

Referral Strategy

We have over 1,500 past customers in our database. We currently do business with 200-250 companies a year. Rather than just seeking referrals from past customers, we are going to also engage in a re-engagement campaign with folks we have lost touch with.

Our Owner and President Tom Smith will personally call or email ten past clients a week starting with our best prospects for renewed business. He will ask our client for the names of and hopefully introductions to at least three peers that are involved in offsite meetings. Tom has developed a list of icebreaker questions that will help him understand why that buyer no longer does business with us.

In December we will invite all the folks that provided referrals as well as everyone they referred to come to an open house networking event at our facility. We will have a guest speaker from the event planning side to add value to the event for the attendees.

Retention Strategy

ABC will generate one newsletter per quarter that will feature an article, video, or tool that will help our primary customers, Meeting and Event Planners, with their jobs. Most of the content of that newsletter will be items that we have already shared via social media. Items can be photos, blog pieces, videos, etc...This process will be managed by Erica who has suggested the following mix of content:

3-4 Posts per month (10%) that are folksy or fun and represent ABC and its clients, suppliers, and friends as a family. Examples: The monthly warehouse hot dog cookout, Bob's son Eric earning his Eagle Scout rank, attending a ballgame with a supplier.

6-8 Posts per month about new products, innovative uses of a product, or highlighting a service. Over the course of a year we only need about 30 of these as they can be recycled at least 2-3 times.

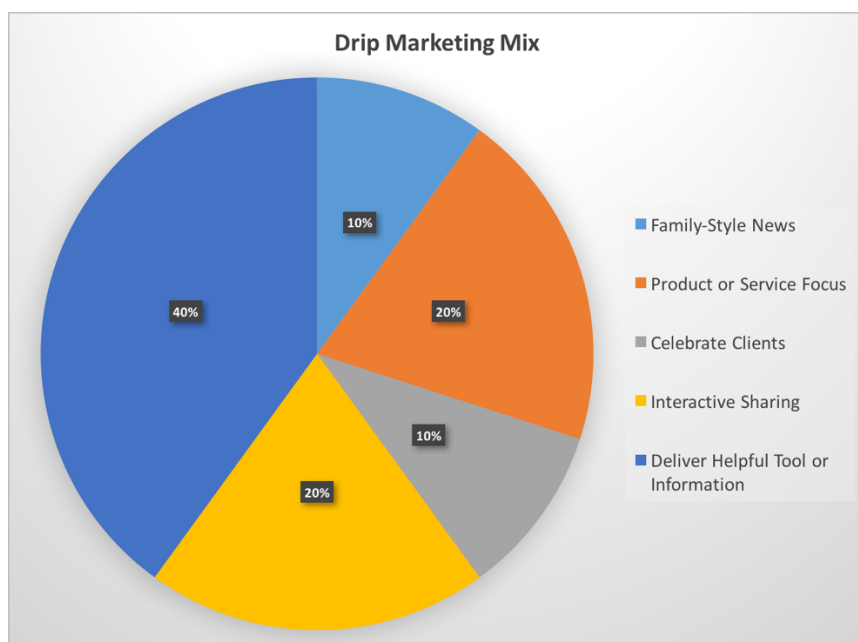
Examples: New audio console training, clever placement of battery-powered LED light,

3-4 Posts per month about Clients. Examples: Video or written testimonial, pic client on showsite, a blog on the success of a client's meeting, or awards our clients have won. Also interested in sharing

inspirational quotes – Erica will submit a list of quotes for approval and sprinkle in when we don't have other content.

6-8 Posts per month that require the reader to click on a link that will take them to our website. These will mostly be blog pieces or helpful graphics or how-to videos, but we can also conduct surveys, share other people's content, or setup registration for an event. Many of these posts can be recycled over a year.

12-16 Posts per month specifically with tips, tricks, news, and innovations targeted at Event and Meeting Planners. Examples: Re-share posts from other meeting planner resources (at least half of our monthly posts will be re-shares), one blog or video snippet each per month from Owner, Lighting Designer, Scenic Designer, Video Expert, Audio Expert.



All of the above will be culled into the electronic newsletter with the same ratios, but only the best of the content.

ABC will also try one in-person event to see how it goes. The current plan is to host a barbecue picnic at the office in late June. It will feature some technology, but it will primarily be a family event.

Financial Projections

Our review of our business shows that we already spend a lot of money on marketing efforts, but generally don't recognize it as such. The proposed marketing budget separates fixed maintenance spending from initiatives. The Targeted Budget spend is a one-time investment spread over the year to introduce the new ABC. We are suspending our trade show visits for the time being, but will consider adding some back in if there is a compelling need.

Budget	Description	Spend
Fixed Budget	CRM, email marketing, monthly newsletter design, print	Average \$1,500 per month
Targeted Budget	Website redesign, Logo design, direct mail campaign, Open House, Holiday gifts, Customer appreciate wine tasting	Q1 \$15,000 Q2 \$15,000 Q3 \$9,000 Q4 \$7,500
Discretionary Add-ons	Additional open house	\$3,500
	Trade Show networking and entertainment	\$2,500/each
	Technology Fair	\$7,500
	Additional Mailing	\$1,200

The Marketing Calendar

The shared marketing calendar can be found on the p-drive. We have developed projects in five areas: Lead Development, Web Presence, Digital Content, Promotions, and Printed Materials. We will track projects based on both time and expense.

Marketing Calendar		Start Date	08/01/16		
Due Date		Week of			
Element		08/01/16	08/08/16	08/15/16	08/22/16
Lead Development					
Mine and compile mailing list					
Evaluate CRM tools					
Launch outreach campaign					
	Design 5 Touches				
	Hire/assign phone support				
	Write and edit script				
	Perform Test calls				
Web Presence					
Engage Web Developer					
	Discovery				
	Framework Deadline				
	Copy Deadline				
	Media Deadline				
	Graphics Deadline				
	Soft Launch				
Web Campaign					
	Press release				
	Social Media release				
	VIP Reception				
Monthly Podcast/Video					
	Social Media release				
Digital Content					
Promo Video					
	Service #1 etc..				
Testimonial Video					
	Client #1 etc...				
Digital Downloads					
	White Paper #1 etc...				
Monthly Newsletter					

	Blog #1 Deadline				
	Blog #2 Deadline				
	Blog #3 Deadline, etc...				
Promotions					
Video Production Studio Time Package					
Student Design Contest					
Christmas in July Discounts					
Printed Materials					
Business Cards assessment					
	New Design				
	Order on-demand B Card printing				
Printed materials assessment					
	Design "Leave Behind" Packet				
	Compile "Leave Behind" Copy				
	Batch 1 of on-demand printing				