



How to Construct a Marketing Plan and Budget

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One way to significantly increase the chances of marketing success is to develop a marketing plan and stick to it. You can go into detail and write an executive summary, a SWOT analysis, goals and objectives, a general marketing strategy, a timeline and a budget. But for many of you, this is more than you have the time or desire to do. While it is nice to know your *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*, it's execution that will bring you business.

Having earned my MBA in Marketing, I know the importance of having a formal marketing plan, provided you have the resources available to create it. But being a pragmatist, I say forget the formal marketing plan and just outline your marketing activities and budget. This will allow you to jumpstart your marketing efforts right away.

Worksheet: Construct a Marketing Plan & Budget													
NORTHWEST BICORP													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Number of Television Advertisements													
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
Print Advertisements													
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
Billboard Advertising													
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
Online / Social Media Marketing													
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
													1
	\$1	\$2	\$3	\$4	\$5	\$6	\$7	\$8	\$9	\$10	\$11	\$12	\$13

Too often advisors attempt to write a formal marketing plan and get bogged down by the details of defining every part of their strategy from a SWOT Analysis to a Unique Value Proposition. On the flip side, advisors who do not write a plan never seem to get around to doing any marketing, or their marketing efforts are sporadic and ineffective. By creating a

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marketing calendar and a budget, a defined set of activities will motivate you to act immediately.

When I developed the annual marketing plan for my former employer, I would write a formal marketing plan of 25 or more pages. I would spell out every strategy in excruciating detail for the executive team's review and approval. However, the only thing I needed from a planning and implementation perspective was a one-page spreadsheet (see [*Worksheet: Construct a Marketing Plan & Budget*](#)) and a calendar. In the following sections, I'll show you how you can easily construct your own marketing plan in just four steps.

Step 1: Choose your strategies

A well-rounded marketing plan will include a variety of strategies. Don't depend on one strategy to produce all of your new leads. You'll want to diversify your campaigns. The following are just a few strategies to consider including as part of your annual marketing plan. Mark down the ideas you like to later incorporate them into your plan.

Centers of Influence (COIs) Referrals

Centers of Influence can be a sustainable source of new clients. If you choose this strategy, you will want to consider some of the activities listed below:

- Attend networking events or join associations to meet new COIs
- Reach out to COIs via LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook or other social networking sites
- Develop marketing collateral targeted to COIs
- Create a schedule to continue nurturing the COI relationships (e.g. lunch or dinner meetings, hospitality events, and continuing education workshops)
- Create opportunities to reach out to COI clients (e.g. speak at the COI's client events, write articles for the COI's newsletter, and hold joint client events)

Client Referrals

Client referrals can be an inexpensive and effective way to generate new leads and should be a standard strategy for every firm. Consider including the activities listed below in your marketing plan:

- Develop a client referral process (e.g., referral follow up and thank you cards)
- Create a schedule to touch clients throughout the year (e.g., newsletters, events, webinars, reviews, and phone calls)



- Create opportunities for clients to introduce friends, family members and colleagues to your firm (e.g., client workshops, appreciation events, webinars, and podcasts)

Offline Marketing

While referrals are the most effective way to generate new leads, advisors new to the business or firms looking to grow rapidly need to reach outside of their current relationships. If this is a strategy you choose, consider integrating some of the following activities into your plan:

- Develop effective marketing collateral including capability brochure, advisor bios and product/service sheets
- Host public workshops or educational courses
- Advertise with local newspapers, magazines, radio stations and television stations
- Send direct mail to targeted leads
- Host a paid television or radio show
- Write articles and submit them to local publications
- Write and distribute press releases with news about your firm
- Create a Drip Marketing program to stay top of mind with prospects

Online Marketing

More and more advisors are incorporating online and social media strategies into their marketing plans as an effective and low cost option to generate new leads. If choosing this strategy, incorporate some of the following activities into your plan:

- Build a website that clearly conveys your capabilities and provides educational resources to prospective and current clients
- Develop educational content through blogs, podcasts, webinars, and videos.
- Join and contribute to social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook
- Implement a Google Ad Words campaign or some similar variation
- Participate in online directories and advisor referral sites

These are just a few ideas to help you get your creative juices flowing. Choose whichever ideas fit your business and target market.

Step 2: Plan your year

Now that you have decided which strategies and activities you wish to implement, it's time to plan your year. Use the [Construct a Marketing Plan & Budget](#) worksheet to plan



out specific activities to implement throughout the year. For now, write the activities you want to include under the appropriate category. For example, if you want to mail a quarterly newsletter to your clients, include “Client Newsletter” under the Client Referral heading. Then put an “X” in the month you wish to send the newsletter. Continue this with each activity you identified in Step 1 until you have a complete marketing calendar for the year.

Step 3: Create a budget

You now have a marketing calendar for the year and it’s time to see if it fits within your budget. Research how much each campaign or activity will cost. When you have determined their cost, replace the “X” you put on the calendar with the monthly dollar amount. In the example of the quarterly newsletter, you would have put an “X” in January, April, July and October, which would now be replaced by the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter – say \$500. This will give you an annual client newsletter budget of \$2,000. Once you have done this for every marketing activity, you can adjust your plan so that it fits within your budget. When you have finished adjusting your calendar and budget, you’ll find that you have successfully documented your marketing plan for the year.

Step 4: Implement the plan

Once you have created your plan, you need to follow it. Print out a calendar for the year and mark down the exact days you plan to implement each activity in your plan. This will give you a clear deadline to meet. If you don’t know when an activity will take place, just pick a day to the best of your knowledge. It’s better to get it on the calendar and be wrong about the date than to leave it off the calendar and forget about it all together. Keep this calendar in clear sight as a constant reminder of the tasks you have to accomplish each month in order to keep your plan on track.

Good luck - and remember that your success will be linked to your ability to stick to the plan.



Download the worksheet in .pdf or Excel formats. If you are not using Excel 2007, you will need to download the [Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint 2007 File Formats](#).



Excel Spreadsheet: [Worksheet: Construct a Marketing Plan & Budget](#)

PDF Document: [Worksheet: Construct a Marketing Plan & Budget](#)

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