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Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy

Some tips on implementing your marketing plan

In our last article we gave you an insight into how to develop a marketing strategy that is suited to the vision for your business. So, once the planning phase is concluded, what happens next and how do you ensure that your plan is implemented well?

Clearly the “delivery buck” stops with the owner or MD of the organisation, but it’s unlikely that they will have the skills and/or time to ensure that the plan is delivered as effectively as possible, while ensuring that all parties buy into the process. Who is the right person to help - and how do you avoid the tinker, tailor, soldier, spy syndrome?

Avoiding the common pitfalls in marketing strategy delivery

1. **Get the right person for the job.** One approach we sometimes see is for the MD or business owner to take responsibility for marketing implementation. In micro businesses this may be a necessity, but in any larger enterprise the owner is unlikely to have the time or the skills needed to really deliver effective results. As a result, it can feel as though nothing ever really gets done properly - a case of *tinkering* round the edges! This can lead to a disgruntled workforce or to the performance of other areas of the business being adversely affected as “the eye is taken off the big picture”.

From an MD’s perspective, the best approach is to task an experienced marketing professional with the ownership of plan delivery and review the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on a weekly basis or as the dynamics of the trading environment become more transparent.

2. **Once you have a plan in place which you believe in, stick to it.** Constantly changing the plan is often a knee jerk reaction derived from *spying* on competitor activity as part of market place analysis and appraisal. It’s a common result of employing junior or inexperienced marketing staff, or of putting a member of the sales team in charge of marketing. The grass may always seem greener on the other side, but responding to changes in market conditions has to be balanced against sound planning. Is it worth risking your business vision to generate sales at reduced profit for a mere Pavlovian response?

Once again, an experienced marketing professional will be able to carry out dynamic reconnaissance into competitor activity and ensure that you respond appropriately.

3. **Choose the right foot soldiers.** Another misguided approach to implementation is giving responsibility to an existing member of staff who can be depended on for reliability but who lacks marketing skills. This person is chosen to *soldier* on and implement the marketing plan, irrespective of their experience or exposure to marketing.



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For example, this might be an administrator who is particular good at crunching numbers or someone who has had some involvement in a marketing related project e.g. a web designer. From a cost perspective using readily available foot soldiers is tempting. However, the main drawback with this approach is the lack of experience and skills, although the 'soldier' at least understands the organisational culture. The experience and skills pitfalls can be overcome in different ways, including training and bringing in a marketing mentor or coach to 'hold the hand' of your existing staff and act as a communication conduit, ensuring that the positive business message is clearly communicated across all departments.

4. Other options often considered by businesses include the appointment of an external creative agency to look after the marketing needs of the organisation. Agencies can be an excellent source of creative input and ideas but it's rare for them to be able to fill the role of a marketing director or manager. They are often focussed on one specific area of expertise (advertising, web, direct marketing) and frequently work on the premise that great marketing is all about creative teams with original and cutting edge ideas. Whilst this may certainly play a part as a key differentiator, it is merely one element of the process and, as with all good espionage thrillers, the sub plots are not always central to the delivery of a truly compelling overall story. Moreover their business models are typically based on selling outputs (ad campaigns, websites etc) rather than end results of increased sales, or higher market penetration. A great marketing 'engine room' needs to be led by a professional marketer who is capable of orchestrating the agency troops in the right way to transform creativity into profitability consistently.

The Way Forward

When it comes to reviewing where marketing should sit within an organisation, there is no need to look for moles! The clear answer is to engage the capability of a marketing professional, on a part-time basis perhaps, who reports directly to the business owner / MD and is tasked with implementing the strategy that will generate revenue and enhance the brand equity of the organisation. Using a diversity of tools and techniques they can *tailor* their skills to provide a bespoke service designed to deliver the corporate vision.

At RCR we specialise in transferring marketing skills to our customers, helping them boost their revenue, improve their marketing capability and enhance their reputation. In short we provide an outsourced marketing director service for our clients, tailored for their specific needs and budgets.

By understanding the demands of growing businesses we have well developed processes and systems to deliver marketing to our customers with focus, structure and direction. This is achieved through a mixture of coaching, consulting and hands-on implementation. If you'd like a bit more of an insight into working out what you should be doing with your marketing, we'd be delighted to have an informal, no cost conversation.

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