

How to Create a 12-Month Marketing Blueprint That Will Help You Sleep at Night



Spontaneity is the spice of life until you're up at 2am looking at your budget and wondering why you're putting thousands of dollars into advertising and not getting so much as a Facebook like in return. You simply can't fly by the seat of your pants in marketing – well, you can, but you're not going to like the result.

Developing a 12-month marketing blueprint won't just help you sleep at night, it'll also help your business grow in some pretty remarkable ways.

What is a Marketing Plan and Why Do You Need One?



A marketing plan is just what it sounds like: a document that not only outlines what you and/or your company want to achieve in terms of advertising and promotional efforts but also how you're going to achieve those goals and in what time frame each step will most likely be completed. The beginning of the year is a great time to put an annual marketing plan together, but you really can kick off a new plan whenever you want. The key is to have one, and breaking it down to twelve monthly sections keeps you on track.

It also thrusts what promises to be a long list of wanna-be accomplishments into the harsh light of reality. Setting unrealistic goals is essentially setting yourself up for failure, but not setting lofty enough benchmarks can be equally dangerous. In marketing, you need to have limitless ambition but also understand that ambition has its limits.

You can't just advertise aimlessly from January until December and hope to greet the New Year with record profits. You need a roadmap, and lucky for you, we're here to help.

Analyze Your Company's Current Situation

To figure out where you need to go, you have to develop a thorough understanding of where you already are.

- What is the current financial state of your company and where would you like it to be by the end of the year? Think in specifics: "More money" isn't a legitimate goal, but "10 percent more revenue" is.
- What do you have to offer customers? Make a comprehensive list of your assets including all currently available products and services.
- Segment your customer base (divide them into groups according to shared characteristics). Identify the groups you've had the most success with, those with whom your success has been limited, and those who you have yet to target.
- List your competitors. Who is a threat to your success? What are they doing differently? What do they offer that you like? What do they provide that you don't like? What segment of the population are they better at connecting with?
- Identify growing trends or other outside forces (a major product release, a law that's taking effect, a major convention coming to town) you think might either help or hinder your business
- Create an organizational chart of your employees including their departments, positions, and general duties. This will be used to help assign tasks throughout the year. In some situations, particularly if you're a smaller company or depending on the project in question, you may be able to just assign tasks to departments instead of individuals.

Analyzing your own company can be extremely difficult to do, especially if you want to do it accurately (hint: you do). That's where an outside marketing firm or marketing consultant can be absolutely indispensable. Someone who can help you critique your business's faults, identify its strengths, and work that whole mess of information into something that will benefit you over the coming year will be more valuable than you can imagine.

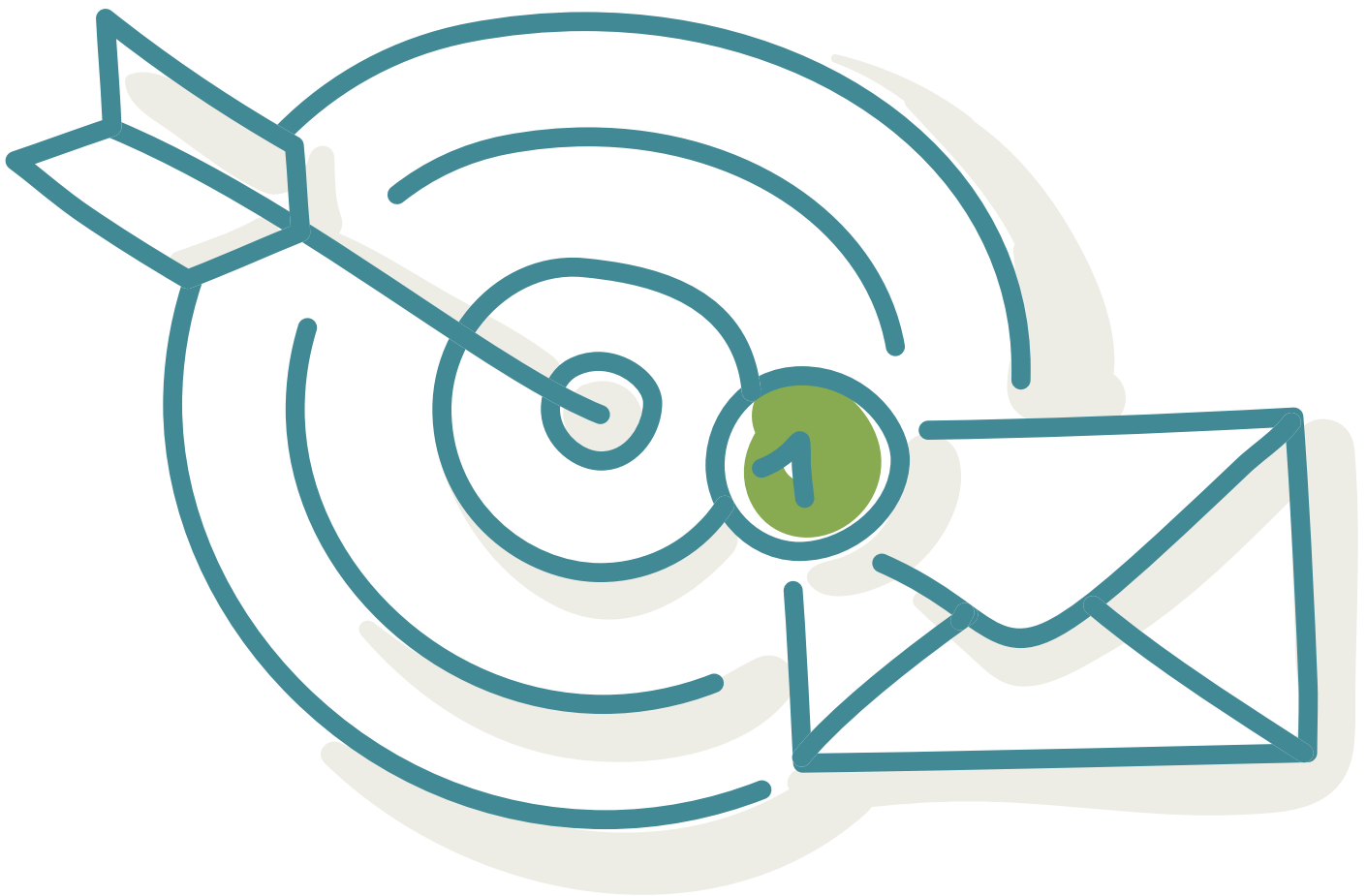
Set Your Goals

There are two ways to approach goal setting:

1. Decide what you want to have accomplished at year's end and then work backward, establishing 3-, 6-, and 9-month goals

2. Decide what you can accomplish in a shorter span, such as 30 days, and then multiply that out to see what you're likely to achieve in a year's time

Set your annual goal and then figure out how to get there. Once you have your goals in place, it becomes much easier to craft a plan of action – or attack, as the case may be.



Spell Out Your Strategies

How are you going to accomplish your goals? What methods or tactics will you use to increase profits, drive more traffic, or sell more eBooks? What channels can you use to execute those ideas?

Make a master list of what channels you have available to you and star or otherwise emphasize the ones you're most familiar with or have had the most success with. You'd be surprised at how many possibilities there are. Here is a completely non-comprehensive list of tools you can use to institute change:

FACEBOOK	SMS DISCOUNTS
TWITTER	SOCIAL MEDIA ADS
SNAPCHAT	MOBILE OPTIMIZATION
LINKEDIN	CURATING CONTENT
PINTEREST	SMS MARKETING (AKA: TEXT)
EMAIL	LOCATION-BASED MARKETING
SEO	PARTICIPATING IN Q&A SITES
PODCASTS	SENDING OUT SURVEYS OR POLLS
BLOGS	SETTING UP A YOUTUBE CHANNEL
INFOGRAPHICS	ADVERTISING IN INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS
USER FORUMS	ADVERTISING ON OTHER PEOPLE'S WEBSITES
COLD CALLING	ADVERTISING IN MOBILE APPS
CTAS	LAUNCHING YOUR OWN MOBILE APP
WEBINARS	RESPONDING TO YELP REVIEWS
ONLINE PARTIES	MOBILE CUSTOMER REWARDS PROGRAMS
LANDING PAGES	AFFILIATE PROGRAMS

Every one of those ideas can conceivably help you with everything from lead generation to conversion to just getting your name out there. No idea will be universally suitable and many will work one time and not the next. You'll get better at picking the right channel or tactic for the right task, we promise. In the meantime, the most important thing is recognizing that you do have options not just so you can identify a Plan A but so that you're ever without a Plan B, C, D, E, F....

Creating Your 12-Month Marketing Plan

This is where it all comes together. Actually creating your 12-month marketing plan is kind of like matching something from Column A (your pain point) with something from Column B (your goals) and then adding in a little dash of Column C (strategies for execution). True, it might take three items from Column C to turn A into B, but you get the general idea.



- Your yearly plan and monthly plan should have very similar structures – you’ll be addressing many of the same general areas or issues, but where the year blueprint sets the goals, the monthly blueprint breaks those goals down into actionable/achievable pieces.
- Begin each monthly plan by listing that month’s main objective and identify any relevant statistics for the previous year (if you’re aiming for more Twitter interaction, list the average monthly favorites and retweets from the same time period the previous year), then set the new goal
- Each task should be assigned to a specific person or team
- Give mini-deadlines within the month timeframe
- Incorporate bi-monthly or quarterly projects as needed; you can always use the monthly markers as milestones
- Once you’ve mapped out the entire year, backtrack and make sure tasks are set out in a way that makes chronological sense. For instance, don’t put “Clean out our email lists” in July and “Create an email list” in September.

Analyzing Your Progress

You can't check off each month's tasks unless you're sure you've actually accomplished them. How can you be sure? It's all about the metrics. Concrete numbers provided by ROI reports and other market data will show you what you're doing right and where you can improve. You can also gather information straight from the source: your customers. They won't rattle off a string of statistics, but they will give you an opportunity to see your growth from their point of view. The best part? Knowing how you're doing really is empowering – as is the whole creation of this 12-month marketing plan.

Above all, remember that your plan is not written in stone. You'll likely to make changes as time rolls by, either because your needs have changed or because the market has changed. But when you do encounter those unexpected bumps in the road, you'll be equipped with a plan that allows you to react quickly and get back on track with similar speed.

And that's what marketing is all about. Efficiency and permanency are almost always mutually exclusive – you can't be rigid and expect to achieve the things you could achieve if you learned not just to roll with the punches but to turn your duck and weave into a million ways to win.

And that's just what creating a 12-month marketing plan is going to help you do: **win.**

