

1. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Understanding the market in which we compete.

Market Environment:

Who is the market we are selling into? What is its size? Can it be segmented? Along what lines? What are the characteristics of each segment? Which products are Stars, Cash Cows, and Dogs?

What is the market's growth trend (declining, flat, growing)? At what percent annually?

What trends are being observed? Economic? Social? Political? Technological? Future? What trends can we foresee?

What market developments could impact this market?

How many end-users are there in the market segment?

Who are the important influencers in the distribution chain? What weight do they carry?

What elements of the product pipeline -- from manufacturer to consumer -- have a vested interest in the business? Can they be considered allies?

Customer Demographics/Attitudes/Expectations:

Demographically who are our customers in the market? What are their psychological / sociological characteristics?

What are our customers' needs and wants in terms of product attitudes? Does our offering address those needs and wants? If you add features or services, will customers pay more for them or will they attract more customers?

What is the customer purchase cycle? Do they exhibit brand loyalty or are they likely to switch? Are they open to new products?

What are the customer attitudes towards our products and those of our key competitors? Are they aware of our offering? Is their attitude/perception of our offering what we would want it to be?

What are customers' most significant problems with regard to our offering? In what ways can we help them overcome these barriers? Why do our customers buy from us?

What could we offer that would attract more non-customers? How can we sell to more of the profitable customers?

Who are the most important influencers in the distribution channel or supply chain? What motivates them in their purchase decision? Where have we focused our selling efforts before?

Are global variations/differences in the customer base important or significant?

Are there bulk, institutional, industrial, corporate or retail markets that we are ignoring? Could we effectively add additional markets to those already being addressed?

Competitive Situation:

Who are our key competitors? Why are they/could they be after us?

What is our competitors market share? What is our market share? By market? By product?

What are our key competitive products? What differentiates our product from the competition? How do we really rank against competitors?

Will competition have new product offerings? How are they different/better?

Beyond specific products, what is the total offering of significant competitors? How does the competition position its offering?

What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of our products and total offerings? From the customer perspective?

What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of competitive products and total offerings? From the customers perspective? How does that compare to the perceptions of our offering? Who has the desired best perception?

Competitive advantages of current players. Any weaknesses? Any sales advantages? How much of a threat are they?

Statement of our overall competitive position in two or three sentences.

Brand and Product/Service Offering:

What are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats? A SWOT overview of our position.

Where do our products/services fall in relation to the total market? Is this truly the position we want?

Are we "all things to all people," or should we move more toward a high-end position, a low-cost position or other?

How is our brand positioned? As a leader, challenger, follower, or niche player in the category?

What is the unique positioning of our company and our products versus the competition? Why is it unique or compelling to buyers?

What is the brand or business personality or image that is desired in the minds of our buyers and end users?

What is the life cycle of the product service? How will it be extended, evolved, or replaced? Over what period of time?

How can we get our products/services out to new outlets profitably?

Are there unbranded opportunities?

Can we bundle in our products with someone else's?

Are we at the mercy of wholesalers for our raw materials or product components?

How can we manage suppliers and gain more buying power over them? Can we simplify our products and reduce our supply needs?

Can we buy in bulk and store/warehouse them somewhere in a cost effective manner?

Can we buy some things pre-fabricated cheaper than doing it ourselves (or vice versa)?

Pricing Strategy:

What is our pricing strategy? Will we be above, below, or at parity with our competitors? Will we lead, follow, or ignore changes in competitors' pricing?

Does variable pricing make sense for different markets, perishable products, or time-based sales processes, or various customer types?

Are we charging for everything we do? Why not?

How well and how consistently are we delivering/producing our products/services? What people problems must we address?

What are the research and development activities or market research plans that are unique to our business?

Regulatory Environment:

What public policy issues could adversely affect our business/products? Now and in the future?

What regulatory and legislative issues are likely to impact our product/services and how? Are the issues national, regional, or local? What would the impact be financially, operationally, and from a brand equity perspective?

Will competitive products be similarly impacted, or will we have an advantage or disadvantage?

Human Capital:

How many Sales reps do we have/need – by inside and outside sales. How many Administration staff do we have need to manage sales. Is sales management equipped to handle growth. Do staff require training or coaching?

How many Marketing staff do we have by title and responsibility? Do we need to hire more in-house or work with outsourced resources? Do staff require training or coaching?

2. KEY ISSUES

Knowing what we must accomplish to succeed.

Based on each of the four constituencies Owners/Shareholders, Customers, Employees, Society/Other Stakeholders:

List top 3-5 opportunities and threats.

List key uncertainties.

List top 3-5 critical success factors that will give our product leverage versus the competition.

What are the major issues/trends of concern to the public, customers, and the category regarding our business/industry?

Of the issues identified, what are the relative priorities for the business? For our company?

What are the risks associated with manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution?

How are the issues going to affect corporate reputation?

3. SALES AND MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Setting goals by which we will be measured.

What are our sales targets? By product? By SKU? By market? By quarter? Existing clients versus new business?

What is our sales percentage increase versus last year?

What market share are we trying to attain versus last year?

What is the relative importance of each of the objectives?

What are the Revenue goals? Revenue by product type? Revenue by customer? Revenue by territory?

4. SALES AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

Developing requirements to accomplish objectives.

Product Strategy:

What is our product and what strategies do we have to make it beat out our competitors? Are there new products being developed that extend our brand?

Price Strategy:

What is the pricing strategy we will use to get sell-in? Repeat orders? What are rough estimates of profit-margins, manufacturing costs and end customer prices?

Channel Strategy:

What are the strategies by distribution channel? Direct sales? Online sales? Channel sales?

What are relative priorities by channel? Will those percentages change over time?

Sales Strategy:

What is our overall Sales Plan?

New business acquisition strategies? New business acquisition tactics?

Existing business growth strategies? Existing business growth tactics?

How are leads nurtured and scored for sales readiness?

How and when are leads transitioned from marketing to sales and what is the agreed-upon level of qualification necessary for that hand-off?

How can sales regularly communicate its marketing needs (e.g., collateral, presentation materials, etc.) to the marketing department?

What shared/complimentary metrics can be established to ensure alignment between sales and marketing?

How do initiatives in public relations, business development, and advertising affect the sales organization and how do sales professionals get informed about them?

Territory Strategy:

How are sales divided across markets? Who is accountable for setting targets?

Communications Strategy:

What are the advertising strategies? Trade show strategies? Conferences? Media relations? Promotion Strategies? Government relations? Corporate social responsibility strategies? Social marketing strategies? Online marketing and website strategies?

What are the essential messages that would be communicated across all media? How will it be measured?

5. TACTICAL ACTIVITY PLANS

Quantifying actions, timing and accountabilities.

Develop a calendar listing by week/quarter of all Sales and Marketing/Communications activities. While it is not a single spreadsheet, it would be complementary plans that align by month to form an integrated plan of activities.

Sales activities plan would include sales plan targets, by product, territory, recurring vs conquest, etc. It would also include step by step activity set regarding initial meetings, discovery, proposals, closing rates, and metrics.

The sales planning and implementation program (EDGE Program) is an ongoing program that needs to be part of the qualification process. The sales plan is a set of objectives, but it is the training, coaching, and follow-up activities that make the program work. So we need to think about how to make the implementation part of the pricing, and if they don't want implementation, what does that do the success metrics?

Marketing activities plan would include all tactics by action, budget, audience, media vehicle, blocking chart, results metrics. Plan would be divided by target, or channel, or product.

As with sales, it is the implementation and follow-on projects where we lengthen the relationship, and have more impact of their sales success. How do we price on-going project management and creative development as part of our service offering?

6. FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

Identifying costs required to execute programs.

Capital requirements

Marketing and selling expenses (current year and 3 year outlook)

Manufacturing costs

Research and Development costs

Overhead

Profit contribution