



# Marketing Plan Guideline and Template

*A guide to use with the ten-step  
Marketing Plan template tutorial*

# Marketing Plan Guideline and Template

Everybody has a Marketing Plan, right? The Marketing Plan sounds like it should be a simple document. There are certainly enough books, outlines, and resources that provide you with templates for Marketing Plans. An important distinction: the Marketing Plan is often confused with a Business Plan or Business Case because it contains common elements such as strategy, segmentation, industry and competitive analyses, etc.

In some organizations, the Marketing Plan is owned by a marketing manager; in others, a product marketing manager takes the reins; and in still other organizations, a product manager owns the plan. Given this inconsistency, it's important to be clear about the *purpose, ownership, content, and structure* of the Marketing Plan for a product.

For product managers and their teams, a Marketing Plan establishes goals and programs that not only support the company's marketing efforts, it should realistically be able to support the goals of the product's business. Given limited resources, this can be a challenge. Typical company goals might include lead generation, customer engagement, or to improve revenue – along with appropriate metrics. However of greatest importance: will the marketing goals and programs in a Marketing Plan for a product, contribute to the envisioned goals for the product's business?

The logic and flow of the Marketing Plan is shown as a ten-step process, depicted below and referenced in the video. It provides you with a framework from which you can create your own standard Marketing Plans for products, product lines, and other marketing initiatives in your company. Even if your company has a standard Marketing Plan template, you can align its content with what's shown here. The main idea is to have a tool that can be used consistently while contributing to the fortification of a common business vocabulary in your company. It can also be used as a vital process that can be improved as people use the methodology.

One further note. For documents like Marketing Plans, all the needed work to be completed in the ten steps should ultimately help you and your team to create an Executive Summary. While Executive Summaries go first in the presentation, they are completed when all the work is done.



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One more point worthy of note. Product teams should aim to marketing plans that are built on a solid fact base, with the proper research, and defensible goals and achievable outcomes. If these tenets are not followed, your team’s credibility may be called into question, so make sure to do your homework!

As you begin your team’s journey, you may wish to identify the key players who will help with the marketing plan. You’ll need to secure the support of their managers to make sure that the plan’s goals can be articulated – and more – carried out, should funding be secured. Marketing plan team member names can be assembled in the space below. Note that Section 8 of the plan provides for the clarification of roles and responsibilities.

Team Member Name	Role	Function	Manager’s Name

## The Executive Summary

As indicated earlier, the beginning of a Marketing Plan presentation requires an Executive Summary. This is short (but comprehensive) summary is designed to provide sufficient guidance to leaders and others with sufficient background and high-level conclusions so they are able to be more effectively guided through the presentation. The major elements of this summary focus on:

1. The strategic and market context
2. Explicit business goals that are facilitated through marketing goals and programs
3. A marketing mix model, anchored in the product and business strategy
4. Any product launches planned
5. Team support
6. Business and financial contributions to be achieved

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## Section 1: Strategic Context

Each and every program and investment in a Marketing Plan should be aligned with the strategic goals established for the company by senior leaders. You will likely need to reach out to these executives to ensure that you and your team understand their objectives. Then you will need to communicate those objectives to all team members. If you are successful at this, when you and the team provide the plan to the executives, they'll clearly recognize the connections between each part of the plan and the strategic intent they've set forth for everyone. In other words, the Marketing Plan must explain exactly how proposed marketing activities for the product are strategically aligned with those of the organization. Note: when your teams' vision for the product is clear, it's easier to explain how a given set of goals contributes to the intended results of the product's business, and by association, the company.

The backdrop for this section of the Marketing Plan is constructed from the marketing plans and programs carried out in the past, up to the present. Use the template section below to help you organize your data so that you can easily explain what worked, what didn't, and how this information might guide future marketing investments.

<b>Prior / Current Marketing Programs</b> <i>(list out campaigns and programs)</i>	<b>How did each program contribute to the goals of the firm, and to the product's business?</b>	<b>Which programs contributed most?</b>	<b>Which programs didn't contribute as planned?</b>	<b>How will these contribute to possible new marketing plans and programs?</b>

Use this space to record any ideas or notes about what you learned from this exercise:

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## Section 1: Strategic Context (Continued)

As was discussed in the video, a “SWOT-like” analysis might prove helpful to uncover marketing investment opportunities. It’s not a company or product business SWOT, it’s basically looking at what’s worked, and what didn’t, from a different standpoint.

<b>Strengths</b>  Validated, verified contributions based on established themes and goals.	<b>Opportunities</b>  Possible new marketing program themes and goals.  <i>List the opportunities after the other areas are done</i>
<b>Weaknesses</b>  Programs that did not work or provide returns as planned.	<b>Threats</b>  Did anything result in an external vulnerability?

Create a list of possible marketing program opportunities for the product based on what you know from the analysis thus far. You can always come back to this later after you’ve worked on other sections:

*Possible Marketing Programs (Goals and Opportunities):*

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# Marketing Plan Guideline and Template

## Section 2: Market Environment

In this section, provide a general summary of what’s going on in your marketplace, told as a short story. The market environment is shaped by the industry in which the product is sold, the competitors that are confronted, and the customers who *should* be the focus of marketing activities.

Your explanation should make it clear to management that the team understands the general direction of the market. Specifically, include information such as the size, demographic makeup, and descriptors that make the market attractive or relevant.

Recognize that this summary of the market environment also serves as proof that the team has a thorough understanding of the industry and competition. Discussion in this section should highlight how the product’s attributes are shaped by the targeted customer’s needs, within the confines of the chosen market segments.

Along with Section 1, this section sets the stage for the justification of incremental marketing investments that you’re asking management to make. Not every investment is going to be approved. Remember, this Marketing Plan represents the output of the research and analysis performed by the team, including key business issues, market drivers, and motivations for evolving the marketing mix, as covered in Section 4.

Two tables, as templates are provided for you to use so that you can record information. One focuses on segments and customers, the other on industry and competition. If you don’t have the most relevant, up-to-date data, you’ll want to make sure you have a plan to secure it so that the analysis is as accurate and believable as possible.

Segments & Customers	Record your Information	Implications for future marketing programs
Market segments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Geographic, Demographic, Firmographics</li></ul>	
Customer targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Users, Influencers, Decision Makers</li></ul>	
Overall needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Segment trends, attractiveness, pain points</li><li>• Needs, problems, motivations, &amp; value drivers</li></ul>	

Record any notes about market segments and customers based on your research and findings:

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# Marketing Plan Guideline and Template

## Section 2: Market Environment (Continued)

Use this table to record information about the industry and competitive environment”

Industry and Competition	Record your Information	Implications for Future Marketing Programs
Industry, sector(s), or vertical(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attractiveness, size, growth rates</li><li>• Trends, activity, patterns</li></ul>	
Competitor companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Size, geography, position</li><li>• Financial strength</li><li>• Market share, their customers</li><li>• Strengths, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities</li></ul>	
Competitor products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Functionality, features, UX</li><li>• Performance, design, style</li><li>• Competitive position (leading/lagging, etc.)</li></ul>	
Overall market attractiveness and fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share you want to attain</li><li>• How you intend to position</li></ul>	

Record any notes about the industry and competitive environment based on your research and findings:

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### MARKET SUMMARY

Prepare a brief summary, to be ultimately told as a narrative, that pulls together all the information about the market environment that describes the past and present, key trends, programs that worked and those that didn't. Consider some of the work you did in Section 1 with respect to the strategic context and future opportunities for marketing goals, themes, and programs.

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# Marketing Plan Guideline and Template

## Section 3: Marketing Goals

In this section, all data and information needs to be distilled to possible goals. They may not be definitive when you first start out. Here, your job is to:

- Leverage findings from market analysis in prior sections
- Characterize prior program outcomes for lead generation, publicity, search, brand, etc.
- Assess prior metrics and outcomes
- Create marketing program goals around key themes

The first part of goal-setting for the Marketing Plan is to derive key themes. In the table below, some examples are provided. What are the themes that are important to your company and why?

Key Themes	Importance to the Company	Importance to the Product
Acquire new customers		
Create content to build awareness		
Reduce customer churn		
Drive "footfall" to a store		
Sell more to current customers		
Improve customer satisfaction		
Launch improved products		
Optimize customer lifetime value		
Deliver great mobile experiences		
Turn web traffic into sales		
Other		

What are the top two or three themes that your leaders want for the company and how do those mesh with your product's vision and goals?

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## Section 3: Marketing Goals (Continued)

Once the key themes are developed, explicit goals can be shaped. Again, just doing this exercise here does not mean that these goals are finalized. They will require fine-tuning as both budget and returns will need to be calculated. Budgets and metrics are covered in Section 9.

In this template, goals for marketing plans and programs are divided into broad categories, and further, associated with the themes that you developed earlier.

Goals	Associated Theme
Digital programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Search engine optimization</li><li>• Paid search</li><li>• Social media advertising</li><li>• Email campaigns</li><li>• Video</li><li>• Cross-media programs</li><li>• OTT streaming/advertising (over the top)</li><li>• Blogs and podcasts</li><li>• Webinars</li></ul>	
Traditional programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print</li><li>• TV (linear – in-line)</li><li>• Brochures/data sheets</li><li>• Outdoor</li></ul>	
Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Industry events and shows</li><li>• Professional associations</li><li>• Analyst meetings</li><li>• Thought leading presentations</li><li>• Other</li></ul>	
Sales Training	

What are the top two or three goals and the *associated themes* that you and your team would contribute most to the business goals for the company and for the product's business?

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## Section 4: Marketing Mix

Many marketing mix models are based on the four P's: product, price, promotion, and place (or channel). These should be your *control levers for marketing execution*. This section of the plan should provide sufficient detail for management to be able to clearly and directly understand your planned activities in order to approve them.

As you and your team consider options, there are a some important items to consider:

1. The *product* portion should already be addressed in the product strategy (not part of this document but available in another template or from Sequent's training programs). Make sure there is consistency with what's either being developed, launched, or already in market.
2. *Pricing* strategies are important aspects of the plan because they portray how value is delivered to targeted customers. However, in many companies, product managers and their teams may not have complete control over pricing. The team's job here is to make sure that pricing policies, fee structures, and so on are addressed. Even if you and your team are not fully responsible for pricing, you must be part of that conversation.
3. *Promotional* strategies – those that include advertising, communications, public relations, and other items articulated in Section 3, these need to be tied directly to the targeted customers with messages that reflect the themes, goals, and desired results.
4. *Place or channel* strategies define how your product or solution moves from the point of creation to the point of use. Regardless of whether the product is sold directly, indirectly, via the web, in retail, or elsewhere, it must be available. As with any of the other mix elements (other than product), the product team should ensure that they are aware of, or part of the conversation so they are assured that the product can be accessed by the intended customers.

So often, desired business outcomes fail to materialize because the various business functions throughout the entire organization don't operate as if they share the same objectives and do not work together to mesh in a synchronous manner. That's why the marketing mix model should be used in the Marketing Plan; it integrates the vital components of the business so that successful outcomes can be achieved.

Lastly, with all mix forces vying for resources, it's important to remember to focus on the achievement of balance across and between all marketing mix elements. After all, the product team should ideally be responsible for the entire product's business.

# Marketing Plan Guideline and Template

## Section 4: Marketing Mix (Continued)

In this section of the Marketing Plan, you and your team should translate the goals created in the previous section and encapsulate them in the template below. Note the importance of indicating how any element contributed to your product's strategic position, and how you want the product's business to achieve competitive advantage.

<b>Marketing Mix Element</b>	<b>Describe how this element contributes to the goals of the business</b>	<b>Current competitive position</b> ( <i>leading, neutral, or lagging</i> )	<b>Desired future competitive position</b> ( <i>leading, neutral, or lagging</i> )	<b>Actions or programs to reflect goals</b>
<b>Product</b>				
<b>Price</b>				
<b>Promotion</b>				
<b>Place</b>				

In the space below, integrate and summarize the context for the marketing mix model so it is easily explained to management in a Marketing Plan presentation. Preparing this as a narrative will be most effective.

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## Section 5: Alliances and International

### Marketing Alliances

Very often, companies need to team up with other (non-competitive) firms that have access to a desirable market segment or geographic area, unique operational expertise, or a larger sales force. Complementary business objectives form the common ground of alliances or joint ventures.

Forming alliances may be easy, but managing alliances is extremely difficult and time consuming. Make sure that your team realizes the effort, time, and money involved in these efforts. Furthermore, there may be publicity that needs to be called out in the promotional plan section. If this is part of your go-to-market strategy, or part of your market penetration strategy, this should be articulated in the Marketing Plan.

In the space below, indicate any alliances that are associated with marketing goals, if it's applicable to your product's business.

Marketing Goals	Areas where marketing goals can be more easily met with an alliance	Alliance targets or partners	Responsible function (to lead)	Results to be obtained

In the space below, integrate and summarize the context for any possible alliances that will facilitate the achievement of a given marketing goal.

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## Section 5: Alliances and International (Continued)

### International

You may be successful at home, but that doesn't guarantee success with customers who are located in different countries. Always keep in mind they have distinctly different tastes, needs, and customs. International marketing is different from marketing in your own country and can entail the use of a host of different programs. These can range from exporting your current products to a distributor in another country, all the way to setting up local operations. All your chosen markets offer unique challenges, and setting up well-thought-out marketing strategies for international markets is among the most demanding.

The International section of the Marketing Plan should address a variety of factors not typically considered in traditional domestic Marketing Plans. For example, you may have to plan for international transactions and payments (currency and exchange rate risks prevail), import/export or local documentation, local language support for product documentation and training, cultural or local business practices, alliances (if you take this route), and protection (related to increased risks relating to payment, intellectual property, or travel).

If you plan to set up operations in another country or region, then the Marketing Plan is dependent on the product being manufactured and distributed, with a host of other support functions such as field operations, sales, and customer service. Finally, there may be product certifications and approvals, which should be called out in this section of the plan.

Marketing Goals	Specific areas that require international action	Responsible function (to lead)	Results to be obtained

In the space below, integrate and summarize the context for any possible international programs that will facilitate the achievement of a given marketing goal.

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# Marketing Plan Guideline and Template

## Section 6: Product Launches or Releases

Your product launch may not be the only launch on the radar. There may be several launches or a stream of releases) during the same month or quarter, or your product may be bundled with others in a division or business unit launch. There may be product launches that are in the process of being carried out, or there may be launches on the immediate horizon that may complement, or detract from, messages you may be preparing. Furthermore, there may also be prelaunch activities taking place in the form of market trials, beta tests, and so on. Your planned launch activities should mesh with each of these existing activities. This is vital if you are resource constrained. It is important to be able to characterize the work and any risks that may affect the on-time delivery of a product to the market.

Use the template below to articulate the marketing plans and programs that must be put into place to support any product launches or releases.

Marketing Deliverable for the Launch	Responsible people or function	Dependencies (persons, artifacts, etc.)	Other Needed information	Start Date	End Date

In the space below, integrate and summarize the context for any product launch programs that will facilitate the achievement of the product's business, or any other relevant goals.

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## Section 7: Sales Training

Sales teams are dependent on product managers and marketers for marketing support and training. Training programs usually focus on how to sell the product, but adding *other* kinds of training to your agenda can foster stronger ongoing relationships with sales teams. For instance, training sales teams on the industry, the competition, and evolving trends in customer tastes and preferences is *extraordinarily* helpful and is usually met with a high level of appreciation by those sales teams.

Training salespeople to sell more consultatively helps them to foster greater partnerships with customers. There may also be sales guides, sales kits, sales briefs, and other meaningful documents that support the sales teams that you furnish them or guide them to find.

Training activities can be carried out at sales kick-off meetings, regional update meetings, or at other events where you have the chance to build strong bonds with sales teams. Lastly, it is important to make sure that the appropriate “negotiations” take place that will ensure that sales management has made available the right compensation packages to encourage salespeople to be motivated to sell your products.

Sales Training Goal	Sales Training Items or other Details	People Involved	Date(s) Planned

In the space below, integrate and summarize the context for any sales training programs that will facilitate the achievement of the product’s business targets and forecasts.

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## Section 8: Cross-Functional/Cross-Organizational Support

This section of the Marketing Plan for the product cements the intent and ensures that goals have the best chance of being achieved. It is vital that this plan describes what people from one function commit to delivering to others across the organization. For example, Marketing might provide deliverables to Sales or Customer Service in the form of training or supporting marketing documentation. In return, those functions should provide adequate staffing and timing for the training. There may also be deliverables due between subfunctions within the Marketing organization, and these should be clearly articulated. In this case, the marketing lead might need to orchestrate interactions between the promotional mix manager and the pricing manager to ensure that they are synchronized in achieving specific goals related to tactical marketing mix initiatives. In the table below, record information about the role people play on your team and what might happen if they don't fulfill their commitments.

Functions who need to support the plan	People who are responsible	Roles and responsibilities based on tasks in the plan	Possible risks



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## Section 9: Budgets and Metrics

### Integrated Budgets

Budgeting for the Marketing Plan’s elements should be set up to show what funds will be needed within identified time frames. These expenditures should be planned as funds are needed, by month, being careful to point out the funding that would be authorized by management if it approves the plan. Other funding categories might require separate authorizations or Business Cases. In any event, the marketing budget is an important tool that affords you the ability to plan and track marketing investments.

One of the particular differences between a *product* Marketing Plan and a *general* (corporate) Marketing Plan is that product investments are handled differently. Investments in product development, testing, and other cross-functional supporting work are captured in a Business Case for the product. In many companies, the marketing budget, although called out explicitly in a Marketing Plan like this, allocates a share of marketing cost to each product based on some predetermined percentage of an overall budget line item. In these cases, marketing expenses then become uncontrollable direct expenses for the product team.

The guidance here is to define budgetary line items for the product’s business, consistent with items in the marketing mix model, and aligned with outcomes your team deems important.

Use the table below to associate funds needed, for which program, and the associated goal.

Goal	Program	Funding for Q1	Funding for Q2	Funding for Q3	Funding for Q4	Total

## Section 9: Budgets and Metrics (Continued)

### Measurements and Metrics

Marketing managers are increasingly being held responsible for making sure that marketing funds are being productively invested in the business. How will the efficacy of marketing programs be measured? Modern marketing measurements talk a lot about return on investment (ROI). Marketing program ROI for the product is highly dependent on the effectiveness of company or divisional promotional program expenditures. However, what leaders want, is true results, shown as increased revenue, engagement, transactions, and other items outcomes. They are less drawn to vanity type metrics such as number of unique visitors, number of emails opened, and the like.

Marketing program measurements are, for your plan, promotional return metrics. An event like a trade show or professional association event may represent one of those investments. Alternatively, items like webinars, blog posts, and other content designed to maintain engagement and convert into sales. If the expected outcome of the event is an explicit number of new orders or new sales leads, and those orders or leads guide the team to accomplish agreed-upon goals for new or incremental business, then the ROI for that event (as a campaign) would be considered positive. Additional metrics might include the following:

- Customer acquisition costs
- Customer lifetime value
- % of new business directly associated with a marketing effort (“marketing originated customer percentage or MOCP)
- Audience growth (especially if it’s traceable too new or incremental revenue)
- Event analytics (associated with new or incremental revenue)

It is recommended that you become familiar with your firm’s metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) to determine which ones are best for your product’s business.

In the space below, indicate the KPIs most critical to the success, especially those that help you achieve the goals set forth in this plan:

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# Marketing Plan Guideline and Template

## Section 10: Managing Risk

Every plan is filled with potential problems. What could go wrong? Each and every dimension of the plan should have some kind of risk assessment. The plan should express to management “what if” scenarios that demonstrate the team’s desire to protect company investments. Risk profiles show not only the marketing activity but also the probability that outcomes will yield (or not yield) the desired result. This can be represented in a list or a table, depending on the complexity of the plan and the number of activities that create risks. Examples of risk factors might include the following issues: A campaign’s investment might not yield the desired number of leads, or an economic downturn might reduce the number of units sold. Some other risk categories might include:

- Will management continue to support the marketing programs?
- Will agreed budgets remain in place?
- Will Sales sell?
- Will other functions meet commitments?
- What if the economy changes?
- Will the product be ready for launch?
- What if a competitor does something unexpected?
- Can we deliver on-time?
- Will an alliance partner fulfill commitments?
- Will the website work as needed?

It isn’t possible for me to give you a concrete list of all possible risks, as these vary not only by company but also by the company and product team. Simply be aware that you must carefully and realistically evaluate all major or visible risks that you can imagine might affect the plan.

In the space below, record the risks that are possible, and the associated mitigation plan that would be put in place if that risk is encountered.

Marketing Goal	Marketing Program	Possible Risk Factor	Possible Mitigation

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## Summary

The purpose of this template tutorial is to provide you with a formal structure and guideline for creating a Marketing Plan for the product. This template and guideline, along with the video tutorial, explains the purpose of the Marketing Plan so that is actionable and realistic within the context of the work needed to support a planned new product or an existing product or product line. There are two important closing thoughts for you to consider.

First, you can't predict exactly which marketing elements will be needed for a product unless you thoroughly understand the market. The industry environment, competitors, and market dynamics have to be internalized before you can establish succinct goals and then write a realistic plan.

Second, if you take the time to really understand your markets in this way, you'll find it relatively easy to assemble a strong Marketing Plan, using this template and the tutorial video simply as a reminder list of things to include.

Ultimately, the purpose of the Marketing Plan is to convince management that you are in a position to do meaningful things that will influence customer purchase decisions, enhance your product's image, and to contribute to the goals of the company.

As you and your team use this template, try to create a true presentation to management, with one or two slides per section. Make sure to rehearse so that you and your team present a polished, cohesive presentation that builds your credibility – and ability to deliver results!

To improve your expertise as a product manager or product leader consider Sequent's library of online self-paced professional development programs. Visit [online.sequentlearning.com](https://online.sequentlearning.com) to learn more.





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