Marketing Your Business 101:: The Basics of a Marketing Plan

If you don't have a marketing plan, you are seriously overlooking a critical element to your organization's success.

Make the time. Do your research. Check out your competition. ***(Think you don't have competition? Trust me, you do)***. Analyze. Adapt. Take Action.

What can a written marketing plan do for your business? Here are the basic elements of a well crafted, well executed marketing plan.

1. Background. Details about the organization the marketing plan was prepared for. When was the company founded? Be sure to include the mission statement and/or purpose of the organization. Who prepared the marketing plan? What's the purpose or intended outcome of the marketing plan?

2. Market Research. What do you know about your audience and what methods/strategies can be used most effectively to reach them?

3. Target Audience. What do you know about your audience? Give details on your core audience demographics.

4. Critical Success Factors. What are the key factors necessary to achieve success?

5. Internal Analysis. What factors will impact the marketing plan? List both positive and negative factors.

6. Environmental Analysis. What forces beyond your organization's control could impact the effectiveness of the marketing plan?

7. Competitor Analysis. Who are your competitors? And what do they do well? Include any identified weaknesses that could serve as an opportunity for your organization.

8. Marketing Objectives/Strategies. This is the ACTION portion of your marketing plan.

- *What mechanisms will you use to deliver your marketing message?*
- *What will the message be?*
- *What will be the focus of your media outreach?*
- *What if any events will you host or sponsor?*
- *What will be your overall methodology?*
    - *Corporate sponsorships?*
    - *What other opportunities exist?*

9. Timeline and Action Steps. Get specific. This is the accountability and "delivery" portion of your plan. Assign dates and accountable staff or representative.

10. Follow Up. Check-in against the progress you're making with your marketing efforts vs. the plan, each month. This should be a living document that keeps the organization on point, and also helps to guide marketing efforts.