

Marketing Planning – An Introduction to the SOSTAC Model

"To fail to plan is to plan to fail"

Ask any consultant, business adviser or successful business owner what you need when starting or developing a business? The answer will invariably include "A Good Marketing Plan".

It is certainly the case that if you want to successfully build a business, a plan of where you are going is essential.

But it can be little help if this plan is simply an overview of objectives and strategy. It is important that the plan is a practical document, actively used in the ongoing management of the business, rather than a nice report that sits on a shelf gathering dust.

Over many years working with clients in developing effective Marketing Plans, we have found that the SOSTAC Model developed in the 1990's by PR Smith is difficult to beat.

It is a straightforward model that goes systematically through the steps to build a marketing plan, and helps to ensure that all relevant factors are considered, without the need to go into excessive and expensive detail.

The model then continues to look at the practical issues of putting the plan into practice.

SOSTAC is an Acronym for the 6 basic elements of the Marketing Plan:

S ituation	<i>Where are we now?</i>
O bjectives	<i>Where do we want to get to?</i>
S trategy	<i>How are we going to get there? – The Big Picture</i>
T actics	<i>How are we going to get there? – The Detail</i>
A ctions	<i>Who is going to do what and when?</i>
C ontrol	<i>How can we control, measure and develop the process?</i>

Each element relates to a key step in the process. Simply work through the Pro-Forma on the following pages step by step and fill in the gaps to suit your business and your goals.

One thing you need to be aware of: Often people deal with the **SOS** as a wish-list of achievements and then fail to develop and implement a detailed, controllable & measurable action plan (the **TAC**). This leads to a statement of great goals with no clear idea of how – or even if you can achieve them.

We will be looking specifically at Action Planning in a future issue of News & Views

If however you would like some help in developing and, more importantly **IMPLEMENTING**, a marketing plan, we would be delighted to talk to you.

THE S O S T A C MODEL

- S** Situation Where are we now?
- O** Objectives Where do we want to go?
- S** Strategy How do we get there? - Broad View
- T** Tactics What tools do we use to implement the strategy?
- A** Action Detailed Action Plan for each tool/tactic?
- C** Control How do we track our progress and know when we have achieved our goals?

STAGE 1

SITUATION ANALYSIS

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

How are we performing?

What are our distinctive competitive (marketing) advantages?

How effective is our Marketing Mix?

Are we focusing on the best segments with the right type of customer?

Are we using the most appropriate channels for communication and distribution?

What uncontrollable event(s) or trend(s) can impact my business?

STAGE 2

SET OBJECTIVES

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

Business Mission?

Business Objectives?

Marketing Objectives - Business Development?

Marketing Communication Objectives?

The *SMART* Test for Objectives

Make sure your objectives are practical and measurable. Do they fit the following criteria?

Specific (with numbers)

Measurable (to monitor progress and confirm achievement)

Actionable (can we do it?)

Reasonable (realistically attainable)

Timed (incorporate deadlines)

STAGE 3

STRATEGY

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Segmentation - How do we want to divide up the market(s)?

Targeting - Which segments of the market do we wish to focus upon?

Positioning - How do we want to be perceived in each different target segment?

STAGE 4

TACTICAL PLAN

HOW DO WE IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY?

Which Communication Tools are we going to use?

How are we going to use them?

What message(s) do we wish to communicate?

Are we being consistent across different tools and messages?

Do we have the necessary resources/budgets?

STAGE 5

ACTION PLAN

WHO, WHAT, WHEN?

Who is going to do what?

When are they going to do it?

What is the resource allocation for the action?

What are the key performance measurements?

How is performance going to be recorded?

STAGE 6

CONTROL

KEEPING TRACK OF PROGRESS

Do action performance measurements relate to objectives?

Responsibility for measurement?

Frequency of measurement?

Resources for measurement?

Review of measurements?

Actions on variance?