

HOW TO CREATE YOUR NEXT MARKETING PLAN, ONLY FASTER

‘Plan’, ugh, it even sounds slow.
But it doesn’t have to be.

In this guide, I’ll show you how creating marketing plans can be done in a much simpler way, and I’ll give you **the two most important things** you’ll need to get there.

🤔 The problem with marketing planning

We talk about how much the world of marketing has moved on in recent years. About how it’s become so fast and difficult to keep up with.



This is partly because marketing has borrowed heavily from the IT world where the practice of ‘agile’ is commonplace. And partly because we’re all vying for more and more data to understand what works and what doesn’t.

Data leads to testing. And testing leads to faster and faster execution.

You get the gist.

But here’s the problem... planning hasn’t quite caught up.

Even the word instils fear in a lot of people. Thoughts of in-depth workshops, weeks of research and complicated mapping diagrams are conjured up.



Photo by JESHOOOTS.COM on Unsplash

And whilst a certain amount of 'deep thinking' is often required to plan stuff properly, that doesn't mean it has to be slow.

Isn't it time that marketing planning caught up?

Well, I'll let you in on a little secret.

It kind of already has, you just need to know where to look...

In fact, there are just two important things you need to make your marketing planning process faster.

How on earth did we get here?

Before launching into the answers, it's worth taking a step back to understand exactly how we ended up here and why taking a distinctly simpler approach is no bad thing. In other words, there's no need to worry about FOMO!

Reinventing the wheel

The first thing that we as marketers are all guilty of is 'reinventing the wheel'.

NEWSFLASH!!

Don't worry, there's no crime against humanity here. But the truth of the matter is that marketing plans haven't really changed much since marketing began.

Ok, the components have been tweaked a bit, new words have come and gone.

But the core planning principles are still the same (remember Kotler!).



What's more, the marketing plan for one company isn't that different to the next. Sure, the content might be different, but again, the approach is more or less the same.

Now the really good news here is that you've got nothing to worry about.

You're not missing out on something a competitor knows that you don't. And you're not doing things the wrong way because every planning approach is just a slightly different flavor of the same thing.

TMI.

Too much content, too many channels, too many blog posts, too many best practices... oh, and too many cooks.

Mark Schaefer describes the content problem perfectly...

Content Shock.

The emerging marketing epoch defined when exponentially increasing volumes of content intersect our limited human capacity to consume it.

And the too many cooks thing – well I'm sure we're all nodding on that one.

Everyone's a marketer, aren't they?

The reason we've ended up with a marketing planning process that is way too complicated is because we're distracted – either by another way of doing things or by someone else's opinion.

*In the next part of this guide, I'll set out the **two most important things** you need to create a marketing plan.*

That's it – two. No more. And they're so simple that it'll mean faster marketing plans too. And I'm talking a matter of hours, not days or weeks.

Let's get to it!

👉 Important thing #1

A customer journey planner

The first weapon in your marketing planning toolkit is a customer journey planner. But before you go off to Google the templates, a few words of advice.

1. Find a planner that balances guidance with flexibility.

If you go for a ready-made template that's built for a certain industry or product then you'll find it doesn't work for what you need. Go for one that gives you enough structure to not have to start from scratch, but enough flexibility that you can tailor it to your needs.

2. Think customer, think campaign.

Newton's third law states, 'For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.' Now translating that into a marketing and customer journey context, we can say that for every action a customer takes, there should be an equivalent marketing tactic. Put more simply, find a planner that will allow you to capture the potential action that a customer takes, alongside the marketing activity you'll want to have ready to either prompt or respond to that action.

3. You'll always need some sort of content.

Marketing activities like Facebook advertising or even PR don't just happen. They need content. That can be short-form content like a social media post coupled with a banner creative. Or it can be long-form content like an article coupled with graphs, charts and diagrams. So when you're planning out your customer journey, don't forget about the content.

4. They're just a guide.

If you take nothing else away from this, then please remember this one thing. Marketing plans, customer journey planners – they're just guides. They can never be a full picture of everything your customer does or is going to do. They're simply templates to get you started so you can get on to the more important task of executing and testing. My particular favorite is funnel models – how many of us have gotten ourselves tied up in knots over funnel models? HELLO!! They are just a guide. Throw a few numbers in, get an idea and then move on.

All the stuff above is partly why I created **immerj**.

I was tired of templates that you had to recreate from scratch. And equally sick of trying to squeeze marketing plans out of project management software.



With immerj however, you get enough of a structure to get started with a marketing plan. But enough flexibility that you can design it around your own needs.

👉 Important thing #2

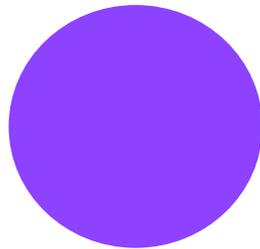
The Marketing Plan Reality Check

Your second weapon is a bit more of a process. But bear with me, because it's super simple. It definitely passes the grandmother test.

It's what I like to call the **Marketing Plan Reality Check**. And here's why...

1) Your target audience

Start with your target audience, the customers you're trying to reach. We'll represent them with this big purple blob.



Now of course it's worth doing some target audience research and trying to map out basic personas or profiles for your main types of customer. This is especially useful when you're trying to work out the problem you're trying to solve and how to message it in your content.

But then let's think about the activities (also referred to as channels or tactics) that you're going to use to reach this target audience.

There are probably going to be a few that bubble to the top – for example, you might work out that Instagram is the best to reach young females on.

But here's the reality check – everyone is different. Not everyone in your target audience will be present on those channels, and not everyone in your target audience will engage via those channels either.

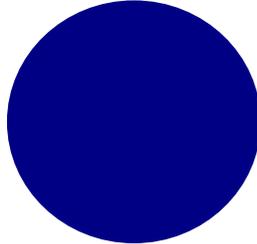
So in actual fact, your 'plan' here means all activities. This purple blob = all possible marketing activities.

Super, well that didn't get us very far!

Fear not, read on...

2) Your objectives

The next step to focus your plan is to consider your objectives. We'll represent these with this dark blue blob.



Not all activities will hit your objectives for you.

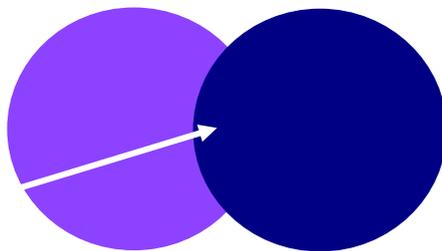
For example, you wouldn't want to do PR if your primary objective is generating leads.

Equally you probably wouldn't do telemarketing if your main goal is to create awareness around the brand.

You have to be quite brutal here and whittle it down to specific objectives. Don't just say 'more sales' or 'more marketing'.

What are you actually trying to achieve as an outcome? For example, is it brand awareness, qualified leads, or competitor displacement?

Then overlay that against your target audience, and you'll start to see that the activities you should do become a bit more focused.



See that bit in the middle where your purple blob (i.e. your target audience) overlaps with your blue blob (i.e. your objectives)?

Well that's your first step in focusing your marketing plan and activities.

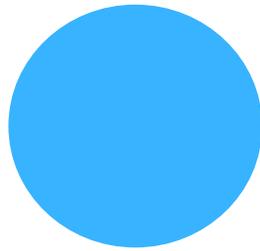
3) Your budget

Now of course we aren't going to leave it there.

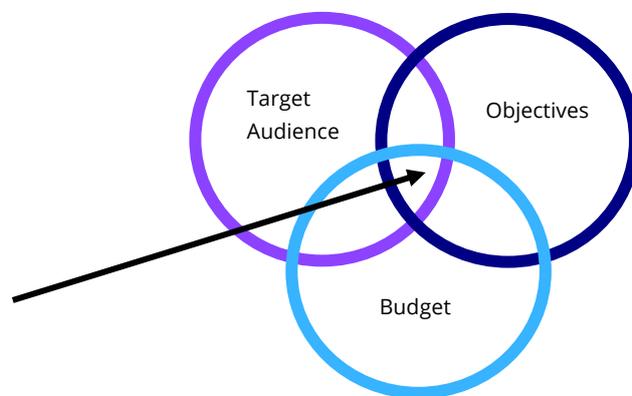
Because for most companies, there's a budget to take into account. It's not endless, it never will be. And if anything, it will only get squeezed more and more.

But actually that's a good thing – it makes you focus even more.

So here's our budget, a light blue blob.



And if we overlay that against our other two blobs and adjust our colors so it's easier to see, we get the following...



And that little section in the middle pointed out by the arrow. Well that's essentially our activities.

In other words, the activities we need to focus on given a) our target audience, b) our objectives and c) our budget.

And that's how we get to a focused set of marketing activities that we want to start executing against.

If you go through this process and end up with loads of different activities, then go back and do it again.

Be honest with yourself about the objectives or the budget. Trust me, honesty will lead to greater focus. Giving you less to do, and also more bang for your buck.



There you have it, the two most important things you need to create a marketing plan.

- 1) **Some sort of customer journey planner.**
- 2) **A Marketing Plan Reality Check.**

'Hold it right there', I hear you cry.

How does this make my marketing planning process faster?



Faster, faster

So I started out by saying that most marketing planning processes are slow.

And here's the thing – they don't have to be.

Depending on the size of your business, team or client, the **'Two Important things'** above can easily be thrashed out in a workshop or even a couple of video calls.

I'll reiterate what I said earlier about these being 'a guide'.

Just as marketing tactics (e.g. advertising or email campaigns) are iterative and change quickly, so too can the marketing plan.

Now that doesn't mean you have to go back and change it each time. It's more that your plan in the first place should be fluid, flexible and 'just a guide'.

And this is how you create a marketing plan faster.

- 1) Focus on the 'Two Important things' above.
- 2) View your plan as a guide, not the be-all and end-all.
- 3) Iterate on the plan, use it to get started and then focus on the things that will really engage your customers like great copy and kick-ass creative



Happy Planning!

From Emma at immerj

For more great resources, tips and tools, sign up to immerj for free now at www.immerj.io