

The Dynamic Marketing Plan: In these uncertain economic times, an essential tool for corporate growth and job security

by Scott Rossborough

In our interactions with clients and prospects, we hear that companies are winding down the cost-cutting that has dominated 2009. The outlook for 2010 is cautiously optimistic, and the focus seems to be shifting from the bottom line to profitable growth.

Yet while business prospects seem to be improving, people are still nervous. Operating budgets were repeatedly reduced throughout 2009, and have not been completely restored for 2010. Layoffs are a recent and raw memory, and many of the workforce reductions appear to be permanent. Job security has been proven illusory, and employees are under pressure to achieve business goals with drastically reduced resources.

Marketing staffs, who often feel undervalued, are particularly anxious – and they have reason to be. Unlike the sales team, in many companies it is difficult for the marketing staff to demonstrate their value and impact on growth. At the beginning of the recession, marketing budgets and people were the first to be cut (as usual), and cuts continued throughout 2009.

Today, the stakes for marketing professionals are high. Marketing support has been cut, but as the market begins to rebound, it is the marketing staff that companies rely on to support sales, increase revenue and achieve profitable growth. And in this environment, “underperformance” is not acceptable - the average tenure for a CMO has dropped to less than two years, and continues to decline. (Source: AMA)

What to do? One solution is tried and true. A successful Marketing Plan is a blueprint for growth, and can also provide valuable cover for the marketing staff. An effective marketing planning process is one that seeks input and participation from all internal and external stakeholders. Ideas are valued, and tradeoffs and dictates are transparent. The goal is to build consensus while hearing the outliers, so accountability is shared.

Successful CMOs understand the many benefits of an effective marketing planning process. A directed, open and participatory marketing planning process is most likely to foster innovation and generate consensus, while achieving corporate revenue and margin goals. The CMO and marketing staff are stewards of the marketing planning process, including plan development, implementation, tracking and measurement, adjustment and internal reporting. But accountability for ongoing performance is shared, which can significantly reduce anxiety.



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We see many marketing plans that are built on a rigid set of assumptions and include only vague tactics with rough budgets and no measurable criteria for success. These plans are not likely to lead to success in a volatile economic climate.

The best marketing plans are dynamic. Dynamic Marketing Plans assume that there will be little or no market predictability, and are built on a range of assumptions that lead to a range of business outcomes. The assumptions are revisited monthly or quarterly, and action plans adjusted to maximize revenue growth.

Dynamic Marketing Plans are also detailed and specific, including objectives and strategies that are directly linked to the business plan. Detailed tactics, budgets and timelines are developed for different sets of assumptions, and as market conditions change throughout the year, implementation evolves. The return on every marketing investment is measured, and all learning is captured for future planning.

Deployment of a Dynamic Marketing Plan requires flexibility, which is often difficult to come by, especially in larger companies. But uncertain economic times demand operational flexibility to maximize success, and companies both large and small will benefit. The ability to be proactive, according to your plan, will maximize revenue and profitable growth.

At Trinity Marketing, we are committed to helping our clients succeed in the marketplace, and in their careers, through effective marketing planning. We recognize that every company has different needs and resources, and that a successful plan is one that works for the company and its people. We know that the successful marketing planning process is hard work, but we believe that the investment is well worth the effort.