

Marketing Guide



A guide to help you complete your marketing plan, with detailed advice on the development and implementation of an e-marketing strategy

Marketing can take many forms and the effectiveness of your marketing efforts depends on an integrated approach. Remember, your written plan is only as good as the thought and planning that you put into it. Therefore, you should see the development of your marketing plan as an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of your customer so that all future decisions are based on the profitable provision of what your customer wants. It is important that your marketing plan is customer-driven rather than promotion-led. In other words, you need to get to know your customers first and then plan how you can best deliver what they need.

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Introduction

Marketing has never been more crucial to success, nor more challenging to tourism industry managers. Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, provides a range of services to assist tourism businesses in optimising the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. This Marketing Guide is designed to provide a template for the development of an integrated Marketing Plan which includes significant e-commerce activity.

Marketing can take many forms and the effectiveness of your marketing efforts depends on an integrated approach. Remember, your written plan is only as good as the thought and planning that you put into it. Therefore, you should see the development of your marketing plan as an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of your customer so that all future decisions are based on the profitable provision of what your customer wants. It is important that your marketing plan is customer-driven rather than promotion-led. In other words, you need to get to know your customers first and then plan how you can best deliver what they need.

The Guide takes a holistic view of your marketing strategy. It will support you in completing your plan and offers detailed advice on the development and implementation of an e-marketing strategy with reference to web development, search engine optimisation and social networking opportunities.

This Guide is also accompanied by a marketing planning template. Such a 'step by step approach' will assist you in completing a comprehensive and useful plan for your business.

It is important to remember that planning is an inclusive process so it is recommended that you do not 'go it alone' and that you consult your team where appropriate. Your plan will be useful for you and also for key stakeholders including staff, directors and investors in order to achieve a sound business footing for the future.

The plan is divided into 3 steps which answers 3 key questions...

Step 1: Examine your business as it stands
Where are we now?

Step 2: Develop your marketing strategy
Where do we want to be?

Step 3: Implement and monitor for success
How are we going to get there?

Before you can set out your objectives for the year(s) ahead, you need to find out what's happening in the market place and how fit your business is to meet the challenges for the year(s) ahead. This helps you to answer the key question: ***where are we now?***

To answer that question you need to research the key trends in your sector, find out how you perform relative to your competition in the eyes of the consumer and you need to figure out what your key strengths and weaknesses are. This will help you to do a good SWOT (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*) analysis.

The business environment in which we operate is also a significant factor in getting an objective view of where a business stands. Managers and operators of tourism businesses are acutely aware that they must compete strongly for every euro of revenue. So what does this all mean for your particular business? Can you see opportunities out there that need to be explored?

Where do we want to be? Having answered the first question- 'Where are we Now?', you are in a better position to decide where you want your business to be next year and beyond. You are able to decide your strategy based on the facts and you can set objectives to help your business survive or refocus.

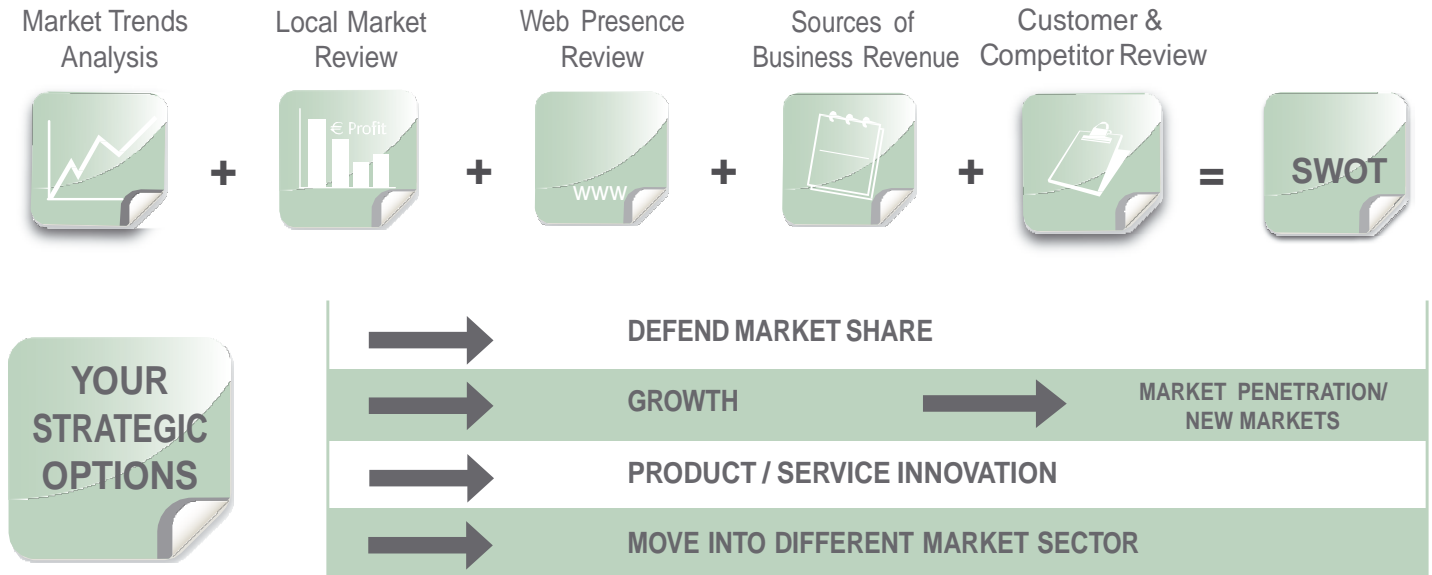
How are we going to get there? In this final part of the plan you are ready to implement your strategy to achieve your objectives. Your key for survival is your customers so this part of the plan focuses on how you can retain or even attract additional customers.

Please see the planning framework overleaf which provides an overview of how this Guide and the marketing planning template are structured.

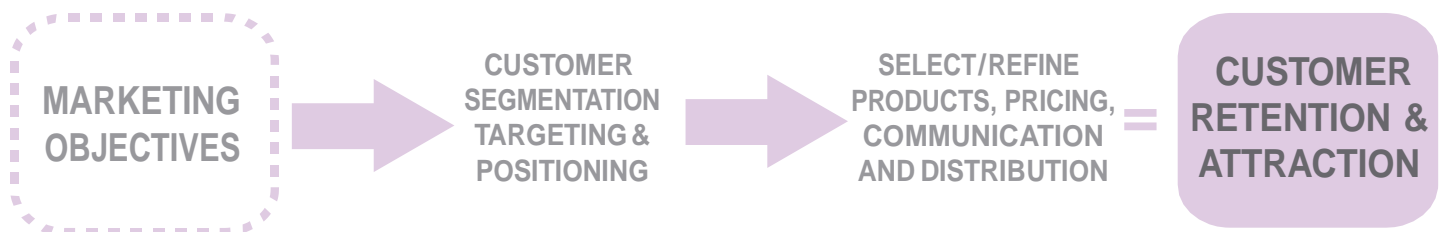


YOUR PLANNING FRAMEWORK

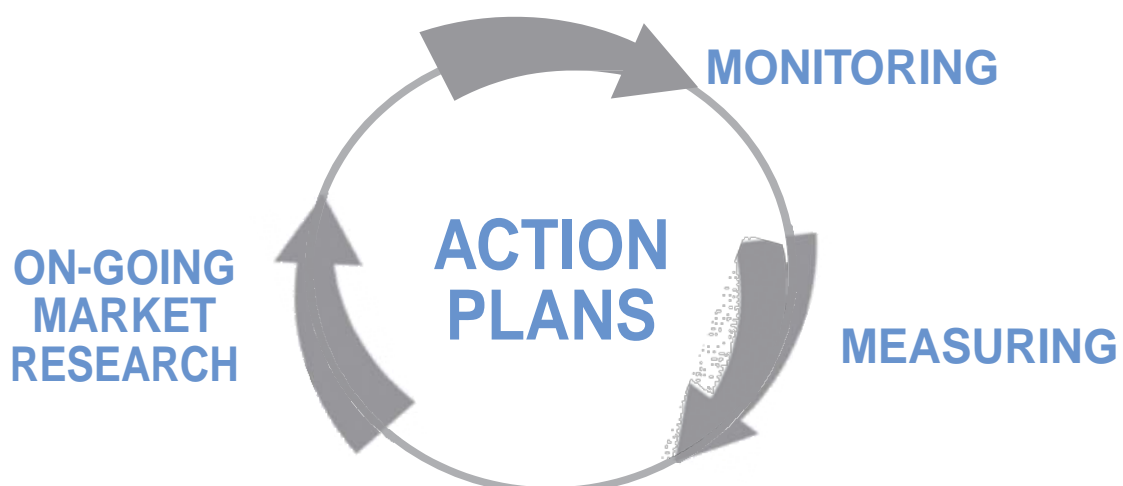
Step 1: Examine your Business as it Stands...Where are we now?



Step 2: Develop your Marketing Strategy - Where do we want to be?



Step 3: Implement & Monitor for Success- How are we going to get there?



STEPS	YOUR MARKETING PLAN	ACTIONS REQUIRED
Step 1	Examine your business as it stands <i>Where are we now?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse Market Trends Review Local Market Review Web Presence Conduct a Website Audit Analyse Sources of Revenue Undertake a Customer Review and Competitor Review Undertake a SWOT Analysis
Step 2	Develop your marketing strategy <i>Where do we want to be?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set Marketing Objectives Segment, Target and Position your Offering Sell to your Customers and Use E-Marketing Tools Manage Communications and the Media Choose a Pricing and Routes to Market Strategy
Step 3	Implement and monitor for success <i>How are we going to get there?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting Your Plan into Action Action Plan Marketing Health Check



Step 1: Examine Your Business As It Stands...

Where are we now?

Market Trends Analysis



This section will present an overview of the current situation for the business and the market in which the business operates.

Write up a brief description of how the market is performing now and how it is forecast to perform over the coming year. Refer to a range of sources including tourism and accommodation statistics and forecasts from Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, Crowe Horwath, Central Statistics Office (CSO), Mintel, Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC), industry websites etc. Comment on how these trends will affect your business.

Question to ask yourself... For example, if this year indicates a fall of 10-15% in a particular segment (e.g. leisure customers), how realistic is it for you to propose an increase for this segment next year? These are the types of questions to start asking yourself...

As highlighted in the recent ITIC report 'A Changed World for Irish Tourism – Facing up to the Challenges of Recovery' recovery will depend on restoring growth from the top 4 overseas source markets i.e. Britain, USA, Germany and France, with these markets typically producing three out of every four holiday visitors to Ireland. The British market is considered to offer the best opportunity for growth and is regarded as very important to Ireland's tourism recovery. The size of the potential market in Britain, coupled with a common language and close proximity to Ireland, dictates the need to regain market share. Germany is also viewed as offering a lot of potential - the industry view is that Ireland is well positioned in Germany and has in place well established trade links in a market where the travel trade is still dominant. The US market is also regarded as offering potential for recovery and growth based on the current demand patterns of an upturn in travel to Europe. The high spending American tourist is critical for many businesses in Ireland.

However, the single largest perceived risk to renewed growth would be the lack of adequate air access with competitive fares. Incentive travel and conferences for the US market are expected to provide further potential for Ireland. France is viewed as offering further potential and like Germany is especially important to tourism businesses and is reckoned to offer some good potential to exploit niche opportunities.

The priority markets for promotable business travel (MICE) are identified as Britain, USA and Germany. This sector is regarded as worthy of particular attention due to its high value, year round potential, while the opening of the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) offers an opportunity to capture an increased market share. Other markets such as Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and the Nordics, coupled with Australia and the emerging long-haul markets will continue to offer opportunities for Ireland.

What to do for your business....

Collect information about what is happening in your sector, what new products or services are being developed. Find out about new products / services in the market by reviewing competitor websites (*especially overseas*), speak to suppliers, or search for a relevant conference or trade show you can attend. Consider all the changes in your sector over the last five years and imagine what can happen in the next five as the pace of business change accelerates.

Question to ask yourself.. Are there markets such as Germany, France, UK or the USA that could be further explored as potential markets for your business? What markets should you be targeting? Do your products match the markets?

Local Market Review



Opportunities and Threats in your Catchment Area

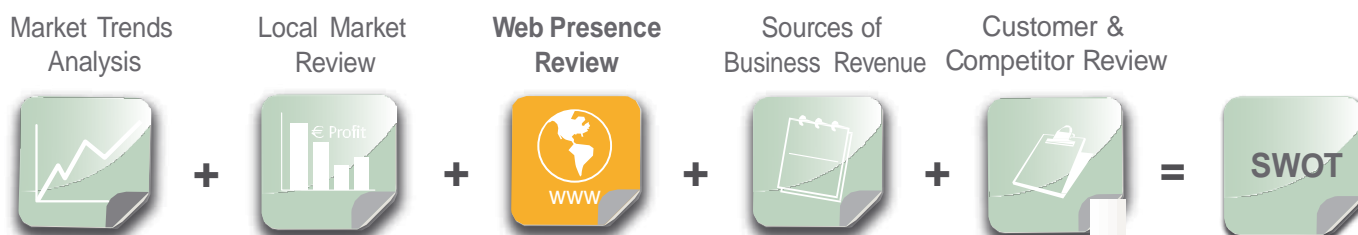
Outline the significant changes in your local market, such as competitor developments. List any businesses opening, expanding or closing in your area that could have an impact on your business. Note any other business, social or planning developments.

Key Dates for the Year

List by date, upcoming opportunities, such as festivals, sporting events, cultural events and any other activities that could lead to significant increases in sales. You will use this information further on in your plan to focus your marketing activities around the key opportunities during the year ahead.

Question to ask yourself... What really challenges you? Is it rate cutting, too many similar products, declining customer numbers?

Review Your Web Presence



How good is your website? Does it do its job? Is it effective? These are all good questions that every business owner and marketing manager needs to ask.

Most people responsible for their company's websites have stats packages and counters to tell them how many hits, how many unique visitors, where they are coming from, what their IP addresses are, what browser they are using. So what! Who cares? The real question is:

'Do we have an effective website?'

A website is the public face of your business. Big businesses can look like 'Mom and Pop' operations and 'Mom and Pop' operations can look like General Motors. The design of your website should not be taken lightly, its budget should not be an afterthought, and the designer you hire should be someone who understands more than code. How many orders are you losing because of bad layout, awkward design, confusing navigation, and poor copy? How many potential clients have you chased away because you have not put a phone number on your site and a reachable real-person that can answer questions?

If you have a transactional website, commonly referred to as an e-commerce site, you know the number of sales you are generating from your site, which is important, but do you really know how effective your site is? Your Web-designer should be a multimedia-marketing advisor, someone who can counsel you how best to deliver your marketing message, and someone who can go beyond technical issues. If you don't think you need a new website, you aren't going to spend the money to have one built. So the best way to tell if you need one is to analyze the one you already have.

Here is a set of questions you can ask yourself. If you answer them honestly, you'll know whether you need a new site or not. After you've gone through the process, ask some colleagues to do the same. See if your answers compare. (Source: <http://articleaddict.com>)

Website Effectiveness

1. Do you know your audience?

Why do the people who you value most visit your site? Are you meeting their needs in a nanosecond? Know your audience, speak to them, meet their needs, and you will build deeper trust.

- Talk to your users. Find out, in plain terms, what they need from you. (This can be achieved by asking a few searching questions & getting feedback from existing customers – why do they wish to visit you? What do they want to do whilst they are with you? How they found you online?)
- Do some unofficial usability testing on your site, asking visitors to accomplish a task. You'll be amazed and humbled by the results.
- Run a simple site survey to find out why people are visiting your site, what they like and what they hate.

2. Does your website deliver on core goals of your business or campaign?

Digital channels are likely to be the primary way people engage with your business today. As your business changes, does your site reflect your greatest successes, issues of highest importance or new products and services that are the most successful? Are you tracking metrics that matter?

3. Does your website have clear calls to action?

All too often there are too many things to do on a site, so nothing important gets done. Your website needs to focus its attention on highlighting the two or three key actions you need people to take, then creating a hassle free experience for them to accomplish those tasks.



- Identify one to three key actions or sections to highlight on your website. Highlighting actions such as Book Now, Upgrade, Go to etc.
- Link the actions to your organisation or campaign's core goals.
- Make it obvious and easy for client's to take these actions.



4. How will your audience come back?

Many businesses get stuck just trying to get supporters to take action and don't think about building a plan for long-term engagement. You should be thinking about the different degrees of participation your client's want to have and ensure tools and opportunities are developed that allow them to engage where they are most comfortable. This is called building a 'ladder of engagement', and it can be automated using Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technology. By capturing information about your customers – a detailed profile or persona can be built up and you can match your services to their requirements.

5. Are you listening to what your audience is saying?

Monitoring social networks and listening to the conversations taking place within them is an excellent way to find out what people think about your organisation. Learning what your clients are talking about and finding out how they want to engage with you can directly inform what 'rungs' you build into your ladder of engagement. The stronger your ladder, the more successful your organisation or campaign will become.

- Find out where your supporters hang out online and what social networks they have joined.
- Set up a business page on Facebook, and Twitter.
- Use Google Alerts to find out who's talking about you.
- Visit these often and become part of the conversation.
- Integrate what you learn to change what your organisation thinks/says/does.

6. Where are you losing visitor traffic and conversions?

Organisations are complex. This complexity unfortunately often carries over into the structure and design of websites, which often results in a confusing experience and failure to convert visitors into clients.

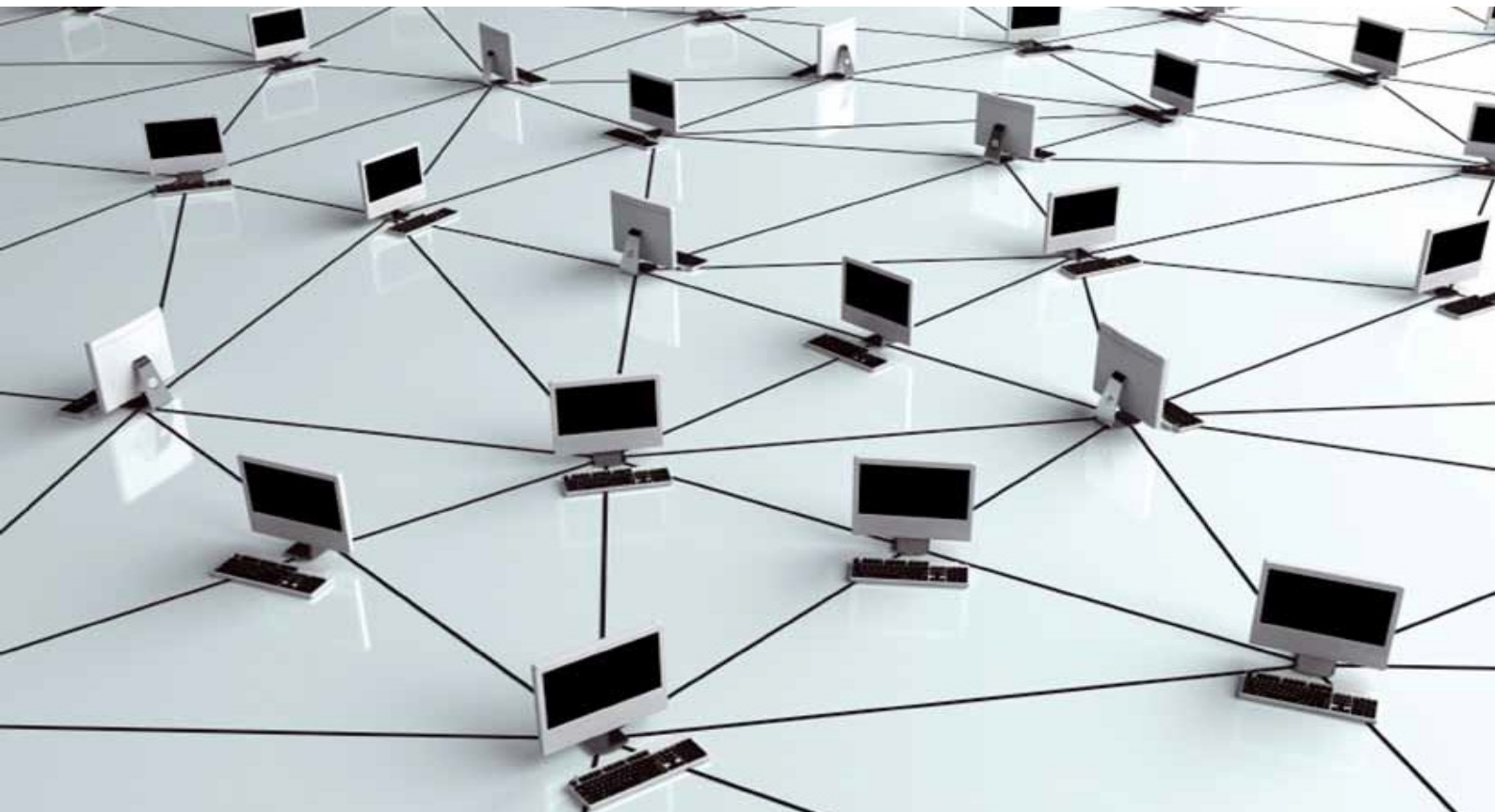
The message is: keep it simple! Ask yourself: Are people getting lost in your internal language/ department structure? Are your action pages failing to get people to take action? Employing simple language your audiences use, simplifying online forms, making catchy graphics for key actions and following best practices for design and usability will go a long way to driving more value from your digital presence.

- Set up and analyse “goal pages” in your analytics software (*e.g. what pages you are attempting to lead your customers towards so that they will perform an action such as booking*).
- Test your site to see if visitors understand what you want them to do.
- Remove any barriers that prevent those actions from being taken.
- Use images that clearly reflect actions you want people to take.

Pulling it all together

Your business can benefit from looking deeply at these key question areas to tighten up how your website performs as a key tool within your digital strategy. Examine these important points for yourself.

(Source: Houle, D; Key Questions for a Website Audit)



Website Audit

When it comes to your company website, it can be easy to forget sometimes that YOU ARE NOT THE AUDIENCE. And, because of this, we sometimes miss the boat in evaluating whether the website is “getting the job done.”

Most tourism business owners and managers appreciate how important a website is to the marketing mix. What can be missing is the objective view as to whether your website is being all that it can...and should...be.

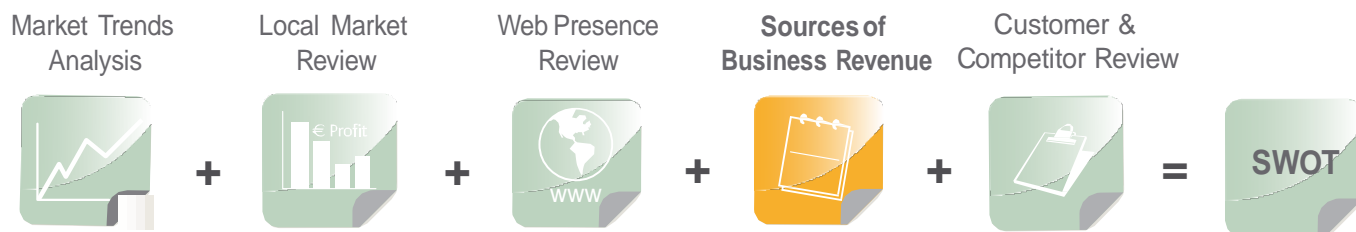
EVERY website should undergo a comprehensive website audit. Whether you hire a third party to conduct the audit or you do it yourself internally, focus on the following areas to make sure you’re conducting your website audit from the eyes of your visitor:

WEBSITE CHECKLIST			
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	ACTION REQUIRED	RESPONSIBILITY
USER EXPERIENCE / INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you made a list of who comes to your site and what they are looking for? 2. Is your site organised by content categories with navigation that leads users easily to the content area? 3. Have you tested user navigation on your site to see how easy it is to find information for each audience category? 4. Does your site contain multiple graphic elements mixed with short texts and links? 		
CREDIBILITY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does your website have a privacy policy that addresses how your organisation handles email addresses, site visitor information, and gift data? 2. Is contact information (<i>phone, address, email address</i>) easily accessible on your home page and listed on every page of your site? 3. Is your mission statement and/or organisation’s focus immediately visible on your website. 4. Do you provide lots of resources? 		
CONTENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you identified the fundamental organisational content for your site? 2. Is this content regularly updated on your site? Identify who updates your site and how often. 3. Does your site contain publications, success stories, FAQs, and a mix of content sources including links to other websites for a deeper user experience? 4. Is there some content that is only accessible online? 5. Is your web site written with short paragraphs, multiple links and graphic elements to illustrate text content? 6. Does the look of your site accurately reflect your brand and does it use your brand elements (<i>logo, colours, etc.</i>) correctly? 		

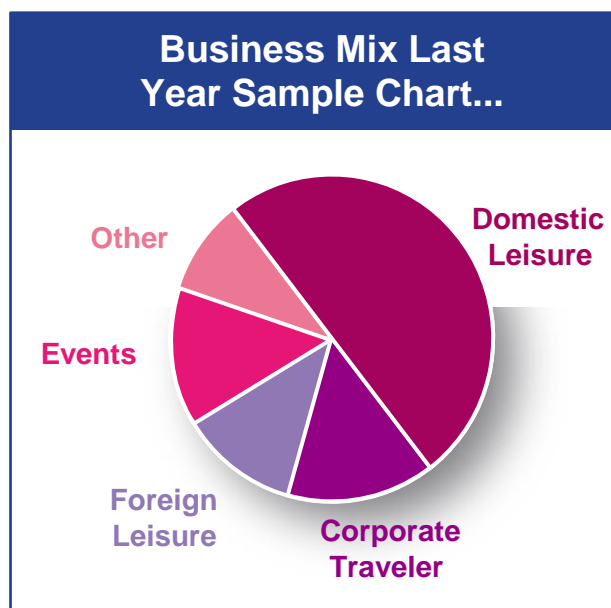
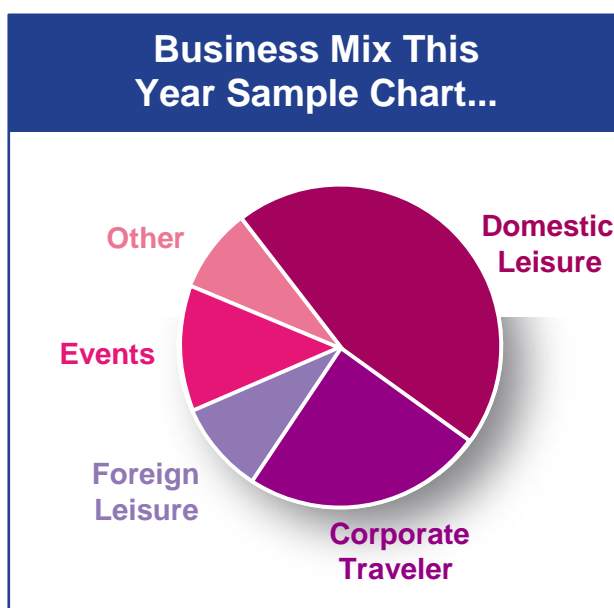
WEBSITE CHECKLIST			
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	ACTION REQUIRED	RESPONSIBILITY
ONLINE PAYMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does your site have an ecommerce button (e.g. can your customers pay directly on line for your product or services) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Above the fold b. Limited number of clicks c. Goes to another page that appears to be your site (third party booking engine) d. Paying page is secure, includes privacy information 2. Do you demonstrate your organisation's fiscal responsibility and commitment to responsible financial stewardship with privacy, security and financial statements? 3. Are you collecting email addresses on your site <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Double opt-in to unsubscribe 		
CLICKABILITY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What kinds of interactive elements have you added to your website <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Search mechanism on site b. Graphics c. Downloadable files d. Printable pages e. Discussion Boards f. Maps g. Quizzes h. Personalisation 2. Are they easy to access? 		
TRAFFIC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you listing your web address on all print materials? 2. Have you registered with the major web directories (<i>Google, Bing, Yahoo, Altavista, Excite</i>)? 3. Have you edited the title, keywords and description tags on your site? 4. Are you linking to like-minded organisations and public sites? 5. Are you promoting special events, memberships or time-specific appeals on your site? 6. Are you using email messaging strategically, segmenting your clients, using e-newsletters and personalised messages? 7. Are you using paid keywords, portals, banner ads as specialised ways to drive traffic? 8. Are you keeping links up to date on your site? 9. Are you regularly analysing the web traffic on your site with web analytics software? 		
NAVIGATION, FUNCTIONALITY & PERFORMANCE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the navigation clearly and quickly guide the visitor to the areas they want to see? 2. Does the site display in the most common browsers and with the various monitor resolutions? 3. Is it easy to navigate around your site? 4. How quickly does your site load, are there technologies used that slow down performance or distract the visitor (<i>Flash, splash entry pages, etc.</i>)? 		

Having analysed your web presence you need to analyse your key sources of revenue.

Analyse Sources of Revenue

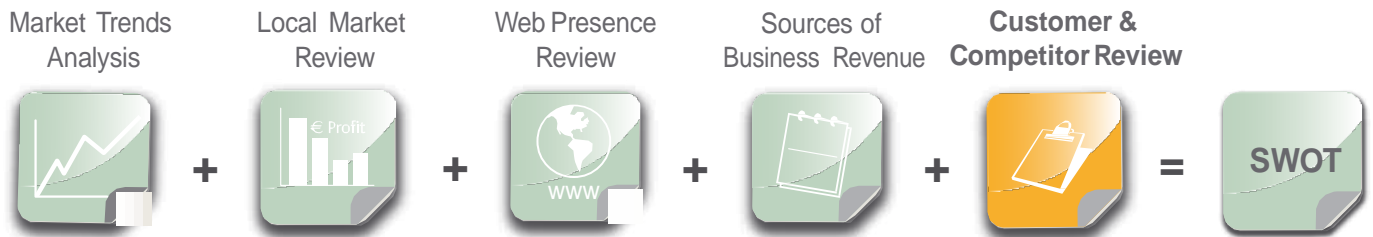


Review your key revenue streams over the past two years, e.g. leisure, corporate, events, tours and map your results using a simple pie chart. This is an easy way to get an overview of important changes in your business revenue streams. Where possible, use actual figures from your own financial results rather than estimates. It may be interesting to see if there are any major differences between last year's and this year's figures.



Question to ask yourself.. Is my business over reliant on one segment? Compare this to where the trends are going...are you fighting an uphill battle and is it time to change?

Customer Review



How is your business viewed in the eyes of your customers?

The answer to this question is critical to your future revenue streams. You must have a clear objective understanding of how your customer rates your service offering. If your business is achieving very high customer satisfaction ratings this should lead to customer loyalty, positive word of mouth and a high level of repeat business. If your scores are low, then your level of repeat business will be low and your business may be suffering from negative word of mouth, further damaging your business.

Review customer feedback for this year. Consider what remedial action may need to be taken. Look at both quantitative findings, such as overall results from customer feedback forms, as well as qualitative findings, such as reports on meetings with customers.

Sources of data include:

- Focus groups reports
- Customer comment cards, requests etc
- Online reviews (*be sure you have a policy to engage with online review sites such as Trip Advisor*)
- Comments on your website
- Mystery shopper research
- Feedback from staff interaction with customers
- Sales figures



The easiest way to capture information is often at the first sales contact. Aim to record details quickly, so that you don't make people wait, while still capturing the critical details (*such as an email address*) you need for your marketing. Aim for your customers to buy from you even if you charge a higher price than the closest competitor. To maintain customer loyalty you need to budget some money and time for a 'customer loyalty plan' rather than taking their loyalty for granted. Otherwise you might start losing loyal customers one by one, without realising the loss until it's too late.

Gaining new customers is far more expensive – apart from getting their attention, you may also have to get them to switch from their existing supplier. Once they are gone, it can be very difficult to get them back!

REMEMBER! Loyal customers will buy more, spend more and pay more. They are less likely to leave you if you make a mistake or to be lured away by competitor promotions.

Question to ask yourself. . Review customer retention rates across your key customer groups. Are you losing or gaining customers? Can you give reasons for any changes in your customer retention levels? Should you consider new ways of communicating with your customers?

Competitor Review

Your competitors are those companies that your customers also consider when buying any type of products or services. Therefore you need to think about competitors from your customer's viewpoint, rather than simply thinking of companies offering similar services in your area.

To complete a competitor review you need to know what other businesses are considered by your customers and also key criteria customers consider when choosing one business over another. These critical success factors will vary from segment to segment. For this reason, it is recommended that you carry out separate competitor analyses for your most important revenue streams.

Consider using your own staff, managers to help in conducting a competitor review...

In your marketing plan template you will find a number of blank competitor analysis tables to complete.

You need a detailed, up-to-date competitor analysis document to make sure you always know what new products or initiatives your competitors are planning and how you can compete. If new customers switch from competitors to you, you should know why.

Sample Competitor Analysis Template

<p>Customer Segment: <i>(Please note this is an example, the CSFs will vary depending on the segment you are reviewing)</i></p>	<p>Critical Success Factors (CSFs) What are the key items from the customer's point of view that any competitor has to do right to succeed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity 2. Grounds 3. Decor 4. 5. 				
<p>Strengths/Weaknesses Analysis Compare yourself and each of your competitors across the critical success factors. This exercise should also help you identify areas for improvement for your business as well as helping you to identify your competitive advantage.</p>					
<p>CSF</p>	<p>My Business</p>	<p>Competitor A</p>	<p>Competitor B</p>	<p>Competitor C</p>	<p>Competitor D</p>
<p>Capacity</p>					
<p>Grounds</p>					
<p>Style</p>					
<p>Reputation</p>					
<p>Service</p>					
<p>Price Basic Package</p>					
<p>Price Luxury Package</p>					
<p>Other?</p>					

You are now able to identify your competitive advantage, i.e. how you can differentiate yourself from the competition and how you can identify the key issues that need to be addressed to ensure future success of your business. This will in turn feed in to your SWOT analysis at the end of this section.

Creating Your Competitive Advantage

Regardless of what you do, a well-defined competitive advantage is possibly the single most important aspect of your business that you must get right. You need to strengthen and defend your point of difference and communicate it well to your customers, staff and suppliers. Beyond simply being good at what you do, you also have to demonstrate that you can do something better than the nearest competitor - and tell people about it. Communicate your competitive advantage. Is the key reason that you are in business clear to everyone? Feature your advantage statement on your business cards, website, brochures and make sure everyone in your business can respond to the question 'what is your competitive advantage?' with the same message.

Remember – no business can survive for very long if it doesn't have some real points of difference from other businesses.

SWOT Analysis

You now have built up a good picture of how your business is performing and what the opportunities and threats are in the market place. The SWOT analysis tool is a very useful way of capturing these critical findings and making sense of them. It's like taking a photograph of where your business is currently. Use it to identify the most important internal (*strengths and weaknesses*) and external (*opportunities and threats*) factors for your business.

Identifying and noting your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is the first step. The second step is to maintain and enhance your strengths, address your weaknesses, capitalise or exploit your opportunities and seek to minimise the impact of threats to your business.

For example, in your competitive analysis, you may have found that your competitors are beating you on better service, so service training may be an action point for the year ahead. These actions can feed into your action plan.

A SWOT analysis should be completed every few months and should change with each revision to represent how you are addressing internal weaknesses, maintaining your strengths and exploiting your opportunities.

Study the SWOT analysis – the answers to your marketing strategy and future direction are in there...Careful analysis will reveal this!!

Key questions to ask yourself when completing a SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Advantages of your product / service offering?</p> <p>Competitive advantages?</p> <p>USPs (unique selling points)?</p> <p>Experience, knowledge, data?</p> <p>Financial reserves?</p> <p>Marketing – Brand Awareness?</p> <p>Web presence and activity?</p> <p>Social Networking expertise?</p> <p>e-marketing activity?</p> <p>Distribution?</p> <p>Customer base?</p> <p>Location?</p> <p>Price, value, quality?</p> <p>Accreditations, qualifications, certifications, awards?</p>	<p>Disadvantages of your product / service offering?</p> <p>Gaps in capabilities?</p> <p>Lack of competitive strength?</p> <p>Poor web presence?</p> <p>Absence of social networking?</p> <p>Lack of e-marketing skills?</p> <p>Reputation?</p> <p>Financials?</p> <p>Known vulnerabilities?</p> <p>Timescales, deadlines and pressures?</p> <p>Cashflow?</p> <p>Morale, commitment, leadership?</p> <p>Accreditations?</p> <p>Processes and systems? Management expertise, succession? Loss of key staff?</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Market developments?</p> <p>Competitors' vulnerabilities?</p> <p>Industry or lifestyle trends?</p> <p>Technology development and innovation?</p> <p>Social networking opportunities?</p> <p>e-commerce potential?</p> <p>Global influences?</p> <p>New markets?</p> <p>Niche target markets?</p> <p>Business and product development?</p> <p>Information and research?</p> <p>Partnerships, agencies, distribution?</p>	<p>Legislative/Regulatory effects?</p> <p>Environmental effects?</p> <p>IT developments?</p> <p>Competitor intentions?</p> <p>Market demand?</p> <p>New technologies, services, ideas?</p> <p>Vital contracts and partners?</p> <p>Sustainable financial backing?</p> <p>Economy - home, abroad?</p> <p>Seasonality, weather effects?</p> <p>Untrained staff?</p>

Strategic Options



Now that you have completed your analysis of the market, your competitors, your customers and brought together your key findings in your SWOT analysis, you are able to consider your strategic options.

Defend Market Share

For many businesses, defending market share is a critical strategy for the year ahead. This strategic objective can be achieved in a number of ways, from increased marketing (*e.g. sales promotions*) to competitive pricing strategies.

Grow The Business (Market Penetration / New Markets)

In your analysis you may have identified markets that show good growth potential. You can grow through either increasing sales to your existing customers, attracting new customers, creating new products and services to capture new markets or a combination of these strategies. You may also be able to increase your market through improved distribution channels.

Product / Service Innovation

This is a new product to be marketed to your existing customers. Here you develop and innovate new product offerings to replace existing ones. Such products are then marketed to your existing customers. Many companies make incremental improvements to their service offerings, but few succeed in creating service innovations that generate new markets or reshape existing ones.

Move Into Different Market Sectors / Diversify

For some businesses, selling part or all of a business is the most cost effective strategy. The reasons for such a decision can range from declining markets to the need to raise capital for other, more lucrative projects. Some businesses need to consider diversification, that is going into completely new markets and seeking a new set of customers.

Whatever strategy you choose you must then make the strategy become a reality by creating objectives. Later in the plan, you will set out your specific marketing action points to implement the plan.



Question to ask yourself.. What is your best option? ...where do you see the most appropriate direction for your business?

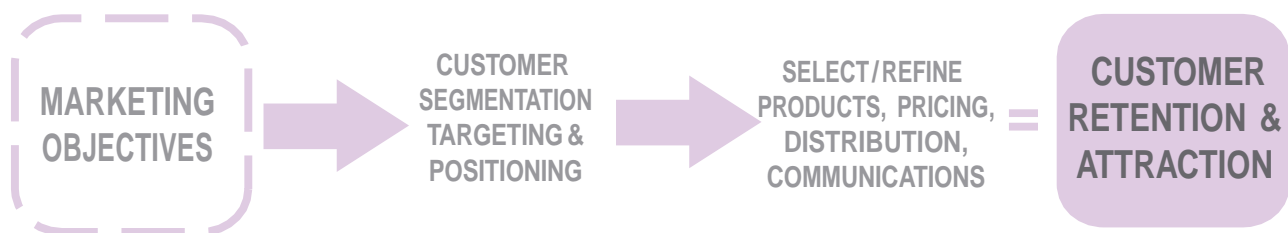
You are now moving on to Step 2 of the planning process – develop your marketing strategy.

Step 2: Develop Your Marketing Strategy

Where do we want to be?

Now that you have completed your analysis of the market, your competitors, your customers, your web presence and e-commerce status and brought together your key findings in your SWOT analysis and considered your strategic options, you are now in a position to address the question *'Where do we want to be?'*

Step 2: Develop your Marketing Strategy - Where do we want to be?



Setting Your Marketing Objectives

Your marketing objectives are a clear expression of what your business wants to achieve in marketing terms in the future planning period. Your marketing objectives should be short and snappy and it might be useful to present them as bulleted or numbered points. The detailed actions required to meet your objectives will be presented in the action plan.

In setting your marketing objectives, consider your desired business mix for the year ahead. From your earlier analysis you should already be able to assess the areas of your business that show potential for growth as well as those that are more at risk, due for example, to increased competition or reduced spending power. This should lead you to creating objectives around sales and market share.

You may also have identified issues around customer satisfaction that need to be addressed and so can be written up as objectives. You will also of course have financial objectives, relating to profits and performance.

You can capture each of the criteria in a single sentence.

Examples of good objectives:

- Achieve total revenue of €2 m by end of next year, representing an increase of 4% on this year. (You could create some sub-objectives here to deliver on the top-line objective, e.g. identifying which parts of the business will deliver the increased revenue, e.g. to increase leisure sales from €500 k to €700 k etc. In your action plan you will then identify the specific activities that will help you deliver on this objective.)
- To raise the average customer satisfaction scoring from 3.5 to 4.5 out of 5 by December next.
- To seek out new corporate business and seek a 5% increase in revenue

Note: at least one of your objectives is likely to be qualitative, such as improving some aspect of your business, for example, creating or improving your database.

As highlighted previously, you now need to decide what your desired business mix is for next year.



Customer Segmentation and Targeting



It is important to break down your market into segments / groups of customers who have similar characteristics.

If you say that your target customer is “everybody” then nobody will be your customer.

Choosing your customer segments will help you to develop relevant products and services as well as target your promotional activities when we get to the Action Plan. Don’t scatter your efforts! This is particularly important for directing a particular marketing strategy to a specific group.

When reviewing your customer groups/segments, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there segments in my market that are being underserved?
- Are the segments for my product or service big enough to make money?
- Is there too much competition in the segment for me to be competitive?
- What are the weaknesses in my competition's offering that I can capitalise on?
(Note: you should have identified any weaknesses in your competitive analysis)
- Does my market want or value my unique competitive offering?
- What segments should I be targeting from the domestic / overseas markets?
An example of a segment is the weddings segment as will be shown below.

Development of Personas

– a Useful Tool for Segmenting Your Market:

To help you in deciding on the groups of potential customers you wish to target it may be useful to develop personas. Create a 'virtual customer' who is based on a real customer and match your offering to his or her requirements.

Personas are a really valuable tool for helping you to put a 'face' on your target market. Here's a really quick way to build up a persona. Say you want to focus on the wedding market. Rather than thinking about 'the wedding market', put a photo of a typical bride on the centre of the page. Let's give her a name, Deirdre. When you start making decisions about marketing strategies for the wedding market, you should check back with 'Deirdre' and ask if it would motivate her. Are the communication channels you are using the most effective channels? How could you reach her more effectively? Where does she go for information? What messages does she need to hear and what will motivate her to choose one venue over the other? This is the basic model for persona development. Here is a template to help guide you through the process.



Detail Deirdre

Age: 29

Status: Bride to Be!

Occupation: Supervisor in Financial Services

Deirdre is actively planning her wedding in 8 month's time. She's coordinating every aspect from bridesmaid's hair & makeup to church, menus, cars & invitations. She likes to go into every detail but would like a little help too!

Demographics	What motivates Deirdre?
Age: ca. 29	Top criteria in booking wedding venue: Wants to be a bit different (<i>but not daring</i>) to impress her friends
Gender: Female	Other criteria: Deirdre's a perfectionist so likes assurance about quality, awards, testimonials
Education: University	Definition of perfect wedding: The perfect day, but with something unusual and memorable – a surprise
Location: Lives within 10 miles of venue	Likes: Detail, lots of communication
Decision Maker: She decides!	Dislikes: Surprises about hidden costs
Influencers: Close friend and bridesmaid, Sarah. Also her mother (<i>particularly around choice of menu</i>).	Biggest challenge: She is very proud and wants to put on a good show but can't afford all the trimmings. Very sensitive on this point.

Touchpoints – where Deirdre goes for information:	Options to engage with Deirdre:
Top blogs:	Blogs:
Influential online reviewers:	PR:
Print media, mags:	Wedding Fair:
Other media, e.g. radio/TV:	Advertising:
Friends:	Direct Marketing:
Family:	Other:

Create personas for your **top four** segments. Remember personas are representations of people from your target markets. If you don't know the answers in order to be able to complete your personas, then you need to find out. Personas help you to understand how your customers think, what their priorities are and how and where you need to engage with your customers.

Once you have selected the segment/s you want to target in the year ahead, you need to consider how you want to be perceived by your customers in that segment.

Positioning Your Offering

Let us go back to our customer persona, 'Deirdre'. Say you want to target the wedding market, consider how you want your persona to perceive your offering versus the competition. The word 'positioning' means how you are perceived in the minds of your customers. The communications channels you use, the image you project, your branding and delivery of that brand experience all help to build up your position in the market place.

Remember: A good brand conveys credibility and trust, which are worth gold to your business.

Recognising a business name you have 'seen somewhere before' makes you feel more comfortable dealing with that business. Many people respond to visual signals, and seeing a business name again and again reassures potential customers. Decide where you need recognition. Is it just in your street, your town, your region or the whole country?

Tailor your tactics accordingly. National TV advertising or advertising on search engines like Google and Bing are less relevant if you only want to target people within a 10km radius of your business.

In the wedding market, do you want to be perceived as the venue that offers the most unique and luxurious experience, or do you want to be perceived as the venue that can help the bride make her budget go further? Whatever you decide, you must ensure all your marketing materials reflect the position you want to hold in the marketplace. You must also ensure that the real experience is as you promise.

Remember it is your customers, not you, who decide how you are perceived in the marketplace.



Select and Refine Products/ Service Offerings, Pricing, Distribution & Communications



You are now ready to 'package' your offering so that it is appealing to your target market. You have used your customer persona to help you understand how your customer seeks out information, who influences him or her and what types of messages are likely to motivate the customer to buy. You may have gained some insight into your customer's unfulfilled needs that could give you an opportunity to innovate around your service offering, or to bundle your service offering with other products, such as equestrian, golf, surfing or guided walk packages.

Pricing Strategy

Your pricing strategy is crucial to your service offering. Price comparisons are quick and easy for the consumer. Packagers and auction sites make it easy for consumers but tourism businesses are not commodities. For example, businesses differ in location, feature and benefits. You must therefore emphasise your business's distinctive positioning and resist the urge to simply match the lowest price offered.

Discount too low and you may find that you are not in a position to increase your price when the economic environment improves...

A sound pricing structure helps you generate sales and build customer loyalty. The wrong pricing structure can leave businesses struggling to service customers and reach profitability. To determine pricing structures for your products and services, steer clear of these four common pricing mistakes. Also remember your time and expertise has a cost element to it and you should be conscious of this when developing your pricing structure.

Four Common Pricing Mistakes

1. Underselling

To set realistic prices, you need to be aware of all costs involved in producing your product or service. This includes easy to track costs such as the price of supplies, as well as less tangible costs associated with the skills and knowledge you bring to the table. Some businesses set prices that do not account for all of these expenses. They may forget to add in overhead such as utilities or rent, or have difficulty putting a price tag on the value of their time.

Remember: Understanding your costs is the foundation for making pricing decisions. This can help identify areas for attention, where to look for substitutions and efficiencies and when to look for other opportunities. Ensure that you have looked at your variable costs for each area of your business. Do you understand your fixed cost structure?

2. Following the competition

Basing your pricing structure on the competition is dangerous because of the following:

- a) You are assuming that your competitors are really good at pricing and
- b) You are assuming that the costs competitors use to calculate their prices are the same as your own.

Your competitors may pay suppliers less or more than you do, employ different service levels, and have larger or smaller payroll costs. You would need to know how much competitors charge so you can confirm that your prices are realistic for the market. If you notice your figures are much lower than competitors, check to be sure you have not left something out of the pricing equation.

Remember: Define the value you offer to your customers. Only you have the knowledge of the value you deliver to your customers and this knowledge will afford you greater control and confidence in your pricing. Interview your customers to find out how they view your products and services.

3. Competing on price

Setting prices solely to beat the competition is a shaky proposition. You are bound to attract buyers this way, but they are unlikely to be loyal customers. If low cost attracted these customers to your business, the likelihood is that they will abandon your company when a less expensive option comes along.

Getting into a price war with your competitors without adjusting the value of the product or service will just send you and your competition swirling into a downward pricing death spiral where no one wins. A better approach is to differentiate your business from competitors by focusing on developing a distinctive competency that will lead to a competitive edge e.g. superior customer service, enhanced service features, great value or enhanced customer responsiveness.

Remember: We often underestimate the volume lift in sales required to compensate for a drop in price. By taking this route on pricing, an assumption is made that the lower the price, the higher the volume but more often than not this leads to lower margins and in turn, reduced product and service levels.

4. Lowering prices without changing service delivery

Clients will often try to haggle a better deal from your company. This can put you in a difficult position. Delivering at a lower price can:

- a) Inadvertently send the message that your initial prices were too high, and all future business is open to price negotiation.
- b) Also put immense pressure on your business to recoup all costs involved in delivering the service

A better approach is to agree to a lower price, but change the level of service slightly. For example, reduced rate for accommodation but breakfast not included.

Remember: Create a range of low to high value offerings. Bundle your products and services and establish price accordingly. This will enable you to appease both cost-conscious and value-conscious customers without cutting prices.

Distribution Channels / Routes to Market

Having the right Distribution Channels or 'Route to Market' approach is a critical element for success in all businesses, large and small. Distribution refers to the way in which consumers find out about your product and the channels they use to research it and make bookings.

Yet many companies have never systematically assessed the options and choices for getting their products or services into the hands of consumers and most of those that have, do not review their approach on a regular basis.

A question to ask yourself is once a person in one of your target markets is interested in buying, how does he/ she reach you?

For example, your reservation office, website, social network, the central reservation system and airline global distribution systems, are all parts of a distribution network. Travel agents, corporate travel managers, meeting planners and leisure customers reach your business through this network. Travel industry distribution channels are in chaos by virtue of the shift of travel agencies from commission to fee for service models, the rise of the Internet as a consumer's direct booking channel and online third party intermediaries like Expedia and Travelocity. Increasingly the Internet may become your key distribution channel, but you must be able to manage two parallel systems, the traditional central reservation system and travel agency channel and the new electronic channels. This may be looked upon as a sort of balancing act, whereby you plan how much of your inventory (*rooms*) you wish to commit to traditional channels (*tour operators, walk-ins etc*) and the proportion you wish to allocate to the online 3rd party sites. Keeping track can be a challenge, but with careful management you will be best able to optimise all channels and maximise potential bookings.

Consider the following factors when developing your distribution plan:

- How and when does your target market purchase your tourism product? Do they tend to book direct, online, through a travel agent or after they arrive in Ireland?
- What distributors are likely to sell and promote your product? Do your research. What agents and wholesalers are active in this market, are already selling Irish products and have the same target market as you do?
- Check the Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland websites for the relevant statistics.



Question to ask yourself. Do I have the relevant research information to know what overseas markets to target and how I am going to reach these markets?

Working with Partners

Working in partnership with marketing organisations or other tourism businesses can greatly increase the effectiveness of your marketing efforts. Tour operators, travel agents, Regional Convention Bureaux, professional conference organisers, destination management companies, corporate and incentive planners and the travel media all have valuable experience and an established reputation in the tourism sector. Partnering with these organisations can benefit a new business by establishing your credibility, increasing your profile and broadening your marketing reach. You may wish to promote your tourism product directly to the visitor, or you may wish to diversify the way your product goes to market. The further away your target market, the more beneficial it is to work with sales partners such as tour operators to help you sell your product. Tour operators can be essential in helping a tourism business sell a product and a destination. Through their in-market sales activities and access to the international marketplace, tour operators provide businesses with an effective and affordable way of targeting international consumers.

Remember, if you are targeting the international conference area or the corporate and incentive travel market, this area is a very sophisticated market sector and requires a different approach to working with tour operators and travel agents.

Fáilte Ireland has a dedicated Business Tourism Unit which specifically handles this area of business tourism. This unit is always available to give advice in relation to conference, and corporate and incentive business and can assist you if you are targeting this area of business.

Our Business Tourism Team works to encourage and support Irish businesses and associations to host international meetings and conferences in Ireland. This is done through promoting Ireland as a destination for international conferences, corporate meetings and incentive travel. Our Business Tourism Team's specific focus is on developing Ireland's full potential as a business tourism destination and this is done by offering the following supports:

- Financial support
- Detailed assistance when bidding to hold a conference
- Assistance with site inspections
- Marketing assistance for conferences
- Introductions to the Regional Convention Bureaux (as required, and in turn to trade partners)

Further information:

Conference and meetings area, find out more [here](#)

Incentive Travel, find out more [here](#)

Packaging Your Products

To sell your products in the international marketplace they need to be visible – a good way of doing this is to combine your product with other complimentary products to create a package. This can be achieved by working with other 'like-minded' tourism operators to form a marketing cluster that enables you to offer wholesalers, agents and inbound operators a single product at a higher value.

There are a few things to consider if you are thinking of working with other operators to bundle your products:

- Make sure you know who you're going to be working with. Do a thorough check of the products the other operators are adding to the bundle and make sure they meet your expectations of quality, safety and professionalism.
- Choose products that complement each other. The other products in the bundle should complement each other in some way - so they all appeal to your target market - while offering a different kind of experience that will be of value to your customers.
- Consider how you will market the offering. Once you have developed your package it should be marketed separately to the rest of your business. Consider the distribution channels you will use and develop the appropriate brochures and other marketing material.
- Assign one party to handle bookings and administration. It's best that one business holds responsibility for all the bookings and financial processing of the package. They will need to be responsible for sharing earnings from the package to the other operators involved, at previously agreed levels.
- Price it right. Agree pricing for a 12-18 month period and don't forget to build in the appropriate commission structure.
- Draw up a legal agreement. It's a good idea to draw up a legal agreement between the companies involved in the package.

Targeting the Overseas Markets

One of the trickiest aspects of selling your product overseas is getting to know the international travel distribution process. It's important to spend some time identifying the most cost-effective and appropriate distribution method for your business. Travel distribution is different in each country and consumers prefer to book different products in different ways. For example, many travelers still book flights through their travel agent, but may book their accommodation online through an online travel agent and their activities direct with the operator once they arrive in Ireland.

In recent years, the distribution chain in some markets has become more simplified, with fewer intermediaries involved in the process. It pays to know how travel sellers sell their products in the markets in which you plan to operate. You will need to allow for appropriate commission structures, depending on the structure of the distribution chain.

The best distribution channel for your tourism business will depend on the product you are selling and the outcome you are looking to achieve. Don't attempt to engage with every distribution channel in a particular market. Choose the one that is best for you. As already highlighted, packaging with other operators may also be a good option.

Trade Shows

Exhibiting at trade shows and other exhibitions gives you a unique opportunity to generate new leads, find suppliers, check out the competition and do some networking. What you can achieve at one trade show would take you weeks or months to do so if you stayed at home. But this requires careful planning, including choosing the correct show, setting clear objectives, creating an effective exhibition and promoting your presence.

Choosing the Correct Show

Picking the right trade show can be quite daunting, even once you've narrowed the choices to your particular target market. Big trade shows are not necessarily the best ones to attend. You want to find one that will attract buyers or prospective customers for your product or service. Look closely at statistics of past years shows to help you evaluate whether attendees fit your customer profile. The show manager should be able to provide you with this data.

Fáilte Ireland can offer you specialist advice and support in helping you choose the right show for your business. Make sure you keep up to date on trade shows and publicity events. Find out more and register your interest [here](#).

Tip.....To get the most out of a trade show investment, clearly identify your purpose and set measurable goals you can evaluate afterwards. Everything you do before, during, and after the show should contribute to achieving the goals.

Question to ask yourself.. Should I attend a trade or consumer show? Trade and consumer shows are different. If you want to attract tour groups organised by tour operators, then choose trade shows. If you want contact with individual consumers then choose a consumer show. Some shows appeal to both and have different days for trade and consumer customers.



E-marketing and Selling to your Customer – a Key Route to Market

Reaching and selling to customers through websites, e-mail, texts and social networking sites is an essential channel in the marketing plan of today's tourism business. You may have wide experience in e-marketing or you may be new to this form of marketing activity. Either way, having analysed where you are positioned, you can now move forward with an e-business plan. Let's begin with your website and how you can use it more effectively.

Search Engine Optimisation

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), the practice of choosing targeted keyword phrases related to a site, and ensuring that the site is placed and ranked appropriately in the natural search results (*non-sponsored results that are delivered by a search engine when a user enters a search term*) of the search engines i.e. when those keywords / phrases are part of a Web search on Google/Yahoo/MSN etc.

There are many different issues that are important to consider and implement when it comes to SEO, which has been described as a science and indeed an art form! Here are five basic issues:



1. Key words and Key phrases
2. META DATA
3. Images - Alt Tags
4. Content - Headings
5. Inbound Links

1. Keywords and Key phrases

1. Create a list of keywords (30) *e.g. self catering, Donegal, Ireland, seaside, fishing*
2. Use the above words to create phrases *e.g. self catering Donegal, self catering Ireland, etc.*
3. List all pages on your website (*as each page should be optimised specifically*)

2. META DATA refers to: Data about data or information about information.

Simply put in relation to SEO, this information can be found in the code or source code of the website and describes individual pages and the information contained within.

To find this on the browser Internet Explorer

Go to 'View' on the main drop down menu select 'Source'

To find this on the browser Firefox

Go to 'View' on the main drop down menu select 'Page Source'

Title - The title of the page

Create a different title for each page including keywords where relevant.

e.g. <title>Discover Ireland - Fáilte Ireland's Official site for Home Holidays in Ireland</title>

Description - The description of the page

Create a different description for each page including keywords where relevant and also consider the call to action of this page (what do you want them to do).

e.g. <meta name="Description" content="Discover Ireland - Right Here, Right Now! Discover accommodation, attractions, activities, events. Let Fáilte Ireland plan your weekend or midweek breaks." />

The keywords - associated with that page

Keywords in this context are not as important as they used to be as most search engines do not take them into account. However the smaller search engines may do so and the bigger ones may change their mind? e.g. <meta name="Keywords" content="Discover Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Irish Holidays, Irish hotels, Irish accommodation, festivals, Dublin hotels, Ireland accommodation, Irish travel, Irish maps" />

3. Images - Alt Tags are the tags/titles that are associated with the image.

Ask yourself; how would you describe each image on your web site? (*Consider keeping it short and concise as if you were describing it to someone who can't see it and with as many keywords included as is logical*)

4. Content - Headings

Your content or copy should also contain keywords and key phrases that match points 2 and 3 above.

5. Inbound Links

Links from other web sites to yours are the most important links from an SEO point of view. They are referred to as inbound links (*coming in*). The reason they are important is because search engines pick up on them, so in essence they are akin to votes for your website. The best way to build the number of links to your website is to have a Reciprocal Links plan of action. i.e. List all the businesses locally/nationally that you could link to and those who could link to you. Start contacting those who could link to you and explain that you will also link back to them. Build on the same co-operation and networking strengths that you have.

Mirror

Each of the points above has one thing in common. Keywords which need to be relevant for each page of your site and mirrored to the words that link to your website (*e.g. words related to rooms should feature on your accommodation page of your website, words associated to food similarly should feature on your restaurant page etc*). Instead of just listing your web address could they also use and link to your site using for example: Self Catering Donegal <http://www.donegalselfcatering.ie/>



Why Should I Use Seo?

A web search engine is designed to search for information on the World Wide Web. The search results are usually presented in a list of results and are commonly called hits. The information may consist of web pages, images, information and other types of files.

(Source: www.THESEARCHGURU.COM/WHY-NEED-SEO.ASP)

- Nearly 80% of people searching for information online type phrases into a search engine's search box. Google alone fields over 91 million searches – per day! How much of that traffic do you want?
- In approximately 50% of online searches, potential customers select a company found on the first or second Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). So, if your company is not found in the first 10 to 20 results, you've already lost out on at least 50% of your potential business – while your competitors, who are highly ranked, are enjoying a lion's share of the traffic.
- Online sales are growing
Bottom line – when a potential customer performs a search via a search engine, do they find you or a competitor? SEO is your ticket to getting found.



Ten things you need to know about Facebook

1. Who is using Facebook?

Since its inception in February 2004, Facebook has grown significantly, with the average user spending 20 minutes a day actively using Facebook by uploading photos, sending messages, or even having discussions within a group. The highly coveted demographic (from 18 to 25 years old) is 52% of Facebook's userbase, averaging 30 to 45 minutes each day on the site.

2. What can you find on Facebook?

Simply put, if people have an interest, it is part of Facebook. A user just has to enter a topic, such as "golf societies" or "new technology," into the search box and then hit the "search" button. Up to 1,000 profiles are displayed, 20 at a time, starting with people in the user's network. If a user who belongs to a US golfing society network is searching for accommodation providers in Ireland who offer golf holidays, the results returned would be people in the US golfing society network first, followed by those in other networks.



From that point, a user can contact others by clicking "send message" or, if that user has a group, by clicking on the "invite to group" button. The user will see an increased number of members joining and participating in the group's message board discussions.

3. Why are people using Facebook?

For one thing, it's an easy icebreaker. Imagine a person who is into walking, specifically Hill-walking. In an attempt to find people who like the same pursuits, the person logs into Facebook and enters "Hill-walking" in the search box. Facebook then returns up to 1,000 users who have a similar interest. He or she can send messages to the people whose profiles came up during the search and set up a Hill-walking society from his computer.

Certain people join Facebook just to have their own place to upload photos so they can share them with friends and family. Other users offer competitions to Facebook Users for uploading photos of scenic areas of Ireland. Entrants to the competitions, for example can win prizes, this not alone entices entries but keeps a high profile for the business.

4. What are advertisers doing there?

Along with setting up a business page on Facebook, advertisers are increasingly viewing this medium as a means of selectively targeting demographic groupings to match their own sales and marketing strategies. They can choose their audience by location, age and interest, and begin to build a community around their business. They can also avail of a very practical approach to resource planning whereby they can set, monitor and control their daily spend.

Using Facebook to advertise can be invaluable. As a promotional tool, it has huge practical, low-cost potential. Say a local festival is planned for an area, and the organisers wish not only to promote the event, but send out a call to groups associated to the theme of the event for input/support. Using Facebook, they can just type in the name of the theme being promoted and get a larger base to send materials to. Local businesses can then align themselves to the event and expand the range of products and services to attract attention and through competitions offer a further enticement to targeted groups to engage further.



5. Who else is joining the Facebook network?

More than half of Facebook users are no longer in college or university, while users 25 and older are now the fastest growing demographic for the social networking site, the average age is seemingly creeping up and the more mature user is becoming more and more prominent.

As they say if you are not in you can't win! – so by tapping into this network and carefully choosing your target demographic, you increase the potential of getting your business name tossed into the web-hosting fray, and although it may be a case of small beginnings, all it takes is impressing a few people, and it'll expand from there. The more people are talking about you referring your product/ services to their friends you improve the opportunity to increase business.

People use Facebook to keep in touch, often using the Groups tool to invite former colleagues and friends to upcoming events, such as festivals, local events, product launches, presentations etc. all of which are opportunities to get your business name profiled.

6. What groups are now on Facebook?

There are countless groups on Facebook, which run the gamut from political groups to current events to self-promotional campaigns.

Within the groups, users are free to post photos and write on the group's "wall," (a type of forum) to speak with others who share their interests. Political groups and "just-for-fun" groups are not the only options, however. There are a number of Facebook groups for professional organisations, such as the Library 2.0 Interest Group, Media 2.0 and the Irish Hospitality Institute (IHI) also have groups.

7. Why is Facebook so popular for sharing photos?

Uploading photos is easy thanks to Facebook's easy-to-use interface. The browser-based programme shows a grid of thumbnail-sized pictures while the user clicks a checkbox on the photos he or she wants to upload.

8. How do you find old friends and new colleagues?

By using Facebook's search feature, a user just needs to type someone's name and four options (send message, poke, view friends, and add to friends) will appear next to a small thumbnail picture of the person.

If the person shares a network with the user and allows non- friends to see his or her profile (*see the section on privacy settings below*), a user can click on the thumbnail picture, which brings up relevant data about the person, such as education information, musical tastes, and favorite TV shows, among others.

A user can also search for people from any network simply by typing a portion of the network's name in the search field then clicking on the relevant network, which works well if an old acquaintance has a common name.



9. What about privacy?

Facebook allows users to control their thumbnail views, which is shown when another user searches based on name or keyword. Everyone can use Facebook's privacy settings to control who can see his or her full profile. If a user is in a network and another person's profile is public, he or she can click on the thumbnail picture to view the profile. Likewise, if the profile options are set to private, the user must be "friends" with the second party to view the profile. There is also an option to show only a limited profile, which is user-defined by the privacy settings. *(Source: Krivak, T; Ten things you need to know about Facebook)*

10. How do I go about setting up an account on Facebook?

Instructions for setting up a Facebook account can be found on the ehow website [here](#):

Sample Facebook Guide for a Guesthouse

as part of overall Social Media Strategy

Main objectives for the Facebook campaign:

1. To increase brand awareness and PR
2. To drive indirect revenue
3. To increase customer loyalty

Perception that the current 'fans' of the Guesthouse's Facebook page tended to be locals. This would need to be monitored and analysed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are getting the balance of content right for their audience.

With the current audience it was felt that they could grow the following business areas:

1. Weddings

2. BBQ and other events

3. Bar entertainment and food

It was agreed to split the percentage of content that was presented on the main hotel Facebook page as follows:

30% - Events taking place in the Guesthouse

15% - Chat about the Guesthouse *(atmosphere, weddings etc)*

15% - Local events

10% - Competitions

10% - Special Offers *(accommodation, food)*

10% - Food & Beverage *(content from the Chef – advice, tips, link to recipes in the local newspaper)*

7% - Staff profiling *(key HODs, employee of the month etc)*

3% - Sponsorships *(e.g. local teams, highlighting when they are playing and if they win; plus potential of aligning competitions to this area).*

Guesthouse restaurant - the page content will focus on the following:

1. **News:** themed evenings, special wines
2. **Events:** kids entertainment
3. **Dining offers for local people**

It was agreed frequent updates should be posted on Facebook – this could be achieved daily *e.g. suggested following times which would work best for the team:*

1. **Sunday** – early morning before checkouts
2. **Saturday** – evening when the desk is quiet
3. **Monday to Friday** – evenings when the desk is quiet

Twitter

Ten things you need to know to get started on Twitter

A huge number of companies now have a Twitter presence. Some massive brands use the micro-blogging platform to manage their reputations and spread awareness. Other smaller firms use it to build relationships and directly find work and sales.



But whatever you want to achieve, what do you need to know in order to get started? Some tourism businesses are still scared, or at least cautious about taking that first step onto Twitter. So let's run down this list of 10 tips on the best ways to get started on Twitter.

1. Using Twitter is simple; using it well is a challenge

However complicated it may seem when you first log on to your new account, Twitter is a simple platform.

- You can write 140-character updates that will be seen by your followers and also watch a news stream of comments left by people you follow.
- To direct a comment at a specific follower, simply prefix their name with "@" -- for example, "@ kevgibbo + your message."
- Send a direct message (one that can't be seen by anyone other than the recipient) by prefixing a name with a "d" -- for example: "d kevgibbo + your message."
- Twitter has also created new grammar the hashtag #. This allows people to conduct simple searches and see what people are saying about a topic *e.g. #Ireland Great airfare sale to the Emerald Isle; as low as \$398 from JFK. Some people use the hashtag ironically to convey humour, without expecting their chosen term to catch on. For example, someone might tweet about how marvellous their recent SEO campaign has been and then add #modesty.*

That's the bare bones of using Twitter. Using it effectively is much, much harder, which you'll see in the next nine tips.

2. Twitter needs a strategy

Before you begin investing time and energy in Twitter, sit down and work out what you want to use it for. Using Twitter only because everyone else is using it won't win you success. Do you want to build small scale relationships or market a major brand? Do you intend to actually drive business using your Twitter account or simply drive people to your website? Unless you know your goals, you won't be able to measure your success.

3. Your account must look professional

Before you start using your Twitter account, make sure it looks professional. Update your biography, add the company logo as an avatar (*this is a visual representation of your business, could be a logo, brand image etc that encapsulates your business and customises your page*). Some people's first interaction with your brand will be via Twitter, so make sure it's as professional as your website and business.

4. You should search for mentions...

Monitor Twitter for mentions of your brand, products, well-known staff, any terms that people might conceivably use to reference you. Twitter will present you with any specific mentions of your account name but you can also run searches. Using software like TweetDeck or Hootsuite allows you to set up permanent searches and be presented with relevant tweets as they happen (and visually display several social media platforms on the one page).



5. ...and reply

You are using Twitter in order to have conversations with people. If there's a positive mention of your brand, thank the person who made it. If it's negative, then apply positive customer service tactics and address the problem; often a positive resolution can turn a critic into a fan. If someone asks a question then answer it. Be as polite on Twitter as you would be at a conference where you deal with people in person.

6. Spamming harms brands

Several brands (and even politicians) have fallen down on Twitter because they don't really understand how people use it. The platform is social and has to be used socially. If you are intrusive, you will alienate the people you want to win over.

Tweet links to blog posts, comments, thoughts, questions, even special offers now and again. But don't simply pour out sales pitches. People won't follow you and anyone encountering your tweets won't leave with a good impression of your brand.

By the way, following thousands of people to try and build your own followers is spam, even if you aren't sending them sales pitches.

7. Automated actions are useless

Twitter needs to be hand fed because it's all about quality, not quantity. You can't automate personable, social tweeting. Also, the roll-out of top tweets means that quality is already beginning to be more rewarded, while those aiming for quantity of tweets will quickly gain a bad reputation as spammers! By auto-following new followers, retweeting mentions, and automatically tweeting blog posts, you may have a working Twitter account, but it won't be working well.

8. Your followers want value

Why should people follow you on Twitter? What will they get out of it? Whether it's humorous tweets, inspired analysis and tips, links to fascinating blog posts, industry breaking news, or discount vouchers, you must add value to their Twitter experience. Otherwise you're spamming and you'll struggle to gain any followers.

9. Make your tweets retweetable

You may only have a few followers certainly at first. So you want your followers to retweet your posts to their followers, spreading the word about your brand. If your tweets are valuable enough, then that shouldn't be a problem. Also, make it easy for people to retweet. Keep your comment as short as possible because, when people retweet it, they will have to add "RT username" at the start. If you've used all 140 characters, then people will have to edit your words or chop off the link or, even worse, use the new retweet button!

10. Twitter magnifies mistakes

Get it wrong on Twitter and you risk a storm of mockery, especially if your brand is well known. Or, if a disgruntled employee tweets something abusive from your corporate account, it could be retweeted hundreds of thousands of times before the company even knows it's happened. Even a small brand that tweets too intrusively will find that recipients complain to their followers.

When you work out your strategy, work out some ground rules and make sure that everyone using your account understands them. *(Source: Gibbons, K; 10 things you need to know to get started on Twitter)*

e-Mail Marketing

Many tourism businesses can mine valuable data every time a guest registers and this can be used effectively for marketing. E-mail is very effective in achieving personalised communication. You can send customers birthday wishes, invite past brides to celebrate an anniversary or target special offers.



Communications Channels

When selecting your service offerings, communications and distribution channels, you need to constantly ask yourself:

- Am I talking to my customer through the right channels of communication?
- Am I present in the right social media channels?
- Are we using the best words in my Pay-Per-Click (PPC) campaigns (as will be discussed later in this Guide)?
- Am I talking to my customers when and where they are able to make a decision?
- Does my offering have real value-added for my customer?

Your communications strategy will vary depending on the type of customer you are addressing, how you want to position your product in the mind of the customer and your channel of distribution. As already highlighted, make sure your business has a relevant website and you are connected with your staff, suppliers and customers through the latest remote working technology.

Developing a PR Strategy

Public Relations is a technique for communicating with various audiences through a wide range of media. It can begin by establishing effective communications with your own staff through an Intranet, Newsletters, news posted on Notice Boards or direct face-to-face communications.

Remember, your own staff can be effective marketers for your business.

Selecting targeted audiences is the key to good public relations. There is no point in having worldwide publicity on the web or a spot on the 'Late Late Show' if your entire market lies within your own town or community. Begin therefore by listing the audiences you would like to reach - your local population, golfers, Golden Years guests, brides-to-be etc. Next, research the media which these groups are likely to access - the local newspaper, a golfing magazine, a Brides supplement or website, a senior citizens newspaper. Now consider how you can create something that will be of interest to the publishers and editors of these media. Remember, their interest is their readers - not you. When you come up with an idea - an interesting story about local golf facilities, a unique wedding offering, facilities for older people etc., contact the editor or a journalist in the targeted media and see if the item is likely to be of interest. If you get a positive reaction, write your piece and send it by e-mail to your journalist contact together with a good quality, relevant photograph. Use a similar technique to get publicity on local or even national radio.

Many programmes feature competitions with holiday breaks as prizes and you can often provide the prize for these, simply by asking. When approaching radio stations contact the producer rather than the presenter. Many opportunities also exist for publicity in national newspapers. Most now run holiday and travel sections and feature 'special offers' and novel holiday ideas. Make sure that you send the section editors details. If they don't know about your special offers, they cannot feature them in their newspaper.

PR opportunities exist on travel and holiday websites, in the local press and radio, in Church newsletters.... indeed in all print and electronic media. Contacts in these media are vital to effective PR, so get to know your local journalists, editors and producers and make yourself known to others by contacting them frequently.

Sponsorship is also an aspect of PR and tourism businesses can achieve cost-effective sponsorship by offering services to local sports clubs, Festival Committees or even national events in exchange for guaranteed publicity.

You can also communicate directly with customers through a newsletter or an e-zine which will include news about your business and latest offers.

6 Tips for Free Publicity

1. Become known as an expert in your field. Start a blog or write a column about your area or activity (such as *'Cycling in Ireland'*). Give talks and demonstrations, write letters to the editor.
2. Send press releases to community newspapers or online sites
3. Start a blog to build positive conversations about your products or services
4. Use social networks like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and many others that are emerging
5. Pin messages on community message boards at libraries and supermarkets in your areas.
6. Create a newsworthy story around your seasonal launch each year or your activities.
For example, are you doing anything to save the environment?

Businesses in the tourism industry are ideally suited to joint marketing initiatives. Network with other businesses in your area; explore joint special offers; exchange website links and consider other ways to piggyback on each other's marketing efforts.



Choosing Advertising Media

It has been well said that half of all money spent on advertising is wasted - but nobody know which half that is.

Most businesses are inundated with invitations to advertise in a bewildering array of media and choosing the ideal media is a complex task.

The best strategy is again to select specific audiences you want to reach and then choose cost-effective media which reach those audiences. Various criteria can be used in selecting advertising media.

For instance:

How many people see or hear the advertisement? This involves more than actual audience. A radio advertisement for instance is heard only by people listening at that moment while a magazine advertisement may be seen repeatedly over a period of a week or month. Radio advertising on the other hand is more likely to elicit an immediate response.

How seriously will they take your message? An advertisement in a newspaper with excellent editorial content might be taken more seriously than the same advertisement in a freesheet. Is the audience right? A Brides magazine is obviously right for a wedding offer, but is a national newspaper advert right if your target audience is the local community?

Are you getting value? Media will be happy to quote you a price for advertising, but always ask the cost per reader or listener.

Much thought and money is invested by large corporations in designing their advertising. A small tourism business will not have similar resources, but you can:

- Ensure that the advertisement reflects the image and style of your business
- It communicates your brand values
- It clearly announces an offering
- It will attract an audience presented with many advertising messages
- Use only high quality visuals
- Keep text as concise as possible
- Use an attention-grabbing headline

In developing an advertising strategy within your marketing plan:

- Set a budget
- Create a schedule of advertising in carefully selected media
- Shop around for best value
- Allow flexibility for short-term advertising



Organising A PPC (Pay-Per-Click) Campaign

Pay per click (PPC) is an Internet advertising model used on websites, in which advertisers pay their host only when their ad is clicked. With search engines, advertisers typically bid on keyword phrases relevant to their target market. Content sites commonly charge a fixed price per click rather than use a bidding system.

Cost per click (CPC) is the amount of money an advertiser pays search engines and other Internet publishers for a single click on its advertisement that brings one visitor to its website. In contrast to the generalised portal, which seeks to drive a high volume of traffic to one site, PPC implements the so-called affiliate model that provides purchase opportunities wherever people may be surfing. It does this by offering financial incentives (*in the form of a percentage of revenue*) to affiliated partner sites. The affiliates provide purchase-point click-through to the merchant. It is a pay-for-performance model. If an affiliate does not generate sales, it represents no cost to the merchant. Variations include banner exchange, pay-per-click, and revenue sharing programmes.

Websites that utilise PPC ads will display an advertisement when a keyword query matches an advertiser's keyword list, or when a content site displays relevant content. Such advertisements are called sponsored links or sponsored ads, and appear adjacent to or above organic results on search engine results pages, or anywhere a web developer chooses on a content site.

Although many PPC providers exist, Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, and Microsoft adCenter are the three largest network operators, and all three operate under a bid-based model. Cost per click (CPC) varies depending on the search engine and the level of competition for a particular keyword.



Determining cost per click

There are two primary models for determining cost per click: flat-rate and bid-based. In both cases you must consider the potential value of a click from a given source. This value is based on the type of individual you are expecting to receive as a visitor to your website, and what the advertiser can gain from that visit, usually revenue, both in the short term as well as in the long term. As with other forms of advertising, targeting is key, and factors that often play into PPC campaigns include the target's interest (*often defined by a search term they have entered into a search engine, or the content of a page that they are browsing*), intent (*e.g. to purchase or not*), location (*for geo targeting*), and the day and time that they are browsing.

Flat-rate PPC

In the flat-rate model, the advertiser and publisher agree upon a fixed amount that will be paid for each click. In many cases the publisher has a rate card that lists the CPC within different areas of their website or network. These various amounts are often related to the content on pages, with content that generally attracts more valuable visitors having a higher CPC than content that attracts less valuable visitors.

However, in many cases advertisers can negotiate lower rates, especially when committing to a long-term or high-value contract.

Bid-based PPC

In the bid-based model, the advertiser signs a contract that allows them to compete against other advertisers in a private auction hosted by a publisher or, more commonly, an advertising network. Each advertiser informs the host of the maximum amount that he or she is willing to pay for a given ad spot (*often based on a keyword*), usually using online tools to do so. The auction plays out in an automated fashion every time a visitor triggers the ad spot.

In addition to ad spots, the major advertising networks allow for contextual ads to be placed on the properties of Third Parties with whom they have partnered. These publishers sign up to host ads on behalf of the network. In return, they receive a portion of the ad revenue that the network generates, which can be anywhere from 50% to over 80% of the gross revenue paid by advertisers. In general, ads on content networks have a much lower click-through rate (CTR) and conversion rate (CR) than ads found on SERPs and consequently are less highly valued.

Using Google Ads

What is Google AdWords?

With Google AdWords, you can create and run ads for your business, quickly and simply. You only pay when people click your ads.

AdWords ads are displayed along with search results when someone searches Google using one of your keywords. Ads appear under 'Sponsored links' in the side column of a search page, and may also appear in additional positions above the free search results. That way, you'll be advertising to an audience that's already interested in your business. You can also choose to display your ads on Display Network sites in the growing Google Network. And, you can choose the exact Display Network placements where you'd like your ad to appear, or you can let contextual targeting match your keywords to the content. You can choose from a variety of ad formats, including text, image, and video ads, and easily track your ad performance using the reports available in your account.

There's no minimum monthly charge with AdWords; just a nominal activation fee. If you'd like to start advertising and you're looking for an agency or individual to help, you might consider using a Google Advertising Professional who has been certified by Google. Learn more about Google Advertising Professionals or visit Google Professionals Search to locate a list of professionals to suit your requirements. Visit: www.adwords.google.com to get started.

Google™
AdWords



Sponsored Links

Google Web Images Groups News More...
 [Advanced Search](#)
[Feedback](#)

Web Search the web pages Thailand
 Results 1 - 10 of about 800 for **bangkok hotel reservation**. (0.17 seconds)

Web	Sponsored Links	Sponsored Links
Bangkok Hotels Bangkok Hotels Online www.af-cms-bangkok-hotel.info book your cheap hotels online easy confirmation, book now Did you mean: bangkok hotel reservation Hotels.com > Book Its Hotels: Hotels in Bangkok You'll find that making hotel reservations and booking a its Hotels Hotels in Bangkok ... the asia hotel bangkok is located 30 kilometers from the bangkok ... deals hotels.com/brand.asp?brand=115%20hotels&city=bangkok&country=thailand - 61k - Cached - Similar pages Official Bangkok hotels - THAILAND Bangkok hotels, discounts, hotel reservation , luxury, cheap, budget, hotel ... The Asia Hotel Bangkok is located 30 kilometers from the Bangkok ... www.naplesnet.com/city/bangkok/ - 65k - Cached - Similar pages Asia bangkok hotel thailand_rathex bangkok hotel_map asia bankaok bangkok hotel - asia hotel bangkok, located for easy access to World Trade, Siam Road, Siam City Centre, Mahon kong center bangkok thailand hotel bangkok ... www.asiahotel.co.th/bangkok/map_asiahotel_bangkok.htm - 14k - Cached - Similar pages Travel review of Diamond City Hotel, Bangkok (28 hotel reviews) Reviews of recent stays, Comment on the hotel , The reservation service ... hotel as it is within walking distance to the various shopping malls in Bangkok ...	Bangkok Hotel Reservation Mandarin Oriental Internet Specials Delightful Rooms At Our Best Rates www.MandarinOriental.com Hotel Reservation Instant secure hotel booking . Room and facilities in centre of Bangkok www.WindsorSuttesHotel.com Thailand Discount Hotels Instant confirmation at over 375 hotels in Bangkok, Pattaya & more. www.HotelThailandz.com Hotel Reservation Featured Deals with Low Rates, Attractions, Reviews & Hotel Photo travel.yahoo.com 40 Hotels in Bangkok Book your Bangkok hotel online. All hotels on a city map. www.booking.com	

Strategies are interlinked...

As you can see, your communications strategy, distribution channels and pricing strategies are all interlinked. Direct relationships with customers are obviously the most advantageous to your business as you are not paying high commissions and you have better control over your pricing and follow up marketing and sales promotions. By contrast, you may sell rooms via third party agents such as Expedia and Lastminute.com. In this case you don't have a direct relationship with your end customer.

Your pricing strategy will be critical to winning this business. If you are interested in growing your direct sales to the consumer market, you may need to invest more in creating a brand that is recognised and desired by consumers.

In the next template, you are provided with an overview of how you might select your communications tools and distribution channels and set your prices in order to meet your objective. In this example, we look at the corporate market and how you might structure your activities to win more corporate clients.

...And Finally The Budget

The budget is a key element in your integrated Marketing Plan and is often difficult to estimate. Major brand owners like Ford or Coca-Cola can spend up to 10% of their revenue on marketing while in other sectors the level is lower. There is no hard and fast rule for tourism businesses.

Retaining customers is usually less expensive than attracting new customers, so if your business needs to attract many new guests/visitors, your marketing budget is likely to be higher. Having decided on an overall marketing budget you need to divide this across your various marketing activities such as internal communications, advertising, PR and e-marketing. On-line activity tends to be less costly than off-line and therefore the budget for a campaign with a strong on-line element is likely to stretch further.

You can refine the budget by allocating a spend to various elements of the principal categories. The PR budget for instance might include a sub-category for sponsorship, the advertising budget could include allocations for newspapers, magazines, radio and tv while the on-line budget might provide for web development, Facebook and Twitter activity.

Your budget should also include a reserve to be used for short term marketing and unforeseen opportunities which may present themselves.

Marketing Planning Template by Segment

<p>Market Segment: <i>e.g. Corporate Clients</i> <i>Please note this is an example. Each segment will have different objectives and metrics!</i></p>	
<p>Marketing Objective: <i>e.g. Win 10 new corporate accounts valued at more than €1,000/account by June next year</i></p>	
<p>Key Communications / Promotional Tools</p> <p>Offline Tools (Some of these tools can also be adapted to online platforms) <i>e.g. advertising in trade mags, newspapers, PR, trade shows, personal selling, promotional campaigns, incentive campaign for bookers, networking, sponsorship</i></p> <p>Online Tools <i>e.g. Google Adwords Social Networking tools</i></p>	<p>Schedule x weekly sales calls Host a Corporate Event Advertise in local Business Publication Join local Chamber of Commerce and host one event at our premises</p> <p>Re-engage with lapsed corporate customers Join specialised groups within LinkedIn Contribute to local and national business blogs</p>
<p>Key Metrics, <i>e.g. new business generated, new leads generation, Return on investment (ROI) this is easily measured on online campaigns</i></p>	<p>Increase share of corporate bed nights by 6% by June next year Sign up 1new corporate client/month up to June next year</p>
<p>Distribution Channel <i>(Direct selling or other channels include 3rd party agents such as expedia, bookings.com)</i></p>	<p>Direct Sales using our inhouse sales person Link up with 3 – 5 leading 3rd party agents.</p>
<p>Pricing Strategy</p>	<p>Written contracts with tiered pricing based on volume Discounted rate for high volume 3rd party bookers to build occupancy</p>
<p>Actions required to Achieve Marketing Objectives</p>	<p>For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - create corporate database - hold 10 face to face meetings per month - run monthly sales review meetings - organise a corporate event

Customer Retention and Attraction

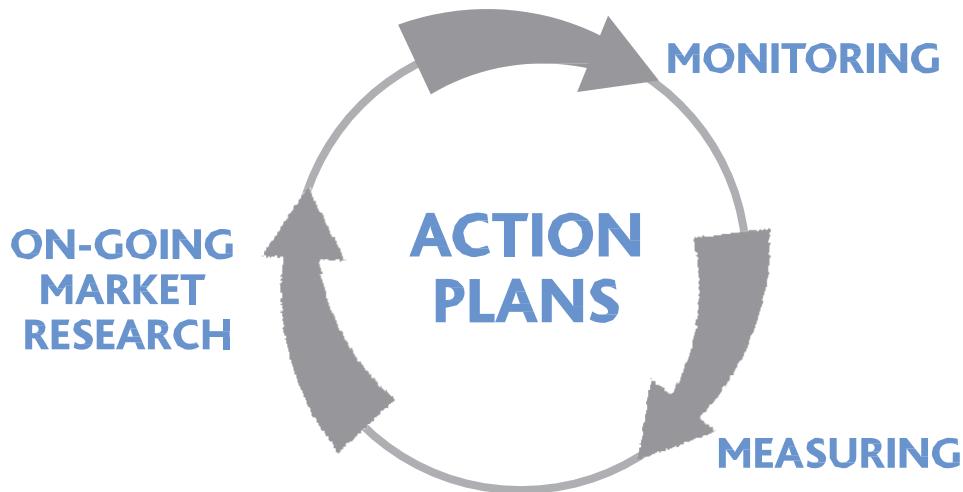


The result of all of this analysis and planning is that you develop the business through your strategies and have higher customer retention and attraction rates.

You are now in a position to move to the final part of the plan – **Implement and Monitor for Success.**

Step 3: Implement and Monitor for Success

How are we going to get there?



Write the Plan

For the final part of the plan (Step 3) you can input / transfer your marketing objectives and the related actions required from the marketing planning template by segment to the Action Plan.

At this point you will be ready to write your Marketing Plan based on the research and analysis which you have completed. Write your strategy and use it to set goals and objectives for the period ahead. As this document may be fairly extensive it is useful to also write an Executive Summary.

Your executive summary should be no more than one page. Write this after all other sections are completed. Its purpose is to give an overview of the full plan so that if a person was to read just this one page they would have a good broad understanding of the marketing plan for the business. You might find it easier to write your executive summary in bullet points.

Your summary needs to cover the following points:

- Review performance (*successes and challenges*) in previous 12 months.
- Set out the key objectives for growth for year ahead.
- Outline the key changes within the business to help achieve those objectives.
- Outline any challenges and resolutions to those challenges.

Putting your Plan into Action

Having done all the hard work of research and analysis it is now time to put your plan into action. To bring your plan to life, you need to decide when particular activities will take place, who will be responsible for them and the budget allocation for carrying out the task.

Each of your objectives has to be implemented through a number of activities that will take place during the year ahead. To make this happen you need to plan carefully, assign responsibility for specific tasks, decide when the activities should take place and, where necessary, provide a budget.

In timing your campaigns, look to your sales trends over the last two years to help you find out when is the best time to market to different segments. You need to ensure that you are promoting your business when your different customer groups are actively looking for your services. Your list of events in your area also helps you to plan your campaigns and to bundle your offering with other providers.

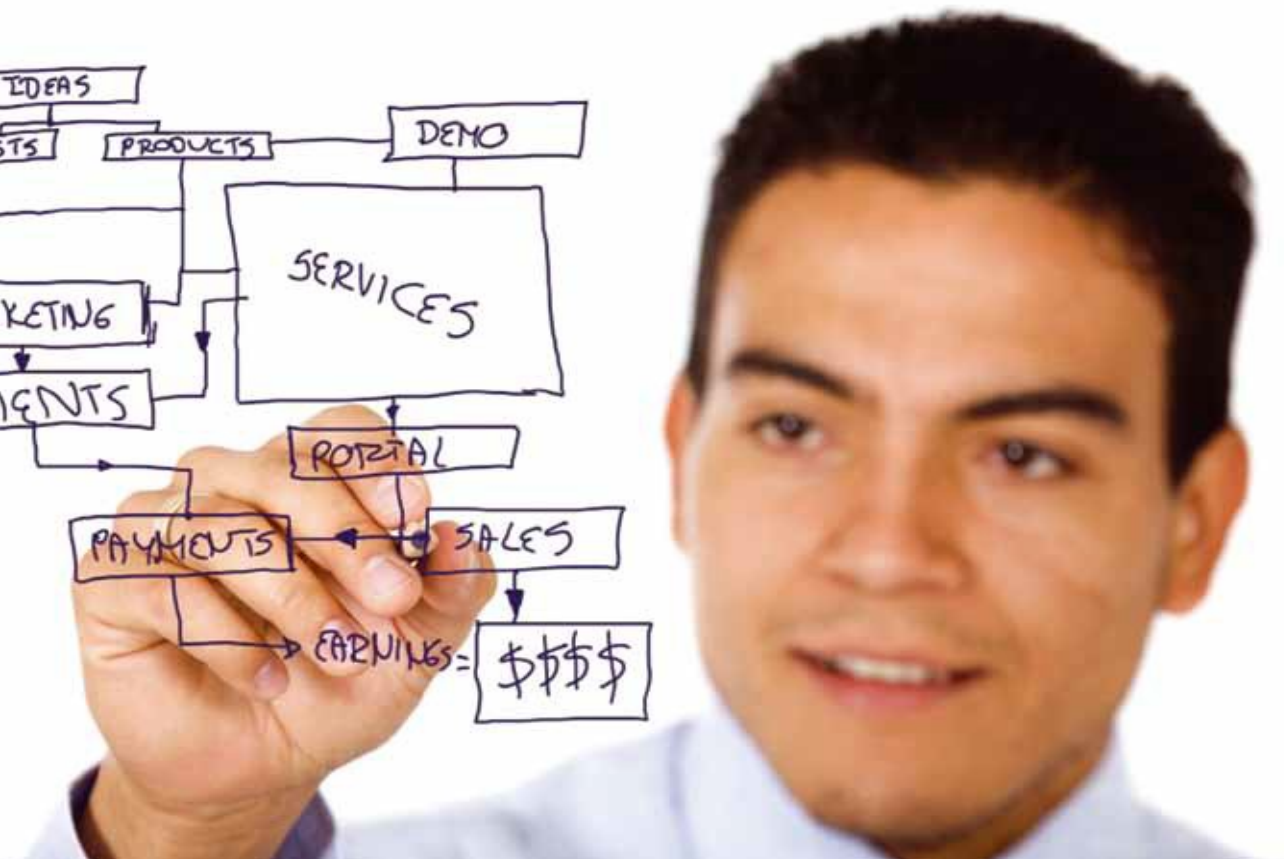
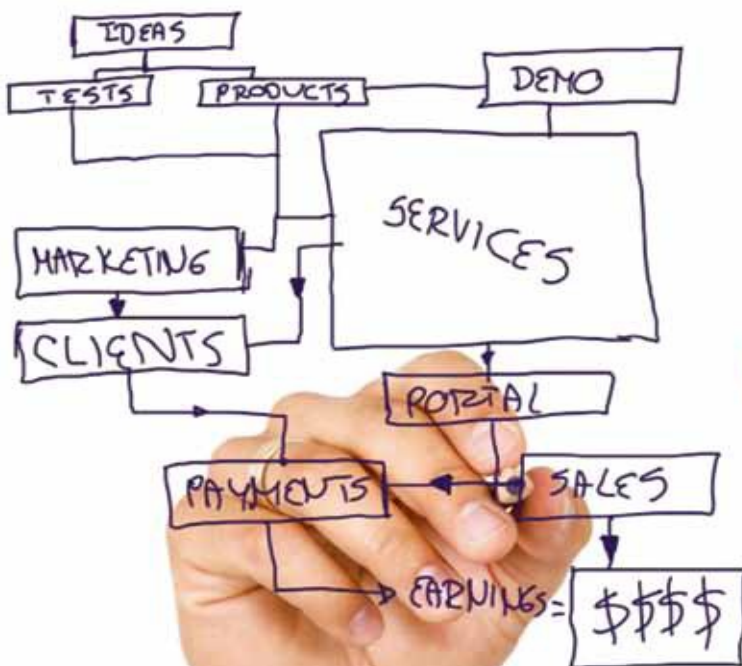
For example, your local racecourse has events all year – you could create an offer that is targeted at race goers.

Many tasks may not require an additional budget, such as building a customer database or making sales calls. However, other tasks do need a special budget, such as Pay-Per-Click campaigns, radio and press advertising, attendance at trade shows and sponsorship.

Your action plan is never 'finished' because you are constantly monitoring and controlling your performance to ensure you are meeting targets. You need to keep tracking market trends, your competitors, your customers and the business environment throughout the year so that you can adjust your plan.

The following template can be used to plan your year ahead which is a shortened version of a real plan. In reality your plan may become a very large wall plan, with lots of colour coding to help you and your team understand the upcoming tasks more easily.

Be prepared to revise your plan as you learn what works and what does not.



Marketing Action Plan

Marketing Objective	Actions Required	Key Metric	Responsibility	Budget	Timeframe
Objective 1 Win 10 new corporate accounts valued at more than €1,000/account by June next year	Create a corporate database - 10 face to face meetings per month - run monthly sales review meetings - Organise a corporate event	Increase share of corporate bed nights by 6% by June next year Sign up 4 new corporate clients/month up to June next year	Joan McDonald		

Your **Marketing Planning Template** can be adapted by you to reflect your own business priorities. You may decide to use different competitor analysis templates or to analyse a greater number of segments. You may also wish to provide more information. You may include these additional points in the main part of your plan or you may wish to add them as appendices.

Please feel free to adjust and amend the template to suit your own business needs.



Marketing Objectives	Actions Required	Key Metrics	Responsibility	Budget	Timeframe
Objective 2					
Objective 3					
Objective 4					
Objective 5					

Marketing Plan Health Check

Before you wish to sign off on your plan take the quick marketing plan health check below which has been adapted from the marketing guru Professor Malcolm McDonald. Are you getting these deliverables from your marketing plan?

Examining the Business as it Stands

Score out of 10

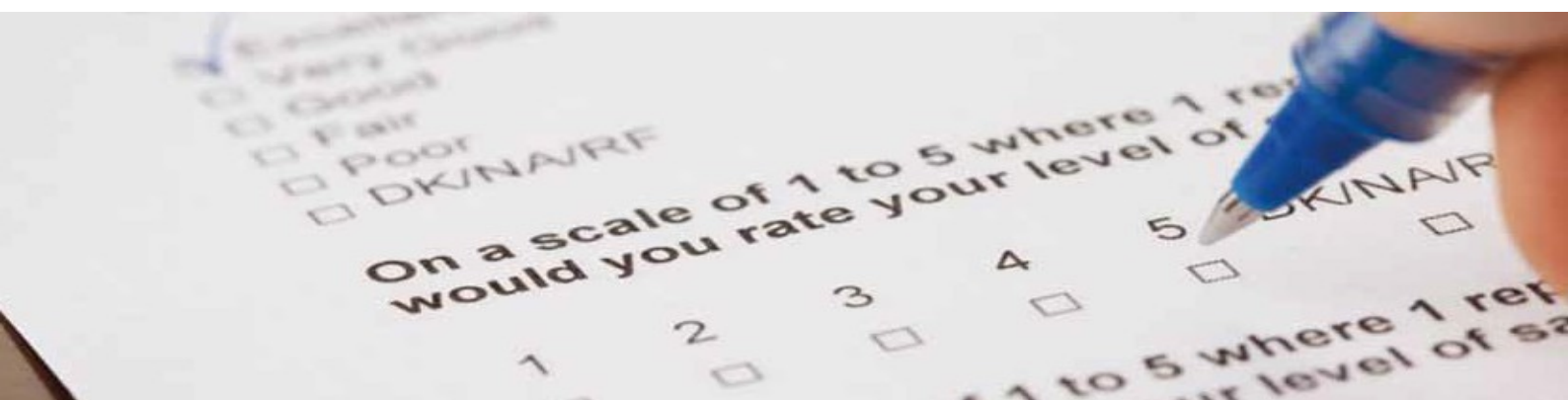
1. Is there a clear understanding of where the business stands?
(including key market trends, local market review, customer and competitor review and results from SWOT analysis)
2. Is there a clear definition of the market(s) you are currently serving?
(from your business mix and other sources)

Developing the Marketing Strategy

3. Are the customer segments clearly described and quantified?
These must be groups of customers with the same or similar needs.
4. Are the real needs of these segments properly quantified, with the relative importance of these needs clearly identified?
5. Is there a clear and quantified analysis of how well your business satisfies these needs compared to competitors i.e. the competitive advantage your business has?
6. Are the opportunities and threats clearly identified by segment?
7. Does the marketing plan clearly highlight the marketing objectives by segment?
8. Are the associated strategies *(including pricing, communication and distribution)* consistent with these objectives?
9. Are the actions required to achieve the marketing objectives clear?

Implementing the Marketing Strategy

10. Is the action plan clear and possible to implement i.e. does it include metrics, allocation of responsibilities, timeframe and resources / budget required?





Scoring guideline

- 10 – totally
- 8-9 – well on our way
- 6-7 – more than half way there
- 5 – partially
- 3-4 – started, but still a fair way to go
- 1-2 – started, but not really got to grips with it
- 0 – not at all

Results guideline

100 – 120

–stunning, world class; just check you read the questions properly and answered them honestly

80 -99

–good performance, the focus now is on the areas of weakness to make you truly world class

60-79

–an urgent need to address these key tasks

40-59

–not good, but if the competition are equally as bad the future could be brilliant, there's not a moment to lose

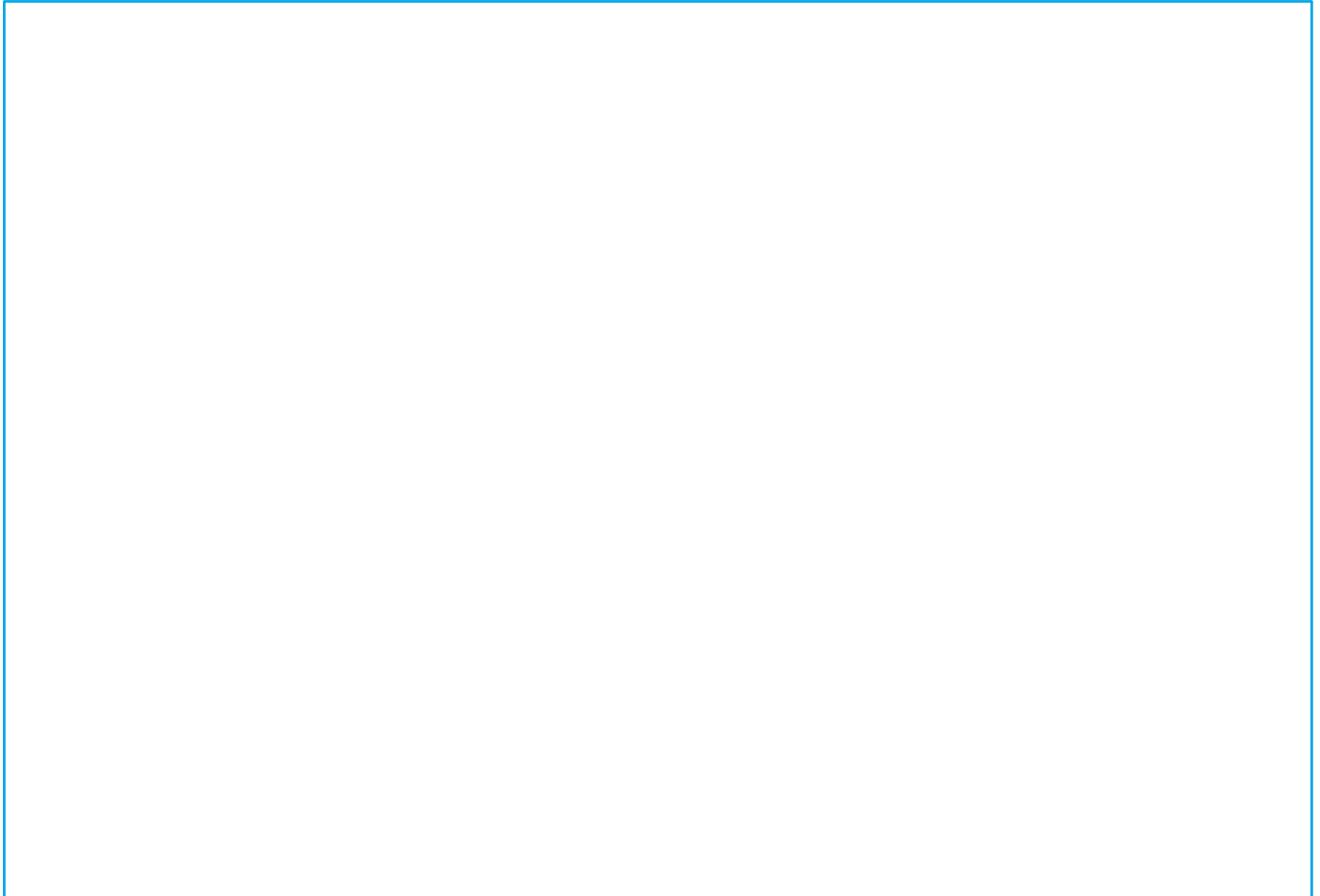
<40

–urgent need of change.

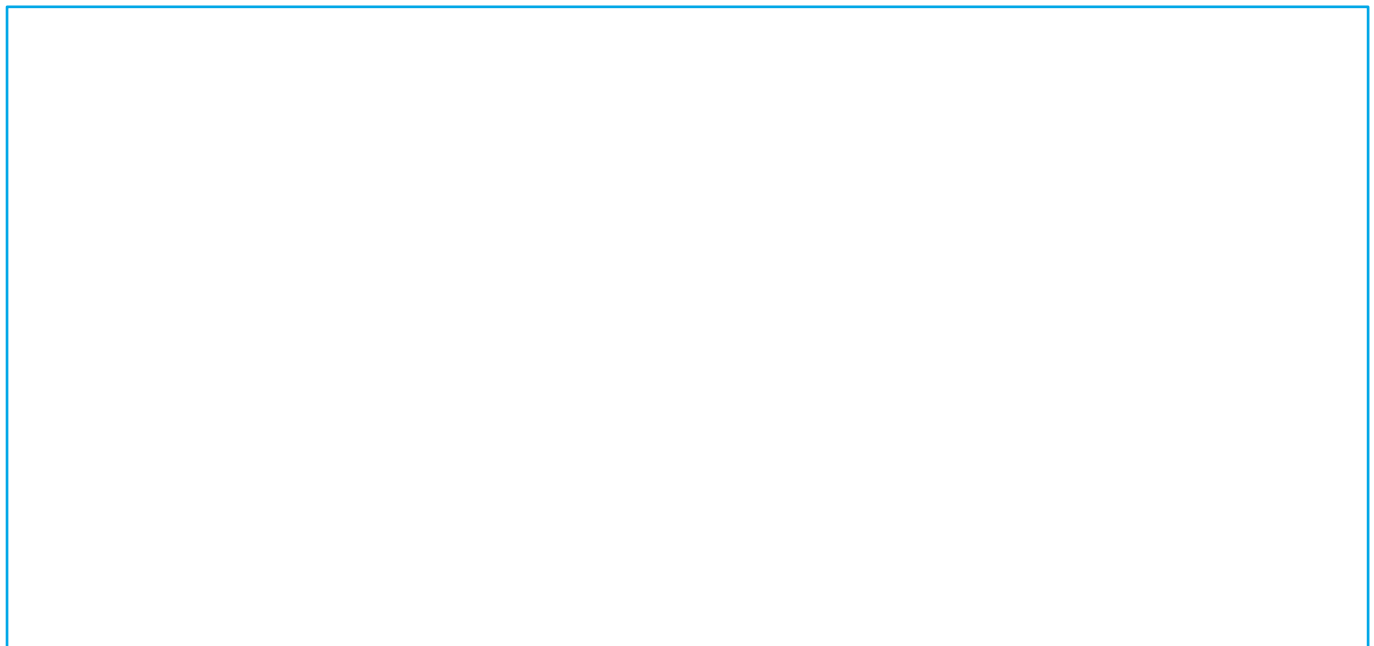
Appendix - Marketing Plan - Some useful Templates

Executive Summary

Step 1: Examine the Business as it Stands



Market Trend Analysis



Local Market Review

Opportunities and Threats in your Catchment Area

Local Developments

Changes in our catchment area that will have a positive or negative impact on our business over the next 12 months

Key Dates for the Year

*List key events in your locality including trade fairs, festivals, sporting events, major concerts, and any other dates that may lead to spikes in sales. **

Month	Critical dates for leisure and corporate customers
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	

* Marketing activities should take place to ensure you maximise the sales opportunity in advance of the event.

WEBSITE CHECKLIST

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	ACTION REQUIRED	RESPONSIBILITY
USER EXPERIENCE / INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you made a list of who comes to your site and what they are looking for? 2. Is your site organised by content categories with navigation that leads users easily to the content area? 3. Have you tested user navigation on your site to see how easy it is to find information for each audience category? 4. Does your site contain multiple graphic elements mixed with short texts and links? 		
CREDIBILITY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does your website have a privacy policy that addresses how your organisation handles email addresses, site visitor information, and gift data? 2. Is contact information (<i>phone, address, email address</i>) easily accessible on your home page and listed on every page of your site? 3. Is your mission statement and/or organisation's focus immediately visible on your website. 4. Do you provide lots of resources? 		
CONTENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you identified the fundamental organisational content for your site? 2. Is this content regularly updated on your site? Identify who updates your site and how often. 3. Does your site contain publications, success stories, FAQs, and a mix of content sources including links to other websites for a deeper user experience? 4. Is there some content that is only accessible online? 5. Is your web site written with short paragraphs, multiple links and graphic elements to illustrate text content? 6. Does the look of your site accurately reflect your brand and does it use your brand elements (<i>logo, colours, etc.</i>) correctly? 		
ONLINE PAYMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does your site have an ecommerce button <i>can your customers pay directly on line for your product or services</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Above the fold b. Limited number of clicks c. Goes to another page that appears to be your site (third party booking engine) d. Paying page is secure, includes privacy information 2. Do you demonstrate your organisation's fiscal responsibility and commitment to responsible financial stewardship with privacy, security and financial statements? 3. Are you collecting email addresses on your site <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Double opt-in to unsubscribe 		

WEBSITE CHECKLIST			
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	ACTION REQUIRED	RESPONSIBILITY
CLICKABILITY	1. What kinds of interactive elements have you added to your website <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Search mechanism on site Graphics Downloadable files Printable pages Discussion Boards Maps Quizzes Personalisation 2. Are they easy to access?		
TRAFFIC	1. Are you listing your web address on all print materials? 2. Have you registered with the major web directories (<i>Google, Bing, Yahoo, Altavista, Excite</i>)? 3. Have you edited the title, keywords and description tags on your site? 4. Are you linking to like-minded organisations and public sites? 5. Are you promoting special events, memberships or time-specific appeals on your site? 6. Are you using email messaging strategically, segmenting your clients, using e-newsletters and personalised messages? 7. Are you using paid keywords, portals, banner ads as specialised ways to drive traffic? 8. Are you keeping links up to date on your site? 9. Are you regularly analysing the web traffic on your site with web analytics software?		
NAVIGATION, FUNCTIONALITY & PERFORMANCE	1. Does the navigation clearly and quickly guide the visitor to the areas they want to see? 2. Does the site display in the most common browsers and with the various monitor resolutions? 3. Is it easy to navigate around your site? 4. How quickly does your site load, are there technologies used that slow down performance or distract the visitor (<i>Flash, splash entry pages, etc.</i>)?		

Sources of Business Revenue

Perhaps use charts to present your sources of revenue and compare last year with this year. Different categories may be used for your business as appropriate.

To do this in Word, you can follow the following steps:

1. Click Insert – Object
2. Click on Microsoft Graph Chart
3. Input your Data – Categories and %. Once chart is created you can click on the ‘Chart Tab’ at the top of the page and click ‘pie chart’ if this is the type of chart you desire.

Complete for both last year and this year for comparative purposes.

This means for my business.....

(Comment on the key successes and challenges of the current year. Identify what you believe are the key drivers for growth in the year ahead.)

Customer Review

Using data from customer feedback cards, online commentary, mystery shopper surveys etc. outline the critical customer service issues you must address for the year ahead. Comment on your levels of customer retention across your key customer segments. What is going well? What needs to be improved? What steps should you take to improve your customer service performance?

This means for my business.....

(What have you learned from your analysis so far? What are the implications for the year ahead?)

Competitor Analysis

Carry out a competitor analysis for your top 4 segments, e.g. corporate, conference, leisure, Spa.

First list the most important criteria customers use in choosing between your hotel and other competitors (*Fill in the Critical Success Factors list in the top right hand box*). Then rate your hotel against your competitors across each critical success factor (CSF). For some competitor comparisons you will be looking at other hotels nationwide against which you are competing, for other segments, your competitors may be more local.

Competitor Analysis No. 1

<p>Customer Segment: (Please note the CSFs will vary depending on the segment you are reviewing)</p>	<p>Critical Success Factors (CSFs) What are the few key things from the point of view that any competitor has to do to succeed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
---	---

Strengths/Weaknesses Analysis

Compare yourself and each of your competitors across the critical success factors.

Critical Success Factors	My Business	Competitor A	Competitor B	Competitor C	Competitor D

My competitive advantage versus the competition in this segment:

Competitor Analysis No. 2

<p>Customer Segment: (Please note the CSFs will vary depending on the segment you are reviewing)</p>	<p>Critical Success Factors (CSFs) What are the few key things from the point of view that any competitor has to do right to succeed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
---	---

Strengths/Weaknesses Analysis

Compare yourself and each of your competitors across the critical success factors.

Critical Success Factors	My Business	Competitor A	Competitor B	Competitor C	Competitor D

My competitive advantage versus the competition in this segment:

Competitor Analysis No. 3

<p>Customer Segment: (Please note the CSFs will vary depending on the segment you are reviewing)</p>	<p>Critical Success Factors (CSFs) What are the few key things from the customer's point of view that any competitor has to do right to succeed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
---	--

Strengths/Weaknesses Analysis

Compare yourself and each of your competitors across the critical success factors.

Critical Success Factors	My Business	Competitor A	Competitor B	Competitor C	Competitor D

My competitive advantage versus the competition in this segment:

Competitor Analysis No. 4

<p>Customer Segment: (Please note the CSFs will vary depending on the segment you are reviewing)</p>	<p>Critical Success Factors (CSFs) What are the few key things from the customer's point of view that any competitor has to do right to succeed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
---	--

Strengths/Weaknesses Analysis

Compare yourself and each of your competitors across the critical success factors.

Critical Success Factors	My Business	Competitor A	Competitor B	Competitor C	Competitor D

My competitive advantage versus the competition in this segment:

Competitor Analysis No. 4

<p>Customer Segment: (Please note the CSFs will vary depending on the segment you are reviewing)</p>	<p>Critical Success Factors (CSFs) What are the few key things from the customer's point of view that any competitor has to do right to succeed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
---	--

Strengths/Weaknesses Analysis

Compare yourself and each of your competitors across the critical success factors.

Critical Success Factors	My Business	Competitor A	Competitor B	Competitor C	Competitor D

My competitive advantage versus the competition in this segment:

SWOT Analysis

In your Marketing Guide you will find a number of prompts for each of the boxes below. Your analysis to this point should also help you identify the critical SWOT factors for your business.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

This means for my business....

(What weaknesses do you need to address in the year ahead. How can you use your strengths to improve your marketing? What are the most important opportunities and what should you do to protect your business from future threats?)

Step 2: Develop Your Marketing Strategy

Marketing Objectives

(Identify three to five major objectives to help you maintain share or grow parts of your business. Later, your Action Plan, you will identify specific activities to help you deliver on each objective.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Desired Business Mix Next Year

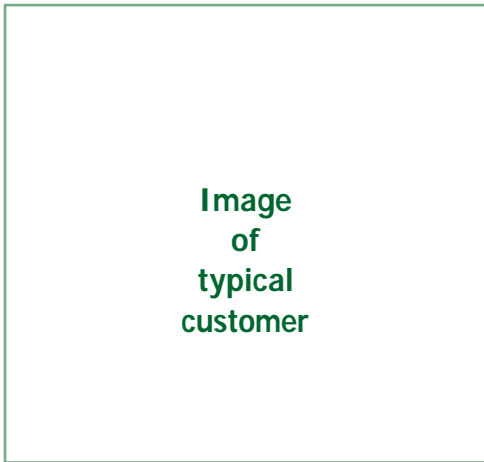


Identify your Key Customer Segments you wish to target next year

Segment	Comment on growth potential

Develop Marketing Personas to represent a typical customer in your top four segments. *(Example of Persona: See Detail Deirdre in Guide)*

Persona 1



Descriptor:

Age:

Status:

Occupation:

Brief description of Persona:

.....

Demographics		What motivates this persona	
Age:		Top criteria in selecting your products/ services:	
Gender:		Other criteria:	
Education:		Definition of perfect experience:	
Location:		Likes:	
Decision Maker:		Dislikes:	
Influencers:		Persona's Biggest challenge:	

Touchpoints where persona goes for information:		Options to engage with persona:	
Top blogs:		Blogs:	
Influential online reviewers:		PR:	
Print media, mags:		Fairs/ Trade shows:	
Other media, e.g. radio/TV:		Advertising:	
Friends:		Direct Marketing:	
Family:		Other:	

Persona 2

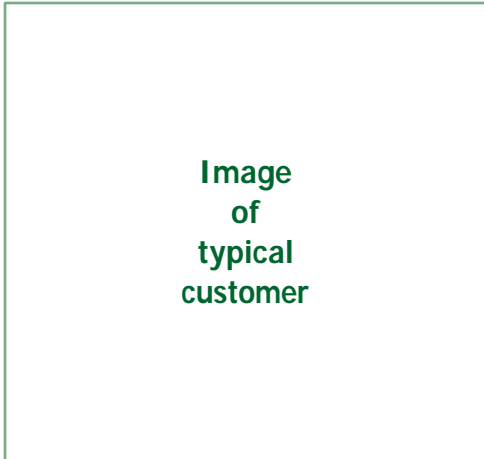


Image
of
typical
customer

Descriptor:

Age:

Status:

Occupation:

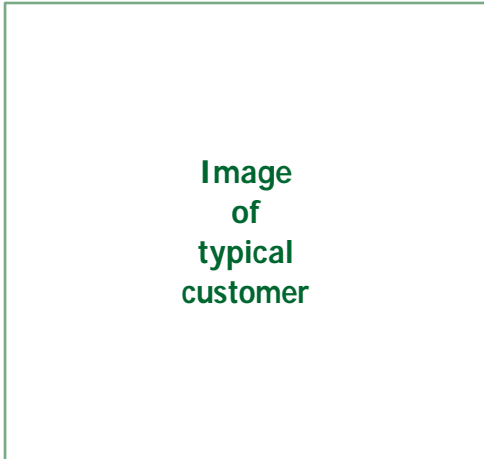
Brief description of Persona:

.....

Demographics	What motivates this persona
Age:	Top criteria in selecting your products/ services:
Gender:	Other criteria:
Education:	Definition of perfect experience:
Location:	Likes:
Decision Maker:	Dislikes:
Influencers:	Persona's Biggest challenge:

Touchpoints where persona goes for information:	Options to engage with persona:
Top blogs:	Blogs:
Influential online reviewers:	PR:
Print media, mags:	Fairs/ Trade shows:
Other media, e.g. radio/TV:	Advertising:
Friends:	Direct Marketing:
Family:	Other:

Persona 3



Descriptor:

Age:

Status:

Occupation:

Brief description of Persona:

.....

Demographics	What motivates this persona
Age:	Top criteria in selecting your products/ services:
Gender:	Other criteria:
Education:	Definition of perfect experience:
Location:	Likes:
Decision Maker:	Dislikes:
Influencers:	Persona's Biggest challenge:

Touchpoints where persona goes for information:	Options to engage with persona:
Top blogs:	Blogs:
Influential online reviewers:	PR:
Print media, mags:	Fairs/ Trade shows:
Other media, e.g. radio/TV:	Advertising:
Friends:	Direct Marketing:
Family:	Other:

Persona 4

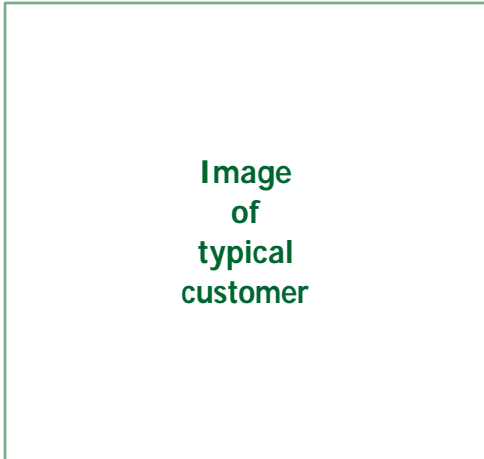


Image
of
typical
customer

Descriptor:

Age:

Status:

Occupation:

Brief description of Persona:

.....

Demographics	What motivates this persona
Age:	Top criteria in selecting your products/ services:
Gender:	Other criteria:
Education:	Definition of perfect experience:
Location:	Likes:
Decision Maker:	Dislikes:
Influencers:	Persona's Biggest challenge:

Touchpoints where persona goes for information:	Options to engage with persona:
Top blogs:	Blogs:
Influential online reviewers:	PR:
Print media, mags:	Fairs/ Trade shows:
Other media, e.g. radio/TV:	Advertising:
Friends:	Direct Marketing:
Family:	Other:

Selecting Communications Channels, Pricing Structures and Distribution Channels to Reach your Target Market

Marketing Planning Template by Segment

Segment 1

Market Segment:	
Marketing Objective:	
Key Communications / Promotional Tools <i>Offline Tools</i> <i>Online Tools</i>	
Key Metrics	
Distribution Channel:	
Pricing Strategy	
Actions required to Achieve Marketing Objectives	

For the final part of the plan (Step 3) you can input / transfer your marketing objectives and the related actions required from the marketing planning template by segment to the Action plan.

Segment 2

Market Segment:	
Marketing Objective:	
Key Communications / Promotional Tools <i>Offline Tools</i> <i>Online Tools</i>	
Key Metrics	
Distribution Channel:	
Pricing Strategy	
Actions required to Achieve Marketing Objectives	

Segment 3

Market Segment:	
Marketing Objective:	
Key Communications / Promotional Tools <i>Offline Tools</i> <i>Online Tools</i>	
Key Metrics	
Distribution Channel:	
Pricing Strategy	
Actions required to Achieve Marketing Objectives	

Segment 4

Market Segment:	
Marketing Objective:	
Key Communications / Promotional Tools <i>Offline Tools</i> <i>Online Tools</i>	
Key Metrics	
Distribution Channel:	
Pricing Strategy	
Actions required to Achieve Marketing Objectives	

Step 3: Implement and Monitor for Success

Marketing Action Plan

Marketing Objectives	Actions Required	Key Metrics	Responsibility	Budget	Timeframe
Objective 1					
Objective 2					
Objective 3					
Objective 4					

Fáilte Ireland Tourism Content System

The Fáilte Ireland Tourism Content System – or TCS - is Ireland's national database for tourism content. Information on more than 15,000 Irish tourism businesses is held in the system, including details of Irish accommodation, activities, attractions and events. The database is also geo-coded and map enabled, and includes details of thousands of Irish locations, cities, towns and villages.

TCS – The Benefits

It is an opportunity for your business to be:

- Listed on www.discoverireland.ie which promotes Ireland to the domestic Irish market
- Listed on www.discoverireland.com, the international website, marketing Ireland to more than 45 countries including Australia, the USA, Great Britain, Canada, Germany and France.

Your business may also appear on related websites including the [Business Tourism](#) website.

Your entry on the database can feature your contact details, a thorough description of your business, photographs, links to your own website, information on events and other details. It is an excellent opportunity to showcase your business to tourists.

The TCS is managed by a team of Fáilte Ireland editors based in our offices across the country.

How can I apply to have my tourism business added to the TCS?

If you have a tourism business and would like to request a listing on the TCS, please email the team at webmaster@failteireland.ie, giving a brief overview of your tourism business and noting the county you are based in. This will allow the team to direct your application to the correct Fáilte Ireland editor.

How do I update my existing listing on the TCS?

Please contact webmaster@failteireland.ie with details of your business / property and remember to include your full contact details. Find out more [here](#) about the Tourism Content System.





This guide has been provided to you as part of Fáilte Ireland's suite of guides and templates in the Business Tools resource.

Please note that these resources are designed to provide guidance only. No responsibility for loss occasioned to any person acting, or refraining from action, as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Fáilte Ireland.

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