

## **Practitioners' Implementation Management of Marketing Planning: The Dibb/Simkin Checklists**

When a company commences marketing planning for the first time, already-busy sales and marketing personnel are going to be expected to find time to produce the marketing plan. Hardly any companies employ specialist marketing planners. The organisation must recognise the time pressures and resourcing issues associated with asking staff to become involved in marketing planning. Senior managers must be seen to be appreciative, but they must also create channels of communication between functions in the business so that marketing intelligence may be gathered, ideas generated and the resulting plan disseminated across the company. Rather than await problems of information availability, time pressure, poor internal communications, ineffective leadership, and so forth, it is better to be aware of these issues from the outset.

The Dibb/Simkin checklist below was developed for a global B2B services company that examined how to improve its annual marketing planning activity. Such a checklist should be considered by those instigating marketing planning – senior managers and the marketing function – before the launch of a marketing planning programme.

- Who to involve, what to tell them, how to control them, how to free up their time.
- Who to put in charge, their level of hands-on involvement, their liaison with other functional areas and senior managers.
- The expected timeframe for completion of the marketing plan and the timing of the planning activity given other commitments in the business.
- Resources required in terms of people, marketing information, IT and administrative support.
- Facilitation of communications within the marketing planning team, across business functions, through the hierarchies of the company.
- Coordination of the inputs from non-marketers, the buy-in to the process by managers, and the roll-out of emerging actions.
- The marketing planning process to utilise, its stages/ activities and core requirements.
- The implementation of the resulting marketing plan, its launch, internal communication, external execution, required roll-out resourcing.
- A sequence of ongoing reviews to ensure effective implementation of the marketing plan occurs and any required remedial action is taken.

As explored in Chapter 23, it is also necessary to adhere to a robust marketing planning process. This should involve:

- marketing analysis – so that the business is properly informed about current market dynamics and the reality of its standing
- a period of strategy development – to ensure that the target market strategy and defined basis for competing reflect the realities of the marketplace
- the creation of marketing mix programmes – designed to execute the devised marketing strategy, and

- a process of controls and reviews – to facilitate the roll-out and execution of the marketing plan.

Once the marketing plan has been developed, it must be implemented. This partly involves ensuring that specific actions from the plan have been allocated to individual managers, with clearly defined timeframes, budgets and performance measures. The facilitation of implementation also requires reviews and monitoring of progress.

‘Review days’ are often utilised. These generally take one of two forms:

1. business unit teams present to senior managers and explain their progress in rolling out their part of the company’s marketing plan
2. cross-functional workshops are held in order to more fully review progress, explore emerging issues and determine appropriate remedial actions.

The B2B company cited above introduces its review workshops thus:

*Review Workshop – Agenda*

- *Review the current strategy.*  
*Focus on the plan’s product/service propositions and how effectively they are being taken to the specified target market segments.*
- *Examine what is working and what is not!*  
*Lessons to emulate and problems to fix.*
- *Determine appropriate actions.*  
*Specify tasks and responsibilities as a result of the discussion.*

Generally, such a discussion revolves around:

- the product/service propositions developed to take to market, and their fine-tuning
- the message clarity of the propositions and their communication to target markets
- marketing communications campaign development and execution
- communication across the company of the plan and its imperatives
- orientation of channel partners/members to the revised direction of the plan
- specialist skills required to help roll out the plan
- strategy for establishing/managing channel and customer relationships
- controls and incentives required to change colleagues’ behaviours in order to enact the new-look marketing strategy and marketing plan.

Often, a marketing plan changes a company’s thinking and direction, so a programme of change management is required in order to realign managers, budgets, the sales force, and so forth. Without the detailed planning of how best to align an organisation’s resources around a marketing plan, successful implementation is unlikely.

While the sentiments above have focused on marketing planning, the same procedures and tips apply to the implementation of a marketing strategy or revised target market strategy.

Sources: © Dibb/Simkin. This process is adapted from and based on material from Sally Dibb, Lyndon Simkin and John Bradley, *The Marketing Planning Workbook* (London: Thomson) and Sally Dibb and Lyndon Simkin, *The Market Segmentation Workbook* (London: Thomson).