



MARKETING STRATEGY

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Its important to start with a Marketing Plan

Set your objectives

This will allow you to identify what your marketing objectives are. They might be generating footfall to your store, acquiring new customers or increasing the value from your existing customers. So it's very important to establish that upfront. Everyone in the organisation is then aware of what the marketing plan is designed to achieve.

Set aside your budget

This will allow you to identify a budget for your marketing activity and clearly this is always going to be a cost to your business. So it may well be you want to start small and test your marketing activity and that will then give you the reassurance to increase your spend if certain marketing activities prove to be successful.

Decide if you have resources in house to deliver this marketing

Once you've identified your marketing plan and written it down, you'll be able to determine whether or not, within your organisation you have the resources to deliver this marketing activity yourselves or whether you need to look elsewhere and outsource some of the activities. It might be for example that you need to find a small local business that will help you with design or with building your website or with PR.

Decide how you are going to measure the success of the plan

It's very important to look at exactly how you're going to measure the success of your marketing activity. As I mentioned before it's a cost to your business and it's very important to ensure that you're getting good value for money.

What you look like to the outside world is very important

- Researching the competition
- Branding the collateral
- Ask your customers
- Logo and signage
- Corporate stationery
- Quotation and invoice paperwork

One of the first stages and one of the most important components of developing a marketing plan is to develop a look to the outside world. This projects an image that's very important for your customers, both existing and the customers that you intend to acquire.

One of the very first important stages is to look at what the competitors are doing in your local area and even further afield, if they're a similar type of business. You may already have a name for your business and you may already have a logo and perhaps now is the time to look at that and make sure that it's still valid for today and future proof.

It's also worth looking at all of your consumer touch points, so your invoice paperwork, your quotations, in fact, every single piece of communication that touches your customer and make sure that it is as effective and professional as it possibly can be.

Communication with customers

Review all touchpoints with customers

- Answering the phone with a smile
- Customer service approach – be attentive but not a hard sell
- Meetings
 - Correspondence
- Deliveries
 - Visits
- Calls

It's very important that you set the right first impression from the word go. This can even be answering the phone with a smile. You'd be surprised what an impression that leaves with a customer when they contact your organisation for the first time. Once a customer is in your store, make sure that your staff are delivering an attentive customer service, but not a hard sell. Also look at all the ongoing ways in which you can communicate with your customers. If you're going out to meet them, for deliveries, for ongoing customer service, answering the phone, responding to emails, it's very important that this is all done promptly and with the highest degree of professionalism. It might not sound like an important part of the marketing mix but it's something that's very important to establish the right relationship with your customers on an ongoing basis and for the future.

Front of house

- Put yourself in the customers shoes
- Ensure the store is clean and tidy
- Make sure displays and literature are up to date
- Add some value to your store – complimentary coffee and biscuits
- Use your showroom for events and previews

Enhance the in-store experience when your customers are visiting you. Try and put yourself in your customer's shoes. It's very important to make sure your displays are immaculate, your store is clean and tidy. Make sure that your literature and your point of sale are up to date and you always have the latest copies of manufacturers brochures. This always gives a very good impression.

Also it's very important to use the opportunity to surprise and delight your customers and add a really good lasting impression when they leave the store. So for example, really good quality complimentary coffee and biscuits always helps. Finally what has proved very successful for small businesses is to use the showroom as a venue for previews, launch events and cooking demonstrations. Invite customers to visit you out of hours and also provide them with good hospitality for previews and special events. This will help to build relationships from the word go.

Website

- Update the site regularly
- 2 click rule
- Easy ways to get in touch
- Make sure you follow up enquiries
- Make sure it is mobile responsive

One of the most important pieces of your marketing mix will be your website. This really is your silent salesman and when you consider that nowadays most consumers will visit the websites of many retailers and will research a lot online before they go anywhere near even picking up a phone, or certainly visiting your store. So make sure your website is up to date, make sure it's updated regularly with news about your products and your events. If possible use search to improve your Google rankings. Bear in mind that a consumer will spend only 2 minutes on a website at any one time, so make sure that they can find the information they need within 1 even 2 clicks.

It's very important that they know how to get in touch with you, whether that's a response form on the website or an easy to read phone number that's on all the key pages and make sure that the website displays the production values of your store appropriately as well, so that they know what to expect when they come in to visit you. Make sure you follow up all enquiries from the website very quickly. It really does set the standard for a digital environment which matches the in-store environment they'll see when they come to visit you.

Another important thing to remember is that nowadays consumers are viewing a lot of website pages on mobile phones and tablets. So make sure if you are developing a new website from scratch, or if you are updating your existing website that it is mobile responsive i.e. that means that when you look at it on a smaller device, on a smaller screen it's still displays appropriate content but it might not be the same content that you see when you view a large desktop computer. This is a very important aspect of today's marketing activity.

Using Social Media

- Facebook / Twitter
- Use social media well or not at all
- Be consistent
- Update regularly
- It's not always a selling tool, but a way of engaging

Now to the marketing buzz word of the moment 'social' or 'social media.' There are so many different social media channels, it can often seem like a real minefield, wondering which ones to use.

The overall advice generally is to look at consumer facing media channels so for example perhaps Facebook or Twitter. Make sure that if you are using social media that you're consistent about it. Either decide to use the social media channels or don't.

There's nothing worse than updates from a year ago or social media channels that look as if they've been neglected. Also the other key thing about social media is to ensure that you're using those channels not necessarily just to sell but to actually engage with your communities and engage with your consumers. Tell them news and views about kitchen design trends, things that are going on within the branch. Make sure that you're using it as a way of building a relationship with the community rather than just selling new products or talking about price all the time.

Local area marketing

- Local press
- PR
- Regional and lifestyle magazines
- Local shows and events
- Corporate Social Responsibility / Charity involvement
- Sponsorship

There are lots of different ways in which you can get your brand, your name, and your services known to the wider area. You could look at local press opportunities such as; newspapers, local press activity, local PR. There may be opportunities to look at regional or lifestyle magazines.

There may well be shows and events that are happening and you can take exhibition stand space, perhaps set up a display and talk to customers who are visiting the show.

There are also opportunities to get involved in charities, maybe sponsoring a local school if they've got a football team. They'll be lots of opportunities in your local area and you'll be best placed to know how to exploit those and who to talk to. They'll give you good brand awareness and can often spread your name further than just advertising alone.

Harness your reputation

- After sales follow up after installation
- Offer incentives – Testimonials / Online reviews, Customer recommendation
- Consider the use of review score sites

In today's world where the consumer really is king and they have all buying power. It's very important to convince them that once they've been in to your fantastic showroom and been sold the dream, they know that the service that you're going to deliver after the sell is as immaculate and high quality as it is possibly can be. One of the most important and powerful ways to do this is to harness testimonials and recommendations from your existing customers.

So whether that involves incentivising existing customers to recommend you to friend or family member or displaying testimonials to encourage customers to write in and explain how delighted they were with your service. There are also official review score sites that you can get involved in. But nothing is more powerful than listening to peers and consumers listen to other people in terms of making their buying decisions about who to go to install a new kitchen.

As part of this process of encouraging positive word of mouth, it's a nice touch to keep in touch with your customers after you've installed the kitchen for them and walked away. A letter, a piece of communication, a couple of months afterwards to say 'we hope you're still delighted with your kitchen - It's amazing how these little touches can spread the word amongst consumers and create a positive reputation for you and your business.

Review

Continuously review what is working

- Are your social media skills engaging and increasing the number of customers
- Are your review scores good enough

Finally, as we mentioned right at the very beginning, because this is an important cost to your business, it's important to make sure that you're getting value for money for your marketing activity. So it's very important on a regular basis to review what you're doing and work out what is working and what isn't. Which magazines and which channels are delivering the most customers and ask your customers how they heard about you. That's a very important piece of information.

Work out which magazines are supporting you with good editorial. Which website pages are the most popular. Perhaps it's time to improve their rankings on your website and re-organise the way that your website is structured. Which media channels are working best for you and which ones are delivering the greatest of engagement for you. Once you've gathered all this information, you can make decisions about how to review and amend your plan and then it's time to look to the future.

Summary

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- Making a plan
- Review your branding
- Review the in store environment
- Check website
- Wider marketing opportunities
- Revisit and update plan for the future

So to summarise, the key stages of developing marketing for your business include; writing a plan, looking at the branding for your business, looking at your in-store environment and making sure it's absolutely fantastic, checking your website and making sure that is doing a great selling job for you while you're not there to sell in person. Look at all the wider marketing opportunities in your area and then revisit your plan, identify what's working and update your plan for the future.