

A Marketing Guide for Small Business

Tips to create a create a effective marketing plan



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Preparation of Your Mission Statement

Definition:

A **mission statement** is a brief description of a company's fundamental purpose. A mission statement answers the question, "Why do we exist?"

The mission statement articulates the company's purpose both for those in the organization and for the public.

Your mission statement has marketing value, unfortunately it's often lost in wordy and meaningless jargon. You need to write a mission statement that reflects your company's purpose and carries great marketing value.

Mission statements should not just be words that look well printed in calligraphy and hung on the wall in a fancy gold frame. Your mission should state your purpose; the reason you are in business. It should reflect the reason that your business opens its doors everyday. It's the passion behind the company, the reason why you would be doing the same thing you are doing even if it did not present you with your daily bank deposit. That is your purpose; your mission.

When your mission statement represents and reflects your purpose it will attract and comfort your clientele, it will bring inspiration and drive to your employees and it will produce measurable results.

With that in mind ask yourself these questions:

- **What is the purpose of your business?**
- **Who do you serve? Who are your customers?**
- **What needs do you fulfill?**
- **How do you fulfill those needs?**
- **What values represent your business?**

Now that you have the questions it's time to gather your core team for a brainstorming session. Sit down with your team discuss, debate, and answer the questions above. Really find out what it is that creates the excitement and the drive in your business. Spend time and determine who it is that you serve everyday. Talk about your values and the philosophy of your company.

1) Describe what your company does.

No need to be fancy here. Just say it, for the moment.

Sample Mission Statements

My company's purpose is to:
Sell shoes
Provide educational services
Grow market vegetables

2) Describe how you do it.

This is the tricky part, because we're not looking for a detailed description of your business's physical operations here; we're looking for a description of how your business operates generally. For most people, this means incorporating one or more of your core values into your description.

So take a moment to think of/list the core values that are important to you that are expressed in your business. Here are some sample values that might be important to you and the way you do business that you may want to use when you write a mission statement:

Sample Values

- Provide high product quality
- Provide superior customer service
- Protect the quality of the environment
- Ensure equal access to resources
- Encourage innovation/creativity
- Practice sustainable development

It might be helpful to focus on your business's core competencies when you're considering which values are worthy of being a part of your mission statement. Once you've decided which core values are most important, add one (or two at the most) to your description of what your company does.

Sample Mission Statements

My company's purpose is to:
Sell shoes of the highest quality
Provide educational services that allow all children to experience learning success
Grow market vegetables using organic, sustainable farming practices

3) Add why.

When you write a mission statement, this is the part that describes your spark, or the passion behind your business.

Why does your business do what it does? For some people, it helps to think back on why they started their business in the first place.

Sample Mission Statements

My company's purpose is to:
Sell shoes of the highest quality so every customer can find a pair of shoes they actually love to wear.



Provide educational services that allow all children to experience learning success and become life-long earners and contributing members of our community. Grow market vegetables using organic, sustainable farming practices to give people safe and healthy food choices.

When you're finished, have another look at your mission statement and see if it says what you want to say or if there's a better way of phrasing it. Be sure to change the phrase "my company's purpose" to the name of your company.

For example;

"My company's purpose is to grow market vegetables using organic, sustainable farming practices to give people safe and healthy food choices",

might be rephrased to produce this finished mission statement:

"At Earth's Bounty, we grow market vegetables in a way that's good for the earth and good for the table".

When you've finished answering the questions, it's time to put the pieces together. Let me warn you that this process will not be easy and you will have to invest time into this process. The good news is that the end result will be a mission statement that will represent and reflect your purpose for keeping the lights on. That is marketing value.

When you're finished, have another look at your mission statement and see if it says what you want to say or if there's a better way of phrasing it. Be sure to change the phrase "my company's purpose" to the name of your company.

4) Put your mission statement to work.

Besides directing your business planning, you want your mission statement to be front and center in the minds of everyone who works in your business and communicated to customers and/or clients. As the statement of why you exist, it's also the statement that explains to them why they would want to do business with you.

Some businesses go so far as to make their mission statements the themes of their advertising campaigns. If you do nothing else, you should make sure your mission statement is highly visible in your business premises, on your website if you have one, and on all your marketing materials.

A good mission statement isn't just a slogan, it's an operations manual and it can't provide the **Do You Need A Mission Statement?**

The answer depends on whether or not the mission statement you compose has significant meaning to you, or is just another corporate exercise in futility. A mission statement can guide your company in good times and bad. A meaningful mission can act as a moral and corporate compass. It can help you make decisions aligning with your values and goals.

Speaker and author, Laurie Beth Jones of "The Path: Creating Your Mission Statement for

Work and for Life” states, “It is the key to finding your path in life and identifying the mission you choose to follow. Having a clearly articulated mission statement gives one a template of purpose that can be used to initiate, evaluate, and refine all of one’s activities.”

3 Keys to a Meaningful Mission Statement

- **Pass the Mother Test:** A mission statement must be a concise paragraph describing what your company does and for whom. Show your mission to your mother, if she does not understand it, start again.
- **Self-Igniting:** Your mission is for you and your business. It does not have to be an earth moving statement. It can be whatever inspires you.
- **Value Alignment:** Forget the money. A meaningful mission goes beyond the dollars and cents. If your small business is creative, focus your mission on creativity. Try to be what your core competency is.

Sample Mission Statements:

The Elephant Sanctuary: “A Natural-Habitat Refuge Where Sick, Old and Needy Elephants Can Once Again Walk The Earth In Peace and Dignity.” One powerful statement that evokes emotion and instant attachment to the cause of this organization.

Sun Microsystems: “Solve complex network computing problems for governments, enterprises, and service providers.” A simple mission statement identifying who their market is and what they do.

Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream: A product mission stated as: “To make, distribute & sell the finest quality all natural ice cream & euphoric concoctions with a continued commitment to incorporating wholesome, natural ingredients and promoting business practices that respect the Earth and the Environment.” This mission inspired Ben and Jerry to build a cause-related company.

Joe Boxer: “JOE BOXER is dedicated to bringing new and creative ideas to the market place, both in our product offerings as well as our marketing events. We will continue to develop our unique brand positioning, to maintain and grow our solid brand recognition, and to adhere to high quality design standards. Because everyone wants to have fun everyday, JOE BOXER will continue to offer something for everyone with fun always in mind.”

Each sample mission statement conveys the business founder’s core beliefs and values. Anyone who knows or has met, Nicholas Graham of Joe Boxer, knows his company is about being zany and fun. What CEO would call himself the “Chief Underpants Officer?” It is all about your mission expressed through your business.

Guidance it’s intended to provide if people aren’t familiar with it.

Writing a vision statement

Besides having mission statements to communicate who they are and what they do, successful small businesses also have **vision statements** to describe their ultimate achievements. **How to Write a Vision Statement** will lead you through the process of creating a vision statement of your own.

The difference between a mission statement and a vision statement is that a mission statement focuses on a company's present state while a vision statement focuses on a company's future.

Definition:

A vision statement is sometimes called a picture of your company in the future but it's so much more than that. Your vision statement is your inspiration, the framework for all your strategic planning.

A vision statement may apply to an entire company or to a single division of that company. Whether for all or part of an organization, the vision statement answers the question, "Where do we want to go?"

What you are doing when creating a vision statement is articulating your dreams and hopes for your business. It reminds you of what you are trying to build.

While a vision statement doesn't tell you how you're going to get there, it does set the direction for your business planning. (For more on the role of your vision statement in business planning, see **Quick-Start Business Planning**.) That's why it's important when crafting a vision statement to let your imagination go and dare to dream – and why it's important that a vision statement captures your passion.

Unlike the mission statement, a vision statement is for you and the other members of your company, not for your customers or clients.

When writing a vision statement, your mission statement and your core competencies can be a valuable starting point for articulating your values. Be sure when you're creating one not to fall into the trap of only thinking ahead a year or two. Once you have one, your vision statement will have a huge influence on decision making and the way you allocate resources.

A vision statement is your ticket to success. A photograph in words of your company's future, it provides the inspiration for both your daily operations and your strategic decisions.

Without a vision statement, effective business planning would be impossible; it's the vision statement that provides the destination for the journey, and without a destination, how can you plan the route?



If you don't have a vision statement, don't panic. I bet you do have a vision of what you want your business to accomplish; you just need to articulate and formalize it.

Here's how to write a vision statement:

1) Examine your mission statement.

As I say in my mission statement definition, a mission statement answers the question, "Why do we exist?" for a company. (I also give several sample mission statements in this article.) What is it you do well? How do you do it?

(If you don't have a mission statement already, [How to Write a Mission Statement](#) will lead you through the process.)

2) Dare to dream.

Before you can travel to the moon you have to look up at the stars. To write a vision statement, focus on the basics of your mission statement and extrapolate; where is your business going to be five years from now? What will your company have accomplished?

Forming a mental picture will help. If you have trouble visualizing your business, mentally script your own news byte. Imagine that you, the CEO of your company, are being profiled on the news. What are you and your company being recognized for? For instance, if your current business involves yoga instruction, you might imagine yourself being featured on the news for opening your twelfth franchise.

3) Shape your vision statement; apply the formula.

Maybe when you were picturing the future of your company, you saw a whole list of achievements scroll by or imagined all sorts of disjointed clips. To write a vision statement, we need to distil your vision into a usable form. Use the following formula to shape your vision statement:

Five years from now, (my company name) will _____
by _____.

Using this formula to write a vision statement will force you to choose what you consider to be the most important accomplishment of your business and give you a time frame to accomplish it.

For instance, here's a sample vision statement:

Five years from now, Tiny Tots Diaper Service will be the top grossing diaper service in the Lower Mainland by consistently providing a reliable, affordable service for Moms and Dads with small children.

See [Sample Vision Statements](#) for more examples.



4) Commit to your vision statement.

- Take action to make your vision statement come true: Use it as the basis of your business planning.

As the vision statement provides your destination, the 'where you want to get to', all of your goals and strategies will focus on making it happen. It's the natural basis for all of your business planning.

- Keep your vision statement alive: Share it with potential partners, staff and employees if you have them.

If you just tell it to people once, your vision statement will fade and disappear. So besides talking about it, keep your vision statement alive by keeping it physically prominent. Print it out and post it on your desk, in your staff room, wherever you, your colleagues and your staff will see it (and be reminded of it) daily.

Is Your Vision Statement the Right One?

It isn't hard to write a vision statement. But it is sometimes difficult to write a vision statement that truly encapsulates your vision for your company. When you write your vision statement, make sure that you have chosen the vision that is most important to you. If you don't fully believe in your vision statement, you won't be able to fully commit to it and writing a vision statement that you can't or won't fully commit to is a waste of time.

Defining Your Niche Market

Often business owners view a niche market as narrowing their sales or cutting into a profit margin, so they fear it. The truth is a niche market could be defined as a component that gives your business POWER. A niche market allows you to define who you are marketing to. Any marketer will tell you that when you know who you are marketing to it's easy to determine where your marketing energy and dollars should be spent. This week I will show you the importance of defining your niche market and share with you 5 questions that will get you closer to that goal.

In my ten years of experience working with clients one thing I've noticed is there are some business owners that have defined their niche market and have a clear picture of whom it is they are marketing to and there are others that tend to waiver or be unsure.

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energy and dollars should be spent. Take for example a car dealership. A car dealership calls me up and tells me they want me to help them develop an Internet Marketing strategy. My first question as always is “Who are you marketing to?” They answer by telling me they want to market to anyone interested in buying a car. Now let’s keep in mind that this car dealership is located in New York. I approach the process by working with the client and explaining to them that although they market to a person in Seattle, because that “person is interested in buying a car” the chances of that person coming from Seattle to New York to purchase that car is a very unlikely. Therefore they’ve wasted time and money and will more than likely see no return on either. By the time our conversation is finished I’ve helped them see why narrowing their niche market down to be “anyone interested in buying a car within a 50 mile radius”. They now have POWER. They know where to spend time and money to market and their vision is clear. They are now 10 steps ahead of the other car dealership located 20 miles away who is marketing to “anyone interested in buying a car”.

There is even a greater importance in having a well-defined niche market when planning your Internet Marketing strategy to achieve Internet Success. The most common misconception about online marketing is that if you build it they will come or having an online business will make you wealthy. Truth is you have to find your niche market to get them to come and you must offer a product or service that they are demanding to reach a level of financial success via the Internet.

Defining your niche market before you embark on your Internet marketing strategy is important for the following 5 reasons.

1. You have the ability to maximize your marketing budget by targeting your defined niche market. You’ll know exactly where to advertise. You’ll know where to look to find ezines and related sites that are catering to your market. This gives you a starting point.
2. Your site can then be optimized for search engines so that your niche market can find you easily.
3. You are able to cater your site to your niche market. You can develop your site to guide your viewers and help them find solutions or products that you offer that are specific to the problems that your niche market encounters.
4. A defined niche market makes it easier to develop ideas for new products or services that inherently appeal to your specific niche.
5. You have an upper-hand in establishing yourself as a leader in your industry.

Do you now see the importance of having a niche market? Are you struggling with who your niche market is? If you answered yes spend some time asking yourself the following questions:

1. What is it that my current clients have in common?
2. How do I set myself apart from the competition?
3. What is different about services or products that I offer?
4. What are the “extras” that I bring to the market?

The best way to answer these questions is without analyzing them too much. Just write down



what it is that first comes to mind. Once you've completed them analyze the answer and it will be easy to define your niche market.

One common path to success for many small businesses is establishing themselves in a niche market. Because no matter how hard they try, no large retailer can be all things to all people, there are always going to be segments of the population whose needs for particular products and/or services are going unmet – leaving room for the small business to succeed by meeting those needs.

So how can your small business capitalize on these unmet needs and find and dominate your own niche market? Concentrate on these four basic concepts for niche marketing success:

1. A unique product or service.

For starters, if you're going to master a niche market, you need to have a unique product or service. Ideally, you want to be the only one selling what you're selling.

The trick to coming up with such a product or service is to "look on the fringes" for unmet needs. For example, one East Coast entrepreneur's business consists of creating hand-made medieval outfits. Large retailers and even shops specializing in costumes don't supply these types of garments.

Don't forget that processes can be products as well. They're ubiquitous now, but someone once looked at an inkjet printer cartridge and came up with the idea and the process for refilling them. Need help getting started with this sort of idea spotting? 7 Sources of Business Ideas will spark your thinking.

2. A marketable product or service.

You can create all kinds of wonderful and wonky products and/or services but if no one wants what you've produced, what's the point? Maybe there's no one selling fried insects from a vending cart on your street, but that doesn't mean it's a good idea. The niche market of people who enjoy eating fried insects in this country is so small they wouldn't even fill a phone booth.

There has to be enough of a demand for your product or service for your business to make a profit. How do you find out? By trial and error or by conducting extensive market research.

I, of course, recommend the latter. If you want to know if there's a market for dog coats, bamboo flooring or counseling for the Blackberry addicted, the best way to find out is to get out there and ask. Making or buying a lot of something and throwing up a Web site to see if there's any interest in what you're doing is for people who don't want to make money.

3. Choose a niche market that's available.

Remember, niche markets tend to be smaller so there's only room for so many players. When it comes to niche marketing, if you try to jump on a bandwagon, you're only going to fall off the back. For instance, I mentioned the niche market for gay marriages in Best Business Opportunities 2005.

Before you started such a business yourself, you would certainly need to carefully research the competition and the size of the market to see if a new business in this niche would be viable. It might well be better to find a different niche in the marriage or gay markets and make that niche your own.

4. Market, market, market.

Marketing is perhaps more important for niche market businesses than for any other kind, because the niche market business is by definition, unknown and succeeds or fails on making the connection with exactly the right kind of customer/client. If I open a Starbucks, for example, people know right away what that business is about and what kinds of products to expect. And because Starbucks' market is "anybody who likes coffee", they really don't have to worry much about advertising at this point in the game.

But if I open a business providing naturopathic treatments for pets, selling tub/shower conversions for the elderly or providing virtual assistant services to professional speakers, to give just three examples, people won't know what to expect or even that my niche business exists at all unless I make the effort to reach and educate them. So market, market, market – and once you have a customer or client, make contact on a regular basis.

A unique product or service that will fulfill the unmet needs of a specific group of people – that's niche marketing in a nutshell. If you apply all of the four concepts above, your small business will enjoy the powerful competitive advantage that mastering a niche market provides.

Targeting your market

When I speak to small businesses about marketing strategy, I often ask the question, "Who are your customers? Who will buy your product?" I am often surprised that otherwise savvy small business people either have no idea who will buy from them, or they assume that 'everyone' will.

Assumptions like this can lead to wrong decisions, wrong pricing, wrong marketing strategy – and ultimately, business failure. The most successful small businesses understand that only a limited number of people will buy their product or service. The task then becomes determining, as closely as possible, exactly who those people are, and 'targeting' the business's marketing efforts and dollars toward them.

You, too, can build a better, stronger business, by identifying and serving a particular customer group – your target market.

One of the first things you need to do is to refine your product or service so that you are NOT trying to be 'all things to all people.' Become a specialist!



For example, in my business, an eco-tourism company, we made some specific decisions early in our market planning. As a charter boat business, we knew that there were plenty of fishing charter operators in the area, and ‘party boats’ as well. So we decided that we would offer sightseeing or special event charters, and that we would not allow alcohol on board, or fishing rods. Yes, this decision eliminated a percentage of the market – but it also gave us a ‘niche’ that we could capitalize on, and **expanded** our market in a way that other charter operators could not take advantage of.

Next, you need to understand that people purchase products or services for three basic reasons:

- To satisfy basic needs.
- To solve problems.
- To make themselves feel good.

You’ll need to determine which of those categories your product or service is the solution to, and be prepared to market it accordingly.

Your product or service may fit more than one category, too – our charter business primarily targets folks who just want to feel good – spending a day out on the water, relaxing and being waited on. But it also targets people who have visitors coming from out of town, or even overseas, because we represent a solution to the problem of “What will we do while our company is here? How can we entertain them, or show them our area?”

The next step in creating an effective marketing strategy is to zero in on your target market. Continue on to the next page to learn how to use market segmentation to define your target market.

Develop Your Value Proposition

It’s important when developing your value proposition that it be clear and concise. It’s best to start by brainstorming and focusing on what needs your target demographic group have in common. This can be done by market research.

Once you’ve found the common denominating need you can determine what it is that they are in search of and develop your value proposition around that need.

Keep in mind that your the purpose of your value proposition is to identify and satisfy an unmet need that your target market possesses.

Why is the development of your value proposition important?

The answer to that question is easy. Your value proposition can equip you with the following benefits to your business:

- Create a strong differential between you and your competitors



- Increase not only the quantity but the quality of prospective leads
- Gain market share in your targeted segments
- Assist you in enhancing tools that will help you close more business
- Improve your operation efficiency

You can get started developing your value proposition today. Just remember that an effective value proposition describes what you do in terms of tangible business results. It draws interest and shares a success story within a few words.

Here is an example of one of the best value proposition that belongs to a sales consultant:
Our clients grow their business, large or small, typically by a minimum of 30-50% over the previous year. They accomplish this without working 80 hour weeks and sacrificing their personal lives.

Now, that value proposition has power and gets your attention to what to know more.

Marketing strategy

Definition:

Marketing strategy are the group of techniques and actions that a business takes in order to achieve its marketing objectives. Having a marketing strategy and knowing what that strategy is can be an important part of being successful in any business.

When is a Marketing Strategy Developed?

You should develop a marketing strategy before you even start a business. Once your business is operational, you'll no doubt need to adjust your marketing strategy from time to time to account for market conditions, shifts in demand and other factors you identify as a result of your market research activities and resulting from the performance of your business.

A marketing strategy and a marketing plan go hand in hand, but they are not the same. Your marketing strategy is a key component of your marketing plan, which examines other factors related to the business.

If you operate an online business or have a website that you use to market and sell your products and services, your Internet marketing strategy will be an important component of your overall marketing strategy.

Examples: One part of his company's marketing strategy included a regular program of distributing press releases to all of the city's newspapers. This part of the company's marketing strategy kept the business in front of its customers to remind them to patronize the business on a regular basis and led to increased brand awareness of the company's name.

Develop Your Marketing Mix

Definition:

Your **marketing mix** is the combination of the elements of marketing and what roles each element plays in promoting your products and services and delivering those products and services to your customers.

Elements of the Marketing Mix

The elements of the marketing mix are also referred to as the **5 P's of marketing**. For years marketers referred to the 4 P's of marketing. Only recently has a 5th P been added. Whether you subscribe to the theory that there are four p's or five p's of marketing, this is essentially referred to as your "marketing mix".

The 4 P's of the Marketing Mix

The original 4 P's of marketing (although they have been renamed a bit over the years) that were the elements of a marketing mix are:

- **Product** – The products or services offered to your customer: Their physical attributes, what they do, how they differ from your competitors and what benefits they provide.
- **Price** – How you price your product or service so that your price remains competitive but allows you to make a good profit. How price plays a role in your marketing strategy with respect to differentiating your products or services from your competitors'.
- **Place** (Also referred to as Distribution) – Where your business sells its products or services and how it gets those products or services to your customers. May also be used in your marketing strategy to differentiate you from your competition.
- **Promotion** – The methods used to communicate the features and benefits of your products or services to your target customers.

The 5th P of Marketing

Some marketing theorists have added a 5th P of marketing to the elements of the marketing mix: **People**

When referred to as an element in the marketing mix, this 5th P refers to how your level of service and the expertise and skills of the people who work for you can be used to set you apart from your competitors.

Also Known As: 5 P's of Marketing; 4 P's of Marketing

Your marketing mix is a combination of marketing tools that are used to satisfy customers and company objectives. Consumers often call the marketing mix "the offering." Your offer is controlled by the following variables often referred to as the four Ps in marketing:

- Product
- Price
- Place (Distribution)



- Promotion

By using variations of these four components you have the ability to reach multiple consumers within your target market.

Creating a successful marketing mix that will increase results often takes experimenting and market research. There are many methods that can be used, both in person and the use of impersonal presentations. The key is to not always depend on “one” mix always explore other avenues. The combining and coordination of these elements will be more effective than depending on one.

You must coordinate all elements so that the prospective consumer is not being sent mixed messages that can cause confusion. Do all of your elements contain the same message? Take for example the following scenario:

We are a company that specializes in marketing services and we cater to physicians, however the products we offer fulfill the needs of lead generation for lawyers. Our price is geared an enterprise budget and our magazine advertisements and promotions are being placed in magazines that have a subscription base of senior citizens.

Do you see a problem with this? While in this scenario it is very obvious, I guarantee that by looking at your marketing mix you may find discrepancies that surprise you. Always make sure that your marketing mix has a message that speaks in unison.

For instance make sure that if you have a practice that caters to a niche market that your product is geared towards the need of that market, your price is within the budget of that market, you are distribution your product or service where it will be seen by that market, and gear your promotion to solve the problems that they are encountering.

If you remember one thing from this article it is that one of the main keys to the success of any marketing program is the ability to work effectively in shaping marketing mixes that meet the nature and needs of your specified target market.