

# MARKETING THEORY: PREPARATION FOR MARKETING PLANNING

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## Tools for Reflection and Group Discussion

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## **MARKETING CONCEPT:**

*Discover and meet the needs of network partners to the mutual and continuous benefit of all parties.*

### Discover Members' Unique Needs/Concerns

- **Team Brainstorming:** What are the pains of this partner? What gains might we provide this partner?
- **Secondary Data:** What information already exists that can you uncover about your partner's unique needs and concerns? Sources might include web searches, published news articles, information in your office files, etc.
- **Surveys or Questionnaires:** If you could survey your partners to learn more about their unique needs, what information would you like to know? How would you use each piece of information gathered to better craft a program that meets their needs? (Important: Do not ask questions unless you know that you will actually use the information – don't waste their time!)
- **Focus Groups:** 6-8 people in a room, discussing their individual pains and what gains are needed. Who from your network would you invite to a focus group? What types of questions/scenarios would you pose to learn about their needs?
- **Depth Interviews:** One-on-one conversations. If you could only talk to one or two people in your network to learn more in-depth about their needs, who would they be? What kinds of information could they provide to help you have a better understanding of their needs?

### Consider Stakeholders' Decision-Making Process

When we know where a given individual is in the decision-making process, we can help him or her in the right way. Think about specific examples of things that you can do for people in each of phase of decision-making, listed below.

- **Need Recognition:** Help the partner realize a need exists by providing information.
- **Information Search:** Supply information that will help them realize your solution to their pains and the gains you can help supply.
- **Evaluate Alternatives:** Provide information. Also, provide timely and helpful information to their reference groups and opinion leaders.
- **Make the Decision:** Be there to help facilitate the decision.
- **Post-Decision Behavior:** Reduce post-decision cognitive dissonance (where people ask themselves, "Why did I agree to this?!") by reassuring them that they made the correct decision.

## Identify Decision Making Influencers

Think about examples of people/titles from your partners' organizations who play the roles listed below. How would you interact with them? How might you help people in each specific role?

- **Initiators:** Start the process of solving pains and creating gains.
- **Users:** Actually implement the decision once made.
- **Influential Adversaries:** Influence the decision but are opposed to our organization or to us.
- **Actual Decision Makers:** (as the name implies) actually make the decision.

## Identify Target Market Segments

- **Market:** All organizations who have needs and also have the ability and willingness to "buy."
- **Market Segment:** A subgroup of the market, sharing one or more characteristics causing them to have similar needs. The overall market is segmented based on organizational characteristics (location, size, type of entity, volume of activity, etc.) or based on their decision criteria (a need for your technical support, quality, reputation enhancements with affiliation, etc.).
- **Target Markets:** Those market segments we will actually pursue with our unique offerings. We won't go after all market segments, just those that we target. Define three potential target market segments in your network. What is the basis for each segmentation (location, size, volume, pains, etc.)? What unique offerings could you provide for this segment, as compared to the market as a whole? This might be a unique product/service/program, unique pricing or financing arrangements, unique distribution model, unique communication, or other various methods or approaches.

## Evaluate Current Target Market Efforts

Choose one or more of your target markets, and consider the following questions:

- Are we supplying, for network members in this target market, real "gains" and eliminating "pains"? Identify several provided gains and eliminated pains for this target market.
- Is this target market responsive to the unique marketing mix we have created for them? Are there any adjustments needed?
- Is this target market sustainable in the long run? Why or why not?

## Develop New Programs

What concrete steps can your network take to engage in each of the new program development steps outlined below?

- Review your organization's mission, vision and strategies. New programs should
- Generate new program fit ideas. Sources include employees, network members, network customers, and what other networks are doing, etc.
- Screen ideas. Prioritize by asking potential partners for feedback.
- Run the financials for the top idea(s) (analyze costs vs. revenues).
- Develop and refine the program further (if needed).
- Test the market by offering a pilot or limited introduction of your idea/program.
- Fully implement the new program.

## Help Spread Innovation

Which of the categories listed below do each of your network stakeholders' fall under? What kinds of things can you do specifically to assist each of them individually?

- **Innovators:** Eager to try new ideas, almost as an obsession; they do not rely on group norms. (3% of stakeholders)
- **Early adopters:** Rely a bit more on group norms and values than innovators. (13% of stakeholders)
- **Majority:** Rely heavily on group norms, weigh pros and cons before deciding. (68% of stakeholders)
- **Laggards:** Do not rely on group norms, tied to tradition; what they did in the past heavily influences their decisions. (16% of stakeholders)

## Plan Marketing Communication

For each method of communication listed below, identify the partners and/or situations for which the method is most appropriate.

- **Advertising**
- **Personal selling:** One-on-one presentations
- **Public relations:** Provide public information as a news item
- **Sales promotion:** Trade shows, exhibits, contests
- **Social media:** Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, You Tube, blogs, podcasts

Below is a list of specific purposes for communication. What are situations within your network where one purpose may be more appropriate than another?

- **Informing:** Stimulates attention or interest
- **Persuading:** Stimulates desire or action
- **Reminding:** Keeps your product/service in their mind
- **Connecting:** Develops relationships, especially through social media