



Association Marketing Plan Basics

When creating a marketing plan, many associations miss the opportunity to clearly differentiate between a strategy and the other necessary plan components.

“Strategy” refers to the long-term planning and implementation of methods to help an organization achieve its marketing goals. However, “strategy” is often misused to refer to a mission, goals, objectives, and tactics.

A well-defined marketing plan with a clear strategy is vital for an organization.

An excessively diverse, reactionary, and scattered strategy known as the “kitchen sink” approach is guaranteed to fail. It’s easy to get excited about new marketing opportunities; but with limited marketing resources, associations risk spreading themselves (and their strategy) too thin.

Put your strategy into context and understand the role of each component of your marketing plan:



Mission: Where does the association want to go?

To become the (largest, best) + (nonprofit, networking group) + in the (market, geographical area).

Not a mission: To increase sales of membership by the year 2020.



Goals: Broad map defining the destination (a.k.a. The Big Picture).

To (improve, increase) + (events, programs, legislative action).

Not a goal: To email our members twice a month in order to increase event attendance.



Objectives: Measurable, concrete steps toward the goal, including a completion date.

To (grow, increase) + our (sales, membership) + by (number, percentage) + among (segment, demographics) + by (date).

Not an objective: To schedule weekly meetings with our membership committee.



Tactics: What methods are we using to get there?

Create a (promotion, game) on (social media channel) to educate (prospects, members) about (program, organization) and capture (engagement, followers).

Launch an (offer, event) to generate (interest, likes) among (new, existing) members to (test, return to, join) the association.

Create a new (service, program) with a (unique benefit) that will increase value.

Not a tactic: To increase sales of our event tickets.



Strategy: How are we getting there?

To (capture, generate) + (new, repeat) + (members, sponsors) + by offering (incentive, added value) + to (sample, promote) + our (product, organization).

Not a strategy: To grow our share of the market.



Clearly defining and writing your mission, goals, objectives, tactics, and strategy is an exercise that will help you to confirm that your association is on the right path.

About GrowthZone

GrowthZone helps organizations grow and retain membership, engage and inform members and prospects, and streamline tedious tasks.

The cloud-based system is powerful, easy to use, and designed to manage all the day-to-day operations of your organization.