

## **MARKETING PLANS**

A sound marketing plan is key to the success of your business. It should include your market research, location, the customer group you have targeted, competition, positioning, the product or service you are selling, pricing, advertising, and promotion.

"You're in business to serve a customer need," says Derek Hansen, founder of American Capital Access. "If you're not sensitive to customers, don't know who your customers are, how to reach them, and, most of all, what will convince them to buy your product or service, get help."

Effective marketing, planning, and promotion begin with current information about the marketplace. Visit your local library, talk to customers, study the advertising of other businesses in your community, and consult with any relevant industry associations. This tool will help you assess your marketing strengths and weaknesses.

### **Define your business:**

- Your product or service
- Your geographic marketing area - neighborhood, regional, or national
- Your competition
- How you differ from the competition - what makes you special
- Your price
- The competition's promotion methods
- Your promotion methods
- Your distribution methods or business location

### **Define your customers:**

- Your current customer base - age, sex, income, and neighborhood
- How your customers learn about your product or service - advertising, direct mail, word of mouth, Yellow Pages
- Patterns or habits your customers and potential customers share - where they shop, what they read, watch, and listen to
- Qualities your customers value most about your product or service - selection, convenience, service, reliability, availability, and affordability
- Qualities your customers like least about your product or service - can they be adjusted to serve your customers better?; prospective customers whom you aren't currently reaching



**Define your plan and budget:**

- Previous marketing methods you have used to communicate to your customers
- Methods that have been most effective
- Cost compared to sales
- Cost per customer
- Possible future marketing methods to attract new customers
- Percentage of profits you can allocate to your marketing campaign
- Marketing tools you can implement within your budget - newspaper, magazine, Yellow Pages, radio or television advertising, direct mail, telemarketing, and public relations activities such as community involvement, sponsorship, or press releases
- Methods of testing your marketing ideas
- Methods for measuring results of your marketing campaign
- The marketing tool you can implement immediately

The final component in your marketing plan should be your overall promotional objectives: to communicate your message, create an awareness of your product or service, motivate customers to buy and increase sales, or other specific targets. Objectives make it easier to design an effective campaign and help you keep that campaign on the right track. Once you have defined your objectives, it is easier to choose the method that will be most effective.