

1. MARKETING STRATEGY

1.1 WHAT A MARKETING STRATEGY IS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING ONE.

All customers have certain wants and desires when purchasing home accessories. Some customers want products that are inexpensive; others are looking for items that are produced sustainably; many will focus on the quality of a product, ease of distribution, as well as price. There are potentially an unlimited number of expectations that customers may have for a product.

With unlimited time and money you could emphasize every positive aspect of your goods and communicate that with everyone. Unfortunately, both time and money are limited, so all companies need to make tough choices about which attributes to highlight and how to communicate those to your customers. A marketing strategy helps you do this by: 1) identifying the most important customer desires, 2) selecting the most appropriate ways to communicate with them. In turn, this focus helps you find customers more easily and spend your time and money effectively to grow your business.

Any marketing strategy seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the latest trends?
2. Who are the right buyers and my best customers?
3. How am I different from the competition?
4. What marketing tools should I use?
5. How should I communicate with my customers?

In order to find answers to these questions you will need to conduct market research. This chapter will review every aspect of the marketing strategy except communications which will be covered in the following chapter. “So once I come up with a plan am I finished?” The answer to this question is – “No.”

While subjects are presented in a specific order in this chapter, a marketing strategy is a living plan. It needs continual revision based on new information you learn from on-going research. In this respect it is like your production practices, environmental performance and the other aspects of your business continually improve. For example, your response to who are your best customers may change as trends in furniture shift and new competition emerges.

Exhibit Marketing Overview gives you a summary of the marketing process.

1.2 CONDUCTING MARKET RESEARCH

Market research is used to understand what your customers want. The research takes several different forms, but in its most basic sense market research means learning more. Market research includes talking to current or potential target customers, visiting trade shows, showrooms and retail stores, reading industry reports and fashion publications as well as exploring the internet to understand:

1. What is happening in the furniture market?
2. What are the wants and desires of your target customers and end users?
3. Who are your competitors?