

FREE Marketing Plan Template

A Sample 12 Month Promotional Calendar for Small Businesses

Written By: Sharron Senter

The following is a free marketing plan template that outlines a 12 month promotional marketing calendar. Keep it handy, as you'll need to refer to it throughout the coming year when forecasting your promotional messages. By no means is this list exhaustive. In fact, you should add to it based on your industry-related activities. There are many holidays throughout the year that may be a natural tie-in with your product or service, such as National Book Week in January, if you're an author or editorial-related service or American Heart Month in February, if you sell health-related services or products.

My calendar list focuses on the major holidays when most Americans have been trained to spend extra money or participate in a ceremonial activity. Generally speaking, you want to link your marketing promotions to a time of year when customers have their wallets out. Thus, you're simply positioning your product or service as the perfect gift or solution for the celebrated event.

Be Prepared

You can never be too early in preparing your marketing campaigns. For example, in order for the typical small business owner to prepare for a [Valentine's Day direct mail campaign](#), you'll need to get most of your materials printed and ready to go by the third week in January and in the mailstream by the last week in January, certainly no later than the first week in February. I recommend you plan two months in advance. Thus, you should start planning your Mother's Day campaign in early March. Obviously, the more involved the campaign, the more lead time. What's more, some advertising vehicles have extensive lead times, specifically magazines that need your camera-ready ad approximately 6 weeks [possibly more or less] before publication, and newspaper inserts also require a reservation approximately 6-8 weeks before publication.

Unique Angle

Your promotional angle is the key to standing out from your competition. People are going to buy gifts at Christmas, without a doubt. But what makes your service or product so interesting, that shoppers should hand over their money to you instead of the myriad of other stores? Find a creative answer, and you'll grow your business.

Small Budgets

If you do not have deep pockets, then you must use a combination of paid and unpaid advertising and marketing strategies to get the word out and attract new customers. Try the following marketing plan template on a **quarterly basis**. The following strategies will keep the phone ringing for most small businesses:

Quarterly Marketing Template Sample Activities

- Mail a minimum of 1,000 pieces of direct mail, ideally a postcard, to your target audience. NOTE: Direct mail is one of my favorite forms of marketing because you can buy the "exact" name and title of your target audience. There's hardly any waste,