

Marketing Plan Handbook, 5th ed.
Discussion Questions and Sample Answers

Chapter 1 – Marketing Planning: New Pace, New Possibilities

1. How can a company hold marketing managers accountable for results when so many elements in the marketing situation are beyond their control?

Sample answer: Although marketing managers can't control the economy or many other elements in the marketing environment, they can and should be alert to changes and trends and carefully analyze potential opportunities and threats as they create and implement their marketing plans. Marketing managers also have the advantage of being "close to the customer," being in touch with customers' needs and watching for changes in behavior and attitudes that drive shifts in purchasing and brand loyalty. Marketers must have the ability to notice, interpret, and react to changes in the marketing environment so they can adjust marketing plans and achieve their objectives despite the many uncontrollable elements they face.

2. In what ways might an internal marketing strategy benefit a nonprofit organization? A government agency that deals with the public?

Sample answer: A nonprofit would benefit from using internal marketing to solidify support and reinforce the loyalty of employees, volunteers, contributors, and others inside the organization. These groups need to stay informed about and maintain a positive attitude toward the nonprofit's marketing activities and results. In turn, these groups would be encouraged to actively support external marketing programs through their personal connections and their behavior and communications. Similarly, a government agency could use internal marketing to build internal support for public contact programs, educate employees about the agency's mission and marketing, and improve understanding of the people served by the agency.

3. A typical marketing plan covers a calendar year. Given the rapid pace of change in today's environment, should companies switch to preparing marketing plans for shorter periods, such as three or six months?

Sample answer: Students who favor a shorter period may say that this will force marketers to reevaluate the marketing situation and results more often and give them momentum to move quickly in the event of significant changes. It will also force marketers to focus on the immediate consequences of their planned activities. Students who do not favor a shorter period may say that marketers need to balance short- and long-term results because building relationships and loyalty can take time. They may also say that a marketing plan must cover sufficient time to allow for situational analysis, research if needed, planning for implementation, and evaluation of interim results. Marketers who create a plan for a calendar year should be reassessing the situation on a regular basis and tracking results so they can apply marketing control at any point.

4. What role do key performance indicators play in preparing for marketing plan implementation?

Sample answer: To use key performance indicators, marketing managers select a few

indicators that will show whether a marketing plan is effective in achieving the organization's strategic goals and marketing plan objectives. For example, a company might determine that customer retention is a key performance indicator when the marketing plan is intended to reinforce customer loyalty; if retention goes up, the plan is having the desired effect—but if retention goes down, performance is not meeting expectations. Ask students to suggest other key performance indicators related to common marketing objectives.