

Preparing for the year to come

The end of the Christmas period is often a time to regroup. Pressure on the business to meet increased customer demands can tax staff and stock, so that January is seen as a chance to draw a deep breath for the year to come. It may also be the end of the financial year, so budget allocations for future promotions can also be limited as the bottom line is re-assessed.



Yet the beginning of any year is the perfect time to create your marketing plan. The previous year's performance can be analysed and evaluated to see what you have learnt. Objectives for the next 12 months can be properly set and budgets allocated to achieve them. Above all, you can give yourself the proper preparation time to develop the material you need.

This month's edition is designed to help you reduce some of the stress, mistakes and costs of preparing your marketing activity and running successful programmes. From organisation to implementation, we offer tips and guidelines to make promoting your business a rewarding experience – emotionally as well as financially!

So here's to a Happy New Year – and a prosperous one!
Kind regards

Pete Savage

The art of planning



Running a small business is an enormous drain on time and energy. As well as selling your products and services, you will have the day-to-day administration and organisation to contend with as well. Most businesses will have few people to help, so you are likely to be rushing around with barely the opportunity to plan for the week ahead, never mind the next few months.

Yet allocating time to plan the year ahead can have great benefits on your nerves as well as your purse strings. The Savagewood Marketing Training Programme was deliberately created with this mind. The unique onsite sessions offer all attendees the chance to work with us develop a programme tailored to suit your business and your circumstances.

This plan becomes the blueprint for your activity, around which you can plan your time and budgets. And if you are still short of time? Talk to Savagewood about our 'phone-a-friend' and 'help-a-friend' options!

Savagewood top tips - #3

Overnight success rarely happens overnight

As much as we want every marketing programme to generate instant success, it is rare for a single activity to achieve the sales success you're seeking. Big breakthroughs often cost big money so smaller businesses need to look at more measured changes rather than giant leaps of faith.

Consistency is the key. Brands like Asda continue to promote the same message of value year after year so that customers automatically think of them as the leading supermarket for value. Customers respond well to familiarity, usually poorly to uncertainty or upheaval. Plan to consistently promote your strongest messages and your marketing activity will become increasingly effective.



The 6 points to perfect campaign planning

Before you start your marketing activity, you will need to establish the ground rules. The Savagewood Marketing Training Programme will have helped you set these - identify the customers you want to reach and the most relevant way to reach them; clarify what they want to hear from you; and define the budgets you want to invest to approach them. So now what?

1) Give yourself time

During difficult economic conditions, it is tempting to rush to get things out there in order to generate the cash flow your business needs. You try to short-cut the planning and creative process – you use media you've used before because it's easy, not because it's successful; you use creative material you've been supplied because it is available not because it's right; you target customers you've tried before in the hope they'll give in through sheer persistence.

Give yourself some time thinking time. Factor in the time during your busy schedule to think about your marketing plans. Assemble previous material and its results so you can properly evaluate previous successes and failures. Above all, set yourself a campaign start date that you can manage to achieve without too much stress – and keep to it.

2) A little help from your friends

Many small businesses have some trepidation about marketing. Inexperience intimidates them; previous experience has discouraged them; or there is a genuine disbelief that it is an effective use of time and money. There's nothing like talking to someone to reduce these sorts of fears. Seek advice from your franchisor, talk to local business organisations or, if you're part of the Savagewood 'phone-a-friend' plan, and get some objective support to your planning and preparation.

3) Get yourself organised

Planning your marketing campaign is like every other part of your business. As dull as it may sound, good organisation can save you enormous time and stress. Always keep proper files of previous activity with their results as an important reference. Have the costs for each campaign clearly tabulated so you can make sure you understand what returns you are getting on your investment and to keep your suppliers honest! Try and set a timetable for your preparation and update developments as you go – revisions to costs, amendments to creative material or changes in your schedule should be registered as they happen and not be left to memory.

4) It's not just about you

As much as you organise yourselves, you are still relying on the speed and skill of others. How long will it take for the creative material to be ready? How many days do you or your supplier need to set the work or supply it? If you are placing a press advertisement, when does the title need the work from you to ensure it appears on the right date? Look to account for all these time factors in your own planning.

5) Hidden costs

You will have planned your budgets and are preparing your material for your activity. You will have negotiated with your suppliers to get the best discounts and the media to get the best deal. But continue to keep an eye on those additional costs that can often be hidden. Are you making last minute revisions and if so, at what cost? Are delivery costs included? What about postage? Are there usage costs on any photography you might be using? Hidden costs can quickly take you over budget.

6) The first time is always the hardest

You may be an experienced marketer, so many of these tips you may follow already. But for many, planning a campaign may not come so naturally. Like any expertise, ability improves through experience and repetition. Once you go through the process and understand the principles, effective planning will become second nature.

A guide to campaign planning

What you need to think about	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8
Deciding on media, target, messages, budgets								
Organising media, preparing creative design								
Setting and printing work, preparing for response								
Supplying to publications or distributing material								
Campaign week								
Evaluating what happened								

Franchisee forum

Savagewood have enjoyed the privilege of spending time with franchisees and see firsthand the passion and ambition to succeed. We hope we have started improving your awareness of the power of marketing and inspired you to run your own programmes and achieve greater results.

We are also happy to be a conduit for great ideas, successful campaigns or innovative approaches so that others can benefit. Send us an email at the address below and we will look to include them in our next newsletter.

REMEMBER – THIS NEWSLETTER IS NOT JUST FOR INFORMATION, BUT AN INVITATION TO YOU TO CALL SAVAGEWOOD OVER THE NEXT WEEK WITH ANY CONCERNS, QUERIES OR TO TALK THROUGH YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN PLANS.

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