GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY

Ageno School of Business
MKT 308 - Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy and Implementation
IMC Final Project Guidelines
Instructor: Ted Simon

Overview

The final project for this course is creation of an Integrated Marketing Communications Plan. This is an individual assignment. I will be assigning peer review teams so each of you will have a couple "supporters" for feedback and suggestions, but your work will be your own.

You are to select a brand, company, organization, or where appropriate, a business unit within a firm, and study it in detail to prepare and present a written IMC plan. You may choose to focus your plan on an existing product or service; an existing product/service launched into a new market, for a new use or a different target; or, a new or conceptual product or service. Your topic may be a tangible brand, a provided service or a cause (e.g., ALS Foundation "Ice Bucket Challenge"); you can select a for profit or non-profit entity.

The final IMC plan will be a Word document submitted via eLearning. You will also create and deliver an overview presentation of the plan online (via eLearning) using PowerPoint with audio narration and will respond to questions from the class.

The plan should be sufficiently comprehensive that a competent marketing professional could execute it and determine if the results met the stated objectives. The usual criteria for written assignments, as stated in the **Syllabus**, apply.

- Be organized, clear, and succinct.
- Flow logically from beginning through conclusion.
- Grammar, punctuation and spelling count. Double check your writing for these kinds of errors.
- Write in graduate-level American English that is appropriate to the business community (i.e., avoid jokes or "cute" comments in your case analysis).
- Cite all sources using American Psychological Association (APA) format. Outside research is required.

Students need not obtain "inside access" to a real company, although that can be helpful and is encouraged where possible. Use of publicly available information and your own research is acceptable. As part of your project you will want to study the industry in which you will be competing. Use available public information and secondary research in developing background for your project. The library is an excellent starting place for uncovering references, either in person or through the library's web site and electronic databases.

Some suggestions before you begin:

- Choose a company and product/service that interests you. The benefits of this are obvious. The greater interest you have in a topic, the better job you will do and the more you will get out of the project.
- Plan in advance and get started early. Rome was not built in a day, and this plan will not be written in a few weeks (at least not in a quality manner). You have 15 weeks to develop this IMC plan and you should make use of all the time available to you. Read through the syllabus and the resources I have provided to get a sense of the scope of requirements and effort, then dive in.

Project Deliverables

IMC Plan, Written

The Marketing Plan will be a formal business document that presents a full IMC plan for your selected topic. The final plan should be at least 20 pages (excluding title page, table of contents, references and appendices) and must follow APA in-citation and reference guidelines. A marketing plan outline/template to help guide your efforts may be found in Appendix I of this Guide. While this provides a guideline for your plan development, situations and needs vary by industry, company, product and brand. It's your responsibility to develop a plan that is suitable for your topic (just make sure you cover mandatory elements of a strong marketing plan).

IMC Plan, Presentation

You will create a PPT presentation version of your plan that will be shared with the class (via eLearning) in week 15 for discussion. The presentation should summarize the IMC plan as if you were presenting the plan to your organization's executive leadership for approval. Please use the audio narration feature as part of this assignment – your voice-over narration will add substantially to the quality and understandability of your plan.

PowerPoint is the standard manner for presenting marketing plans so this will give you a flavor of "real world" experience. I have posted a resource, PowerPoint Tips, on our class eLearning page as a reference.

- You can make use of both the Slide and Notes portion of PowerPoint to present your plan. Slides are to be used for presenting main points, key rationale as well as visuals (charts, graphs, data, etc.) that reinforce the key communication. These should be created as if you are preparing to present your recommended plan to your senior management.
- Your Audio Narration will provide prose content that amplifies on the Slide, providing more detailed information and content that further explains and/or reinforces the key point for the associated Slide. If your narration is strong and informative, you may not need to provide further data or information in the Notes section of your PPT.

Your Presentation will be posted on an eLearning Forum set up for this purpose. If you prefer, you may create and post a video of your Plan Presentation on YouTube, Vimeo or some other video sharing site.

Your IMC Plan

Through this plan, you will demonstrate your understanding of the concepts and techniques of IMC and ability to apply these techniques. The project will be judged on:

- the establishment of clear and measurable IMC objectives
- the use of appropriate communication tactics
- the quality of the research, marketing, media, and creative strategies
- thoroughness of budgeting and projections
- proposed evaluation techniques (success metrics and measurement)

Your comprehensive Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) plan should take into account all potential channels and tactics, including:

- Public relations & publicity
- Advertising
- Direct marketing
- Interactive marketing (display, SEM, web site, etc.)
- Social media
- Sales promotions
- Personal selling
- Sponsorship, partnerships & events (if applicable)
- Cause related marketing (if applicable)
- Fulfillment and customer service (if applicable)

Outside research is required and will be an on-going effort throughout the course as you develop your plan (see earlier suggestion for getting started immediately). Ultimately, your plan should be based on your research into/analysis of the situation, needs, challenges and opportunities facing your brand. Your objectives, strategies, tactics and implementation plan should flow directly from this analysis.

There are many outlines on how to structure a plan and there are many possible tactics and channels. Not all brands, companies or organizations need to (or should) pursue every single option available. That's not realistic, nor is it marketing. Marketing is about achieving business objectives by targeting the best audience(s) with the most compelling, relevant message(s) through the most appropriate media/channels. Ultimately, that's what you will be doing for your IMC Plan; you should develop a plan that is suitable for your company, product, and objectives.

All this said, I have provided an outline to serve as a starting point and guide for your efforts. It's a good "check list" for you; where you take it is up to you.

Assessment

The IMC plan will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Thoroughness and relevance of information gathered – There is always a wealth of information that can be reviewed and presented. The key is to identify the right information and data to share. Focus on information that provides important context, relates directly to the business challenges and decisions to be made and explains/provides insight that will drive your marketing plan.
- Quality and depth of analysis – Research and analysis should demonstrate a depth of thinking and go beyond describing or stating what has transpired to uncover underlying reasons that drive those findings. Wherever possible, you should provide evidence, data or research to support your assertions.
- Overall organization and logic of the plan – There should be a logical flow from analysis to plan objectives, strategies and tactics and on through your performance measurement plan. Put another way, your plan should be strategically consistent from analysis through recommended tactics.
- Clarity, quality and understandability of the writing – As noted earlier, clear communication is an essential tool for a marketer. Your writing will be evaluated as graduate students. Please write in a professional tone and make sure that your content is readily understandable by an outside reader. Lack of clarity or difficulty in understanding what has been written will negatively impact your grade.
- Good application of the concepts and principles of marketing and IMC – Apply both a breadth and depth of the marketing skills you have learned/are learning to your IMC plan.
- Soundness and reasonableness of the recommended marketing plan – Use your common sense and business acumen to test your recommendations (i.e., don't recommend running TV commercials in the Super Bowl unless you have a very strong case as to why that makes strategic sense for your business as well as rationale for funding this very high expense).
- Formatting, style and tone of the plan - Think of this like you are preparing a plan for your company's upper management and write in a professional, clear and direct business tone that creates a clear and compelling case for your marketing plan.

The final presentation will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Was the content of the slides clear, concise, and informative? Did it highlight the most important aspects of the plan without repeating the entire written paper?
- Is the analysis clear? Do you establish clear objectives for your plan? Do the strategies and tactics flow in a consistent, synergistic manner that address your objectives?
- Are the key strategies and tactics clearly articulated? Does the presentation make it clear what you intend to do and why?

- Were the slides visually appealing, easy to read, and clearly organized?
- Did the presenter respond professionally, thoroughly, and in a timely fashion to questions posed by the instructor and classmates?

Final tip: In developing and evaluating your final plan, please keep the following questions in mind:

- Does the plan contain all relevant requested content? Is any missing content acknowledged and explained?
- Does the plan demonstrate thoughtful, original, and articulate consideration of marketing objectives? Are there specific, complete, and practical methods of evaluation and measurement of performance against these objectives?
- Is the research relevant, useful, clearly linked to the purpose of the plan and appropriately attributed?
- Does the marketing strategy clearly define the target market and segments, positioning, pricing, etc.? Does the marketing and media approach target the identified markets?
- Are the tactics complete, logical, well-balanced and appropriate for the target, value proposition, strategy and the organization? Do the tactics chosen support the marketing research conclusions? Are the tactics well integrated, synergistic and do they support one another?
- Are all aspects integrated into an overall marketing communications program?
- Is the marketing message compelling and appropriate for the target(s) and objective(s)?
- Is the budget complete, logical, and reasonable, given the organization, the specific marketing communications program, and the objectives of the plan? Does it reflect an understanding of the costs and components of the tactic/channel? Have printing and other media costs been researched and are they realistic? Do production and media costs stay within budget?
- Is testing included? Is any testing clearly defined and justified? Is it stated how testing results will be used in the future?
- Is the plan (paper, presentation) well-organized, logically structured, and does it flow well from beginning to end with clear direction and good transitions?
- Are all assumptions clearly stated and reasonable?
- Is the plan internally and strategically consistent?
- Are the mechanics of writing handled well? Is the tone geared to the audience? Is the sentence structure appropriate and varied? Is the content free of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors?
- Are in-text notes and the list of references accurate and complete? Is all quoted or paraphrased material appropriately identified and credited?
- Is the language original? Does the paper “speak” with one voice”?

Note: These guidelines may be modified during the course of the term.

APPENDIX I
Marketing Plan Outline

This document is based on suggested guidelines for completing a full-scope marketing plan for marketing courses at Golden Gate University. It has been developed with input from industry advisors, adjunct and full-time faculty, and students, and has been adapted specifically for MKT 308 and IMC Plan development.

The project report should be at least twenty pages, exclusive of appendices. (NOTE: The use of appendices is a good way to incorporate detailed information, charts, tables, images and exhibits that may take up a lot of space in the body of a paper). Spacing: use 1.5 or 2.0 (double spaced) spacing. I request you use 12-point font; I will accept 11-point font if you use Arial or Calibri font style.

The weights shown below are simply general indicators of importance. Grading will be done based on how the plan functions as an integrated whole, not necessarily as a weighted average of the components. Roughly **30%** of the grading weight is based on plan clarity, integration, flow, and consistency.

The report should contain the following elements:

- ***Table of Contents***: This section may be single spaced.
- ***Executive Summary***: Summarize the entire IMC plan, with key specific details including a synopsis of the main goals, strategy and tactical recommendations, along with the requested dollar amount for execution of the plan. Please note that this is a critical part of the plan and should be written with great care as this gives top management an insight into the plan's major thrust. Write the Executive Summary after you have finished writing the report. Length is not to exceed two pages.
- ***Situation Analysis***: A situation analysis provides important context for any plan. This is where you will present the information, research and analyses that establish a clearer picture of the business situation, opportunities, needs and challenges that ultimately shape your strategies, plan and tactics.

  Your situation analysis should paint a brief portrait of the company and provide information relevant to the IMC plan. For example:
  - Organization Overview: Company background information that provides helpful context
    - Pertinent historical information
    - Core Values, Mission/Mission Statement, Vision, Goals and Objectives
    - Size/status; market share, sales, financial health of the company
    - Key success factors, critical issues facing organization (e.g., major sales declines, facing bankruptcy, public relations disaster or scandals)
  - Describe the business model (where appropriate)
  - Market Segment Characteristics – Including, but not limited to
    - Target market analysis - demographics, psychographics, as well as key consumer insights behaviors, benefits sought and other segmentation bases,
    - Market size, growth rate, relevant trends
    - Product/service details, product/market matrix
    - Brand awareness, and any other available marketing data relevant to the situation
  - Existing distribution channels for the company's products.
  - Current product situation including definition, positioning, sales, prices, margins, and profits of the products addressed in the plan.
  - Industry Information and Competitor Insight: Industry landscape, trends, key competitors and relative market shares
    - Where possible, a strong competitive analysis that evaluates key competitors' relative position, as well as an assessment of the competitors' strengths, weaknesses, key marketing and/or IMC initiatives, etc. is particularly valuable.
  - Marketplace Macro-level Environmental Forces: Environmental, technological, regulatory and other relevant factors in the external environment

- Primary or secondary research results that lend insight into the IMC plan: You must conduct some research in order to prepare the plan. This section should summarize the results of research already conducted; not focus on research that should be conducted in the future. Testing should be addressed elsewhere.

NOTE: It is not necessary to include every piece of information available about your organization in your situation analysis. Part of the assignment is to identify the relevant information that will inform and guide your IMC plan.

- ***SWOT Analysis***: Not required, but often very helpful in framing the situation. This analysis utilizes your key learnings and insights derived from the situation analysis to develop an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by the organization (SWOT). For your IMC plan, focus on factors that impact your IMC effort. For example,
  - Do not spend time focusing on addressing product ingredient sourcing issues UNLESS it is something that you need/intend to address via your IMC plan.
  - DO spend time highlighting a new technology advantage that you will want to communicate to the marketplace or a competitive offer that threatens your brand.

- ***Objectives***: Marketing Objectives describe what the marketing plan is expected to accomplish. Objectives can be stated in a hierarchical manner beginning with a statement of the overall strategic mission of the organization (or the SBU as the case may be). The proposed marketing/IMC plan must be consistent with these overall corporate and marketing objectives.

  Example of a Strategic Mission/Vision Statement: "The mission of eHarmony is to empower people with the knowledge and inspiration needed to grow and strengthen their most important relationships for a lifetime of happiness." (www.eHarmony.com)

  Objectives should be stated so that they are **SMART** goals – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-drive. Examples of Objectives focused more on the IMC aspect of Marketing may include:
  - Generate $X Revenue for the New Mini Cooper in year 1
  - Achieve Year 1 Awareness of the new Envoy among 50% of the target audience
  - Sell X units of the Dockers Brand products in 2006
  - Re-position Levi's brand to be perceived as youthful, in-style, and sexy among 50% of the target audience over the next 12 months
  - Increase market share of Peet's Coffee from 16% to 18% in 1 year
  - Increase revenue per customer by 20% in the next year
  - Increase Awareness of the new Toyota Prius from 20% to 60% of target consumers in 1 year
  - Generate Trial of Nantucket Nectars among 20% of target consumers
  - Achieve "highly satisfied" customer satisfaction score among 90+% of customers in 1 year

- ***IMC Strategy*** – Every plan has key strategic components that need to be well-defined to insure that the plan is "on target" - aligned with overall business/marketing objectives, focusing on the best audiences and delivering the right message via the proper channels at the appropriate times.
  - **Brand Strategy** – This section establishes the overall positioning and message you will be delivering and reinforcing across all your marketing activities. Done properly, this is the "glue" that will hold all components together in an integrated, synergistic fashion. Your plan should articulate the following brand components:
    - Positioning Statement
    - Brand Essence/Soul
    - Brand Character, Personality, Tone
  - **Target Audience** – Every brand has multiple constituencies that comprise its overall franchise. As we will discuss in this course, some audiences are more important to our business and brand than others. Your job is to identify these key constituencies, prioritize them. You will also define the behavioral objective for each of your key segments; this p
    - Key Segment(s)/Constituencies – Every brand has multiple constituencies; you should identify at least two.

        - Define your target audiences – demographics, psychographics; any variables that aids your understanding of your audience and informs your plan/tactics.
        - Key Insights – Relationship with brand, category; key needs, motivations, triggers.
    - Behavioral Objective – You will define the behavioral objective for each segment selected. In other words, what is the change in behavior, action, attitude, etc. that you seek in order to achieve your larger business/marketing objective. This will provide a measurable metric for evaluating the success of your IMC efforts. We will discuss this topic further during the course.
- **Communication/Creative Strategy** – Define your key communication points and messages, by objective and target. This is where you should define product messages, specific promotional offers, etc.
    - NOTE: During the course will be reviewing a framework that helps pull the three above steps together into a consolidated format. You will find this useful in developing your plan.
- **Media/Channel Strategy** - Recommended media/channels for each target/objective, including rationale for your selections.
    - You should also delineate any specific tactical efforts, such as sales promotion, fulfillment, customer service, etc. called for by your plan.
- **Geography, Timing –** If there are important factors or skews related to geography or timing, those should be articulated as part of the plan.
    - **Example:** When I worked on Pillsbury Biscuits there were two key factors we needed to account for: 1) 70% of biscuit sales occurred in the southern region of the U.S. (where biscuits are a traditional, staple food), and 2) 65% of our sales occurred between November and March (when temperatures are cooler and our audience was more likely to cook using the oven). Based on this knowledge of our business skews, a key part of our strategy was to concentrate our marketing activity in the South (geography) and during the "baking months) of October-March (timing).
- **Other Strategic Considerations –** Each organization and/or brand is unique and therefore may have certain factors that are important to take into account in setting the strategy for your IMC plan. It will be up to you to discern and/or define any such factors for your topic.

- ***Implementation Plan – aka, The Action Plan* -** This section, often called the Action Plan or Program, will contain the tactical and executional details of the IMC plan. This should include specific actions and activities across all key parts of the IMC mix.

  The Action Plan should be clearly aligned with the above marketing objectives/strategies. It summarizes your IMC activities while establishing clear timing parameters, cost estimates and responsibility for plan execution. Flowing from your above IMC Strategies, your Implementation/Action Plan should include:

  - Tactical Plan – This summarizes and delineates the specifics of what you plan to execute for each tactical element of your plan. It should include the following for each tactic:
    - Target audience(s) (demographics, psychographics, behavioral)
    - Offer(s) (if applicable)
    - Creative approach and implementation, including copy points and visual design
    - Creative (design and production) costs (if applicable)
    - Media (broadcast, publication, website or lists) (if applicable).
    - Media cost (if applicable)
    - Product pricing, including any sales promotions (where appropriate)
    - Fulfillment and customer service (where appropriate
  - Calendar of Events/Marketing Road Map – This "road map" guides execution and helps communicate the IMC plan to others in your organization. In one crisp view, it provides a clear view of what tactics will be executed when. This is often best shown in a visual format that provides a "snapshot" of your plan. It also helps insure an integrated and synergistic approach to your IMC plan.
  - Budget: Resources and Costs
    - Media and production costs – Estimates for the cost of planned IMC tactics (derived from your research).

        - Other Budget Items – If there are other costs associated with executing this plan, such as personnel, agencies, technology tools, etc. you should include those as well in order to properly evaluate the cost, and return, of your IMC efforts.
    - Monitoring, Tracking and Control Mechanisms: Provide specifics as to the monitoring program, key metrics (KPI's) and measurement tools that will help you insure that the marketing plan is on track toward achieving the objective(

Budgets and financial information: Provide a review of budget, your financial projections, sales forecast, breakeven analysis, anticipated return on marketing investment, etc.

References: Sources cited using APA format (http://ggu.libguides.com/apa).