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## IS A MARKETING PLAN THE SAME THING AS A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN?

How does a marketing plan relate to an organization's communications plan? What are the differences? Is the marketing plan just one aspect of the communications plan? Should one consider combining them into a single document?

A communications plan is a PART of your marketing plan. A communications plan is a focused strategy you use to get the word out about your business, product or service.

You may use a variety of communications tactics such as public relations, advertising and speaking engagements. Yes, it does identify who you are communicating to and what your message is, and where and how you will get that message out, and often has goals or objectives you are trying to achieve.

Here's the difference between the two

A marketing plan starts by creating a strong, strategic marketing foundation for your communications plan. It addresses the goals and objectives for your business, not just for your communications activities.

It addresses how you package, price and sell your product or service, not just how you talk about it. It takes into consideration your competitors and helps you develop a unique selling proposition to ensure your product or service is uniquely positioned in the minds of your prospects and customers.

And it ensures you have a way to track all of your marketing activities to create the greatest possible success for your business.

You need a marketing plan FIRST

The messaging part of your marketing plan is where your communications plan comes in. Once you have created a strong, strategic marketing foundation (which you will do as part of creating a marketing plan) you can determine a message strategy and tactics - this is your communications plan. And it most definitely can be a part of the same document.

When I write marketing plans for clients, the communications plan is part of the marketing plan. The only time it is not, is when the client has written their own business and marketing plans. But in those cases, I make sure I either get to review their plans or that I completely understand their business goals and strategy so I can develop a marketing communications plan to support them.

The success of your communications plan depends on it

If all you have is a communications plan, you are missing an important part of what it takes to make a business successful. A marketing plan is essential.

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