

The Marketing Toolkit: Determining Indicators to Maximize Marketing Efficiency for Small Business



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ABSTRACT

The Marketing Toolkit Workshop is a seminar to be given with the goal of providing educational material and in-sight for “Maximizing Marketing Efficiency for Your Small Business.” The workshop consists of the following components:

- Marketing Workbook: Provides exercises, examples and activities in a worksheet format that will help the participant better understand the principles and objectives of the workshop. Includes appendices and a marketing glossary. The workbook also functions as a take-away that can be referenced at later dates.
- Marketing Toolkit: Includes interactive ‘props’, checklists and quick reference guides that supplement the workbook and can be used in the business environment as Marketing Basics reminders.
- Powerpoint Presentation: This is the visual piece of the Marketing Toolkit Workshop which the facilitator will use to present the material.

The Marketing Toolkit Workshop is a half day educational seminar, that could be easily expanded with more depth into a full day seminar, that enables participants to learn how to effectively and efficiently develop a personalized marketing plan that is based on indicators relevant to the individual business. The principles of the workshop include: Defining Your Business & Brand; Getting to Know Your Customer/ Audience; Developing Marketing Strategies and a Marketing Plan; and Tracking Success of Marketing Programs. Several marketing best practice examples have been included to demonstrate the points of the seminar.



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INTRODUCTION

The intended audience for the Marketing Toolkit Workshop is small business owners and/or managers and other interested community members in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee region. The purpose of the Marketing Toolkit Workshop, and its components, is to enable individuals who make marketing decisions within a small business to gain a better understanding of how their business fits into the marketing atmosphere and how to determine relevant marketing indicators that can be used as guides in formulating marketing strategies and plans.

This educational seminar can be held multiple times throughout the year to allow business owners to re-educate themselves on what they will need to do to engage in a successful marketing process. It is important for businesses to re-evaluate the components of their marketing regularly because economic factors and consumer preferences are consistently changing and evolving. Participants of the workshop will be able to review their Marketing Workbook after the seminar is complete to aid the marketing re-evaluation process.

This project was created primarily for the Sierra Business Council as an educational aspect for the Think Local First project. The North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce has already expressed interest in using the project or pieces of the project in a Chamber Education program.

The major sections of the project include:

- Written Report
- Powerpoint Presentation & Facilitator Notes
- Marketing Workbook
- Marketing Toolkit

BACKGROUND

The initial topic of our leadership indicators project was ‘community connectivity through economic success.’ As our group began discussing how we could create an indicators project to fit this topic, the issue of small business marketing was consistently prevalent. During this time, the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association

(NLTRA) was holding community workshops to allow interested members of the community to comment on current marketing practices of this Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). Multiple times in these workshops and in other local forums, community members consistently indicated that they were interested in learning how to better market their own small business to become more successful in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee region. With this, and statistics found in other secondary research our group began to see a need for marketing education at the small business owner/manager level.

The group began to converse about creating a Marketing Toolkit or a Marketing 101 class, and in the end, we decided to blend both of the ideas to create our final project. Due to time constraints, our North Lake Tahoe-Truckee Leadership Project Presentation will not include the full Marketing Toolkit Workshop. Instead, we will present key points of the seminar and provide examples of the Marketing Toolkit and Marketing Workbook for the class to review.

PROPOSED INDICATORS

Throughout the Marketing Workbook, various sources of information are available for the workshop participant to review, including primary research, secondary research, and useful tips for conducting their own research.

The information includes:

- Survey results from a questionnaire that was sent to Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce members and the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce members, via Chamber email blasts.
- Graphs and charts exemplifying economic factors in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee region, including: sales tax revenues, transient occupancy tax (TOT), and visitor demographics.
- Ways to use the Internet to efficiently market a small business.
- Useful information and contacts for businesses and organizations including appendices with various marketing resources.

We have attempted to provide indicators that small businesses already have data for, but that they may not realize the value or importance of using. For instance:



- Geographic data, such as where consumers are located (ie; locals, second homeowners, visitors), that indicate how marketing resources should be allocated.
- Profitability mapping by time (ie; month to month) to show trends in spend, economic impact, and seasonality which indicates what resource investments to apply and when (ie; staffing levels, product mix, marketing strategy).
- Buying trends (ie; 78% of customers who purchased a fly fishing pole also purchased a guide book) which indicate possible promotional opportunities for value add-ons, coupons, offers, etc.
- Demographic data (ie; age, gender, income) that indicates your target audience which allows you to choose relevant marketing methods, media outlets, and types of content.
- Website data (ie; visitor pathways, bounce rates), that indicate the relevance and ‘stickiness’ of the information contained on your website so that the small business can alter content, usability, design, and flow of the website/landing pages to enhance user experience and encourage longer and repeat visits.

The Marketing Toolkit Workshop will enable small business owners that participate to determine their own indicators. Our seminar and project will show the small business owners how to take the indicators they have determined and use them to more efficiently market their own business.

PROMOTION AND UTILITY OF THE INDICATORS

Since every business will have a different product mix and consumer base, indicators will vary accordingly. The project will enable each participant to use business specific indicators, and the provided examples of marketing best practices, to create relevant marketing strategies that ultimately formulate a cohesive marketing plan.

Advantages of the Marketing Toolkit Workshop

- Encourages more in-depth analysis of individual business to find indicators that are unique to that business
- Ability to create a personalized marketing plan
- Tips and techniques for promotions
- Interactive workshop which allows for open discussion of relevant issues
- Marketing materials for future reference



Disadvantages of the Marketing Toolkit Workshop

- Varied levels of experience and knowledge about these marketing principles can affect relevance of the information provided and the class dynamic
- Some businesses may need more assistance than others in understanding marketing principles and strategies
- Can only facilitate a small number of participants per workshop

PROPOSED AUDIENCE VALUE

This toolkit is valuable for small businesses across the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee region. The primary goal is to help local businesses learn how to find indicators that will facilitate a more effective marketing process. Our audience is local businesses, but we will be presenting the Marketing Toolkit Workshop through organizations such as the Sierra Business Council and the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce. These organizations can be seen as distributors for our training.

Within the Sierra Business Council, our group is specifically working with Think Local First. This project was created “to foster increased support for people and businesses creating and maintaining sustainable local economies and thriving communities” in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee region. Our project will be used as a resource that the Think Local First project can use to educate small business members about how to more effectively market themselves, within budget, while reaching specific customer segments.

Similarly, the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce has expressed interest in providing workshops on indicators and methods to increase local and tourist business as part of their Chamber Education program.

GOALS AND PURPOSE OF MARKETING WORKSHOP

For small businesses, marketing is a process where limited resources must be frugally applied in order to promote the benefits of a product or service to people who are ready, willing and able to buy. By researching, strategizing and planning, we avoid mixed messages and inconsistent marketing efforts. Building and reinforcing our brand identity through well planned marketing creates a platform for customers to engage in relationships with and gain loyalty towards.

The Marketing Toolkit Workshop provides a “getting started” point for small businesses looking to become savvier with their marketing. The overall goal is for participants to implement these marketing processes for their own businesses.

The objectives of the workshop are:

- To understand the basic concepts and terminology of marketing
- Determination of target markets
- Collection and use of data to identify indicators that are useful in marketing planning
- Develop a marketing plan using targeted marketing strategies
- Learn “best practices” of how to effectively develop, execute, and control marketing programs
- A basic level of understanding of how to meet the wants and needs of your customer

The indicators and marketing strategies our project showcases aid in informing small businesses how to optimize their companies’ marketing processes. The project is focused on four key areas: Knowing Your Business/Brand; Knowing Your Customers/Audience; Marketing Strategy and Planning; and Program Execution and Tracking Techniques.

Branding is the concept behind creating a consistent and recognizable look and feel for your company. We will include worksheets and examples to help businesses evaluate their own brand, its purpose and effectiveness, and understand why it so powerful.



Client and audience profiling is one of the most valuable planning activities companies can undertake. Data such as comment cards, geographic location of clients, web traffic, search terms, and many other available pieces of information can be used to indicate ideal customers, who your current customers are, and when the most effective time to reach them is. Education on accessing and analyzing these indicators will be provided.

The seminar will also provide insight on marketing mix, relationship marketing, customer service, and interactive marketing. These strategies can be easily executed with the right know-how and may be activities that smaller businesses are not currently pursuing.

Furthermore, we will provide best practice examples, guides, and checklists for how to accomplish these strategies. Tracking success of marketing programs and re-evaluating strategies are other important aspects of the marketing process.

METHODOLOGY

Our project purpose and goals are based primarily on community feedback during strategic planning workshops and forums for area organizations, secondary marketing research, individual interviews, business associations' input, and a direct online survey to the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce and the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce. Secondary research performed by our group uncovered statistics from the North Tahoe Business Association which showed that 44% of the Main Street Business Survey respondents indicated a need for marketing and advertising education. Further research from the 2007 North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Membership Survey showed that workshops on creating a brand and niche were highly requested. The business survey our group conducted showed that while 88% of respondents have a website, only 14% of those businesses linked to existing sites that could be used for referrals and link optimization.

The group's business survey asks the following questions:

1. Is your business a member of a business organization? i.e., Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Association and or Business Association.
2. If yes to # 1, do you take advantage of the member benefits?
3. Do you have a website for your business?



4. If you have a website, has it helped you reach your business goals?
5. Do you survey your customers?
6. Do you advertise for your business?

The content for the Marketing Toolkit and Marketing Workbook was created through best practice guides and examples, group expertise, further secondary research, and survey data. We focused on finding information and creating content that is useful across different types of businesses and industries. This ensures that the majority of businesses in the region can benefit from this basic marketing training.

LIMITATIONS

The business survey was limited to a small sample of businesses due to respondent limits within the online survey application. The survey responses were limited to 100 respondents and most of those were filled by the time the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce had a chance to access the online survey. This means our responses were biased towards the Truckee Chamber member businesses.

Primary research for the Marketing Toolkit Workshop, in general, was limited because of the nature of our intentions. The objectives of the project are meant to lead the participants towards conducting their own primary research as relevant to their specific business.

Our group is not comprised of six marketing professionals, but instead of members with varying background and experience, although several members have both professional and academic experience in marketing and in the actual execution of marketing processes listed in the project. This led to the need for more extensive secondary research and presentation preparation.

Finally, the impact of this project is dependent on business owners previous knowledge and willingness to participate and actively make changes. Effectiveness of the Marketing Toolkit Workshop may not be directly calculable. Information about the businesses perceived benefits would most likely have to be collected through surveying businesses at the workshop and then at certain intervals after the workshop to determine if participants found the workshop useful, if techniques discussed in the workshop were being used in current marketing planning and to what extent, and if they are tracking the success of their programs.



SUMMARY

In response to a need in the small business community of the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee region for marketing and advertising education, our group has created a Marketing Toolkit Workshop which aims to educate small business owners/managers about basic marketing principles and how to find relevant indicators to use in marketing planning. Unique indicators for every business abound and data for creating your own is easily accessible with the right tools. Using applicable indicators, businesses can become more efficient at identifying target audiences, implementing effective marketing strategies and promotions, and tracking success and returns of programs.

The interactive workshop includes a Marketing Toolkit and Marketing Workbook which illustrate important topics in a personalized manner and provide resources for further research. This allows participants to use the workshop materials for continued learning and re-evaluation of marketing processes after completion of the course.

Our projected outlets for the Marketing Toolkit Workshop are the Sierra Business Council's Think Local First project and the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Chamber Education program. Both organizations support the education and promotion of area businesses.



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