

The 3-3-7-2 Marketing Plan

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Most small business owners don't have any formal training in marketing, so the idea of creating a marketing plan can be very intimidating.

The Internet is a great resource for learning more about the elements of a good marketing plan, so go online and do some research on the basic principles of the art of marketing. While you're learning, get started with this simple marketing plan for building new customer relationships.

My 3-3-7-2 marketing plan has four elements: time, variety, interaction and persistence. Over a **three**-month period of time, using **three** different delivery channels, create **seven** customer interactions. Repeat **twice**.

Time. We all know it takes time to build new relationships, so placing a timing element in your marketing plan makes sense.

Variety. The delivery channel is how you make contact with your potential customers. No one thing works all the time, and we get bored by too much repetition. Using a variety of delivery channels will help keep your potential customer interested. Get started using these common delivery channels, including face-to-face meetings, phone calls, emails, letters, direct mailings and social media.

Interaction. This is the meat of it all. Potential customers form perceptions based on cumulative interactions, and every interaction with you becomes part of that perception. The good news here is that you actually have some control over how the perception is being built if you plan those interactions thoughtfully. When you put yourself in front of potential customers, do more listening than talking. Your goal is to find out what they need. Follow up and initiate the sales process based on the solutions your company can provide.

Perseverance. This is a nine-month plan. Evaluate what works and what doesn't, then adapt accordingly each time you begin a new

three-month cycle. Good business is built on relationships and this plan gives you the time to get to know your customer. You can map it out in your head, but I strongly recommend that you write it down. There is something about putting a plan on paper that makes it more concrete and increases the chance you'll follow it.

Create a plan for each new customer you are targeting. Of course, you've still got a business to run, so limit yourself to something manageable (five to 10, depending on your resources). Since you can't do this for

every potential customer in your universe, choose wisely instead of randomly. You want to place your efforts where they are most likely to bring a return.

We all like to do business with people we know and trust. It takes time to build a relationship with a new customer, so don't expect it to happen overnight.

You'll have to work hard and invest serious time to become known and trusted, but when it does happen, you'll have everything you need to compete successfully and win new business.



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Tailoring your marketing plan

The foundation of the 3-3-7-2 marketing plan exists within the four primary elements of time, variety, interactions and persistence. The way you apply those elements is totally up to you. When developing your own marketing plan, customize it. If you already have projects in place but need to develop customer relationships for the future, consider a 6-3-12-3 plan. If you are just getting your business started, try something more robust like 3-4-9-5.

Getting in front of potential customers is hard, so think strategically. You know how to reach them at the office, but where else will you find them? Are they exhibiting at a procurement event, attending pre-bid meetings? Professional associations, business organizations and civic groups are also great places to interact with potential customers. Follow them on Twitter or join a mutual group on LinkedIn. Keep an eye on the company's Facebook page and look for blogs authored by people you would like to do business with. Social media platforms are intended to be interactive, so engage in the conversation.

Make sure your marketing and advertising materials (website, capability statement, brochure, advertisements) are up-to-date and that they properly reflect your brand. Use these tools to learn more about your customers and expect that they are using the same tools to learn more about you.