



CK's Epiphany

Inspirations & revelations from
the mind of a marketer.



planning: Are you planning for Viability or Vulnerability?

As marketers, we've all experienced planning paranoia. It's not your mind playing tricks on you — everywhere you turn — someone wants something from you:

Your boss wants an increase in market share. Senior management wants higher sales. Shareholders want tons of ROI. Your department wants direction on marketing programs and definition of creative elements.

All on tight budgets and even tighter timetables.

It's no small task and a lot of pressure. Chances are, you're feeling a little less confident and a lot more vulnerable than usual.

We start our issue on planning with this epiphany:

**Failure to plan viable programs is a
fast road to vulnerability.**

But with so many marketing activities to choose from, and an equal number of opportunities for error, how do you know which programs to develop? What elements do you need to plan for? In other words, what do you do next?

Clear your desk and make a viable plan that leads to success. Viable planning is a 3-step process:

Step #1: Identify Marketing Opportunities

When you begin planning, you have your objectives, strategy and hopefully, some insight into your audiences, competition and trends. With this information in-hand, you're able to identify marketing opportunities, for example:

- Brand-neutral market segment with significant purchasing power (A new target market with tremendous sales potential)
- Strong competitive advantages (Compelling advantages that your competitors can not or will not match)
- Advances in technology (Technologies enabling new methods of marketing and selling your offerings)

illuminating Questions:

Want to ensure that your plan is viable, not vulnerable?

Make sure you have answered the following questions before setting your plan in-motion:

- What are the opportunities for my brand?
- Which of the opportunities that I've identified are viable?
- What type of resources do I require in order to execute my programs?
- What is the best time to launch each of my programs?
- What budget will I require in order to develop my plan?
- How do I measure ROI on each of my programs?

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Step #2: Evaluate Marketing Opportunities

Now that you've compiled your list of opportunities, it's time to separate the viable from the vulnerable. You may have discovered tens of opportunities, but only have the budget and the "bandwidth" to develop a few. But how do you determine which ones will make plan?

Evaluate each opportunity against a checklist of critical criteria.

You'll need to customize your checklist according to the criteria you deem critical for your own brand, but here's a starting point:

- Does this opportunity support my marketing objectives?
- Does this opportunity work to position my brand as competitive?
- Do I have the proper resources (e.g. budget/talent/partners) to develop this opportunity?
- Does this opportunity represent a significant ROI potential for the organization and its shareholders?
- Are there adequate methods for measuring the efficacy of this opportunity?

You'll find that your opportunities fall into one of two groups:

Viable: Opportunities that pass your custom criteria.

Vulnerable: Any opportunity that fails on even one of these points.

All of the viable opportunities will translate into your marketing plan programs.

Supporting the epiphany:

An opportunity is a program waiting to happen.

Step #3: Devise Marketing Programs

The type of programs that will make-up your plan depend upon the objectives you're working toward and the opportunities you deemed as viable. In other words, your programs are borne from and support the viable opportunities you identified earlier, for example:

- **Branding & Awareness Campaigns:** Develop a campaign that works to position your brand within the new target audience by showcasing unique selling points relevant to this audiences' needs and wants.
- **Customer Acquisition Program:** Launch sales programs that leverage your brand's competitive advantage.
- **Market through a New Sales Channel:** Utilize advances in technology to create a new marketing and sales channel for your brand.

When you were identifying opportunities, it was necessary to think strategically and "high-level." Now that you are devising a plan and defining programs you need to think on a lower, more "practical" level.

Unveiling the Epiphany:

When determining your strategy stay conceptual.

When comprising your plan, get tactical.

For each program, you will need to provide the following direction and detail:

- **Program Description:** Write a synopsis of the program describing objectives, category (e.g. customer acquisition, customer awareness) and means of delivery (e.g. email blast, broadcast TV campaign).
- **Program Ownership:** Determine a program lead to instill a sense of program ownership and responsibility among in-house staff and external partners.

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- **Resources Needed:** Outline internal and external resources and partners you'll need to launch and manage the program.
- **Program Budget:** Detail all expenses, you'll want to be prepared once the invoices come in!
- **Program Audiences:** Pinpoint the target audience(s) the program is customized for (e.g. single women ages 25 – 34 in the NYC Metro Area).
- **Timetables:** You'll need to schedule 3 timetables for each program: Lead time, Deadline and Drop Date.
- **Impact Desired/Program Goal:** Set impact and ROI goals for each program.
- **Tracking (ROI) Techniques:** Establish the techniques that allow you to monitor the success of particular programs, such as: number of leads generated, % of sales increase and conversion rates.

Congratulations! You've just devised your viable, reliable marketing plan. Now you can answer the questions that were challenging you at the onset and present your plan with confidence and enthusiasm.

Next edition we'll explore branding epiphanies, hope you'll join us. ■

who is CK?

CK is Christina Kerley.

Since '91, Christina has been identifying and developing marketing epiphanies for up and coming Start-Ups and formidable Fortune 500s. Passionate about working on extraordinary projects and providing exemplary service, she formed ckEpiphany in '99.

The business works with clients to realize their marketing, branding and business development objectives. For more information on CK and ckEpiphany, please visit: www.ckEpiphany.com

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