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Promotion is the most frequently overlooked aspect of a marketing plan. A strong promotion plan outlines the promotional tools or tactics used to achieve your marketing goals. Your promotion plan should also include the projected costs for the year, and an explanation of how your promotion tactics will support your marketing objectives.

Before You Start

Before you can determine which promotional strategy will help you reach your target market, you need to do some competitive research and learn about your target customer. Your research should consist of studying your industry and discovering what other companies are up to. To learn how your competitors get marketing messages across, consult trade journals. Their advertising will show you which features they are focusing on. Learning about your target customer will help prevent wasting your money and time on unproductive promotional activities.

Primary Promotional Tactics

The key to your Promotion Plan is the description of your projected promotional tactics. The most common promotional mix comprises media relations, print and other advertising venues.

- Media relations. Design a comprehensive plan for contacting and maintaining relationships with select members of the media. You might want to develop a media relations campaign if it would benefit your company to be mentioned in newspaper, magazine or TV broadcasts viewed by your target audience. Begin by creating press releases, press kits and public service.
- Print Advertising. This ranges from classified and display ads in trade journals, magazines, and newspapers, to ads placed in programs for events.
- Other Advertising. This comprises outdoor advertising, such as billboards and bus boards broadcast advertising on radio, TV, and cable TV and last but not least, Internet sites.

Other Promotional Tactics

There are an unlimited number of additional promotional activities. You can include any of the following:

- Sponsorship of special events
- Participation in community projects like educational boards and city councils
- Exhibition at trade shows. You can set up a booth or kiosk to showcase your products or services.
- Fairs. Depending on your product, you might consider educational fairs, job fairs, or county fairs.
- Public speaking and conferences. Making speeches or participating on panels at

professional association meetings, conferences, and other events positions you and your company as a leader in your field.

- Freebies. Everyone loves give-aways. If you can't afford to slap your logo on baseball caps and mouse pads, consider coupons and free samples.
- Marketing collateral. Materials such as newsletters, brochures, and fliers all get your message across to prospective customers.

It's crucial that you estimate your costs as accurately as possible. You should be able to obtain a rate schedule from any media outlet and the sales departments of fairs and trade shows.

Finally, in order to measure your success or failure in various promotional activities, you need a specific objective stating what you want to accomplish by what date and a way to measure your success. A poor example of measurable objective would be "send out brochures." A better example is "send out 1,000 brochures by May 1."