

How to Audit Your

# Marketing Strategy

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# Boost Your Marketing ROI with a Marketing Audit

What's the best way to maximize the return on your marketing investment? Take a step back from your day-to-day marketing projects and conduct a marketing audit.

A marketing audit is a top-to-bottom assessment of your entire marketing program, from branding to tactics. The beginning of a new year or the start of a new budget period is an ideal time to do it.

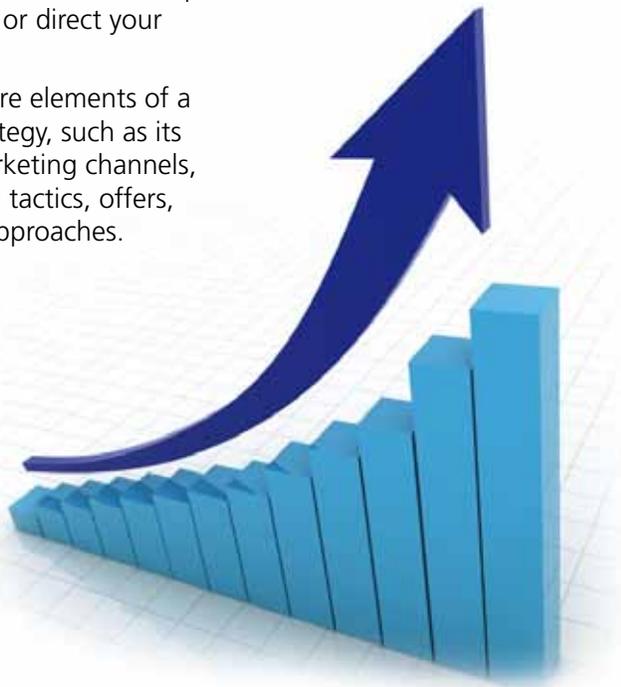
The purpose of a marketing audit is to objectively evaluate the effectiveness of your investment in marketing. By taking a good, hard look at every marketing dollar you're spending, you can decide whether to keep spending money this way or direct your resources elsewhere.

Most audits review the core elements of a company's marketing strategy, such as its branding, messaging, marketing channels, marketing campaigns and tactics, offers, sales tools, and creative approaches.

The goal is to determine what's working and what isn't, so you can adjust your marketing strategy going forward. You want to know how marketing is moving the sales needle and which elements of your marketing plan are making that happen.

How do you conduct a marketing audit? What questions should you ask? And how can an audit help you develop a smart marketing strategy?

Here's a practical guide to a marketing audit.



# How to Conduct an Audit

## 1. Form a small internal team

Marketing staff members from across your company should be involved in the audit process, even if an independent marketing consultant will be guiding your audit.

Keep the group manageable in size, ideally five to seven people. Include staff from different levels for varied perspectives. Consider inviting a few individuals from other departments, such as product management, sales, or customer service. Ask a representative from your marketing agency to participate.

## 2. Establish an evaluation timeframe

Most marketers look at one to two years' worth of marketing initiatives to evaluate their programs. Older initiatives usually are not relevant to an evaluation of what's working today.

## 3. Do your homework

You will need accurate metrics to gauge the effectiveness of your marketing. Compile and share these numbers in advance to give your team a context within which to view your marketing. Look for industry benchmarks to use as a comparison. Metrics to evaluate could include:

- Leads generated
- Leads converted
- Direct mail and e-mail response rates
- Web traffic
- Search engine rankings
- Social media engagement
- Media coverage
- Advertising impressions
- Trade show traffic
- Brand awareness

## 4. Meet offsite

Pick a meeting room outside your normal workplace. Spread all your materials and images out on tables or on the walls. A neutral environment will help you focus your discussion and see your creative with fresh eyes.

## 5. Be objective

Try to look at your marketing through the eyes of a customer or prospect. Avoid the temptation to defend campaigns you've created or tactics that "we've always done." Be ready to jettison initiatives that aren't delivering results and be willing to test new ideas and approaches.

## 6. Examine your marketing in all channels

Look for inconsistencies in messaging and branding and opportunities to integrate marketing more effectively across traditional, web, and social media. Ask your web specialists to evaluate marketing in traditional media and vice versa. They may be surprised at what they can learn from each other.

## 7. Compare your marketing to your competitors'

Though your focus should be on your own program, take some time to compare your marketing to what competitors are doing. Try to do a head-to-head comparison of your branding, website, and marketing messages to see who's having more impact in the marketplace.

### Strategy Tip:

Customer satisfaction surveys and web comments can help you see how well you're delivering on your brand promise at the human level, when your staff interacts directly with customers and prospects.

# Questions to Ask

What should you assess in a marketing audit?

Here are the main factors to evaluate and 40 questions to answer that will help you determine the effectiveness of your marketing.

## Brand

1. Does your brand clearly communicate what you are about and convey the highest value you deliver?
2. Does your brand effectively differentiate you from every other supplier in your marketplace?
3. Is your brand promise well understood and consistently executed at all levels of your organization?
4. Is your brand identity being properly used in all media?

## Market

5. Do you know your most profitable customers and are you targeting prospects that look just like your best customers?
6. Do you understand the factors buyers consider when selecting your product or service and are you focusing your marketing campaigns on those factors?
7. Have your customers changed the way they find, buy, or use your product or service and have you adjusted your marketing plan accordingly?
8. Are you actively upselling and cross-selling products and services to your current customers?

## Messages

9. Do you have three to five key marketing messages that you're consistently delivering in all media?
10. Do your marketing messages resonate with your target audience? Are you talking about the things your customers and prospects care about?
11. Do these messages match the experience customers have when they interact with your staff?
12. Are you tailoring messages to specific market segments when you have the opportunity to do so?



## Marketing Channels

13. Are traditional marketing channels – such as advertising, direct marketing, and public relations – still delivering enough value to warrant their investment?
14. Is it time to shift some – or more – of your marketing to new channels such as social media and mobile marketing?
15. Are you maximizing the value of the proprietary channels you control, such as newsletters, invoices, product packaging and inserts, vehicles, and buildings?

## Marketing Tactics

16. Do you know which marketing tactics are generating the best results – leads, conversions, or sales – at the lowest cost?
17. Can you cut the cost of any of your tactics by changing formats?
18. Are you integrating social media into traditional marketing tactics like direct mail and advertising?
19. Can you create a mobile app to promote your product or connect with your audience?

## Creative Approaches

20. Is your creative attention-getting? Does it stand out in a crowded marketplace?
21. Does your creative engage the prospect immediately in your sales message and enhance the delivery of the message?
22. Is the call to action loud and clear? Does the prospect know exactly what to do next after reviewing your marketing materials?
23. What will people remember most after seeing your marketing: your clever creative approach or your product?

## Offers

24. Is your offer resonating with prospects? Are more and more people saying yes?
25. Does your offer showcase your product?
26. Does your offer deliver real value to the prospect?
27. Are you tailoring offers to specific market segments or types of buyers?

## Collateral and Sales Tools

28. Are your sales brochures, displays, and sales demonstration tools accurate, complete, and up to date?
29. Are your sales tools integrated with your brand and your marketing campaigns?
30. Do you need new tools to educate prospects about your industry or product?

## Data

31. Are you capturing customer and prospect data to build a robust marketing database?
32. Are you compiling email addresses for an ongoing sales dialogue?
33. Are you tracking and recording response and transactional data to create full profiles of your customers and their behavior so you can target future promotions?
34. Is your customer and prospect addressing data accurate and complete and optimized for USPS standards?

## Website

35. Is your website built around the needs and interests of your visitors?
36. Is your site easy to navigate, with most information available in three clicks or less?
37. Are you delivering high-value content that establishes your credibility?
38. Are you inviting visitors to engage with you via blogs, podcasts, RSS feeds, and social media?
39. Is your site optimized for search engines?
40. Are you regularly adding new content and inbound links to increase your SEO rankings?

# Applying Your Insights

A marketing audit can give you insights into your strengths and weaknesses as a marketer and help you determine how to invest your marketing resources going forward. It can also help you build consensus within your company about marketing and forge a common vision to guide your efforts.

Once you've completed a marketing audit, you should have a better understanding of how your marketing is working and the steps you need to take to achieve your objectives. You may need to refocus your messages, revamp your tactics, and reallocate your marketing resources.

Work with your marketing staff or marketing agency to develop an action plan and timetable for implementing the audit team's recommendations. Eliminate tactics that aren't delivering a satisfactory return on your

investment; redirect those resources toward channels producing good results or toward new initiatives you plan to test. Ensure that your branding is consistent across all media and that your marketing messages are relevant to your target audience.

You may need a different combination of internal and external resources to implement your plan. You also may discover in the audit process that you need better metrics to measure the effectiveness of your marketing. Put those measurement tools in place now to have accurate data for your next audit.

Finally, it's critically important to communicate the changes you're making in your marketing plan to your team and your colleagues, and the reasons why. Enlisting their support is essential for achieving a smart and successful marketing strategy.

## About Gianfagna

Gianfagna Strategic Marketing, Inc. provides expert marketing strategy, marketing consulting, and marketing campaigns to FORTUNE® 500 companies and other market leaders. We specialize in targeted marketing and have won more than 50 awards for marketing achievement.

Our consulting services include conducting full marketing audits and coaching marketing teams through the audit process.

If you need a smarter strategy, a successful product launch, a fresh brand identity, a comprehensive marketing communications plan, or an independent assessment of your approach from an experienced marketing consultant, Gianfagna can help you create marketing that delivers terrific results.

**To learn more, visit our website at [gianfagnamarketing.com](http://gianfagnamarketing.com) or contact Jean Gianfagna at (440) 808-4700, ext. 11.**

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