

The Five-Slide Marketing Strategy

Faster, Flexible Planning
for Today's Quick Pivots



steēl
ADVERTISING

THE FIVE-SLIDE MARKETING STRATEGY

Quickly create, present, and get buy-in on marketing campaigns during rapidly changing circumstances.

THE FIVE-SLIDE MARKETING STRATEGY WILL HELP YOU:



Stay competitive in a rapidly changing environment



Develop an informed 3- to 6-month marketing strategy



Rapidly collect data, focus thinking, and expedite your presentation



Streamline executive level conversations for approval



Prepare in two to three days for a Quick Pivot

Speed, flexibility and the ability to innovate and refine quickly while still maintaining focus on business objectives are essential for thriving in an era of volatility and unpredictability.

Use this nimble process to react to unexpected changes in the market or to prepare for contingencies that might shift your marketplace in the near future. Plans developed with this process will prepare companies to execute a quick pivot in marketing strategy to capitalize on short-term marketplace opportunities.

Five-Slide Marketing Strategy Steps:

The process for creating the Five-Slide Marketing Strategy is broken down, not coincidentally, into five clear steps. Following these steps results in the creation of an executable marketing plan ready to launch on a moment's notice.

1

Create a Quick Situation Report

2

Identify Opportunity

3

Build Your Product Slate

4

Create a Plan Overview

5

Prepare for an Immediate Start



**of CMOs
believe their
marketing teams
are adaptable
and resourceful
enough**

SOURCE: GARTNER CMO STUDY



CREATE A QUICK SITUATION REPORT

Get Perspective on Your Situation

Every plan begins with an objective inventory of your company's consumers, the changing market landscape, and the efforts of your competitors. Normally this process can take weeks and involve primary research to answer key questions, but when things are rapidly changing, speed to market greatly influences who wins market share and who loses it. To quickly gain perspective on your current situation, pick the right team, gather your information, and create a situation report.



Picking the Right Team

When speed matters, collaborating with the right team helps you avoid tunnel vision and make the right decisions based on the information available. The ideal team for collaboration under pressure is small, attentive, open-minded, and informed. Each team member should be chosen for the unique knowledge they bring to the table. Your picks should include at least one person from the marketing, sales, and operations departments, allowing you to quickly access their knowledge in real time. Be careful to keep the team lean. Too many people creates conversation bulk and causes team members to be less individually engaged. An ideal team size is 4-6 people, including yourself.

Gathering Your Information

Once your team is selected, set an initial meeting. Ask your team to prepare by gathering all the “nice and neat” information they have readily available and bring it to the meeting. Start the meeting with a statement of your objectives for the plan and context as to why those objectives matter. As a group, review the objectives and how the information they brought informs the team. Then, start digging deeper. Don’t be afraid to ask “What don’t we know?” or “What are we missing?” to try to find out something new. That “something new” might not be revolutionary or even useful, but these will be your signs that you are looking in new places and listening to current voices. Remember, you’re gathering information about the current situation here, not creating campaign ideas

Nice and Neat

- ✓ Company data and analytics
- ✓ Associations and trade groups
- ✓ Trade publications
- ✓ Third party industry research (Pew Research Center, etc.)
- ✓ Industry financial analysts
- ✓ Media subscriptions (Nielsen, Simmons, MRI, Mintel, etc.)

Digging Deeper

- ✓ Google search
- ✓ Ask peers (LinkedIn, FB groups)
- ✓ Consumer ratings media (e.g., Consumer Reports, U.S. News, TripAdvisor, etc.)
- ✓ Social media listening
- ✓ In-person observation
- ✓ Online survey
- ✓ Competitors’ websites and advertising

Make a Situation Report

The purpose of collecting all of that information is to put together a Quick Situation Report. The Quick Situation Report summarizes the most important and relevant information about the current state of the market and your company's position in it. It highlights the core issues with what's going on with your consumers, your competition, the industry, and the general conditions surrounding your brand and product.

This portion of the process is when two heads (or three or four) really are better than one. Gather input from the team in a brainstorm format and be sure everyone contributes to every question. Identify and prioritize the items that affect your objectives for the plan. A meeting of this type can take 3-4 hours and, when done well, will result in a stronger assessment of the current situation by having explored more perspectives.

The questions on the right are what you will want to answer when creating your Quick Situation Report.

Consumers

Who came, stayed or left?
What are they buying now and why?
What are they saying about me?
How satisfied are they?
What successes and failures have we had recently?
What would they like from me?



Competition

Who is financially unstable?
Who is picking up the most market share?
Are there any new sources of competition? New alliances?
Who is doing something impressive?
What are some top messages/ads?



Industry

What do people think about this category right now?
What do people expect or want now that they did not before?
What innovations have occurred during this time?

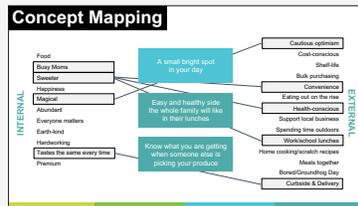
Conditions

How has media consumption changed? Which media are rising/falling? Media costs?
What are trends in the economy in my geography? How is this impacting different segments of society?
What are the general mood, tastes and trends that are pervasive?

**This portion of
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STEP 2



IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITY

Find the Best in Your Personality

With your Quick Situation Report created, you should have a rough yet useful summary of your brand’s current context. You can now start focusing on developing your strategy from an internal standpoint.

Putting Your Personality in Context

Effective quick pivots don’t leave time to develop or change major aspects of your brand, especially if there are big changes happening around you. The best results happen by understanding your current brand personality traits and mapping them to your target’s current concerns and limitations.

look at you. Get outside of your own corporate head and honestly look at how audiences might currently view your brand. Once a hero, are you now the bad guy? Once the small guy, are you now the sympathetic fellow citizen? Previously the dowdy local choice, are you now the safe avenue? Try to take a moment and just ask yourself...

A changing market landscape can create changes in others’ perspective as others

?

What has the current situation placed on you?

Next, use this simple Content Mapping exercise to help you identify the portion of your existing brand story with the most current relevance to your audience. This will be what you will highlight for the quick pivot.

Concept Mapping

On the left side of your work space, list brand traits that are well established in the market. For example:

- Positioning Elements
- Personality Traits
- Values
- Top Message Pillars

On the right side of your work space, list trends and keywords that emerge from your situation report.

See what relationships can be made between the left and the right lists. You do not have to connect every single idea, but look for the ones that stand out and have historically been part of your messaging. Below you can see an example of a concept map of a food item.



**A changing market
landscape can
create changes in
others' perspective
as others look at you.**



ITEM	RATIONALE	RELEVANCY	PROMOTION	PROMO CONCEPT
Family size	Best value, opportunity for discounting, aligns with bulk sizes purchased less frequently	Summer meals + healthy aids for family lunch/dinner; reliable produce for pick up	\$1.00 off	Monday's Pick Up!
Public health degree	Growing in popularity; more so with Pandemic	Tap into social good; best value, low risk	First class online this summer	Summer Good Start

BUILD YOUR PROMOTIONAL SLATE

With your concept map complete, it's time to start building a slate of products and promotions to address current market opportunities. List the products, packaging, or services that best address each point of intersection on your concept map, then create relevant promotions that turn the intersection into an offering. Use the concept grid below to help generate ideas for product variations to promote.



New Products

Special editions, limited experiences, brand new items, change in packaging, add-ons, etc.



Distribution

E.g., direct to consumer for first time, online only, through local businesses, new retail partnerships



Unit on Size

Economy packs, snack size, samples, membership



Risk Reduction

Trial, deposit/reservation, refund policy, guarantee, virtual specialist



Promotion

Limited/rare, new, discounts, coupons, partnerships with channel/related products/frenemies



Audience

New group, new segment, call out existing stronger



Remember

Promotions don't always include discounts, particularly if you are highlighting a way in which your product has unique current value.

Since points of intersection can be addressed by multiple different products, a table format lets you best capture and organize your thinking. The example table below shows a promotional slate that continues the above exercise for a produce brand. Beneath that is a table showing an example of a promotional slate for an education brand.

EX. 1: FOOD ITEM

ITEM	RATIONALE	RELEVANCY	PROMOTION	PROMO CONCEPT
FAMILY-SIZE	Best value; opportunity for discounting; aligns with bulk sizes purchased less frequently	Sweeter taste = healthy side for family lunches/snacks; reliable produce for pickup	\$1.00 off	Mommy's Pick Up!
MULTIPACKS	Bulk purchasing; opportunity for discounts; aligns with less frequent purchasing	Everyone matters - a taste to satisfy the whole family	Buy two flavors and get the third free	New variety, same healthy choices
PRODUCT PARTNERSHIPS WITH QUALITY COMPANION FOODS	Boredom/cooking at home	Premium/Magical = a new way to experience your favorites	Buy one product, get the other 50% off	Magical Mash-ups

EX. 2: EDUCATION PROGRAM

ITEM	RATIONALE	RELEVANCY	PROMOTION	PROMO CONCEPT
PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREES	Growing in popularity	Tap into social good; best value; low risk	First class online this summer	Summer Good Start
CORE CLASSES	Appeals to uncertain	Offer chance to get started with a low commitment; get classes out of the way close to home	Enroll for Fall	Core Classes Close to Home
ONLINE MASTER'S PROGRAMS	Easier to complete with more time at home	Tap into students with a goal to someday come back for their master's	Rolling start date	Now is the time

**Points of intersection
can be addressed
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different products.**

**A table format
lets you capture
and organize your
thinking.**



Plan Overview		
Audience	Strategies	Activities
Target Persona	Marketing Goals & Budget	Marketing Channels
Customer Journey	Key Strategies	Tactics & Activities
Value Proposition	Product & Promotion	Measures of Success
Timeline		

CREATE A PLAN OVERVIEW

Now that you've identified the offerings and current trends that represent your best opportunities to sell into, it's time to create a Plan Overview. Start with the provided template and follow the simple steps for the fastest, easiest way to create your overview. Remember to keep this document to one page.

Sample Plan Overview Template

The short-term opportunities that you have located through the previous exercises should be the focus. Do not feel the need to cover all audiences or products, but rather focus only on the major gains you can make in the next six months. Quick Pivots require discipline.

AUDIENCE	STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES
Target Audience	Goals, Budget, KPI	Marketing Channels
Customer Journey	Key Strategies	Tactics & Activities
Value Proposition	Product & Promotion	Dependencies
Timeline		



When using the template, remember:

- Be a planner; do not get caught up in execution.
- Always work forward from problem to solution. Resist the temptation to lean on familiar channels and tactics if more appropriate choices are available.
- The best plans are simple. Limit yourself to no more than three strategies.

Plan Overview		
Audience	Strategies	Activities
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Audience

Identify the customer persona, buyer's journey, and value proposition that is most relevant. Time constraints of the Quick Pivot may limit the resources available to you. If your organization doesn't already have buyers' personas created, you should apply experience

and make an educated guess to define your target. The target should be narrow enough to have a typical buyer's journey and a message to which they relate most strongly. Having two or three better-defined targets produces better results than having a single blended target.

Plan Overview		
Audience	Strategies	Activities
Target Persona	Marketing Goals & Budget	Marketing Channels
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Strategies

Next, inventory the resources and points of leverage you have or lack. These advantages or differences become your strategies. How much will you spend vs. your goal? Where or how can your brand stand out? Who can help? What urgency or special privilege can you layer on in the form of promotions?

In your goals, make a commitment to what you will accomplish tangibly and then state the budget you need to do it. These should be measurable things like incremental revenue and increased enrollment, not communication objectives (which you will use later when you are leading the execution of your tactics with your team).

Under strategies, consider the 18 most commonly addressed strategy issues and determine which issues you need to address in your plan.

- 1 Build or steal market share
- 2 National, regional or local markets
- 3 Seasonality and timing
- 4 Spending
- 5 Competition
- 6 Target Market
- 7 Product
- 8 Branding
- 9 Packaging
- 10 Pricing
- 11 Distribution/penetration or coverage
- 12 Personal selling/service/operations
- 13 Promotions/events
- 14 Advertising message
- 15 Advertising media
- 16 Merchandising
- 17 Publicity
- 18 Marketing research and testing

As stated before, use the strategy approaches that fit this particular situation and best help you exploit the identified opportunity. Select the most relevant and then make a clear, concise directional statement about how you intend to address each issue.

Example Strategies



Higher Education Product:

Focus campaign efforts on degree programs that align with lowest unemployment rates.



CPG Promotion:

Develop partners for joint couponing in online grocers, requiring less margin reduction for promotion but increasing exposure to new audiences.



Healthcare Operation/Promotion:

Use an offer (fulfilled by surplus support staff hours) to train the patient base to increase the number of virtual appointments booked with physicians.



Upper management should have a good understanding of how you will accomplish your goals just by reading the concise statements about strategy.

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Activities Column

Finally, ask your team what we can realistically get done with the resources available. With your budget and bandwidth, what marketing channels can you access? What tactics can you execute well? How will you track how effective you are? How can you get metrics in time to adjust and improve?

When working on a Quick Pivot, it's imperative to make sure that you have considered both bold new tactics as well as your tried and true set. While many of your tactics should be things that you have a high confidence in your team's ability to execute, likely there will be a couple significant areas that stretch your organization if you are truly pivoting.

While it is easy to spend time defining the tactics that are most familiar, spend your time defining the innovations or level of quality in execution that is needed for your tactical mix. This will make sure that you, upper management and your team really focus the new knowledge and skills it will really require to make this successful.

Lastly, enumerate any dependencies that are required to make this plan work clearly. For example, you must launch in the market by a specific date, you will need to put another marketing effort on hold to do this, or you must have a specific price point to be competitive. This is key to making sure that there are no major impediments to success within your own organization.

Test and Temper

With a draft of your Plan Overview in place, ask for questions from your planning team. Identify inconsistencies, question its effectiveness, and discuss if there are ways to improve it. Ask yourselves questions such as:

- ✓ Do we know what our consumers want right now?
- ✓ Do we know what our competition is doing?
- ✓ Will our offering lure people back?
- ✓ Are we making an emotional connection?
- ✓ Will our creative show through the noise?
- ✓ Do we have a strong call to action?
- ✓ Are we connecting online habits back to offline operations?
- ✓ Are we taking experiential to new levels?
- ✓ Are we making our loyal base feel rewarded?
- ✓ Are we taking advantage of the new channels that have emerged and dominated?
- ✓ Can we collaborate more with partners and influencers for increased audience?
- ✓ Do we have milestones planned for celebrations?



Make only the changes to the plan that you are confident will improve results. Poking holes in your plan at this stage will both improve the plan as well as prepare you for the discussions with management that come next.

**The best plans
are simple.**

**Limit yourself to
no more than
three strategies.**



STEP 5

Launch Checklist

- Get everything in place and ready for an immediate launch as soon as you say "Go!"
- Communicate the plan and gain buy-in from leadership, marketing team, stakeholders and vendors. Does everyone know what is expected of them?
 - Clear any financial hurdles—credit terms, bid process, approvals, POs.
 - Create the campaign and the executional elements so that they are ready to launch.
 - Clear any regulatory or legal approvals.
 - Put technology in place and test for commerce, marketing automation, CRM on new marketing programs/products.
 - Train consumer facing staff on the information they need.
 - Prepare for any issues—updated crisis communications plan.
 - Other: _____

PREPARE FOR AN IMMEDIATE START

The power of a Quick Pivot is in the timing of its execution. This process is designed to quickly create a plan to nimbly react to a market opportunity that may or may not arise while conditions are rapidly changing. Once the market conditions become right for a promotional strategy, time wasted before launch reduces the strategy's effectiveness. Rapidly getting approval for your plan is both critical and manageable. First, follow the Launch Checklist below to ensure your plan is actionable.



Launch Checklist

- ✓ Communicate the plan and gain buy-in from leadership, marketing team, stakeholders and vendors. Does everyone know what is expected of them?
- ✓ Clear any financial hurdles—credit terms, bid process, approvals, POs.
- ✓ Create the campaign and the executional elements so that they are ready to launch.
- ✓ Clear any regulatory or legal approvals.
- ✓ Put technology in place and test for commerce, marketing automation, CRM on new marketing programs/products.
- ✓ Train consumer facing staff on the information they need.
- ✓ Prepare for any issues—updated crisis communications plan.
- ✓ Other: _____

Your final presentation will look like this:

Quick Situation Report 1

Consumers

Who came, stayed or left?
What are they buying now and why?
What are they saying about me?
How satisfied are they?
What successes and failures have we had recently?
What would they like from me?

Competition

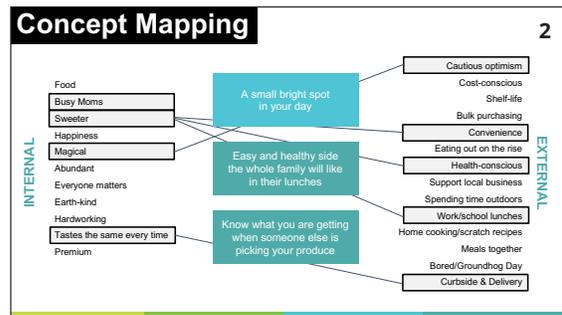
Who is financially unstable?
Who is picking up the most market share?
Are there any new sources of competition? New alliances?
Who is doing something impressive?
What are some top messages/ads?

Industry

What do people think about this category right now?
What do people expect or want now that they did not before?
What innovations have occurred during this time?

Conditions

How has media consumption changed? Which media are rising/falling? Media costs?
What are trends in the economy in my geography? How is this impacting different segments of society?
What are the general mood, tastes and trends that are pervasive?



Promotional Slate 3

ITEM	RATIONALE	RELEVANCY	PROMOTION	PROMO CONCEPT
Family size	Best value; opportunity for discounting; aligns with bulk sizes purchased less frequently	Sweeter taste = healthy side for family lunches/snacks; reliable produce for pick up	\$1.00 off	Mommy's Pick Up!
Public health degrees	Growing in popularity; more so with Pandemic	Tap into social good; best value; low risk	First class online this summer	Summer Good Start

Plan Overview 4

Audience	Strategies	Activities
Target Persona	Marketing Goals & Budget	Marketing Channels
Customer Journey	Key Strategies	Tactics & Activities
Value Proposition	Product & Promotion	Measures of Success
Timeline		

Launch Checklist 5

Get everything in place and ready for an immediate launch as soon as you say "Go!"

- Communicate the plan and gain buy-in from leadership, marketing team, stakeholders and vendors. Does everyone know what is expected of them?
- Clear any financial hurdles—credit terms, bid process, approvals, POs.
- Create the campaign and the executional elements so that they are ready to launch.
- Clear any regulatory or legal approvals.
- Put technology in place and test for commerce, marketing automation, CRM on new marketing programs/products.
- Train consumer facing staff on the information they need.
- Prepare for any issues—updated crisis communications plan.
- Other: _____

Get It Out the Door!

While you may feel like the burden of execution is now on your team, you will want to clear the field for them more than usual. Don't let perfect be the enemy of the good. You need to develop your materials and execute your campaign quickly, which means you will need to keep the scope of projects lean. Tightly align your efforts with other departments and waymake for quick buy-in and approvals.

Schedule your presentation, get approval, and be ready for an immediate launch as soon as market conditions dictate.



Templates are available on the Steel Advertising Blog at steeladvertising.com

Need Help?

If you need help with any part of this process, Steel Advertising is available for a “no strings attached” call to answer your questions and provide guidance. We love helping, especially if you promise to tell us your success story afterward!

Steel Advertising

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About Steel Advertising

Based in Austin, Texas, Steel is a full-service integrated ad agency that uses a deep understanding of how families make purchase decisions to deliver brands that families love. In close partnership with our clients, Steel unites data, technology, creativity and influence to produce more stunning growth for brands in health, education, food and fun that serve the American family.