

Week 14 experiential exercise



Prof's Market Plan Development In order to complete this project I met with the sales director of a large downtown hotel. This was an informal conversation without prepared questions, focusing on the difficulties and opportunities involved with developing and executing an effective marketing plan in the hospitality industry. This particular sales manager had over ten years experience in the field, and only recently moved to this hotel, having served previously in the sales department of Hilton international, though in a lower-level position.

This director of sales indicated that things had changed significantly in the field of marketing since she first entered it, but the steps to creating a marketing plan remain essentially intact, though they are now somewhat more difficult and require more ingenuity. For instance, the first thing that one does when creating a marketing plan is segment the audience. An organization has to have a very clear picture of who they are trying to reach, who they are not trying to reach, and how to divide up groups within their target audience. For instance, hotels spend a great deal of their time and effort trying to market themselves towards business travelers, a demographic that obviously uses hotels a great deal. But this does not constitute a homogenous group: high power brokers are going to want different things than a low level sales person in town for a day; people who need to stay somewhere for weeks want different things than those who can be in and out quickly.

So it is essential to segment the market and identify who you want to reach and reach them how best you can. Now there are more opportunities for marketing than ever, ranging from traditional media such as print ads to youtube ads and other social media. I was told that age constitutes a

significant difference in social media use, but this seems to be slowly fading with time: though young users outnumber old, more and more middle age and retirement age users are using social media. One important note that was driven home to me is to treat marketing plans like an investment: the key is not how many people you reach, but how efficiently spent marketing money is. Thus, one might, for instance, have to determine whether it would be better to buy minutes upon minutes of television ads in various markets, trying to entice small business travelers and entrepreneurs, or to rather spend less money to fly out and meet a procurement executive and a large corporation, and try to get that company to go with your hotel as their standard choice when visiting a certain city. Making a single big sale often ends up being more economically efficient than making many little ones. The development of marketing strategies seems to be a difficult and time consuming task, but there were two things I really took from this: critically segment one's market, and always be looking to make the best, most efficient investment of marketing money.