

9.4: Create the Promotional Plan

Learning Objectives

After studying this section, students should be able to do the following:

1. *Create* a promotional plan by following the suggested execution steps.
2. *Describe* how small businesses can use integrated or cross-channel promotional planning to meet their objectives.

Like a traditional advertising strategy, before you craft an integrated strategy, it's important to be clear about what you hope to achieve, how much you can afford to spend to achieve it, and what the promotion will say.

What, Who, Where—and How Much?

We have to be able to answer these four basic questions before we move forward:

- *Objectives for the promotion:* What measurable change do you wish to achieve?
- *Budget:* How much do you intend to spend?
- *Messaging strategy:* What do you plan to say? Who is the target of the message?
- *Media strategy:* Which channels do you plan to use?

An integrated promotional plan needs to address these four questions. To see how this works in the real world, let's look at how Kellogg's developed such a plan for its Special K cereal brand. First, the company set sales objectives, which included targets for existing products as well as for new launches. Then, Kellogg's promotion team worked with its ad agency to define the messaging strategy. The focus was on losing weight and maintaining that weight loss by using Special K products. Then, the question was how to implement the strategy and how to allocate the client's promotional budget to each part of the plan. The team divided the campaign into a series of initiatives timed to different seasons, and it earmarked a specific amount to spend on each initiative:

- The campaign started with a "Special K Challenge" to lose six pounds in two weeks. This part of the campaign drew in new customers to the brand. The campaign launched to coincide with New Year's resolutions to lose weight.
- In spring, the agency launched a new campaign it called "Are You Beach Ready?" This campaign featured a beach towel and bag as a premium.
- The third campaign in the series began in the fall, this time with a "Drop a Jean Size!" theme, giving customers a free pair of jeans in an instant-win sweepstakes when their weight loss goal was achieved.
- In winter, Special K urged consumers to lose the pounds with a free-in-mail personal training DVD.
- Throughout the year, coupons were put onto Special K packages. The coupons boosted multiple purchases. Print ads in publications targeting women (fashion and parenting magazines) and TV commercials during programs with high female viewership supported ongoing brand awareness.

The integrated campaign worked well: Special K saw growth across all of its product lines, with double-digit growth for the brand for the year. Special K exceeded its targets for existing products as well as new products. "Integration is the key to consumer engagement," said Marta Cyhan, Kellogg's VP-worldwide promotions.

Video Spotlight

Russell Stevens Discusses Integration

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Russell Stevens emphasizes that clients and agencies have to not only embrace but also organizationally execute integration. Silos are not unique to agencies; often clients aren't set up to handle this kind of synergy.

Raisin' Awareness: How the CRMB Executed Its Plan

Now that we've looked at all the elements in turn, let's put it all together to see the execution of an integrated marketing campaign. We'll use the example of the California Raisin Marketing Board (CRMB), whose goal is to promote California raisins.

Set the Objectives

The first step was to set the objectives for the campaign. The target audience was women with children at home. The CRMB began with research, which showed that moms—and adults in general—were aware of health-related issues but felt they were too busy to always eat healthy foods. The CRMB could capitalize on this opportunity to promote raisins as a healthy, easy snack for moms and kids alike. With this objective in mind, the CRMB set three specific goals for the campaign:

1. To create a personality for raisins that would appeal to the target audience
2. To generate excitement among trade partners (food service operators, manufacturers, supermarkets) to offer raisins and raisin-based products
3. To raise awareness and demand for raisins among the target audience

The CRMB hired ad agency MeringCarson to design an ad campaign. MeringCarson developed different concepts and then tested these concepts through focus group research. The research revealed that the most effective campaign was one that spoke to the target audience as women, not just mothers. “One campaign in particular featuring serene images of women consuming raisins as a part of their daily lives struck a responsive chord,” said Greg Carson, partner and Creative Director of MeringCarson. “Consumers loved the use of peaceful colors and imagery and the messages of health and empowerment embodied in the ads.”

Define and Execute

With the concepts and copy strategy complete, CRMB next devised the integrated brand promotion plan, which included print, online, PR, and sweepstakes.

- The *print campaign* included ads in women’s magazines as well as trade publications aimed at foodservice, industrial, and retail sectors.
- The *online campaign* included the launch of using the same artwork as the print ads and providing additional information (like recipes and nutrition facts) as well as a free newsletter that provides timely seasonal recipes using raisins.
- *Sweepstakes* included a back-to-school sweepstakes that consumers can enter to win a three-night, two-day trip to a major theme park in Florida or California for a family of four. Other sweepstakes included a weekend spa getaway at Miramonte Resort and Spa, along with a free on-the-go bag featuring the advertising artwork and filled with a plush California raisins character, California raisin samples, a compact mirror from the spa, relaxation lotion, and a refrigerator magnet to keep raisins top of mind.
- The *public relations campaign* featured Valerie Waters, a celebrity fitness trainer, who acted as a spokesperson for California raisins during her satellite and radio media tour. Each sweepstakes was announced by a press release. Press releases aimed at trade publications discussed the health benefits of raisins and announced industry news such as CRMB’s sponsorship of new raisin pie categories in the American Pie Council’s Crisco National Pie Championships.

While registering for the sweepstakes, moms could get a *premium* such as a free California Raisin lunch bag filled with a California Raisin plush toy; California Raisin snack packs, water bottle, and magnet; and tips from Valerie Waters.

In Chapter 13 you will see msnbc.com’s fully integrated and launched campaign.

Video Spotlight

Danielle Tracy Discusses Her View of PR

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Danielle Tracy is in charge of the msnbc.com public relations efforts. She discusses the collaborative relationship she has with her colleagues at SS+K and why she refers to herself as a generalist rather than a PR person.

Integrated Campaigns for Small Businesses

How does a small business, say one that has less than six figures to spend on an ad campaign, advertise successfully against competitors with \$20 million to spend annually? The point is not how much you spend, but how well you spend it on a set of well-coordinated marketing communications.

Pool Resources with Associations and Loyal Customers

One way to extend the reach of a small budget is to pool resources through a trade association. For example, small whiskey distilleries pool their ad money through the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. Similarly, the California Raisin Board is

an association of raisin growers throughout California; we've already seen how effective this group is. Using word of mouth is another key strategy: loyal customers become de facto brand ambassadors who spread the word to others. Third, develop Web initiatives that allow people to interact with the brand. Small companies rely on creative ideas to generate curiosity and conversation that will draw free publicity.

Go Small and Local

Another low-budget option is to sponsor local or niche events. Red Bull energy drink drove its growth by sponsoring niche extreme sports that traditional big-budget corporate sponsors ignored. Finally, companies that make products can consider conducting local tours of their factories or facilities as a way to introduce new customers to their products, become a tourist destination, and build publicity around that.

Key Takaway

A strategy requires several pieces: First, set objectives for the promotion—and be sure to specify measurable changes you hope to achieve so you can determine how successful your strategy is. Second, set a budget (be realistic). Third, devise a messaging strategy where you decide what you want to say and to whom. Finally, identify your promotional mix, being sure it fits the target customer you've decided you want to reach (don't just pick the media you're used to, or the ones that are "sexy," if these aren't the best fit to your customer). Even small businesses can implement an IMC strategy, but they have to be more creative when they harness local communications platforms to tell their story.

EXERCISES

1. List and describe the integrated marketing communications planning steps used in the California Raisins promotional plan.
2. Explain how small businesses can use integrated marketing communications planning to enhance their promotional planning ability.

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