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**TEN BARRIERS TO MARKETING PLANNING**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper serves as a wide-ranging review of why, given the acknowledged benefits to be enjoyed by companies carrying out formalised marketing planning, most industrial companies still rely largely on forecasting and budgeting systems as their principal means of addressing the future.

It identifies ten distinct and major barriers to the preparation and implementation of marketing plans. These are:

1. Confusion between tactics and strategy.
2. Isolating the marketing function from operations.
3. Confusion between the marketing function and the marketing concept.
4. Organisational barriers.
5. Lack of in-depth analysis.
6. Confusion between process and output.
7. Lack of knowledge and skills.
8. Lack of a systematic approach to marketing planning.
9. Failure to prioritise objectives.
10. Hostile corporate cultures.

The paper recommends ways of overcoming these barriers.

## TEN BARRIERS TO MARKETING PLANNING

### INTRODUCTION

The overall purpose of marketing planning, and its principal focus, is the identification and creation of competitive advantage. Yet after twenty years of doing, researching (1), teaching, and writing about the subject, the author of this paper has experienced little to change his view that marketing planning is still the most enigmatic of all the problems facing management as they brace themselves for whatever challenges the 1990's hold.

The purpose of this paper is to expose a few myths about marketing planning and in the process to suggest ways of doing it better in order to create a substantial competitive advantage, for surely, if marketing planning doesn't lead to this, it can't be worth bothering with in the first place.

The paper opens by restating what marketing planning is and how little impact it has had on British industry to date:

The main part of the paper explores what it is that prevents organisations from developing and implementing good strategic marketing plans.

Some solutions to the problems identified are proposed.

### WHAT IS MARKETING PLANNING ?

Marketing planning is simply a logical sequence and a series of activities leading to the setting of marketing objectives and the formulation of plans for achieving them. Companies generally go through some kind of management process in developing marketing plans. In small undiversified companies, this process is usually informal. In larger, more diversified organisations, the process is often systematised. Conceptually, this process is very simple and involves a situation review, the formulation of some basic assumptions, setting objectives for what is being sold and to whom, deciding on how the objectives are to be achieved, and scheduling and costing out the actions necessary for implementation.

### WHY IS MARKETING PLANNING NECESSARY ?

Apart from the need to cope with increasing turbulence, environmental complexity, more intense competitive pressures, and the sheer speed of technological change, a marketing plan is useful:

- FOR YOU ■ TO HELP IDENTIFY SOURCES OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
  - TO FORCE AN ORGANISED APPROACH
  - TO DEVELOP SPECIFICITY
  - TO ENSURE CONSISTENT RELATIONSHIPS
- FOR SUPERIORS ■ TO INFORM
- FOR NON MARKETING FUNCTIONS ■ TO GET RESOURCES
- FOR SUBORDINATES ■ TO GET SUPPORT
  - TO GAIN COMMITMENT
  - TO SET OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

## NAIVETY ABOUT MARKETING PLANNING

At the cognitive level, all of this seems delightfully simple. Yet many observers are still bemused by the fact that many meticulous marketing planning companies fare badly, whilst the sloppy or inarticulate in marketing terms do well. Has there ever been any relationship between marketing planning and commercial success, or are we all deluding ourselves ?

Greenley's recent study of marketing planning (2) identified only seven UK empirically based studies into the marketing planning practices of commercial organisations. The remaining mass of publications are largely prescriptive and amount to little more than logically deduced theories based on ungrounded assumptions (what Glaser and Strauss refer to as "exampling" (3)). Most of the empirical studies concluded that few companies actually practice the theory of marketing planning so prolifically written about by so many.

But, even more disturbing, those who recognised the need for a more structured approach to planning their marketing and who turned to the formalised procedures found in prescriptive texts, rarely enjoyed the claimed benefits of marketing planning - indeed, the very opposite sometimes happened, in that there were actually dysfunctional consequences, which brought marketing planning itself into disrepute.

Herein lies the problem. The claimed benefits of better coordination of inter-related activities, improved environmental awareness, better communication among management and better use of resources, really are there for the taking, and there is a relationship between marketing planning and commercial success, as the work McDonald, Thompson, Kollatt, Ansoff, Thune and House, Leighton and others has shown (1,5,6,7,8,9). It is just that the contextual problems surrounding the process of marketing planning are so complex and so little understood, that effective

marketing planning rarely happens. What these problems are and how they can be overcome will be dealt with in the main body of this paper.

The fact that financial performance at any one point in time is not necessarily a reflection of the adequacy or otherwise of planning procedures, (since some companies just happen to be in the right place at the right time, usually in growth industries), should not deflect us from this fundamental truth. Those who want to know what marketing planning can add in a situation where a company has a well established position and where success to date has not been based on any particularly rigorous approach to marketing planning, should remember that all leadership positions are transitory, and no industry based in the United Kingdom needs reminding of that today. The rapid and systematic demise of the UK's world leadership position is an insult to the founding fathers of British industry.

It is easy to forget the financially-driven management of the 60s and 70s who milked dry the results of the endeavours of their entrepreneurial forebears. Rationality to them meant only short term profits on a product-by-product basis, and if this meant raising the price or deleting the product, who cared as long as the end-of-year profit and loss account came out right ? Regard for competitive position, market share, promotion, customer franchise, R & D and the like (all of which, of course, are funded from revenue) seemed irrelevant in those halcyon days of high growth.

Nor should we fool ourselves that this sad state of affairs has changed. A recent study (10) of Japanese and British companies in the UK concluded that 87% of British firms still have profit maximisation as their major short term goal, whilst 80% of their Japanese competitors have market share growth as their major short term goal. It is a sad reflection on our business schools in the UK that so many of our top industrialists still behave like vandals in the way they manage their marketing assets. It is little wonder that so many of our famous industries and names such as

Woolworths, Dunlop, British Leyland and countless others, have had to suffer the humility of near bankruptcy, and it is a pity that so many more will have to suffer the same fate before we come to our senses and see that marketing planning is crucial to our long term survival and prosperity.

There is no escaping the fact that, whatever our size or shape, marketing's contribution to business success lies in analysing future opportunities to meet well defined customer needs with products or services that deliver the sought-after benefits in a superior way to that of competitors.

Such a process and activities must not be mistaken for forecasts and budgets, which of course we need and already have. Put bluntly, the process of marketing planning is concerned with identifying what and to whom sales are going to be made in the longer term, and how, in order to give revenue budgets and sales forecasts any chance of being achieved.

Let us turn now to the question of why it is that so few companies really master the art of marketing planning.

#### **BARRIERS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARKETING PLANS**

Prescriptive texts on marketing planning describe the process of marketing planning in terms of marketing audits, SWOT analyses, objective setting, and so on, with hardly any thought given to the contextual issues surrounding this process. For example, who is to do all these things, how, when, how often, should it be top down or bottom up, which comes first, the one year or the long range plan, and so on ? Then there are issues such as: company culture; company size; internationalisation;

diversity; environmental turbulence; market growth rate; technological change; and countless other considerations.

It is very clear that the simplistic approaches of most writers do not adequately address such contextual issues in relation to marketing planning, which partly accounts for the fact that so few companies do it at all, and even fewer do it well.

The remainder of this paper outlines the ten principal reasons for this failure and gives advice on how these pitfalls can be avoided.

(i) CONFUSION BETWEEN MARKETING TACTICS AND STRATEGY

The author's own research (1) has shown that, in peering into the murky depths of organisational behaviour in relation to marketing planning, confusion reigns supreme, and nowhere less than over the terminology of marketing.

Few practising marketers understand the real significance of a strategic marketing plan as opposed to a tactical, or operational marketing plan.

Why should be this so ?

For an answer, we need to look at some of the changes that have taken place during the past two decades. For example, the simple environment of the 1960s and early 1970s, characterised by growth and the easy marketability of products and services, has now been replaced by an increasingly complex and abrasive environment, often made worse by static or declining markets. For most, the days have gone when it was only necessary to ride the tidal wave of growth. There wasn't the same need for a disciplined, systematic approach to the market. A tactical, short term approach to



marketing planning seemed to work perfectly well in such conditions. But by failing to grasp the nettle of strategic orientation in plans that identify and develop their distinctive competence, companies have become, or will increasingly become, casualties during the 1990s.

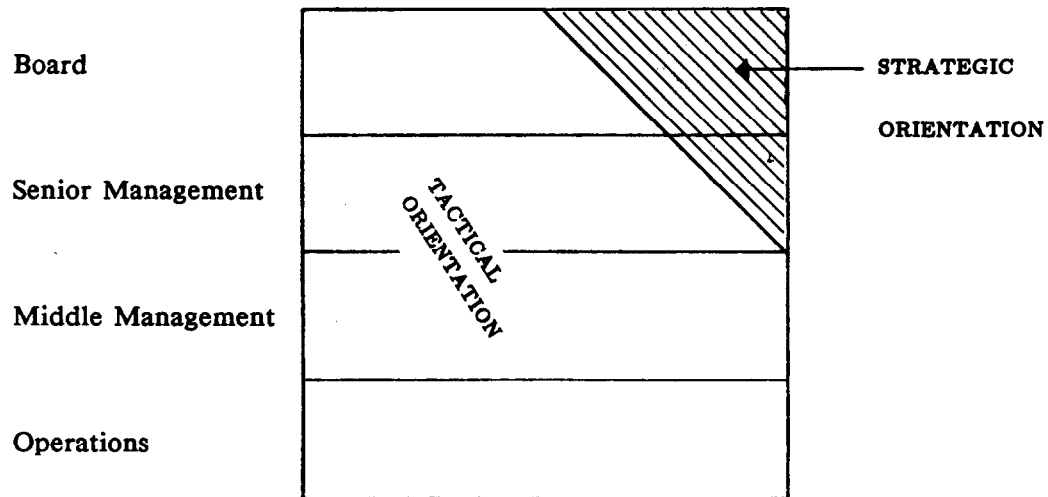
The problem is really quite simple. Most managers prefer to sell the products they find easiest to sell to those customers who offer the least line of resistance. By developing short term, tactical marketing plans first and then extrapolating them, managers merely succeed in extrapolating their own short comings. It is a bit like steering from the wake - O.K. in calm, clear waters, but not so sensible in busy and choppy waters ! Preoccupation with preparing a detailed one year plan first is typical of those many companies who confuse sales forecasting and budgeting with strategic marketing planning - in our experience the most common mistake of all.

Already, companies led by chief executives with a proactive orientation that stretches beyond the end of the current fiscal year have begun to show results visibly better than the old reactive companies with only a short term vision.

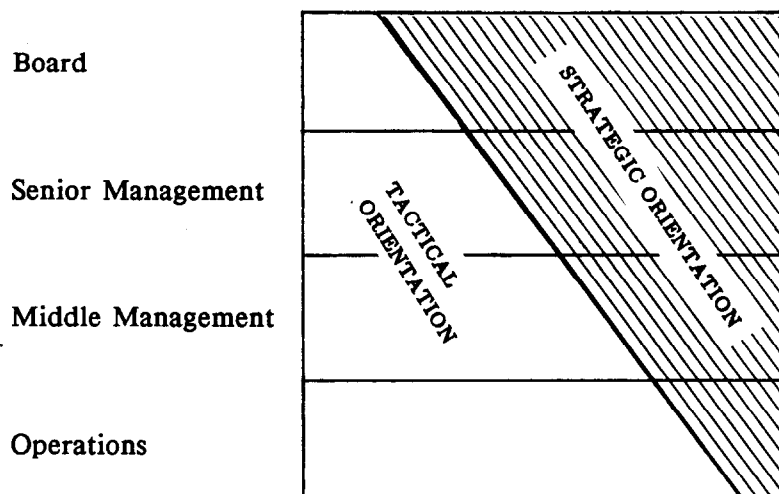
Figure 1 shows the old style of company in which very little attention is paid to strategy by any level of management. It will be seen that lower levels of management do not get involved at all, whilst the Directors spend most of their time on operational/tactical issues.

Figure 2 is a representation of those companies that recognise the importance of strategy and who manage to involve all levels of management in strategy formulation.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



The rule, then, is simple:

DEVELOP THE STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN FIRST. THIS ENTAILS GREATER EMPHASIS ON SCANNING THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT. THE EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF FORCES EMANATING FROM IT, AND DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE STRATEGIC RESPONSES, INVOLVING ALL LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT IN THE PROCESS.

A STRATEGIC PLAN SHOULD COVER A PERIOD OF BETWEEN 3 AND 5 YEARS, AND ONLY WHEN THIS HAS BEEN DEVELOPED AND AGREED SHOULD THE ONE YEAR OPERATIONAL MARKETING PLAN BE DEVELOPED. NEVER WRITE THE ONE YEAR PLAN FIRST AND EXTRAPOLATE IT.

(ii) ISOLATING THE MARKETING FUNCTION FROM OPERATIONS

One of the most common causes of the failure of marketing planning is the belief that marketing is something that a marketing person "does" in their office. The appointment of a marketing supremo is often a last-ditch attempt to put things right when all else has failed. The trouble is, the new person comes along and, irrespective of their knowledge or skills, quickly finds that all the power is vested in others, particularly for product development (the technical people), pricing (the accountants), customer service (the distribution department) and selling (the sales director). This leaves some bits of the promotional mix for the new person to play around with. Hence the new executive is powerless to influence anything of significance and quickly fails.

Line managers look on the new department with disdain and see requests for information, strategies and plans as a time-consuming task likely to have little impact on their real and more pressing problems.

This has much to do with the general misunderstanding about what marketing really is. Without a corporate driving force centred around customer satisfaction, (ie. a marketing orientation), arguments about where to put marketing are of course pointless, but even when top management is jolted into a realisation of the need to take account of the customer, the most frequent mistake is to separate out marketing from operations as if it had the plague.

This is not the place to argue about organisational issues, such as line versus staff, centralisation versus decentralisation, although the principles are clear:

FOR THE PURPOSE OF MARKETING PLANNING, PUT MARKETING AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE CUSTOMER. WHERE PRACTICABLE, HAVE BOTH MARKETING AND SALES REPORT TO THE SAME PERSON, WHO SHOULD NOT NORMALLY BE THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.

(iii) CONFUSION BETWEEN THE MARKETING FUNCTION AND THE MARKETING  
CONCEPT

The Author's close contact with about 2000 senior managers a year confirms his belief about the depth of ignorance that still abounds concerning what marketing is.

a) Confusion with Sales

One managing director aggressively announced to the assembled seminar audience "There's no time for marketing

in my company 'til sales improve!".  
Confusion with sales is still one of the  
biggest barriers to be overcome.

**b) Confusion with Product Management**

The belief that all a company has to do  
is to produce a good product to succeed  
also still abounds, and neither Concord,  
the EMI Scanner, nor the many  
thousands of brilliant British products  
that have seen their owners or inventors  
go bankrupt during the past twenty years  
will convince such people otherwise.

**c) Confusion with Advertising**

This is another popular misconception  
and the annals of business are replete  
with examples such as Dunlop,  
Woolworths and British Airways who,  
before they got professional management  
in, won awards with their brilliant  
advertising campaigns, whilst failing to  
deliver the goods. Throwing advertising  
expenditure at the problem is still a very  
popular way of tackling deep-rooted  
marketing problems.

**d) Confusion with Customer Service**

The "Have a nice day" syndrome is  
currently having its hey day in many  
countries of the world, popularised of  
course by Peters and Waterman in "In

Search of Excellence". The Banks are amongst those who have spent millions training their staff to be charming to customers whilst still getting the basic offer fundamentally wrong - the banks are still closed when the public most needs them open. Likewise, in British Rail, whilst it helps to be treated nicely, it is actually much more important to get there on time.

The principle, then, is as follows:

"MARKETING IS A MANAGEMENT PROCESS WHEREBY THE RESOURCES OF THE WHOLE ORGANISATION ARE UTILISED TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF SELECTED CUSTOMER GROUPS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF BOTH PARTIES. MARKETING, THEN, IS FIRST AND FOREMOST AN ATTITUDE OF MIND RATHER THAN A SERIES OF FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES."

(iv) ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS

Closely linked with the issue of marketing powerlessness, is the issue of corporate organisational form.

The most typical organigram is the one which is based around corporate functions such as personnel, finance, production, distribution, operations, and marketing. Whilst the traditional reasons for this type of organisation are clear, there is little

doubt that it can be very difficult to get people who are loyal to their own "tribe" to think of subjugating their own goals to the broader goals of customer satisfaction. This is clearly the role of top management and has a lot to do with corporate culture, to be discussed below.

Whilst the team building approach has gone a long way towards overcoming this kind of organisational barrier, of much more importance is to get the task of defining strategic business units (SBUs) right. (11)

#### **A Strategic Business Unit:**

- will have common segments and competitors for most of its products
- is a competitor in an external market
- is a discrete, separate and identifiable unit
- will have a manager who has control over most of the areas critical to success.

But SBUs are not necessarily the same as operating units, and the definition can, and should, be applied all the way down to a particular product or customer or group of products or customers, and it is here that the main marketing planning task lies.

The problem remains of getting organisational support and commitment to the marketing planning process, but this is discussed later.

So the principle is:

ORGANISE COMPANY ACTIVITIES AROUND CUSTOMER GROUPS IF POSSIBLE RATHER THAN AROUND FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND GET MARKETING PLANNING DONE IN THESE STRATEGIC BUSINESS UNITS. WITHOUT EXCELLENT MARKETING PLANNING IN SBUs, CORPORATE MARKETING PLANNING WILL BE OF LIMITED VALUE"

(v) LACK OF IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Even from well respected companies, the most common complaint concerns lack of adequate information for the purpose of analysis. On deeper investigation, however, it nearly always turns out to be a case of too much information rather than too little. The real problem is frequently lack of proper analysis. At a recent conference for a builders merchanting company that had increased its net profit before tax by 60 per cent for the second year running, one of their chief executives did not know the answer to any of the following questions:

"How much of the profit increase is due to:

- market size growth
- market share growth
- price increases
- cost reductions
- productivity improvements ?"



Faced with such massive ignorance, it is clear what will happen to this company the moment construction industry trading conditions worsen.

The methodology for developing marketing intelligence systems has been comprehensively covered in the literature during the past twenty years, (12) yet it is clear that in Britain at least, industry has a long way to go to get even the basics right concerning trends in:

- the environment
- markets
- competitors
- internal strengths and weaknesses

It is also clear that, even if an organisation has an adequate intelligence system, rarely is there a formal Marketing Audit undertaken by all SBU managers as a required activity at a specific time of the year as part of an agreed planning.

The principle, then, is as follows:

FOR AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING AUDIT TO TAKE PLACE:

- CHECKLISTS OF QUESTIONS CUSTOMISED ACCORDING TO LEVEL IN THE ORGANISATION SHOULD BE AGREED.
- THESE SHOULD FORM THE BASIS OF THE ORGANISATION'S M.I.S.

- THE MARKETING AUDIT SHOULD BE A REQUIRED ACTIVITY
- MANAGERS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO HIDE BEHIND VAGUE TERMS LIKE "POOR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS"
- MANAGERS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO INCORPORATE THE TOOLS OF MARKETING IN THEIR AUDITS, EG. PRODUCT LIFE CYCLES, PRODUCT PORTFOLIOS, AND THE LIKE.

(vi) CONFUSION BETWEEN PROCESS AND OUTPUT

Confusion between the management process itself and the output of the process, the marketing plan, is common. In most cases, plans are too bulky to be of any practical use to busy line managers and most contain masses of data and information which rightly belongs in the company's marketing information system or audit, and whose inclusion in the marketing plan only serves to rob it of focus and impact.

The swot device (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), whilst potentially a very powerful analytical device to give impact to the ensuing assumptions, objectives, strategies and budgets, is rarely used effectively.

A SWOT SHOULD:

- BE FOCUSED ON EACH SPECIFIC SEGMENT OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO THE ORGANISATION'S FUTURE
- BE A SUMMARY EMANATING FROM THE MARKETING AUDIT

- BE BRIEF, INTERESTING AND CONCISE
- FOCUS ON KEY FACTORS ONLY
- LIST DIFFERENTIAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES VIS A VIS COMPETITORS, FOCUSING ON COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
- LIST KEY EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ONLY
- IDENTIFY AND PIN DOWN THE REAL ISSUES. IT SHOULD NOT BE A LIST OF UNRELATED POINTS
- THE READER SHOULD BE ABLE TO GRASP INSTANTLY THE MAIN THRUST OF THE BUSINESS, EVEN TO THE POINT OF BEING ABLE TO WRITE MARKETING OBJECTIVES
- FOLLOW THE IMPLIED QUESTION "WHICH MEANS THAT ...?" TO GET THE REAL IMPLICATIONS
- NOT OVERABBREVIATE

This leads to a key point which needs to be made about this vital part of the marketing planning process.

INFORMATION IS THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH A MARKETING PLAN IS BUILT. FROM INFORMATION (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL) COMES INTELLIGENCE.

INTELLIGENCE DESCRIBES THE MARKETING PLAN, WHICH IS THE INTELLECTUALISATION OF HOW MANAGERS PERCEIVE THEIR OWN POSITION IN THEIR MARKETS RELATIVE TO THEIR COMPETITORS (WITH COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE ACCURATELY DEFINED - EG. COST LEADER, DIFFERENTIATION, NICHE), WHAT OBJECTIVES THEY WANT TO ACHIEVE OVER SOME DESIGNATED PERIOD OF TIME, HOW THEY INTEND TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES (STRATEGIES), WHAT RESOURCES ARE REQUIRED, AND WITH WHAT RESULTS (BUDGET).

(vii) LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

It must be a matter of great disappointment to academics that many of the components of a typical marketing syllabus are rarely used by practising marketing managers, at least in industrial goods organisations. Indeed, in the author's experience, even experienced marketing managers with marketing qualifications often fail to apply the techniques of marketing in their jobs.

The perennial problems have always centred around customer behaviour and market segmentation, and indeed these are extremely difficult concepts to grasp even at the cognitive level. Even more worrying, however, is the blind assumption often made by top management that all the key marketing practitioners in an organisation actually possess both the knowledge and the skills to be effective marketers.

The author has conducted a series of experiments in some of the UK's leading companies during the past two years, and has found that almost two thirds of marketing practitioners do not know the difference between a corporate objective, a marketing objective, and an advertising objective. Even fewer know what a logarithmic scale is and how it can be used in experience curves and matrices. Very

few have heard of the Standard Industrial Classification and virtually no one has heard of P.I.M.S. Very few even understand the significance of Benefit Analysis, let alone Benefit Segmentation. Out of fifty questions, the average score is about 20 per cent.

Whilst these are only examples, and do not prove anything, it must be a matter of concern when thinking seriously about marketing planning, for without an understanding of at least some of the basic tools of marketing, the chance of coming up with strategies based on sustainable competitive advantage is slim.

Communication and interpersonal skills are also prerequisites for marketing planning success, since excellent marketing plans will be ineffective unless those on whom the main burden of implementation lies understand them and are highly motivated towards their achievement.

The principle then, is:

ENSURE ALL THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR MARKETING IN SBUs HAVE THE NECESSARY MARKETING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR THE JOB. IN PARTICULAR, ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND AND KNOW HOW TO USE THE MORE IMPORTANT TOOLS OF MARKETING, SUCH AS:

- |               |                       |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| ■ INFORMATION | ■ HOW TO GET IT       |
|               | ■ HOW TO USE IT       |
| ■ POSITIONING | ■ MARKET SEGMENTATION |
|               | ■ ANSOFF              |
|               | ■ PORTER              |

- PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE ANALYSIS
- PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT
- 4 X Ps MANAGEMENT
- GAP ANALYSIS
- BCG
- DIRECTIONAL POLICY MATRIX
- PRODUCT
- PRICE
- PLACE
- PROMOTION

ADDITIONALLY, MARKETING PERSONNEL REQUIRE COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS.

(viii) LACK OF A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO MARKETING PLANNING

Gorb (13) talks about the differences between a hunter and a farmer in planning requirements. A hunter travels light, and needs stealth, cunning and know-how, whereas a farmer needs to plan ahead, buy seed, sow, harvest, interpret demand for the crops, and so on. Clearly, then, at the entrepreneurial end of corporate development, marketing planning as a formalised system is not likely to be seen as relevant because of the "here and now" ethos.

Leppard (14) discusses the different kinds of planning system that are required by organisations. These range from very informal systems to highly formalised ones, with the degree of autonomy at the top or bottom depending on the organisation's size and stage of development. Leppard and McDonald (15) have evolved an analytical tool for measuring an organisation's stage of development to ensure that any marketing planning system is appropriate.

The point here, however, is that for all but very small, undiversified organisations, a marketing planning system is essential to ensure that things happen when they are supposed to happen and that there are at least some basic standards which must be adhered to. In the author's experience even where training has been carried out, the quality and usefulness of SBU marketing plans are so variable as to make headquarters coordination into a central document an impossible task. This is largely due to the different levels of intellect and motivation of participating managers.

The principle, then, is as follows:

IT IS ESSENTIAL TO HAVE A SET OF WRITTEN PROCEDURES AND A WELL ARGUED COMMON FORMAT FOR MARKETING PLANNING. THE PURPOSES OF SUCH A SYSTEM ARE :

1. TO ENSURE ALL KEY ISSUES ARE SYSTEMATICALLY CONSIDERED.
2. TO PULL TOGETHER THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING OF EACH SBU IN A CONSISTENT MANNER.
3. TO HELP CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TO COMPARE DIVERSE BUSINESSES AND TO UNDERSTAND THE OVERALL CONDITION OF AND PROSPECTS FOR THE ORGANISATION.

(ix) FAILURE TO PRIORITISE OBJECTIVES

Even when organisations are successful in producing well reasoned marketing plans, it is not uncommon to find in each marketing plan as many as fifty objectives and many more strategies. This is because of the hierarchy effect of a principal

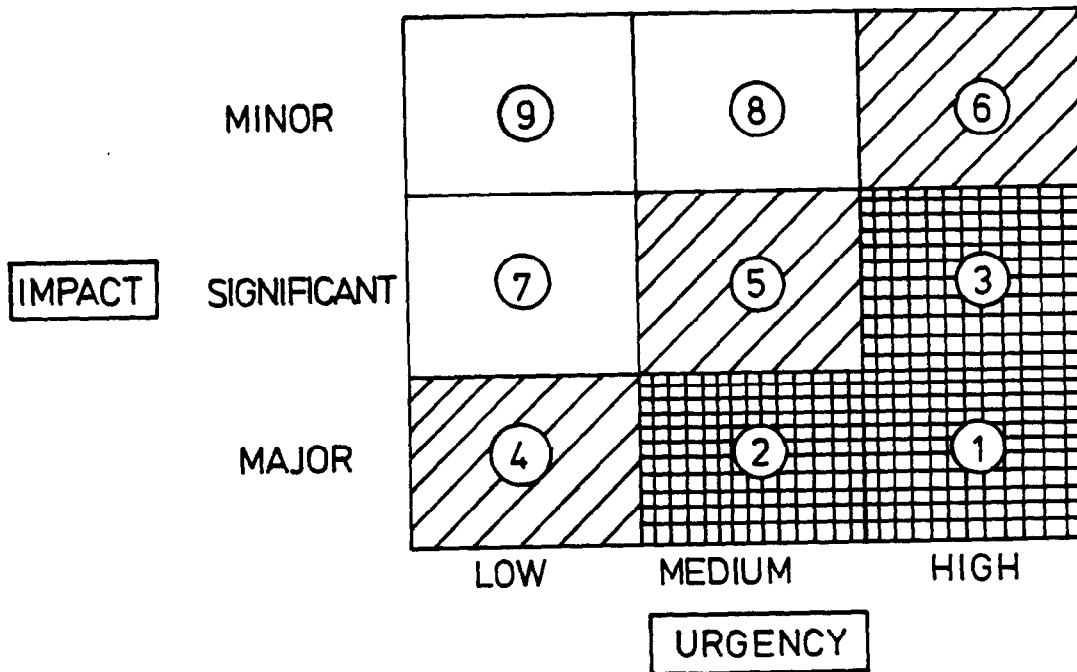
marketing objective leading to a number of sub-objectives, with each of these sub-objectives leading to further sub-objectives. It is rare, however, to find any kind of prioritisation of these objectives, and even rarer to find any allocation of time resource to each. The result is that managers can, and do, get sucked into the day-to-day "In Tray" syndrome, which in turn results in the creeping non implementation of the marketing plan.

The key role of senior management is to concentrate lower level management attention on factors that are both high leverage and actionable in order to get the essential jobs done effectively.

To prevent managers getting sidetracked by trivia, the author has found that it is helpful to get managers to prioritise their next year's objectives using a time allocation planner as follows:



## OBJECTIVES PRIORITY MATRIX



### KEY : POSSIBLE TIME/RESOURCE ALLOCATION (%)

1 - 30	4 - 12	7 - 8
2 - 15	5 - 10	8 - 4
3 - 12	6 - 8	9 - 1
<u>57</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>13</u>

The principle then, is as follows:

ENSURE THAT ALL OBJECTIVES ARE PRIORITISED ACCORDING TO THEIR IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION AND THEIR URGENCY AND THAT RESOURCES ARE ALLOCATED ACCORDINGLY.

(x) HOSTILE CORPORATE CULTURES

During the years 1985 and 1986, the author carried out a research study (16) to attempt to provide an explanation for the widespread corporate resistance to marketing planning. Most previous work concentrated on the "medicine", itself and showed relatively little concern for the "patient". In a sense, this is a bit like a doctor dispensing the same drug to all patients irrespective of their condition, a practice that would be at best irrelevant and at worst even dangerous.

Over the years, in promoting the marketing planning nostrum, the product has somehow become more important than the customer. So, just as a good doctor tries to find out more about his patient before prescribing drugs, the author attempted to find out more about the condition of companies before prescribing a marketing planning "cure".

This research showed that the acceptance of marketing planning is largely conditioned by the stage of development of the organisation and the behaviour of the corporate culture carriers. Thus it is that different modes of marketing planning become more appropriate at different phases of an organisation's life.

While the marketing planning process itself is universally consistent, how that process is managed must be congruent with the current organisational culture - i.e. top down,

bottom up, directive, non directive, coordination, and so on. The alternative to this would be to attempt to change the organisation's culture to make it more amenable to a particular planning process.

Since culture tends to act to maintain the existing power structure and status quo, marketing planning interventions must be recognised as having a "political" dimension and are not purely educational. Thus, even though requisite training is given to key marketing personal and an appropriate system is developed, without the active support and participation of the power brokers, marketing planning will not happen. Not least among the political issues is the question of whether or not an organisation's management style can adapt sufficiently to enable the marketing planning process to deliver the rewards it promises.

Can managers who have led a company down a particular path suddenly change track? Is it possible for frogs to become princes ? Iconoclastic books would claim they can, because this is a much more optimistic message with which to sell copies. However, experienced practitioners and consultants would have some reservations.

If the business pressures on a company are great enough, intelligent behaviour will, of course, win the day, as in the cases of British Airways and Woolworths quoted earlier.

In the meantime, however, standardised, textbook type marketing planning cannot be imposed on organisations with any chance of success, and most definitely not without the active support and participation of the culture leaders. Such participation must involve feeding back to those who have taken part in the process the total results of their efforts.

The final principle then, is as follows:

MARKETING PLANNING WILL NOT BE EFFECTIVE WITHOUT THE ACTIVE SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION OF THE CULTURE LEADERS. BUT EVEN WITH THEIR SUPPORT, THE TYPE OF MARKETING PLANNING HAS TO BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE PHASE OF THE ORGANISATIONAL LIFE LINE. THIS PHASE SHOULD BE MEASURED BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO INTRODUCE MARKETING PLANNING.

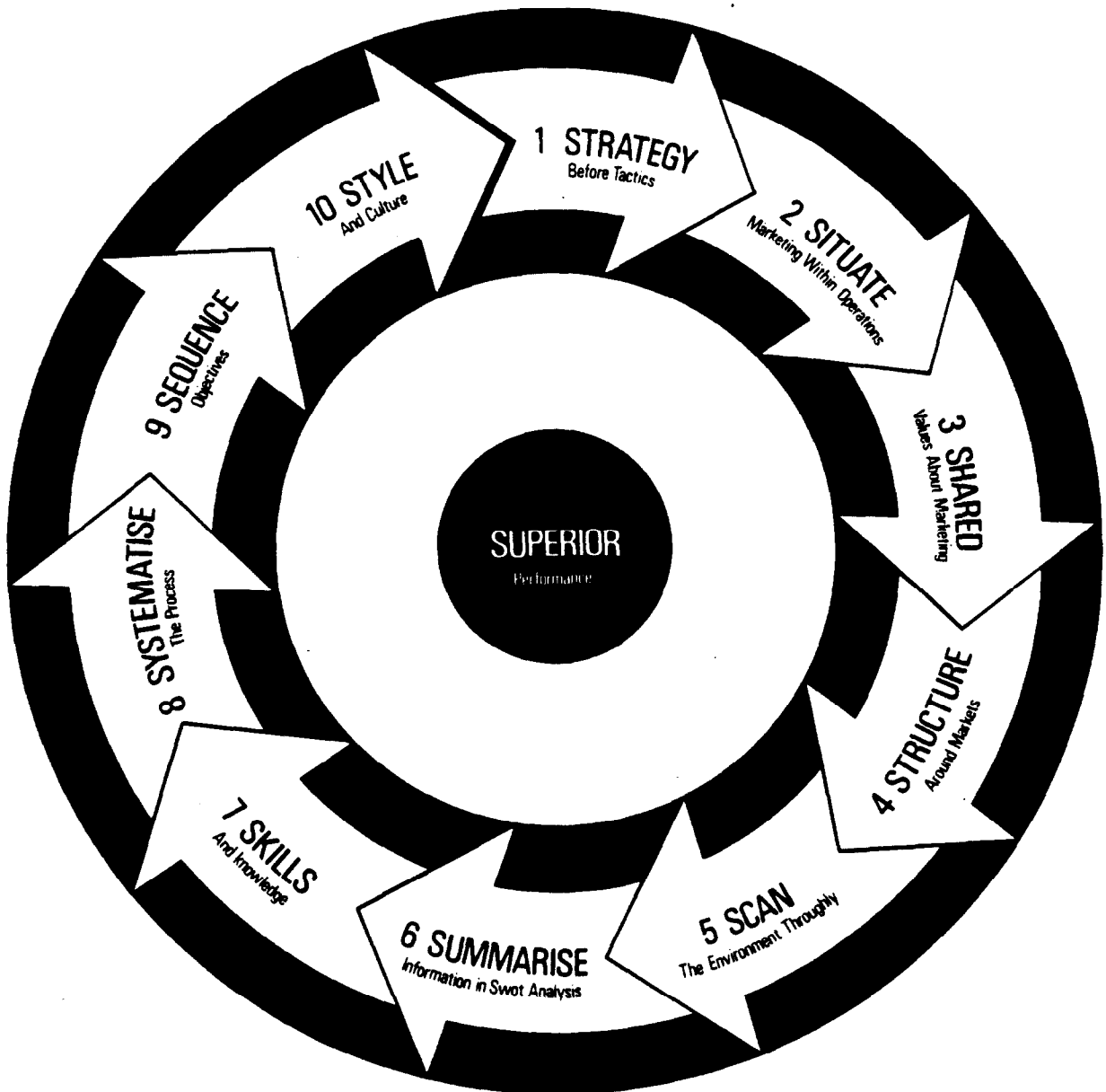
#### IN CONCLUSION

It will be understood from the foregoing that marketing planning never has been the simple step-by-step approach described so enthusiastically in most prescriptive texts and courses. The moment an organisation embarks on the marketing planning path, it can expect to encounter a number of complex organisational, additudinal, process and cognitive problems which are likely to block progress. By being forewarned about these barriers, there is a good chance of doing excellent marketing planning that will bring all the claimed benefits including a significant impact on the bottom line through the creation of competitive advantage. If they are ignored, however, marketing planning will remain the cinderella of business management.

The ten barriers described in this paper and the advice provided for overcoming them are summarised in the figure which follows:

# MARKETING PLANNING FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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