



The Promotional Mix: Six Key Questions

1. What is it?

The promotional mix is a set of tools that a business can use to effectively communicate the benefits of its products or services to its customers.

2. What does it include?

- Advertising
- Sales promotion
- Public relations
- Direct marketing
- Personal selling

3. How are they different?

When you consider **advertising**, you pay for the advertisement to be developed by a creative agency and you also buy the space in which the advertisement will appear. It can be quite costly and unless you include a response mechanism, it is hard to assess how much business results from the expenditure.

There are three main reasons for advertising:

- To make the market aware of your existence and the benefits of the services you offer
- To give information about your company and your services to your target audience
- To persuade them to buy from you

Research has shown that for people to remember your advertisement and the message you are putting over, they need to see it at least seven times. So you need to advertise your message regularly and consistently.

Public Relations offers a way of keeping your business in front of your clients and targets. It involves a sustained attempt to develop your reputation as a business by using the media to help create the image you want.

There is cost associated in the creation of articles or press releases, but you do not pay to place them in the media. (Sometimes you pay a cost to have a photograph included.) You have no control over whether they are printed or not, in part or in total, but public relations can be a very cost-effective way of promoting your business.

Direct Marketing gives you a very flexible way to deliver your message and it does enable you to target specific client groups very effectively. Having a contact database to plan and monitor communications to clients and to measure any responses is an important tool.

Personal selling is the most targeted communications tool as you can tailor your approach to the specific needs of an individual client. You can create constructive dialogue with your clients, identify their needs and objectives and build a relationship. During the process you can promote your company, its services and the benefits you would be able to deliver specifically to this client and resolve any questions or issues they may have. Of course getting the business is the final objective.

Sales Promotions are short-term activities with a specific objective that offer the client something over and above what you would normally provide. An example we all see regularly in supermarkets is the 'buy one, get one free' offer. You might use a sales promotion tactically to encourage a client to buy a wider range of services from you. The type of promotion you choose must be relevant to your target customers as well as your own marketing objectives.

4. Why is it important?

Communication with your clients and targets is vital to ensure that your business generates sales and profits. If they don't know about you, the services you provide and the benefits you deliver, then they will not buy from you.

5. How do we decide what to use?

Using one promotional tool on its own will seldom gain the best results. The combination you choose will depend on

- Your target audience
- The message that you wish to communicate
- Your budget

6. Where do we start?

1. Analyse your target audience for the communications. Is it a consultant, a contractor, a developer or an end-user client? Which industry? What type of person influences your success in winning business; what role do they have in the organisation? Build a profile of each group.
2. Decide your objectives: are you trying to make people aware of your services, differentiating your company or perhaps informing them of something new that you have to offer?
3. Identify what actions you want your audience to take when they receive your communication.
4. Define the budget you have available.
5. Develop your plan.
6. Monitor and measure the results.

It is important to remember that active networking with clients, targets, your supply chain, specialist industry groups and trade associations can also play a valuable role in promoting your business to a wider audience.

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Since joining MarketingWorks as a marketing consultant, Jan has helped clients to identify strategic direction and has supported them in tactical marketing planning and implementation. She also works with clients to analyse their business development processes and identify both critical success factors and priorities for improvement.

A member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and holder of the Post Graduate Diploma, Jan started out as a marketing trainee in the motor industry and over 25 years has held positions in a variety of business-to-business sectors, in the UK and throughout Europe.

As the European Marketing Manager for a Swedish forestry company based in Stockholm, she managed a European product launch into the construction industry and carried out a strategic review of one business unit based in eight European countries. In her role of Marketing Director for a leading marketing services company, her report on new services launched into the airlines industry won two awards for the company.

What to do next?

MarketingWorks helps its construction industry clients win new business by working with them to develop effective internal marketing systems to create and sustain a business-winning culture. To help you with your tactical marketing we suggest you consider the 'Practical marketing techniques for new business generation' workshop,

<http://www.constructionmarketingcommunity.com/downloads/openprogramme/MW05.pdf> and to help you get the most of your networking activities,

<http://www.constructionmarketingcommunity.com/downloads/openprogramme/MW10.pdf>

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