

Roll these together and then add image or positioning. None of the factors can be considered in isolation from the other. And all are considered in relation to the two basic rules of knowing customer(s) and knowing competition.

Sound complicated? It can be, but it doesn't have to be. Your best approach is to have as much information as possible about clients, potential clients, competitors and, of course, your own product and business capacity. This means doing marketing research.

There are a couple of cautions to keep in mind. You do not want to limit those you query to those who are a built-in market for your product or supporters of your ideas. Supportive attitudes and answers can make you feel good, really good, for a very short period of time. Depending on your product and sales goals, you need to know what a chunk of the rest of the world thinks. All of that feel-good information can cause you to build a marketing and business plan that will not take you to the success you want.

Marketing framework

Below is a diagram of the marketing framework. This will help you understand the process of investigating and understanding your markets. As discussed above, you will need to gather information about your customers, your potential customers and your competition.

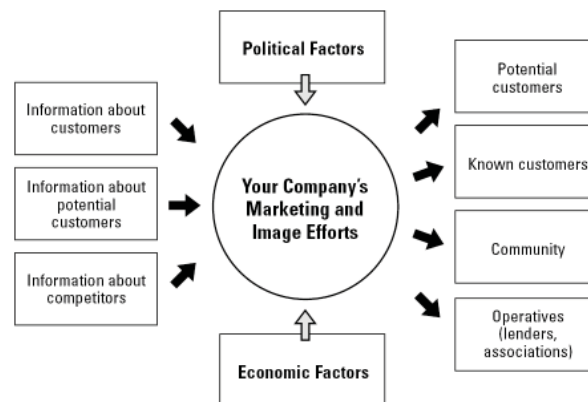
You also need to know the climate in which both you and your customers are operating. You may be able to do this simply with a meeting among you and your partners, associates, etc. Or, you may wish to consider surveying or questioning others for this information. This is called environmental scanning.

While it may not seem relevant at the time of beginning your operation, you don't want to be caught by surprise by events that occur which you have no control. You need to know where you are sitting in the larger scheme of things.

You should know about the current political climate as it relates to your product. Also, what factors in the economy (regionally, nationally or world-wide) could affect your situation or your customers' buying ability? What trends related to your product area exist?

You may be able to do all of the information gathering yourself or with your own staff or partners. Probably, it will be money well invested to hire some assistance in this area. You have a big job simply in using the findings of research to make your product, production and sales decisions.

This information will help you connect with the customers you expect to reach and the customers you can potentially reach. It will also help you connect with the community and other operatives or stakeholders in your project such as lenders, investors, etc.



... and justice for all

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