



## strategize your sales tactics

Devise a marketing plan that helps achieve sales goals

By Tina Serio

**When you established your organization's goals for 2015, did you do so with thought towards the strategy you will use to achieve those goals? Setting sales goals seems to be a very common marketing tactic and is a staple of distributors' fourth-quarter management duties. What is less common, however, is defining a marketing strategy to help achieve those goals, and documenting that strategy into a formal plan.**

I have created a simple spreadsheet that readers can download from SonicTrain's website, [www.sonictrain.com/resources.html](http://www.sonictrain.com/resources.html). This planning tool (or your own version of it) will allow you to identify which channels you will use to engage audiences, generate leads, nurture prospects and fill your sales pipeline.

Scheduling your marketing activities by channel in a spreadsheet or calendar will give you an "at a glance" view and enable you to quickly identify gaps of time where you may be falling off the radar of your customers and prospects.

Although your peak marketing may be filled with information about premier value-added

services, trade show participation, new products, training opportunities and seasonal specials, you may see time periods where you are not marketing at all. Fill those gaps with marketing content from your key vendors. This enables consistent reach to your customer base with minimal impact on you.

What advertising channels you utilize will depend on the scope of your market and the size of your marketing budget. For most distributors, the reach of their marketing program is the local or regional area. Social media, SEO, state/local association chapters, and, of course, your own contact base via email campaigns are typically cost-efficient components to a strategic marketing plan.

Not aware of what associations have local or state chapters, or if they have social media networks you can tap into? Try working backward. If your sales team has key target accounts to bring on board in 2015, start with those accounts (if not, start with your current best accounts). Identify what the buyers at these accounts read, what associations they belong to, and what LinkedIn groups they subscribe to. If your team can't get an audience with the buyer to personally ask questions, try sending an incentivized survey; i.e., "Everyone who submits all answers will be entered into a drawing to win a new (fill in the blank)."

Although you may not have a marketing department or a marketing budget, if you have a sales team then you need a marketing plan. Bottom line: Strategy sells, the rest is just luck. **SM**

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