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## Marketing Solutions: Create a Winning Marketing Map for 2005

By MJ Gilhooley  
[mjg@gilhooleyconsulting.com](mailto:mjg@gilhooleyconsulting.com)  
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Every firm will be more successful with a business plan. Of course, a key component to this is your marketing plan. But your first step is to simply understand marketing.

### MARKETING MAP MUST-HAVES

- *A checklist.* Include a list of your to-dos and action items.
- *Project plan.* Document who will be doing what. Set deadlines and include conditions or dependencies for hitting your targets.
- *Appendices.* Keep a file that ties to your marketing map. Include price lists, event planners, promotional vehicles, graphics, charts and other materials or data used to substantiate statements in your marketing map.

Marketing is *everything* you do to promote your interiorscape product or service and *everything* that touches your customer.

Marketing also is a continuous journey and to be most effective, you must incorporate it into the daily aspects of your business. This can happen, but only if you create a marketing map in your business plan.

THE MARKETING MAP. Make yours using the seven Ps of marketing: product, positioning, price, promotion, place, packaging and people.

**1. Product.** Define the core needs your service fills. Review Plants at Work data ([www.plantsatwork.org](http://www.plantsatwork.org)), which quantifies net gains in starting or enhancing a commercial interiorscape. Flush out tangible features and functions, as well as add-on and value-added services.

**2. Positioning.** First, look at marketplace influences in manageable units. Review the latest data on local and regional economies, demographic divisions, notable political issues, market size – especially growth trends – social or cultural issues, new buyer behaviors and the competitive landscape. Do a SWOT analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – of significant competitors in your region.

Next, review your market segments. You may be overlooking a viable group of prospects, such as human resources executives, in addition to the usual facility managers, architects and designers.

Now, create a simple positioning statement, which should say who you are (a professional interiorscaping firm); what audience you serve; core market issues and problems; competitors; differentiating factors; and unique service benefits. Communicate this internally and externally.

**3. Price.** Understand the business goals you wish to achieve and how your pricing strategy will help you achieve them. There are a variety of strategies, including



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premium, penetration, economy, bundling and promotional pricing, but no matter which one you choose, strive to make pricing a function of value, not strictly cost. Use your marketing map to assess the true risks associated with each pricing tactic and to clearly articulate your goals.

4. *Promotion.* Include any or a mix of the following: advertising, trade shows and events, public relations activities and branding and merchandising. Note costs, review campaign targets and set goals.

5. *Place.* Outline your basic distribution channels and methods of service delivery. Even though most interiorscapers work on site, there are exceptions, and this must be articulated.

6. *Packaging.* Decide on the look and feel of your truck, uniforms, sales presentations and plant installations. Whatever it is, keep it consistent and make sure it reinforces your service features and benefits.

7. *People.* Chart and review your optimal team and its yearly activities.

**ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS.** Include plans for achieving business goals in your marketing map. For instance, if part of your marketing effort will be devoted to developing new business, then put the mechanisms in place to engage and support this new business. You'll need to identify a new business leader and make sure your marketing and budget can support this activity. Or, if 2005 will mark a service launch for your business, then include the launch plan in your map.

Whatever your goals are, don't forget to include a plan and budget for sales training. You must ensure that whoever sells for you is properly equipped with the tools and positioning to achieve your goals.

**SETTING BUDGETS.** Draft out the expenses necessary to achieve your goals, referring to the seven Ps for the categories in which you will need to budget. Keep in mind that most thriving firms in the green industry allocate 2 to 4 percent of total revenue for marketing. In specific instances where you're defining marketing campaigns, state each campaign budget, including your targets, cost and expected outcome.

Budgets are critical because you'll need to compare your marketing map to the actual outcome. Comparing performance to plan allows you to analyze positive and negative variances to more specifically target areas and optimize market penetration.

Unfortunately, finding time for marketing activities like these can be tough. But stick with it. If you stay committed, the results *will* pay off with more successful sales. – *MJ Gilhooley*

*The author is president of Gilhooley Consulting, Los Angeles, Calif., and Plants at Work media spokesperson. She can be reached at [mjg@gilhooleyconsulting.com](mailto:mjg@gilhooleyconsulting.com).*

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