

FuturePerfect

Overview of the work steps in a FuturePerfect consulting session.

Objective

Undertake a marketing/ business development audit of a UK-based business.

Review the business' marketing and sales objectives

- Examine these objectives for:
 - Accuracy.
 - Duplication.
 - Understanding and dissemination.
 - Historical achievement.
 - Relationship with forecasts.
 - Linkage with people and manpower budgets.
 - Linkage with marketing responsibilities, sales roles and numbers employed.

Product assessment

- Determine the profit and profitability of the current product range, add-ons, accessories and other services.
- Determine the differences in costs between the various products and services offered.
- Determine the relevant fixed and variable costs associated by the business with its products.
- Establish how simple break-even analysis is undertaken and the sales volumes associated.
- Review the marginal costs of production/sales.
- Assess how multi-product and service decisions are made – using which choice methods.
- Establish a contribution analysis for determining an optimal product mix.

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- Review the cash generating properties of the capital type products sold and the other services offered.

Distribution and marketing services

- Review direct and indirect sales operations.
- Identify how indirect sales operations are compensated.
- Identify any key distribution differences between the products.
- Review the sales and marketing communications tools employed.
- Review the marketing methods used e.g. web site or exhibitions - consider their value for money against set objectives.
- Consider the role played by customer services with help lines, feedback systems, e-mail contacts, call-out procedures, warranties, service agreements, and trial periods.

Competitive and branding position

- Establish the brand value – brand recognition and awareness.
- Examine the promotional strategies employed – methods, relevance, timing, frequency and results.
- Review the business' pricing approach, its strategy, price points, pricing competition, re-seller incentives and discounts.
- Establish the competitive position of the business in the UK. Use performance benchmarks in some or, all of:
 - Product portfolio.
 - Sales volumes.
 - Added value.
 - Market share.
 - Exports.
 - Sector/segment share.
 - Innovation and development.
 - Service and quality ratings.
- Review the supplier dependency – which suppliers are able to perform the tasks performed by this business? Why don't they already?
- Review the customer dependency – which of the current products and services offered to existing customers could be readily sourced elsewhere?
- Establish the expected "switching" costs of a customer changing from the business' supply to that of a competitor. Consider why, how and when this happens.

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- Establish the internal resources available for dealing with new competition.

Markets

- Assess which markets are currently being served by the company and its products.
- Identify the critical success factors involved in serving these markets.
- Consider how the current products fit into these markets – how old are they? How innovative?
- Consider which other markets could be served with existing or planned product features.
- Establish the current industry trends and their relevance for the business.

Customers

- Establish the size, scale and value of the current customer base.
- Group the customer base using variables such as “age,” “value” or “acquisition date”.
- Establish the buyers and users – and their rationale for purchase.
- Identify the buying process and buying decision influencers.
- Identify any customer problem and opportunity areas such as low spend, credit risk, upgrade potential, repeat business.
- Identify current perceptions on the product range.

Marketing activities

- Review the processes involved in acquiring new and keeping existing customers.
- What rigour and process is committed to forecasting? Establish the frequency of forecasting and the update procedures.
- Establish the procedures in place for sales and marketing cost control.
- Review the composition and allocation of budgets? Examine any conflicts of interest or areas of over/under spend.
- Review how variances and allowances are treated within the marketing and sales departments.
- Establish how cost variances are treated by the marketing and sales departments.

- o Establish the role played by the sales team in credit control and controlling bad debt.

Next steps

Based on some or all of these FuturePerfect steps Time to Market will recommend courses of action and policy to address any areas considered sub-optimal.