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Conclusions

Implementation pronunciation: /,ɪmplɪmən'teɪʃ(ə)n/ *the process of putting a decision or plan into effect; implementation: she was responsible for the implementation of the plan.*

Oxford English Dictionary

Summary

In this chapter we:

- Summarize the key points in the book
- Help you get started in applying the thinking to your own implementation challenges
- Complete the marine chronometer story.

■ Introduction

Implementation is both an art and a science. As with any artist or scientist, there are many instruments from which to choose. However, there are only a few that you need to master. In this chapter we go through the main points of the book and the essential tools to put them into practice. Mastering these points and these instruments will take you a long way to becoming a marketing implementation leader – and beyond.

Key principles

- Implementation matters
- The old way of implementation does not work
- Implementation is a process not a program
- Planning is still vital
- Implementation needs to respond to unexpected events
- We must learn from other professions and use new tools
- Sense and respond is key
- Marketing Navigation changes the planning and implementation process
- Strategy is implementation and implementation must include change
- Leadership means being good at market strategy and change
- Marketing leaders should make natural implementation leaders.

■ Implementation matters

Implementing a marketing plan may not be the most exciting subject but it is crucial. Billions of dollars are wasted in the global economy every year from poor implementation of planned strategies. Billions more are lost from failing to implement mid-term strategies that exploit new and unexpected opportunities or counter new threats.

Apart from the commercial cost, there is the frustration (ranked number one in our survey) about the wasted time and effort involved in poor implementation.

The nature of implementation is that often we do not see these problems. So long as we hit the targets in the plan, everyone is happy. Yet failing to implement well, failing to hit higher targets and not knowing we are off course until too late, can cost the business dear.

For any organization, large or small, better implementation is a sure way to improve its performance at relatively little cost.

The old way of implementation does not work

In the traditional marketing planning process (and many books on strategy), implementation is treated as a single step (see Figure 10.1).

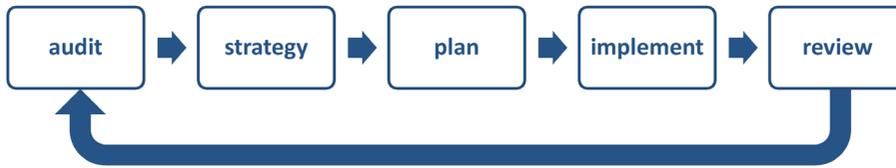


Figure 10.1:The traditional marketing planning process

The key steps are commonly:

- 1 Undertake a marketing audit (internal and external assessment of your situation)
- 2 Develop your marketing strategy
- 3 Capture the strategy and its rationale in a marketing plan
- 4 Implement the plan
- 5 Review its implementation (and feed results back to the marketing audit for next year's plan).

The results of implementation are reviewed and fed back into the marketing audit. The market strategy, marketing plan and its implementation can then be improved accordingly. This seems a logical process but it has severe limitations:

- Implementation is not a single step, but a process in its own right.
- Each of these five steps takes time and typically takes a year to complete. It is a rigid process and organizations following it cannot respond quickly to unplanned events. Events overtake the marketing plan.
- Once agreed, marketing plans tend to be shelved and quickly become out of date.

Implementation requires a phased approach that provides guidance to the marketer but also retains flexibility in handling unplanned events.

■ Implementation is a process not a program

Figure 10.2 repeats Figure 3.8 in showing that implementation is a continuous, never-ending process and is actually taking place during the preparation of the next strategic marketing plan.

All organizations, of course, have a fiscal year end, but this is purely an accounting convention required by law and the day after the year ends, implementation of the next one-year plan begins and in reality this is just a continuation of the previous day's implementation, even though