



Center for World-Changing Organizations

Strengthening organizations that make the world better

#5 In Our Guides & Workbooks Series

Strategic Marketing Workbook

How to Better Understand, Engage, and Serve
Those Who Determine Your Success



By Jonathan Reed, PhD

We specialize in helping organizations that make a difference in the world:

- **Design ingenious ways to accomplish their missions**—through our innovative approach to *strategic planning*.
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- **Create great places to work**—through *organizational development* tailored to their values-driven missions and unconventional staff.

We've written ***eight leadership guides*** on these subjects, which you can download at www.wcorgs.com. They describe how we adapt *corporate* planning, marketing, and organizational development to meet the challenges these organizations face.

Our clients include local-to-global nonprofits, government agencies, and companies in the U.S. and abroad. As subject-matter experts with extensive consulting experience, we offer high return-on-investment consulting, training, and other services.

JONATHAN REED, PH.D., the Center's founder, has an unusual background for a management consultant. He received his doctorate in the biological sciences at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, where he subsequently served as Lecturer and Honorary Fellow. His research took him far afield: 500 miles north of the Arctic Circle, four field seasons in Kauai, Hawaii, and to Panama as a Smithsonian Tropical Research Fellow.

He then founded The University Group in 1988, a private consulting firm representing 65 leading faculty at UW—Madison. It transferred the latest advances in management and technology from universities to corporations such as General Electric and Johnson Controls.

When clients began asking for his advice, he found he preferred consulting to trying to manage professors. So he started consulting for corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies on his own. One of his projects received a National Quality Award.

He has co-authored *A Systems Handbook: An Introduction to the Systems Age for GE Medical Systems*, consulted for federal Science Centers for seven consecutive years, and helped lead the Conservation Science Division of The Nature Conservancy.

He served as a consultant to the U.S. Agency for International Development in Afghanistan and the former Soviet Union Republic of Georgia, and the Inter-American Development Bank in Trinidad and Tobago. He also has taught mindfulness meditation at maximum-security prisons.

To see the results his clients achieved and read their testimonials, see the Experience section of our website.



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#5 Strategic Marketing Workbook

To Better Understand, Engage, and Serve Those Who Determine Your Success

This workbook is the companion publication to our *Strategic Marketing Guide*. It provides a step-by-step process for a world-changing organization¹ to apply the strategic marketing concepts and tools presented in the guide. The guide is divided into two sections: an introduction to strategic marketing and a description of our strategic marketing model.

To maintain consistency between our marketing guide and this workbook, we continue the section numbering from the guide. Thus, we entitle the main section of this workbook “Section 3: How to Use This Strategic Marketing Model.”

You can use this workbook to improve your entire strategic marketing system systematically. Alternatively, you could use it to identify and shore up its weaknesses. Still, another use for both this workbook and its companion guide could be to familiarize your staff with how to apply the ideas and tools of strategic marketing to a world-changing organization.

This is the fifth in our *Guides and Workbooks Series* to help you build a more successful and prosperous organization. Subjects include ***strategic planning, strategic marketing, and organizational development***. We list them on the back cover. See this endnote for permission to use them.²

They are based on our research and work with many organizations of different sizes and in various fields, including General Electric Medical Systems, Rexnord Aerospace, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Geological Survey, and U.S. Agency for International Development—as well as many smaller organizations.



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FLOWCHART OF STRATEGIC MARKETING

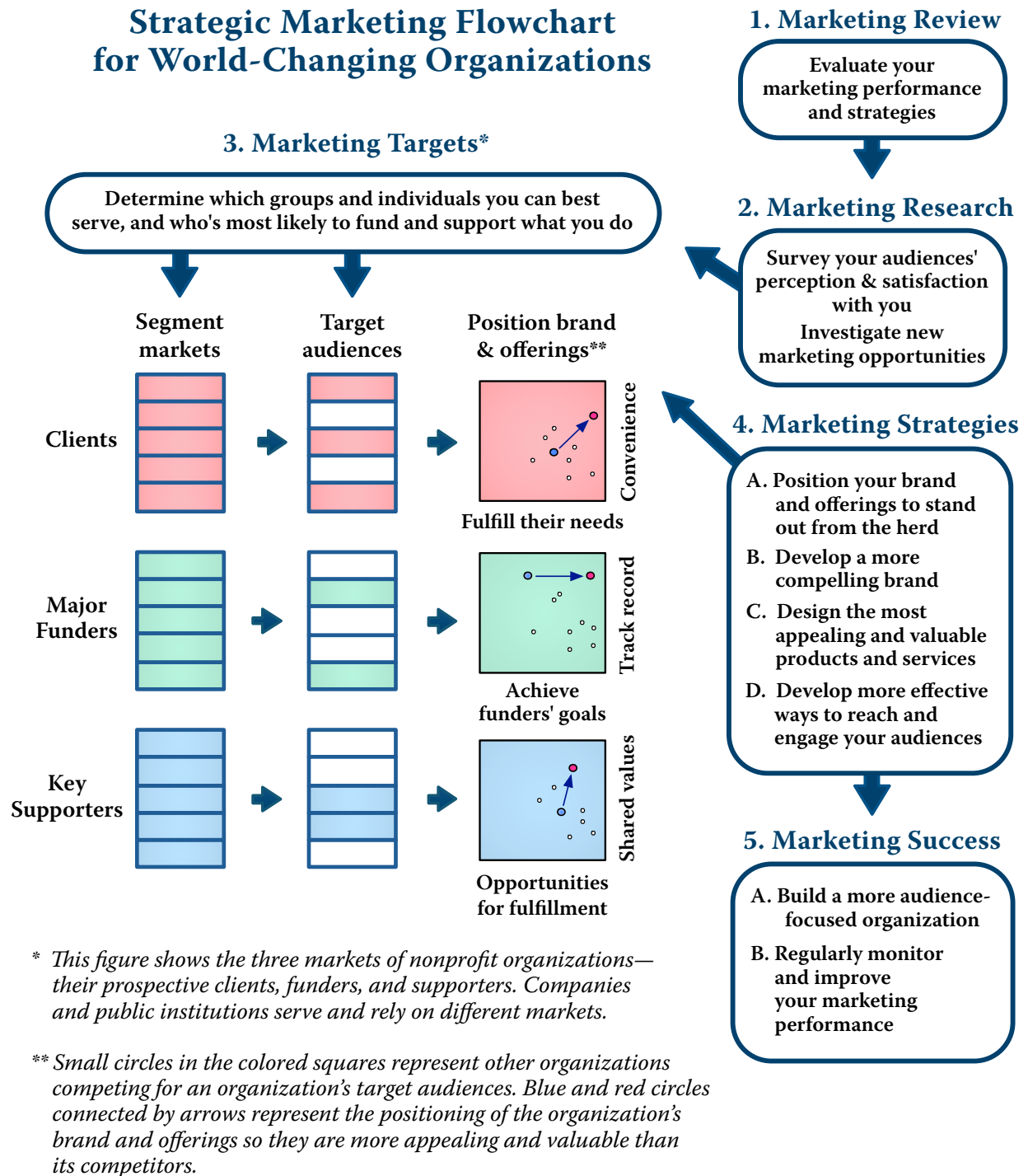


Fig. 1. Strategic marketing model for world-changing organizations

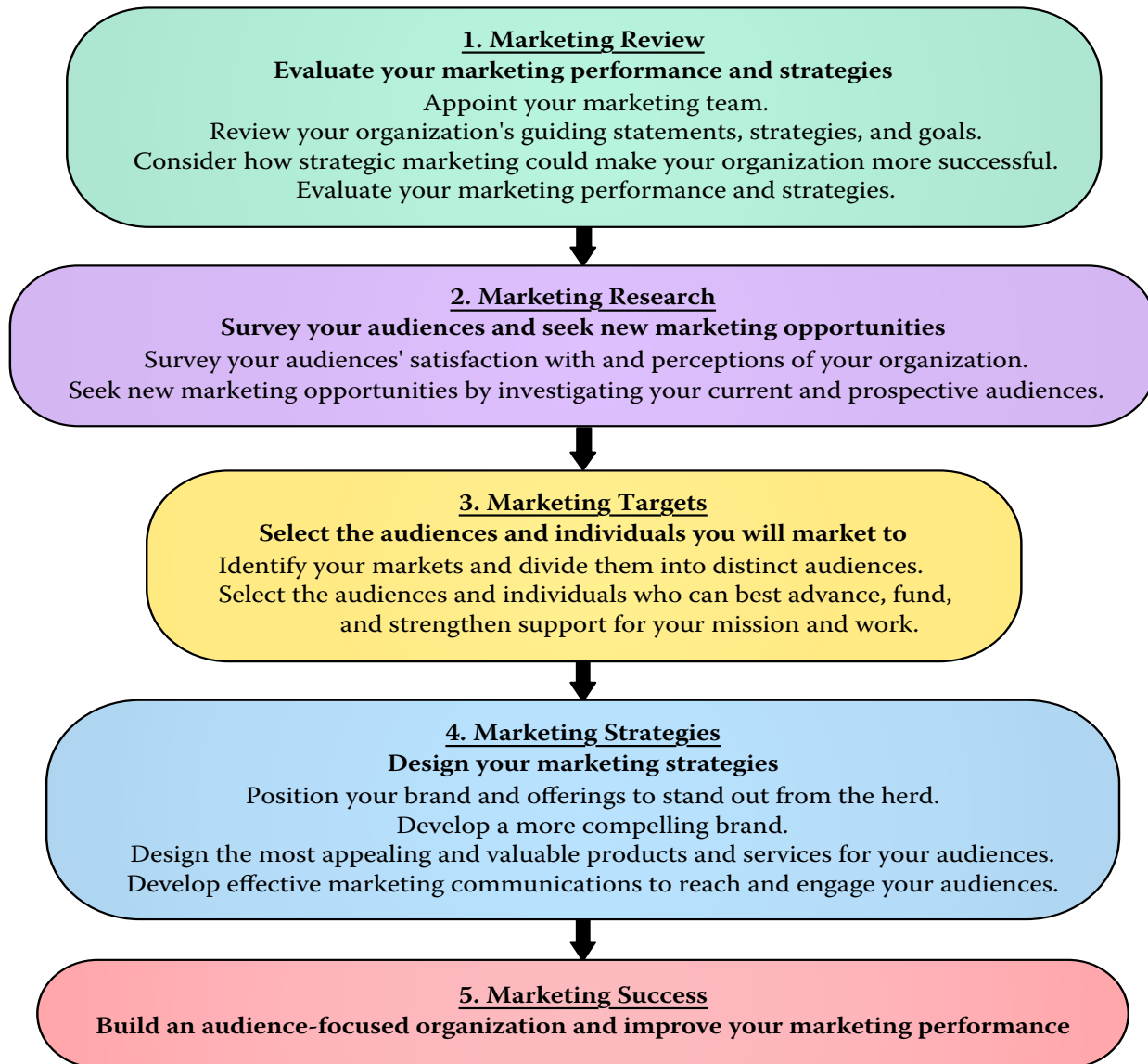


Fig. 2. Strategic marketing model for world-changing organizations

OUTLINE OF OUR MARKETING MODEL

1. Marketing review—Evaluate your marketing decisions, strategies, and perceptions

- A. Select who will lead and participate in your marketing review.
- B. Read our Strategic Marketing and Branding Guides.
- C. Review your guiding statements (core values, mission, and vision), strategies, and goals.
- D. Determine how strategic marketing could help you advance, fund, and build support for your organization's mission and work.
- E. Assess your organization's knowledge of and attitudes toward strategic marketing.
- F. Evaluate your organization's marketing efforts using the five steps of this model as benchmarks; and the role marketing plays in advancing, funding, and building support for its mission and work.

2. Marketing research—Survey your audiences' satisfaction and perceptions, and investigate new marketing opportunities

- A. Survey their satisfaction with what you offer and their impressions of your organization and competitors.
- B. Investigate new marketing opportunities by studying the needs and preferences your current and potential audiences.

3. Marketing targets—Determine the best audiences, individuals, and organizations to target

- A. Divide your prospective clients, funders, and supporters into distinct groups or audiences.
- B. Identify the audiences and individuals that can best advance, fund, and build support for your mission and work.

4. Marketing strategies—Design your marketing strategies

- A. Position your brand and offerings to stand out from the herd of other organizations in your field—so they are different from and more appealing than those of your competitors.
- B. Develop a more compelling brand.
- C. Design the most appealing and valuable products, services, or whatever else you offer.
- D. Develop effective marketing communications to reach and engage your audiences.
 - Formulate your marketing communications strategies.
 - Develop your marketing messages.

- Design your identity media.
- Maintain good public relations.
- Engage your audiences using our iEngage System.
- Freely share your knowledge with your audiences.

5. Marketing success—Build an audience-focused organization and continuously improve your marketing performance

- A. Build an audience-focused organization.
- B. Monitor and continuously improve your marketing performance.

SECTION 3

HOW TO USE OUR STRATEGIC MARKETING MODEL

This section provides guidelines to use this strategic marketing model to review and improve your marketing strategies and performance.

STEP 1. MARKETING REVIEW

Evaluate Your Organization's Marketing Performance and Strategies

Substep 1.1 Marketing Review

#1. Select Who Will Lead and Participate in Your Marketing Review

Your organization's leader should appoint the members of your marketing review team. If feasible, your leader should lead the team. If your organization has a marketing department or its equivalent, that person might seem the logical choice to lead this team. But appointing the head of marketing to lead this team could shift its focus from a review of your organization's marketing practices to those of its marketing department.

Therefore, we advise appointing someone outside your marketing department to lead it. Doing so sends the message that marketing is everyone's job. But certainly include the head of marketing, who probably knows the most about your marketing strategies and performance, on the team.

Substep 1.2 Marketing Review

#2. Prepare for This Review by Reading Our *Strategic Marketing and Branding Guides*

Many people think of marketing as advertising and promotion. These are among strategic marketing's least essential functions. Before reviewing your marketing efforts and performance, read our *Strategic Marketing and Branding Guides* to familiarize yourself with strategic marketing and this model. You might also find it helpful to read several of the recommended marketing references in the bibliography.

Substep 1.3 Marketing Review

#3. Review Your Organization's Guiding Statements (Core Values, Mission, and Vision), Strategies, and Goals

If your review of marketing is done separately from strategic planning, it might be helpful to review your organization's guiding statements (its core values, mission, and vision statements), strategies, and goals before you review your marketing strategies and performance.

Substep 1.4 Marketing Review

#4. Determine How Strategic Marketing Could Help Your Organization Advance, Fund, and Build Support for Its Mission and Work

Use the benefits and goals of strategic marketing on pages 1 and 2 of our *Strategic Marketing Guide* to determine how it can make your organization more successful. In short, it should help you improve everything you do involving the participation or support of outside groups.

Substep 1.5 Marketing Review

#5. Assess Your Organization's Knowledge of and Attitudes Toward Strategic Marketing

Your marketing performance probably mirrors your managers' and employees' knowledge of and attitudes toward strategic marketing. Use the figure on page 19 of our *Strategic Marketing Guide* to identify **your organization's marketing mindset**. Furthermore, consider whether those in positions to implement strategic marketing practices in your organization understand what they are and how to use them.

Next assess how much, if any, marketing research your organization does to target the best audiences, understand their needs and core values, and to design the most effective marketing communications to reach and engage them. Then determine the degree to which your organization views marketing through the lens of target audiences, irrespective of what it calls them.

Determine how narrowly or broadly it defines the external groups that determine its success, and how it tailors its offerings and marketing communications strategies to them. Finally, determine if your organization staked a claim to the idea it wants to "own" in its target audiences' minds, and what it is.

Substep 1.6 Marketing Review

#6. Evaluate Your Organization's Marketing Efforts Using the Five Steps of This Model as Benchmarks; and the Role Marketing Plays in Advancing, Funding, and Building Support for Its Mission and Work

The previous five guidelines should prepare you for this last and most important one of Step 1. Use the five steps of this model as benchmarks to evaluate your organization's marketing efforts:

1. **Marketing review.** Start by considering how often and effectively your organization systematically reviews its marketing situation, strategies, and performance.
2. **Marketing research.** Study the amount of marketing research that your organization does to understand its current and prospective audiences better, and to identify new marketing opportunities.
3. **Marketing targets.** Determine whether your organization is targeting the best audiences and individuals to advance, fund, and build support for its mission and work. Also, assess the size and composition of its target audiences. For example, does it target small audiences whose needs it's in a unique or best position to fulfill or does it market to everyone who might be remotely interested in what it does and stands for.
4. **Marketing strategies.** Assess the degree to which your organization has: positioned its brand and offerings to stand out from the herd, developed a compelling brand, offers the most appealing and valuable products and services, and tailors its marketing communications to reach and engage each of its audiences.
5. **Marketing success.** Determine the extent to which your organization focuses on understanding and fulfilling the needs of its audiences, and monitors and continuously improves its marketing performance.

Use our Marketing Performance Scorecard on the next page to rate your organization's marketing efforts and performance. If your markets aren't composed of clients, funders, and supporters, rename the column headings. Evaluate your organization's performance on a scale of 0 → 10 (10 is excellent) for each item, and then total the values horizontally for activities and vertically for markets. Use it to assess your marketing performance and to identify weaknesses in your marketing system that need to be improved.

Our Marketing Performance Scorecard

Marketing activities	Clients	Funders	Supporters	Total
1. Evaluate marketing performance				
2. Effective marketing research				
3. Target best audiences &				
4. Understand audiences' needs				
5. Positioning: unique				
6. Compelling brand				
7. Appealing & valuable offerings				
8. Effectively reach & engage				
9. Audience-focused organization				
10. Continuously improving mkt.				
TOTAL				

STEP 2. MARKETING RESEARCH

Survey Your Audiences' Satisfaction and Perceptions and Seek New Marketing Opportunities



Many world-changing organizations do little if any market research

Market research enables you to base your marketing decisions on data about your markets and target audiences instead of relying on hunches and assumptions. Few values-driven organizations do as much market research as comparable size for-profit enterprises. Failing to conduct market research might be one of the reasons some world-changing organizations struggle financially.

Myths about market research

One reason organizations do little or no market research is a tight or non-existent marketing budget. Another might be they believe these outdated notions about strategic marketing:

- It is only carried out by prominent corporations with enormous marketing budgets and in-house marketing professionals.
- It couldn't help small organizations use the information that's already in their databases and files to boost their funding, gain more and better clients, and recruit more supporters.
- It isn't necessary because the organization knows what's best for its target audiences.
- It is primarily done through professionally facilitated focus groups or large, painstakingly designed and validated surveys.
- It is a waste of time and money because nobody pays any attention to marketing studies.

Range of market research options

The type of market research you do depends on your organization's size, marketing budget, and gravity of its marketing challenges. We encourage you to do at least some basic market research. Though it won't take much time, it might yield valuable insights into your audiences, offerings, brand, and competitive position. Below are examples of market research that different size world-changing organizations could do that would probably improve their marketing efforts.

Marketing research of step 2

This step focuses on two types of marketing research, but as the sections that follow their descriptions show, there are many valuable yet relatively easy types of marketing research that can be done:

- A. Surveying audiences' satisfaction with what you offer, their perceptions of your organization (your *brand*), and your perceived standing among your competitors or other organizations in your field.
- B. Investigating marketing opportunities by researching current and prospective audiences.

Substep 2.1 Marketing Research

#1. Survey Your Audiences' Satisfaction with What You Offer, and Perceptions of Your Organization and Competitors

One of the best investments you can make is to commission a survey by your consultant or an outside firm of your target audiences' satisfaction with and perceptions of your organization. A well-designed external survey would reveal:

1. Their level of satisfaction with what you offer.
2. Their perceptions of your organization (your *brand*).
3. Your organizations' and offerings' *key attributes* that determine their satisfaction and perceptions.
4. How they think you stack up against your competitors or other organizations in your field.

Though all four results are crucial pieces of information for organizations to know, ***the third is by far the most important***. Unfortunately, few surveys probe what determines audiences' satisfaction and perceptions, and thus fail to reveal the organization's key attributes. Knowing your key attributes would enable you to focus your energy and resources on what would have the biggest bang for the buck. Is there anything more valuable to know than how you can make your organization more appealing and relevant to those who determine its success—your target audiences?

Survey results are leading indicators of performance

Another advantage of an external survey is its results reflect *leading* instead of *lagging performance indicators*. Most measures of performance are *lag indicators* based on past performance. Last year's revenues are an example of a lag indicator. Lag indicators predict the future in the same way that a driver would guess what lies ahead by looking in the rearview mirror.

The results of an external survey are *leading indicators* because one can accurately predict audiences' future behavior based on their current satisfaction with and perceptions of an organization. Survey results are a preview of coming attractions. We should mention that what we call an ***external survey*** for mission-driven organizations is known as a ***customer survey*** in the private sector.

Different types of surveys

The best external surveys include both *questionnaires* (online or hardcopy) and *interviews*. The advantage of online and mailed questionnaires is they can be sent to a large and randomly selected sample of one's audiences. Thus their results can reliably reflect the sentiments of one's target audiences. Their disadvantage is that one can't ask follow-up questions or probe topics revealed by respondents' answers and emotions. Personal interviews are the opposite; they provide in-depth knowledge about a small number of audience members. But due to their small sample size, they don't necessarily reflect the sentiments of the whole audience.

Comprehensive surveys, which employ both interviews and questionnaires, produce both broad and in-depth results. Interviews usually precede the design and distribution of questionnaires. Interviews are typically conducted first because questionnaires can then probe their key findings.

Advantages of hiring an outside firm to conduct the survey

There are several advantages to hiring your consultant or an outside firm to design and conduct an external survey. One is their experience in designing surveys for world-changing organizations. Another is the assurance of respondent confidentiality, which encourages candid responses. Others are their expertise in survey data analysis and producing professional survey reports.

We use a mix of ratings (using the 5-point, strongly agree → strongly disagree Likert psychometric scale), open-ended narrative, and ranking questions in our audience and internal surveys. We design and administer surveys, analyze their results, and produce professional survey reports. Alternatively, we can develop custom surveys for your organization and recommend web-based survey firms to administer them and send you the results.

Substep 2.2 Marketing Research

#2. Investigate New Marketing Opportunities by Researching Your Current and Prospective Audiences

If you decide to survey your audiences yourself, you could assign an internal team to do so. If you decide not to survey your audiences, at a minimum you should ask key staff members what they think your audiences think of your organization and what it offers.

Of the many ways to examine marketing opportunities, studying the needs and perceptions of both your current and prospective target audiences are probably the best. Recall that your *prospective* audiences are the groups of potential clients, funders, and supporters you could serve or seek support from but currently don't. As you investigate your current and prospective audiences' needs, pay close attention to their needs that you're in a unique or best position to fulfill compared to your competitors or other organizations in your field.

If you commissioned an external survey or conducted one yourself, it should have identified your audiences' needs, their perceptions of you, and your competitive position relative to the other organizations vying for your audiences' attention and business. If you aren't sure of your prospective audiences' needs, look at their websites and printed materials, search for articles about them, and ask your colleagues who are familiar with them.

Along with identifying your audiences' needs, examine their core values. The more an audience's core values overlap with yours, the greater the likelihood that they represent a marketing opportunity: either to expand your marketing to an existing audience or market to a new audience. Shared core values are a particularly good indicator of marketing opportunities among prospective funders and supporters.

Another way to discover marketing opportunities among your current audiences is to analyze the marketing information that's already in your databases and files. A third way is to conduct small-scale marketing research projects to address your pressing marketing issues. The following marketing research section describes various ways that small and medium-to-large values-based organizations can uncover new marketing opportunities.

Marketing Research for Different-Size World-Changing Organizations

Market research for small values-driven organizations

The take-home message about strategic marketing for small organizations is that basing decisions on even a small amount of objective data is *vastly superior* to relying on hunches and assumptions. Here are some examples of elementary strategic marketing research:

- Use the geographic information you already possess (e.g., zip codes, county, state, or whether they live in urban or rural areas) to analyze, say, the geographical distribution of your clients and supporters based on their attendance, usage, size of donations, membership, etc.
- Use your databases, spreadsheets, and files to analyze trends in funding, usage of products or services, or responses to mailings and marketing campaigns.
- Conduct a ***competitive positioning analysis***, which is described on pages 20-22, of your brand to determine and improve your competitive position in your target audiences' minds. Use the results to construct a competitive positioning map and design your core marketing strategy to improve your standing among your target audiences.
- Set up a simple market intelligence system by assigning a staff member or small team to research what and how your competitors are doing. Have them study who your competitors market to, how they market, what's on their websites, their annual revenues, and what's the word on the street about what they're up to and how they're doing.
- Test the effectiveness of two or three different marketing messages or types of mailers by analyzing their "hit" or response rate. You could test if it's worth the time and expense to design and produce color versus black-and-white mailers, or if you get a better response if you feature one major success story or present a summary of all your current projects.

Market research for medium-to-large organizations

Market research for larger organizations doesn't need to be expensive or complicated to be highly beneficial. They could use the same marketing approaches we described above for small organizations. They could also:

- Conduct a study on why target audiences behave the way they do. They could use behavioral-drive models such as MOA (Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability) or BCOS model (Benefits, Costs, Others, and Self-assurance), or a decision-stage model such as the Pre-contemplation → Contemplation → Preparation & Action → Maintenance Model.
- Segment their markets on more sophisticated objective variables than demographics or income such as:

Social class (upper-uppers, lower uppers, upper middles, lower middles, upper lowers, and lower lowers) with distinct consumption preferences.

Family life cycle such as the **AIO approach** (Activities, Interests, and Opinions) that yields the type of categories germane to world-changing organizations such as Social Actives and Culture Patrons. A six-stage family lifestyle study of symphony attendance found that young singles and older/no children stages were more likely to attend symphony concerts than the traditional demographic and income categories.

Geoclusters developed by firms like PRIZM, ACORN, and ClusterPlus 2000, which have combined location and lifestyle information (census information, car registrations, magazine subscriptions, and purchases) to reveal more than you probably ever wanted to know about groups of residents. These firms classify communities into target-marketing relevant groups such as Toys & Tots, Estate Summits, The Great Outdoors, Raisin' Grandkids, and Shooting Stars.

Psychological measures using personality types, values, and specific behaviors such as the KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices) approach often used in healthcare studies.

Secondary sources of marketing information. They include the Source OECD (international online publications from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) and Factiva (for newsprint, trade-magazine, and business-profile articles). Other sources are the Lexis-Nexis Database (for a broad range of news and information), MarketResearch.com (for market research reports), Foundation Directory (fonline.fdncenter.org—a directory of foundations and grants), and Catalog of Nonprofit Literature.

STEP 3. MARKETING TARGETS

Select Audiences and Individuals Who Can Best Advance, Fund, and Strengthen Support for Your Mission and Work

Use these guidelines to divide your current and prospective clients, funders, and supporters into distinct audiences. Select those who can help advance, fund, and support what you do.

Substep 3.1 Marketing Targets

#1. Segmentation—Divide Your Markets into Distinct Groups and Key Individuals

Segmentation is dividing a market into different audiences or groups based on differing needs, core values, preferences, financial resources, demographics, and lifestyles. If key individuals and organizations are important to you, you might single them out for special consideration instead of lumping them into audiences. The success of many nonprofit organizations, for example, depend on three markets: those they serve through their missions (clients), funders, and supporters.

Segmenting a market often reveals how seemingly homogeneous groups of clients, funders, or supporters are made up of distinct audiences with differing needs and values. Segmentation should help you tailor your offerings and marketing to those audiences that you can serve in a superior way or that are more likely to fund and support what you do.

To segment your markets, identify your current and prospective members in each market. Next, determine different criteria to divide each of your markets into distinct audiences and test their effectiveness at differentiating the audiences you should market to. Use the best criterion for each of your markets to divide them into distinct, non-overlapping audiences.

Examples of criteria for segmenting markets

- **Needs or benefits** segmentation based on people's and organization's needs or benefits.
- **Core values** segmentation based on who shares your principles and beliefs.
- **Demographic** segmentation based on age, sex, income, education, etc.
- **Occasion** segmentation based on when people use an organization's goods and services or support its work on different occasions. For example, one could divide prospective donors into those that give between Thanksgiving and the winter holidays, those who donate throughout the year, and those who don't donate.

- **Usage-level** segmentation. Dividing prospective clients, for example, into heavy, medium, light users, or nonusers of an organization’s services, products, or other offerings.
- **Lifestyle** segmentation such as “tots & toys” and “shotgun and pickup truck macho males” (these are actual lifestyle categories used by some marketing research firms).

Other segmenting criteria are on the previous two pages.

Substep 3.2 Marketing Targets

#2. Targeting—Select the Best Target Audiences and Individuals

Targeting refers to whom you serve and market to within your markets. It ranges from mass to individualized marketing: marketing to everyone in a market to specific individuals in it. Most organizations choose one of the two targeting strategies that lie between mass and individualized marketing: targeting one or several audiences within the market. We’ve divided targeting into four options:



Mass marketing

It is marketing to everyone within a market in the same way. Mass marketing is still a common and viable strategy for large consumer-products corporations. But most organizations, and smaller ones in particular, find that mass marketing is the most expensive and least effective way to market. In trying to appeal to everyone, many end up appealing to no one.

We worry that mass marketing is the default option for some world-changing organizations that don’t understand strategic marketing. Although mass marketing was typical in the 1950s and 1960s, only big and market-savvy corporations possess the expertise and marketing budgets to reach and engage mass audiences. To us, mass marketing conjures up images of behemoth cars with arching fins and drive-ins with wait staff careening around on roller skates.

Targeting several audiences

Most corporations today market to either one or several target audiences. The narrower your audiences, the easier it is to tailor your offerings and marketing to their needs and core values. Larger organizations are more likely to possess the marketing knowledge and budgets to tailor their offerings and marketing to multiple target audiences than smaller ones.

Targeting one audience

Smaller organizations usually have better success targeting one audience. Targeting small audiences with specialized needs that few, if anyone else, markets to is called **niche marketing**. Small values-driven organizations might be well-served by targeting one audience or niche within a market instead of attempting to appeal to a variety of audiences.

Marketing to individuals

This targeting strategy tailors marketing to individuals and organizations within a market. The arrival of sophisticated search engines and data-mining applications has made individualized marketing a reality. Ones that succeed at it usually possess in-house expertise in data mining and advanced search engines—or hire firms with this expertise.

Most world-changing organizations should probably focus on one or several target audiences within each of their markets. The following sections of this workbook assume that you are. If your organization has substantial expertise in information management or Internet marketing, then individualized marketing may be your best option.

“Targeting” everyone, targets no one

Because many values-driven organizations do vital work, they mistakenly assume that they should market to everyone—or at least to a wide range of audiences. This line of thinking leads them to design what are essentially mass-marketing strategies without realizing the massive investment required to succeed at such a “low-hit-rate” marketing strategy. Unless you have an enormous marketing budget and lots of experience in mass marketing (think Procter and Gamble, Microsoft, and Nike), focus your marketing efforts on one or several audiences within each of your markets.

STEP 4. MARKETING STRATEGIES

Design Your Marketing Strategies

As we mentioned earlier, the two critical marketing decisions you just made establish the **strategic framework** for the four marketing strategies you'll design in this step. It will help you understand and fulfill your audiences' needs, strengthen your brand, increase the appeal and value of your products and services, and improve your ability to reach and engage your audiences.

Substep 4.1 Marketing Strategy

#1. Position Your Brand and Offerings to Stand Out from the Herd

To effectively position your brand and offerings, you first need to determine their current places in your audiences' minds compared to those of your competitors. Knowing this enables you to reposition your brand and offerings as distinct from and more appealing than your competitors.



How you decide to differentiate your brand and what you offer from your competitors is called **positioning** in strategic marketing. You implement your positioning strategy through the three marketing strategies that follow this one.

Positioning takes place at several levels. You **position your brand** to be distinct from and more appealing than those of your competitors in the minds of *all* your audiences. You **position what you offer each audience** as different from and more attractive than what your competitors offer in the minds of each audience. And you **position your brand and offerings within your markets** to target under-served audiences and reduce competition.

Because most marketing writers don't distinguish between these different types of position, you may, like us, find most descriptions of positioning confusing. Wikipedia, for example, defines positioning both ways within several paragraphs. We define a positioning strategy as:



Positioning strategy. Establishing the organization's brand and offerings as different from and more appealing than the other organizations competing for the attention and "business" of its target audiences. The organization positions its brand for all its target audiences and its offerings for each target audience.

Positioning within audiences' minds. Ries and Trout coined the term **positioning** in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It refers to differentiating a company's 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) **in audiences'**

minds as different from and superior to competitors' 4Ps. Their classic marketing book is entitled *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind* published in hardcover in 1981 and paperback in 2001.

They saw positioning as a **communications strategy** to reach and engage audiences who are bombarded with marketing messages. Marketing-saturated audiences protect themselves from communication overload by screening out messages that don't conform to their views of the world or address their specific needs. If a marketing messages slip through these two filters, audience members usually simplify it to a single word, idea, or feeling.

Determine the position of your brand and offerings in your audiences' minds

Though world-changing organizations do occasionally compete for funding, donors, investors, and key supporters, their competition is more collegial than between most corporations. Most complement what their peer organizations do. Andreasen and Kotler³ note that you don't just compete against other organizations but also against the **status quo**; for example, audience members who continue behavior and activities that harm their well-being or the environment. One of the biggest challenges for many mission-driven organizations is just getting people off their couches.

Competition between profit-driven companies is usually much more intense. Coke and Pepsi, for example, have engaged hammer-and-tongs positioning and counter-positioning battles for years as they try to knock each other out of the beverage-market ring.

One of the gravest challenges for world-changing organizations today is that their audiences see them as anonymous herds that stand for and do more-or-less the same thing. If this describes your organization, it means you have a positioning problem, a branding problem, or both.

If your organization is unique or sufficiently different from its competitors, you should probably strengthen your current brand. But, if your organization stands for and does similar things compared to others in your field, you should probably design a positioning strategy to reposition your brand and offerings in the minds of your audiences, and then rebrand yourself.

As we mentioned earlier, **your brand represents your broad positioning strategy**. You design it to appeal to all of your audiences—or sometimes to the most crucial ones. **What you offer each of your audiences might have its own specific positioning strategy**. Two of the most powerful methods to determine and display your competitive positions are competitive positioning analysis and mapping.

Competitive positioning analysis

It assesses your position in your audiences' minds compared to your competitors. It usually evaluates the relative appeal of your brand and value of your offerings to your audiences compared to those of your competitors. To conduct this analysis, you need to know several things: who your competitors are, the key attributes of your brand and offerings that determine their appeal to your audiences, and how the key attributes compare to those of your competitors' brands and offerings.

1. **Identify your competitors.** You probably already know the other organizations vying for your clients' attention and business, but you may not know who you're competing against for funding and other support. You can probably find out fairly quickly who you're competing against in each of your markets.
2. **Determine the key attributes of your brand and offerings that determine their appeal and value to your audiences.** The best way to find out this information is to interview some audience members from each of your markets.
3. **Compare the strength of these attributes in your brand and offerings with those of your competitors.** Incorporating the *semantic differential method* into your external survey is probably the best way to collect this information. It asks people to rate the attributes of a set of organizations using polar- or extreme-opposite scales. A scale of customer service, for example, might range from "extremely helpful" to "hostile."

A benefit of conducting a comprehensive external survey is that it would enable you to *identify* the key attributes of your brand and offerings from audience interviews, and then *assess* their strength in your and your competitors' brands and offerings in a subsequent questionnaire. The results would enable you to construct competitive positioning maps—scatter diagrams of pairwise comparisons of these key attributes for your organization and your competitors.

Another way to map competitive positions is to plot the average scores for an organization's and its competitors' *benefits* compared to their *costs*, which is called a *cost-benefit competitive positioning map*. The figure below illustrates how respondents might rate some key attributes for three hypothetical organizations using polar-opposite scales. You can plot pairwise comparisons of these results as competitive positioning maps.

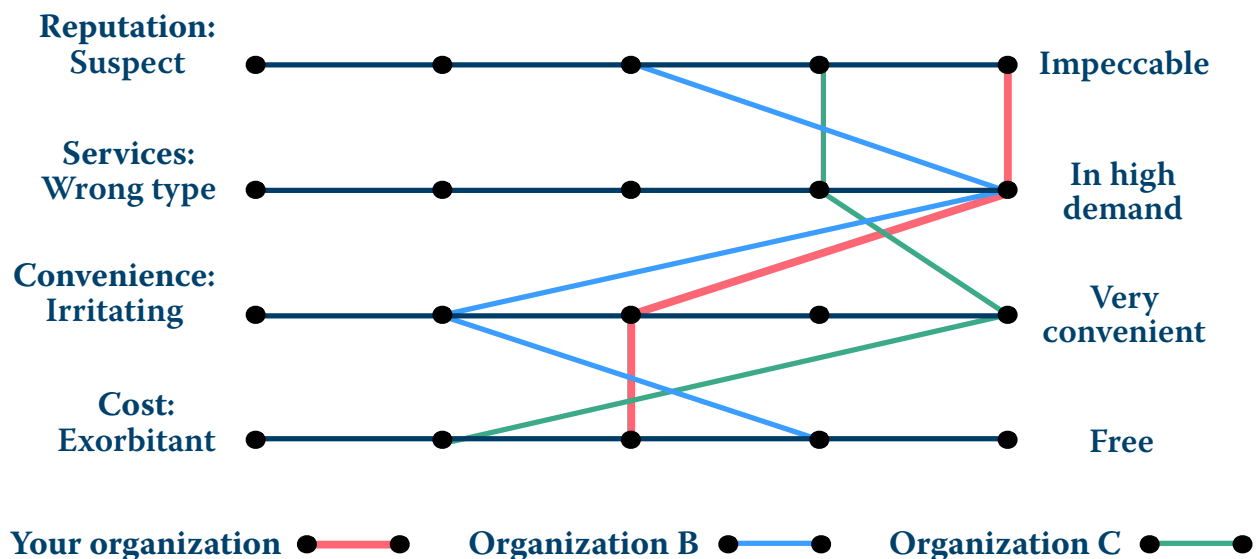


Fig. 3. Semantic differential diagram

Competitive positioning maps

Competitive positioning maps are the best way to show the results of a competitive positioning analysis. Steve Jobs of Apple was the master of competitive positioning maps. Google “competitive positioning maps” to see what we mean. Most positioning maps plot the competitive positions of organizations, or the relative appeal of their brands and offerings, based on the relative strength of two attributes.

The following competitive positioning map plots the relative benefits and costs of what an organization (blue disk) and its competitors (black circles) might offer an audience. The x - and y -axes represent composite variables: combinations of all benefits and all the costs associated with what these organizations provide.

Another and perhaps better way to choose the x and y variables is to determine the two attributes that account for the most variability (biggest spread) of the appeal of your and your competitors’ brands. The blue arrow or vector in the figure below represents the positioning strategy of a hypothetical organization to improve its competitive position.

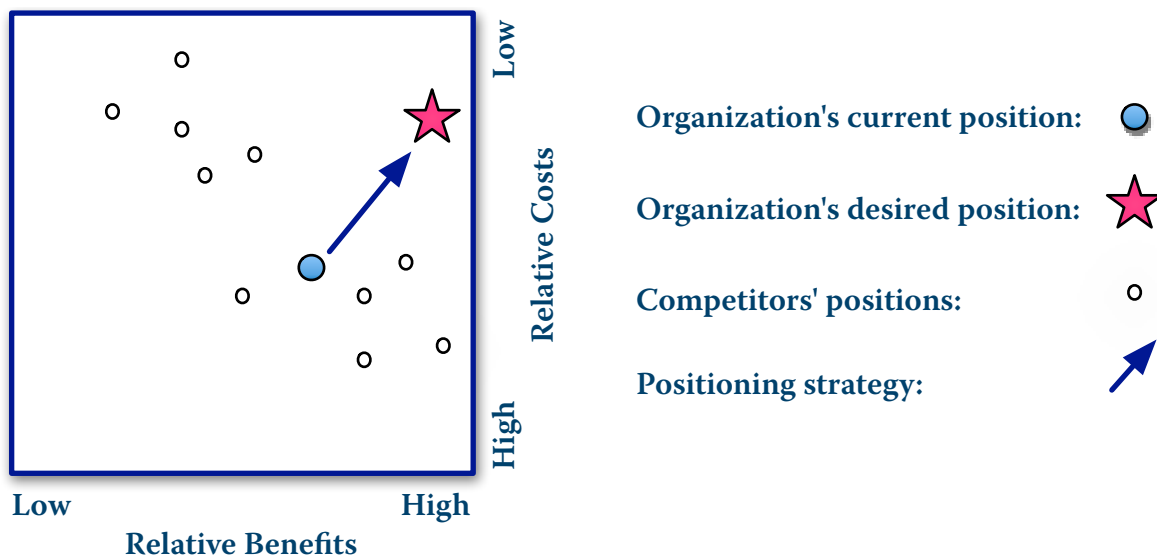


Fig. 4. Competitive positioning map

What idea or attribute of your organization do you want to “own” in your audiences’ minds?

Reis and Trout regard *market share* as the real estate that an organization owns in its audiences’ minds. One way to view your brand positioning strategy is the *idea* (or unique attribute about your organization) you want to “own” in your target audiences’ minds and the *strategy* you pursue to stake your claim to it. Most brands contain a core idea or attribute, and secondary attributes associated with it that enhance an organization’s appeal and value.

The most powerful idea to own in your audiences' minds is that your organization is the only or best one to fulfill one of their most pressing needs. This one-to-one connection is called the **concept of singularity**⁴ in strategic marketing. Volvo achieved this when they made their brand synonymous with safety in the auto industry. The Alzheimer's Association is attempting to do the same thing through its marketing campaign to distinguish itself from similar organizations like itself by staking a claim to the idea of *brain health* among baby boomers and older adults.

In the 1960s, Volkswagen decided to “own” the idea of owning a small, oddly shaped car in the minds of young, sophisticated US car buyers when it introduced the VW Beetle in US markets. VW's brand later faltered but recovered in the 1990s when it rebranded itself with its “Drivers Wanted” marketing campaign. It took several years before car buyers re-calibrated their mental image of VW from the maker of the humble VW Beetle to a German automaker specializing in higher-performance, nimble-handling vehicles.



Is there an idea that you want to own in your audiences' minds? If so, Ries and Trout recommend implanting that idea in their minds by:

1. First identifying the most appealing idea or attribute associated with your organization or what it offers.
2. Building a compelling brand and set of marketing messages around it.

Then establish a one-to-one connection between this idea or attribute, and who your organization is and what it does, by continually reinforcing this link in your marketing communications with your audiences.

What position do you want to stake out in your audiences' minds?

If your external survey incorporated competitive positioning analysis and you plotted its results as competitive positioning maps, it should be relatively easy to see how to strengthen the positions of your brand and offerings in your audiences' minds. Even if you didn't, you still should be able to figure out how to strengthen your competitive position among your competitors.

The last step in deciding how to make your organization stand out from the herd is to determine the desired position of your brand and offerings relative to those of your competitors. You will **implement your positioning strategies** to shift your brand and offerings from their current to desired positions through the four marketing strategies you'll design in Step 4.

Substep 4.2 Marketing Strategy

#2. Develop a More Compelling Brand

Cowboys brand cattle to make it stand out from other cattle on the open range. Organizations brand themselves to distinguish themselves from their competitors. They also do it to stake their claim to the idea they want to “own” in their target audiences’ minds. This section outlines how to develop a compelling brand for your organization. Our *Branding Guide* describes a new model to develop a more compelling⁵ brand.

Brand basics

Over the past couple of decades, branding has emerged as the most powerful idea and tool of strategic marketing. In some ways, it still is an elusive subject. For example, marketing experts don’t yet agree on exactly what a brand is. The following are our broad recommendations to develop a compelling world-changing brand:



Brand your organization. Concentrate on developing a compelling brand for your organization instead of your products or services. Large consumer-products companies like SC Johnson & Sons are the only ones that have the resources and expertise to brand product lines such as Windex, Ziploc, and Saran Wrap. Most companies and almost all purpose-driven organizations brand their organizations and then link their products, services, or whatever they offer to their brands. Developing one powerful brand for your organization will yield many benefits.



ranchers using almost the same brand on their herds. Brand your organization to make it stand out from the herd.

A brand is not a blunt instrument designed to bludgeon the masses. It is an arrow aimed at the center of your brand’s target. The outer ring of the target is the organization’s target audiences. The middle ring is what your brand symbolizes to your audiences. It is usually an icon that connects their values and needs to what your organization represents and does. The bull’s eye is what they find most appealing and distinctive about your organization.



Design your brand for your target audiences, not the general public. *Target audiences* are a critical concept in strategic marketing. They are the key external groups that determine an organization's success. They are the *customers* of world-changing companies; *constituents and oversight committees* or *administrators* of public institutions; and *clients, funders, and supporters* of mission-driven nonprofits.



Windex, Ziploc, and Saran are among the few brands designed for the general public. Well-known brands like Ferrari, Prius, or Dodge Caravan certainly aren't. Every automaker, computer manufacturer, and all but the largest consumer-products companies design their products and marketing for specific target audiences—and so should you.

Build your brand around what your target audiences find most compelling about your organization. Build your brand around what they find most appealing or

interesting about you; *not what you think* it is. Use their current perceptions about your organization instead of trying to change them or introduce new ones.

Two ways to define a brand. We think it's helpful to look at brands from two perspectives. An organization's *real brand* is the one that its target audiences carry around in their heads. It is shaped by many things: an organization's history, reputation, recent events, public opinion, urban legends, rumors, and *the image it projects of itself*.

An organization's *desired brand* is the one its leaders and marketers (and probably a lot of people in an organization) carry around in their heads. It is the compelling image it projects of itself to its audiences. An organization's real and desired brands are rarely the same. Almost all marketing writers define a brand from one of these two perspectives, but not both. We cite the definitions of what a brand is from eight marketing authorities in the appendix of our *Branding Guide*.

Less is more. You build a powerful brand around one central theme—whatever *target audiences find most appealing* about the organization. It can possess secondary themes associated with the central one. Weak brands are laundry lists of *what organizations consider noteworthy*.

The leaner and clearer your brand, the more likely it will hit its target and engage your *target audiences*. Distilling your brand to its essential element—based on your audiences' perceptions, not yours—is the biggest challenge in branding. It requires much sacrifice, especially among those factions within an organization whose best ideas are left on the cutting room floor. The leanest runners win marathons: the bulked-up ones stay in the gym. Keep it lean.

What your brand should do

Your brand should *distinguish* your organization from its competitors and *highlight* what your audiences find most compelling about it. To paraphrase Ries and Ries,⁸ branding is about *staking a claim to the idea or attribute that you want to “own” in your target audiences’ minds*. To do this, your brand should:

- Capture the essence of who your organization is and what it does.
- Distinguish your organization from others competing for your audiences’ attention and business.
- Symbolize what your target audiences consider most compelling about your organization.
- Position your organization in their minds the only or best one to fulfill their needs and solve their problems.
- Generate positive emotions in your target audiences.



The best brands are simple but run deep. By *deep* we mean that they resonate with audiences at various levels and contain multiple associations. These connections can be emotional, cognitive, cultural, tribal, core values, and lifestyle. To appreciate this, consider the following brands: Habitat for Humanity, BP Oil Company, Greenpeace, Nike’s former sponsorship Tiger Woods, and Trek Bicycles’ past endorsements from Lance Armstrong. Each brand embodies layers of emotions, thoughts, associations, and judgments. They also are imbued with tribal and lifestyle affiliations. For example, do you love or hate golf?

Brands serve other functions including the ability to slip past the mental filters that audiences erect to screen out unwanted marketing messages. Almost all of us are bombarded with thousands of marketing messages every day. Our minds prevent the vast majority of them from entering our consciousness. Corporations engineer the messages that pass through our mental filters and enter our consciousness for people just like us. For more information on branding and to see the first model to branding world-changing organizations see our *Branding Guide: How to Stand Out from the Herd of Organizations in Your Field*.

Substep 4.3 Marketing Strategy

#3. Design the Most Appealing and Valuable Products, Services, or Whatever You Offer

The key to this third marketing strategy is seeing the world and your organization from your audiences' perspective. If you don't, you'll likely overestimate the benefits of what you offer and underestimate their costs compared to what other organizations offer. While you might think you're promoting the features and benefits of what your organization offers, your target audiences might not yet understand who your organization is and what it does. Placing one's cart before one's horse is a classic marketing mistake.

The more you understand who your audiences are and how they see the world, the better you'll be able to design and offer them what they need—appealing and valuable products, services, programs, or whatever else you offer them. Surveying your audiences' satisfaction and perceptions is one of the best ways to do this. Though the idea of the *value proposition* is a key marketing concept and germane to this marketing strategy, we've decided not to use it for fear of making our marketing guide and workbook seem too commercial.

Audiences look for value

Value is the extent to which the benefits that an organization offers its audiences outweigh the costs to acquire them. **Benefits** are a product of a couple of things. One is *satisfying audience member's external needs*—curing an audience's disease or helping foundations meet their funding goals. Another and an often overlooked benefit is *fulfilling their inner needs*—instilling self-confidence, listening, or providing opportunities for personal fulfillment. **Costs** are the negative consequences associated with an offer including monetary costs, inconvenience, delays, and frustration. The motto of seasoned salespeople is:

People buy benefits, not features.



Audiences are interested in features but base their buying decisions primarily on perceived benefits versus perceived costs. Features are best presented within the context of the advantages they provide. Andreasen and Kotler⁹ and others have pointed out that audience members also base their decisions on what their peers are doing and thinking as well as how self-assured they are that they can make needed changes.

Don't overlook how your organization fulfills your audiences' deeper needs

World-changing organizations are in the enviable position of both addressing the most critical challenges facing communities and the world—and fulfilling people's deepest needs. By interweaving the external and inner benefits they

offer, mission-driven organizations can design compelling brands and offerings. This type of marketing is not hype or promotion but an accurate description of what the organization is trying to accomplish.

Wisconsin Shares, a nonprofit that hired us as a consultant, is an example of an organization that understood and fulfilled its audience's external and inner needs. Its mission is to provide needy families in Wisconsin with nutritional food at below-market costs and to build healthy communities through community service.

Groups of Wisconsin Share volunteers meet one Saturday a month in church parking lots across the state during the predawn hours to unload boxes of nutritious food from delivery trucks. The food is usually carried down to church basements to be repacked and distributed to participating families. Families pay for their next month's food and enroll in two hours of community service of their choice for the coming month when they picked up their food.

The obvious need that Wisconsin Shares understood and satisfied was that many families in Wisconsin either don't have access to nutritious food or couldn't afford it. The deeper and perhaps more critical need it understood and fulfilled was the need for struggling families to be valuable and contributing members of their communities. We will always remember the positive energy, community spirit, and hope that emanated from the families and volunteers in those church parking lots and basements on bitterly cold Saturday mornings.

"Inseparability" in marketing services or causes

In marketing, *inseparability* refers to the connection that audiences make between the person representing the organization and what it offers. The less tangible the offering, the more inseparable that person and offering become. Inseparability refers to the indelible connection between the individual who promotes the offering and the offering itself.

If you are of a certain age, you might recall the 1980 PBS series, *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, featuring Carl Sagan who describes galaxies filled with "billions and billions" of stars. People who watched the series invariably associate space exploration and research with him. Jane Goodall is similarly inseparable in the public's mind with her Gombe Preserve chimps and tropical conservation.

The less tangible the offering, the more the people who represent the organization *become* or *are* the offering. Their demeanor and embodiment of the organization's values and culture affect the value of the intangible offerings.



Consider writing a brief description or just a few phrases describing how your target audiences regard what you and other organizations offer them

The intent of this activity is for the review team to stand in the shoes of their target audiences and see the world—and what you and others offer them—from their perspective. If you were they, for example, what would appeal to you and what would you value? What offering or request for support would arouse your curiosity and interest? What would make an offer stand out from the herd of other offers?

We recommend including these descriptions in the appendix of your marketing review report or strategic marketing plan. This information would be useful in designing marketing strategies and materials for specific audiences. These last two tasks of this section are self-explanatory and depend on your target audiences and what you offer them.

Assess the appeal and value of what you currently offer your audiences, and determine whether you need to improve or change what you offer

If you commissioned or conducted an external survey, you should know your audiences' level of satisfaction with what you provide them. The survey results should also reveal your audiences' satisfaction with your competitors' offerings. Use this information to determine whether you need to improve or change some of your offerings to make them the most appealing and valuable to your audiences, and if so, how.

Substep 4.4 Marketing Strategy

#4. Formulate Effective Marketing Communications to Reach and Engage Your Audiences

As we noted in the last section, the fourth P in traditional marketing's 4Ps is *promotion*. Many marketing professionals now call it *marketing communications*. Marketing communications is a crucial topic in strategic marketing, and marketing writers have written countless books about it. The section covers the six keys to developing the most effective marketing communications:

- A. **Marketing communications strategies** to reach and engage your audiences.
- B. **Marketing messages** that capture your audiences' attention and project a compelling image of your organization.
- C. **Identity media** that convey who your organization is, what it does, and why your audiences should care.
- D. **Public relations** that establish and maintain positive relationships with your audiences and the public.
- E. **Our iEngage System** to engage audiences and create a favorable impression.
- F. **Freely sharing of knowledge** on your website and in at least some of your publications, thereby providing unique access to valuable information and establishing your organization as an authority in its field.

The first three keys lay the foundation for an effective marketing communications program: your *marketing communications strategies, messages, and identity media*. The next three put your plan into action: *public relations*, our *iEngage system* for engaging your audiences, and *freely sharing much—but not necessarily all—of your knowledge*.

4.4.1 Formulate Your Marketing Communications Strategies

Marketing communications are the strategies and methods organizations use to reach and engage their target audiences. We suspect that most world-changing organizations would benefit from upgrading their marketing communications strategies. To design your communications strategies, determine:

1. Which audiences are similar enough to one another to employ the same communications strategies for them and which need their own.
2. Whether to market to some or all members of each of your audiences.
3. The stage of the decision-making process that your audiences are in.
4. The best materials and channels to reach and engage each audience.

Research the best ways to market to your audiences

Consider conducting some marketing research to determine the best ways to reach and engage your audiences. Your research might investigate:

- What are the best ways to reach your audiences? What are the best media and channels to use?
- What knowledge does your organization possess that they would be interested in?
- What stage of the decision-making process are they in?
- What type of marketing materials are they accustomed to receiving? How could you meet or exceed their expectations with your marketing materials—and make them stand out from the herd? For example, do your audiences expect to receive high-end, four-color brochures with compelling graphics, or would they be turned off by them?
- What's the best way to spark your audiences' interests and capture their attention? Use what you've learned about their perceptions of your organization and its competitors from your external survey to design marketing communications that distinguish your organization from its competitors—and make it more appealing. If, for example, you know that potential funders are skeptical of organizations like yours because they overpromise and under deliver, stress your track record of successfully completing projects—that you deliver what you promise.

Determine which audiences require their own communications strategies

An important thing to consider when designing your communications strategies is determining which target audiences need their own communications strategy and materials, and which you can lump together. For example, assume you have five target audiences: three client audiences, one major funder audience, and one key supporter audience. You would likely design three different communications strategies: one each for clients, donors, and supporters.

If your client audiences are similar, one communications strategy might be adequate for all three. Alternatively, if your organization is small and has enough supporters, you might only need two communications strategies: one for your three client audiences and a second for prospective funders.



Pick who to market to within your audiences

Your *marketing targets* are the audiences, individuals, and organizations to whom you market. Persons or organizations should be marketing targets when they're crucial to your success. Likewise, within a target audience, concentrate on high-value audience members.

There are many ways to determine the members of your target audiences. You might buy a contact list of all audience members from an Internet vendor or government agency, search for members on the Internet, or obtain membership or client lists of organizations like yours.



Here's an example of how you could determine the best prospects within one of your target audiences. Assume that your mission or business deals with fishing in your state. It might be your state's anglers' association, a lakes and rivers conservation organization in your state, or a group of state fishing guides who want to promote their services and the protection of the state's fishing habitats.

Further assume that one of your target audiences is made up of all the anglers in your state, and you purchased the mailing list of the 500,000 people in your state who bought state fishing licenses last year. Your marketing research shows that the best way to recruit hunters and anglers for organizations like yours is to send them an attractive brochure. But you can only afford to print and mail 20,000 brochures.

Given these assumptions, one of *the least efficient* marketing communications strategies would be to send all 20,000 brochures to a random sample of the 500,000 anglers in your state. "Hit rates" for such mailings vary by industry and other factors, but a one-to-two percent return rate is typical for direct mail marketing. So you would expect to pick up 200-400 new members or clients out of a potential pool of one-half million prospects with this *random-sample approach*.

But *a much better strategy* would be to segment or divide your state's anglers into different groups by county or proximity to the best fishing areas in your state. Or you might determine they're members of similar organizations like yours such as Trout Unlimited (assuming they would give or sell you their membership lists), and other criteria that might distinguish those anglers who would most likely join your group or become your clients vs. those who wouldn't.

Let's assume you've identified five such groups that seem to be your best prospects. Using what is called a *randomized block design*, you would send the same percentage of randomly selected individuals in each group a brochure. The total you might send each group in your first mailing might be 25% of your brochures—5,000 of them.

Now for the exciting part of this makeshift marketing experiment—seeing which of the five groups has the best response rates. What you should expect is one or two of the five groups to have a higher, and hopefully much higher, response rate. If one group has four times the reply rate as the other four, and another has double of the remaining three, you might decide to send, say, 12,000 of your remaining brochures to the top responding group and 3,000 to the second group. This approach should yield a higher response rate than a random-sample one for all state anglers.

Though the details of this example aren't important, understanding that there are relatively smart and efficient ways to identify the best prospects within your target audiences—and using them—can make the difference between a highly successful mission-driven organization to one that is always struggling to fund and carry out its mission.

Determine what stage of the decision-making process your audiences are in

Social scientists have determined that people and organizations move through stages when considering important decisions: what social scientists don't agree on is whether there are four, five, or six stages. We present a five-stage decision-making model below, which is a reasonable compromise between their competing models—and the best communications strategies to employ for each stage.

The stage of the decision-making process that an audience is in should affect your communications strategy for that audience. For example, if most audience members don't know that you exist (stage 1), then your initial communications should inform them of who you are and what you offer them rather than stressing your benefits.

At the opposite end of the decision-making process (stage 5) are those who have already used your goods or services, or supported you, and are deciding whether to do so again. You would employ a different communications strategy to convince them to continue supporting your organization.

Decision-making stages

Most people and organizations go through the following stages when making an important decision:

Unaware. If an audience barely perceives the need you can help them fulfill or is unaware of your organization, focus your marketing strategies on *creating awareness* of who you are and how you can assist them.

Early contemplators. If an audience feels the need that you're targeting and is weighing the advantages and costs of its options to satisfy it, focus on the *benefits* you offer.

Late contemplators. If an audience has decided to satisfy its need but is weighing the cost and is concerned about what its peers will do, then focus on *reducing costs associated with your offer and stop focusing on benefits*. Costs include price, inconvenience, etc.

Prepared to act. If audience members hesitant to act because the opportunity to act hasn't presented itself or, if it has, they still have lingering doubts, then present them with *opportunities* to act and *assurances* they won't regret it.

Repeat or long-term clients and supporters. Acknowledge your gratitude for their ongoing support, offer meaningful rewards to them, and share the benefits loyal clients and supporters have enjoyed through their long-term relationships with your organization.

Determine the most effective ways to reach and engage your audiences

The critical decision to any communications strategy is deciding the most efficient way to reach and engage one's audiences. This decision is a hot topic in marketing research. There are many ways to reach and engage audiences.

Here's our laundry list of some of the common ones: Send them direct mail pieces such as a brochure or letter, request to meet with members either individually or in groups, and contact news organizations to see whether they'd be interested in running a story on an interesting or unusual project you're doing. You also could post on blogs or social networking sites like Facebook to communicate with your audiences and enable them to communicate amongst themselves.

4.4.2 Develop Your Marketing Messages

You might send public service announcements and press releases (including marketing kits) to news outlets as well as offer classes, seminars, or webinars. You could pay Google and other search engines



You might send public service announcements and press releases (including marketing kits) to news outlets as well as offer classes, seminars, or webinars. You could pay Google and other search engines to appear at or near the top of searches in your field and area. Plus, you could sponsor a radio or television program on public or community access radio or television, or pay for advertising in journals, newspapers, on websites, or other venues that audience members read or visit.

The next element of your marketing communications is your marketing messages. Crafting compelling marketing messages is becoming an increasingly important part of strategic marketing. Most world-changing organizations should design two types of marketing messages: a core message and several longer follow-up messages.

Develop your core message

Your core marketing message is your prepared response to the question: “What does your organization do?” Some people refer to it as an *elevator speech* because it should take 30 seconds or less to deliver—the time it takes an elevator to move between several floors. It should:

- Capture your target audiences' attention.
- Briefly touch on the one or two things about you that they will find most appealing, intriguing, and what distinguishes you from your competitors—this is essentially your brand.
- Be passionate and sincere.
- Make a memorable impression and leave them wanting to know more about you.

4.4.3 Design Your Identity Media

Don't worry about trying to appeal to the general public—*they aren't your target audience*. Your survival and success depend on engaging your target audiences, not the public at large. Furthermore, your core message is not a summary of what your organization stands for and does—unless you're talented enough to summarize it in 30 seconds and make it sound fascinating to your audiences.

Develop a list of the most interesting and appealing things about your organization, and decide which to include in your core message. You can fold your remaining attributes into follow-up messages.

Marketing messages that stick—Heath brothers' SUCCEs principles

Chip Heath, a Stanford business professor who researches why some business communications succeed while others fail, and his brother Dan wrote a short and insightful book entitled, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. Their research reveals that *sticky ideas* share six traits:¹⁰

- **Simplicity.** Short, memorable messages that strike a deep chord stick in one's mind.
- **Unexpectedness.** Surprising or counterintuitive statements grab people's attention.
- **Concreteness.** Concrete language and images like “get an American to the moon in this decade” stick.
- **Credibility.** Asking the audience if experiencing what you described establishes more credibility than quoting outside experts.
- **Emotions.** Personal stories, not abstractions, are what most people remember.
- **Stories.** Stories stick with us because they help us define who we are, explain our place in the world, and prepare for future events.

The first decision you need to make about your organization's marketing materials is whether to design general-purpose or audience-specific marketing materials. A rule of thumb to follow in creating your marketing materials is:

The best way for you to capture an audience's attention and get your message across is to focus on what's important to your audiences while generating a positive emotional response.

To design appealing and effective marketing materials, follow these guidelines:

Build a great website

It's hard to imagine a world-changing organization that doesn't need a well-designed, attractive, and easy-to-navigate website. It is the front window potential clients, funders, and supporters peer through to see if there's something appealing or interesting inside the organization. They want to quickly understand three things about you: who you are, what you do, and what you can do for them.

People walking by storefront windows on Main Street a hundred years ago expected the same thing: to see if anything caught their eye. If something did, they'd walk in, look around, and maybe buy something.

As every shopkeeper knows, you put your most appealing and evocative objects in the front window; otherwise, you may not get any "traffic" through your store. While much has changed about marketing over the years, this hasn't. Put what audience members will find most appealing and evocative about your organization on its homepage. Make it attractive and uncluttered. Otherwise, in a blink of an eye, they're gone. A superb and witty book on web design is Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*.

Choose media that your audiences use frequently

Your choices of media have never been greater. They include you—meeting with people and speaking in public, digital media (Internet, video, and audio on CDs or DVDs, podcasts, hyperlinks, webcasts, webinars, radio, text messaging), and print media (brochures, letters, etc.). You also might use published media (newspapers, journals, etc.) and broadcast media (radio, television, etc.). The list keeps growing.

Create intriguing content—Self-explanatory

Use superior graphic design

Graphic design makes a huge impact on the look and feel of your marketing pieces: visual images and colors, typology, layout, interface design on websites, and paper stock. Use an attractive, uncluttered, and consistent graphic design for all your marketing materials. Your graphic design should distinguish you from your competitors.

4.4.4 Maintain Good Public Relations

The goal of public relations is to form, maintain, and enhance an organization's image and reputation. According to Philip Kotler, public relations is becoming as important as advertising to corporate strategic marketing.

Because mission-driven organizations' funding and support depends on their public image and reputation, maintaining good public relations has become critical to their survival and success.



Kotler recognizes seven critical public-relations assets under the acronym **PENCILS**.¹¹

- P—Publications.** These are your brochures, annual reports, newsletters, yearbooks, and corporate kits.
- E—Events.** Organizing the kind of events to get folks interested in your organization.
- N—News.** Getting positive attention in the various media channels (both old and new).
- C—Community relations.** Organizations are better regarded if they are accepted by the community.
- I—Identity media.** Business cards, stationery, boilerplates, taglines, and codes of conduct.
- L—Lobbying.** This relates to government relations, activism, and meetings with legislators.
- S—Social investment.** PR should be a conduit for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities for issues that the organization cares about.

4.4.5 Engage Your Audiences Using Our iEngage System

Background on our iEngage System

Social scientists have discovered that people who are making high-involvement or complex decisions go through a series of stages before they make their decision. These types of decisions affect people's self-image, reflect their core values, and influence their peers' perceptions of them. Thus people don't make these kinds of decisions lightly or quickly.

Instead, people appear to progress through a series of decision-making stages. Social scientists and marketing theorists call individuals in these various stages "pre-contemplators," "early contemplators," and so forth described on page 34. Marketers then recommend a battery of strategies and methods to engage people in each stage.

Our *iEngage System* takes a much simpler approach to engaging audiences. We organized it around five steps. It starts by *introducing* who your organization is, what it does, and what's most intriguing about it. It concludes by *inviting* that person or audience to avail themselves of what you offer or support what you represent and do.

Each step is designed to incrementally increase people's understanding of and comfort with what your organization stands for and does. We've given each a simple name beginning with the letter "i" so the steps are easy to remember.

Our iEngage System works for both individuals and audiences. Step 1, for example, applies to both describing your organization to someone you've just met, and introducing it to your audiences through your website and brochure.

4.4.5.1 INTRODUCE—Your audiences to who your organization is, what it does, and why they should care

Before introducing your organization to an audience, develop its core message and identity media. The core message should summarize in one minute or one paragraph: 1) who your organization is, 2) what it does, and 3) why someone should care. Everyone in your organization should understand the core message and be able to state it in their own words when asked: "What does your organization do?"

Your identity media is the printed and digital information that describes or projects the image of who your organization is and what it does. Your website and brochure should convey your core message and introduce your organization to its audiences. Your business card (always carry some) will probably be the first tangible representation of your organization for someone you've just met. Identity media include your website, brochures, publications, manuals, fact sheets, employees' business cards, stationery, your office, how your employees present themselves, and so forth.

When someone you've just met asks you what you do for a living, weave your organization's core message into your response. If they're interested in learning more about your organization, tell them a little more about who your organization is and what it does, which is Step 3. When you introduce your organization to audiences through your website and printed material, your inquiry (via your marketing research in Step 2) precedes your introduction (developing your identity media Step 1).

4.4.5.2 INQUIRE—About your audience's needs, core values, and interests

The goals of Step 2 are to discover what interests the listener most about your organization and shift the conversation to that topic. After briefly introducing your organization, you could ask the person if they've heard of it, and are familiar with its work. If they haven't, you could ask them if they're familiar with and thought about its mission.

What you're looking for is an "opening" in the conversation that might connect your listener's interests, values, or needs to your organization. If they don't follow-up on your initial inquiry, let the conversation flow to another topic. If it seems appropriate, you can circle back to the topic later in the conversation. Your listener's response to your inquiry is, in marketing terms, your way of "verifying" a potential lead. The more seamlessly it flows with the rhythm of the conversation, the better. By practicing the art of the "soft," skillful inquiry, you'll discover how easy it is to become a master of it.

4.4.5.3 INFORM—Your audiences about what your organization stands for and does

Once you've introduced your organization and inquired about your listener's interests that might be related to it, you may have an opening to share more information about your organization. If the opportunity doesn't arise when you first meet them, send them a note saying you enjoyed meeting them and enclose some information about your organization should they be interested in learning more about it.

Sending a handwritten note with a copy of your brochure as a follow-up to your conversation is far superior to a simple email. But an email is far superior to no follow-up.

What you tell someone about your organization depends on what you learned about them in Steps 1 and 2. The goal of Step 3 is to give someone a better idea of who your organization is, what it does, and particularly about what seemed to have interested them most about your organization.

The key to this step is knowing when you've provided enough, but not too much, information about your organization. But don't proceed through a laundry list of everything your organization does. Hit the highlights of what it stands for and does, say more about the aspects of your organization that most interest the listener, and then move on to Step 4. The advice in this step also applies to your website, brochure, and other identity media.

4.4.5.4 INSPIRE—Your audiences by telling them about what your organization has and intends to accomplish to make the world a better place

As you shift the focus of your conversation or content of your identity media from informing to inspiring, start to focus on what the listener or audiences would find most interesting and compelling about your organization. You could, for example, give a brief account of two or three of your recent success stories. Or you might mention what distinguishes it from other organizations in its field or how its clients are benefitting from what it offers them.

If the person you're addressing is a potential supporter, you might bring up the ways that your organization provides opportunities for someone like them to make a real difference in the world. You might point out a few of the ways that it is changing the world or improving your local community. If you're talking to someone who might benefit from what your organization offers, you could describe what's unique about what it offers and how people like the listener have benefitted from its offerings. This same advice applies to your organization's identity media.

4.4.5.5 INVITE—Your audiences to avail themselves of what your organization offers and support what it stands for and does

The last step in our iEngage System is to encourage the listener or audience to act on what they've just learned. Invite prospective clients to avail themselves of what you offer, prospective funders to help your organization accomplish its mission, and potential supporters to consider backing and assisting it in what it does.

4.4.6 Freely Share Your Knowledge with Your Audiences

If your organization is like most world-changing organizations, it possesses a wealth of information about its mission and work, which could be a valuable resource for your audiences. Making it freely available to them is one of the best ways to engage and build trust with them. It can also establish your organization as an authority in its field, and resource for other types of assistance audience members might need. For some institutions, sharing knowledge replaces providing goods and services as the vehicle by which they deliver value to their audiences.

STEP 5. MARKETING SUCCESS

Build an Audience-Focused Organization and Continuously Improve Your Marketing Performance

Once you've selected your marketing targets and designed your marketing strategies, it's time to roll them out to your organization, implement them, and then adjust them to real-world situations within your markets.

Substep 5.1 Marketing Success

#1. Build an Audience-Focused Organization

Strategic marketing can only make your organization more successful if it influences how it sees and interacts with the outside world. This shift in perspective often begins with the realization that your success depends on understanding and fulfilling the needs of your clients, funders, and supporters. The needs we're talking about are those both tied to your mission and that you are in a unique or best position to fulfill. This guideline could be entitled *build a needs-focused organization*.

This change requires a shift in perspective. If your organization is internally focused, it sees the world from an *inside-out*. It sees the world of how others should help it achieve its mission and goals. In contrast, an externally focused organization sees its role in the world from an *outside-in* perspective—it sees itself as its audiences see it.

Internally focused organizations ask, "How can external groups *help us* accomplish *our* mission and goals?" Audience-focused ones ask, "How can we better fulfill the needs of those we serve through our mission and rely on for funding and other support?" Establishing an audience-mindset requires a shift in your organization's focus from inside-out to outside-in.

Three marketing mindsets that characterize most organizations

We think the *marketing mindsets* of organizations fall into one of three categories that we illustrated on page 19 of our *Strategic Marketing Guide* and describe below:

Internally focused mindset. The organization with this mindset is absorbed with the importance of its mission and work. They may inadvertently and unknowingly approach their clients with an attitude of "here's how we can help you"—often before they fully understand their needs and preferences. Similarly, they may unintentionally approach prospective funders and supporters with a similar attitude—"here's why you should support the important work we do."

These organizations view marketing as *simply getting the word out* about the important work they do. People or organizations with this mindset tend to act as if they know what's best for their audiences—even if their audiences aren't "buying"

what they're offering. It is symptomatic of organizations afflicted with what we call **"The Curse of the Crucial Mission."** Doing critically important work is a marketing curse for many organizations. They approach marketing as if it's an unsavory topic that's beneath their station in life. And they're offended when audiences "just don't get" the importance of what they do.

They tend to blame their lack of funding and resulting poor performance on their audiences' ignorance instead of their marketing ineptitude. This curse may explain why some world-changing organizations struggle year-after-year to raise enough money to carry out their missions. An internally focused marketing mindset is a serious liability for them.

Selling mindset. An attitude toward marketing focused on *convincing others* why they should use your goods and services, or support your work. Once an internally focused organization figures out that the outside world is not as impressed with its mission and work as it is, most adopt a selling mindset. *Persuasion* characterizes this marketing mindset. Audiences often tire quickly of listening to "selling" organizations talk about how great *they* are and the features and benefits of what *they* offer.

Target-audience mindset. Most successful private corporations and a growing number of purpose-driven organizations possess this mindset. Instead of being preoccupied with their self-importance, they focus on understanding and serving their audiences better than anyone else.

An organization with a target-audience mindset understands that the only people interested in what it stands for and does are those who believe it has something to offer them. The organization and its staff realize that every prospective client, funder, and supporter asks themselves the same question about their organization: **"What's in it for me?"** They know the better they understand their audiences' needs, values, and perceptions; the better their brand, offerings, and marketing messages can answer this question.

Determine your organization's marketing mindset. Your organization's marketing mindset is a tricky thing to identify. When you ask someone about their attitudes or mindset, they'll usually tell you what you want to hear. They do so not because they're dishonest or manipulative, but because most of us want to present ourselves and our organizations in the best light. If your team or another group of employees is assigned to assess your organization's marketing mindset, be aware that you or they are apt to determine that it has a more audience-focused mindset than it does. Your consultant should make this call.

Determine the best way to build an audience-focused mindset in your organization. If your organization already possesses a target-audience marketing mindset, skip this step. If not, consider how best to establish one. Here's are some things you might try:

- Present a training program on strategic marketing for everyone in your organization. It could be a half-day training program for all staff followed by a more in-depth training program for supervisors and managers on ways to incorporate strategic marketing into planning and daily operations.

- Encourage managers to incorporate strategic marketing ideas and tools into every unit that interacts with the organization’s audiences.
- Incorporate strategic marketing into your strategic planning as well as program and unit planning.
- Encourage leaders and managers to frame the organization’s mission, work, and performance around better understanding and satisfying target audiences.
- Incorporate strategic marketing performance measures into unit and managers’ evaluations.

The change from a “here’s what we need and here’s how you can help us ...” to a “how can we help you ...” marketing perspective marks a key milestone in an organization’s shift to an audience-focused mindset. It often marks the start of a surge in performance and funding.

Substep 5.2 Marketing Success

#2. Monitor and Continuously Improve Your Marketing Performance

During this last step, you implement, monitor, and improve your marketing strategies. The following description also appears on pages 34 and 35 of our *Strategic Marketing Guide*. We designed it to encourage you to track and improve your marketing performance regularly. Our *Strategic Planning Guide* introduces the **strategic review process** shown below. We designed it to help guiding members define what their organization should accomplish in the next five years, and establish the one- and three-year milestones it must reach to do so.

Guiding members would *formally evaluate* their organization’s strategies and performance every two years, and conduct a *less rigorous review* of them annually. Depending on the results of these evaluations and reviews, the guiding members might modify or change their organization’s strategies, milestones, goals, and vision.

This strategic review process should help you strike the right balance between advancing your marketing strategy, adapting them to changing conditions, and seizing promising but unplanned for opportunities. If you use our planning model, which incorporates strategic marketing into the planning process, then your marketing performance would be tracked along with the implementation of your strategic plan. If not, you could still use this review process to monitor and improve your marketing performance regularly.

ENDNOTES

¹ **World-changing organizations** are committed to making the world a better place—whether in a local community, a region, or the world. Many are **nonprofits** and **governmental institutions**. But others are **companies** striving as much to make a difference as turn a profit. When we refer to *organizations* in this document, we mean *world-changing ones* unless we specify otherwise.

They range from small organizations working in local communities to global organizations like the U.S. Agency for International Development (which I consulted for) and The Nature Conservancy (which I worked for) that work in 100 and 30 countries respectively.

What do these seemingly diverse organizations have in common? Most of them are trying to solve complex problems (e.g., social, societal, environmental, and scientific—to name a few); understand and serve a variety of audiences with different agendas (e.g., clients, funders, and supporters); seek support from diverse interest groups; and manage an idealistic, independent, and often iconoclastic workforce.

These are just some of the things they have in common. And it is up to an organization to determine if it is sufficiently committed to making a difference in the world to refer to itself as “world-changing.” If so, they may wish to avail themselves of what we offer.

To avoid repetition, we sometimes refer to them as **values-driven**, **mission-driven**, and **purpose-driven**. Use the term “values-driven” most often because, as we explain in our *Guiding Statements Guide* and elsewhere, we believe their core values drive everything they stand for and do.

And we often refer to the people who work in and support them as **conscience-driven** because their inner sense of what’s right and wrong compels them to work for and support these organizations.

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³ Andreasen & Kotler, *Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations*, 46.

⁴ Ries and Ries, *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding*, 109.

⁵ We use the term **compelling** to mean *evoking interest, attention, or admiration in a powerfully irresistible way*. From the New Oxford American Dictionary in Apple’s Snow Leopard OS 10.6.4 (2010-8-26).

⁶ Keller, *Strategic Brand Management*.

- ⁷ Sargeant and Ford, “The Power of Brands.”
- ⁸ Ries and Ries, *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding*, 16.
- ⁹ Andreasen & Kotler, *Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations*, 92.
- ¹⁰ Mendonca and Miller, “Crafting a Message that Sticks.” Heath and Heath, *Made to Stick*.
- ¹¹ Kotler, *Kotler on Marketing*, 111.

*Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful, committed people
can change the world.*

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

— Margaret Mead

OUR SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Consulting and Training Services

We offer a full range of consulting services on planning, marketing, and organizational development—design, surveys, facilitation, implementation, and evaluation. We offer training programs on many subjects. See our *Catalogue of Services on our website* for details.

Planning and Facilitating Retreats and Board Meetings

Retreats and board meetings are the best times to gain strategic insights and forge strong bonds among leaders. We can help you plan and facilitate these gatherings. We also can help you set their goals, design creative ways to achieve them, and ensure discussions are honest and respectful. Topics can range from emerging opportunities to resolving underlying issues.

Probably the best topic is *“How can we make our organization more successful?”* We’d welcome the opportunity to explore it with your leaders and board from an hour-long meeting to a weekend retreat. They’d consider what success means to their organization; what supports, produces, and drives it; and how to strengthen the forces behind it.

Keynote Addresses

Topics for our keynote addresses include world-changing strategy, marketing, and leadership, which we tailor to your organization; inspirational stories to motivate staff; and other topics.

Your Resource Library for Making a Difference in the World

- #1 Strategic Planning Guide: How to Design More Effective Strategies to Deliver on and Support Your Mission** ~55 pages
- #2 Strategic Planning Workbook** ~40 pages (not pictured below)
- #3 Guiding Statements Guide: Core Values, Mission, and Vision** ~25 pages
- #4 Strategic Marketing Guide: How to Better Understand, Engage, and Serve Those Who Determine Your Success** ~50 pages
- #5 Strategic Marketing Workbook** ~50 pages (not pictured below)
- #6 Branding Guide: How to Stand Out from the Herd of Organizations in Your Field** ~25 pages
- #7 Leadership Guide: How to Build a More Successful World-Changing Organization** ~75 pages
- #8 Manager’s Survival Guide: 5 Keys to Guide World-Changing Staff and Projects** ~30 pp.

