

Integrated Marketing Communications

Why integrated marketing communications?

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is a new trend in business planning – combining different communication instruments such as promotion, public relations, sale promotion, personal selling, internet communication and direct marketing.

Not long ago, the marketing world belonged to advertising. Advertising had a huge effect, because by advertising in popular media vehicles it was easy to generate high reach. In recent times, this picture has changed considerably. Media has become fragmented, making it difficult to achieve a satisfactory reach at a reasonable cost.

Increased competitive environment

Technology touches every part of our lives, making our world faster, smarter and more mobile. Amidst the proliferation of online businesses, the Internet has made online business models and offerings transparent. Such transparency has two key results:

First, many competitive advantages enjoyed by companies have diminished. Products and technologies that were once unique can now be duplicated within months, services can be copied within days.

Second, because of a Web site, there is a single source of a company's information for all audiences; message inconsistencies



are more easily discovered. If outgoing messages do not align with product or service offerings, a company's brand is jeopardized.

Sophisticated customer knowledge

Today, customers are more knowledgeable. They are able to research product attributes, investigate competitors' offerings and compare prices; making marketplace conditions more demanding, and requiring higher accountability from businesses.

Technology provides increased power to competitors and consumers. The same technology also enables the principles of IMC to operate at new levels.

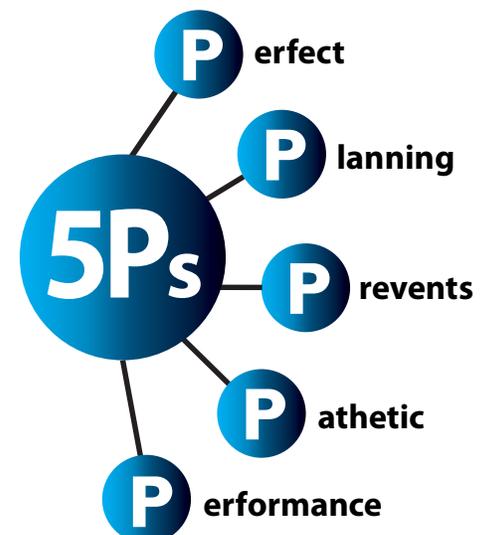
Mechanisms for two-way communication are more efficient and fluid than ever before, and by using IMC concepts, companies have the ability to exceed customer expectations and outsmart the competition.

The importance of brand image

In contrast to the past, today's marketplace puts a much higher value on intangible assets. Companies such as Microsoft, Coca-Cola and McDonald's have capitalized market values that correspond with their intangible capital, not just the hard goods they produce and manufacture.

The significance of brand equity is rising because a high level of brand capital equates to a high level of loyal customers. That is why the value of the brand is such a key factor within the marketing process.

Today's leading managers strive to achieve two "competing" goals: first to achieve considerable sales volume, and second to build a strong brand image. The method for reaching these goals is called Integrated Marketing Communications.



What is integrated marketing communications?

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is message integration. Message integration means that all corporate messages are coordinated and consistent. These messages apply to both internal and external communications.

Because of the multifaceted nature of communications within organizations, leaders must ensure that all communications reinforce each other and promote the organization's values and messages. They must share a common look, sound, and feel across a number of mediums, including: web sites, e-mail, direct marketing, publications, and media advertising. However, these messages may still be segmented to reflect different target audience needs and expectations.

IMC is a process of conveying your brand and messages in an effective manner, using a wide range of marketing mediums on a simultaneous basis. Integration saves money and makes better use of budget resources. The savings come from multiple use of the same planning and creative work, and more efficient use of available funds. Another major advantage of IMC is the enabling of all integrated activities to support each other; improving the efficiency of individual campaign elements in working towards overall objectives.



IMC Strategies

Successful marketing requires integrating research with strategy. It demands the resources to explore complex challenges like new programs, new markets and new organizational structures. Integrated marketing is the way of the future for businesses and organizations that want to succeed in today's sophisticated communications environment.

There is growing evidence of exponential changes in the way we do business. To succeed, organizations need to become more market driven and customer focused; using integrated strategies as the basis of the entire operation.

Every IMC strategy looks different, but there are core elements that are crucial to the successful development of a well integrated marketing plan.

● Core IMC elements include:

- ✓ Website
- ✓ Direct marketing
- ✓ Public relations
- ✓ Sales promotions
- ✓ Personal selling
- ✓ Advertising
- ✓ Database structure

How does IMC work?

Integrated marketing communications is a customer-centric, data-driven method of communicating with consumers.

IMC – the management of all organized communications to build positive relationships with customers and other stakeholders – stresses marketing to individuals; understanding their needs,

● **IMC is customer centered**

Every integrated marketing communications strategy begins with an accurate and acute understanding of the customer. This approach goes far beyond simple demographics, and uncovers necessary segments and consumer motivations that drive their purchasing decisions.

● **IMC is data driven**

Today, marketers have more information than ever about their customers' behaviors and preferences. IMC depends on this data to identify and understand a company's best customers, and to make informed decisions regarding how to communicate with them.

● **IMC is message integration**

Stakeholders, including customers, investors, the media, employees and others, do not distinguish between messages intended for them and those intended for other audiences. IMC not only integrates the marketing communications disciplines – advertising, direct and e-commerce marketing, and public relations, – it also advocates the alignment of all the organization's other business processes, from product development to customer service.

● **IMC is effective branding**

When companies respect and understand their customers, those customers will demonstrate their appreciation with loyalty to the company's products, services and corporate brands. Loyal customers reward companies with high retention rates, which in turn translate into a company's measurable success, and improve bottom-

What are the guidelines for developing an IMC?

In order to achieve maximum benefits, careful planning and preparation are essential ingredients for success.

Developing an effective integrated communications plan brings into play a wide range of key marketing areas, including:

● **Situation analysis**

What are the general dynamics of the industry and market which have an important influence on your promotional strategy? In particular, what is the nature of the consumer behavior in the product category and what is the nature of the competitor situation?

● **Target market analysis**

How is the target market defined and why? What are the important characteristics of the target market?

● **Positioning strategy**

What positioning strategy will be employed and why?

● **Message strategy**

What message will be communicated to the consumers and why? How will this message be communicated?

● **Media strategy**

What combination of media will be employed to get the message across and why? How will the message be executed in each media? What level of reach and frequency do you hope to achieve?

● **Sales promotion**

What type of sales promotion will be employed and why? What are the objectives? What proportion of the budget will be devoted to sales promotion relative to advertising?

● **Direct marketing**

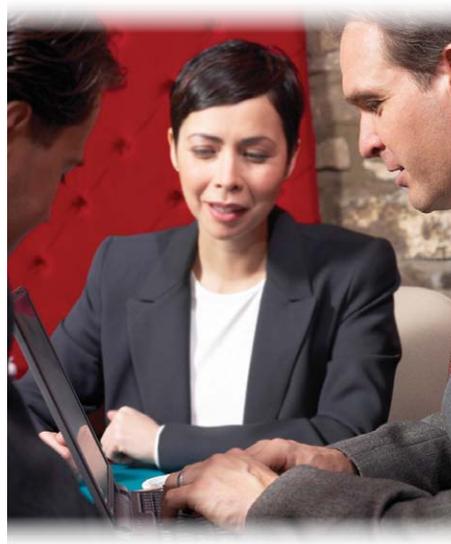
What types of direct marketing will be employed as part of the campaign?

● **Public relations**

What type of public relations activities will be engaged and why? What are the objectives of these efforts?

● **Integration**

What is the plan to integrate the different types of communications objectives? How will the different stages of the consumer decision making process be influenced?



What are the benefits of IMC?

Providing it is managed professionally, implementing an IMC program will optimize the communications process and offer companies generous benefits such as:

- ✓ *Budgets that stretch*
- ✓ *Increased customer knowledge*
- ✓ *Increased market share*
- ✓ *Improved customer retention*
- ✓ *Qualified referrals*
- ✓ *Improved corporate image*
- ✓ *Increased sales revenues*
- ✓ *Increased bottom-line profitability*
- ✓ *Increased brand capital*

Results, results, results

Firstbase has created Integrated Marketing Communication action plans that have played a key role in the success of many brands and services. Working with industry and government for over two decades, we have developed a deep-seated understanding of high technology marketing. We speak your language and know how to reach your customers in the most cost-effective method. We can tie together your marketing and corporate communications to build a powerful, consistent brand identity.

Are you ready to launch a new company or product? Is it time to position your company at the forefront? Do you need to build a targeted print, broadcast and Web presence? Do you need sales, lead generation or trade show support?

We will help you create a powerful and persuasive image, with consistency and continuity, to catapult you to the top of your industry. How do we do it? By providing expertise across a full range of services, from brand strategy and market research, to targeted media buying with award-winning creative design.



Using IMC concepts, companies have the ability to exceed customer expectations and outsmart the competition.

Solutions

Your marketplace is in the midst of significant changes complete with new rules and regulations, opportunities and expectations. To flourish in this new age, your organization needs to find innovative solutions enabled by business intelligence designed to help you respond to evolving business challenges.

Firstbase provides solutions that are designed to enable executives and managers to integrate marketing strategies, and, through good planning and implementation, turn them into profitable customer relationships.

Action

This crucial information enables the development of insights about what changes are occurring and what actions need to be taken. Insights alone are not enough. Leaders need the ability to take action. Whether you are faced with the launch of a new product, service, distribution channel or partner, or refinement of an existing process; leaders need the ability to respond quickly and effectively.

Results

Leaders demand results, and a Firstbase integrated marketing communications plan delivers. By facilitating better business communications between employees, customers and sales channels, Firstbase provides programs that are effective and productive. IMC can help companies better manage their risk, increase their bottom line and realize the potential of each critical relationship.

What our clients are saying:

“ *It's a pleasure to work with the Firstbase team, we are delighted with the results of our campaign and the level of professionalism that we receive.* ”

“ *Their ability to think outside the box is exciting and we are now working on the next stage of our business growth.* ”

“ *The Firstbase team certainly live up to their promise of getting the work done!* ”



Firstbase's range of in-house services includes:

- ✓ Strategic planning
- ✓ Business planning
- ✓ Relationship management
- ✓ Market research
- ✓ Product launches
- ✓ Communications planning and implementation
- ✓ Web development
- ✓ Professional creative design and printing solutions

Time is money



Move to the next level

As your partner in helping your business move to the next level, Firstbase stands ready to assist our partners and customers to achieve their business goals. We work closely with you to plan and implement your strategy and achieve measurable results.

Contact us

Call us today at **1.800.758.2922** for a preliminary **no obligation discussion** to explore the opportunities.



www.firstbase.ca