

# Marketing Management: A Simple Quiz to Help Your Company Master Marketing

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Marketing, whether business to business or business to consumer, is a complex endeavor. The multitude of media, competitors, channels of distribution and marketplace clutter make it a real challenge to get your company's products or services in the hands of end users.

Marketing, as a profession, is changing faster than ever. The much-heralded demise of mass media and products appealing to all consumers represents a fundamental change for marketers. Traditional channels of distribution have all but vanished, creating a free-for-all among retailers, distributors and manufacturers. The sales function has a hard time hanging on to long-standing accounts and an even more difficult time obtaining profitable new accounts. This super-competitive world also presents a dizzying array of new communications vehicles and relationship development tools. At the heart of these trends, the tremendous power of computer chips and software converge with customer demands, from an exploding number of market

segments, for just the right product, package of services and pricing to meet each segment's needs.

Insight, analysis and judgment remain indispensable for the modern marketing executive. These skills are developed over years of conscientious work and practice of the marketing art, but the tidal wave of market and technological changes make it increasingly difficult to manage organizations and marketing programs that, in many cases, were created to meet the needs of yesterday's marketing world.

For these reasons, I have developed a multifaceted tool for use by marketing managers to assess the marketing opportunities within their organization. In 24 questions, I touch on the entire spectrum of marketing management issues from the strategies and programs to the marketing organization and customer contact personnel. The self-scoring design provides immediate feedback to individuals and allows specific areas to be targeted, where their organization has the greatest potential. At the very least, it is a thought provoking exercise. The applications of the Marketing Opportunity Quiz (see Table I), however, go much further.

Please take a few moments to consider each of the questions below. *When you are finished, you can score the quiz right away!*

For each question circle a:

"1" if the answer is:	"No, not at all"
"2" if the answer is:	"No, not very much"
"3" if the answer is:	"Well, I don't know"
"4" if the answer is:	"Yes, sometimes"
"5" if the answer is:	"Yes, absolutely"

	No	●	●	●	Yes
<i>Competitive business environment</i>					
Is more intense competition threatening your margins?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you sense that your organization needs to take bold new steps, but lacks the clear strategic direction?	1	2	3	4	5
Have you avoided marketing and other strategic alliances because of potential threats to your profitability?	1	2	3	4	5
Does your product/service receive inadequate support in your various channels of distribution?	1	2	3	4	5
Are competitors reducing your market share?	1	2	3	4	5
Are you lacking the level and type of distribution you need to meet your goals?	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Marketing activities</i>					
Do your traditional sales, marketing and advertising techniques become more costly each year, without delivering additional profits?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have a difficult time finding and implementing innovative approaches to improve current marketing efforts?	1	2	3	4	5
Are the marketing and sales organizations often at odds with each other?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you avoid evaluating specific marketing activities based on their contribution to profitability?	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Marketing organization</i>					
Is your marketing and sales compensation system mostly independent of achieving marketing goals?	1	2	3	4	5
Is your staff becoming leaner in quantity, and less focused on the quality of your company's marketing programs?	1	2	3	4	5
Is sales force motivation a tough challenge?	1	2	3	4	5
Does your customer service function primarily deal with complaints and problems?	1	2	3	4	5
Is your market research and database function providing you with basic profiling information that is interesting, but not useful?	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Company insights</i>					
Is it fair to describe your company's strategic plan as "grow as much as we can and keep profits as high as we can"?	1	2	3	4	5
Are you concerned that your company's culture does not fit with its future direction?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you and the other senior managers feel frustrated by the need to improve sales results and manage marketing costs more closely?	1	2	3	4	5
Has your company found that measuring and tracking the quality of service you deliver to your customers is too costly?	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Product/service elements</i>					
Is it difficult for customers to distinguish your product or service offerings from those of competitors?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel that your existing products and services are fairly complete and will continue to meet the needs of your customers?	1	2	3	4	5
Has it been a while since you made significant changes or modifications to your product or service line?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you keep the customer service function focussed on its duties, rather than involving it in other activities such as defining new products or services for development and current product or service enhancements?	1	2	3	4	5
Has competition been a primary determinant of how your product is perceived by your customers?	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Total points</i>					
<i>Scoring!</i> Thank you for filling out this questionnaire! Now, simply add up your points					
If you scored between:	24 and 36:	You and your company are marketing superstars!			
	37 and 48:	You are clearly committed to success; keep pushing to become a superstar			
	49 and 84:	You have big league potential, but should consider new approaches			
	85 and 108:	There are real problems; address them or you'll end up in the minor leagues!			
	109 and 120:	Well, marketing is clearly new to you, to become a pro, you need a solid coach			

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**Table I.**  
**Marketing Opportunity Quiz**

It serves as a multifaceted tool in three key ways:

- (1) *Marketing issues survey*: I use this quiz to conduct an industry management survey, helping me keep a finger on the pulse of professional marketing managers and the issues they face.
- (2) *Internal diagnosis tool*: The quiz can be used as a tool for top executives of any size organization to identify areas of marketing opportunity within their organization. The quiz can also be used as part of a top management group's assessment of the marketing function. The group assessment allows management to compare the perceptions of various executives or groups and determine the areas and degree of consensus among the participating managers.
- (3) *Framework for management consulting*: In a marketing management consulting engagement, the quiz provides a basic framework for the assessment of a client's marketing function. The assessment includes rigorous analysis of issues surrounding each question, allowing a thorough review of the client company's marketing activities and management.

In marketing, as in competitive sports, there are winners and losers. The winners are those

who have mastered the skills required to excel. Marketing skills require the same commitment to mastery as do the skills of professional athletes.

While each company faces unique marketing issues, companies which have developed their marketing skills to the greatest degree make the greatest inroads against their competitors, developing more customers and achieving greater profits. In fact, some companies report increasing not only their share of market, but also their profitability during troubled times. Clearly, these kinds of results are achieved by the real marketing pros!

Table I shows the Marketing Opportunity Quiz. Test yourself (honesty is the best policy!), test your peers, and see for yourself if the areas it identifies present opportunities for your organization. Just as being first to market with a quality product or service creates an advantage for you, being the first to master changes in your marketing environment can create real advantages, too.

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