

Market Analysis & Sales Shadowing Project

Overview

The project has two Phases: a marketing phase and a sales phase. You will write two papers and make two brief presentations: one each on both phases of the project. In Phase I your charge is to rigorously evaluate an agricultural product or service and to gain an understanding about the customer group to whom the product is targeted. This phase will involve a series of steps that will help you to develop a knowledge base about the product and customers. Here you will be describing and evaluating the marketing and sales plan currently utilized by the company providing the product or service. In Phase II you will describe and evaluate how the product is sold by shadowing a person selling the product.

Identifying the Company, Product or Service and Salesperson

Choose an agriculture related product or service for which a company provides sales support. Be creative in your choice. Find a salesperson who is willing to work with you and whom you can shadow for phase II of the project. Be sure to choose a specific product for which you can readily find customers and information (either primary or secondary data is allowed) about the company providing the product. Some general examples follow:

Ag Inputs	Ag Services	Food & Ag Products
Chemicals	Pest scouting services	Branded food items
Animal Genetics	Insurance	Processed Wood Products
Seed	Landscape Design	Branded Beverage Items
Equipment	Farm Management Consulting	
Feed	Veterinary Services	
	Ag Credit Products	

Assignment #1 — Company, Product & Sales Person Choice (5 points)

Provide the name of the company and salesperson as well as brief background information on the company. Explain why you choose this company and the salesperson. Assignment # 1 will be due at the beginning of class on **Thursday, September 16, 2010.**

Phase I: The Marketing Plan Analysis (75 points)

Step 1: Customers' Interviews

Identify five customers of the product/service you have chosen. Conduct a brief interview with each customer, having them identify for you the following:

1. Most important features of the product/service

2. Ways these features have benefited them
3. Key factors behind their initial choice of the product/service
4. Product/service weaknesses or limitations
5. What would/did they look for from a salesperson representing that product? Initially?
After the sale?
6. Did they already have some loyalty to the company before their purchase? What other product/service options did they consider?
7. Overall satisfaction with the product. What could the company do to improve it?

Prepare a one page type-written memo for each interview, summarizing your findings for each of the points above. Highlights from your interviews will need to be included as part of your Phase I paper and presentation. The memos will be turned in to me as part of the final Phase I project report on **Tuesday, October 5. (20 points)**

Step 2: Background on the Company

After checking the website of the company, reading the brochures of the company, talking with the salesperson, or from other sources, prepare a brief report on the background of the company. Include in your report some background on the role of the product or service within the company's larger activities. Discuss related products the company provides and how sales efforts for other products may be linked. The background report should include brief discussion of **(1)** competition, **(2)** forces of change in the targeted market, **(3)** product life cycle and **(4)** how the company came up with the new product idea

The background portion of the Phase I report should be type-written and should not exceed 2 single spaced pages. The document should include references indicating sources of key information points. The background information of the company will be due as part of the final report in class on **Tuesday, October 5. (10 points)**

Step 3: Evaluation of the Value Delivery System

The value delivery system

This part of the product evaluation project will be to discuss and evaluate the 9 points of the value delivery system for the product as discussed in class. Emphasize the product or service you have chosen within the company. Please note, it is not necessary that the business have a comprehensive strategy addressing each point. You should be able to discuss generally what the company is doing with respect to your chosen product along these points. Evidence of your research on the product and the company should be apparent in your report. The value delivery system will include the following components (mention each component even if you find nothing on it; at least make a scientific speculation:

Target Market

All businesses eventually recognize they cannot be all things to all consumers. They need a certain focus or target market. This focus can be defined in terms of geography, demographics (age, income, ethnicity), business types (farms, banks, restaurants, etc.), or other kinds of market divisions. Create a perceptual map of the competitive space, based on your assessment of the customer choice set. The targeted market need not be the exclusive market, but it should be the one the company expects will pay the bills. Are there key trends in the target market the company should be monitoring?

Positioning

What are the intended or desired goals for the business with respect to how they want to be regarded as a supplier of the product you are evaluating to the targeted market? Primary in-season supplier? Gap or short-order supplier? Steady, but secondary presence? What competitive factors outside the business may influence the viability of alternative supplier positions? What competitive advantage does the business have in the respective market?

Product line

What other products will be emphasized in the target market? How are they chosen? How are new products introduced? Will there be any attempt to differentiate products? Do they have product families or joint products? Discuss the produce/service life cycle.

Price

Are customers highly price sensitive? Are there special pricing arrangements targeted to certain customers? Are pricing strategies used to position the product you are evaluating?

Distribution

Describe the distribution supply chain. Will distribution involve largely local channels or will there be significant inter-state trade? What specific outlets, businesses, or customers will be targeted within the targeted market channel? Are there specific distribution and packaging needs for these customers? How does the company relate to the distribution logistics of their customers? Is this a source of value?

Sales force

Who will handle the sales activities? How will contacts be made and maintained? Are there guidelines that need to be developed for sales staff? Special training? What sales activities are standard (required?) for the targeted market?

Sales promotion

Are special sales promotions beneficial to the development of a presence in the marketing channel? What are some cost-effective ways of starting? What are industry conventions

for sales promotions? Trade shows? Industry associations? What product features is the company emphasizing in their sales efforts?

Advertising

What advertising (if any) might be justified for the target market? What are effective media? Should there be a portion of the budget allocated to advertising? Should a professional agency be employed or can the association manage it? Are there any outside resources to help develop advertising to targeted customers?

Marketing research

What trends may be important to watch in relation to the targeted market segment? What resources would be necessary to carry on needed market research? What industry communications monitor the relevant trends for the targeted market? What are the costs and benefits of the market research?

The marketing and sales game plan should be summarized in no more than four single spaced pages. I prefer to see clarity rather than volume. Be sure to particularly emphasize the sales approaches. (This is, after all, a sales course!) Be sure to conclude your discussion of the current value delivery system with an evaluation. What's good about it and what's working? Are there some things they could do better? Does the company appear to be purposeful in the development of a marketing & sales game plan for the product? Can they stay competitive with current and/or potential rivals? Why?

Evaluation of the Value Delivery System (45 points)

Prepare a three-page type-written evaluation report following the above step-by-step evaluations.

(Although not necessary, you can use the Marketing Plan Worksheet as a guide. This worksheet can also be found at http://www.swcollege.com/marketing/ferrell/second_edition/ferrell.html)

IMPORTANT: As your papers are graded for content, the checklists provided will be used to assure that each of these topics have been included. Of course not every sales call progresses formally through all these steps. Deal with the steps that were used in the call, **being sure that you indicate what steps were not covered and why.** The most important goal of the project is to note how your salesperson employs the selling process, and how he or she adapts it to the needs of the situation.

Assignment #2 - The Phase I Market Analysis Project Report (75 points)

The Phase I project report will be made up of three parts; Steps 1-3 above and will be due at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, October 5.**

Assignment #3 - Phase I Report Presentation (20 points).

For the Phase I presentation you will be asked to talk about your company and product/service in an informal presentation. Each person will have 5 minutes on **October 5 and 7.**

Phase II: The Shadowing Project

Assignment #4 – Phase II Shadowing Report (80 points)

The company sales system and professional shadowing report should contain the following information in a typed, double spaced format, 5-8 pages. Each section of the report should be clearly identified.

1. Title Page

Report title, your name, course number and name, instructor's name, and date. Space and center the information appropriately on the page.

2. Background Information (about 1 paragraph – you will have already completed a full paper on this information so emphasize below)

Share background information about:

- A. Your sales rep (name, company, products, etc.)
- B. The customers visited
- C. Date and location of shadowing activity

3. Analysis of the Company Sales System

Provide a description and evaluation of the approach the company uses to sell its products and/or services. Draw on your discussions with your sales professional and your background research of the company to discuss how they deal with the following

- A. Sales contracts
- B. Designating territories and/or customer groups
- C. Commission, bonus, and other incentive systems for the sales staff
- D. Identifying and qualifying leads
- E. Training for the sales staff, both initial and on-going
- F. Approximate time allocation to various activities; ie, making calls, following up, in-office paperwork, training, travel, phone versus person-to-person.
- G. Sales tools provided the sales staff by the company

4. Customer Relations Analysis

Provide a description of your observations of both the sales professional and the customers during your shadowing experience. Be sure to take detailed notes during your shadowing time. Watch for some of the approaches and tools we discuss in class. Try to get some ideas from your sales person on what approaches work best for them.

A. Although you should observe and take notes on all of your calls, you may want to emphasize only one in your report.

B. Provide a detailed summary of what happened during your meeting. Try to organize the events chronologically.

C. Specifically you should include:

1. Examples of **verbal and non-verbal communication**, which might include observations about:

- initial reaction of the prospect to the salesperson
- reaction of the prospect to the progression of the meeting toward the objectives targeted by the salesperson
- reaction by the salesperson to information they were hearing from the prospect

2. An analysis of the selling process, which might include:

a) How did your salesperson prepare for this call? This section might include a summary of long-term and short-term sales and call objectives and strategies.

b) What opening techniques were used?

c) What type of presentation was made?

d) How were objections handled?

e) Did your salesperson close? What techniques were used?

f) What follow-up arrangements were made?

5. Evaluation

Give a brief summary and evaluation in a closing section of your project report.

This section should include:

1. Your personal reaction to the salesperson

2. The salesperson's effectiveness, in your opinion

3. What you learned from the project

4. Ideas for improving the project

5. Any benefits you might have gained directly from the project. (i.e. job offer, interview, etc.)

Assignment #4 will be due at the beginning of the class on Tuesday, November 30, 2010.

Assignment #5 Shadowing Project Report Presentation (20 points)

A 5 minutes presentation will be made to the class on either **November 30 or December 2**. The thrust of the presentation will be to provide an overview of your shadowing experience

BONUS POINTS -- Salesperson's Evaluation of You

Attached is a simple evaluation sheet we are asking the salesperson to complete after your shadowing exercise and send to me. Please have the salesperson fax or mail me this completed form. Be sure they get the evaluation form before you complete your shadow date. The evaluation will provide you bonus points up to **10 points** based on the rating and comments provided to me by the salesperson. **Evaluation Sheet. Points will be recorded on the last week of class.**

Phase I - The Market Analysis (100 points)		Points
Assignment #1: Company & Salesperson Choice		5
Assignment #3: Market Analysis Project Report		75
Customer Interviews	20	
Background	10	
Value Delivery System	45	
Assignment #4: Phase I Report Presentation		20
Phase II: The Shadowing Project (100 Points)		
Assignment # 6: Phase II Shadowing Report		80
Assignment # 7: Presentation		20
Bonus—Salesperson’s Evaluation		10