



# Marketing Communications Toolkit for the Small/Medium Tour Operator

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## **Executive Summary**

This white paper outlines basic concepts in marketing communications (marcom). The purpose of this document is to help small and medium sized travel operators attract customers by communicating what is unique about your brand, services and products. Good marcom efforts help create the image of a stable, effective business, and are a key to attracting client and repeat business. There are many channels by which to communicate your marcom efforts, many of which are detailed in this paper. A key element of this paper and the first step in effective marketing is developing a plan, including key message. Understanding your audience, knowing the benefits of your business over your competitors and identifying your own unique selling propositions achieve this. The paper concludes by identifying the top marcom tools that an SMB will need to develop when implementing the marcom plan in order to make an impact on your local market.

## **What is Marketing Communications (marcom)?**

Marketing communications, (marcom) covers a wide variety of marketing activities whose purpose is to create a business image that is effective and consistent. In the travel industry this is especially important as competition is tight and a professional image is one of the keys to attracting new customers and repeat business. Marcom products are communicated to many audiences through a wide range of channels, including (but not limited to) creation of printed collateral material (brochures, website, presentations, etc.); advertising and promotions; direct marketing; analyst and media relations; tradeshow, conferences and events; awards and speaking opportunities; and others.

The proximity of marcom efforts to the customer makes it one of the most important activities that a company undertakes. It is important, therefore, to develop a strong written marcom plan BEFORE developing customer-facing materials such as brochures, websites, and trade show presentations.



The purpose of developing a marcom plan is to ensure that all materials developed by your company present one voice across a vast number of products, regions, and customer interactions. Developing messages that emphasize your strengths, help differentiate you from competitors and resonate better with target audiences. A good plan gives the impression of a large, organized and credible business, helping to reassure and retain customers.

Finally, by planning your marketing communications activities, you save both time and money, focus on high-impact marketing activities, and achieve more with better results.

### **How to Develop an Effective Marcom Plan?**

The best marcom plans are based on concrete research and practical decision-making. The first thing you need to do is define your goal. This is best achieved by asking, and answering, the following question:

- **What is your desired end result?** What do you want to happen as a result of your marcom activities? What customer behaviors do you hope to inspire? Are you interested in strengthening your brand? Selling more products and services? Attracting more clients? All of the above?

Once you know what you are trying to achieve, you need to develop a plan of action that is targeted to those activities that will help achieve your goal(s). A good plan is based on a thorough understanding of your:

- **Market and target audience:** While “Know your customer” applies to virtually every marketing activity, it's doubly true for marcom planning. First, learn about your target audience's specific demographics and methods of operation, and then take the time to understand your market size (this can be accomplished by a review of sales, surveys, magazines), market segmentation (what is your niche, do you focus only on incoming or outgoing operators? Do you sell only local tours or global packages?) and behavioral



analysis, market growth (what is in the future, new products, etc.). Then answer the following questions:

- Who are you selling to (End-users? Travel agents? Wholesalers)? Who are your existing and potential customers? What is the best way to communicate with them?
- Buying, selling, and communications processes: How do your customers prefer to buy (online or direct)? How are you set up to sell? What communications best facilitate buying and selling?
- **Know your competitors:** Who are your key competitors (other agents in your area)? Who products do they sell and how do they approach the market? Pricing? History?
- **What makes you special,** or what do you want customers to know? Do you offer special travel services or products? Are your prices the best or is your service most convenient? At this point it's best to develop key messages that emphasize your strengths, differentiate you from your competitors, and make you attractive to potential customers.

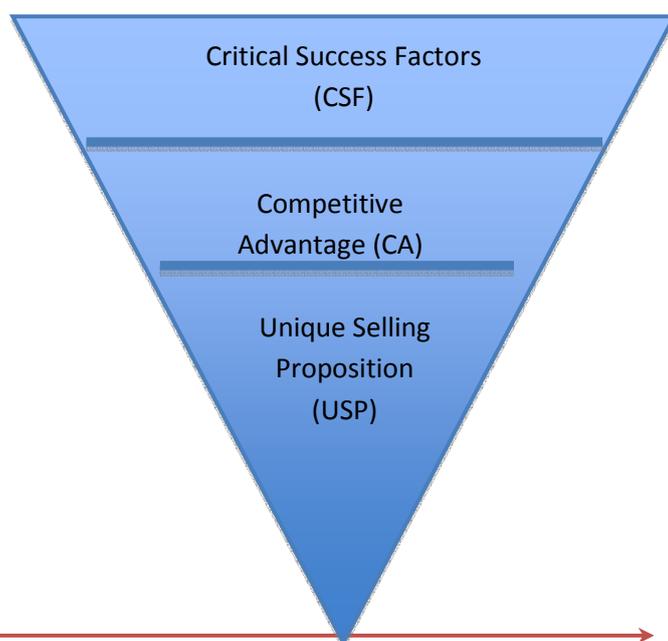
### **How to Develop your Key Messages and Differentiate Your Business:**

The best way to define you key messages is to follow a standard marketing model and map a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) for you and your competitors. Mapping a SWOT will help you identify what makes you better than the other players in your market - your unique selling proposition and product attributes - as well as helping you focus on what you need to improve.

SWOT	You	Your Competitors
Strengths	e.g. lowest cost	e.g. excellent customer service
Weaknesses	e.g. limited package options	e.g. complicated reservations system
Opportunities	e.g. the only player in your region to use a sophisticated reservations system which speeds up service.	e.g. already established in region
Threats	e.g. many competitors	e.g. have been in the market for a long time, and are seen as "old fashioned"

Another model for identifying your USP is demonstrated in

figure 2:





In order to understand your Unique Selling Propositions (USP), you must first map out the Critical Success Factors (CSF) for the travel industry in your area. Look at your competitors and identify 5-7 services or attributes common to all. For example, it's quite possible that everyone in your region sells discounted flight and hotel packages around Christmas that can be purchased by phone or in person. This is considered a basic package and without them no-one would take you seriously. The CSFs are products or services you will want to mention in your marketing materials, however they are obvious and will not help you differentiate yourself.

At this point, use the same process to identify 3-5 competitive advantages (CA). These are products or services that some of your competitors may offer, but not all. If you carry these CAs you will want to highlight them more frequently in your marketing materials. Let's say you and some of the other agents in your area have a website (or online platform) where users can purchase products from the comfort of their home. It's an attractive service that draws repeat business. If this is something that not everyone offers, you will want to make sure you communicate this so people understand how easy it is to work with you.

Finally, find 1-3 elements that are only yours, your USPs. These could relate to your customer service, product line, business stability, or anything in which you excel. These attributes should be emphasized in all your marketing materials, repeated and accentuated. These are the reasons why customers should buy from you, and not your competitor. Because you are the best at your USPs and offer a value beyond what anyone else in your region is offering. For example, if you find you are the only player to support multiple languages and currencies, dynamic packages and segmentations reports, these are all items that will help attract new business, so you will want to make sure these are clearly communicated.

At this point you are ready to make decision regarding which tactics are the best for your business. You need to take into consideration which communication vehicles best convey your messages, as well as budgetary concerns. The tactics you will want to consider include: price, advertising, PR, web, direct, promotions, events.



Before completing your plan you need to calculate how much and how long will it take to develop will each tactic? What is your budget and timeline?

### **Top Marcom Tools for an SMB**

While the temptation to develop a wide range of marketing materials may be strong, a small or medium size business only needs a few basic tools in order to establish their brand. The list below includes the basic items with which to begin:

- Logo: A logo is a graphical element and unique font (symbol, emblem, icon, sign) that includes your company name, trademark or brand. The logo is eventually how your business will be recognized so it should relate to the core of your business.
- Corporate stationary (business card, letter head, etc.): The printed documentation that is used for day-to-day communications from your company. Printed stationary includes your business card, letterhead, and templates. All these documents should include your logo, contact information, and should be consistent in their look.
- Website: Your online (virtual) presence. Your website should reflect your brand, and include all the information about your business as well as the products or services you offer.
- Corporate profile/corporate history: Usually no more than a few paragraphs long, your corporate profile should roll out the history and vision of your business, background of your executive management, and key messages. Your corporate profile is used as an overview of your business as well as to demonstrate stability and experience.
- Services brochures: These are documents (1-2 pages each) that give a detailed overview of the products and services that you offer. These documents should reflect your key messages, and should be designed in an attractive, easy-to-read format.



**Summary:**

Marcom plans can be focused at the product level, the product line level, or the company level (for example, company or brand image) — or any combination of the three. Beginning with a detailed plan ensures you invest only in worthwhile activities that will help you achieve your business goals. A good marketing plan integrates all marketing activities with other departments to surround the consumer and make sure the same messages are coming out of every department.



## **About Galor**

Established in 1989, Galor is a leading supplier of travel technology, boasting a client base of over 700 customers and innumerable users in 26 countries around the globe.

Galor was founded on the belief that to promote growth in the global travel industry, sophisticated but simple technology must be accessible to all. Our vision is to upgrade the industry by introducing cutting edge technological solutions that answer the evolving needs of the market, reducing costs while expanding business opportunities.

Based in Israel (the second Silicon Valley), our highly experienced international team of executives includes over 70 people focused on excellence in development, product application, customer support, training, installation & implementation, administration and finance.

## **About Travel Booster:**

Travel Booster is a SaaS based end-to-end tour operator software with a complete suite of front, mid & back office tools. The product acts as a hub for a range of different services that include single components such as flights, hotels, cars, attractions and tours, as well as dynamic packages, static packages and shopping cart options. Travel Booster users can access the system over the internet anywhere and at any time and effortlessly load and manage their own content as well as integrate with GDS and third party interfaces.

In short, Travel Booster includes all the tools necessary to handle reservation, operation, administration, and financials.