

White Paper



Much Ado About Something

Understanding the Strategic Opportunities Afforded by Integrated Marketing

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SUBJECT HIGHLIGHTS:

This paper explores integrated marketing, examines how integrated marketing differs from more traditional definitions of marketing, and offers insight into what kinds of institutions might most benefit from integrated marketing. It closes with a brief outline of the components of an integrated marketing plan.

Introduction

Sometimes it seems as if everyone is talking about integrated marketing. And as the author of CASE's book on integrated marketing and a frequent presenter on the topic, I am generally pleased about the level of interest and enthusiasm for the topic. However, as I listen to clients and colleagues discuss integrated marketing, I am aware that there appears to be some confusion about what integrated marketing is, how it differs from more traditional definitions of marketing, and how it differs from integrated marketing communication.

To help shed a little light on integrated marketing I would like to address five key questions in this paper:

- What is integrated marketing?
- What makes integrated marketing integrated?
- Why is integrated marketing important?
- Why should you consider an integrated marketing effort?
- What is the planning context of the integrated marketing plan?

Note

Some readers of earlier white papers, particularly *Shifts and Nudges*, will find that this paper revisits some themes and issues introduced in earlier writings. I felt that it was necessary to plow some of this ground again because the context of integrated marketing is rooted in traditional definitions of marketing. However, I reinterpreted these more traditional themes in the "cloak" of integration so that their meaning is both reinforced on the one hand and perhaps changed just a bit on the other.

Question 1: What is integrated marketing?

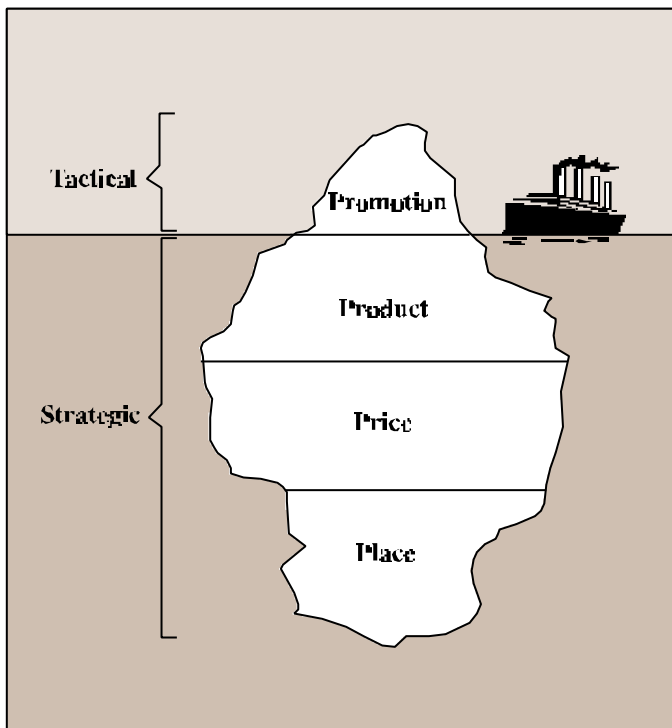
Integrated marketing is a relatively recent addition to the higher education lexicon. As such, there is—at least at this point—no one, generally accepted definition of integrated marketing. However, even as a working definition is developed, there is fairly common consensus that integrated marketing has six key elements:

- An outward focus
- Desire to address strategic problems strategically, rather than tactically

- Strategic, organizational, and message integration
- Active listening to the customer
- Database dependence
- Coordination of messages

First, integrated marketing has an outward focus. It places a great emphasis on looking outside the organization for new opportunities, synergies, relationships, and strategic liaisons. Instead of serving internal stakeholders at the expense of customers, integrated marketing stresses the need to serve current customers and find and serve new customers. In addition, integrated marketing stresses that strategic decisions must recognize and even anticipate the needs of the marketplace. Of course, this does not mean that stakeholders are ignored. Rather, it means that the needs of target audiences—especially customers—are more consistently recognized and met.

Second, integrated marketing recognizes that strategic problems require strategic solutions and that only so much can be achieved by refining promotion tactics. This issue, the relationship between strategies and tactics, is extremely significant. Often, the uninitiated only see, like the tip of the iceberg, the most visible outcomes of a marketing strategy: how it manifests itself in promotion (see diagram). At best, however, promotion is tactical, and while useful, tactics alone will seldom solve a significant



marketing problem. For example, if your curriculum is out of date or overpriced, the best advertising in the world will only buy you so much time. Eventually, you will have to deal with your curriculum problems at the strategic level. New majors. Better faculty or facilities. Or even a revised pricing policy. These strategic responses to your curriculum problem will have a more immediate and long-term impact, especially when coupled with aggressive promotion. Strategic response is at the heart of integrated marketing.

Third, integrated marketing is just that: integrated. This integration exists at three levels: strategic, organizational, and message. A little later in this paper, I will explore these levels of integration in greater detail.

Fourth, integrated marketing requires active listening. One important distinction is the difference between downward promotion and two-way communication. Integrated marketing is dependent on two-way communication built on active, aggressive listening. In addition, this listening is ongoing and is used to constantly modify and improve the application and use of strategic resources.

Fifth, integrated marketing is data- and database-dependent. Rather than acting intuitively, integrated marketing organizations strive to act empirically. They want to make decisions based on solid research. They want to allocate strategic assets based on documented audience needs. And they seek to monitor processes so they might continually improve efficiencies and effectiveness. Careful followers of marketing trends will realize that the logical extension of database dependent marketing has been espoused by Peppers and Rodgers. They make the case that institutions will, in the long run, use research to guide the creation of uniquely customized marketing mixes that meet the needs and expectations of individual customers, not merely groups of customers. Their approach, outlined in *Enterprise One to One: Tools for Competing in the Interactive Age* is fascinating and worth the read.

And finally, integrated marketing means that you coordinate your messages.

Integrated marketing and integrated marketing communication

It is this last characteristic of integrated marketing—coordinated messages—that is at the heart of a closely related and often confused topic: integrated marketing communication (IMC).

To many people, integrated marketing and integrated marketing communication are the same thing. In actuality, these are two terms for two very different ideas. Integrated marketing is concerned with strategic issues and the management of strategic assets—particularly product, price, and place—or, as we will see in a minute, customer, cost, convenience, and communication.

Integrated marketing communication, however, has as its primary concern the communication or promotion function. Not surprisingly, the same folks who have trouble understanding the difference between promotion and marketing also have trouble understanding the difference between integrated marketing communication and integrated marketing. In both cases, there is a relationship and a pecking order. Promotion is a subset of marketing (it is the fourth P), and IMC is a subset of integrated marketing (it is the fourth C).

Before we press on, let's spend a moment exploring in greater depth the term *integrated marketing communication*. While Don Schultz, Stanley Tannenbaum, and Robert Lauterborn were some of the first to use the term, the overarching idea clearly predates their first book on the topic, *Integrated Marketing Communications: Putting It Together and Making It Work*. Based on a review of the literature and on discussions with colleagues and compatriots, we know that integrated marketing has the following four elements:

- Is comprehensive, coordinated, and institution wide
- Stresses communication, not merely promotion
- Has as its goal the transmission of mission-critical values and messages
- Seeks to communicate to audiences in ways that they understand and respond to

First, IMC **is comprehensive, coordinated, and institution wide**. Because it has as its goal the communication of strategic messages, it must be able

to draw on the full range of resources at the institution: people, budgets, and time. It cannot be driven from the bottom. Rather, it must have the ongoing and visible support of the president and chief administrators. In this regard, as noted by Don Schultz et al., it is fully integrated.

Second, IMC **focuses on strategic communication, not merely promotion**. Strategic communication involves careful listening. In fact, aggressive listening must precede the crafting of messages.

Third, IMC **has as its goal the transmission of mission-critical values and messages**—not simply slogans and themes that are often as temporary as they are cliché-ridden, but enduring messages that represent core values that grow directly from the institution's mission and vision.

And finally, IMC **seeks to communicate in ways that target audiences notice, understand, and respond to**. IMC recognizes that some audiences are of truly strategic importance and that institutions must develop segment-based, often highly customized, messages that meet the needs of these strategic audiences—messages that they are likely to notice, contemplate, and respond to.

Buzzwords and bandwagons

Perhaps one of the most frustrating dimensions of recent discussions of marketing and integrated marketing has been what one practitioner termed “the bandwagon effect.” He noted that, “People are tired of hearing about communication, but if we call it marketing, all of a sudden we seem more cutting edge.”

A recent issue of *National Crosstalk* reported that Don Hale, university relations vice president at Carnegie Mellon, told a gathering of public relations and communications professionals, “Marketing . . . has a future. Let's ride the wave.” The report then noted that Hale advised his colleagues to go to their president's office and, if there was no marketing office, lay claim to that title. “Put it in your job description,” said Hale. I suspect that Hale was speaking with his tongue firmly in his cheek. However, he does recognize that many people—and the institutions they lead—will hop on the integrated

marketing bandwagon with no real understanding of integrated marketing and no real commitment to its tenets. As a result, their integrated marketing efforts will be no more strategic or effective than earlier marketing efforts and will continue to fixate on issues of image rather than substance.

Question 2: What makes integrated marketing integrated?

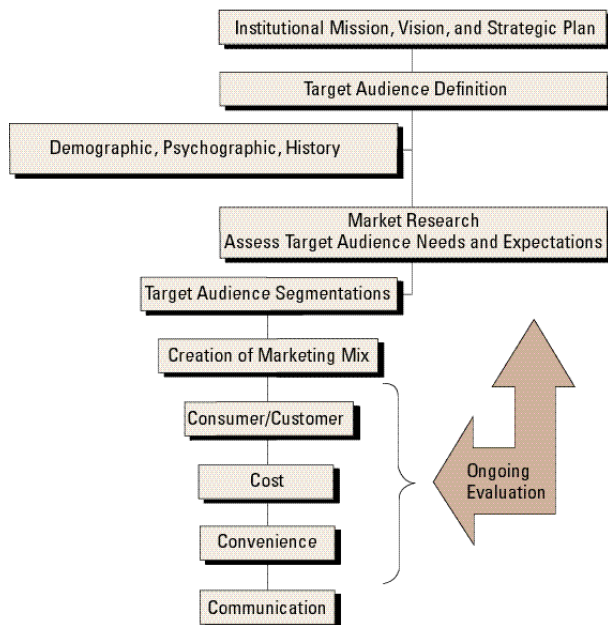
Integrated marketing must, by definition, have three levels of integration:

- ✓ Strategic
- ✓ Organizational
- ✓ Message

Strategic integration

Strategic integration involves the assessment and meeting of target audience needs through the allocation of strategic resources within the constraint of your institutional mission. As the following diagram presents, strategic integration involves a willingness to make data-based decisions. It involves a desire to segment and mix strategic assets such as product, price, and place (or if you prefer, consumer, cost, and convenience). And it relies on feedback to help assure that strategic decisions are on track.

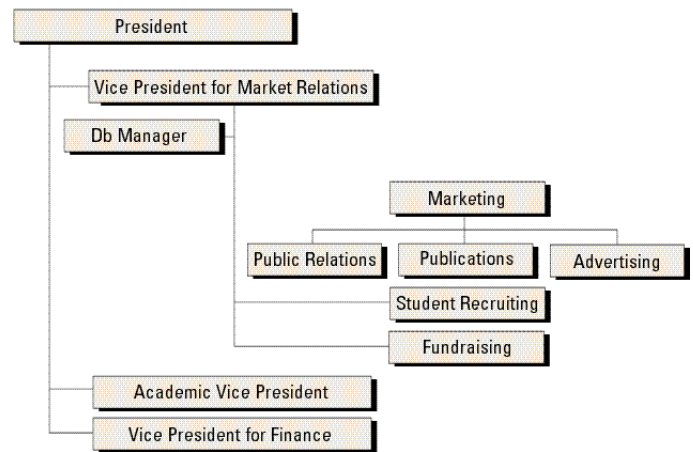
Strategic Integration



Organizational integration

Organizational integration is another requirement for integrated marketing. In fact, it is organizational integration that allows or encourages—from a systems perspective—complete strategic and message integration. At its most basic, organizational integration involves coordinating resources and sharing goals. In an ideal world, this is accomplished through the creation of organizational structures such as those outlined in the next diagram.

Organizational Integration



In this model, all marketing and communication functions—and I would include student recruiting and fundraising as marketing functions—are arrayed under one vice president. Clearly, this is a dramatic—and some might say irrational—departure from how most current colleges and universities are organized. This model does, however, reflect both the importance of and need for coordinated marketing strategies. One note: when I first proposed this model some months ago I was surprised by the number of e-mail messages I received from people who said, in effect, that they were moving in that direction. Perhaps the higher education landscape is more receptive than I first imagined.

Message integration

The last component of strategic communication is message integration. Message integration means that messages are consistent and coordinated and driven by strategic decisions. Integrated messages have a common look, sound, and feel across various mediums and over time—although they still may be segmented, reflecting difference target audience needs and expectations.

Question 3: Why is integrated marketing important?

Perhaps this is the most important question of all because the reality is this: if integrated marketing doesn't bring anything new to the table, what's the point?

The more I think about integrated marketing—and read and talk to colleagues around the country about it—the more convinced I am that there are two fundamental and significant differences between more traditional definitions of marketing and integrated marketing. The first of these issues involves orientation, and the second deals with strategic thinking.

THE 4 PS OF TRADITIONAL MARKETING	THE 4 CS OF INTEGRATED MARKETING
Product	Customer or consumer
Price	Cost
Place	Convenience
Promotion	Communication

The issue of orientation is best approached through a revisiting of our old friends, the 4 Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. More traditional definitions of marketing—and those institutions that espouse them—seem to focus on meeting the needs of the organization and its stakeholders (and these are not always the same) first. They seem to have much less real regard for the needs and expectations of the marketplace and target audiences. The institution decides what products to offer. The institution sets prices. The institution determines place. And finally, the institution promotes. Seldom do market forces and the needs of target audiences—dare we call them customers?—fit into the equation.

Of late, the 4 Ps can be challenged by a different paradigm: the 4 Cs. While the 4 Ps and 4 Cs may seem similar and may even address the same four categories (see table above), they are not. Most significantly, they are cast from the perspective of the customer or target audience, rather than the institution. Instead of product, we have consumer or customer. Instead of price, we have cost. Instead of place, we have convenience. And instead of promotion, we have communication.

A true marketing orientation must be just that—oriented toward the market. Integrated marketing, as evidenced by the 4 Cs, has that orientation. And while I find little significant difference between price and cost, save semantics, I am instantly captivated by the possibilities that are afforded by a marketing orientation that involves the customer, is interested in issues of convenience and access, and is concerned about two-way communication rather than downward promotion.

The second issue involves strategic thinking and the execution of strategic decisions. From the start, integrated marketing requires that strategic decisions be based on a realistic, even independent, assessment of the problems and opportunities. In addition, integrated marketing suggests that the strategic plan must also recognize a realistic appraisal of

strategic assets (remember the Cs and Ps) as well as of time, budget, and people resources (some people rightfully make the case that time, budgets, and people are also strategic assets).

Those of us with any experience in higher education—or in the private sector—know that in many cases strategic planning seems to occur in a vacuum. The result is a plan that does not address real needs. It is too vague or pie-in-the-sky. Or one that presents strategies that are ill-conceived or underfunded. In other words, the result is a strategic plan that cannot be executed.

Integrated marketing helps colleges and universities deal with these strategic inadequacies because it:

- Forces marketing issues up to the strategic level
- Is built on realistic assessments
- Operationalizes the strategic plan and stresses accountability and ongoing evaluation

Question 4: Why should you consider an integrated marketing effort?

It is presumptuous to believe that every college or university in the U.S. should undertake an integrated

marketing effort. In fact, many institutions will continue to do quite well without integrated marketing as long as at least one of two primary sources of revenue—tuition dollars and donated dollars—continue to increase and they keep a wary eye on their tuition discount rate and on the cost to raise a dollar.

At the same time, some institutions should seriously consider an integrated marketing effort. In general, these institutions are less resource-rich and/or they work in a marketplace that is more contested. In particular, they might suffer from:

- Difficulties in student recruiting in primary recruiting market
- Difficulties in fundraising among alumni and core contributors
- High tuition discount rate
- Organizational lethargy and poor morale
- High administrative and faculty turnover
- Weak, inaccurate, or inconsistent image
- Overdependency on tuition and tuition increase
- Small or decreasing endowment or tapping endowment to meet operating expenses
- Inability to respond to problems and opportunities in a timely fashion

Of course, I do not believe that integrated marketing will help every institution that is in trouble. But I do believe that more institutions will be better served by an integrated marketing approach that deals with strategic issues in a rational and thoughtful way than by the simple creation of another promo plan that emphasizes publications and a billboard or two. By no means is integrated marketing a panacea. But it is a legitimate way to steward, muster, and coordinate strategic resources to meet strategic goals.

Question 5: What is the planning context of the integrated marketing plan?

I want to conclude this white paper with a brief examination of the planning context of the integrated marketing plan and then outline the components of the plan itself.

As you can see from the following diagram, the integrated marketing plan is nestled under the strategic plan. In an ideal world, the strategic plan is built on solid research and a legitimate SWOT analysis, and it flows directly from the institutional mission and vision.

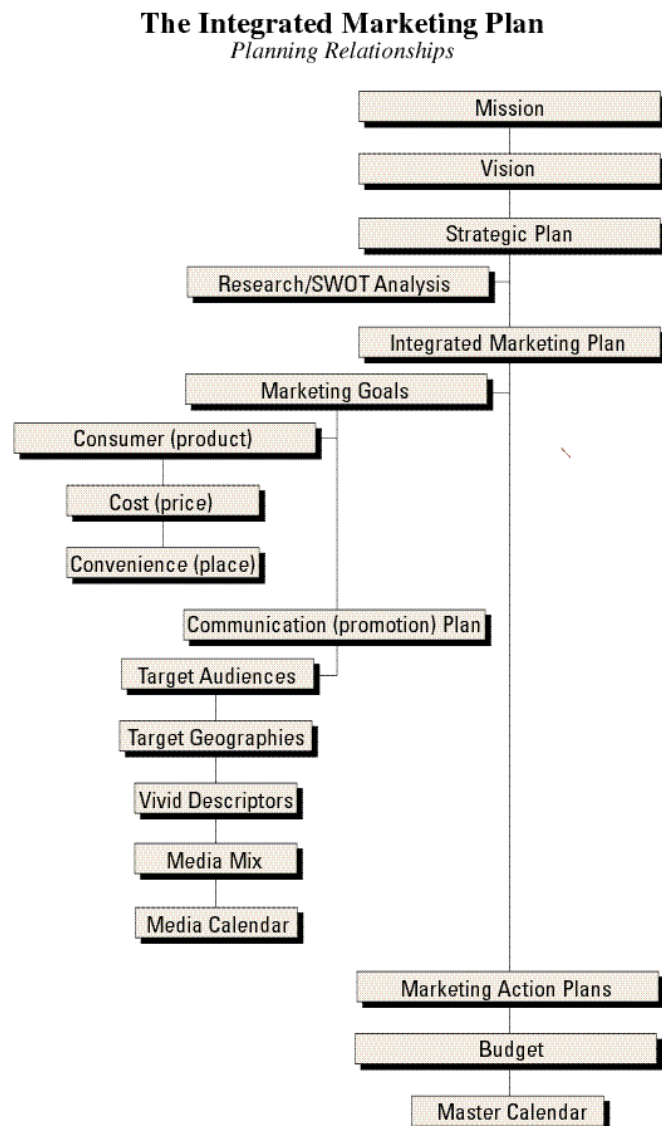
It is also worth noting that there is a fuzzy boundary between a well-conceived strategic plan and the integrated marketing plan.

As noted in the table on page 7, the integrated marketing plan itself contains five major components.

Dissection of the plan

A quick review of the components of the plan will give you a greater understanding of the individual plan components and of how they fit together into a larger whole.

The first component of the plan is the **marketing goals**. Of course, this assumes that the integrated marketing plan dovetails off the research and SWOT analysis completed as part of your strategic planning process. If research was not done at the strategic planning stage, it must be initiated at this point, before the marketing goals are developed.



In their most elegant form, marketing goals are what you hope to accomplish through the integrated marketing plan. Not surprisingly, most integrated marketing goals tend to be strategic and often involve the first three Cs and Ps: consumer/product, cost/price, and convenience/place. In addition, marketing goals often include image-related activities. While marketing goals should resonate with the goals of the strategic plan, they tend to be a bit less lofty, more specific, and often include time lines and the name of the person who is responsible for providing oversight.

<i>Outline</i> INTEGRATED MARKETING PLAN
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marketing goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer (product) • Cost (price) • Convenience (place) 2. Communication (promotion) plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target audiences • Target geographies • Vivid descriptors • Media mix • Media calendar 3. Marketing action plans 4. Budget 5. Master calendar

The next component of the integrated marketing plan is the **communication plan**. The communication plan is responsible for coordinating the communication with both internal and external audiences. In many cases, the communication plan is often a fairly distinct component of the larger integrated marketing plan. Once again, this is a nod toward integrated marketing communication as a subset of integrated marketing.

The communication plan begins with a list of **target audiences**, the people—the daring among us may even call them customers—whom you wish to inform or influence. Surprisingly, the list of target audiences in an integrated marketing plan is generally quite small, usually no more than half a dozen or so. By way of explanation, it is important to keep in mind that because integrated marketing plans emanate directly from the strategic plan, it stands to reason that the target audiences must also be of strategic importance. In other words, the plan must focus on meeting the needs of the relatively small

handful of people who will truly, quickly, and significantly impact your institution's future.

Following the list of target audiences is a clarification of your **target geographies**, the geographic area(s) in which your target audiences live. A clear understanding of your target geographies is extremely important because of the need to coordinate media buys, purchase mailing lists, schedule visits, and generally steward resources. Many plans flounder or cannot be sustained because they attempt to reach target audiences spread out over too large a geographic area.

Next we have the **vivid descriptors**. Vivid descriptors—or as some call them, points of pride—are the institutional core values expressed as words and phrases that you want to aggressively communicate to your target audiences. Like the list of target audiences, the number of vivid descriptors is usually relatively small. And like your target audiences, your vivid descriptors must also be strategic. Vivid descriptors are very important because they form the backbone of your communication plan.

After the vivid descriptors, we have the **media mix**. The media mix is the array of media that are incorporated into the overall integrated marketing plan. The media mix is heavily influenced by the media habits of the target audience, the budget, the sophistication and competitiveness of the media market, the complexity of your vivid descriptors, and other variables.

Now that the media mix has been developed, it is time to turn our attention to the **media calendar**. The media calendar keeps track of messages, mediums, and deadlines. Readers with a planning bent may find similarity between a media calendar and master calendar. Both feature GANTT charts and are designed to help keep the plan on schedule and to increase accountability and control.

The next major component of the integrated marketing plan is the collection of **marketing action plans**. Action plans outline individual activities that, when completed, will help accomplish the marketing goals. Action plans detail how the activity will support the marketing goal, who will be responsible for its implementation, and note how the activity will be evaluated. Action plans also often include a budget and time line for completion.

The integrated marketing plan also includes an overall **budget**. This will be a compilation of the budgets established for each marketing action plan and other resources such as those required for the media plan.

The last component of the integrated marketing plan is the time line or **master calendar**. The master calendar is a management tool. As such, it includes all the action plans as well as the media calendar so that you have an exact understanding of what is happening when.

Conclusion

As you have read here, integrated marketing is much more than communication and promotion, and it deals with larger issues than institutional images. It is more strategic in nature than traditional marketing and emphasizes the stewarding of strategic assets to meet strategic goals. In addition, it is much more *outward looking* and *listening oriented* because it is keenly interested in meeting the needs of customers and not just stakeholders. As noted earlier, it is not a panacea. But for institutions confronted with difficult times—or great opportunities—integrated marketing can be a highly effective and efficient way to realize your mission and vision.

Resources

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