



## **From Drab to Fab: Marketing Plan Crash**

By: Laura Patterson, President

It's fall in Austin, and after the brutal heat of the summer, my garden is in need of some serious attention. Given our three-year drought, I've been thinking about how to eliminate more of our grass. So on one of our rare rainy days, I settled in for a few episodes of "Yard Crashers" on HGTV. Wow, what these guys can do in three days! All you need is a sledgehammer, a thousand dollars, willing friends, and "voila" -- you have the backyard of your dreams.

Putting pen to paper, it wasn't long before I realized that coming up with a great plan was going to be more work than I expected. That's when it occurred to me that many marketers approach their marketing plan in the same fashion -- a few days and a few dollars, and "voila" -- a new marketing plan!

So while fast, easy, and inexpensive may work for the Yard Crashers, it's probably not the best approach for creating a marketing plan. Here are a few marketing plan myths that we have come across.

### **1. It's fast**

There's no such thing as a 3-day makeover or a 30-minute marketing plan. With the magic of TV, a three-day project is completed in 30 minutes. But the truth is that a lot happens behind the scenes to prepare those wonderful HGTV shows. Off screen, a large team of experts spent months developing and costing the plan, creating a project schedule, taking measurements, making selections and organizing contractors and crews. The same holds true for your marketing plan -- a lot needs to happen behind the scenes if you want your marketing plan to have "divine design." If you want a marketing plan that elicits the same response from your leadership team as from those who receive the HGTV garden makeovers, you need to invest the time and people to do the behind-the-scenes legwork first.

### **2. It's free**

Although a show may say a project budget is only a thousand dollars, that usually isn't what it really costs. These shows often don't reveal the design and labor costs, which can be expensive. You can't design a marketing plan on a dime either. Planning isn't

free. You'll need the right people to conduct market and customer research and competitive analysis, establish performance targets, and plan development. You need to capture data and apply analytics so you can make more informed fact-based decisions about markets, customers, strategies, and programs.

### **3. It's easy**

These shows suggest that anyone with a little know-how can transform a yard, room, or even an entire home from "drab" to "fab." I'm reminded of those famous tag-lines from the large home improvement stores: Home Depot's "You can do it" and "we can help" or Lowe's slogan -- "Let's Build Something Together." All of these shows are being produced by professional home improvement experts with years of experience and a stable of seasoned crews. They work with these contractors to select and prepare for the project. A little know-how can go a long way with a marketing plan. But if you don't have the market data, the expertise to make it customer-centric, the ability to make it measurable, the commitment to ensure it is properly aligned with business outcomes (versus an extensive list of marketing activities with costs and dates) then you may end up not only with a bad plan, but a finished product that negatively impacts your business credibility.

The planning season is upon us. So develop those blueprints, collect your best tools, take good measurements, double-check your alignment, consult your experts and craft a marketing plan you and your team will be proud of -- one that will demonstrate your value to the leadership team.

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