

CIMS – Comprehensive Integrated Marketing Strategy

The high risks associated with marketing your company and its products can be offset through an integrated process that allows for the creation of an overall relationship with your customers. The core of an integrated marketing plan is the demonstration of your commitment to your customers through your adherence to the promises you make. Tudog promotes the concept of CIMS - Comprehensive Integrated Marketing Strategy - as a means of focusing all company communications around a set of targeted messages, and backing up the words and images with actual substantive actions.

Defining Integration

The successful implementation of CIMS requires the planning of a corporate image and the consideration of this image during the planning and execution of every corporate activity. The corporate image - ideally designed to generate discussion and radiate positive attributes of the company and its products - includes the name of the company, the name of its products, the pricing policy, the expressed benefits, the point of difference, the packaging, the advertising campaign, the public relations effort, the promotional trials, the service promise, and any and every other segment of the company's operations. Literally everything occurring within the company - from product development to business development, from trade appearances to magazine appearances, from competitive gestures to promotional gestures - literally everything - goes through the filter of the corporate image with careful thought given to how the proposed action can be structured and implemented so as to be consistent with this image. Inconsistencies breakdown the hard earned consumer trust gained through CIMS and serve to erode the credibility of past and future company communications. Honesty is the soul of your company, and by communicating a message you can demonstrate through real actions as genuine, you gain customer trust and long term value.

Thinking CIMS

CIMS requires creativity, discipline and commitment. On examination, each of these primary elements is crucial to the success of your marketing efforts, and the elimination or dilution of any will result in a weakened market position, lost opportunity and an erosion of any long term benefits. Thinking CIMS means the following:


- Know Your History - Gain a historical perspective on your company, your competitors, your market and vertical markets. Know which marketing strategies have worked and which have failed and why. Not only will this allow you the benefit of not making the same mistakes as others, but it will also help you define your points of difference, the tone of your communications, the minimum commitment level, and product requirements.
- Be Flexible, Be Honest - marketing is a dynamic and fluid art and only the most flexible are able to identify in midstream tactics that require changes - or worse, reversal. Be honest enough to admit when something is not working. Remember it is often easier to continue to sustain a strategy that is faltering than it is to muster the courage needed to confess to failure and move on to other tactical options.

- **Be Cautious, Embrace Risk** - good CIMS balances caution with risk. Don't be afraid to experiment, but limit your activities within the confines of the company image. You have freedom to explore creative delivery channels and innovative tactics, but everything you do needs to reinforce the overall image of the company and its core messages.
- **Challenge One Another** - creativity is a process that is born, among other things from an atmosphere of intellectual confrontation. Don't be afraid to push one another to excellence by not settling for good when you know great is possible. Find the way to communicate among each other so that the atmosphere remains cordial while you are still able to contradict, criticize and challenge one another.
- **Tolerate Intelligent Failure** - innovation only happens in an environment where people are encouraged to think creatively - to experiment - to take risks - make mistakes. Let people know you reward honest failure. You want them out there seeking opportunity and will tolerate the inevitable errors so you can benefit from the successes.
- **Integrate Your Outside Agencies** - using outside advertising or consulting firms can afford you the benefits of their experience and provide you with some historical perspective (see Know Your History above). If you have outside service providers make sure you view them as more than suppliers. They should be involved in all your strategy and development sessions, so they can offer their insights, but also so the work they perform on behalf of the company stays within the definition of your company image. Make sure that you empower your consultants to challenge you. Let them know you'll admire them if they have the courage to tell you when you are making a mistake, and that you wouldn't mind their keeping in check some of your entrepreneurial enthusiasm.

Constructing CIMS

The construction of CIMS is a three-part process, with the underlying principle of maintaining the integrity of the company image throughout each phase. The diagram below illustrates the process:

 1 Groundwork	Grassroots Campaign: Targeted Product Placement with Market Influencers
 2 Launch	Expansion to Broader Market: Influencer acceptance - Wider awareness campaign

	Growth Maintenance: Influencer management - Continued perception of innovation
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Groundwork is essentially the readying of your market for your introduction by exposing your products to a select list of early-adapters who are influencers in their respective markets. These individuals often serve as models for their industries and will imply certain credibility by the fact that they use your product. The task is to choose your influencers carefully - with full consideration to your company image - because who you become associated with becomes another form of your product communication. You need to safeguard your message and image consistency.

Launch is the introduction of your product into your mainstream targeted market. Be sure when engaging in this phase that you view your market through the lens of your targeted customers, that is, that you define your targeted customer before you define your targeted market. Your market is comprised of your customers. Make sure your communications are personal and direct. Communicate clearly, emphasizing product purpose and benefits in a manner that makes your offering not only relevant but important as well.

Maintain is your opportunity to show your persistence, which the market will understand to mean a commitment to your promises and an intention to be a long-term player. Indeed, one of the key contributions of CIMS is that it shows the market a dedication and conviction for and toward your corporate image, leaving the impression that you are as diligent with your customer pledges as you are with your corporate image. A significant task in the maintain phase is to keep the loyalty of the market influencers you secured in the groundwork phase. Now that your product is more accessible, some of the prestige of using a cutting-edge technology may have worn off, leaving the trendsetters to seek the next best thing. You want to keep them loyal to your product, and you do this by once again focusing on them and making them feel important to you and your company.

Finally, when constructing your company image be certain your selling focus is on your company and your product as a part of your company. The long-term value of your company dictates that you build your equity around your company so that current and future products can benefit from the reputation and perception of excellence your company has earned. Equally as important, customer feelings about your company are central to the buying decision - which influences how they feel about your product - so building your company image also serves to drive immediate sales. The diagram below demonstrates the hierarchy of your company image and level of importance of your product, brand and company.



Developing a Comprehensive Integrated Marketing Strategy that influences your company's advertising, promotions, public relations, distribution channels, service department, product offering, pricing and every other aspect of your operations is a complex endeavor that requires the patience to wait for a reputation to build, as well as the foresight to understand the value once it has. Tudog strongly urges our clients to operate under the principles of CIMS and work with our clients to construct, implement, and maintain their CIMS efforts.