

Tactical Marketing Moves

The focus Tudog places on tactics is an indication of the centrality we believe they have in the success of an enterprise. Upon completing a strategy that defines for a business their market and the offer they will be bringing to market, it falls upon the tactics to serve as the foundation of execution and the realization of the strategic objectives. This heavy burden means that the marketing tactics must be consistent with the company's goals and must interact with the market in a way that is engaging and effective. This article introduces 5 tactical marketing moves that should be considered when you construct your tactical plan.

One common challenge companies face when determining which tactics will be the most effective to employ is a lack of an established criteria upon which to judge and measure the tactical options. Having criteria allows for the identification of viable tactical options and the comparison of the tactical options for an understanding of efficacy and proper timing. The elements of the criteria should be:

1. What You Know – you need to know all you can about the market you are engaging, including its history, the economic influencers that affect it, the trends it has followed, and its vulnerabilities.
2. Who You are Engaging – you need to know the culture of the market you are engaging, including what it desires, what it needs, what it feels it lacks, how it behaves, and how it is influenced.
3. Who You are Competing Against – you need to know who your competitors are and what their strengths and weaknesses are. You need to be able to anticipate what reactions your competitors will make to your tactical moves and predetermine how you will neutralize their responses. Also, when you scan the competitive landscape it is useful to try to estimate which among the companies active in your space can be considered an ally and those which must be seen as active and aggressive competitors.
4. What Your Capabilities Are – in addition to understanding what capabilities you need to develop, you also need to know where your capacities currently are so that you are certain not to make immediate promises based on future capabilities. You need to be able to meet the promises you make today, today. So review your capabilities and match your tactics to what you can do. Grow your tactics to what you will be able to do as your abilities grow.

With these criteria in mind, the 5 tactical marketing moves Tudog often deploys include:

1. The Battle Tactic

When you have a strong competitor you think you can beat you should take them on one on one and fight to win the category. Make sure you select The Battle only when you know you can win – which is a function of your assessment of the criteria above and your appraisal of the market.

The time is right to employ this tactic when there is an existing market leader with a dominating market share and you assess that you can capture a portion of their share because the companies they are supplying are as eager to break their dominance in the market as you are to sell to them. This “partnership” to weaken the industry giant offers you a significant opportunity.

Another reason to use this tactic is if your market is crowded with a large number of small players and you wish to impose a consolidation of sorts by driving the sectors attention to your company and the major competitor only.

In order to succeed in The Battle the following conditions must be present:

- Your current customers must be willing to watch a fight. If you are going to lose your current base while pursuing the market leader, you will be at a disadvantage and your back will be exposed. You need to shore up your major customers, let them know that you are about to embark on a growth tactic and ensure them that you will continue to serve them as you always have, even while the battle rages.
- You have to have selected the right opponent. No sense in getting involved in a fight you think you can win, only to find out you can't. If you lose you will be more vulnerable to others and will have weakened your position, so make certain you are fighting the right company and have geared up your operations to win.
- You have to genuinely have the better product at the better price. The ground rules for the battle will not always be set by you, and you have to be able to claim superiority and demonstrate it when required.
- You have to direct all your efforts at the selected competitor, which may require a shift in your marketing focus. You have to remain locked on this one competitor until you can declare victory (which may be in a very long time).

The Battle is a useful tactic if you have the resources to be very aggressive and you have an opponent who is vulnerable. The risks are the use of resources that are endangered if you lose.

2. The Ally Tactic

Your company can elect to build its position in the market through the development of alliances that allow you to formulate a competitive wall against any large scale threats. In this tactic you would use your existing market position to establish partnerships with smaller companies that will rely on you for competitive protection, but also afford you a broader scope and larger market share.

The building of your coalition is designed to share the wealth of your leadership position so as to lessen the incentive of others to join forces with your closest competitor to displace you. The inclusion of your customers and smaller competitors allows you to weaken the position of your competitor while gaining the allegiance of those who might have joined forces against you.

In order to execute the Ally Tactic you must:

- Be certain to establish yourself as the force to be reckoned with and source from which good things can come to those who assist you in meeting your goals.
- Be aware not to focus on any one strength you may have, but rather focus on all your powers so that you appear even more appealing (and intimidating) than you would if you just focused on your primary strengths.
- Position yourself as the leader, but do not hesitate to take from your partners any lessons they can share and any models they have that are better than the ones you already use.

- Make it easy for others to work with you by removing any threats you may pose to them, even if it means letting up on some accounts that are not critical to you but are important to them.
- Keep your pricing affordable to most levels and make sure your product is positioned as an integral part of your sector.
- Let your partners drive most, if not all, of the promotion and let them leverage your name and position to do this.

The Ally is useful when you want to avoid an all out competitive battle and need to secure your position against the possibility that your competitor might seek a fight. It is also a good way to expand on the “feet” of others, allowing them to grow your brand as they seek to expand their own customer base.

3. The War & Peace Tactic

There are times for love and there are times for war, and then again there are times when the best approach is a little of both – love the ones you can and fight the ones you can't. The War & Peace Tactic is really about meeting your needs in the marketplace by directly confronting your primary competitor and building alliances with smaller companies to pre-empt their becoming active competitors.

In order to achieve this tactic you need to be able to operate on all sides of the market and be able to produce products that meet the needs and demands of all segments. Although your competition is solid, you are going to out maneuver them by being able to hit parts of the market that are closed off to them. Your chances of success are enhanced if you successfully engage in the following steps:

- Identify key trends that are likely to shake up your category and position your company to be the lead shaker.
- Target the weaknesses of your competitors and make them key market issues.
- Capture the strongest segments at each end of the market and hold on to the base as the competitors try to chip away.

While this dual end approach can be effective, it should be mentioned that your chances of success are greater if you target one end first and work your way into the other. Typically it is easier to start with the high end and then offer a quality equivalent but featured down version for the lower end. The reverse, starting low and working high, is more of a challenge as you will have issues of reputation and status to try to overcome.

4. The Strength Tactic

Every one of your competitors has a weakness that, if emphasized over and over again, would lead to a decline in their reputation and status. The Strength Tactic is something you may want to try when you are not strong enough to win the Battle Tactic, but need to compete in an aggressive way because the market leaders are refusing to permit you entry into anything more than a symbolic share of the market.

The notion driving this tactic is that, at least initially, the market leaders will not see any reason to respond to your allegations – both out of arrogance and because they are uncertain you can cause them damage and do not want to “lower” themselves to your level. As you proceed with your attacks, however, you can expect them to respond, at

which point, if you are executing well, you will be insulated from the wrath of their revenge.

This “hit and run” tactic is most successful when you highlight the competitor’s weakness and immediately make an offer that addresses the weakness. Then you use gap tactics to stall for time while you consolidate your gains and build protections around you. Once you have your gains consolidated, you move on to the next hole you see and repeat the process.

This tactic is successful if you:

- Have the ability to spot your competitors reactions and neutralize them.
- Have the ability to spot opportunities and holes in the market and have the product and operations to fill them.
- Have the alliances necessary to protect you from competitor retribution.
- Have a good enough product to sustain you while the fighting is going on.
- Have a pricing model that is flexible enough to allow you to fill the holes as they arise.

This tactic is designed for companies that need to fight in order to break through but have not yet developed the financial backing or market presence necessary to engage in the Battle Tactic.

5. The Market Split Tactic

Most of the time your market will be split into high end and low end, with most players trying to capture the middle ground and leaving the edges free for others to pick up what they view as the niche fringes. The Market Split Tactic acknowledges this basic fact of market behavior and realizes that in order to capture both ends and chip away at the center your products need to be different things to different people.

While it is a core marketing rule that you cannot be different things to different people, the rule really applies when the practicing company is staying in a single market. However, if you seek to define yourself at different edges of the market, and you brand your products accordingly, there is really no reason why it cannot be done. There are numerous examples, such as food manufacturers and car manufacturers who successfully engage in this tactic all the time.

The object of this tactic is to ultimately deny your competition the middle ground by working your way into the middle territory after having secured the edges. To achieve this you need to:

- Make certain you have the operational capacities needed to meet different needs.
- Make certain the pace of change in your industry is not too dramatic so that you have the time you need to capture the edges and move toward the center.
- Make sure you have identified your market opportunities correctly and that the products you are offering are correct for the segment you are targeting.
- Be aware that the threats will come from the middle and do what is necessary to monitor them and neutralize them as they begin to appear.

- Protect and maintain your company image as you move from one sector to the other so that your gains are consolidated and you don't wind up simply moving from one sector to the other, but rather remain in one sector as you move to the next.
- Make sure your prices are corresponding to the market you're in and make certain that your position is focused enough to be meaningful but broad enough to give you the room you need.

The tactics shared in this article are designed to assist companies as they grow within one market segment and seek to expand beyond their traditional sectors. The threat of competition and the need to neutralize that threat must be a key component in your strategic approach, executed through these tactics.

The use of tactics as a competitive tool is not for every company, but for those with the need to fight companies that are larger and more powerful, or smaller and more aggressive, The tactical deployment of the options in this article are part of a comprehensive strategic plan and should only be executed within that context.