

11 Steps of a Strategic Message Planner

1. **Advertising goal**
2. **Client: Key Facts** - The basic history of the brand and parent company, and the corporate ownership big picture. Are there any reputational issues that may help or hinder the client in reaching the advertising goal?
3. **Product: Key Features**
 - a. **What is the product?**
 - b. **What is the purpose of the product?**
 - c. **What is the product made of?**
 - d. **Who and what made the product?**
4. **Target Audience (Demographics and Psychographics)**
5. **Product Benefits** - Remember that advertising should seek solutions to three main needs: Control, Companionship and Confidence.
6. **Direct Competitors and Brand Images**
7. **Indirect Competitors and Brand Images**
8. **Product and Brand Image**
 - a. **Current Brand Image** – How is the product perceived by independent third parties? What is the product’s Internet and social media footprint? (*This is new and not in the textbook.*) Briefly describe how the Internet and social media are used to promote the product.
 - b. **Desired Brand Image** – How does company wish its product to be seen? What kind of top-of-the-mind position does it wish to achieve through its strategic communications?
 - c. **Brand Image Challenge** – What is the number one problem/challenge in moving the target audience from the current brand image to the desired brand image.
9. **Strategic Message: The Promise** - The strategic message should sell this particular brand, not the entire category. State the message and then fill in these blanks: You (describe the target) should buy (this brand) because (it provides you this benefit).
NOTE: This is not a slogan that will appear in the ad. It is the guiding principle behind the ad.

10. Supporting Evidence: The Proof – What are the selling points to be used in the ad?

11. Bibliography (We need a page or two of references all in one place at the end, as well as throughout the SMP wherever you need to cite evidence to prove your point.)