

SWOT Analysis for the Installation of the Teleflora Direct Marketing System for April Flowers

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....2

PROBLEM STATEMENT..... 3

HYPOTHESIS 3

OBJECTIVES 4

JUSTIFICATION 4

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW5

SWOT ANALYSIS 5

FLORAL INDUSTRY..... 9

 TELEFLORA’S SUCCESS STRATEGY..... 10

 TRENDS FOR TOMORROW 12

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 14

PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION..... 14

PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS..... 17

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS 19

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS..... 21

PROBLEMS WITH DATA COLLECTION..... 21

INTERNAL FACTOR ANALYSIS 21

EXTERNAL FACTOR ANALYSIS..... 26

OVERALL STRATEGY ANALYSIS 30

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 31

RECOMMENDATIONS..... 32

APPENDIX A 34

APPENDIX B 35

REFERENCES..... 36

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Direct marketing via internet communication is one of the most effective means of letting existing and potential customers know about your business' upcoming features and attractions. By being able to reach these people through the internet instead of wasting time and expenses on fliers, is something to be valued.

In order to determine if the system is worth installing it is necessary to understand the program itself, as well as its use for April Flowers. This project aims to determine the benefits of installing a direct marketing system for April Flowers, a small flower shop in San Luis Obispo. Through the increased use of wire-in, meaning through the use of internet communication, floral design, where individual shops can send orders that are out of area to a local florist instead, there is a broader sense of community amongst florists of all styles. In the shop, there is already an existing wire-in system established through Teleflora, one of the newer aspects of the floral industry, leading the way in the advancement of florists around the country.

Teleflora has given florists the freedom to share with each other the styles and designs that keeps the floral industry constantly looking for the next trend. In order to be competitive it is imperative that an individual shop markets its unique features. The cut flower industry is worth approximately 19 billion dollars in the United States (Palomeri, 2008) and any means of attracting new business is profitable. With every occasion and holiday there is an inevitable sale of flowers to make the event seem all the more special. Sending a message reminding customers of these things is something people may come to rely on and in turn boost sales for April Flowers.

By understanding the Teleflora system, the industry, its competitors, and trends, future endeavors will become more apparent. These factors will encompass the overall environment that April Flowers operates in and the overall idea to determine the best strategy to exploit the opportunities presented while fixing

potential problems that may arise. By deciphering through these obstacles April Flowers could be able to form a completely researched and confident decision for a profit-increasing course of action.

Problem Statement

Is it advantageous, in terms of increasing sales, for April Peet to install Teleflora's Direct Marketing System in order to effectively promote to her customers for her flower shop, April Flowers. What are the potential drawbacks, and what trends in the floral industry will help in its promotion?

Hypothesis

By better understanding the software provided by Teleflora and determining the uses of the system, April Flowers can decide whether it is beneficial for her business, meaning that it will be easier to directly market to her current customers in order to boost sales. Through research into market trends and the potential helpful and harmful factors that could arise from the marketing system, April Flowers can form a strategic decision to install it by compiling and weighing the options into a SWOT matrix that will aid in the strategy to adopt the Teleflora system. The anticipated outcome of this research is to determine whether it would be beneficial for April Flowers to utilize the Teleflora Direct-Marketing System in order to increase customer awareness of product availability and reach a wider range of customers that already shop with Teleflora online.

Objectives

1. To learn the basic functions and features of the Teleflora Direct Marketing system.
2. To assess Teleflora's competitors' options for a direct marketing system in particular the marketing strategies of 1-800-Flowers and FTD.
3. To determine the goal of the system in accordance to proprietors' style aesthetic.
4. To determine current trends of the floral industry in order to market more effectively.
5. To determine potential positive and negative aspects of the Teleflora system.

Justification

This study is significant for California florists looking to expand their effectiveness of marketing. Through the systematic structure of a SWOT matrix, the decisions to choose certain wire-in services will become apparent and calculated to be the most beneficial opportunity to pursue. In particular April Peet will be able to determine the best course of action in order to be more competitive with other florists in the San Luis Obispo area and will revive the initial investment opportunities for potential clients and investors. The results of this study will provide insight for small floral shops using the Teleflora system.

To further examine the floral industry the analyst will need to look at the statistics regarding the current production of cut flowers in the United States. Of the 15 states in the United States that produce cut flowers, California produces seventy-five percent of total production. The number of growers of floral products in the United States is 6,457 in 2009. The number of personnel in the floral market is 450,000 in 2009. Total floriculture item sales in retail at all floral outlets estimated more than \$32.6 billion – following revision by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. All of this information was provided by the Society of American Florists, 2012.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

When a business makes a decision it is based on rigorous calculations of the pros and cons for plausible scenario. All strategies for success and rising above one's competition are the end goal and must be thought out in advance. For a flower shop the stakes are of the same significance as those of a fortune 500 company with over 5,000 employees, the difference is the scale in which the business operates. For a business to find these "moves" before making any decisions comes from a SWOT analysis in which strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are weighted in order to find a course of action. The goal behind a SWOT analysis is to use the resources available in unison with the environment in any industry that builds on a firm's strengths, reduces its weaknesses, takes advantage of opportunity and avoids threats. (David, 2011). By knowing the external and internal factors that affect one's company and finding strategies to raise profits is the greatest weapon a firm can use to stand the test of time. The components of the analysis come from learning the industry, Teleflora's strategies for success, and the trends of tomorrow.

SWOT Analysis

When determining a course of action for any business a team must use some type of deeper understanding of the industry in which the business operates as well as of the business itself. By learning every scenario at hand before making any choices it will be considered a more strategic means of doing business. SWOT's are an analytical tool that evaluates a firm's internal strengths and weaknesses in comparison with the industries opportunities and threats. They are typically used when writing a business plan or finding the means to be a more strategic firm, however they can be used in minor scenarios as well, like for example should a new employee be hired, or on a larger scale it could be will our company merge with another to take out an enemy? All of the weight given to the final decision comes from the knowledge-based cataloging of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Zinger, 2003). The two components of a SWOT matrix are

the internal and the external analysis that embody the factors that a firm is in control of and outside influences that are not.

An internal factor is something a business is in control of like management, marketing, accounting and finance, production and operations, research and development and management information systems (David, 2011). An internal factor is referred to as either strength or a weakness and completely reliant on the creator of the SWOT matrix to conclude whether it is one or the other. The means of determining each are defined through a variety of methods from comparing ratios, to looking at past financials, evaluating performance, and giving surveys that analyze trends of a firm's target consumer. In order to correctly employ a SWOT analysis the user must correct the weaknesses of an internal investigation in order to turn them into strengths, as well as utilize the strong points of a company to be more competitive in a market (Camden, 2009).

An external analysis comes from the evaluation of a firm's opportunities and threats that come from factors that are outside of its control. Such factors include economic, cultural, social, demographic, environmental, political, governmental, legal, technological and competitive trends and events that could significantly benefit or harm a business (McConkey, 1988). The primary objective of identifying opportunities is to exploit them, while reducing the threats of other factors that could impair the profitability of an organization.

Once the internal and external factors are determined and listed into their prospective categories a weight is given to each component. For internal factors, strengths and weaknesses, a score of one and two and a 3 or 4 for external factors are given to each idea in order to prioritize the list into what are more important strengths or weaknesses. After listing the elements of strengths and weaknesses in a more organized fashion from most important to least, they are given a quantitative value that equals the sum of

one. The reason for doing so is to produce an appropriate weight that will shed light on what strategies can be made internally and externally when placing them in the SWOT matrix (David, 2011).

The SWOT Matrix is an eight-celled chart that combines internal and external factors, shown in Table 1 below (David, 2011).

Table 1 Example of a SWOT Matrix

| EXTERNAL FACTORS | INTERNAL FACTORS | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Strengths | Weaknesses |
| Opportunities | Strengths and Opportunities | Opportunities and Weaknesses |
| Threats | Strengths and Threats | Threats and Weaknesses |

In each section of SWOT the user will list the most significant factors pertaining to their company and begin to combine internal and external categories. With the matrix the user can distinguish the relationships between each sub category labeled as the following: strengths and opportunities, strengths and threats, weaknesses and opportunities, weaknesses and threats. A way to think about a SWOT analysis is to think of it in terms of a prognosis of a patient, (Camden, 2009) in terms of letting the patient know all the things that are wrong, and the means by which to correct those problems through procedures that come from the strengths and weaknesses that currently exist. An example of this in financial terms could be a budget, which is a strategy created by cost efficiency analysis. It is the connections made from the external environment that aim to solve the problems experienced internally.

Once connections are made from each of the subcategories, strategies can be made to determine a course of action for that company's particular needs of progression in their industry. What one gains from planning is a better sense of security in a firm's future and present. A firm needs all ranks of profession to become part of the internal analysis because it immerses them in what's important to the firm in terms of

trend analysis, evaluating personnel skills, and industry knowledge that forms the larger picture of where the firm is performing (Schwenk, 1993). What this indicates is that by understanding these internal and external factors, one is better equipped for long-term decisions in its operations. The single most important part of this kind of analysis for a firm is the strategies that emerge from them (Olson & Currie, 1992).

SWOTs can be used in other situations besides in a business setting. An example of a productive SWOT analysis is the using social software in higher and further education (Schroeder, A., S. Minocha, and C. Schneider, 2010). The goal of the project for the researchers is attempting to determine the implications of creating a social networking program for educational purposes by using a SWOT analysis. To determine the factors that are the most prevalent to the problem relevant themes and sub-themes were reviewed through situational description and data analysis by each of the three members on their team individually, and then compiled together.

There are drawbacks to doing a SWOT analysis with a smaller group of people because we naturally tend to be either pessimistic or optimistic when weighing the importance of certain internal and external factors. Personal opinions are a problem in SWOTs because they reflect a person's existing ideals, which can be used to justify a previously decided course of action rather than used as a means to create new possibilities (Balamuralikrishna, 1997). In order to combat these pre-existing biases it is important to have diversity in the SWOT creation. By including opinions of all facets of the firm, one will gain a more comprehensive SWOT because it encompasses the views of all parties involved in its conclusion.

In the study mentioned previously it was important for them to obtain information from students and faculty alike for a total of 83 participants. By doing this, the researchers were able to obtain a broad spectrum of the strengths and weaknesses that encompass the internal factors of existing social software, and the external factors that define the environment of other university system's learning software capabilities. After

categorizing the responses from the 83 participants, weights were given to the internal and external factors that were rendered more valuable than others. What this means is that they put a numerical value on what most participants deemed favorable to the strength of the program and what they considered harmful. Giving a weight to each of the responses allows for the researchers to identify strategies to come to a conclusion and possible problems that can arise from that decision. By identifying risks that could arise from this conclusion a better system can be established to create a learning environment that achieves results that will benefit students and faculty alike.

The Floral Industry

The satisfaction of the purchasing of flowers is only measured by the reason for purchase. The floral industry is a volatile one because flowers are considered a luxury good, meaning that for a higher price there will be a lower quantity sold, and are affiliated with emotional and seasonal purchasing habits. It is the goal of the large wire-services to build consumer demand for flowers on a more regular basis than annual occasions, but the problem is how to attract more consistent buying habits among standard consumers. When comparing flowers sales to other food products such as produce, dairy, and meats, floriculture and nursery crops lack an extensive marketing literature (Palma, 2010) which indicates to florists of all sizes that there's a need to create an incentive to buy flowers without the occasion of a holiday.

1-800-Flowers, FTD (Florists Transworld Delivery), and Proflowers have been dominating the \$19 billion dollar industry (Palomeri, 2008) for decades, but beginning to dwindle under the pressure of online sales, consumer preferences, and legal matters (Lyon, 1995).

With more people shopping online there is the need to market online. When researching the change of the floral industry post internet, it seemed to lose creativity between the florists' and the consumers as more and more people wanted to choose one arrangement out of one hundred (Hunt, 2006). The problem with this

lies with the florist that completes the wired-in order and gets blamed for its lack of value. There is a loss of profits for a wire-in order on the florists' end because they are receiving 15% percent less than if they were to receive the order locally (DeLaach, 2011). The wire-service gains mostly from the subscription of individual shops to their floral communities, and less from the actual wire of orders (Lucas, 1996). What this indicates is a discord between the internet services and the florists that complete the final transaction.

The factors that cause a disconnection between the consumer demands and the suppliers' limitations are caught at the point of shipment. The CEO of ProFlowers said in an online interview on distribution modeling that the barriers to entry are relatively low and can be found everywhere, but the opportunities for success are considerably high. He indicated that shipping product as perishable and fragile as flowers is no easy or cheap task, and buyers are unforgiving when they don't get exactly what the picture on the website looked like (Cottrill, 2001). What this means for suppliers with primarily online sales is the need to ship the product in a last-minute fashion without compromising quality. There could be a loss in customer satisfaction by not completing an order exactly as it would appear on Teleflora.com. However, it is Teleflora's, and all other wire services, responsibility to specify that flowers are seasonal, meaning that not everything pictured on a website will be included in your order but made to equal in price and style.

Teleflora's Strategies for Success

In order to create a brand name in an oligopolistic industry, Teleflora, located in Los Angeles California, has to be aggressive in determining what the floral customer wants and how to market effectively to them. Teleflora has been established for seventy-seven years, has over 16,000 florist members domestically and an additional 20,000 outside of North America. Instead of modeling themselves after their competition, 1-800-Flowers and FTD, they have taken a route that is catered to the individual customer. In an interview with the president of Teleflora, Shawn Weiddman, he stated that, "...florists that operate with Teleflora are able to

create a beautiful product that is made and delivered locally...FTD and 1-800-Flowers have begun the mediocrity of creativity and stifled the businesses of local florists..."(Wong, 2009). The core difference for many Teleflora florists is the anti-belief in the use of "drop-shipping" flowers. What drop-shipping means is that flowers are packaged separately from a vase in a cardboard box as opposed to arranged and delivered by a professional florist.

Teleflora considers their policy of not participating in the drop-shipment trend as an opportunity in capturing market share by taking an opposite approach to the way flowers are delivered. Teleflora believes that by drop-shipping flowers, there is a negative experience for both the sender and receiver because it decreases the overall look and value of the product (Wong, 2009). Often times the sender of the gift never actually sees what they send, but get the negative feedback from their recipient. By using the technology of wire-services Teleflora can connect to a local florist and have an arrangement delivered to a customer for around the same price as if it were delivered in a box. The value of this is measured in the reassurance of the sender that the recipient is getting a quality product and in most cases a photo of the end product.

Consumer behavior is easier to predict when it comes to flowers because they are a valuable commodity that has sentimental value when purchased. A consumer will typically buy flowers for personal use or for a gift, but their meaning is something that transfers differently with every culture (Marinos, 2010). Historically flowers have been given for household adornments, private gifts (such as birthdays and anniversaries), and national holidays such as Valentine's Day. Today these trends are still the standard but there has been a recent development in the import of developing nations' cut flowers. They are generally cheaper because of low wages and long year growing and typically exported to developed nations like the US and Europe (Hughes, 2000). What this indicates is the movement from standard cut flowers like daisies, roses, and lilies to a more exotic preference like ginger, orchids, and halcyonia (Drakou, 1995). What this means for

small flower shops is that there is a globalization of the floral industry that needs to be taken into account when promoting one's business and marketing on-trend with the rest of the world.

Trends of Tomorrow

Teleflora is fighting to become a household name and take away from their competition by directing their customers to local florists' websites, becoming more prevalent in TV advertising and hiring big names to promote the individuality of Teleflora.

The idea behind directing customers to local florists' websites is to allow them to get a better idea of what can be made for their specific needs. Individual florists may have the capacity for large orders for weddings, funerals, and other large events as well as for smaller ones like birthdays and holidays. By being able to search for a florist through Teleflora, the customer gets that tailored desire fulfilled. Teleflora's strategy behind the function for consumers to find a florist in their location is that they want to have as many facets for gaining the sale of flowers for any and all occasions when shopping online. It provides an ease of customer usage to be able to talk to a real florist in their area instead of simply picking from the pictures online (Wong, 2009). What this means for Teleflora is the pursuit to place their name first when it comes to searching for the consumers' floral needs.

Television advertising has become more popular in the floral industry after FTD began making commercials for Mother's Day in the 1960's. Today one sees commercials for flowers on every channel for every holiday (William, 2005). Teleflora began a new campaign in 2010 with singer/actress Faith Hill to create a new line of flowers for every occasion. Teleflora aired the commercial during the Super Bowl in 2011 and again in 2012 with model Adrianna Lima, which is something that no other floral company has achieved on that kind of scale. Teleflora's outlook on TV advertising is that it is one of the most productive mediums for creating awareness for most consumers (Wong, 2009). After the commercial during the 2010 Super Bowl there

was a calculated growth in return on investment around 8% percent (Passikoff, 2011). What this indicates is that increasing presence in the media has proved to be affective in boosting sales and brand recognition. Being reminded of these holidays seems to be the catalyst behind the spikes in purchasing of fresh flowers for Teleflora even in a downtrodden recession. Florists all over the world speculated that there would be a significant drop in purchasing due to our recession, (Clark, Matthew, 1999) however there were a lot of backorders for many florists that reduced their inventory around the Christmas 2011 season (Wong, 2009). This kind of brand advertising is the most expensive to come by today, and with more people doing their purchasing online the strategy behind commercials needs to be more carefully planned out through management creating strategies based on internal and external factors.

Some competitors have turned to combining forces with other enterprises in order to beef up their competition against Teleflora. 1-800-Flowers teamed up with Baskin Robbins, located in Canton, Massachusetts, to promote their holiday arrangements with holiday sweets (Lucas, 1996). By doing so, they have been able to earn more in the sweets markets and has also opened a line of chocolates made by Dove and Godiva that sell particularly well around Valentine's Day. With all the partnerships and creative marketing sales are still stagnant for most of the floral giants reporting that change in the way they sell flowers is necessary in order create an increase in profit (Rosner, 1996). It is important for small flower shops to promote before holidays in order to increase its' own sales when the recession is stimulating flower prices to increase.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To establish the best decision in choosing whether to create a direct marketing service with the Teleflora Network, there must be an understanding of April Flowers' end purpose. By analyzing the features and attractions provided in the system there can be a better understanding of how well it will work for April Flower's and its customers' flower needs. An internal analysis will be created through the gaining of knowledge on the current operation of April Flowers. By gaining industry knowledge through trend analysis and the examples set by competitors, an external analysis with strategies on how to exploit the market to firms' favor.

Procedures for Data Collection

The procedures for data collection will attempt to explain the process by which each factor of the SWOT matrix was concluded upon and how the weighing process is assessed. As described in the literature review, a SWOT matrix is the means to come to a conclusion based on the weight of internal and external factors. In order to affectively assemble a list of potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats there must be a collection of research done on the company as well as the industry.

The internal analysis will come from information provided in an interview of the shop owner, April Peet about the potential strengths and weaknesses of April Flowers and her experience with the Teleflora system that exists already, without the marketing program. An external analysis will come from the industry information based on competitors' strategies, economics regarding the floral industry, and current market trends. First the compilation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are ordered from most to least important. The degree of importance is assessed by the management of the firm in order to determine which factors are more severe than others. A listing of the potential threats seen from the interview with Mrs. Peet will highlight weaknesses that can be avoided or corrected and will emphasize strengths that can be

taken advantage of. A list of the interview questions appears under Appendix A. With this discussion guide the researcher will categorize the internal business operations that are favorable and unfavorable for April Flowers. In order to determine a strategy on how to become more profitable, the analyst will take into account the degree of satisfaction from each question in the discussion guide. Strengths and weaknesses should be given a number one through four, with strengths getting a number three or four based on their importance and weaknesses a one or two based on the same thing in order to list all factors out. Once the list of internal factors is found they will be put in order of importance from least to greatest individually for strengths and weaknesses. From this point the researcher will give each factor a weighted number that factors the level of importance with the portion of all internal factors. The portion of each factor will be evaluated by ranking all strengths and weaknesses together with a total sum of one. This is done to highlight which factors from both the strengths and weaknesses are the most important.

The same process will be done for external factors by giving opportunities a number between three and four, and threats a one or two. The same weighted portions will be calculated in the same manner as the internal factors. The objective of this is to provide the analyst with a better notion of what factors are more relative to creating an overall strategy.

The SWOT matrix effectively identifies any malfunctions in daily operations, what pre-existing attributes are working well, what opportunities are present in current and future markets, and the threats facing the firms' industry. The discussion guide links the shops' past marketing campaigns, raw product volatility, and the process by which new marketing will aid in the production process. The discussion was conducted in person, at the shop in order to physically witness the daily operations of all employees and the evaluation of productivity from the owner. Such a first-hand account of operations adds the personal opinion of the shop owner, which can skew the decisions made at the end of the SWOT matrix. To avoid too much

personal bias the opinions of the analyst and employees are taken into more consideration, however April Peet will have final deliberation in any decision making because she is the most at risk. In order to flesh out the most apparent problems of past experiences, trends need to be discovered. By creating the discussion guide, the analyst is provided with first-hand knowledge in what factors are more important as well as what strategies have been tried in the past. For example, handout surveys have been given to customers in the shop as a means to evaluate marketing in the past. What this indicates is that April Flowers could be using a similar method through online communication as opposed to handwritten surveys.

To determine what external factors are important, the analyst researched what trends are current in the floral industry such as consumer tastes and preferences, product development, and global issues that affect local product supply. Demographic factors are part of trends involving local consumers' tastes and preferences. These will be found using Mediamark Research and Development database, which allows researchers to evaluate the importance of specific factors including national data on website usage, annual income spent on cut flowers in the last six months, and specific television channels that the respondents watch. This data will allow the analyst to manipulate the information in order to evaluate specific factors that include variables relating to marketing those marketing statistics. This particular data is used to manipulate what demographic trends are relevant on a national perspective in order to better attract the average consumer of cut flowers. The focus of this data is to determine how April Flowers' current customers relate to the overall consumer of fresh cut flowers in the United States and will better provide April Peet with a local target and possible future consumers. Using this data will also portray the level of importance for external opportunities and threats used in creating the SWOT matrix.

Information on competitors in floriculture, 1-800-Flowers and FTD, will come from peer-reviewed articles provided by Hoover's; additional information on global and economic trends will come from variables

in the “Quarterly Consumption Tracking Report from 1998-2005” and will shed light on the trends of consumer purchasing for fresh cut flowers in the United States. Economic trends in the floral industry are provided through the “Economic Research Service outlook data on fresh cut flowers in California, 2006”.

Procedures for Data Analysis

The procedures for data analysis will then decipher how a strategy can be formed to accept or reject the assembly of the Teleflora Marketing System. The analysis will be a qualitative decision process of creating a SWOT matrix. The primary objective is to determine whether it is advantageous for April Flower’s to use the Teleflora Marketing System in order to direct market.

The process of choosing which internal factors rank higher than others is done through the analysis of the discussion guide responses, and an overall evaluation of the shops daily operations from the perspective of the employees and the analyst. Once each factor is listed, they are given their respective rates, threes and fours for strengths and ones and twos for weaknesses. Then each factor will be assessed as a portion of the whole internal analysis. What this allows the analyst to do is bring forth what factors are more plausible to stem a strategy from. The highest ranking factors from the strengths and weaknesses are chosen and the analyst will include them as a part of the final SWOT matrix. This same process is done for the external analysis, however the factors are analyzed based on their level of significance for specific factors. For example the trends in floral consumer behavior will be ranked according to what the most profitable trend is, and the same is true for trends in flower production and economic factors.

By dividing the internal and external factors into their own categories it will become apparent as to how many strengths compared to weaknesses exist in the internal analysis and how many threats and opportunities exist in the external analysis. The analyst will be able to evaluate the shops overall performance

capabilities based on said ratio. By performing the SWOT matrix in this manner, strategies to avoid harmful scenarios will be easier to identify due to their rate of occurrence, weight given from the analyst, and strengths used to combat against negative factors. The analyst is aware of these strategies by noticing the relationship between the factors and how they interrelate between the external and internal analysis. This is achieved by combining strengths with opportunities, weaknesses and opportunities, strengths and threats, and weaknesses and threats. This is shown earlier in figure 1.1. In April Flowers SWOT analysis there needs to be an obvious strategy to increase sales by using the Teleflora marketing system in order to install it.

Specifically using the interview for internal analysis will give insight as to the strengths and weaknesses that exist in the shop currently. The responses of the interview questions will be analyzed on whether April favored a particular attribute of the shop or not. From this information a weight can be given based on the severity of favorability for each specific question. Potential problems with this approach could be that what April may see as a good thing, might actually hurt the business in the long run once a strategy is deciphered with the SWOT matrix. In order to minimize human error it is necessary to include the perspective of current employees and the use of past strategic success that is relevant to the issue of marketing. It is important for an analyst in this situation to be aware that errors can occur, but it is best to have the most information available when concluding on a course of action. In order to collect that amount of data, it is necessary to cover every internal factor from daily chores and operations to historical data and sales.

A conclusion for a SWOT analysis is the result of weighing the risks and benefits of the internal and external factors and their combinations. By doing this there can be a pairing of internal and external factors that will create the overall list of outcomes. As an example of a beneficial analysis, in the SWOT analysis of whether creating social software for higher education was effective for better learning, they concluded that the benefits of creating the software outweigh the threats of external factors because it is more productive for

students in each class to learn in an individually catered manner. By listing each risk against each possibility the group of researchers could strategize a plan that would avoid potential downfalls. In this SWOT analysis for April Flowers the goal is to reach the same type of strategy in which opportunity is preserved through the assessment of risk.

The results will be presented in an eight celled chart that highlights the combination of internal and external factors in the order of favorability that will come from the calculation of their weights. Once the weights are calculated, the analyst lists the top factors by their individual category, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The combination of internal and external factors is done through the deliberation of April Peet, the employees, and the analyst by using an aspect of both factors. For example, strengths such as high asset turnover ratio combined with the opportunity of an increase in floral consumers' income can form the strategy to acquire more assets to take advantage of a larger consumer spending capability. This is done with all factors that can be combined for each sub-category. By pinning these categories together it is easier for all members involved in the decision process to decide which combinations are the most frequent. A frequency indicates a trend in the level of importance, as well as what strategies could be put into action. A list of the top three strategies from all sub-categories will be given to April Peet so that she can make an informed decision on the appropriate course of action for her business

In order to support the adoption of the Teleflora direct marketing system there needs to be a clear strength in its profitability, meaning that it will attract more orders from customers based on the advertisements sent through the system.

Assumptions and Limitations

The limitations of performing a SWOT analysis for a direct marketing system for April Flowers will hold a certain level of bias. It is the duty of the analyst to advise her on what decision could be the best, but since

she holds the most risk, it is her final decision. Every decision will be rendered harmful or helpful based on the optimism of the respondent. For example a pessimist may see an opportunity as something weak, or an optimist may see a weakness as an opportunity (Balamuralikrishna, 1997). There is also a lack of diversity in the compilation of internal and external factors' weights due to the limited pool of responses determining favorability. Since this is a project specifically pertaining to the profitability of April Flowers, there is a need to cater to that business. However, by bringing to focus the environment in which the shop operates will enlighten April Peet to new opportunities and threats that may not have been apparent before the research was conducted. The researcher assumes that the problems were transparent through the careful study of the shop itself in context with the floral industry. These assumptions are limited to April's knowledge of her business as well as the historical data of April Flowers. The employees will have a limited knowledge on the positives and negatives of the shops operations because of personal biases, as mentioned before. Creating a perfect SWOT analysis with the limited resources can only be as accurate as the information given. It is the requirement of all in the decision process to acquire as much qualitative and quantitative evidence in order to give importance to every factor. Following resolution of these problems, April Peet can choose to adopt the Teleflora system based on the finished SWOT matrix.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis for April Flower's direct marketing system through Teleflora was conducted by organizing internal and external factors that impact the profitability of the shop. The tool used for conducting this research is the SWOT matrix which is presented in the appendix section A. With the SWOT this researcher is able to highlights strategies deemed the most effective in increasing the profitability. The procedures in which this researcher's information was organized are summarized in chapter 3. When reading this chapter it is important to reflect on the objectives listed at the beginning of this research in order to better understand the overall effectiveness of the project itself. This chapter will describe, in depth, the process behind choosing a strategy including their relationship to all objectives.

Problems with data collection

The primary problem with collection data is based on opinions of April Peet, other employees, and public information available on the floral industry. Information gathered from the interview with April Peet is entirely based on her own knowledge of internal factors that are part of owning a florist shop, and can be interpreted differently, which can deliver alternative strategies. Although the data may be biased, it is a view of concerned participants of the internal factors that affect one specific business.

Internal Factor Analysis

The basic functions of the Teleflora direct marketing system are important for a shop owner trying to earn customer loyalty. Within the system it was extremely easy to enable the marketing function because all a researcher needs to do is determine the products to advertise in message and the target customer. The system allowed for pictures and personal messages to be sent to specific customers in an effort to create a personal touch. The proprietor, April Peet, found it is much easier to reach customers via e-mail messages

than over the phone because it is quicker and more simple to get the message across with the increase in customer use of smart phones and other mobile devices that can receive e-mail notifications. In comparison to the current method of order reminders, cold-calling, a customer has the option of ordering online or calling the shop directly at their own convenience. If a customer does decide to reorder then the Teleflora system has all the previous information saved, which makes the customer experience user friendly and expedient.

When factoring in the system's effectiveness in the overall SWOT matrix, see figure one on the next page, it was necessary to look at how April Flowers has been marketing to its customers already.

| | <u>Strengths</u> | <u>Weaknesses</u> |
|---|---|--|
| <p>current sales are enough to balance current costs</p> <p>Telofora is the best operating system available according to April</p> <p>April flowers is in a convenient location with parking and delivery employment is sufficiently staffed</p> <p>Telofora is the lowest cost wire-in service</p> <p>only floral shop within the Madonna area</p> | <p>Wire-in/out services lose a 15% share of profit compared to local orders</p> <p>increasing wedding orders make storage difficult for shop flowers in the cooler</p> <p>style of April Flowers is very similar to Open Aire; competing florist</p> <p>Telofora designs are not consistent with the style of April Flowers</p> <p>Current reminders for customers about occasions relies on phone conversation</p> | |
| <p>Opportunities</p> <p>ing online and on television</p> <p>les floral market in close proximity</p> <p>markets for specialty flowers</p> <p>keting trend for floral companies</p> <p>f exotic flowers has become easier and cheaper</p> | <p>Strengths-Opportunities</p> <p>increased advertising can increase profits</p> <p>online advertising with telofora</p> <p>joint marketing with other local businesses allows better sales</p> <p>LA Floral market can provide more unique products to April</p> | <p>Weaknesses-Opportunities</p> <p>increasing wedding orders takes away from space for new product</p> <p>advertising through Telofora means more wire in/out orders, lose 15% profit</p> <p>Style of April Flowers emphasizes uniqueness, so could other local shops</p> <p>importing gets cheaper for every other shop as well as April's</p> |
| <p>Threats</p> <p>re lowest on the list of "food products"</p> <p>opping takes the creativity from local florists away</p> <p>e prices increase when in recession</p> <p>t of flowers is extremely difficult</p> <p>re considered a luxury good</p> | <p>Strengths-Threats</p> <p>Shop is located near a grocery store where flowers are cheaper</p> <p>online shopping outside of Telofora can give back some creativity</p> <p>shipment of flowers easier with more local growers</p> <p>saving on wire-services costs keeps flower prices competitive</p> | <p>Weaknesses-Threats</p> <p>other local shops getting the orders that April can't fill</p> <p>current recession hurting all floral industries</p> <p>increasing wedding orders takes precedence over shop orders</p> <p>online shopping takes away from florist customer relations</p> |

FIGURE 1: FINISHED SWOT MATRIX FOR APRIL FLOWERS

When interviewing April Peet about what methods she is using currently, she gave a low rating for the following internal factors: current marketing strategies has increased sales, customers have sufficient

knowledge about upcoming birthdays and special occasions, customers know what flowers are in season and in stock. What this indicates is that there is a greater need to alert all customers about events, flowers in season, and upcoming holidays in order to boost sales. By using the Teleflora marketing system it would be possible to send any client an e-mail that would remind them of any order they had placed earlier and give them the option to renew that order again. April can keep track of repeat orders through the system because it records all previous orders. If she wanted to look up a specific customer it would tell her if that person re-ordered after the system was installed. Below is the table of weights and descriptions used to conduct the internal analysis for April Flowers. When factoring this into the SWOT matrix this researcher gave weights heavier for its degree of importance. Using the system was placed in the opportunity section because it could increase sales, but was given a higher rating because of the recent trends in the floral industry of online sales and marketing. When putting together a SWOT matrix it is important to put together internal and external factors in order to find what strategies are the best to take into action. The decision process is laid out in table 1 of internal factors and then factored into the SWOT matrix that highlights the best strategies for a business.

TABLE 2: Internal SWOT Analysis for April Flowers

| S/W | rating | weight | score | Description |
|-----|--------|--------|-------|---|
| S | 4 | 0.09 | 0.36 | current sales are enough to balance current costs |
| S | 3 | 0.07 | 0.21 | employment is sufficiently staffed |

| | | | | |
|---|----------|------|------------|--|
| S | 3 | 0.05 | 0.15 | current system of reminders reaches customers |
| S | 3 | 0.06 | 0.18 | reporting more profits than losses in year 2010 |
| S | 4 | 0.2 | 0.8 | Teleflora is the best operating system available according to April |
| S | 3 | 0.07 | 0.21 | only floral shop within the Madonna area |
| S | 4 | 0.1 | 0.4 | Teleflora is the lowest cost wire-in service with a monthly subscription of \$99 dollars |
| S | 4 | 0.09 | 0.36 | April flowers is in a convenient location with plentiful parking and delivery Deliveries are available for customers in the San Luis Obispo area including |
| S | 3 | 0.05 | 0.15 | Morro Bay, Pismo, Cuesta, and Arroyo Grande |
| W | 1 | 0.04 | 0.04 | Teleflora designs are not consistent with the style of April Flowers |
| W | 1 | 0.02 | 0.02 | The overall size of the shop is very small and difficult to have a large inventory and store wedding arrangements |
| W | 1 | 0.05 | 0.05 | Wire-in/out services lose a 15% share of profit when compared to simple local orders |
| W | 2 | 0.02 | 0.04 | Current reminders for customers about holidays and birthdays relies on phone conversation instead of e-mail reminders |
| W | 2 | 0.04 | 0.08 | style of April Flowers is very similar to Open Aire; competing florist |
| W | 1 | 0.05 | 0.05 | increasing wedding orders make storage difficult for shop flowers in the cooler |
| | 1 | | 3.1 | Cumulative scores |

What this table illustrates is the overall process used to determine the most important internal factors in formulation of a strategy. The sum of the weights equals one, which means that the overall calculations are accurate because it means that the internal factors are part of a whole internal analysis. What was realized from this chart was that the main weakness for April Flowers was customers lack of awareness pertaining to flowers are in stock or in season, also that some of the Teleflora designs didn't reflect the general design aesthetic of the shop.

When factoring in April's responses from the interview into the SWOT matrix, the top five to six factors were placed under either strengths or weaknesses. Refer to appendix A for the questions and appendix B for the responses. This was done in order to better pinpoint what factors were more important, as well as what can be combined with external factors in order to form strategies.

The rest of the interview brought attention to the strengths of April Flowers as it currently stands. When the interview was returned the strengths that were the most prevalent were that the shop is low in debt, and product moves very quickly. What this indicated for the SWOT is that increased advertising can only improve consumer awareness of the shop as well as the overall style and pricing that makes April Flowers stand out amongst other local florists. Being technologically savvy also was evaluated as something that the shop was performing well in, but April felt it could be improved. When giving weight to this factor in the internal analysis it ranked higher than other decisions because it has a greater possibility of being put into action with the Teleflora direct marketing system.

External Factor Analysis

There are essential differences in using the Teleflora system as opposed to other corporate floral wire-services that include creativity, quality assurance, and support for small floral shops around the nation. When putting together the external analysis it was important for the analyst to take competition into consideration in terms of what they had to offer that Teleflora did not. Also part of the external analysis was identifying current trends in the floral industry to look at how it's changing and adapting to market better to an increasingly online world.

The top three competitors for wire-services included flower availability, marketing capability, and overall market presence. When examining their unique characteristics in the literature review it became apparent these companies were marketing heavily online to expand reach for various holidays and special occasions. The problem with these companies is that they lost customers based on the quality of product (Wong, 2011). This is an opportunity for April Flowers as a Teleflora florist because the shop is able to deliver a product that is arranged by a professional and insures the quality of the end product because it was made

locally. The “drop-box” ship method has lost steam in marketability because of the overall perishability of the flowers themselves. The main competition for Teleflora florists is that they have very similar arrangements and customer service, but the essential difference for florists is that the Teleflora wire-service costs significantly less, creating an opportunity for April Flowers to have lower prices for in-store customers. With potential extra income from increasing numbers of customers, it is also possible for April Flowers to market more online on websites not affiliated with Teleflora. To explain further, April will have more disposable income to set up a specific site for April Flowers customers and other local shoppers.

When putting these factors into the external analysis it was apparent that the greatest opportunities for April Flowers were the advantages of “online marketing”, creating a website for customers to know what’s going on at April Flowers currently, and better service because of its proximity to the LA floral market which provides more exotic products than anywhere else in the world (Drakou, 1995). What this indicated for the analyst is that there needs to be a direct marketing system to reach customers in order to remind them of upcoming occasions and/or holidays as well as what flowers are in season and in stock. Table 2, shown below, illustrates the process taken to analyze the external factors of the floral industry.

TABLE 3: External SWOT Analysis for April Flowers

| O/T | rating | weight | score | Description |
|-----|--------|--------|-------|---|
| T | 2 | 0.05 | 0.1 | Floriculture is typically lowest on the list of "food products" when being purchased in a grocery store (Palma) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|----------|-------------|--|
| T | 2 | 0.04 | 0.08 | Online shopping for floral arrangements takes the creativity from local florists away |
| T | 1 | 0.05 | 0.05 | shipment of flowers is extremely difficult because of their perishability and design placement |
| T | 1 | 0.02 | 0.02 | flowers are considered a luxury good; recession has drastically hurt the floral industry |
| T | 1 | 0.01 | 0.01 | grocery store flowers are cheaper than those bought from a florist |
| T | 2 | 0.03 | 0.06 | wholesale prices increase when in recession |
| O | 3 | 0.1 | 0.3 | import of exotic flowers like Orchids, Halyconia, and Ginger has become easier and cheaper for local florists |
| O | 4 | 0.25 | 1 | advertising online and on television has become more popular with big floral companies |
| O | 3 | 0.1 | 0.3 | joint marketing between floral companies and other complementary comp. (Baskin Robbins) provides extra advertising |
| O | 4 | 0.2 | 0.8 | Los Angeles floral market is one of the largest import/export centers in California; great for CA florists |
| O | 4 | 0.15 | 0.6 | trend to purchase less conventional flowers opening markets for specialty flowers and promotes sustainability |
| | | 1 | 3.32 | Cumulative scores |

What this chart indicates is the weights and measures of the external opportunities and threats. This chart highlights the main factors used to create a strategy for April Peet in order to better market to her customers and boost sales. When analyzing the potential threats to April Flowers and the floral industry the top three were the perishability of flowers, price volatility for flowers as a commodity, and that online shopping takes away the creativity of local for fixed product offerings. In order to counter these threats with strengths available the analyst found the threats facing the floral industry as a whole. What the analyst found is that by marketing to customers outside of Teleflora's system, potential online clients can get a better idea of what the shop has to offer in terms of creativity and overall style. The reason to do additional marketing outside of the Teleflora system is to maintain a primary connection between the shop's aesthetic, and for weddings. In order to reduce product perishability it is necessary to only deliver within the areas that are local. April Flowers only delivers within a certain radius of the San Luis Obispo area, insuring the freshness and presence of the flowers being delivered. Lastly, since flowers are considered a luxury product they are usually

the lowest priority of the typical grocery list of an average income shopper. Small floral shops are in competition with grocery store florists because of price competition. Grocery stores typically are getting lower prices for flowers, yet lack many of the specialty plants that are offered in many local florists. By using Teleflora as the wire-service, it keeps April's wire-service prices lower, while being able to reach a larger number of customers.

The most prevalent opportunities presented in the external analysis are that April Flowers has the option to use the Teleflora marketing system and the trend towards unique and exotic flowers. Having such a direct connection to the LA floral market insures that April Flowers will get the most popular and unique flowers imported from all around the world. Some of the flowers the shop received include flowers that haven't been used for any designs in the San Luis Obispo area, which gives April Peet a creative advantage over other local florists. By using a direct marketing strategy April can let her customers know just what new flowers she has in the shop and what can be done with them by sending a picture attached with the notice. By doing this April could create a market of receptive customers when it comes to their floral purchases. By combining these opportunities with the strengths of the shop April can create a larger market and consumer awareness. The strategies that were formed from these opportunities are the strongest because of their potential profitability. In order to succeed all April would have to do is use the Teleflora direct marketing system to let he customers know just what is in stock, and include reminders of what customers have purchased in the past. April already pays for the system, which is a monthly cost of \$99 dollars, and it includes the direct-marketing function free of additional cost.

Overall Strategy Analysis

After weighing the internal and external factors from the SWOT matrix the best course of action was determined in order to benefit April Flowers. The favored top three strategies from the matrix were first increased advertising through Teleflora and specific site for April Flowers, then saving on cost of a wire-service like Teleflora can keep all retail flower prices down, and finally the increase in exotic flowers imports gives April Flowers a competitive edge in creativity. From those three strategies the best option for April would be enabling the Teleflora direct marketing function in order to reach current customers with floral needs as well as increase customer awareness of April Flowers' website. The end objective of using this system was to boost sales and build a closer relationship with current and future customers. By creating an ease and convenience in shopping for something as unique as flowers, April can receive better feedback from clients as well as stay at peak of competition in a small-scale, local market. In order to track the success of the system all April would have to do is compare the sales from last year from returning customers compared to how sales are with the system. It is expected that there will be an increase in the general sales for the shop as well as an increase in return customers. Part of this industry is creating something for an occasion that is supposed to be memorable and by creating a stronger relationship with her customers April can create consumer loyalty that other florists in the area can't have.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking back at what has been discussed so far, the researcher can examine the possibilities of installing the Teleflora direct marketing system based on the analysis of April Flowers' internal and external factors of influence. In order to find these factors it was necessary to determine what constituted an internal factor versus an external factor. The internal factors are things that the shop controlled or what is part of the business operations already. An external factor was something outside of the business' control, like trends in the market, the economy and changing consumer preferences.

After concluding what these factors were the researcher and April Peet came up with a list of strengths and weaknesses that were part of the internal analysis. This was done through an interview and first hand work in the shop by the researcher in order to gain a more in depth perspective on what worked well already and what things could be improved. At the same time external factors were identified through research into what the floral industry was doing in 2011. What the analyst found was a movement towards online shopping, cheaper imports of exotic and unique flowers through the LA Floral Market, and knowing more consumer direct online marketing campaign by floral wire-services. These factors were then measured based on the level of importance for the shop and then internal and external factors were paired together in order to determine specific strategies that would ultimately increase the sales of April Flowers. In conclusion, the analyst reached the decision to use the already available Teleflora direct marketing system and reach current clients in an effort to build a stronger relationship and brand loyalty. Further, it was concluded that outside marketing from Teleflora should be utilized to keep customers better aware of the uniqueness of the shop and what flowers were in stock and in season.

Recommendations

To those who own a floral shop or are interested in becoming part of the floral industry, this project can help identify the best way to market oneself effectively and efficiently. A SWOT analysis is great for making any large business decision because it forces the analyst to fully examine the business itself as well as the industry and economy that it's operating in. For this project in particular it was extremely helpful to know that the main weaknesses of the shop were that it was not reaching returning customers well enough in order to be frequent consumers of flowers. Most people never really knew what flowers were in season or in stock, but with quick e-mail they became aware of past orders, upcoming events and holidays, as well as what things are new to the shop. To create that awareness is to create a smarter consumer, and that is what the goal of advertising and marketing really is.

In order to take this project further it would be helpful to know just how effectively the system worked. Once installed, a researcher could track current sales and pin them against sales from previous years. If there is a significant increase in sales then there is reason to believe that it was caused by the new system. Also it could be wise to install a customer survey to see just how helpful the messages from the system were. Some consumers may consider the messages spam whereas others may rely on it to remember important occasions.

In conclusion it is always better to understand the way ones' business can improve itself in order to remain competitive in their specific market. By using tools like a SWOT analysis, management and owners can gain a more informed perspective on what factors need improvement and what factors can be taken advantage of. Industry, no matter what kind, is always changing and it is important for any member of a business to know just how to capitalize on these changes to gain profits, consumer awareness, and brand loyalty.

Appendix A

Interview with April Peet

Listed below is a set of Internal factors that are relevant to April Flowers. Indicate and amount on a favorability scale of 1-5, 1 being very unfavorable and 5 being very favorable.

1. The amount of current customers is adequate to sustain a high amount of profit.
1 2 3 4 5
2. The amount of employees staffed on a given day allows the shop to run smoothly.
1 2 3 4 5
3. The current marketing programs have increased sales.
1 2 3 4 5
4. Customers have a sufficient knowledge about upcoming birthdays and anniversaries.
1 2 3 4 5
5. Customers have a sufficient reminder of upcoming holidays and events.
1 2 3 4 5
6. Customers know what flowers are in season and in stock.
1 2 3 4 5
7. April Flowers reports more profits than loss.
1 2 3 4 5
8. Teleflora provides an extra source of profit for April Flowers.
1 2 3 4 5
9. Teleflora has a style that relates to April Flowers
1 2 3 4 5
10. There is no better wire-service than Teleflora.
1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

Returned Survey from April Peet

Listed below is a set of Internal factors that are relevant to April Flowers. Indicate and amount on a favorability scale of 1-5, 1 being very unfavorable and 5 being very favorable.

1. The amount of current customers is adequate to sustain a high amount of profit.
1 2 3 4 5
2. The amount of employees staffed on a given day allows the shop to run smoothly.
1 2 3 4 5
3. The current marketing programs have increased sales.
1 2 3 4 5
4. Customers have a sufficient knowledge about upcoming birthdays and anniversaries.
1 2 3 4 5
5. Customers have a sufficient reminder of upcoming holidays and events.
1 2 3 4 5
6. Customers know what flowers are in season and in stock.
1 2 3 4 5
7. April Flowers reports more profits than loss.
1 2 3 4 5
8. Teleflora provides an extra source of profit for April Flowers.
1 2 3 4 5
9. Teleflora has a style that relates to April Flowers
1 2 3 4 5
10. There is no better wire-service than Teleflora.
1 2 3 4 5

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