

5) Describing products – The 4 Ps

A convenient and methodical way of describing a product consists in detailing its “**Marketing mix**”, divided into four sections corresponding to the **four basic components of a marketing plan or strategy**: the “**4 Ps**”, namely:

- the **P**roduct itself (with its content, functions, features and other characteristics),
- its **P**rice (and pricing strategy and business model),
- **P**lace (ie where and how the product can be purchased or accessed),
- **P**romotion (ie the various activities undertaken to promote the product).

Product

A summary presentation of the product should describe its **content and main functions** in simple terms, emphasizing **benefits for the users** as well as **distinctive features** with respect to the product’s possible competitors. A more detailed description of the product should be provided in its requirements specification.

In addition, the following characteristics of the product should be addressed.

Target users (or user groups), for example:

- general public, possibly restricted to an age group (eg 9-15) or to another type of segment (eg French-speaking persons interested in Business English),
- businesses and/or institutions,
- schools.

Target platforms, for example:

- Windows, Linux, Mac OS X, Chrome OS,
- Windows Mobile, iOS, Android, e-reader,
- Internet Explorer, Edge, Firefox, Safari, Chrome, Opera.

Delivery media, for example:

- CD/DVD-ROM,
- website (download),
- website (online service).

Price

It is necessary to have a rough estimate of the sales price of the product in its various forms early on in the project, in order to establish its **forecasted P&L** (profit & loss statement) and to position the product with respect to its competition. More generally, this component of the marketing mix covers the **pricing strategy**, which is related to the distribution channels (“Place”) and the product’s **business model** (ie how revenue, if any, is generated).

Note that a sales price may actually correspond to a subscription fee or a licence fee.

In the case of websites intended to be completely free of charge, there is no price attached to the product but if its business model features advertising revenues, such revenues need to be included in the P&L.

Place

The word "place" refers to "**where the product can be found**" and relates to distribution channels/processes, which may have an impact on the product requirements. Distribution costs must be featured in the P&L.

Here are a few examples of distribution channels/processes:

- indirect sales via wholesalers and/or retailers,
- indirect "OEM" ("bundle") sales,
- direct sales to the general public,
- direct sales to businesses and institutions,
- online sales with product shipment,
- online sales with product download,
- direct online subscription,
- indirect online subscription (via commercial partners),
- online service free of charge.

Promotion

This component of the marketing mix covers everything that is to be done to promote the product, for its launch and beyond. The corresponding **costs** need to be **included in the P&L**.

Here are a few examples of promotion methods and activities:

- evangelism,
- press releases,
- press conferences,
- sample products (free of charge) for journalists and "prescribers/evangelists",
- demonstration version of the product,
- leaflet and/or brochure,
- mailing/e-mailing,
- website, blog, Twitter and, more generally, viral marketing,
- website referencing and search-engine optimization (SEO),
- partnerships (eg sponsoring...),
- exhibitions (booth, demos, "goodies", etc.),
- advertising (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, cinema, Internet).

The promotional activities, as well as the other components of the marketing mix, are generally described in much more detail in a document prepared by Marketing, namely the product's **Marketing plan**, for which input from the PM is usually required (and no doubt useful...).

Note that the expression "**4 Ps**" is also sometimes used in project management to refer to four key areas, namely: **P**eople, **P**roduct, **P**rocess, **P**roject (or **P**olicies, **P**rocedures, **P**eople, **P**lant).

> See the following sites for **more information on the Marketing mix**:

>> netmba.com/marketing/mix/

>> marketingteacher.com/category/marketing-mix/

> See Guy Kawasaki's blog for **more information on "The Art of Evangelism"**:

>> blog.guykawasaki.com/2006/01/the_art_of_evan.html