

APPLE IPAD AIR



With the plethora of new tablets being launched by the likes of Samsung, ASUS, HP, Dell, etc., it was only a matter of time before Apple gave the iPad an overhaul.

The original, boxy, first-generation device was only available for about 11 months, before being replaced in 2011 by a restyled version, the iPad 2. The tapered design language survived, more or less unchanged, for a further 2.5 years, which is a lifetime in the consumer electronics world. That period saw two updates, bringing faster chips and a better display. This latest version however, is a full redesign.

The latest iPad is slimmer and lighter hence its name – iPad Air. Apple has delivered a proper exterior design update, crafting a substantially thinner and lighter tablet that finally eliminates the chunky bezels handed down since the first generation (at least on the left and right). But, despite this significant exterior reduction, the iPad Air maintains the battery life of its predecessor and offers significantly better performance.

Thanks to its vast ecosystem of apps, great performance, and a fantastic screen, the iPad Air retains Apple's title for the best tablet money can buy.

The iPad Air's processor adds extra system speed and power. Improved worldwide cellular compatibility makes the LTE model (with a sim card) a more appealing proposition. And the iOS App Store remains best in class with the widest selection of apps on the market.

This latest iPad adds several tweaks, a new design, lighter weight and performance improvements. Third and fourth generation iPad owners need not upgrade however – it isn't a significant enough jump and their devices are certainly not out of date. However first-generation iPad owners should certainly consider upgrading to the iPad Air.

POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN SETTING A MARKETING STRATEGY

Your marketing strategy consists of the things that you do in your business to make the phone ring. Each technique requires different combinations of financial and human resources. Here are a few pointers on which marketing decisions to improve the return on marketing investment.

- *Market research*

Forward-thinking businesses conduct market research to identify market trends and the demand for their products well before heavy investment is made. The trick is to identify whether your product or service is targeted at a specific audience or to the general population

- *Market Segmentation*

Some products or services are developed to the demographic characteristics of end users/customers.

- *Budgeting*

Your marketing budget plays an important role in deciding which marketing channels are viable and which are not cost effective.

- *Channel Preference of your Target Market*

The key to improving levels of business is identifying the best possible channels to reach your relevant audience.



SETTING EFFECTIVE KPIS

Setting goals and a strategy for your business is important. However you then need to measure how the business is performing in order to understand if the firm is moving forward and is on track to achieve its goals. As such it is necessary to set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). However many business owners and managers find this difficult to do and see the establishment of KPIs as a pen-pushing exercise and don't dedicate time to do this.



KPIs however, form a vital element of the business's sales strategy, both for individuals and for the team itself. In order to create a shared vision, commitment and firm-wide motivation, it is vital that the KPIs are discussed with and agreed by each member of the team from the outset. KPIs should cover:

- Team targets (i.e. convert 75% of all leads during the first quarter of 2014)
- Individual targets (i.e. 80% of chargeable time billed each month in 2014)
- Key tasks

The nature and specific tasks of your KPIs will depend very much on variations including the market sector and geographical area in which you operate. However, managers must ensure that they follow the SMART principal - that is, ensuring that objectives are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.

Depending on your business, it can be useful to adopt a traffic light approach for each client account, so areas of strength and weakness can be easily and quickly identified. This data can be fed into charts which can also be very useful when preparing KPIs, giving specific objectives and demonstrating how the results have a direct impact on the overall sales and business objectives.

Once set, KPIs should then be reviewed on a regular basis, both with the team as a whole and with individual team members. Any variance in performance can then be identified and flagged appropriately, with remedial actions put in place before any aspect of the traffic light chart turns to amber. Bear in mind that KPIs should always be dynamic. For example, even if a KPI target hasn't been met, the individual or team performance may still be on course to achieve the overall sales objective, and the KPI target may need to be lowered. Similarly, if a target has been met, then it may need to be increased at intervals, to maintain drive and motivation.

Please contact a member of our team if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.

COMMUNICATION & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT.

Good communication is key in any business and no more so than when it comes to performance management in a firm. Issues relating to staff members and the performance of their duties arise often when running a business (or a department for that matter). Whether it is timekeeping and attendance issues or failing to complete a task, such issues should be resolved as soon as possible. Good communication skills are key if issues are to be resolved quickly and effectively.



Talk to the person. The first step in resolving almost any employee issue is ostensibly the simplest: talk to the person. It's remarkable how reluctant many business owners and managers are to initiate such a conversation.

It's important to communicate honestly, openly and clearly with your employees. Whether it is performance or conduct that is not up to scratch, it's also a good idea to have such conversations early, rather than letting things fester.

Plan for a successful conversation Before initiating the above conversation with your problem employee, you should plan it out and write down a few bullet points such as:

- What behaviours are giving cause for concern?
- Do I have specific examples I can quote?
- What are the observed or potential consequences of those behaviours?
- What improvements in behaviour would make me feel confident that the employee has understood my concerns and knows what results I am looking for?
- How shall I respond if the employee becomes emotional, angry or defensive?
- How will I monitor their future behaviour?
- When shall we meet again to discuss whether the improvements have actually taken place?
- What shall I do if they are not forthcoming?

The answers to these questions will give you a robust framework for the discussion.

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