The next step in preparing a marketing plan for the company you have chosen is to get a thorough understanding of the marketing opportunities in terms of marketing to customers. Investigate Internet opportunities, with a special focus on potential customers. Try to understand both consumer and business decision making because Internet business can be built to serve either market. In fact, most experts predict that the business-to-business sector of the Internet will be several times larger than the business-to-consumer sector. Knowing how to perform marketing research to find out more about both customers and competitors is key for any strategic marketing plan.

Use the following exercises to guide you through the second part of your strategic marketing plan:

1. Identify the NAIC code for your chosen company's industry. For a complete listing of all 2002 NAICS codes, see the NAICS Association website http://www.naics.com. Perform a brief industry analysis of your firm's industry, based on the NAICS code. You can find NAICS and SIC codes at Statistics Canada's website, www.statcan.gc.ca. These codes will help you perform further research. For example, a firm can register for free with Frasers Canadian Trade Directory Online http://www.frasers.com and get market information on an industry. Industry Canada's Strategis website, http://strategis.ic.gc.ca, provides a good collection of statistical and economic sources from countries and regions outside of Canada.

2. To whom does your company market (consumer, industrial, government, not-for-profit, or a combination of targets)? Within each market, are there specific segments or niches that your company can concentrate on? If so, which one(s) would you focus on and why? What are the factors used to create these segments? What are the Internet capabilities in those markets? If you try to encourage those segments to access your product or service via the Internet, will that change which segments are most important to your business? How? What are the factors used to create these segments? Which segments should your company focus on and why? A resource indicating segment-specific resources in the U.S. is available at http://www.awool.com/. In Canada, Strategis, Industry Canada's website provides information on markets by industry segments, it can be accessed at http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/. Additionally, Statistics Canada has a number of databases you can access with statistics for different marketing segments at http://www.statcan.ca. You can also look at the unique challenges of business-to-business e-marketing at www.bellzinc.ca a site that offers Canadian marketers information on doing business in Canada via the internet.

3. Describe your company's target market segment(s). Use demographics, psychographics, geographics, economic factors, size, growth rates, trends, NAIC codes, and any other appropriate descriptors. What role does the Internet play in your target market's life? How is the target market for your Internet business different from that of a traditional business in your market?

4. Describe the decision-making process that customers go through when purchasing your

company's product or service. What are the critical factors that influence this purchase-behavior process? How will this decision making affect your e-marketing focus and your market offering? If you have a brick-and-mortar presence, will you encourage any existing customers to shop on-line? Why?

5. Using the list of key differential advantages described in the first part of your marketing plan, create a series of positioning grids, using two factors as dimensions (see Exhibit 6.10 for example). Then plot the list of key competitors identified earlier onto these positioning grids. Is your company too close to a key competitor? Are there spaces where the consumer's needs and wants are unsatisfied? Check out the concepts and models used by Positioning Strategies at http://www.positioning.com to increase your understanding of positioning strategies. Consider how the Internet changes what factors are important to success in your market space. Is technology the most important factor for your firm, or are there other ways for you to differentiate from and beat your competition?

6. Are there any critical issues you must explore with primary marketing research before you can implement your marketing plan? These might include items such as customer demand, purchase intentions, customer perceptions of product quality, price perceptions, and reaction to critical promotion. List some critical research questions and decide which form of research you would use. Design a brief Internet customer satisfaction survey that you could place on your Web site. Use the "Survey Wiz" at

http://psych.fullerton.edu/mbirnbaum/programs/surveyWiz.HTM to help you with your questionnaire. Also check out Insight Express at http://www.insightexpress.com.

7. What type of competitive intelligence will you need to gather in order to monitor your market space? How can analyzing the job offerings, mission or "about us" statements, products and services descriptions, or other general information on your competitors' Web sites help you figure out their strategic direction? What areas of a Web site could you scan to gather competitive information? Perhaps you will need to select a clipping service. Go to CanadaOne, http://www.canadaone.com/ and search for "News Clipping Services." For an excellent compilation of competitive intelligence tools, go to http://www.fuld.com/i3/index.html.