

MSU Global Audience Identification Mapping Tool

Audience Identification Mapping (AIM) is a facilitated brainstorming exercise created by Gerald Rhead, while he was Director of Marketing for Central Michigan University's Greater Michigan Programs – Continuing Education Division. The process was initially developed to assist stakeholders who were creating potential businesses, programs and products to identify potential market segments and ways in which to reach those segments through marketing and communication vehicles. The information gathered from this process is then used to assist in the development of strategic plans, business plans, marketing and communication plans etc...

Over time this tool has been adapted and expanded to fit a number of focus group and brainstorming scenarios:

- (1) Constituency Identification
- (2) Sponsorship/Funding Identification
- (3) Potential Partner Identification
- (4) Market Segmentation
- (5) Competitor Analysis
- (6) System/Process – Component Identification

Process Components

Depending on the needs of the client and intended outcomes of the session, the following components of the process are available to the facilitator to help meet the predetermined outcomes.

Initial Client Interaction

It is imperative that the facilitator and his/her team have the necessary upfront communication with the client to determine all elements of the project and the outcomes that the client would like to meet. Together an outline should be developed that uses the necessary components to insure that the client's needs are met.

Identifying Participants

In most cases, assembling a group of 8-12 participants is sufficient. Ideally, 2-3 participants should have a relatively good understanding of the organization and its mission. Another 2-3 participants may come from related fields or areas of the same organization. It is important to have 2-3 participants from outside your organization, but who have an understanding of the field or area you will be discussing.

Context Setting

(Estimated Time Needed: 10 minutes)

Whether you are conducting AIM as a focus group, meeting or other type of session, it is extremely important that you set the context with your participants. Hopefully you have been able to assemble a very diverse group of participants. Make sure that each participant understands the "project" and what the intended outcomes are. This is best accomplished through communication during the "invitation to participate" process and then presented formally at the beginning of the session.

Broad Identification – Level One

(Minimum Time Needed: 20 minutes)

At this stage, the facilitator is attempting to extract (from participants) information at the broadest level and from a macro perspective. This broad identification phase eliminates a common problem in brainstorming – which is the propensity for participants to directly focus their attention on “implementation” level details, potentially missing numerous other opportunities and angles.

Broad Identification – Level Two

(Minimum Time Needed: 20 minutes)

Here, the facilitator begins to target and refine information collected in Level One. The primary objective here is to evaluate the information collected thus far and move forward the investigation and further identification of information that will most likely meet the intended outcomes developed with the client.

Specific Identification – Level One

(Minimum Time Needed: 15 minutes)

At this point, the facilitator begins the process of combining information cataloged up to this point and identifies and prioritizes the categories that will be investigated further.

Specific Identification – Level Two

(Minimum Time Needed: 15 minutes)

At this stage, the facilitator attempts to extract “micro” details in each of the combined categories identified in the previous level. Once this process is complete, the facilitator should help participants identify one, two or three areas (depending on time remaining) that they would like to move forward to the Reach Exercise.

Reach Exercise

The goal of this exercise is to determine with participants the best methods for communicating (reaching) the segments, organizations, people etc... that have been outlined in Specific Identification – Level Two. In most cases, completing the table below is the process used in this exercise.

Segment	Trade Journals and Publications	Associations	Conferences	Meetings	Websites	Other

Final Report

As a result of the AIM exercise, all information is compiled into a written report that is shared with the client. It is recommended that a follow up meeting(s) is scheduled with the client to review the report and determine how to incorporate or move forward on the data collected.