



The Gold Medal Playbook of Marketing Planning

Win More Budget & Drive More Revenue by Planning like a Champion

As a Marketer, You're Competing in a Budget Race

Getting your marketing budget can be competitive, and the best-prepared marketers always win.

Budget dollars are fuel for marketers: the more we have, the farther we can go. However, the way that most marketing organizations handle planning won't help you win the largest possible budget.

Marketing planning often starts from the top down. At the start of the year, you may get a high-level budget based on a percentage of your company's revenue or based on what was given the year prior. Then, you build a bottoms-up plan, breaking it down into months or quarters – perhaps allocating a larger amount to a quarter when you have a big trade show or campaign. From there, Finance adjusts the budget allocations accordingly and you start to track your revised plan and spend to ensure you are not going over or under budget.

Often, marketers rely on what was done last year or their gut feelings when planning, as opposed to data-backed plans.

“More than ever, marketers have to compete for budget and prove their value to the organization. Marketers can easily win that competition by presenting marketing plans that show a clear path to revenue.”

— James Thomas
CMO, ALLOCADIA

However, taking this approach to planning **doesn't give you the ammunition you need in order to make the ask for more budget.** With so much competition for budget dollars, **marketers must increase their level of sophistication in how they build their plans.**

This level of sophistication is difficult when most marketers are still using spreadsheets to track their plans. This is time-consuming and leads to errors. Spreadsheets also don't show how plans relate to corporate objectives, nor do they show how plans impact the company's revenue.

Marketing Budgets and Marketing Plans: Two Sides of the Same Coin



Marketing budgets are typically allocated from the top down – from Finance to Marketing. Meanwhile, marketing plans flow from the bottom up. Marketing budgets and plans sit next to each other and in the end should have an equal dollar amount. This playbook will show you how to build a strategic, bottoms-up plan that not only aligns with your top-down budget allocations but also your strategic business goals and revenue targets.



Why read this playbook?

This guide outlines three levels of strategic marketing planning – Bronze, Silver and Gold – to empower you to **build the best possible strategic plan.** With a strong strategic plan, you can **advocate for more budget and increase your leadership team's confidence in marketing's outcomes.**

Who should read this playbook?

- ✓ CMOs who lack visibility between marketing plans and revenue and have no way of showing the C-suite how they will hit revenue goals
- ✓ Marketing Operations professionals who need to enable CMOs and field marketers to connect plans with overall corporate objectives
- ✓ Field Marketers who are constantly in a race to secure more budget for programs and are tired of coping with cumbersome, manual methods of marketing planning

Bronze-Medal Planning: Scenarios

At the bronze level, you have a **quantitative** understanding of your marketing plan.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: 1

“Scenario planning allows our marketing organization to be agile when things change - and to have an intelligent conversation with the CFO about a new plan of record.”

— CMO

“What is our plan if more budget becomes available? We want to know, so we can hit ‘go’ if it comes.”

— MARKETING OPERATIONS

A Bronze-level plan is a basic scenarios budget. For example, you get \$1 million at the beginning of the year and then decide what to spend it on. You list out your activities that get you to \$1 million in spend **plus additional activities that you could do based on receiving additional budget.**

We recommend that you create scenarios for 10%, 15% and 20% more budget. Also, be ready for a scenario where you have to cut budget. Alternate plans are all about helping you stay agile, so you can “hit the ground running” if your budget changes either way.

Your scenarios should answer the following questions:

- What activities will I do if I get more budget mid-year?
- What will I cut if my budget decreases mid-year?
- Will I have the time and resources to spend the money?

Scenarios also encourage you to be more frugal, so you can free up dollars to spend on activities that are part of your alternate plans.

Ultimately, if you have defined what your plan looks like in different scenarios, you will increase your chances of getting more budget: your stakeholders will have the confidence that you will be able to handle the budget changes efficiently.



“Scenarios are an important element that gives us flexibility throughout our planning process. Planning is an iterative process, and with properly defined scenarios, our plans readily adapt as the plan evolves. We also know that if our marketers have items on their plan that are just beyond the reach of their available target, it creates motivation to be frugal, freeing up funds to bring these items into target. Plus, we always want our marketing organization to have a backlist of vetted and prioritized activities we can quickly green light should funding become available.”

— RYAN DANNER

DIRECTOR, BUDGETING,
PLANNING AND FORECASTING
RED HAT



Bronze-Medal Planning: Scenarios

“Scenario planning means the thinking has been done up-front and I’m ready for any changes in the year.”

— FIELD MARKETERS



Requirements

Bronze-level planning doesn’t require a lot of resources or expertise. It simply requires an incremental addition to what you are already doing in terms of building out a basic functional plan that meets budget allocations. All you need to understand are the numbers.



Your Bronze Medal Team

- Marketers to build the bottoms-up plans with corresponding scenarios
- The CMO to provide input on the standardized alternate scenarios
- Finance and Operations to allocate your top-down budget



Next Steps

- #1. CMO:** Identify your alternate scenarios. Build incremental plans to fill these scenarios. However, you can do this at any time in your fiscal year cycle.
- #2. Ops:** Ensure scenarios are standardized and enable field marketers to easily build these.
- #3. Field Marketers:** It is easiest to work this in at the beginning of your planning cycle.



How Allocadia Helps You Win the Bronze

Allocadia keeps marketing plans agile by allowing field marketers to easily build scenarios. Tag, filter and swap scenarios to explore alternate plans and apply a new plan of record when changes occur. Ops can report globally on all scenarios and re-allocate funds.

Scenarios: Your Base Layer For Successful Marketing Planning

Scenarios are a “base layer” that can be applied to every level of your planning. For example:

- Start by using scenarios in your **investment planning** to show, “What is your Plan B if more budget becomes available?”
- Then, apply scenarios to **strategic alignment** to answer questions such as, “Will we continue to be aligned with our strategic goals if we jump to Scenario B?”
- Finally, apply scenarios to **revenue impact**. For example, if your budget is cut, how will it impact your revenue goals? How can you readjust your marketing efforts to generate 10% more revenue before year-end?

Using scenarios is a simple way to improve your plans and win more budget. And with scenarios as a base layer, you will build the foundation for more complex marketing planning.

Bronze-Medal Planning: Scenarios

The screenshot displays the Allocadia Scenario Planner interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for Home, Budget, and Analytics. The user is logged in as Megan Smith. The main area shows a budget table for North America, viewed in Q1 View, grouped by Default. The table compares Q1 Plan and Q1 Forecast values across various categories. A filter overlay is active, allowing users to tag scenarios by activity (Forecast, Optional, Committed) and scenario (Scenario A, Scenario B). The filter overlay includes a search bar, a 'View \$0 Rows' checkbox, and buttons for 'Reset Filters' and 'Apply Filters'.

Category	Q1 Plan	Q1 Forecast
Grand Total	\$952,200.00	\$1,012,250.00
Email Programs	\$108,000.00	\$104,100.00
Webinar Programs	\$61,500.00	\$57,000.00
Events & Conferences	\$484,000.00	\$481,550.00
SiriusDecisions Summit	\$275,000.00	\$271,100.00
Keynote Sponsorship	\$150,000.00	\$165,000.00
Partner Dinner	\$15,000.00	\$12,500.00
Pre-event Campaign	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Booth Design & Swag	\$29,000.00	\$25,000.00
Conference Passes	\$25,000.00	\$32,000.00
Customer Travel / Accomodation	\$8,000.00	\$11,600.00
Collateral	\$25,000.00	
Employee Travel / Accomodation	\$20,000.00	\$22,000.00
Martech	\$203,500.00	\$204,500.00
Marketing Ops Summit	\$5,500.00	\$5,950.00
Digital Marketing		
Sales Tools	\$700.00	\$45,800.00
Content Marketing	\$105,000.00	\$29,500.00

With Allocadia's Scenario Planner, marketers can tag scenarios by activity, to allow teams to quickly answer "what-if" questions related to their plan.

Silver-Medal Planning: Strategic Alignment

At the Silver level, you have a **qualitative** understanding of your marketing investments.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: 2

“How will giving specific teams or individuals more budget help further our corporate goals?”

— MARKETING OPERATIONS

When you plan at the Silver level, you'll have clarity around your marketing objectives and can identify how your plan contributes to the business. The more you can prove that your plan aligns with the business, the greater your chances of increasing your budget.

When your marketing plan is in alignment with company priorities, you won't invest in campaigns that will ultimately not have the right kind of impact. For example, you might consider re-running a campaign that gave you great results last year. However, you now see that this campaign doesn't align with your organization's latest goals. Instead, you decide to direct your time and resources towards a more valuable campaign.

Strategic targets also empower your organization to work together to achieve common objectives, as it gives visibility into the rationale behind decisions.

Focusing on the right kind of activities will help the entire organization build momentum where it needs to; you will be part of a collective force working together to achieve a clearly understood common goal.



“Allocadia has helped bring to life many of the strategic planning frameworks our organization leverages. It's empowered us to build plans that are transparent and has helped illuminate how our aggregate plans align to strategic targets and benchmarks that we've determined are appropriate for our business.”

— RYAN DANNER

DIRECTOR, BUDGETING,
PLANNING AND FORECASTING
RED HAT



Silver-Medal Planning: Strategic Alignment

“Planning with strategic alignment lets me have a qualitative conversation about go-to-market plans with our Chief Executive Officer.”

— CMO

“I’ve built out a plan to budget and now I want to make sure the plan aligns with our strategic objectives.”

— FIELD MARKETERS



Requirements

Silver-medal planning starts with a strategic marketing plan. The CMO must have well-defined objectives and buy-in from C-level stakeholders. It’s essential that all stakeholders come to a consensus on what marketing is trying to achieve.

A marketing organization may engage the help of an outside consultant to identify what the specific investment allocation mix should be for these objectives (called: strategic targets). For example, if you are in an established market, you may want to invest more in sales enablement or if you are in a growing market, you may want to invest more in brand awareness. These targets are usually reflected as a percent split of your marketing budget.



Your Silver Medal Team

- Marketers to input the plan and map to strategic objectives per activity
- The CMO to set strategic targets, get buy-in from internal stakeholders and communicate strategic objectives to the Marketing team
- Finance, the CEO and other stakeholders to agree on Marketing’s objectives as they relate to company objectives



Next Steps

#1. CMO: To go for the Silver, gain an understanding of your business and marketing objectives. Then, you can engage an analyst group (e.g. SiriusDecisions) to help set your strategic objectives. From there, get buy-in from all internal stakeholders on how to realign your budget. And finally, get the team to map every activity in your plan to these objectives.

We suggest focusing your strategic targets according to program families, objectives and campaign themes.

#2. Ops: Enable field marketers to map activities to objectives.

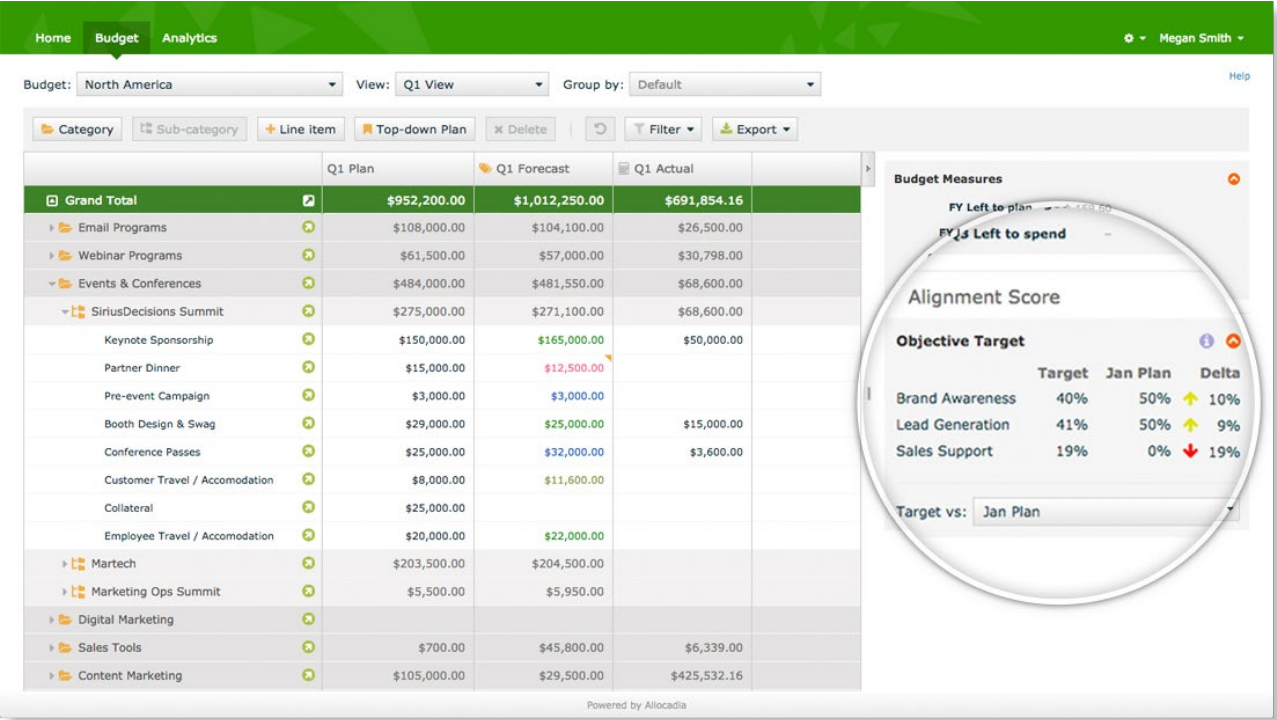
#3. Field Marketers: Ensure you get visibility into the corporate marketing plan and that you understand the overall objectives. Ask questions if you do not!



How Allocadia Helps You Win the Silver

Allocadia makes it easy to set strategic targets and have field marketers map to these as they build their bottoms-up plans. An “alignment score” shows field marketers – at a glance – if their plan is in alignment with the organization’s goals. This helps them make better decisions around their spending and ensures ops can see the global marketing alignment.

Silver-Medal Planning: Strategic Alignment



Allocadia's Strategic Alignment Planner allows teams to visualize their strategic alignment as they build their bottoms-up plans and revise forecasts.

Gold-Medal Planning: Revenue Impact

At the Gold level, you are revenue-driven. This means you have the ultimate quantitative and qualitative understanding of your plan. You are a **leading-edge marketing organization** that achieves predictive performance.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: 3

“Is our plan solid enough to hit our revenue goals?
And if things change, how will revenue be impacted?”

— MARKETING OPERATIONS

At the Gold level you can estimate how your plans – or changes to your plans – will impact revenue. This level of planning is more sophisticated, as it requires a deeper understanding of your marketing funnel and related data points – such as funnel stages, velocities and average deal sizes. It also requires cross-functional assignment with other teams, such as analytics and CRM teams, in order to collect these complex data points.

Showing how your plans will impact revenue is a savvy approach when requesting a larger budget. It demonstrates sophistication and accountability. You can defend your plans when your organization makes cuts and communicate your value when seeking more dollars. It can also enable you to identify opportunities and pro-actively ask for more budget when none seems to be available.

Although this is complex, there are ways to make it easy to understand your estimated impact on revenue. Within Allocadia, you can simply input your expected *output*, such as leads, and see the automatically calculated estimated revenue *impact* – using your funnel metrics.



Gold-Medal Planning: Revenue Impact

“Revenue impact planning allows me to have conversations with the CEO about what she really cares about: revenue.”

– CMO



Requirements

Gold-level planning involves more groups and more buy-in. Gather data from all of the sources that feed your marketing funnel – such as your CRM and marketing automation tools. You might even need to reach out to IT or Operations if you have information stored in a data warehouse.



Your Gold Medal Team

- Marketing Operations to provide field marketers with funnel metrics to feed an estimated view of how much revenue they are driving
- Specialists who can provide funnel metrics data from analytics, CRM and marketing automation
- Field Marketers to manage the bottoms-up plan, including the expected output of activities, and have conversations with the CMO or VP of Marketing
- The CEO and Chief Revenue Officer to set strategic revenue targets as they relate to the corporate objectives

“What is my particular impact to the business?”

– FIELD MARKETERS



Next Steps

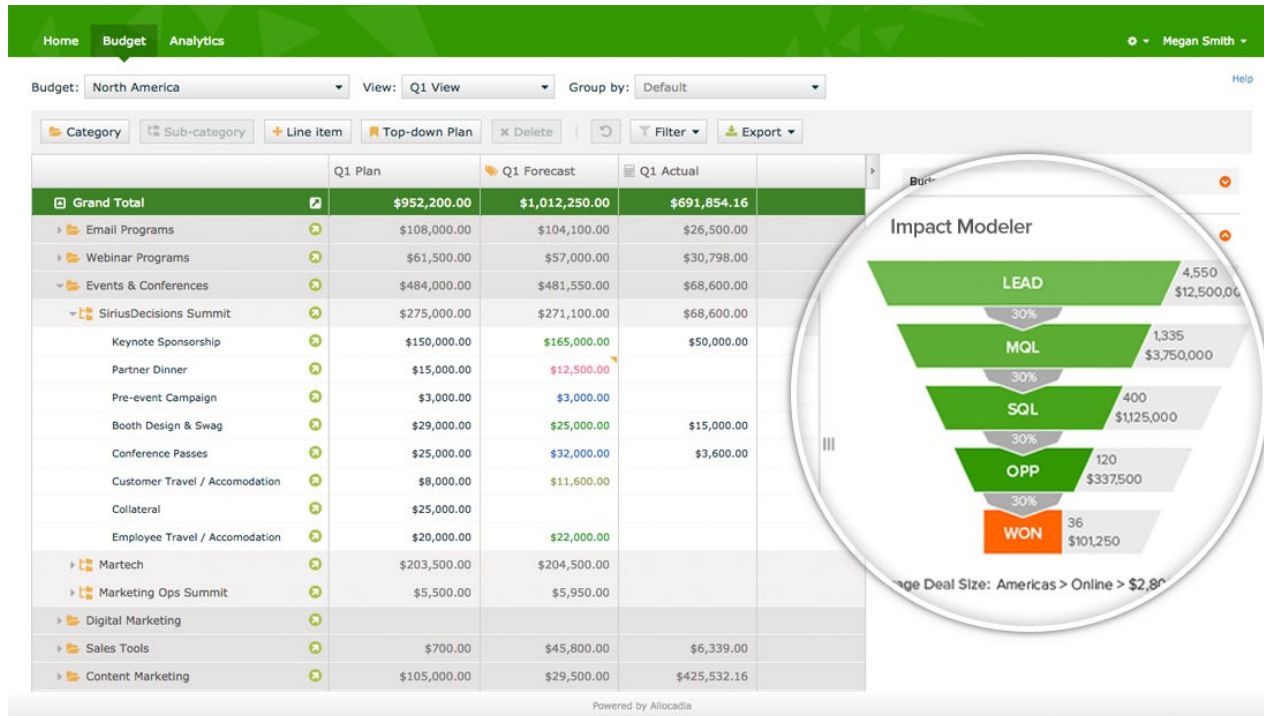
- #1. CMO:** Get clear visibility into what marketing’s responsible for driving vs. overall company revenue goals.
- #2. Ops:** Gather funnel metrics data (funnel stages, velocities and average deal sizes) from all of your sources. You may need to bring in people from other teams – such as sales or IT – to help you collect the information. Based on this data, you can set your funnel metrics assumptions and then get buy-in on them.
- #3. Field Marketers:** Capture your expected output as part of your plan. And make sure to be realistic with your estimates!



How Allocadia Helps You Win the Gold

Allocadia makes it easy to have the field marketer input expected outputs of their activities and automatically show estimated impact on revenue. A “revenue impact” widget shows – at a glance – a marketer’s contribution to revenue. This helps them make better decisions around spending and ensures they can see a global view of whether plans will be hitting revenue targets.

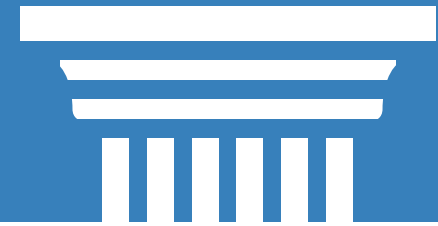
Gold-Medal Planning: Revenue Impact



Allocadia's Impact Modeler helps marketing teams to understand, in real-time, the estimated revenue impact of their marketing plans.

World Records: Benchmarking

At this level, you're headed for the Hall of Fame. **You have a solid foundation for your strategic plan and can see how you stack up against your peers.**



“Our marketing organization starts to speak the same language when we use benchmarks in conjunction with strategic targets.”

— MARKETING OPERATIONS

“Planning with benchmarks gives me confidence that we're not leaving any money on the table.”

— CMO

“Benchmarks help me to know where I stand vs. others within and outside the organization”

— FIELD MARKETERS

Now that your marketing organization has a good planning foundation, it's time to look outward. When you compare yourself to others, you'll gain insights into your marketing planning and see if you are in line with the market in general. For example, are you being too aggressive or not aggressive enough? Is your budget the right number? How are others spending their dollars? Benchmarking gives you a frame of reference, so you can have more confidence in your planning.

You can compare yourself with the following:

- 1. Peers from within your organization.** How are teams doing vs. one another in terms of revenue generation vs. investment? How are campaigns performing based on similar campaigns being delivered across the organization?
- 2. Peers and competitors from within your industry.** For example, how do we compare vs. organizations of similar profile in our industry? What are reasonable targets to set for our organization? What are your competitors spending on their campaigns? What results are they achieving?
- 3. Peers in the larger marketing community.** What percentage of revenue are they investing back into the business? How much revenue did they generate from their allocated budget?

You can also layer benchmarks on top of your other strategic planning capabilities to leverage them in scenarios, strategic alignment and revenue impact.



Requirements

Benchmarking requires a strong marketing planning foundation. You also need enough historical and volume of data to have meaningful comparisons. You can use your own data, data from within a marketing planning tool like Allocadia or get independent data from analysts.



Your World Records Team

- Marketing Managers and Field Marketers to make better decisions around campaign investments based on benchmarks
- Executives to determine if your plan is aggressive enough, especially when compared to other companies
- Analysts if you require independent, third-party data



Next Steps

The first step towards benchmarking is determining the most relevant benchmarks to make use of, and start assembling the data required to make the comparison.

Are You Ready to Go for Gold?

Strategic planning not only makes marketing organizations better but also makes each marketer better. Accountability starts with field marketers and travels upwards.

The more strategic plans become, the more sophisticated the conversations at every level of the organization.

Marketing planning doesn't have to be all or nothing. You can start winning small races and eventually go for the Gold.

Go for it!

Discover How Allocadia Can Help You Win More Budget and Drive Revenue by Planning Like a Champion. [Request a personalized demo today.](#)

[1.866.684.0935](tel:18666840935)
allocadia.com

 **ALLOCADIA**