The worst possible mistake a student can make when developing an advertising campaign is trying to do it without a strategy. You’ll have difficulty getting execution ideas and, when you’re finished, the campaign won’t be cohesive.

The second worst mistake is regarding the strategic planning process as annoying busy work and waiting until the last possible minute to do it. A strategic plan isn’t just fluff. It’s a gift. A well thought out strategy tells the creative team exactly who they’re talking to and what they have to say in their ads. It makes your final execution ideas fall into place like dominos.

In the advertising industry, you’ll encounter several types of strategies, the client’s marketing strategy, the agencies campaign strategy, the media strategy and the creative execution strategy. The type you’ll be writing is a campaign strategy. Different agencies have different methods for creating strategies. They may call the sections by different names. But the objective is always the same: Matching something about the audience to something about the product that competitors can’t or aren’t saying about their products.

The key to a good strategy is knowledge of the intended audience. The key to the audience is almost always found in their life-style, motivations, beliefs, aspirations or psychological makeup, not in their demographics. Unfortunately, some of that information is a bit more difficult to research on-line or at the library than information about the product. The good news is that you probably already have a lot of that information in your own brain. The difficult part is bringing it to the surface and using it.

For your preliminary strategic plan, you and your partner are each to write separate target audience member profiles. The profile must be of a real person with whom you are personally acquainted. You are to generate a one-page, typewritten description of that person’s activities, likes and dislikes, beliefs, quirks, fantasies and fears, behaviors, and anything else you know about them that might relate to your client’s or their competitors’ products. But, don’t tell me about the products in these profiles. Tell me about the PEOPLE!

Your profile and the remaining sections of the plan are to be typed as follows: The page must have 1.5” margins on the sides and .75” margins at the top and bottom. The material in each section must be single spaced and in 10 point type. Paragraphs are to be indented .5” (that’s generally the default indent.) Your section heads are to be in 14 point type and there is to be a blank line between sections.

Just leave a couple blank lines for the audience section when you are typing the remainder of the preliminary strategic plan. If you finish it before the due date, I will go over it with you as soon as you finish. That will give you more time to plan your creative execution.
The questions in red below are the topic heading for the strategic plan you are to write as part of your final project. The questions in smaller black type are intended only to stimulate your thought process. They may or may not apply to a particular product or service. There may be other relevant questions that are not listed here.

**What is the nature of the product?** What are its characteristics? What is its history? How is it made? What are its current uses/new uses? Does it have or do anything that the competitors’ products don’t? Does new or innovative features?

**What is the current situation with the product?** How is it doing in the marketplace? What do people who use/don’t use think of it?

**Who is our target consumer?** Who is currently buying/not buying our brand? Are there other groups who are likely prospects? What is the common bond among our the our target customers? What is the name of someone you know personally in each of the target groups and what is that person’s life like? Is there anything about their life that would help us relate our product to them?

**What is the goal of the campaign?** How should we go about increasing the client’s sales? What do we want the prospect to do after he or she has seen the ad?

**What are the competitors doing?** Who are the competitors and how are they doing in the marketplace? What do their ads say about their products? What do they avoid saying?

**What promise can we make to the target consumer?** What physical/tangible benefit that they want will they receive from using or consuming our product? What emotional/psychological benefit that they want will they receive from using or consuming our product?

**What is the support for that promise?** What specific qualities of our product will enable us to fulfill that promise?