



HOW TO STRUCTURE A MARKETING TEAM

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Digital transformation, the pandemic and the needed focus on diversity & inclusion have been a catalyst for a renaissance of the marketing department within organizations. Amid all this flux, companies are increasingly recognizing that a customer's experience of a brand is influenced by each interaction it has with that company. Marketing simply cannot operate as a siloed department. With this understanding, the mandate of the marketing function is expanding. In response, marketing leaders are re-thinking the way they're structuring their marketing teams.

OVERVIEW

This article provides my insights on structuring a marketing team based upon my experience during this era of disruption and digital transformation. I will address the following points that I've identified as the most important in structuring a successful marketing team.

Build a comprehensive core team with deep insight and skills, covering:

- Technology
- Content
- Marketing strategy

Strategic partnerships: keep an open mind. To secure top talent, marketing leaders need to be flexible in how the broader marketing team is structured, which means being open to external partnerships.

Leadership: the role of the CMO: Marketing leaders need to wear more hats than ever before. To deliver a leading class CX, the CMO needs to be agile but also needs to be a Chief Connection, Collaboration, and Innovation Officer within the company.



1 START WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS: BUILD A CORE TEAM

As a first course of action, I recognized that it was important to put together the right core team. This core team should consist of a few individuals with deep insight and skills, covering the following core competencies: technology, content, and marketing strategy.



Technology and marketing have long been deeply intertwined. History has witnessed the transformation of marketing by technological innovation. For example, the rise of television, personal computers, and the advent of Google each ushered in new skill requirements, from the rise of big ad agency talent to web and digital skills to a focus on experience (UX and CX).

The challenges of the pandemic have once again ignited a new era of extraordinary transformation as technology continuously reshapes marketing and ultimately the human experience. Without question, technology is an essential component of today's core marketing team.

4 KEY TECHNOLOGY SKILLS THAT MARKETING TEAMS NEED:

1

A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF MARKETING TECHNOLOGY (MARTECH).

As discussed in a prior article, “What are Martech Stacks and what Do Marketers Need to Know about Them,” it’s important to have someone who is fully fluent in all the Martech tools and platforms the company needs and knows how to use them to get the best results.



2

A PASSION FOR ANALYTICS.

It’s important to have someone on the marketing team who is passionate about data analytics and understands how to read and act on the data to provide an increasingly high level of UX and CX.

3

A FORWARD-LOOKING LENS.

It’s imperative for Martech not to be waiting for a “new normal” but rather to maintain a mindset of continuous improvement and optimization. As the saying goes: the best way to predict the future is to invent it. I interpret this to mean that technology should have a constant pulse on data and an ability to adjust and improve in real-time. Martech shouldn’t be waiting for a future-state vision but should be continuously moving forward.

4

A HOLISTIC VIEW.

Holistic thinking can be more challenging than ever in a world of rapidly changing marketing technologies. It’s complicated further by the fact that Martech does not operate in a silo. There is an increasing amount of convergence of business functions, IT, sales, and digital marketing. That’s why it’s important to have someone on the team who not only has the deep understanding of Martech but understands how it applies across the organization.





CONTENT

Today, content needs to be customer-centric, innovative, and remarkable. People want high quality, useful, engaging content that is relevant to them. They will tune out what they're not interested in.

When content is done right, it has the power to attract, retain, and connect with audiences. It is a powerful tool in building trust and forging lasting bonds. While AI can tick off some of the content development boxes, it will never replace the value that a content guru can bring to the marketing team.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF CONTENT LEADERS TODAY:

TOP 5 CONSIDERATIONS

1

A RELENTLESS FOCUS ON CX.

First and foremost, content leaders need to be laser focused on CX. This requires an in-depth understanding of customers' needs along the entire customer journey. While more content is better than less; relevance is always critical.

2

A GENUINE PASSION FOR POSITIVE CONNECTION.

Strategy provides the direction and technology offers the tools, but content is what speaks to customers and creates connection. Today, there needs to be a leader on the core marketing team who promotes a culture of connection based on genuine care for what customers need.

3

A COMMITMENT TO CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT.

To be successful today, content leaders need to have a mindset of continuous improvement and optimization. They need to leverage data, measurements, and feedback to continually adjust content in real-time.

4

AN IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF CONTENT FORMATS.

A content leader needs to provide direction on what formats will be most digestible for which audiences, e.g., short, long, video, audio. They also need to champion the brand voice and use it consistently across all formats.

5

A PURSUIT OF THE REMARKABLE.

It can't be overstated just how important content is in our current environment. Today we live in a culture of rapid consumption. Marketing teams must assume that customers have informed themselves on products and brands. In today's bustling online world, content leaders need to strive to be remarkable. Remarkable content will help the company stand-out and raise the bar on the level of CX being delivered.





Today it's not good enough to create marketing strategies that work for an ad campaign or within a marketing department silo. The strategies must be framed around managing experience across the customer journey.

While the classic 4 P's (product, price, place, promotion) are still important, they no longer paint a complete picture of marketing's mandate. The real picture today likely shows the Ps spread across the functional departments: sales may control pricing, trade marketing may control packaging and distribution, etc.

Given the significant shifts marketing has experienced due to the rapid digitalization hastened by the global pandemic, some marketing teams are re-thinking their approach to strategy. While some may want to take back the 4Ps, I think there is a better approach.

Instead, the core marketing team needs to include a marketing strategist, who is laser focused on strategy to elevate the CX across the entire customer journey. The work of the strategist is to shape the 4Ps - wherever they may exist in the enterprise and align them to the needs and structure of the CX journey being created.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF A MARKETING STRATEGIST TODAY:

TOP 4 CONSIDERATIONS

1

BE THE ENGINE OF MARKETING.

Technology is the backbone of marketing and supports the platforms to deliver CX. It's via content that marketing can communicate and connect with its audience. Strategy is the engine that keeps it going and drives it forward. The core marketing team needs someone who can take on this highly collaborative, forward-thinking, customer-focused role.

2

BE THE CX EXPERT AT EVERY TOUCHPOINT.

Today, CX is the way for marketing to own a growth/revenue focused mandate. The marketing strategist needs to cultivate the culture of CX within the company. This means:

- understanding the entire customer journey so that every customer touchpoint is identified
- recognizing what customers need at each point to align with the CX journey being created.

3

ABILITY TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY ACROSS THE ENTERPRISE WITH MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS.

In many companies today, the 4 Ps are spread across functional departments. A marketing strategist will need to work effectively across the organization to promote marketing's mandate.

4

CHAMPION CX.

The marketing strategist will need to maximize:

- acquisition of new customers
- purchase experiences
- ownership experiences
- repurchase opportunities





2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Covid-19 has shown us that almost anything is possible when it comes to the way people can work. To secure top talent, marketing leaders need to be flexible in how the broader marketing team is structured around the core team and competencies. Not all roles can or should be in-house, nor do they need to be permanent employees.



5 WAYS TO SUCCESSFULLY PARTNER WITH EXTERNAL TALENT

1

ENSURE THE PARTNERSHIP IS WIN-WIN.

External partnerships must be based on a win-win dynamic. One partner can't win over the other. If the partnership isn't mutually beneficial, you'll never achieve the results you're seeking.

2

CONSIDER YOUR PARTNER A PART OF YOUR TEAM.

Whether you're working with internal or external talent, it's important that everyone feels a part of the same team, working towards the same goals. To achieve this, it's important to remember that language and a culture of inclusivity matter. For example, external talent should be referred to as partners rather than vendors. They should be brought into discussions and have access to information in the same manner as other team members. A rule of thumb is that if you don't trust external talent enough to consider them a part of the team then they're likely not the right people to partner with.

3

REMOVE GEOGRAPHIC AND SECTORAL BOUNDARIES.

It's important to look for the right kind of talent regardless of where they are. COVID has demonstrated that it's possible to effectively collaborate remotely, thus removing geographical boundaries. We're also seeing there are benefits in looking for talent across sectors. For example, in agriculture, we often look to the automotive industry, which has very mature dealer distribution channels. Although the sectors are different, we benefit from leveraging talent that understands their leading practices.

4

FIND AN EXTERNAL PARTNER, WHO CAN MEET YOU WHERE YOU ARE.

Change happens where you are – not in the future or the past. To make progress towards your goals, it's vital to partner with people who truly enjoy working where your company is now.

5

ACTIVELY SEEK OUT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION.

As leaders, we need to own this. We must ask ourselves whether we're getting the broadest and best possible diversity of thought and talent. This needs to be one of the top decision criteria when looking for external talent.





3

LEADERSHIP - THE ROLE OF THE CMO

As the world has shifted, so too has the mandate of a marketing leader. CX is more important than ever along with a focus on a brand's values and the ability to be agile and responsive to shifting customer needs.

Marketing is the direct line between a company and the consumers. Therefore, to deliver a leading class CX, the CMO needs to be agile but also needs to be a Chief Connection, Collaboration, and Innovation Officer within the company.



TOP 5 AREAS OF FOCUS FOR MARKETING LEADERS TODAY

Today the importance of an effective marketing department within a company cannot be understated. The mandate of a marketing leader must encompass the following:

1

HARNESS THE POWER OF A PURPOSE-DRIVEN BUSINESS.

Without question, it is within the marketing leader's job description today to drive an understanding of the role their companies and brands play in society. Organizations need to demonstrate that their long-term commitment to their purpose guides their actions and the CX that they offer.

2

PLAY TO PEOPLE'S SKILLSETS AND DIFFERENCES .

When building a marketing team, you'll have better results if you allow the team to take the lead in the areas that they enjoy and shine in. Additionally, to foster a truly collaborative environment that promotes innovation, it's important that everyone's voice is heard. For example, over the pandemic most team meetings moved to virtual calls. We've all observed that there are naturally people who like to speak more than others. It's the responsibility of a leader to make sure that both extraverts and introverts are comfortable in contributing their thoughts and ideas.

3

MAKE SPACE TO FAIL AND LEARN.

People learn by doing. This means that leaders of successful teams need to have a high tolerance for failure. Today a leader needs to create a culture of fail fast, course correct and try again.

4

PRIORITIZE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION.

As mentioned in Strategic Partnerships, as leaders, we must continually prioritize obtaining the broadest and best possible diversity of thought and talent. Furthermore, we need to continually work on dismantling all stereotypes of what leadership looks and sounds like.

5

LEAD WITH DECENCY.

I've written before about Dean of Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, Bill Boulding's concept of the "decency quotient" – a concept that is certainly relevant right now. According to Boulding, "A DQ implies a person has not only empathy for employees and colleagues but also the genuine desire to care for them. DQ means wanting something positive for everyone in the workplace and ensuring everyone feels respected and valued."

It's vital we acknowledge the shift in what's required to be successful today. More importantly, in our current environment, business can be a transformative force for good. As leaders, we have a responsibility to lead with decency and foster a generation where empathy and decency are critical business skills.



CONCLUSION

Marketing has changed. We're now in the age of CX and doing it well requires everyone's participation. Success today depends on how effectively the marketing team can be influencers and impart the vision to all parts of the organization. To accomplish this, there needs to be the right core team, the ability to partner with top talent (internal & external) and strong leadership to foster collaboration, champion the company's values and continually raise the bar on the future of CX.