the marketing pod

HOW TO RECRUIT A FUTURE CMO_

A guide for in-house teams from The Marketing Pod



As businesses become increasingly marketing-led, the role of the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) is changing. CMOs can no longer solely focus on the activities that take place within their own department - they must be able to look beyond the marketing team and work cross-functionally to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

Finding a candidate that has all of the skills a CMO needs to fuel the growth of your business is therefore no easy feat. You need someone who is an expert in marketing and can successfully develop the function within your organisation, while always maintaining a customer-centric mindset in order to deliver against your wider business objectives. This requires an individual with a unique set of hard and soft skills which can be hard to find.

If you're striving to recruit a CMO who will not only lead your marketing team, but also lead your business to successful growth, this guide will help you to identify what you need to look out for when you're interviewing candidates. We recently surveyed 140 senior B2B marketers to get their insight into how the CMO role is evolving and which skills they believe will be most important in the CMOs of the future, and we've distilled all of their advice into practical tips you can use to inform your hiring decisions.

Happy hiring!

Jodie Williams
Director and Co-Founder at
The Marketing Pod



98% of B2B marketers believe CMOs will be critical to the success of B2B organisations over the next 10 years.

LOOK FOR THE 3 'C'S'_

Today's CMOs need to have a wide range of competencies and skills in order to succeed, but all of these skills fall under three 'C's' - customer, commercial and credibility.

Customer

First and foremost, your CMO must have a deep understanding of your customers. They need to really 'get' the people behind the businesses you're striving to work with, what drives them on both an emotive and rational level and how your business can best serve them. You may want to look for someone who has experience in your industry, as they should already have a good understanding of customer needs. However, it's just as important to find someone who appreciates that customer needs are always changing, and will therefore appreciate the value of and prioritise customer research. In the future, customer loyalty will be key to boosting your organisation's resilience and growth, so you need a CMO that understands the importance of providing an excellent customer experience and will take a customer-centric approach.

It can be hard when you know a business inside out, to see something from the viewpoint of a customer. It's important for a CMO to be able to take a step back, put themselves in the customer's shoes.

Lydia Maule,
Head of Marketing at GEFCO UK



Credibility

To be able to trust someone to lead your marketing function, you need to see that they have the experience required to take on such an important role. When we spoke to B2B marketers, they agreed that a CMO should have at least ten years of front-line experience in marketing and a strong background in business leadership. This level of experience is necessary for the person who will represent your marketing team in the C-suite, as they will need to be able to hold their own in the boardroom.

Commercial

As the role of the CMO continues to evolve, it's also vital that you find someone that is commercially aware. A good understanding of marketing is clearly vital, but you should also look for someone who can see the bigger picture. Now and in the future, CMOs will need to be able to understand the financials and know how different departments work together to deliver an excellent customer experience. As they will be representing your marketing team in the C-suite, they will also need to be able to hold their own in the boardroom.



Are they qualified?

These are the qualifications that B2B marketers believe are most important for a CMO to hold:

- **10+ years' marketing experience**
- **Business leadership experience**
- **Master's degree in marketing / business**
- **Bachelor's degree in marketing / business**

HARD SKILLS TO SEEK OUT_

When you're interviewing candidates, look for those who demonstrate the ability to:

Think strategically

Experience in executing campaigns is good, but when you're considering a candidate for a CMO role you need solid evidence that they have the strategic, commercial mindset needed to put together a robust marketing strategy. So be sure to ask them to tell you about their experience in key areas of marketing strategy, from customer journey mapping to marketing positioning and developing marketing propositions. A good CMO will have hands-on experience in all of these areas.

Drive insight from your data

Your business is probably collecting more data than ever before. Your CMO must be able to analyse and interpret this data so they can use it to constantly optimise your campaigns and inform your wider marketing strategy. If a candidate can show you tangible examples of how they have used data to improve their campaigns, they might have what it takes to become your next CMO.

Spot trends and opportunities

As the most senior person on your marketing team, your CMO should be ahead of the curve when it comes to spotting trends and opportunities for your business. With digital marketing booming, your CMO needs to be able to deliver 'always on' marketing, quickly adapt to change and seize new opportunities before your competitors get there first. So find out how they plan to stay on top of changes within your industry and beyond.

Make the most of tech solutions

The number of martech (marketing technology) solutions on the market is growing by the day, which means there are plenty of opportunities for your business to harness the power of technology to help you to achieve your goals and objectives. You need your CMO to be able to assess which solutions will be most beneficial to your team, smooth processes between departments and integrate seamlessly with your wider martech stack. Ask your candidates which martech solutions they value the most, and whether they have experience in the martech solutions you're already using.

SOFT SKILLS ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT_

Finding your perfect CMO isn't as easy as just checking that they have the right qualifications - you need someone who's a good fit for your organisation's culture, and that means looking for soft skills too.

Here are some of the soft skills you should look out for in your candidates:

Communication

Every marketer should have strong communication skills, so when you're looking for a C-suite level marketer, you should set the bar high in regards to their ability to communicate with others. Clearly, they should know how to communicate your brand's key messages to its audiences, but they should also be able to communicate well with all of your other key stakeholders. Cross-department collaboration can make a significant difference to your bottom line, and a good CMO will be able to bring cohesion to teams that may have historically been siloed (such as sales and marketing).

Leadership & teamwork

Your CMO is responsible for your entire marketing function, so they should not only be adept at leading a team, but also at working as part of a team. They may be part of the C-suite, but it's vital that they don't let themselves become disconnected from the marketing team. So look for a marketer who knows how to be a leader, but is also willing to take a hands-on approach so they can fully understand what's happening in your day-to-day marketing plan.

Problem-solving

Sometimes, messages that you thought would really resonate with your audience just don't strike a chord, and campaigns that you've put a lot of investment into don't deliver the results you're looking for. It's not ideal, but with a good CMO at the helm, you should be able to turn things around. Panicked, knee-jerk reactions rarely produce successful marketing activity - but well-informed, swift responses often can. You therefore need a candidate who can keep a cool head when things don't go as planned, and quickly identify the actions you need to take to resolve any issues that may arise.

Adaptability

A good CMO will be able to adapt to anything, because if there's one thing we've learned from the Covid-19 crisis, it's that your marketing team must be able to pivot their activities to meet changing circumstances. Look for a candidate who knows how to identify what's working and what's not, double down on the areas that are delivering successful results and switch up their approach in the areas that aren't performing as expected.

Creativity

For too long, B2C marketers have had all the fun, while B2B marketing was slightly more 'traditional' (read: stale). But in recent years, B2B marketers have really discovered their creativity, developing campaigns that are just as creative as their B2C counterparts. You should therefore look for a CMO with creative flair - someone who can bring fresh ideas to the table and help your business to stand out from the crowd.



CAN THEY DRIVE THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN YOUR BUSINESS?_

B2B brands have been increasing their digital spend for some time now, but since the Covid-19 crisis caused many professionals to move to remote working, the shift to digital has accelerated rapidly. And while it's likely that traditional marketing methods will be picked back up once we return to normality, there's no doubt that digital will remain a significant element of many B2B marketers' strategies in the future.

This means that although your organisation may have digital specialists dedicated to ensuring the success of your digital marketing efforts, your CMO must also have the digital nous needed to optimise your online presence. Delegating the technical aspects of digital marketing to your experts is fine, but it's vital for your CMO to be able to apply their strategic insight to your digital data in order to provide your customers with an excellent, omni-channel experience with your brand.

However, recent research by Marketing Week has found that many CMOs lack the digital skills needed to truly optimise customer experience online - with some former CMOs even finding it necessary to take a step back to upskill in digital before they apply for their next CMO role. When reviewing your candidate list, you should therefore seek someone who has recently undertaken strategic digital courses, or someone who is agile, flexible and adaptable enough to be willing to upskill in this area.

Being buzzword proficient is one thing, but truly understanding those customer journeys across all the different digital customer points is becoming critical, because that determines the success or failure of businesses.

David Nobbs, Partner and Head of Consumer at Grace Blue Partnership



Digital: what they need to understand

- How to build a seamless, strategic martech stack
- How to enhance your Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Marketing Automation (MA) capability to deliver excellent customer experience
- How to set your own ROI markers and the KPIs that will help you to measure your progress against these markers
- How to develop a 360˚ view of your customers in order to create cohesive, omni-channel customer journeys



WHAT IF THEY DON'T HAVE IT ALL?_

If you're currently scanning CVs, searching for a candidate that has all of the attributes we've outlined and coming up short, don't worry. It may be that none of your candidates meet all of the criteria that you might want to find in your 'ideal' CMO, but that doesn't mean that none of them should get the job.

Truthfully, it's an exceptional candidate that does hold all of these characteristics. You may find a person with a really commercial mindset, and great leadership skills, but they might not be as creative as you'd like them to be. Recent research by Marketing Week has also revealed that many senior marketers lack the deep understanding of digital that's needed to oversee your digital marketing.

Did you know?

The demand for Chief Marketing Officer roles has risen by 13.8% in the past year, so competition for candidates is high.

This just means that you need to be strategic when you're building your wider marketing team, to ensure that you have all the skills you need at your disposal. You may still want to upskill your new CMO in some areas once they're in the role, but by making sure that you have people with the skills we've listed in this guide right across your marketing team then you should have all you need to succeed.

If you don't have all the skills you need on your team, don't start writing another job ad - that's what marketing agencies are for! At The Marketing Pod, we always aim to work as an extension of our clients' in-house teams, enabling them to call on any of our specialists as and when they need them. So if your CMO lacks digital know-how, you could ask our digital experts for support - whether that's in the form of training and workshops to upskill your team, or in providing hands-on support with your digital strategy and execution. Our people have specialisms across our five centres of excellence - digital, strategy, content, creative and PR - so whatever aspect of your marketing or PR you need help with, we're here for you.



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS_

Here are some questions you can use when interviewing candidates - their answers should tell you whether they're your ideal CMO:

As CMO, what would your top three goals for our company be?

What are we doing well? What could we be doing better?

As CMO, how would you ensure success in these areas?

Describe how you've guided the creation of new customer acquisition models in the past.

What would your long-term marketing vision be for our company? How would you help our employees to connect to that vision?

How would your direct reports in your previous position describe you?

In your previous role, how was your marketing vision enabled by the addition of new martech?

How did you gain buy-in from key stakeholders as your martech stack evolved?

How would you ensure that we're investing in and leveraging the correct technology - while being careful to balance cost with ROI?



READY TO BOOST YOUR RESOURCES?_

Whether you just need some extra support while you're waiting to recruit your next CMO, or you'd like us to fill skills gaps in your team for the long-term, our marketing maestros can be everything you need and more.

If you're interested in working with us, tell us what you need by dropping us an email at hello@themarketingpod.co.uk, and we'll get back to you ASAP.
www.themarketingpod.co.uk