PROPOLIS
COMMUNITY SPRINT
FROM B2B MARKETING

JULY 2024

Stop talking marketing. Start talking business:

Why we need to become commercial marketers



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Annabel Venner, *Board Advisor, Chair and Non-Executive Director*



Catherine Dutton, *VP, Global Account-Based Marketing,* **Pegasystems**



Graham Wylie, *Vice President of Marketing - International,* **ADP**

Marketers are fed up



David Rowlands,
Head of Product,
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Get a room full of B2B marketers together, and you'll notice a trend. No, it's not a passion for AI – it's a sense of frustration that we don't get the respect and appreciation of the C-Suite and our fellow departments. Not to paint all marketers like moody teenagers – as this is far from the case – but the sentiment often boils down to this: "they just don't get marketing!"

The frustration, no doubt, stems from the fact that we know we can provide huge amounts of value to our businesses. In fact, used correctly, marketing can be the main growth engine for a business, especially in a world which is becoming increasing reliant on digital customer journeys, and in which salespeople often don't get involved until a decision has already been made.

So, why doesn't marketing get the respect it deserves and, more importantly, what do we need to do differently in order to get it? Well, this is what we sought to find out in our latest community sprint – a series of activities within Propolis (the global community for B2B marketers) in which we bring our community together to solve a collective issue.

Make no mistake, this is no small matter. Cast your eyes over the last… forever… and you'll spot an unsurprising trend. When times get tough, marketing gets cut back significantly. Clearly outlining what we need to do change our perception and prove our worth is critical for us if we're going to: 1.) drive the value that know we can; and 2.) ensure our budgets and careers are safe.

This report reveals what we've learned over the course of this latest community sprint, and what all B2B marketers need to do in order to be valued and correctly perceived as a strategic arm of the C-Suite.

How we tackled the challenge

Within the Propolis community, we use an approach called community intelligence. In essence, community intelligence is all about bringing our audience together to solve problems and become better marketers.

After all, it is you – yes, you – that have the answers! No individual can possibly know as much as the entire B2B marketing community combined. The problem, of course, is that the knowledge we all have can be patchy at best, and we often work in isolation of one another, unsure if our problems are unique to us or apply to everyone.

Community intelligence, therefore, is all about bringing the community together in a structured way to discuss challenges and find solutions. With that in mind, in order to get the absolute best out our membership, our community sprint followed this structure:

1

Building a new vision for marketing by bringing B2B marketing leaders together: In an exclusive roundtable, we brought client-side B2B marketing leaders together in order to answer one question: How can marketing leaders build trust and influence with fellow members of the C-Suite in order to enhance marketing's strategic and commercial impact? In this session, leaders had an open conversation around what marketing needs to change in order to answer that very question. During this session, we also collected data from those in attendance, in order to get an even deeper understanding of where there is work to be done.

2

Sharing this vision with our full community: Following the roundtable, a new vision for B2B marketing started to emerge (more on that later). We therefore ran a digital event to share this new vision for B2B marketers with our entire community. In this session, we also ran a series of polls to collect data on skills gaps, and invited a series of marketing leaders together to share their thoughts. In other words, what skills do B2B marketers need to actually achieve this vision?

3

Outlining practical next steps: Once we built and shared our vision for the future of B2B marketers, the next step was to outline some practical steps that marketers of all levels could take to ensure they were moving in the next direction. In this digital session, we broke down the things that marketers can do right now to start to build trust and influence with the C-Suite.

4

Sharing a case study that demonstrates excellence: Wrapping up the community sprint, we interviewed Gursaran Marjara, non-executive director, coach & mentor, and former CMO of The Access Group. In his time at Access Group, Gursaran helped the business grow from $100 million to $1 billion in revenue over the course of six years. We spoke to Gursaran as we felt he embodied this new vision for B2B marketers. In this open and honest interview, Gursaran explains his philosophy to marketing, and provides a great example to any marketing leader (current or budding).

What client-side marketing leaders have to say

In the kick-off roundtable, which had representation from technology, professional services, real estate and everything in between, the key theme that emerged was as follows: if we're ever going to enhance our strategic impact, then it's absolutely critical that B2B marketers stop talking the language of marketing, and start talking the language of finance and sales. By all means, track clickthrough rates – metrics like these do still have their place. However, if you're talking the CFO or CEO, ensure you can relate this clearly back to their metrics, particularly revenue.

In other words, the way to solve this issue of trust and influence is to become what we've recently been calling in Propolis: a 'commercial marketer'.

To recap, we recently defined the term 'commercial marketer' as follows: "A marketer whose primary skillset and value is in their ability to think strategically and drive measurable business growth through marketing. A commercial marketer thinks about the wider business objectives first and foremost, and marketing tactics and specialisms second. By comparison, a commercial marketer is not a marketer who is primarily occupied by achieving tactical wins, or results in one isolated metric."

With marketing leaders in agreement that this is ultimately where we need to get to as marketers (regardless of whether or not you call it a 'commercial marketer'), the next thing to do was to understand exactly how close leaders are to the various areas that a commercial marketer needs to be engaged in to act accordingly.

In other words, are marketing leaders fully equipped to act as commercial marketers, or are they too far removed from certain areas of the business in order to ever truly act as such?

In order to answer this, our host (and Propolis Strategy Expert), **Shane Redding**, was joined by design-thinking mastermind and Propolis Ambassador, **Scott Stockwell**, to investigate.

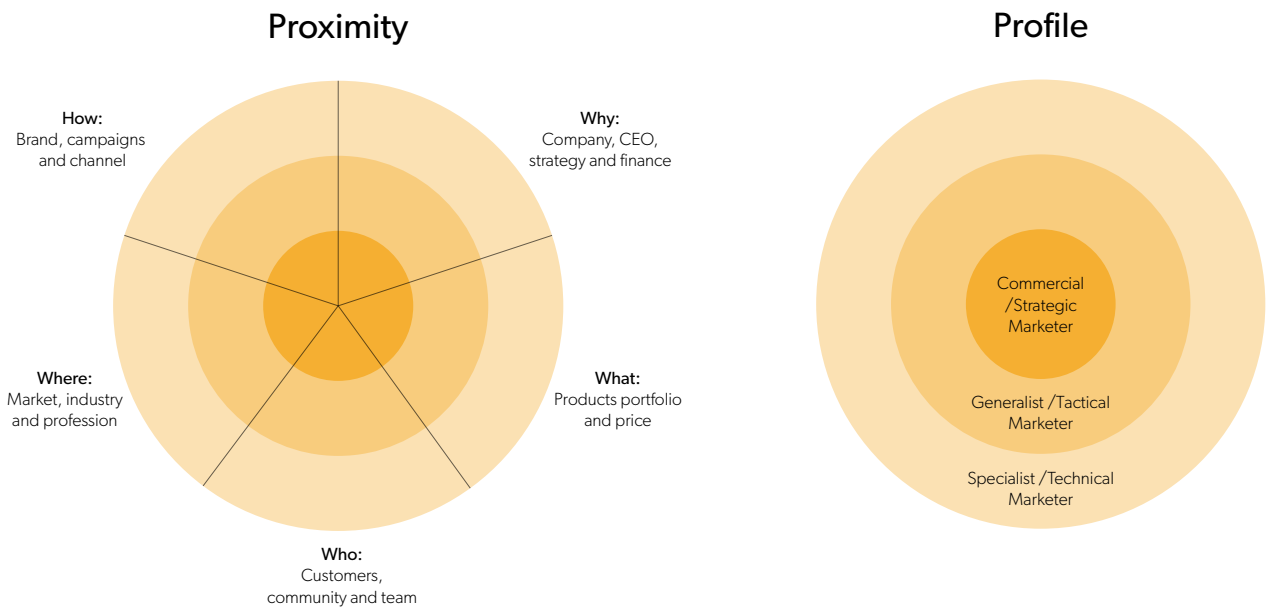


The five key areas a commercial marketer must focus on

We identified five key areas that a commercial marketer should be focused on and involved in, in order to drive genuine commercial value. At a top level, these are:

1. Business and strategy (why you're trading).
2. Product and portfolio (what you're selling).
3. Customers, community and team (who you're serving).
4. Market, industry and profession (where you're trading).
5. Brand, campaigns and channel (how you're trading).

These sections were presented on the chart which you can see below:



In order to understand exactly how well placed B2B marketing leaders are to act as commercial marketers, we asked a series of questions under each section. Participants could then place a dot in the given segment, depending on which option they felt best summed them up. In short, the closer to the centre of the circle you are – the better – as this reflected the proximity of the marketer to their senior peers.

For full openness, the questions under each section were as follows:

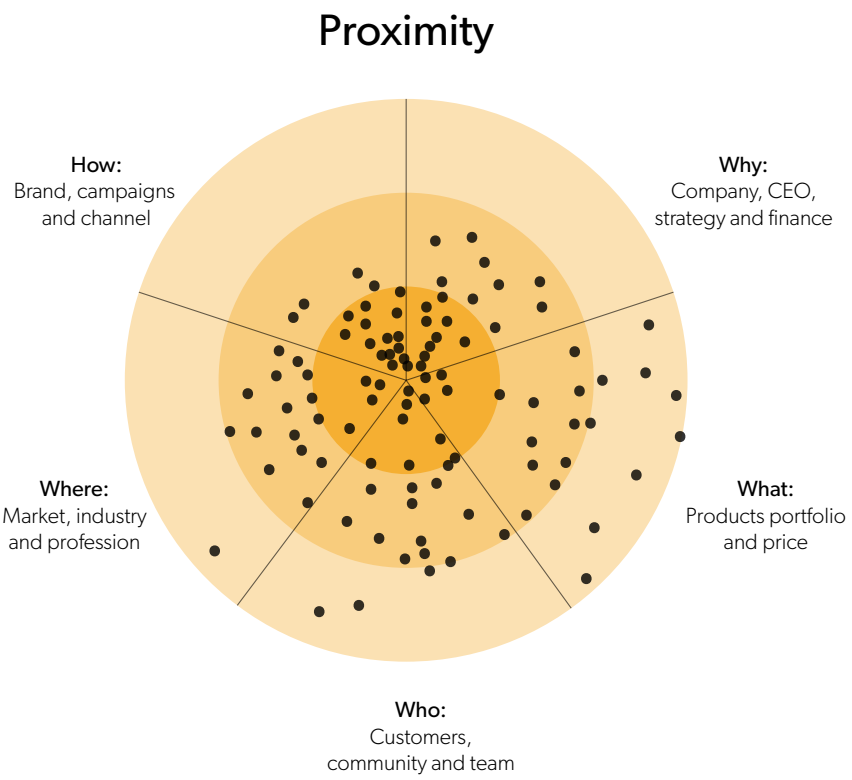
Business strategy (why you're trading)	**1 (inner ring)**	**2 (middle ring)**	**3 (outer ring)**
How closely do you work with your CEO and CFO?	Closely	Moderately	Not at all
Does marketing have a seat at the board table?	Always	By invite/request	Never
What degree of control do you have for the marketing strategy?	70–100%	40–69%	Less than 39%
Product and portfolio (what you're selling)			
Do you formally input into product/service development?	Yes	Only informally	Not at all
How formally input into product pricing?	Yes	Only informally	Not at all
Do you formally inform your company portfolio?	Yes	Only informally	Not at all
Customers, community and team (who you're serving)			
How frequently do you spend time with customers?	Frequently	Infrequently	Not at all
How connected are you with customer communities?	Very	Somewhat	Not at all
How skilled/capable is your marketing team?	Very	Average	Poor
Market, industry and profession (where you're trading)			
How much insight do you have on your market?	Outstanding	Adequate	Inadequate
How much insight do you have in your industry(ies)?	Outstanding	Adequate	Inadequate
How engaged are you with your profession?	Highly	Somewhat	Not at all
Brand, campaigns and channel (how you're trading)			
Do you set the brand and campaign strategy and balance?	Yes, 100%	Partially, others involved	Not at all
How closely do you work with sales / ABM?	Very	Very	Not at all
How involved are you with channel strategy?	Very	Very	Not at all

SECTION 4

The final result

So, combined, what did this exercise tell us? Well by looking at the diagram below, we can see where B2B marketing leaders feel their strengths are, and perhaps where we need to develop further.

This diagram was based on the collective input of around 25 senior B2B marketing leaders.



To reiterate, the closer you are to the centre of this chart, the better placed you are to be a commercial marketer. The further out you go, the more distant you are from this critical area of business, and, therefore, the less likely you are to be well placed to be a commercial marketer.

The good news, then, is that B2B marketing leaders clearly feel close to the customer and their campaigns. Using the methodology outlined above, we can see that most B2B marketers:

1. Are 100% responsible for setting the brand and campaign strategy.
2. Work very closely with sales (often through ABM).
3. Are highly involved in their channel strategy.
4. Frequently spend time with their customers.
5. Are well connected with customer communities.
6. And feel they have skilled and capable marketing team.

Some of these points are probably not surprising (of course marketing leaders are highly involved in setting their brand strategy!), but it's encouraging to see that the relationship with sales appears to be being resolved. As everyone knows, the strained or disconnected relationship with sales has been a critical issue for marketers for years, so the fact that most marketing leaders feel they work very closely with sales is great to see.

In some instances, though not always, it's clear that account-based marketing (ABM) is the preferred strategy for building this relationship and delivering revenue growth.

Slightly more worrying, perhaps, is the fact that marketing leaders don't feel as close to the market and the business strategy as they could be. Using the methodology outlined, we discovered that most marketing leaders:

1. Have only an 'adequate' amount of insight on their market and industry.
2. Only work 'moderately' closely with the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Growth Officer (CGO).
3. Only join the board table by invite or request.
4. And, perhaps most shockingly of all, only estimate that they're responsible for around 40-69% of their actual marketing strategy!

But the number one area that B2B marketers feel least involved in? Product and portfolio. In other words, the majority of B2B marketing leaders claim that:

1. They don't input into product/service development at all.
2. They don't have any formal input into product/service pricing.
3. They don't inform their company's portfolio in any way.

Of course, there are some that do, but the majority don't. Speaking on this issue, **Shane Redding** commented: "The increasing complexity and sheer range of a modern company's portfolio means this has become a specialist function outside marketing, so this is not a surprise. However, this separation means that we have to work harder than ever to ensure the essential knowledge and skills that marketing bring to creating and converting demand are applied early enough to make a positive commercial impact."

The great news is that B2B marketing leaders are clear on how marketing needs to evolve, and recognise the importance of these areas. The next job? Taking the strides necessary to evolve in those areas we've identified.

What do we do about the product and portfolio problem?



Graham Wylie,
Vice President of Marketing - International, **ADP**

As we have demonstrated, it's clear that product and portfolio is not getting the attention it deserves from B2B marketing leaders. But why is it so important in the first place, and how do we start to fix this issue? Well, it was clear on the day that one roundtable participant – **Graham Wylie,** *Vice President of Marketing – International* at **ADP**, a human resources services company – was making some great moves in this area, setting a shining example for the rest of us. With that in mind, we interviewed **Graham** afterwards to learn more.

Why is it so important for marketing leaders to formally input into product and pricing?

"It's only when the buyer consumes the product (or service) that the value proposition made by marketing is actually delivered, so rigorous alignment between messaging, product and price is one of the best ways to ensure happy customers and sustainable growth."

Given this importance, why do you think marketers have become so removed from this area in the first place?

"Around half of all marketers learn on the job and build a narrow, specialist career typically in brand or communications. The proliferation of channels keeps these marketers running full tilt just to keep up. Combine that with a widely held view in product teams that 'marketing is a tax on poor product' – i.e. what we built is so great it sells itself – and you have marketers putting lipstick on the pig with little strategic thought on either side."

In your own organisation, how and when does marketing get involved with the product and pricing?

"Every international business that serves multiple segments in multiple countries over a long period of time builds up a pretty complex portfolio of solutions. Bringing marketing into the management of the product lifecycle helps keep the focus on the customer rather than the internal dynamics. Over the last seven years, we have built a stage-gated 'new product introduction process' in partnership with product, operations and sales that significantly improves business readiness and our ability to price to value for new products. That means we bring products to market more efficiently and with greater impact. At the same time, we're working to make the total portfolio easier for the customer to understand and buy through clearer narrative an more targeted investment in the things that really drive buyer preference."

How can other marketing leaders start to have more involvement in this area?

"The first question you have to ask is 'why?' Why do you want to get involved, and why does that benefit the business? If the answer is that you have the skills and insight to help solve a meaningful problem, then figure out how that problem impacts your team today and work back from there. So, for example, if you are stuck putting 'lipstick on a pig', go deep on that one product. Use the resources you already own to drive sales and earn the right to bring everyone to the table. Keep your focus on the customer and step-by-step you can prove that things are better with marketing in the mix. One win leads to another, and pretty soon other product teams come to marketing for help. When the queue out the door is long enough, the business case for greater investment writes itself – faster time to market, greater competitive advantage and intelligent pricing power."

SECTION 6

The six key skills you need to become a commercial marketer

So far, this report has focused largely on the 'big picture'. However, we also recognise that there's a need to identify clear skills that marketers need in order to actually act as commercial marketers. After all, being close to the CFO is one thing, but knowing what to do when you're in the board room is a different thing altogether.

With that in mind, **Georgie Gilmore**, our Propolis Strategy Expert (and indeed an Expert in channel partner marketing), identified six key skills that all B2B marketers need to be proficient in if they are to become true commercial marketers.

In this section of the report, we'll introduce each of these skills one-by-one, and will share **Georgie's** top tips in each area. In addition to this, we'll include poll data on how skilled marketers feel they are currently in each given area, as well as insights shared by our panellists during the community sprint.



Skill number 1: **Insight**

By 'insight', we mean understanding how your market works, and staying informed about industry trends and influences, whether those are regulatory, economic, social, technological, cultural or geographic.

Essentially, this means having a deep understanding of your target market, including market sizing, addressable market opportunity and customer insights/profiles. It also means having the ability to analyse customer strategies, strengths, weaknesses, market share and positioning to help understand the competitive landscape, in order to inform your strategy. In short? It's critical that you know about the given world you're operating within.

In a poll we ran during the community sprint, we discovered that just 8% of our community feel they're 'an expert' in this area. The vast majority (80%) claim that they're 'capable', with the remaining 12% rather worryingly saying that they're either 'not entirely capable' or that they 'don't know how to do this at all'. Clearly, most marketers are at least 'OK' in this area, but there remains work to be done (for some more than others).

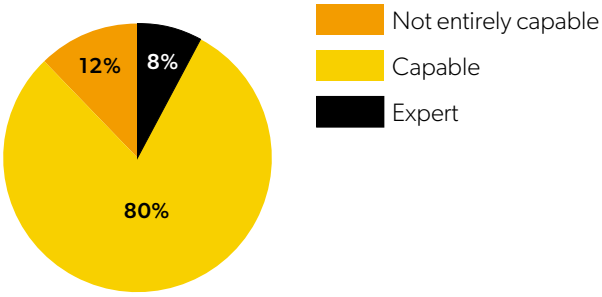
With that in mind, in our Best Practice Briefing on 'How to be a commercial marketer', **Georgie Gilmore** outlined the following things that all marketers can do today:

1. Listen to customer calls, join customer meetings and forums.
2. Join external professional networks (like Propolis!), and continue learning about how marketing is developing and what best practice looks like.
3. Attend industry events, and hear what your competitors are doing.
4. Share your learnings internally across the wider business and stakeholders.
5. Ask yourself, 'what does this insight tell me?' (in other words, answering the 'so what?' question).
6. Develop an 'outside in' approach to your marketing strategy.

In our panel discussion, **Catherine Dutton**, *VP, Global Account-Based Marketing*, **Pegasystems**, added:

"I think insight is crucial. You've got to have up-to-date knowledge and bring that into your organisation. It could be things you're reading about, or hearing from people in webinars, etc. The key thing is just being able to relay that insight into a constructive conversation to say 'here's how this affects our business'."

How good are you at researching and understanding your market to ensure your campaigns and strategies are hitting commercial objectives?



Skill number 2: **Analytical**

With new technologies and the overall digitisation of world business, marketers now have access to an overwhelming amount of data. The skill, of course, is having the ability to actually understand that data, and make sense of what it's saying. Once we can do this, then we can start using our analytical skills to make commercially sensible decisions

As we can see from the poll data, 40% of B2B marketers feel that they are 'not entirely capable' when it comes to collecting, analysing and acting upon data in a way that has a clear impact on revenue. 50% claimed they are 'capable' and 10% felt they were 'experts', but it's clear that a large portion of marketers do not feel entirely comfortable in this world.

With that in mind, **Georgie Gilmore** recommends the following:

1. Develop a clear dashboard aligned to business goals.
2. Communicate results as a narrative that is easy to understand and links to commercial outcomes.
3. Include your qualitative (customer insights, etc) with your quantitative data to create your narrative.
4. Be honest with your analysis. Don't just present the good news!

Providing a 'mini case study', **Annabel Venner**, who acts as a board advisor, chair and non-executive director in a number of roles, shared her approach to this at **Hiscox** (where she held a number of roles, including *Interim CMO and Global Brand Director and Hiscox Partner*):

"One of the things I introduced at Hiscox was a dashboard that was used in quarterly business meetings, but was also then circulated amongst our exec team and our limited board. The challenge was that I had to think about how to build a dashboard that tells a story, links back to commercials, and which is easy for them to understand.

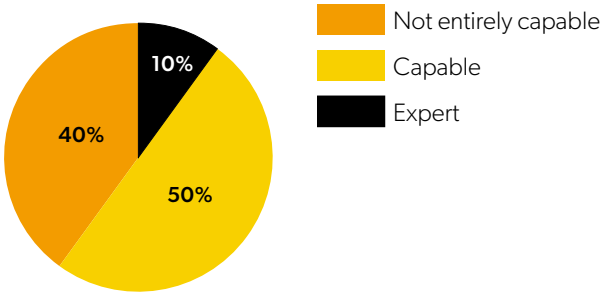
"That dashboard needed to engage them. They needed to understand the story I was telling, but I wanted them to come back to me and ask 'so tell me a bit more about this.' Often, I think the worst thing you can do is produce stuff that gets sent out and you hear nothing back. You might think 'ok, that's great', but, actually, in my view, that means they don't understand it, or they just don't care, because you're not talking about the right things.

"So, I spoke about five things in that dashboard: 1.) revenue (how much we were spending, and how much new business we were driving); 2.) brand metrics; 3.) digital performance metrics (i.e. SEO); 4.) customer feedback; and 5.) retention. It took a long time (maybe six months) to develop the right dashboard, but it's really important to get those metrics right."

Adding to this conversation, **Gary Hurry**, *SVP Marketing*, **Circana**, commented:

"The first thing to think about is 'why' we want to do this, and the answer is threefold: 1.) to optimise our performance and ROI; 2.) there's a professional respect that comes with marketing being in control and understanding data and insights; 3.) it allows marketing having more influence in the organisation. In other words, it helps us influence pricing etc long-term, as well as optimising demand flow today and tomorrow."

How good are you at collecting, analysing and acting upon data in a way that has a clear impact on revenue?



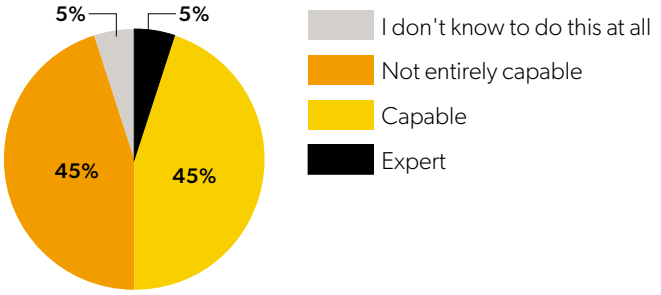
Skill number 3: **Financial acumen**

As we discussed earlier in this report, it's absolutely critical that B2B marketers are able to speak the language of finance. To a CEO or a CFO, clickthrough rates, likes and shares may sound vaguely positive, but they have no clear link to the only thing that matters: revenue. After all, what good is a 100 million likes, if not a single one of those 'likes' can demonstrably be connected to a sale?

Of course, that's not to say that tracking marketing-specific metrics isn't important, and it's clear that lots of these metrics do demonstrate whether or not our campaigns are working or not. The critical thing to keep in mind, however, is that, when speaking to the board, we must be able to show 'here is how we are creating revenue' and not 'here is how many likes we have generated'. Admittedly, this is a gross simplification, but the sentiment remains the same.

So, what exactly do we mean by financial acumen? Well, **Georgie** claims that B2B marketers must be able to understand financial terminology in order to analyse financial statements (such as profit & loss, balance sheets, and cash flow statements), and to create and interpret financial projections. Marketers must also have the ability to accurately plan and manage marketing budget, as well as have SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) marketing KPIs that are measurable, meaningful and aligned to business goals. Lastly, marketers must also be able to understand and communicate the correlation and financial impact of changes in go-to-market strategy (i.e. pricing strategies or sales channels).

How good are you at understanding financial terminology and goals, and demonstrating the connection with your marketing campaigns and strategies?



In our poll, just 5% of B2B marketers felt that they were 'an expert' in this area. 45% felt they were 'capable' at least, but a further 45% claimed they are 'not entirely capable' and 5% said 'I don't know how to do this at all'.

So, clearly, there's a lot of work to be done here. In order to provide a guiding hand, **Georgie** recommends that B2B marketers start by doing the following:

1. Invest time and build relationships with finance. Ask for their expertise!
2. Invite finance to run 'lunch and learn' sessions for your team.
3. Invite finance to your monthly marketing meetings, with regular slots to cover budgets, planning cycles and business performance.
4. Ask finance to help you set KPIs that matter.

In our panel session, **Cat Dutton** added: *"I don't think we need to be finance experts, but I think we need to understand the basics. In the past, I have certainly found myself in certain meetings thinking 'I don't understand what you're actually talking about!'*

"Simple things like getting to know someone in the finance team really helps. It doesn't need to be a CFO – it can just be someone in a junior position. Get them to talk you through what the different calculations are and what they mean. I think it's about investing that time and pushing yourself out of your comfort zone to go and find out. The difference it made for me is that it just made me feel a lot more comfortable. I think the other thing is to understand the return on investment that you're driving. What does that actually look like in terms of bottom-line numbers? This gives credibility."

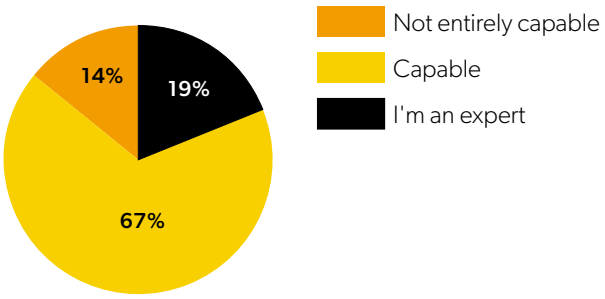
Attention **Propolis** members! Check out our latest session by Tony Lamb, our Data & Insights Expert, where he outlines the key metrics you need to use when talking to the CFO

Skill number 4: **Strategic**

This is all about thinking, planning and making decisions that truly align with your business' goals for both the short and long-term. In order to do this, B2B marketers need to be able to identify and develop go-to-market strategies that support business growth opportunities. They also need strong planning skills with clear and actionable goals, determining how achievable they are and in what timeframe, considering possible outcomes, setbacks and opportunities. Lastly, they need to be problem solvers – marketers that are able to adapt to changing circumstances, and to think and operate holistically for the good of the business.

When asked 'how good are you at developing marketing campaigns and strategies that deliver against your business' overall goals?' just 19% said 'I'm an expert', with 67% saying that they're 'capable' and 14% claiming they're 'not entirely capable'.

How good are you at developing marketing campaigns and strategies that deliver against your business' overall goals?



In order to help marketers improve in this area, **Georgie** recommends the following:

1. Know you're your business' long-term strategy (five-year goals) and the role marketing has to play to help deliver these.
2. Adopt an 'outside-in' approach.
3. Understand how your business operates and the different function roles.
4. Develop your marketing strategy and plans aligned to business goals.

In our panel discussion, **Annabel Venner** was asked how marketers can get closer to the business strategy, in order to become a better marketer. **Annabel's** advice?

"Part of it is identifying your key stakeholders outside of marketing and then spending time with them. Most successful marketers need to deliver great marketing and be able to link it back to revenue, but they also need to form close relationships in the business. At Hiscox, I would regularly meet with our pricing, underwriting, operations and finance teams [amongst others] to: 1.) understand more about the business, what they wanted to do, and the challenges they were facing; and 2.) so I could explain the value that I could add for them. If you have that really strong network within the business, you become that trusted partner, and you can get involved in those big strategic conversations about where the business wants to go. Then, you can work with your teams to figure out the role marketing has to play."

Catherine Dutton added: *"When leaders talk about the need for marketing to become more strategic, what they mean is for you to really understand how the business operates. I've spent a lot of time in the past 10 years or so really getting to understand the different parts of a business, and also spending a lot of time really understanding the market. When you talk about being more strategic, it's about bringing that outside knowledge back into the business. This gives you credibility. It's almost just getting yourself out of your day-to-day job, and thinking wider."*

SECTION 6

Skill number 5: **Agile Decision Making**

Put simply, agile decision making is the ability to leverage real-time analytics and the latest market insights, in order to make rapid adjustments and improvements instinctively where and when needed.

Lose this, and you could end up delivering plans that were doomed to fall flat just two weeks into their run-time.

In this area, **Georgie** recommends the following:

1. Know when there is enough data and ideas to take action, and when you need to dig a bit more before making a decision.
2. Set a short timeframe for your decision.
3. Don't look for the perfect solution. Perfect solutions are the enemy of innovation and progress.
4. Ask experts for their opinion (but not everyone!).
5. Don't revert to the path of least resistance, or just doing something because 'we've always done it this way'.
6. Find someone who disagrees with you. Let them pick holes in your decision to provide a different perspective (not to provide an alternative solution!).



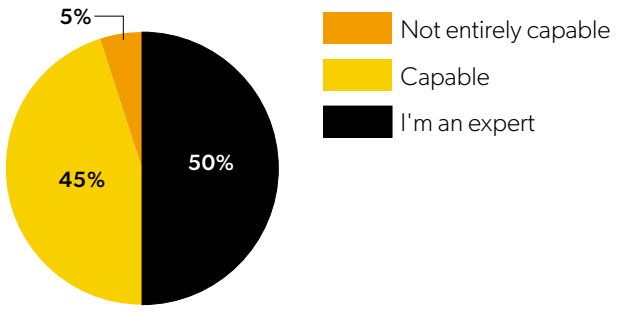
Skill number 6: **Communication and Collaboration**

The final skill needed to operate as a successful commercial marketer? Communication and collaboration. This means building sustainable relationships with both your internal and external stakeholders, having the ability to communicate complex ideas in easy-to-understand ways, and spending time listening to key stakeholders and sharing ideas with them, asking for input where necessary.

It also means fostering open communication and collaboration, and building strategic partnerships with other departments, working towards a common goal of delivering business objectives.

When asked 'how good are you at working closely with other departments to create marketing campaigns and strategies that are aligned to overall business', we can see that 50% said 'I'm an expert', 45% said 'I'm capable', and just 5% said 'I'm not entirely capable'. Fortunately, therefore, it appears that the majority of B2B marketers are already doing fairly well in this area. Regardless, for those who do need a helping hand in this particular area,

How good are you at working closely with other departments to create marketing campaigns and strategies that are aligned to overall business objectives?



Georgie recommends the following:

1. Communicate marketing's progress towards a business goal (demonstrating effectiveness), and not marketing performance.
2. Ensure that metrics can be easily interpreted and aligned to business goals:
3. Create metrics for a specific audience to ensure that your stakeholder finds value in them (finance, legal, IT, sales, etc).
4. Make it immediately obvious (without needing additional context or comparison to another metric) whether something is succeeding or failing.
5. Ensure that metrics contribute to a clear 'so what?'.

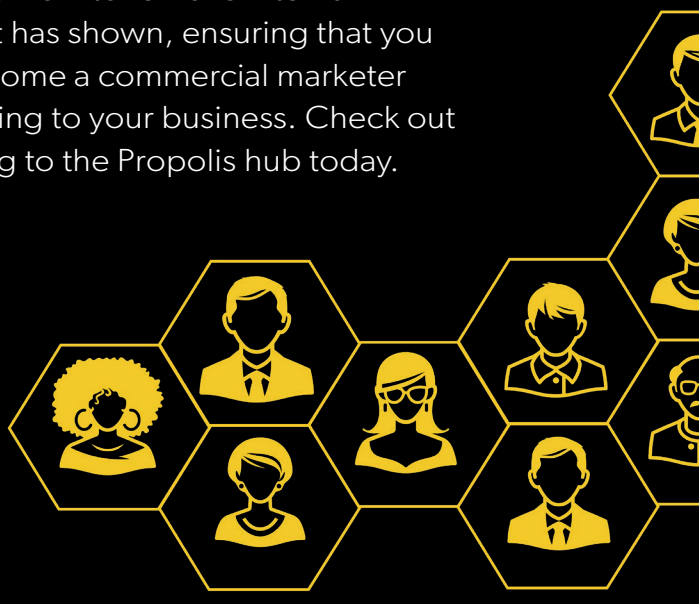
Of course, we're all communicating and collaborating with other departments every day – especially as we climb the career ladder – but the key thing is that this is done in the right way. Speaking on the panel, **Georgie** pointed out:

"One of the things I've encouraged my teams in the past, particularly when you're developing your annual plan/ strategy, is to really invest some time into thinking who your key stakeholders really are, and thinking about where you're going to need them, why you're going to need them, and what you're going to ask of them.

"So, don't ask the legal department to help at the 11th hour, because it's going to become a nightmare. Rather, think about the process for a programme of work, and think about what the steps are, who you need to involve, and, up front, make everyone aware of what you're doing and involve them from the beginning."

Adding to this, **Gary Hurry** *commented: "Some weeks, I spend 70% of my time in stakeholder collaboration, and I've come to accept that, the more senior you become in organisations, the more that's going to become part of your role. I think the key is trying to be a bit more scientific around how you do it… It's a really critical skillset that marketers need in order to be strategic and grow their careers, so I would urge everyone to get good at it!*

If you're a Propolis member, we'd highly recommend that you take part in our Propolis Essentials Course on 'Succeeding as a team: How to remove internal blockers and get stakeholders on side.' As this report has shown, ensuring that you don't operate in a silo is critical if you're going to become a commercial marketer and start demonstrating the commercial value you bring to your business. Check out the full course – led by Georgie Gilmore – by heading to the Propolis hub today.



PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

Become a commercial marketer, or get left behind

When we started this community sprint within Propolis, we wanted to answer one question: How can marketing leaders build trust and influence with fellow members of the C-Suite in order to enhance marketing's strategic and commercial impact?

The answer that emerged was that we must become commercial marketers. As a quick reminder, we've defined this as follows: "A marketer whose primary skillset and value is in their ability to think strategically and drive measurable business growth through marketing. A commercial marketer thinks about the wider business objectives first and foremost, and marketing tactics and specialisms second. By comparison, a commercial marketer is not a marketer who is primarily occupied by achieving tactical wins, or results in one isolated metric."

If we can change our mindset to think about the business objectives first, and marketing objectives second, then we will be better placed to create marketing strategies that: 1.) drive more revenue; and 2.) demonstrate our value to the board. Clearly, this can only be a good thing for our businesses, but also for our careers.

Fail to do this, and we will be having the same conversations around not having a seat at the top table in years to come.

Marketing has always had the great advantage of being close to the customer, and therefore being in a strong position to help lead business strategy. However, as this community sprint has revealed, many B2B marketers aren't as close to product and portfolio as they should be (amongst other things). In some cases, B2B marketers have even been reduced to focusing exclusively on communications, and not having the ability to input on wider strategic issues.

Fortunately, as the world becomes increasingly digital, marketers are now there alongside their buyers for every step of the buying journey.

This is fantastic news. It means we now have the ability to play a greater role in driving revenue (and demonstrably so) than ever before. The key is to make sure you're one of the marketers who can play this role, and not one of those left out in the cold.

Being a commercial marketer requires both a mindset shift and a particular set of skills. For those of you who are members of Propolis, our Experts, training resources and content are all there to help you become commercial marketers. For those of you not in the Propolis community, we urge you to join the club.

Propolis helps B2B marketers confidently build the right strategies and skills to drive growth and prove their impact. Full of relevant expertise and tools, it cuts straight to the answers and advice marketing leaders and teams need to overcome their biggest challenges. Follow the link here to learn more about Propolis.

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