PROPOLIS

Marketing leads the strategy going forwards:

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION MEANS THAT DIGITAL MARKETING NOW RULES



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SECTION 1

Digital business transforms the role of marketing



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Business transformation in the post-Covid world is now being driven by radical societal change, which will result in new working practices, economic and market shifts, and changing customer behaviour. This should lead to a radical rethinking of products, services, channels, processes and go-to-market approach for all B2B organisations.

If that sounds like powerful stuff, it's because it is. Ultimately, it will even result in a fundamental re-examination of the role of marketing for every B2B organisation.

The question here though is as follows: are we talking here about a reset, a restart, or a future reimagined? Some business leaders are already looking for marketing to step up and lead the change. Those leaders are looking down a new type of funnel, and have realised that their customers have changed. They expect marketing to drive a different type of demand generation programme, expecting much more impactful and relevant campaigns around a more seamless, cohesive customer journey. In their June 2021 report 'The growth triple play: Creativity, analytics, and purpose', McKinsey reported "The historic shifts brought on by the pandemic have also fundamentally changed the role of marketing leadership and the chief marketing officer (CMO). 78% of CEOs are now banking on marketing leaders to drive growth."

Many businesses are also re-examining the relevance of their brand as part of the greater business transformation initiative – another task delegated quickly to marketing.

That is the focus for this report: to assess the stress, specific to marketing processes and organisation, from business transformations. We will identify examples of the most significant B2B transformations, and try to understand why and how marketing organisations are affected.

In order to build this report, we held long interviews with 10 senior B2B marketing leaders to gain deep insight into the topic at hand. The framework for our discussions was a pre-defined list of six 'parameters of change', as we called them. Both Shane Redding and I have worked with many clients (and continue to do so) on their digital marketing transformation projects, and so those experiences also feed into this report.

It's worth mentioning that this research is relevant even if your business does not have this kind of impetus. We would suggest that marketers should be taking the initiative anyway in recognising changes and driving transformation.



Shane Redding is an independent consultant and expert trainer on strategic marketing and digital transformation, and has over 30 years of experience. She helps global businesses transform their marketing by choosing and implementing strategies that work for them and their customers. Shane is also the Propolis Hive expert for Strategy & Evolution.

"My contacts are reporting a positive shift in the perception of the importance of marketing by their board, often releasing additional budget or at least defending their budget from cuts. I sense a desire across these executives to ensure this momentum is not lost, or, as Gareth Case from Ricoh put it: 'How to keep winning when you're winning'."

SHANE REDDING,
Propolis Hive expert,
Strategy & Evolution



SECTION 2

The six parameters of change

In order to organise the thoughts of the senior B2B marketers we interviewed, and also to ensure that they also think outside of the pure marketing context when necessary, we designed this list of six parameters of change as a basis for the discussions:

1. The offering
2. The target markets
3. The brand
4. The role of marketing
5. The buyers
6. The engagement

2.1 THE OFFERING

Some B2B products have now become fully redundant, or demand has dried-up for them. The retail, hospitality, travel and leisure sectors have been particularly affected, and there has been a great need to quickly innovate new revenue streams which are better adapted to changed customer needs. In other sectors, brand new markets for existing products were created overnight (i.e. personal protective equipment).

The marketers we talked to were all deeply involved in tracking these changes in their markets.

"To create differentiation in our offering, undertaking analysis from a product, sales and brand appeal perspective were important. Marketing led the process to understand what the new opportunities were, so we could then build a plan to capitalise on them."

OLIVER PILGERSTORFER,
CMO, IFS

For IFS, their transformation began before the pandemic, so their transformation was self-actuated, and not impacted by Covid-19.

In developing those plans, marketers would work closely with their peers in other departments to drive what is perhaps a brand-new offering.

John Kerr, marketing director, Reliance Worldwide Corporation: *"Marketing has a very key role to play. We work with other groups, from the obvious ones like sales and customer service, but also in new product development, where we share market research on a new product development process. So, it's no longer a case of 'Let's find a product that we can make and bring it to market.' It's 'What does the customer actually want? And what do they want to do with that?'"*

Some leaders reported that their market insights were also steering changes in the overall business strategy of their organisation.

Andrew Colwell, marketing director, Fleetsolve: *"I think that, perhaps more than ever because of Covid, marketing, as a discipline, has come to the forefront of a lot of businesses and has led a lot of the change. As a supplier to different sectors and business types, we need to understand how their businesses are affected and adapt accordingly. You can hardly say: 'Look, we don't really care what's happened with you. This is our product, it costs this much, and you need to have it.' You need to change with your customers."*

A larger digital business transformation affecting many sectors, and accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis, is that product-based businesses are becoming service providers. These organisations are transforming to a recurring revenue model, which affects all aspects of the company. The classical example is the conversion of software vendors to software-as-a-service (SaaS) providers, but this change is also apparent in other B2B sectors, including manufacterers of multi-million-pound equipment assets like aircraft-engines.

Clearly, marketing and selling a service based upon time-based subscriptions is totally different than marketing products for a one-off sales transaction. The overall customer engagement lifecycle is longer; the decision critieria for buyers are different; the as-a-service benefits to be communicated are different than the product benefits; and the roles of marketing and sales have also changed.

2.2 THE TARGET MARKETS

The geography of business has been one of the biggest shifts that now challenges businesses. Planning post-Covid-19, many sectors will want to make significant changes in their supply-chain structure because of the geopolitical dependencies that were exposed. These considerations have taken up a more vital role, and some of these changes may even be mandated by government and/or compliance regulations.

Demand for many B2B interactions and even solution delivery has shifted from office buildings to home offices. This has changed the B2B marketing and sales interaction dramatically. It also exposes new buyer expectations in terms of style and tone. The result of these discussions were often new products or new marketing programmes developed rapidly.

Kate Cox, CMO, Moneypenny: *"We recognised that larger enterprises needed more help with their call and live chat solutions as they were more dependent on the office structure to work. So, we focused our product innovation roadmap on this customer group and targeted them with marketing through content, social and email, alongside broadcast media channels such as radio and newspapers."*

Another element of the geography of business is the location of the target buyers. Not only have offices been closed, but other face-to-face meeting opportunities were also curtailed, such as conferences and trade shows. This radical change in location of the target buyers needs an appropriate response in the deployed marketing channels.

John Kerr: *"A traditional plumber would be looking at print magazines and going to exhibitions. Now, however, many have switched to online research to find new products and services, meaning online reviews are becoming more critical in the decision making process. This means that how we position ourselves online has drastically changed, even though we're targeting the same customers."*

B2B companies are also discovering that their market is not as secure as it once was, as there are fewer barriers to entry for new competition. In fact, in a fully-digital world, choice is easier than ever for buyers. This raises the question: how do B2B marketers ensure that their offering has the potential to be positioned as the brand of choice in its chosen market(s)?

All of the above means that marketing is helping business executives make strategic decisions about the needs of their target markets on a regular basis.

Simon Rusling, partner and head of marketing, Barnett Waddingham: *"Ultimately, the transformation programme or our strategy is driven by our management board, but we feed into that. We provide them with updates around what's happening externally, what others are doing, but also what clients are asking us for."*

2.3 THE BRAND: WHAT IS IT NOW?

The importance of the customer experience (CX), regardless of channel, seems to have crept up on most B2B companies. The expected CX, plus the experience delivered during person-to-person meetings, within business correspondence, and across all digital communication, is closely linked to a company's brand. Savvy marketers are able to trace these changes and react accordingly.

Simon Rusling: *"It's an evolution. We're not ripping the old thing up and throwing it away, and starting with a blank sheet of paper, but we know that the world is significantly different two years on, and our clients are significantly different. We need to make sure that our brand is resonating."*

The brand promise sets the expectation, and that promise must be evident end-to-end across the entire customer lifecycle. In addition, the desired brand purpose in most B2B sectors has also changed perceptibly, with buyers looking for more honesty, transparency, helpfulness, experience, belief and reflection.

Andrew Colwell: *"In December 2020, we rebranded the business completely: more content; better surfacing of information; a more humanised brand; and a lot more storytelling. There's now more customer leverage and a new willingness to get involved in issues that a lot of people shy away from."*

Brand is often thought of as a marketing specialism, but, as with CX design, this is delivered by stakeholders throughout the company.

Rossa Shanks, CMO, ISTARI: *"If you're talking about a product, there's only so many ways you can differentiate the service. And the inevitability of parity and commoditisation of products and services elevates the importance of differentiation through other means. I think the story matters; purpose matters. But it must be genuine and authentic, not just some sort of marketing fluff. It has to be present through the DNA of a company beyond just marketing."*

Marketing, therefore, is often in a leadership role when it comes to communicating internally, as well as externally.

Lucy Steers, partner and head of brand, Hymans Roberston: *"But all of those key themes that sit at that corporate or 'one firm' level very much then feed into all of our propositions in all target markets. I recently said to a colleague: 'I feel like it's like a constant game of dot-to-dot – joining up people around the business.' But that's necessary! There's no point having a purpose and a set of brand messaging that's separate and distinct. If the propositions and markets teams went and did their own thing, they would come up with campaigns that are at odds with everything else."*

2.4 MARKETING'S ROLE NEEDS REDEFINING

In almost every B2B organisation, marketing's lead-generation output is now being considered a less critical business contribution. The business now values ongoing relationships with customers over a longer lifecycle as much more important than feeding leads to sales. Engagement marketing has gained a new emphasis as the long-term engine of growth. The transformation is compounded by a real shift in preference for ecommerce interactions by B2B buyers.

Andrew Colwell: *"Marketing is now two things. One, it's being seen as central to business transformation success, but also, it's become very much more aligned with other functions, such as sales, but also with perhaps less obvious functions, such as HR."*

Traditionally, in B2B, the 'primary ownership' of a customer had often sat with sales. This has now shifted as marketing takes advantage of more data insights and deploys more advanced digital technologies. This is a significant power shift that was highlighted by Covid-19, when sellers could not visit customers and therefore became more dependent on digital marketing programmes. Those marketers who assisted sellers with their customer insights data have noted that this shift has also been broadly accepted by sales executives.

Amy Williams, head of marketing, NHS Property Services: *"Marketing is playing a bigger role in offering strategy and forward planning, based on the huge amount of data and insight we have at our fingers tips and our natural bias towards forward thinking. We're in the process of changing how we work with the business by offering more insight, data and strategic advice than ever before."*

"We have led several training sessions with the sales teams on how to use social media. Their messages [on social media] are so much more powerful and resonate more than a company message."

JOHN KERR

Marketing is also helping sales in other ways.

Not only is the alignment between marketing and sales being newly defined, the overall role of marketing in the company is under review in many organisations.

Toni Allen, executive director – international, strategic marketing & engagement, Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET): *"The business is starting to see marketing in a leading role – the 'brains of the business.' We are the centre of excellence to come to for anything about the market, to understanding customers better, or modelling new offerings in certain markets."*

Rossa Shanks: *"I think marketing has to infiltrate every area of a company and be the connective tissue. That even means working with HR to ensure that when people are being onboarded, they learn about the brand and marketing strategy straight away, regardless of where they work."*

2.5 THE BUYERS ARE BEHAVING DIFFERENTLY

A major change during the pandemic has been the increasing popularity of working from home. At first mandated and necessary because of pandemic restrictions, home offices have become the preferred way of working in many B2B sectors. At best, these businesses will reach a point where working from home is considered just as important as being in the office.

The consequence? Well, businesspeople are now accustomed to consumer-like experiences and naturally prefer them. They are adept at ordering goods online and taking deliveries, and so they expect user interfaces on ecommerce and other business systems that match their private digital experiences. Many of the senior marketers we interviewed have been monitoring these changed expectations closely, because it affects all elements of marketing planning.

Lucy Steers: *"The world we live in has changed so much. What motivates people? Where do they want to get their information from? How do they want to interact with you as a business? We really need to maintain an up-to-date picture of our target audiences more than ever before."*

The more dramatic change is that buyers now realise the value of conducting their own digital research and limiting sales calls to an agenda-driven video-conference. Research in the McKinsey 'Omnichannel in B2B sales' report confirms that two-thirds of B2B buyers now prefer remote human interactions or digital self-service across all phases of the buying process. Onsite visits will be reintroduced post-Covid, but they will play a smaller role in B2B negotiation and buying in the future. All this will cause fundamental changes in the skillsets and contribution now required of sellers.

Andrew Colwell: *"I think that's a real fundamental change, because, as a business, you've got to understand what your market's doing. Buyer preferences have a major impact on how you set yourself up as a business, and operationally how you deliver. I would even say that the change in buyers has affected not only the marketing strategy, but also our overall business strategy."*

2.6 FROM BUYING/SELLING TO ENGAGING

The advent of digital marketing and the increasing use of digital platforms to support meetings has introduced challenges beyond the more standard sales enablement function. Several sales enablement platforms can now support virtual reality presentations to support demos of proposed factory layouts, new machine tools or production processes. The mundane proposal presentation has also been digitalised to some extent.

Danielle Regan, group marketing and communications director, Mace: *"In the bid process, we're looking at how to create a better customer experience. When we interview for projects, we consider how we can offer a collaborative space online, rather than just a video conference – something that is much more interactive, and more of an 'experience'. How can we differentiate it from a virtual meeting into something that's a bit more experiential?"*

B2B has also been affected by the increasing influence of word-of-mouth (viva voce) marketing, community discussions, and even social media commentary about product and brands. This is a phenomenon known to be common in consumer marketing, but is now a significant factor in B2B as well.

Kate Cox: *"We have found that the addition of a managed live chat on our website, as well as call back widgets to prompt phone calls, has led to a better conversion rate and experience for the customer. Having real people on hand and engaging with prospects is the quickest way to understand customer needs and respond accordingly."*

The classical business interaction has now changed permanently. From physical to virtual/digital; from formal to informal; from targeted to opportunistic; and from local to boundaryless.

> *"I think it's also levelled the playing field in terms of how many people you can talk to. You're not travelling, and location and time differences don't matter as much. It also opens up possibilities of perhaps finding clients in random places because virtual events are accessible around the world. And I think the personal stuff, such as the lack of business attire, or certainly a decrease, has added some informality where there might have been formality."*
>
> ROSSA SHANKS

The digital marketing to address this, plus all the rising expectations documented above, requires more than just a website revamp. It is now time to reflect on the entire style and purpose of marketing.

In many B2B marketing teams, agility is usurping sequential marketing processes, just as the waterfall or funnel has been replaced by the buyer cyclone. Long marketing campaigns now seem outdated and irrelevant when the pace of change is so quick. During the pandemic, many marketers have found that their 'always-on' campaigns enabled by automation were more of a burden than an asset in a crisis when you needed to turn off certain types of communication streams quickly (promotional language, for instance). All budget cycles in the future will be under intense pressure to be able to respond quickly to new rapid decision processes on the customer side. Again, the customer experience is now (almost) everything.



SECTION 3

Assuming leadership as a marketer



SHANE REDDING,
Propolis Hive expert,
Strategy & Evolution

As times change, so too must marketing leaders in order to remain relevant. If they don't, they risk the role of CMO becoming redundant.[1] Whilst the role has continually evolved, I now see far greater diversity than ever before in terms of what the function's responsibility does and doesn't encompass in different B2B organisations around the globe. However, is there a 'right answer' as to what role a modern CMO should play?

Some believe that marketing's natural evolution is to expand as an internal service provider, not just to sales, but across the organisation, replicating the entire customer arc of interactions with a business, whether its customer needs informing RnD and product development, to the customer experience of post-sales customer service and operational delivery.

However, perhaps that view is already outdated and not brave enough? Instead, should CMOs aspire to transform marketing into the lead agency of change as both profit drivers and managers of strategic change?[2] This approach is one that is enabled by the adoption of a robust, scientific approach of test-and-learn (fast), coupled with the analytical data-driven decision-making that digital tools empower.

However, it goes further than this, as marketing in B2B organisations is transforming not in isolation, but as part of what has been termed the 'digital ripple effect'.[3] We need to understand our function as part of the corporate whole. As Ted Moser puts it:

"Digitalisation affects every aspect of a firm's business model: from front-end to back-office; from how firms create value for their customers to how they capture value. And doing so can reshape every facet of the firm. By adapting their business models to the possibilities of technology, firms are facing an accelerating transformation of their activities, offering new opportunities for 'out-of-the-box' development of new processes and tools, which effectively challenge deeply engrained functional silo-based thinking."

I do not claim to know what the 'right' role of the CMO is, or how the function of marketing should be defined in your business. I merely wish to offer my thoughts or talking points, in order for you to draw your own conclusions and help you construct your own 'fit for the future' template for success.

Whatever vision you have as to marketing's role in your company, you still need to answer these two fundamental questions:

1. How will you lead change?
2. What structures, processes and systems do you need in place to support it?

3.1 UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU ARE TODAY AS AN ORGANISATION AND A MARKETING FUNCTION, AND YOUR ROLE AS A LEADER IN THE BUSINESS

Assessing where you, your company, your customers and your markets are today, is always the first part of planning for the future. Numerous strategic marketing models can help us to frame our understanding, whether it's Pestle, SWOT to TOWS, the five Cs, the Ansoff matrix, Porter's five forces, or the lean marketing canvas. However, B2B Marketing has recognised that a framework that not only allows you to assess your competencies, but to understand your maturity compared to other B2B organisations, is even more valuable. That's why we've created the strategic marketing competency assessment process (CAP), which you can find on page 18.

So, if you have not done so already, take the CAP now.

3.2 LEADERSHIP FIRST?

If you are not currently seen by the board as a leader of change and being asked to drive strategic transformation – why not? Is it that the role and function of marketing is not valued, or is it that your own leadership skills require honing? Whichever it is, one key area that high-performing leaders consistently demonstrate is excellent communication of marketing's vison and mission, and how these will support and help deliver the overarching company strategy.

Have you asked yourself if it's time to spend more time on your internal communications and marketing to stakeholders across the business? What evidence can you share to help change perceptions and add value internally to other functions? With better digital collaboration tools available, using these to disseminate useful information should be business as usual. However, too often, we fail to share marketing data and insights that the wider organisation could use.

One excellent example of this is a CMO of a major international business who realised that the ABM insights they were gathering for their one-to-one programmes had enormous value beyond marketing and sales, and now form part of the monthly board pack. This enables board directors to leverage deep key client information, not just in their peer-to-peer conversations, but to inform strategic decisions too.

Ask yourself whether marketing is aligned to your organisation's most pressing business issues. If not, why not? Deeper and wider conversations with the board will show that you are focused on what matters most.

3.3 BE CLEAR AND REDEFINE THE ROLE OF MARKETING NOW AND AS YOU TRANSFORM

Being able to communicate marketing's vision and purpose is essential for your team to feel they belong to a culture where they are doing meaningful work and feel appreciated for delivering it. Recent research has demonstrated that teams who are valued are more productive and engaged. The need for employees to understand the 'why' behind their workdays ensures they are aligned to the most important priorities of the company, provides context and information that helps them deliver quality work, and gives leaders visibility into what employees are accomplishing.[4]

One of the painful lessons that CMOs have learnt bringing in new ways of working, especially digital marketing platforms, is to make sure that you don't overpromise and underdeliver. Whilst you may have a vison of becoming a profit centre for the business, those who already have achieved it will tell you it is not a quick and easy journey. One tip from the highly experienced CMO Nick Eades (currently CCO at eConsult Health), who has made it his mission to transform marketing into a measurable, accountable and revenue generating function wherever he works, is to set "milestones not millstones."

The same Adobe research shows that "remote work has exposed the limits of outdated technologies, and workers are noticing. Today, digital workers expect the technologies they use at work to be both up to date and fit for the job. Nearly a third of workers (32%) say they have said goodbye to an employer whose tech was a barrier to their ability to do good work."

With digital marketing skills in short supply, employers who win the battle for talent will be better placed to beat their competitors and support business growth. CMOs need more than ever to invest in their teams.

Changing the function of marketing requires not just a vison, but different technology, processes and skills to deliver the new ways of working too. Do you have the capabilities to deliver (personally) and as a team?



3.4 ASSESS THE GAPS

One of the key parts of any new strategic framework is to assess where the resource gaps are now (and where they will be in the future) that will accelerate or prevent success. Talking to your peers in Propolis and in the wider B2B marketing community who have already gone on the same journey will help you identify challenges and areas that will require additional investment that you may not have considered.

These include the need to build more agile teams, whose roles can flex along with demand. Some companies do this internally, sharing resources with sales or service functions, such as data analysts. Others build capacity using their agencies to test new digital marketing methods, learning fast before investing in-house in the tools and the skills to deploy them. Some choose to keep a very lean central team and always outsource not just testing, but ongoing deployment to specialists. Is it time for you to rethink your resource balance and structure?

Understanding your marketing ecosystem and maximising its efficiency and effectiveness has become a driver for many CMOs as the role becomes more like a conductor, getting best performance out of all the players, no matter what type of marketing they are doing. Our roles increasingly span beyond marketing, and towards orchestrating other players across the business to drive a better customer experience at all touchpoints. This is what Moser redefines as:

"In B2B, one might think of 'total workflow benefits'[5] as a modern successor to 'total cost of ownership.' It's how a new system enables better flow that compresses time, improves customer productivity, and enables innovative outcomes... **In a flow world, a great customer benefit experience depends meaningfully on the customer's own behavioural change – a blend of user engagement and know-how – making lifecycle marketing critical.** That's why marketing needs to view the sale as the starting line, not the finish line, for the company's value proposition."

3.5. INVEST IN YOURSELF AND BECOME A BETTER CMO

Lastly, in order to keep ahead and become a better leader, how do you need to change? Many marketers within Propolis cite lack of time as their biggest challenge. Our ability as leaders to help not just our teams, but also ourselves, to focus on what matters most, is business critical.

Allowing ourselves 'thinking time' over 'doing' or 'directing' provides that reflective space and needs to be built into our business-as-usual approach to leading. Are we spending too much time on providing answers and not asking the right questions? One of the biggest changes from stepping up from a management role to that of a marketing leader is to ensure that we delegate finding the answers and solving problems to others.

"Digital workers crave autonomy and freedom when deciding how to support company goals. Successful autonomy requires companies to shift from a hierarchical to egalitarian operational model – from telling people what to do, to providing context so they can determine what needs to be done and giving them the ability to do it."[6]

This top-down, bottom-up approach to leadership is one that has many fans and, having experienced it first hand, is one I would recommend to all who wish to move their companies forward at pace.

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SECTION 4

Words of wisdom:
An interview with Iulia Balan



IULIA BALAN,
Propolis Hive ambassador
for Strategy & Evolution

Peter: **Most B2B businesses start out with a strong focus on their products or services. Do you think that this is an issue in the new world of digital marketing and selling, and, if so, why?**

Iulia: A strong focus on products or services can be an issue if the product/service design is done without a deep understanding of the customer needs, wants and behaviours. The new world of digital marketing and selling has deepened the expectation from B2B customers to find products and services that clearly meet their needs, but it has also provided plenty of opportunities to obtain more reliable insight into those needs and behaviours and feed that insight back into the product development process. The sweet spot is ultimately one of value exchange between the customer and the product.

Peter: **And, of course, marketing has tended to adopt that orientation as well, which has established a mass of muscle memory in everything they plan and execute. How would you recommend that CMOs transform their organisations towards a more customer-centric organisation and approach?**

Iulia: True marketing has always been about a deep understanding of the customer. CMOs have an extraordinary opportunity to focus on that core strength and truly help the entire organisation focus on the customer. That does not mean creating products or services that are inferior or less profitable. It simply means inserting customer insight across the product lifecycle with the goal of providing the best possible customer experience. Marketing itself can transform by 'walking the walk' of using that insight to deliver more targeted, personalised customer engagement as part of the go-to-market process.

Peter: **Our research shows that brand has now become a critical factor for B2B organisations. As brand, let alone customer experience, is communicated by many departments in a company (sales, service, design, etc), how do you see marketing's role within this evolving in the next few years?**

Iulia: Marketing has the unique ability to serve as the voice of the customer inside the broader B2B organisation and, as such, become a catalyst for customer-centric collaboration and transformation. Brand and customer experience are a shared responsibility across the company, but marketing can become the connecting tissue between teams such as sales, operations and service, by building on the momentum created by the increased credibility gained over the past couple of years. And so we have an opportunity to take the lead on not only creating the brand purpose and CX vision, but also on aligning and training the organisation to deliver on these.

Peter: **One of the clear consequences of the last year has been the increasing internationalisation of all B2B businesses. Through digital channels, marketers can reach, or be found, by potential customers around the world. How can marketing leaders take advantage of these opportunities for their business?**



Iulia: It is important to recognise that the increased internationalisation comes not only with some major global themes, such as the new working practices, but also with a deepening of some localisation trends given the greater physical divide between markets and people. With a strong digital presence that provides the right content to the right people at the right time, marketing can lead the charge in spotting new market, product and service opportunities for their business. It all goes back to the ability to gather and relay deep customer insight, but on a much broader scale than ever before. This can really move marketing from the position of asking what the business strategy is to helping shape that strategy.

SECTION 5

Strategy and Evolution Competency Assessment Framework

The following framework seeks to define the different stages of maturity when it comes to marketing strategy and evolution, and map them against different criteria required for success. A framework such as this is being created for all eight Propolis Hives and competency areas.

This framework is a flat or static version of the interactive Competency Assessment Programme, which is part of your Propolis membership. This assessment is designed to help you determine your specific level of competency against these criteria, compare them against other Propolis members and highlight areas to focus on for improvement.

If you've not taken your Competency Assessment yet, please contact your account manager or Propolis customer success manager.



MARKETING STRATEGY AND EVOLUTION ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

PART 1. LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTION	1. BUILDING	2. DEVELOPING	3. PERFORMING	4. IMPROVING	5. EXCELLING
Does the leadership team have a clearly defined and mapped business strategy?	There is no clearly defined business strategy. The business 'exists' with no roadmap or plan.	A basic business strategy exists, with an overall marketing strategy. Not all products/services are included in the plan, and not all stakeholders are aligned.	A business and marketing strategy has been agreed, and implementation has started, supported by all stakeholders, with a fully developed marketing plan for all products and services.	The leadership team has clearly defined, mapped, implemented and communicated the strategy. Its effectiveness is reviewed regularly.	An integrated business strategy drives business excellence and growth, powered by dynamic and optimised decision-making.
How is marketing's contribution to overall business strategy seen by the board?	Marketing is seen as a tactical support function, not a business driver or creator of value.	Marketing has market insights to inform the marketing plan, but the board is not asking for more input.	Marketing uses market and customer insights to inform and drive decision-making within marketing, but that is not yet fully valued by the board.	Marketing provides some market and customer insights to support and guide the business strategy and drive some innovation.	Marketing is a key strategic function, highly valued as a key contributor, driver and shaper of business strategy to lead change.

MARKETING STRATEGY AND EVOLUTION ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

PART 2. BUSINESS ALIGNMENT

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTION	1. BUILDING	2. DEVELOPING	3. PERFORMING	4. IMPROVING	5. EXCELLING
To what degree have shared goals been set, communicated, understood and adopted in the strategic alignment process?	Marketing works in a 'silo' with little input or feedback on its impact on the business. No shared cross-functional goals.	The need for alignment is understood, but collaboration is hard due to poor internal processes and siloed systems. Shared goals are being developed.	Functional alignment is a now a management priority with shared goals for finance, marketing, sales, customer experience, IT and operations.	The process for all functions to input to business strategy is defined, communicated understood and followed using best practice. Stakeholders collaborate to set shared goals.	Strategic and functional alignment provides shared learning and drives business improvement and innovation.
To what level are related strategic dependencies between all functions mapped, continually stress-tested and revised?	Emphasis is on 'doing' or short-term tactical activity, often 'delivering' to internal teams, e.g. sales. Little or no awareness of need for alignment.	Strategic dependencies to enable alignment are beginning to be mapped. Decisions are still taken without understanding the full impact on other business areas.	Strategic dependencies are understood, mapped and used to plan operational processes and aid decision-making.	A review process to ensure market strategy keeps pace with the rate of business growth/ change has been implemented and is beginning to deliver improvements.	Related strategic dependencies between all functions are mapped and continually stress-tested and revised and alignment embedded as best practice.

MARKETING STRATEGY AND EVOLUTION ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

PART 3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTION	1. BUILDING	2. DEVELOPING	3. PERFORMING	4. IMPROVING	5. EXCELLING
To what extent has the business set clear marketing strategy KPIs and how well does it monitor them?	Few marketing metrics exist. Marketing is measured mainly on output (not impact). Budgeting is based on cost, not ROI.	Key marketing metrics are in place, and work is starting on understanding their relation to wider business levers.	Marketing efficiency and effectiveness are defined and understood. Marketing is a revenue-generating function, but not yet fully optimised.	Focus is on optimisation, using agreed milestones to measure and ensure that the marketing strategy is on track and delivering the desired outcomes.	'Always on' metrics ensure that strategy is reviewed and rapid action is consistently taken when needed, positively impacting business results.
To what extent are tools, data and platforms in place and utilised to support and deliver the marketing strategy?	The business has basic CRM/email/website set-up, but with no customer insights. Consistent data and IT standards are not yet in place.	Investments are being made in backbone martech and the need for better data/analytics is understood. Data and IT standards are being developed.	A robust martech stack exists. Integration of data flows to core business IT platforms has commenced. Robust standards with consistent and replicable processes embedded.	Technology to actively support and develop customer lifecycle management and insight creation is deployed, but its value is not fully leveraged.	Data is valued and treated as a key asset. Analytics is a core capability, with growing investment in technologies and the knowledgeable resources to drive progress.

MARKETING STRATEGY AND EVOLUTION ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

PART 4. VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTION	1. BUILDING	2. DEVELOPING	3. PERFORMING	4. IMPROVING	5. EXCELLING
How well has the business embedded its vision, mission and values in its ongoing strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose?	Brand identity has been created, but vision, mission and values are unclear, or confused.	The business has invested in creating a clear vision, mission and values, and is in the roll-out phase. Purpose is clear to all stakeholders and is embedded in the brand.	Purpose is embedded in the brand and marketing strategy. Investment in customer experience and insight are helping evolve the brand.	Purpose drives the marketing strategy and helps guide decision-making. Customer experience is integrated with brand and business strategy.	The business actively monitors its ongoing strategy to ensure these core pillars are enshrined and fit for purpose and takes action when required.

MARKETING STRATEGY AND EVOLUTION ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

PART 5. BUSINESS PLANNING

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTION	1. BUILDING	2. DEVELOPING	3. PERFORMING	4. IMPROVING	5. EXCELLING
How well is the marketing strategy and planning process embedded as best practice in overall business planning?	Marketing planning is a 'lag' activity done once other functions have defined their needs. It is inward looking, as opposed to outward looking.	Planning is usually done annually as part of the budgeting process. Best practice is still lacking.	The marketing team is trained in best practice budgeting and planning, and is learning to apply it.	The marketing strategy and planning process is embedded in overall business planning with stakeholders committed to delivering continual improvement.	Marketing planning is forward-looking, yet resilient and agile enough to cope with change. Deployment of predictive analytics provides competitive advantage.
How well are people enabled to deliver the strategy?	The business lacks experienced and skilled marketers. Marketing may even be a sub-function of another team, e.g. communications or sales.	Marketing resources are already stretched doing business-as-usual, so may rely on external resource to help with developing new products/markets.	The marketing team is results-oriented and always looking for ways to improve results. Talent is actively developed to strengthen marketing capabilities.	Marketing is part of cross-functional teams and empowered to make 'bottom up' strategic recommendations. Test and deployment have commenced within agreed frameworks.	The head of marketing is a top-level executive who sponsors a number of key strategic initiatives. Investment in people is a key business differentiator and an engine of change.

SECTION 6

Recommendations

Marketing leaders must ensure that the marketing strategy both delivers and helps drive the overall business strategy. Such key requirements need organisations to be agile and innovative, anticipating and reacting to changes in customer needs on an ongoing basis. This requires flexibility in both planning and measurement and setting up processes accordingly.

The traditional five-year or three-year marketing plan is now passé, and, as the last year has shown, even an annual marketing plan can no longer be expected to stay steady for a 12-month period. The most mature organisations will be continually adjusting their planning based on real-time data and are structured to support innovations and change.



6.1 RESET EVERYBODY'S EXPECTATIONS OF MARKETING

As Shane writes in her chapter, it is now time to re-assess marketing's role and standing within the business. The last 18 months have changed the game for everyone, and the strong likelihood is that your peers now see you as more strategic than before.

If not already done, initiate an audit of your marketing technology platform and strategy to establish a plan to optimise that environment. This is needed not only to ensure that marketing delivers value efficiently to the business, but, perhaps more importantly, to be able to recruit and retain your most important marketing staff. Their expectations have also changed now regarding working remotely, using digital platforms, and being more flexible/agile.

In summary, we are recommending that you set up a project team to rethink through all processes, measures and outcomes that currently prevail in the marketing organisation.

On that note, if you haven't taken your competency assessment yet, don't forget to get in touch with your account manager or Propolis customer success manager to take part now, and see where you're ahead of the game, and where you're possibly falling behind.

ABOUT

B2B Marketing and Propolis

Powered by the community, for the community.

Established in 2004, B2B Marketing is now the number one go-to resource for B2B marketers across the globe.

Right from the start, we had a clear mission that remains as strong and clear today: to provide marketers at business brands with the tools, insight and inspiration they need to grow and succeed – as both individuals and businesses.

To do this, we need to continually evolve to make sure we are delivering what you need.

This is why Propolis was born – our community for B2B marketers.

We're proud to serve as the focal point for the B2B marketing sector, and to be a force for greater connectivity, enabling marketers and leaders to share experiences and learn from one another.

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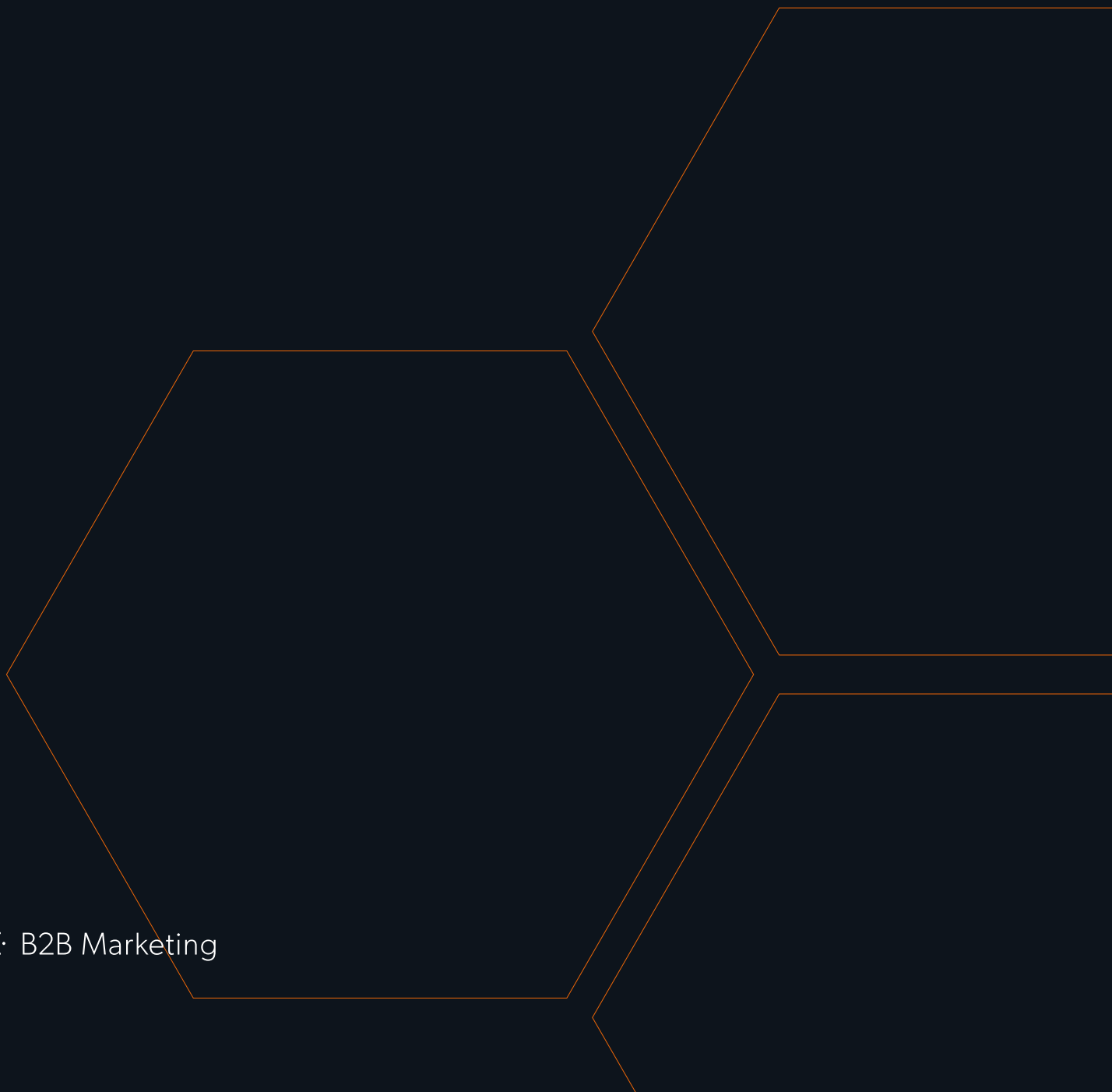
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