ROUNDTABLE

Portrait of a B2B leader

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

B2B LEADERS

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1 MANAGING 'LEGACY PERSONNEL' WITHIN THE MARKETING TEAM.

Rapid digitisation of marketing activities and processes has created a challenge for many leaders around how to manage members of their team who have been left behind – whose skillsets may largely be focused on offline or outbound techniques, and who are unwilling or unable to adapt to the new environment and embrace new skills. The problem is compounded if these individuals have been with the team for a long time (as is often the case), while the team leader is newer in the role and/or organisation. If they are resistant to change, the only option will be to gently manage them out, which can be a time-consuming, distracting and convoluted process for all involved.

2 ENCOURAGING EFFECTIVE PRIORITISATION OF EFFORT.

A common reason for marketing teams losing effectiveness is when they are simply trying to do too much. A key challenge for leaders, therefore, is to get them focused on the things that will make a difference. By definition this will require them to stop doing certain things and focus their effort where it will deliver demonstrable returns. It also follows that appropriate project planning and metrics are put in place to ensure those areas where they are prioritising are actually followed through.

3 HYGIENE FACTORS STILL DEFINE THE ENVIRONMENT.

Too often, marketing isn't taken seriously enough by the board, or it's still a very new function and hasn't really been set up or integrated into the organisation correctly. In both scenarios, marketing leaders will struggle to be effective. Similarly, international is a major headache, with expectations for growth without understanding marketing implications placing real strain on marketing's ability to deliver.

4 MARKETING IS ABLE TO DEFINE THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR THE WHOLE ORGANISATION.

Arguably no business function has felt the impact of digitalisation in the way marketing has – bar the IT function, and that creates an opportunity for marketing to help leverage its expertise to help other areas of the business meet their challenges through sharing, learning and processes. This not only enables collaboration within the organisation, but, more importantly, it assures that marketing's place at the top table is not questioned by demonstrating clear value across the organisation.

5 MARKETING NEEDS TO BE MORE TRANSPARENT.

Demonstrate that you're accountable, and show what has been successful and what has not. Actively enable challenges; become proactive rather than reactive in driving change. Have a dialogue with other departments, and provide clear and accessible data.

6 MARKETERS STILL NEED TO DRIVE CHANGE THAT MAY SEEM OBVIOUS TO THEM.

Getting adoption to social media remains a massive uphill struggle for some orgnisations, for the sales team, the board and the organisation more generally. The key is to understand barriers and break these down – these can be as innocuous as access to a profile photo which they're happy with, to more fundamental things like enabling access to platforms via the network.

7 THE PRIMARY ROLE OF THE B2B LEADER IN 2016 IS TO DRIVE ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE.

In order to do this, they need to take on a number of different roles. Firstly, they need to understand a little bit of everything in order to have a dialogue. They need to stop thinking and speaking in silos. Secondly, they need to be storytellers, packaging up ideas and sell them in a compelling way to the rest of the organisation. Finally, they need to be brokers, bringing together different stakeholders, finding a common ground for them to buy into shared objectives. The marketer is the fixer in the organisation.

8 MARKETING NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO ARTICULATE THE CUSTOMER.

It's too easy for marketers to become focused on products and communications, ignoring the customers' needs and preferences. Data and technology can provide a single view of the customer. This provides massive strategic value, if done right, and puts marketing very much on the front foot.

9 MARKETING STILL HAS TO DEAL WITH ALL THE RANDOM REQUESTS FROM THE ORGANISATION.

"I know it's not marketing, but…" This can be random events or initiatives – whatever they are, the marketing team has to pick these things up. Sponsoring your son's football team, Christmas cards, samples and stationary orders, etc. Sometimes marketers don't know about things that are expected to go into their budget until the end of the quarter when the bill arrives.

10 LEADERS NEED TO BE GENERALISTS.

They need to know enough of everything that their team is doing to be able to have a dialogue with them about it and be able to collaborate on the development of activities. This can be difficult, bearing in mind the rapid evolution of technologies, techniques and behaviour. They don't need to know enough to actually perform this specific role, but they 'need to know enough to be dangerous.'

About B2B Leaders

B2B LEADERS

The B2B Leaders programme is a network of the most senior figures in the B2B marketing space, from heads of marketing to global CMOs of leading brands.

Members benefit from a unique and invaluable opportunity to regularly network and collaborate with senior-level peers, share insights and discuss strategic challenges.

Membership is by invitation only, and includes:

- Annual Leaders Forum ticket, the only B2B marketing leader's event of its kind
- Monthly roundtables, focused on key marketing leadership topics
- Monthly roundtable findings reports
- Annual *B2B Leaders Report,* with key research data and insights

The B2B Leaders programme counts senior marketing names in Deloitte, Oracle, Atos, Dell, HSBC, KPMG and Adobe among its members, all sharing ideas on topics ranging from team development to board interaction.

To register for the programme call +44 (0)20 7014 4920

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