B2B marketing

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THE FUTURE OF YOUR MARKETING DEPARTMENT

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2020: Time to transform?

The role of the marketer has changed greatly over the past few years as a result of new technology. But what might the marketing department of the future look like? **Claire Weekes** investigates



The digital revolution has had an unprecedented impact on the way in which businesses operate, with marketing at the vanguard of this change. Who could have predicted 10 years ago that a thing called 'social media' would exist, and that it would be an ingrained part of so many companies' marketing plans? Or that mobile marketing would be such a viable way to reach business decision makers?

With this in mind, we decided it would be useful to consider how the average marketing department might look seven years from now in 2020. The changes impacting on marketing communications in the here and now have been widely discussed – it's time to look to the future and to how technology may continue to make the marketing department more dynamic than ever.

Here we list seven key areas we feel will benefit from the continued digital revolution in the coming years and influence the marketing department of the future.

Skills and workload

Thanks to the internet, we now live in an 'always on' society, meaning the average campaign model has changed. Campaigns of the future will become even less about large, seasonal bursts of activity and more about 'drip marketing', whereby content is pushed out on a continual basis.

"'Continuous content provision' will be augmented by fast speed of response, and operational agility will be key for the marketing department of 2020. Demand spikes and threats to corporate reputation will be random and unpredictable. Marketers will be expected to capitalise on the former and minimise the latter in real-time," says Gerry Brown, senior analyst, digital marketing and CRM at Bloor Research.

"Campaigns will be built and executed at speed. For example, the head of marketing for News International was given five days to launch the *Sun on Sunday*. More marketers will be expected to work at high speed using a range of interconnected digital tools to create, manage and deliver marketing activities."

Bloor also predicts that increasingly, marketing departments will have a mix of multi-skilled and specialist marketers organised in a flexible 'hub and spoke' configuration.

"Centralised (hub) multi-skilled marketers will control and manage multiple projects and campaigns, while decentralised (spoke) experts and agencies will collaborate to deliver specialist campaign components using workflow tools," he explains.

"Marketers will have customer-focused titles and functions, and they will be

organised around customer segments rather than products and channels. For example Salesforce's board already has a 'customers for life', a 'chief growth officer', a 'chief customer officer' and a 'chief adoption officer'. Virgin Atlantic, meanwhile, has a 'social relations team' that delivers combined advertising, marketing and PR through social media."

Internal communications

Thanks to technology, marketing is becoming increasingly transparent in the way it handles its internal communications. As we look to the future, it is apparent teams will no longer work in silos, rather they will be brought closer together. This is true no more than in the marketing department – which is working more and more closely with sales and IT teams. No matter if these different departments are not geographically close either, as can be the case in larger B2B organisations, thanks to social media and the cloud.

"Teams can't work in silos any more, nor can companies for that matter. There is an increasing need to share content across departments and across the firewall between organisations," says Chris Boorman, CMO of Huddle. This is where collaborative tools come to the fore – particularly ones that provide a secure cloud platform to share relevant content between departments and across boundaries such as the traditional firewall. Boorman adds, "Social tools have an important role to play in enabling conversation within the context of that collaboration. In addition, capabilities such as version control, task and activity management are also important so that, for example, workers can keep a clear audit trail of who edited what and when. Modern cloud-based collaboration services that provide these capabilities are displacing email as a legacy collaboration tool."

Recruitment and training

In the past, trainee marketers perhaps took one qualification and that was that. But in the modern world, both employers and employees find flexible, on-demand training more useful. So what new training solutions might become available to marketers over the next few years?

The Institute of Direct Marketing (IDM) recognises the trend for more bespoke training and has been adding more initiatives to its IDM Education Programme pledges to get the best young people into the industry. "Via the IDM Education Programme, university students can sit additional qualifications such as our Direct and Digital Marketing Principles Certificate, which add to a student's immediate employability without extra coursework. And they can apply to attend the IDM Summer School or Data Discovery workshops, which gives them both an intensive period of study and evaluation, plus some key client, brand and agency contacts to help them leap-frog the recruitment process into the profession," explains Mike Cornwell F IDM, CEO of the Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing.

So what are Cornwell's thoughts on the future of training in marketing?

"Ultimately, and it's getting closer and closer already, professional training organisations are going to have to plan, process and deliver against the ever-changing breadth and depth of marketing communications skills requirements. It may also be that at group or even holding company level, white label solutions are found to meet the changing client and agency skills and knowledge gaps," he says.

"Training can be a sensitive issue, with many, particularly those in senior positions, perceiving it to be an admission of a lack of know-how. It's a completely false perception, of course, since every marketer needs to keep up with the acknowledged pace of change."

Cornwell adds that data is now being seen as the 'trojan horse' for the marketing industry, with many having to admit they don't have the skills and techniques required to imagine, track, measure and iterate against agreed KPIs that truly track ROI. He believes online training will become more important in helping to bridge this knowledge gap.

"As far as training delivery is concerned, our customers tell us that face-to-face is still a vital component, but distance learning via a blend of live interactive workshops, clinics, webinars and other proven, engaging learning techniques will all have a part to play."

The role of the agency

The role of the agency is changing. There has been talk about the future role of agencies, and most predominant, it seems, is speculation over whether the role of the agency as middleman is fading. Yet rather than agencies disappearing, the future perhaps lies in a more collaborative approach, and a gradual shift in the way in which clients and agencies work together.

"Agencies are always going to be important to marketers because it's easier

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CHRIS BOORMAN
CMO
HUDDLE

to spend programme budget than it is to get headcount. Even a modest-sized marketing department will typically have five or 10 agencies," says Jon Miller, co-founder and vice president of marketing for cloud-based marketing automation company, Marketo.

"Some will feel like a third party and others will feel like an extension of your marketing team based on chemistry and cultural alignment. However, we are seeing a change in as much as there are now many more agencies focused on digital, process and technical skills. We are also seeing a need for more process, left-brain thinking, as well as all-round content providers. For example, PR agencies today are much more focused on content than they ever used to be."

"Continuous content provision will be augmented by fast speed of response and operational agility will be key for the marketing department of 2020"



GERRY BROWN
SENIOR ANALYST
DIGITAL MARKETING & CRM
BLOOR RESEARCH

Working with sales

The advent of demand generation and marketing automation have pushed the marketing and sales departments closer together over the years, and this is a direction that will continue into the future.

"A tight coupling and alignment between sales and marketing departments can deliver a step-change in revenue generation and profitability in the B2B environment. However, B2B marketers are more enthusiastic than B2B salespeople to forge this partnership, as marketing is reliant on sales execution to prove the worth of marketing. This explains the current interest in marketing attribution technologies and the measurement of 'marketing-influenced sales revenues' as marketing seeks to prove its contribution to ROI," says Brown.

"Salespeople, generally, are unconvinced of the street-wise commercial saviness of marketers and like to be the masters of their own destiny, usually by using their wits and CRM system. The best strategy for marketers is to invest in a demand creation and lead management system, and then persuade sales opinion leaders to try it for size. Once key salespeople are 'bought in', a more balanced discussion of the metrics and definitions that will guide service level agreements between the two departments can start in earnest.

"[In the future], at best, the relationship between sales and marketing will be an uneasy truce, as each group has different cultures, motivations, timescales and working methods. As the doyen of marketing, Theodore Levitt once said, 'Selling tries to get the customer to want what the company has, marketing on the other hand, tries to get the company to produce what the customer wants.' We need to appreciate that fundamentally sales is from Mars and marketing is from Venus. [Going forward] both parties need to manage their relationship and partnership with empathy, emotional intelligence and constraint," suggests Brown.

The evolution of email

Thanks mainly to the domination of social media now as a communications tool, many marketers question the role of email as a form of dialogue in the future. Yet for as many people who argue that email will die, there are those that believe it will still have a role to play in marketing communications, just so long as it adapts. "SMS and IM potentially sound the death knell for email in the consumer market. But the level to which it is still embraced by the business community makes it difficult to see that email will completely disappear. Platforms such as Yammer are certainly helping to blend social and business communication channels, but it is still more likely that we will see email evolve rather than become extinct. It's conceivable that email will simply become an IM that is responded to at a later date," reckons Tom Gillman, business development director at integrated digital agency Crafted.

The role of technology

Of course, advances in technology underpin all of the above. Marketing is becoming increasingly digital and automated, which impacts on the way departments will be run. Forward-thinking companies will procure technology that provides marketers with deep customer insights – for example customer profiles including demographics, purchase and engagement history, website journey and propensity to up/cross sell.

"This data will enable marketers to craft compelling and relevant campaigns with high potential response and conversion," says Brown. He adds, "Marketing communications will, as a result, be better coordinated across multiple channels to provide a more consistent brand image and brand promise to the customer. In summary, mad men [the creative folk] and math's men [those driven by numbers] will merge into the modern multi-skilled marketer."

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Seven golden rules of online collaboration



Chris Boorman, CMO of Huddle, shares top tips for leveraging online collaboration in 2013… and beyond

One of the primary roles of today's B2B marketing is to create different forms of content for the organisation. Modern cloud-based collaboration systems, such as Huddle, bring teams of people together, from both an internal and external environment, to enable this. These systems can assist in organisations of any size or structure, and they utilise a SAAS architecture and 'consumerised' interface, which means you don't need the IT department to make them work. So how do you make it work?

1. Start small and then build. Create a strategy, beginning with a defined manageable project with clear goals – don't bite off more than you can chew.
2. Stay focused on goals. Ensure you don't create yet another jumbled repository.
3. Encourage immersion. Like all new technology, users need to be trained and encouraged to use the platform regularly to be comfortable with it, and ensure it is used in the right way.
4. Be inclusive. Include everyone. All relevant stakeholders need to be involved in sharing all the way through – that includes external teams like agencies.
5. Share easily and often. Thoughts and feedback should be encouraged at every stage. A two-way dialogue must be created, and team members encouraged to share things they know is not perfect.
6. Be mindful of deadlines. Don't let the discussion run away – the goal is to get the work done.
7. Don't slip back into bad habits. Remember, email is not a collaboration tool!



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