

Role Change in Marketing

Herein we explore the evolving role of marketing in the Internet Age. The first of a two-part series.



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Over the next couple of years, as it responds to monumental changes in the marketplace, we will witness as well as be a part of significant changes that will affect the role of our marketing leaders in the coating, paints, adhesives, sealants and specialty chemicals industries. In fact, all other management positions will appear to “stand still” relative to the marketing role.

As marketers, we will be forced to broaden our marketing stance and truly embrace the whole value change within which we participate. The two legs of this three-legged stool driving these dramatic changes are the Internet and evolving distribution channel influ-

ence models, which deeply change the way the ultimate end-consumers research and buy products. The third leg of the stool is a third party such as bloggers and the creators of user-generated media, which are having increased influence on the entire corporation and its reputation.

The ultimate task marketers face is gaining increased influence within their respective companies and assist in searching out and successfully meeting unique needs within an ever more diverse and global customer base. Considering these market dynamics collectively, they tend to force the transformation of not just the marketing function but every other function within the company itself.

To be successful this new set of market dynamic changes will require two fundamental but reflective considerations:

- CEO and board recognition for and support of an expanded role for the marketing

head; and

- A determination if the company has the right person heading up this critical marketing role.

Too often upper management has limited the breadth of the marketing person's role while concurrently, pressing him/her to achieve extraordinary growth with more effective sales and marketing efforts, creating internal frustration at both levels in the process. This frustration has caused a turnover rate considerably higher at the top marketers' spot versus C-suit peers.

The responsibility of the Chief Marketing Officer's (CMO) broadening efforts must include:

- Leading change efforts across the whole corporation.
- Becoming more active in shaping the company's public profile.
- Assisting in managing the complexity.
- Building new capabilities within the marketing department.

The corollary to the "musts" listed

above for the CMO is the capabilities of the CMO him or herself:

- Is he/she the right person for the job.
- Does he/she understand fully how customers are changing.
- Does he/she understand that he/she must become more involved in developing new marketing capabilities across the company.

Push versus pull

The days of "push" marketing as a dominate model are rapidly coming to an end. It is being replaced by "pull" marketing techniques augmented by the internet. People are researching before they buy. Automobiles, trucks, farm equipment, electronics, vacations, insurance and clothes are a few products/services that are researched heavily before buying. Research leverages a more informed and intelligent buyer who knows what they want and where to get it most efficiently. This "new buyer" is "pulling" items through the

market rather than, in the not-so-old-days, allowing themselves to being "pushed" into a buy situation.

The quandary a marketer faces within the dynamics of change just described is in the time-phasing life cycle of a product and all the detailed elements that encircle that product.

Because the end consumer can make decisions precisely and quickly via their own research, marketers must face the dynamic of new product introduction and product obsolescence curves becoming constantly shortened. Since product life cycles will become less, new products will fill the gap. Therefore, the pan-corporation must be totally in tune with these shortened cycles in order to manage the changes in product design, distribution, inventories, communication techniques, et cetera, in order to stay competitive.

Next month we'll discuss pattern changes in buying behavior and the increased role of third parties. **CW**

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