

Marketing Operations Builds A Lasting Foundation for *Excellence*

A White Paper
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Corporate marketing groups — especially bandwidth-challenged small-to-mid-sized departments — can be so focused on tactics and fire fighting that they jeopardize their marketing investment. There is a tendency to overreact to events, to tackle symptoms rather than underlying fundamental problems and to jump at the opportunity to please the boss. Many times, this kind of tactical knee jerking may be fatal.

Without great marketing, companies won't flourish, especially those in highly competitive markets. Yet the chaotic nature of emerging companies and the tendency to place the marketing burden on too few individuals is a setup for failure. Promising companies may be left in the dust, or at least handicapped at the starting gate.

Marketing Operations is emerging as an important discipline for improving performance and measuring ROI in admired technology companies (like Intel, IBM and Amazon) who have refined and fine-tuned their marketing organization with an operational focus. Given the demands that these organizations face today, an innovative approach is central to solving critical issues like results measurement, bandwidth constraints and creativity limitations, and building value-added outsourced supplier relationships and effectively managing budget. Many of the best practices, efficient processes and systems approach from large company Marketing Operations can and should be applied by emerging companies that are serious about their marketing investment. Here's why:

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
<p>Ill-defined metrics Today, more than ever, corporate marketing departments need to justify their existence. The need to <i>measure</i> results is unavoidable. However, the instincts and skills that make an outbound marketing practitioner great—action-orientation, verbal and written acuity, persuasiveness, the ability to build strong relationships—often don't translate into an ability or willingness to scientifically and objectively evaluate success. Add in broken systems and the organization's unwillingness to pay for marketing evaluation, and it's no surprise that many marketing departments are unable to define meaningful success metrics.</p>	<p><i>Marketing Operations ensures that the right processes are in place to establish meaningful metrics at the front-end of marketing process, enabling the measurement of success at key intervals, and as each program concludes.</i></p>
<p>Slammed resources The prevailing attitude of “doing more with less” can leave key people discouraged, overwhelmed, near burnout, and eventually, circulating their resumes. The consequences for organizations are costly mistakes, high turnover, and collapsed programs when key people leave, and missed opportunities to leverage the “ugly-stepsister-Cinderella-in-waiting” programs that never get off the ground because of a lack of ownership.</p>	<p><i>Marketing Operations addresses these resource limitations by ensuring workload is effectively allocated, roles are clearly defined, interdependencies are understood, team members feel satisfied with their jobs and the programs and additional resources, whether through additional headcount or outsourcing, can be successfully justified to executive management.</i></p>



PROBLEM	SOLUTION
<p>Sketchy institutional memory Marketing is dependent on accurate information, a historical view into past successes and failures, and the ability to recognize patterns that link seemingly unrelated data points. Unfortunately, knowledge in many marketing organizations is scattered all over the company. It's in the heads of individual workers, on shelves, on people's hard drives, in long forgotten filing systems. When people leave, a big piece of organizational knowledge goes with them. Information loss is a huge productivity killer for marketing teams. Lost insight that must be regained or reacquired wastes previous marketing investments.</p>	<p><i>Marketing Operations facilitates knowledge sharing, an enduring repository of information and greater decision-making based on fact, as opposed to hunch.</i></p>
<p>Constrained creativity The best creativity comes from many brains working together in collaboration. A consequence of the age of the "individual contributor" director is constrained creativity. When the entire creative burden falls mostly on one outbound marketing person, the ability to think out of the box can be severely impacted. Creative synergy results from many minds thinking as one.</p>	<p><i>Marketing Operations enables the creative process to benefit from the synergy of team.</i></p>
<p>Failed supplier relationships - Most successful companies can point to strong, long-term marketing supplier relationships as integral to their success. Likewise, a pattern of failed supplier relationships is often an indicator of marketing department failure, rather than poor vendor performance. Unfortunately, companies that have had consistently bad relationships with outsource suppliers often react by seizing control and bringing everything in house. While this strategy may provides the illusion of control, it lets marketing managers deflect blame for failures, rather than teaching them how to manage their outsource suppliers by taking responsibility for the results. In addition, this strategy won't scale with the growth of the organization.</p>	<p><i>Marketing Operations helps set realistic expectations and mutual accountability between suppliers and the organization, increasing the effectiveness of outsource partners by empowering them to act as an extension of the internal team.</i></p>



PROBLEM	SOLUTION
<p>Lost discretionary budgets Use it or lose it. Misuse it and lose it anyway. Many corporate marketing departments are leaving discretionary budget on the table or allocating it to the wrong initiatives. This discretionary marketing budget “Catch 22” occurs because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s very time consuming to manage the budget effectively, especially in companies with broken financial systems • Each marketing spend-decision creates more work for the one-person or small-team marketing department in terms of project management, measurement, supplier management, etc. • Doubt persists about the ability to successfully justify the expenditure to management • Focus is instinctively on high-visibility marketing activities and C-level executive “requests” over fiscal management (marketing people are more inclined toward marketing than finance) 	<p><i>Marketing Operations facilitates implementing the system support infrastructure and financial management discipline needed to protect precious marketing budgets.</i></p>
<p>Narrow marketing mix Many companies align their fate with the success of too few marketing programs. Whether it’s lead generation, public relations, trade shows or advertising, the over-reliance on any one particular program can derail a company—especially if a key program unexpectedly loses momentum. In the meantime, programs that could have had strong leverage never get a chance to prove their mettle and are forever relegated to the “B” list.</p>	<p><i>Marketing Operations puts the means in place to launch potentially high-value marketing programs that would never otherwise get out of the starting gate.</i></p>

The Bottom Line

In a nutshell, Marketing Operations is an organization’s best bet to:

- Ensure that success can be measured and replicated
- Leverage systems and processes to enable consistently excellent performance
- Encourage great marketing departments to stay together
- Allow the marketing organization to flourish, despite the unexpected, but often inevitable, loss of a key employee.

For More Information:

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