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Integrated? Strategic? Why Marketing Needs a New MO

By Gary M. Katz

We are captivated by the promise and vision of integrated marketing, yet few of us truly understand it . . . and even establishing a common definition is a struggle.

We long for a seat at the decision-making table, yet in many organizations Marketing has evolved into a low-stature mouthpiece and "cost center" that contributes little to the enterprise strategy, and so it's treated as a necessary evil.

Giving Up Our Power

Our power is further usurped as increasingly more organizations turn over responsibility for vital functions that were once the domain of Marketing to other departments: product management, the sales pipeline, customer experience management.

Many of us are working in marketing departments that spend most of the time fighting fires and kissing up to CEOs for fear that our corporate survival depends on such compliant behavior.

We've often settled for reactive, chaotic, dysfunctional work environments where we operate more like order takers at McDonalds and company mouthpieces (spin doctors) than real change facilitators and difference-makers in our organizations.

How many of us are really happy in our positions today, spending precious little time on strategy and customer facing activities, operating with few resources, and facing expectations that are growing geometrically?

Changing the MO of Marketing Through Marketing Operations

Let's face it: If we want to realize the vision of integrated marketing and strategic marketing, of a more collaborative and enjoyable work environment, of more stature and influence in our organizations, we need to let go of the old. Marketing needs a new MO. And we have that new MO right in front of us, if we're not afraid to embrace it. It's called Marketing Operations.

Admired technology companies (like Adobe, Symantec, and Seagate) are leveraging marketing operations to improve performance and demonstrate return on marketing as they refine their marketing organizations using an operational focus.

Marketing Operations is an emerging discipline that increases efficiency and drives consistent results in complex Marketing organizations. It builds a foundation for excellence by reinforcing marketing strategy with guidance, processes, metrics and technology.



It creates both the infrastructure and ecosystem for individuals and teams to make informed decisions about marketing-mix investment, gain committed buy-in from stakeholders both inside and outside Marketing, collaborate synergistically across functions, optimize resources, and operate with discipline and accountability.

Raising the Stature of the Marketing Profession

Organizations that embrace Marketing Operations are being viewed throughout the enterprise as profit (not cost) centers and fully accountable businesses.

Marketing executives with the foresight to build a Marketing Operations function in their organizations are blessed with an operational partner, similar to the COO/CEO relationship. Directors and managers gain an invaluable resource to help them get the most out of their marketing programs, make course corrections, and learn from their experience.

Even the most inexperienced professionals gain by being part of a learning-oriented environment where they develop fundamental skills to operate effectively, stay accountable, and benefit from Marketing Operations-driven improvement programs, such as new competency development.

Marketing Operations is all about a new MO for Marketing. In fact, it's fair to say that the abbreviation for Marketing Operations (MO) is an apt descriptor of its potential impact in organizations: Marketing Operations is poised to literally change the modus operandi (MO) of Marketing.

And a new MO for Marketing in organizations is great news for all of us. We won't be such an easy target come budget-cut time. The average CMO tenure won't continue to drop to embarrassing levels (about 30 months at last count). Employees won't be so motivated to jump ship, taking their valuable, but siloed, institutional knowledge with them.

Reclaiming Our Power

So whether you're a marketing executive, middle manager, or early-career specialist, it's definitely in your best interest to become a passionate advocate of Marketing Operations.

Embracing Marketing Operations is a win-win for everyone, but bringing its benefits into your marketing function is an evolutionary process. MO is both a serious commitment and a great opportunity.

Like all change initiatives, it requires careful and comprehensive thought and exacting implementation. Key players in Marketing and other cross-functional organizations, such as Sales and Product Development, need to be invited into the process early on and need to stay involved to achieve stakeholder ownership and buy-in.

The effort, however, yields impressive rewards. Marketing Operations has the power to re-position and re-energize a company's marketing function, moving it past stubborn barriers to unprecedented levels of performance and success. MO creates the type of marketing organization in which individuals and teams are empowered to do their best work and a culture of accountability leads to better results. This in turn raises the stature of Marketing in the enterprise.



Leveraging the discipline and rewards of an MO approach places Marketing in the perfect position to influence strategic decisions and help increase corporate revenue, decrease costs, and sustain high levels of customer and employee satisfaction.

Bottom line: embracing MO should be a no-brainer for every marketing professional, from the most senior marketing executive to the new junior staffer.

If your organization has not yet embraced MO, you have the opportunity to seize leadership, increasing your value to your organization. If your organization is already leveraging MO, you can work to ensure its continued success. Either way, Marketing Operations enables you to help yourself.

About the Author:



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