

## **Got marketing?**

*How to find marketing talent among self-imposed hype*

Everybody thinks they are a marketer. After all, we all buy stuff and watch commercials. I am consumer, ergo I am marketer.

While most marketers know this is ridiculous, it is one of the reasons CEOs often take the function for granted. Long plagued by a reputation for creative versus business acumen, marketing ironically still has a bad rap. And as if this isn't enough to challenge any cobbler in making his own shoes, marketing has gotten a whole lot tougher.

Today, marketing managers need to be more focused on results. This is usually outside the comfort zone of anyone trained in design aesthetics or innovative brainstorming. Marketing is now a game of numbers such that marketers are challenged with questions such as:

- How many leads need to be generated to fill the marketing and sales cycle phases to generate the necessary close rate for our sales forecast?
- What is the cost benefit/ROI of web vs. print vs. TV vs. radio vs. billboard ads for our particular products? What about proactive or reactive PR, search engine optimization, or a blog?
- Speaking about blogs, how many and which ones should we focus on as partners and/or competitors and what do we do with each? How much do we spend on advertising, writing or linking to other blogs?
- Is our site optimized to get hits and conversions? Which pages are the most popular entry or exits and why? Who is referring to our site and who is not? What is my cost per click, my revenue per visit and the abandonment rate of the site? What about my competitor's?

Still think you are a marketer?

Not many people do or can be a good marketer these days. There is a true shortage of really talented marketers. In fact, bidding wars for already employed talent is commonplace and good marketing talent – especially in the mid-level – is commandeering salaries near or above those of VP level personnel and in some areas 60% over last year's level<sup>1</sup>. Why?

One reason as implied above is that the job has gotten tougher. After the Dot Com bust and U.S. recession, most companies clamped down on all functions, most notably marketing. Marketing expenditures were scrutinized and every CMO faced the 'Board' question, "What have you done for me lately?". Pretty storyboards didn't cut it. Clever Super Bowl ads weren't entertaining anymore. Management wanted only one of two answers: 1) this program will bring in new customers more cost effectively or, 2) this program will retain our most valuable customers.

All of a sudden, marketing needed not just great program ideas, but great software programs to help analyze customers and prospects. Alas, the urgency for CRM and related automation such as campaign management and analytics. With this plethora of data, marketers could find the perfect segments and hone messages specifically to those unique individuals. Catalogs could be customized, emails and other correspondence addressed individual needs beyond Dear <Name>, and front line employees could be armed with specific offers for that customer at that specific time. Even computers, phone systems, ATMs, kiosks, etc. were all trained to deliver one-to-one marketing. Of course, this was all easier said than done. With recurring IT nightmares and statistics headaches, marketing just wasn't any fun. Many truly creative people fled the discipline to find greener fields to sow – for example, one top marketer bought a vineyard and another went non-profit.

Have we sacrificed innovation and creativity for quantifiable, predictable marketing? Many CEOs do complain, “yes”. Marco Emrich, CEO for public software company SEDONA Corporation emphatically says, “There is no more good marketing. It's all the same old stuff. Nothing is new and interesting and it's our fault. We've given the marketers tools and directives to be more like finance and as such, they follow the formulas and no longer color outside the lines. What a shame.”

Often times, it's a matter of going back to the basics. Product Marketing expert and Principal at Product180, Steve Rankel helps companies identify the subtle but persuasive reasons why their best customers actually buy the products. Subsequently, he can help the company craft better product messaging and sales tools. Steve noted that many times it only takes talking to a handful of a company's clients to uncover golden opportunities, yet most companies don't do this. Rankel noted, “Because there is so much pressure on marketing to deliver results, a lot of effort is put into getting prospects to simply respond to campaigns and then the leads are tossed over to sales. Yet once marketing has the prospect's attention, less has been done to ensure that the company has the best possible words and processes to help the prospect make a successful purchase.”

Most marketing experts claim that the problem is that there are plenty of marketing people, but very little talent. Paige Arnof-Fenn, founder and CEO of Mavens & Moguls notes, “There is an unfortunate abundance of marketing malpractice.” Arnof-Fenn continued, “There are gaping holes in most company's marketing plans. They try to address one-off projects and don't really plan how they will all tie together. As a result, they may have in-house experts in particular areas such as web design or direct marketing. Or they may outsource projects to various agencies. However, there isn't a common understanding from the top down about what marketing is trying to accomplish and subsequently the results are fragmented at best. Sometimes quantity hides this but overall, a lack of process results in a lot of wasted, unaccountable and uninspiring marketing.”

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Parry Headrick, VP at public relations experts, Shift Communications, adds, “The Dot Com era ushered in hoards of unskilled people into marketing at outlandish salaries. Not only did this turn off a lot of skilled marketers, it obviously resulted in a lot of marketing money ill-spent. So when marketing was then severely cut back, the marketing department wasn’t a great place to build a career. Future mentors weren’t developed and today, most marketing people have but a few years of successful experience.”

Kristin Motta, principal of the marketing talent placement firm, CM Access agrees, “With companies legitimately scrutinizing marketing, they are hyper-careful about who they hire and have precise criteria with regards to the candidates’ experience and fit within that specific corporate culture. Despite a healthy supply of marketing candidates, it is clear that real talent is sparse. We spend a great deal of time managing the tug-of-war between employers for top marketing talent, thus putting candidates in a tough, but usually beneficial situation. In fact, we have many new corporate clients that hire us to help them ensure that their marketing talent is happy and stays put. Retaining top marketing talent has become a major corporate concern and often times, money isn’t the answer. Marketers want to have growth opportunity and respect within the company and if this is not given internally now, they can easily find it elsewhere.”

With the collective wisdom of the marketing experts quoted, here are some concrete ways to address corporate marketing needs:

1. Hire a mix of seasoned and new marketing personnel. Develop and reward mentorship.
2. Be thorough in your interviewing and reference checking. Google experienced candidates and see how they’ve branded themselves! Check to see if their resume offers quantifiable results from previous work.
3. Utilize top agencies and consultants that specialize in the project area. Don’t ask your advertising agency to do PR. Print design is completely different than web design. Use experts – it’s always worth it in terms of money and the lack of aggravation to get the project done on time and on budget.
4. Create and maintain a great place to work. Allocate time and money to ensuring that your marketing people are satisfied. Consider using a third party to ensure this because the cost of replacing a great marketing person will be far greater.
5. Benchmark and challenge your company’s marketing. Conduct third party studies to evaluate the marketing of your competitors. Do it at least annually, if not more often. Ask your customers and prospects for feedback too. Also measure changes in customer retention, customer satisfaction, new customer acquisition, and the costs for each.

Marketing isn’t a luxury, it’s a necessity. Like anything, there is a right way and a wrong way to get it done and because marketing by definition is outward bound, the bad stuff is very visible. Not everyone can be a great marketer and in fact,

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fewer people today can claim to be. The good news is that if you ain't got marketing, there are companies that can help find, retain and supplement your marketing needs.

*1 = TheWall Street Journal, Oct 23, 2006 "Wanted: Online-Media Expertise Madison Avenue Finds Limited Supply of Talent That Can Drive Web Ads"*

**Recommended Resources:**

**CM Access**

[www.cmaccess.com](http://www.cmaccess.com)

CM Access recruits and places talented, creative & marketing professionals who deliver flexible, effective solutions to any marketing challenge.

**Mavens & Moguls**

<http://www.mavensandmoguls.com/>

Mavens & Moguls is a global strategic marketing consulting firm made up of former Chief Marketing Officers and seasoned marketing professionals. They work with venture capitalists, entrepreneurs and business executives who seek expert marketing advice and innovative ideas without the overhead of a full-time marketing staff.

**Product 180**

[www.product180.com](http://www.product180.com)

Product 180 delivers breakthroughs for customers who wish to sell more product, ship products faster, help make cross-functional teams work more effectively and package and market intangible services.

**Shift Communications**

[www.shiftcommunications.com](http://www.shiftcommunications.com)

SHIFT Communications is a public relations agency that measures their performance according to the impact that they have on driving their client's business forward.

**About the Author:**

Alyssa Dver often writes for publications including Forbes, BusinessWeek, Entrepreneur and dozens others. She is regularly featured on TV, radio, print and web for her business and marketing knowledge. With global marketing experience, she has been CMO for both public and private companies, managing technology and consumer product companies. Her book, "Software Product Management Essentials" ([www.swproductmanagement.com](http://www.swproductmanagement.com)) remains an international best seller. While managing Wander Wear ([www.wander-wear.com](http://www.wander-wear.com)), a new company focused on lost child prevention, Alyssa continues to consult to companies needing marketing or product management expertise. Reach Alyssa at [alyssadver@comcast.net](mailto:alyssadver@comcast.net) or 508.881.5664.