

Hot competition increases need for marketers

By Rachel Buchman
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Marketing is the business that makes other business possible. Marketing professionals provide the research, expertise and creativity that enable companies to attract and retain customers.

The field of marketing has grown dramatically in the past 25 years, according to Richard Lancioni, chair of the Marketing Department at Temple University's Fox School of Business. He estimates starting salaries have doubled in the last 10 years. With about 1,100 students, Lancioni's department has nearly tripled in that time to become Temple's largest undergraduate major.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates annual salaries for people who reach the manager level in this field range from about \$58,000 for public relations managers to over \$300,000 for sales managers.

"More competitors have come into all markets," Lancioni says, "whether it be consumer or industrial. Markets have become much more competitive, so you need more marketing people."

Lancioni's examples of increased consumer choice range from automobiles to computers to designer coffee. Lancioni points out that the latte industry — once ruled by Starbucks — is quickly becoming the province of Dunkin Donuts and McDonalds. He notes that the increasingly global marketplace heightens that healthy rivalry.

Challenging, creative field

All marketers must be creative, whether they are the ones developing content, such as advertisements, or the ones who focus on competitive research and identifying new markets for products and services.

"It's all ways of communicating with customers," he says of the field. "You can take a marketing idea and you can identify market trends, but then how do you translate that to the bottom line ... into a profitable product for the company?" That's the challenge.

Mary Helen Votral is adept at identifying people who do that well. She's a career advocate for CM Access, a marketing job placement firm, and vice president for publicity in the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Marketing Association (AMA). Votral, who began her career at a non-profit in Bolivia, loves marketing because it's ever-changing and touches every industry.

She points out that marketing is an industry abuzz with jargon. Votral recommends talking to an insider to "decode" job descriptions, especially because the same job title may mean different day-to-day responsibilities, depending on the company.

Lancioni notes that people who aspire to any marketing position will benefit from internships.

E-skills are in demand

The Internet, with its growing range of ways to reach buyers, is the focus of a lot of industry attention.

"A lot of our clients are trying to get a one-up now and the way they're doing that is through Web 2.0," Votral says.

New e-skills in demand include understanding the way people navigate websites, writing web content, writing code, and assuring that search engines pick up and correctly identify keywords.

Votral also sees big growth in research positions, especially in scientific fields like pharmaceuticals.

"There are firms that specialize in measuring the success of new technologies, so there have to be people who are doing the research."

Angela Morsa counts such companies among her own largest clients. She is the founder and president of Active Integrated Marketing and president of the Philadelphia Chapter AMA.

Morsa says the industry has picked up rapidly since the fall 2001 slowdown. "There are a lot more jobs open," she says, "I think people are increasing their marketing budgets. I know my clients are."

But, Morsa adds, many companies are choosing to outsource marketing work rather than build large in-house departments. For job seekers, this means more opportunities in marketing companies and fewer in corporate marketing departments.

Keep abreast of trends

Morsa describes her company as a direct response agency. Direct response is a relatively new approach designed to prompt customers to call a phone number or go to a website. In her view, the direct response trend is overtaking the previous trend called branding, which involves creating a consistent positive image about a product or service.

Riding the crests of new trends is a key to success in this rapidly evolving field. Morsa says she reads about 15 industry newsletters a day. "I try to stay up on all the new techniques and think about how I can apply them for my clients," she says.

Morsa recommends the same approach for people moving into marketing careers. She suggests getting involved with a local marketing association to gain inside information and contacts.

She adds that, prior to a job interview, candidates should research not only the company they hope to work for, but that



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company's target markets as well.

"If someone were to come in to an interview with me and know who my customers are and speak to me about that, I think I'm going to be more likely to hire that person than someone who just read my website," Morsa says.

The best way to prove your potential as a marketer? Morsa's advice: Start by marketing yourself.