Marketing's Digital Divide

It's Just "Digital" Marketing

THE GROWTH STRATEGY GROUP

Growth Achieved.

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Introduction

David Ogilvy, known as the Father of Advertising who built his agency using direct mail promotion, would not recognize today's marketing organizations.

Marketing has evolved from a supporting nonstrategic department to one of the most important actors in today's businesses driving profitable growth, retention, loyalty and advocacy. Marketing has transformed from a product-pushing entity to a customer focused team striving to build value-based customer relationships. Today, we have very concrete marketing influenced revenue targets!

The original Four P's of marketing have been redefined and present us with a different mission. **Product** has become Experience. **Price** is now Value. **Place** is now Omnichannel and **Promotion** has become Influencer and Storytelling.

Because technology has placed the buying process firmly in the hands of business buyers(B2B) or consumers (B2C), marketing and sales usually aren't aware of a buyer's need until the buyer is well into the buying journey. Product choices abound with easy online access to information about them including complex items like considered purchases and highly engineered products. While marketing might be driving awareness, marketers no longer control the end-to-end buying process which has become buyer directed and nonlinear.

Traditional outbound marketing efforts are insufficient to address the fast paced, mobile and social engagement our customers expect. Buyers insulate themselves from the onslaught of direct mail, email and other outbound messaging. The alternative to intrusive outbound contacts is earning people's interest and trust and being relevant through the practice of inbound marketing.

Inbound marketing is not intrusive. Through blogs, social marketing, and newsletters we create awareness and attract new followers. Prospective customers come to us. We develop relationships with them through nurture programs. We nurture them through the buying cycle to Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) which we handoff to sales for opportunity management and conversion.

Over the last decade, many organizations have not structured themselves to achieve channel integration – the blending of inbound and outbound engagement. Instead, many organizations have allowed a separate and distinct "digital" marketing team to evolve. It operates along-side the traditional outbound marketers but may not always work on integrated channel programs with them. This digital team is the repository of knowledge for all things web, social, search and mobile marketing. To address the ever-increasing channels that serve the digital world, over time we have added staff to the original web team without thinking ahead that a more holistic team would serve our customers, our employees and, therefore, our businesses better. Herein lies *Marketing's Digital Divide*.

This Divide creates barriers to achieving the seamless, insight driven, omni-channel experience to which we aspire. It also prevents marketers from developing into the holistic professionals who know how to orchestrate engagement over channels with the appropriate touch at the appropriate time.

Once the Divide is eliminated, we no longer have to say "Digital" Marketing . . . It's just "Marketing"!

The Problem

Contributors to today's marketing programs come from most of the groups reporting directly to the Chief Marketing Officer. Contributors also come from agencies, platform partners and other functional disciplines within the enterprise. In some organizations, program teams execute by handing off deliverables to each other in a serial fashion often without following a central plan and/or having routine communication. Lack of communication contributes to conflict, confusion and lack of transparency on the state of the program.

Consider my experience with one Fortune 50 organization. A marketing strategist leading a growth program would communicate with each of six team members on an individual basis. He was the only person who saw the big picture. Each contributor saw only their part of the process and was not able to contribute to problem resolution as problems occurred. Metrics were not clearly defined up front nor measured consistently throughout the program that was several months long.

In this example, team members operated independently for the most part without regard for an integrated, end-to-end customer experience (CX). The program designs were optimized around a single channel and did not take into consideration how channels influence each other. Marketers were working on multiple programs at one time and managing to multiple and sometimes overlapping deadlines. Frequently priorities were not clear. The marketing strategist responsible for program results struggled with tying the channels and journeys together and measuring the results.

Silos promote a narrow vision of the CX thus alienating customers by not demonstrating a full understanding of them, their needs and their approach to buying. Silos prevent us from achieving the fullest financial benefit of a program. The ANA Insight Brief found 59% of marketers surveyed said that breaking down organization silos would be the most important step their businesses could take to drive growth and better customer connections!

The silos also limit the professional growth of marketers. They don't understand the synergy of inbound and outbound marketing practices that are appropriate and effective at particular points in the buyer's journey. Marketers working in a channel vacuum have limitations in delivering the experience customers are expecting from them. While it's true we haven't quite solved the technical barriers that get in the way of delivering a true omni-channel experience, in many organizations, we don't yet have marketers with all the skills to design that experience either.

Inbound and outbound marketing processes require many different skills and areas of expertise. There are over 15 areas of specialization for marketers to understand and select as a career focus. **While technology has spurred the need for specialization, our organizations, processes and practices have not kept pace.** The level of confusion increases in a segregated environment with loosely defined roles and responsibilities and disjointed marketing processes. As a by-product of organization fragmentation, data silos have resulted exacerbating the challenges in delivering a timely, relevant and contextual experience.

As marketing continues to evolve, we must address the barriers that are getting in the way of success.

What are the **key components** required to transform marketing organizations and the way we execute to attract, nurture, convert, retain and grow share of wallet more effectively in a multi-channel, multi-device world?

The Course Correction

THE STRUCTURE: A SYNERGISTIC TEAM OF TALENT

Various organization models are utilized in marketing organizations today. Structures are driven by segment, product, geography, or business unit. Structures also vary depending on a B2B or B2C selling paradigm. A simplified organizational structure for discussion purposes is depicted. The Demand Center is an integrated team of inbound and outbound marketers.

The Demand Center has the core responsibility for generating demand and nurturing leads through the buying cycle until a product or service is placed in a shopping cart or a lead has achieved MQL status. Integrating inbound and outbound marketers is a first step organizationally in achieving an effective omni-channel program.

We turn to the inbound and outbound marketers in the Demand Center (marketers with expertise in direct marketing, event marketing, search marketing, email marketing, web marketing, social marketing, mobile marketing, ABM and lead management) to work with the marketing strategist to design the omni-channel program that achieves program objectives and complements the buyer's journey. The program is ultimately launched by these marketers with marketing operations at the controls. The tactics are led by a marketing program manager with oversight by the marketing strategist.

The **core program team** includes the marketing strategist, marketing specialists from the **Demand Center, Marketing Operations, content marketers** and **creative and user experience** designers. **Information Technology** specialists and **data analysts** are also part of the core team. As marketing is data driven, insights would have been a key input at program inception and design.
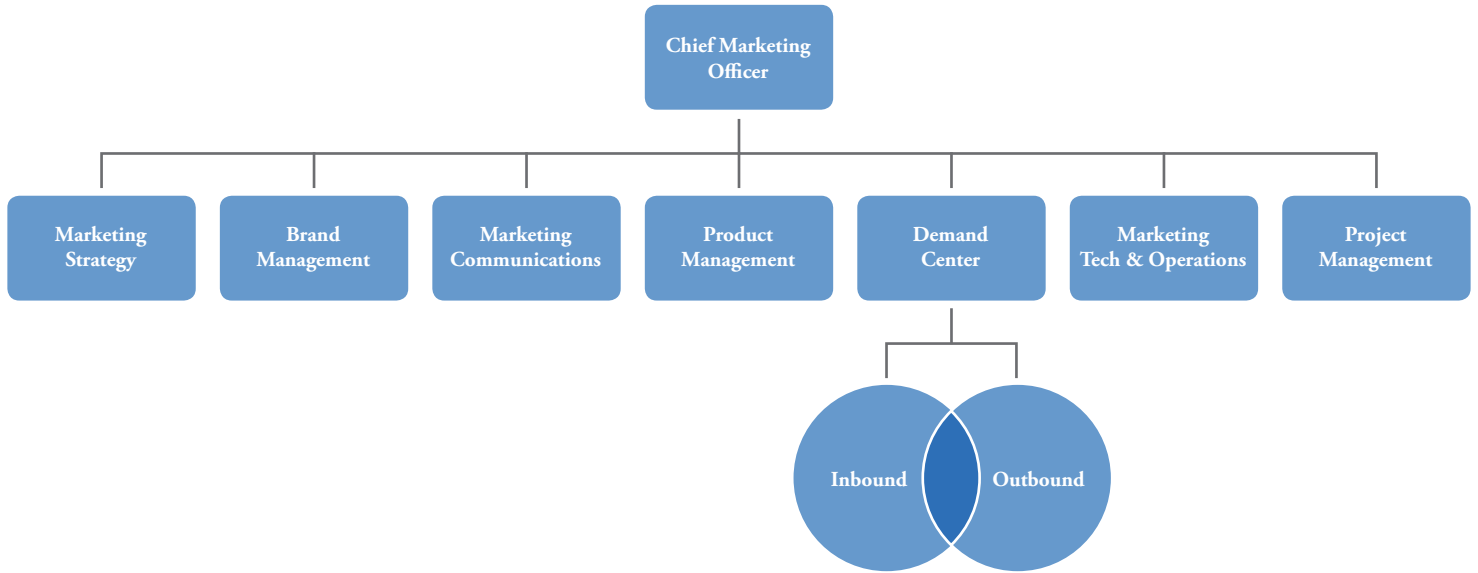
In the second tier around the core team and internal to the business, we have brand, product, sales, service and finance. The third and final tier are external to the business and include agencies, platform providers and data providers.

A fluid network or ecosystem of internal and external team members coalesces into a program team. The program team transcends the formal organizational hierarchy. A representative marketing ecosystem is shown.

With all the relevant marketing specialists (internal and external) represented in the cross-discipline team, each specialist can provide a point of view about how best to approach the work and contribute to problem resolution as problems inevitably arise. With the deep expertise of multiple disciplines coming together in a cross-functional team, the quality of the CX and the content, messaging, imagery and delivery will yield much higher conversion rates!

This working structure is a very effective way to cross-train and develop marketers in the art and science of omni-channel marketing. It also helps build a career path for marketers as they rotate through different disciplines. A recent survey by MIT reported that only 34% of respondents are satisfied with how their organization supports ongoing skill development.

On-the-job training and learning by osmosis is an ideal way to cross-train marketers by executing in a collaborative team environment. External training programs where marketers network with other marketers from different organizations provide additional and alternative points of view. This is also valuable in preventing group think and bringing in new ideas and techniques.

A Collaborative
Marketing Ecosystem

We want to develop inbound and outbound skills of all marketers. We also want them to have deep expertise in more than one discipline. Areas of focus can change and grow throughout a career in order to build a bench for succession planning purposes. We want employees to be engaged, inspired and feel valued.

Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) are inspiring and advising their organizations to achieve vision and objectives. In order to do that, they need a firm grasp of the capabilities of technology powered omni-channel customer experiences. They will need to understand how technology enriches the CX and the challenges in achieving that enrichment in order to provide oversight, wisdom, and guidance to marketers who are in the trenches.

However, the team structure is only part of the formula for success. Collaboration among marketing disciplines will move us toward a more agile and innovative marketing culture. Marketing needs a systems mindset[1] to maximize its effectiveness using the technologies it has at its fingertips today.
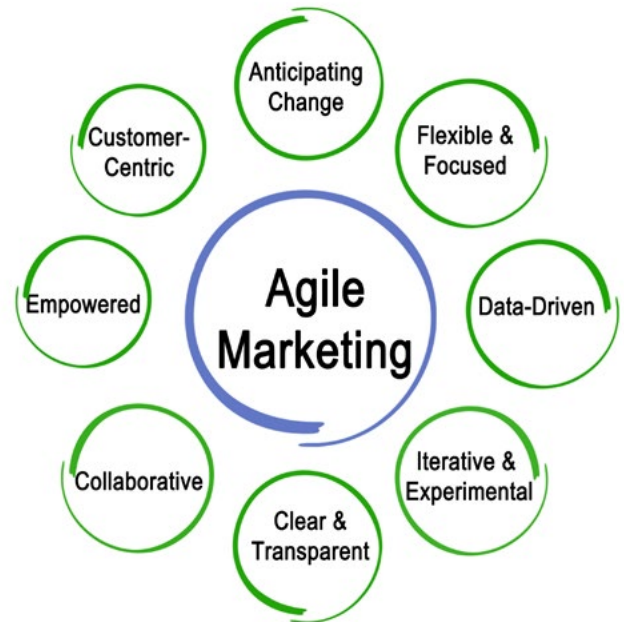
THE APPROACH: AGILE MARKETING

Many marketing organizations have already adopted a systems mindset. They understand the value of a fluid ecosystem for collaboration and have established common and standard processes, practices and priorities. They have alignment from business strategy to marketing strategy to marketing initiatives.

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[1]A system mindset is an approach to dealing with constant change and provides habits and tools to encourage us to be flexible thinkers and celebrate new ideas and new ways of looking at things.

The synergies of all these components working together real time is pronounced.

A collaborative ecosystem moves us toward a more agile and innovative workplace. Assets and deliverables are produced in smaller units allowing us to fail fast and learn faster. We design programs in incremental fashion to more effectively promote and test customer engagement and revenue generation.

This approach is referred to as agile marketing not to be confused with the agile framework that has existed in IT departments for at least two decades. High growth companies are very mature in their adoption of agile marketing.

THE APPROACH: TOOLS

At this point we have an organizational structure that is a fluid ecosystem bringing the right experts together in a collaborative environment. We have an approach to work that is marketing agile.

As in any business situation, we need technology to enable these processes.

Many marketers have a plethora of tools at their fingertips to facilitate their daily activities. Often these tools are disparate solutions addressing specific functions rather than a collection of tools that are integrated and guide the workflow through each of the stages of marketing's internal processes.

A single project collaboration tool intended for projects and managing workflow, approvals, communication and status is a good alternative. Examples of this type of tool are Percolate, Monday or Adobe Experience Manager.

The tool can be configured to reflect the common practices and processes that have been agreed to for all marketing programs. Passing deliverables on to the next step in the process, gathering approvals as they move, results in faster, more accurate and less costly asset production.

Going to one source or tool to get program status and providing full transparency to management and all stakeholders

results in higher levels of confidence for all.
Based on my own experience with some great marketing teams, marketing organizations are in various stages of maturity in the marketing workflow components of their tech stack.

THE APPROACH: DATA

Data driven marketers excel in product development, customer engagement and measurement of results.

Data tells us what products customers and prospective customers want, and the features and functions they desire. High quality data lets us interact with our communities in a more insightful way. It brings personalization to our engagement and intelligence for making the next best offer in cross and up selling.

Customer engagement using accurate data engenders trust in our brand. Using contextual and relevant data reinforces our commitment to our customer relationships.

We can eliminate the data silos that prevent us from delivering an omni-channel CX by implementing a Customer Data Platform (CDP). Leading CDPs can alleviate the negatives of siloed data and increase marketing effectiveness significantly.

Customer Data Platforms provide a single and comprehensive view of a customer across any touchpoint or business unit. Marketers use CDPs to drive CX across all channels in real time based on behavior.

CDPs unify data into a single source of truth. They are considered a transformative technology by Gartner.

THE APPROACH: IN SUMMARY

All in all, elimination of the people, technology, and data silos will remove many of the barriers to achieving excellence in marketing, realizing productivity improvements and generating revenue.

4 Benefits of Eliminating Marketing's Digital Divide

As we bring the key solution components together, we have the foundation for a high performing marketing ecosystem.

That ecosystem results in:

1. Marketers more fully appreciating the value of omni-channel programs and a deepened understanding of the power and role of individual channels

2. A scalable approach to work that delivers assets and programs which can be enhanced quickly and easily

3. A spirit of continuous learning, improvement and innovation in a deeply collaborative environment

4. Last, but not least, **marketing influenced revenue with more profitable growth and retention.**

By eliminating marketing's digital divide, marketing transforms itself from a rigid, isolated hierarchy to an integrated and aligned ecosystem of internal and external marketers that deliver profitable growth and retention.

This happens because we're combining left brain analytics with right brain creativity. Using an agile marketing approach, we're failing fast and learning faster to drive innovation. Our programs are designed better, yielding more effective marketing. The progress of the programs is visible and transparent.

With the high level of team interaction, we're reducing the probability of confusion and waste. And through the synergies of teaming, we're achieving better results.

Marketing's Call to Action

Best-in-class marketers take a holistic view of engagement. They understand touchpoints will take place over a diverse set of channels during the buyer's journey. These marketers take an integrated approach to meld inbound and outbound teams and have them work and partner together. They adopt an "adapting is a continuous process" mentality.

Follow these steps to eliminate Marketing's Digital Divide:

- Evaluate your organization and shape it to work in a more fluid network
- Develop and execute a change management program to get everyone on board and moving in the same direction
- Implement agile marketing in order to scale high quality programs quickly
- Identify the metrics to measure success. Track them. Initiate improvements based on those metrics.

It's Just Marketing!

When we work as a channel agnostic team and focus on today's multi-device, multi-channel buyer's journeys, we can use diverse channel plays that reinforce and support each other to produce seamless and superior customer engagement with measurable improvements to profitable revenue growth.

It's no longer "Digital Marketing" . . . It's just Marketing.

About the Author

Marianne S. Hewitt has held senior marketing and technology leadership positions in industry and practice leadership roles in the global consulting environment. She promotes marketers' understanding to leverage and adapt the use of technology to marketing, sales and service to drive sustainable growth, enhance customer engagement and long-term customer relationships. Recognized for her powerful ability to influence and develop profitable strategies, she has demonstrated successes implementing governance, business processes, organization structures and technology solutions to help achieve business objectives.

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About the Growth Strategy Group:

We are a group of hands-on executive consultants passionate about helping businesses reach their growth potential.

We are your thinking and implementation partners.

We are vested in your success!