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# Marketing skills in a virtual world

Jean-Luc Ambrosi | 30 July, 2015 11:16 | 1 Comment | Share this post

It wasn't so long ago that CMOs and marketers came to realise they were under-resourced in managing their rapidly expanding digital activities. In fact, many marketing departments are still today far from optimal resourcing levels, if not noticeably below.

Blending traditional marketing skills with the new age of digital is not an easy affair. At first, digital was treated as a medium of communication, much like any other. Whereas marketing departments and their agencies had specialists in different areas, such as above-the-line and below-the-line, online was simply added to the mix.

What has changed, however, is that digital is not simply a medium, it is many mediums with different media consumption patterns. Both a push and a pull mechanism, it is above-the-line, direct marketing, social media as well as point-of-sales, all under one big label.

As many CMOs and marketers know only too well, this is where resourcing becomes tricky. The skillsets associated with the new world of digital require marketers to master many distinct skills under one roof. Just have a look at the job advertisements for 'digital specialist' and you will quickly find that the role definition varies widely by advertiser, and can range from technical specialist to campaign manager or content creator. This highlights the difficulties in clarifying the roles required and how marketing departments should resource accordingly.

With the shift in emphasis around treating digital as a multi-medium platform, the solution may lie in building teams focused on the customer rather than the digital channel. With customer centricity at the core, marketing teams can treat digital for what it is: A multifaceted mechanism to interact with customers, and a means rather than an end. Marketing principles apply even in a virtual environment and success rests on the ability to connect with customers in the most effective manner. It's hardly a new concept, really.

As a result, the search for digital specialists should more often than not be a search for marketing specialists (such as copywriters or campaign managers) with specific skillsets adapted to the digital environment. We know, for example, that many direct marketers have been able to adapt their savoir-faire to online campaigns due to the direct response and data driven nature of digital. Similarly, most copywriters have adapted their style to suit different digital formats and their specific media consumption patterns. There is still a need for digital specialists, but these roles often focus on specialist support for execution.

The under resourcing of digital activities is a function of the expansion of marketing activities in the digital ecosystem, rather than the disappearance of traditional marketing. Therefore, it should be answered via the adaptation of marketing specialist resources to digital rather than a shift towards technical digital specialists.

It all comes down to this Darwinian concept: It is not the most intellectual of the marketers that survives; nor is it the strongest that survives. The marketer that survives is the one able best to adapt and adjust to the changing digital environment in which it finds itself.

Tags: marketing strategy, digital marketing

1 Comment



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Jean-Luc Ambrosi is an award winning marketer and recognised expert in branding and customer relationship management. He is the author of the new book, Branding to Differ, a strategic and practical guide on how to build and manage a successful brand.

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