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Happy Juice principles: How to create a marketing organization that informs and influences

Sagarika K and Vyshakh P Nair

Introduction

Role of marketing has expanded to become an essential part of a company's business model. To expand reach and improve marketing effectiveness, companies are relooking at marketing organization best practices, inter-linkages, technology investments, resources and measurements. With internet penetration increasing and mobile adoption driving the customer behaviour marketing is also witnessing major upheavals. Many companies have invested in a marketing team that holds the reins for both physical and online medium. More often than not, the leadership is disillusioned with the outcomes and impact of the marketing department.

While investments on events, awards, social media and other marketing assets are increasing year on year, leadership bemoans lack of a unified and consistent marketing that delivers. Many leaders believe that marketing is mostly working with "hope", has spread itself thin across many activities, focus on why and how an act will impact the company's fundamentals is lost.

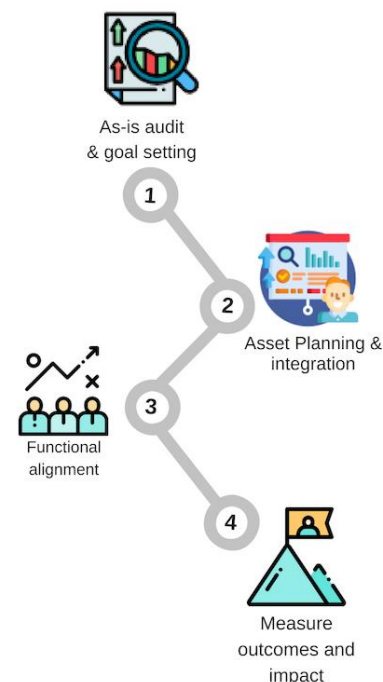
Many CEO's want to understand how an integrated consistent messaging can be pushed through social media platforms, how these efforts augment or complement offline efforts and finally what impacts the revenue and branding. In private conversations many share their apprehension of treating marketing as a "ritualistic" activity, not the powerful engine to attract, grow and sustain customers. While leadership continues to support marketing spend, they would like to live beyond hope. Boards and executive leadership wants to invest in an integrated marketing engine that fuses offline and online activities to drive thought leadership, influence and advocacy programs.

Marketing effectiveness framework

From our consulting experience, realizing higher returns from marketing is all about 60% planning and 40% execution excellence. To realize higher returns on marketing spend, companies can adopt a simple yet effective 4 step approach shown in Figure 1 that covers:

1. As-is audit and goal setting
2. Assets planning & integration
3. Functional Alignment
4. Measure outcomes and impact

Figure 1: Marketing Effectiveness Framework



1. As-is-audit and goal setting

Rewiring marketing starts with a vision, where we stand today and what is that needs to be done to reach the goals. Setting a clearly defined scope and context is the key for marketing improvements. Conducting a comprehensive "as-is process marketing audit" helps to identify current marketing activities, underlying processes, gaps and scope for

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improvement. This encompasses evaluating the current service levels in two phases. One from an internal customer perspective, what is the expectation of these customers, how are these met, what is the organization, consistency of communication and content, communication quality and impact, etc. Second, is from external customer perspective, mix of marketing assets used, marketing communication strategies used, content & knowledge management approaches, etc. The other important thing to factor in is investment. What are the company's monetary resources allocated for marketing and sales for each quarter? What is their plan of spending money in both short term and long term goals?

2. Asset planning & Integration

Marketing departments has many assets at its command. Social media platforms provide low cost, highly scalable tools to increase reach and engagement, offline assets may be more effective in one-on-one interactions and credibility building. Social media revolves around conversations, community, connections and social networks. Social media encourages contributions and feedback from the interest group.

Each social media tool has inherent advantages, some are good for promotion while some are effective for community building. A start-up will benefit from using Instagram and twitter to create a buzz about their brand in the market. A B2B business will benefit from using LinkedIn effectively as their clients and potential customers are more likely to use LinkedIn. Whereas a product company can make use of Instagram and Facebook to grab more eyeballs and reach out to a wider audience to sell their products. Offline strategies also play a crucial role for companies. Companies can build community or special interest groups and conduct workshops or thought leadership seminars and events to reach out to C++ people. Companies may

create an offline society and invite decision makers and decision influences for a breakfast session or a cocktail meeting. Many companies find this as a low cost model to generate valued leads.

For effective marketing, not only the messaging be consistent and comprehensive, the total cost of content creation, curation and extension must be optimal. This is possible when companies plan their content management across various assets and then follow up a "embellish" strategy where in the content schemas starts from basics and progressively scale to richer content & context. The advantage of this is that content development and curation can happen in stages and stronger stories and messaging emerge with each insert. For example, an infographic can be used to reward the reader with rich insights with high level cause-effect. Next level, a blog, which is used to influence, informative or thought provoking, may extend the infographic content. The blog could contain rich arguments and silver line conclusion and this could be followed by a whitepaper an extensive write up may emerge followed by a case study or a video.

The beauty of the embellish model is the content not only unfolds in a consistent manner, content gets richer over time and consistent messaging improves visibility and augments recall. Similar extensive strategy can also be used for physical platforms. Companies realize focus group meetings, followed by industry forum and curated events including analyst shows provide improve coverage and affinity.

3. Functional alignment

Companies can realize better return on marketing when functional alignment happens. It is not just sales and marketing alignment, but included HR (people branding, culture programs, internal branding) and facilities.

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Stitching together an integrated marketing that interacts and influences other functions can be achieved when the efforts are congruent and well-coordinated. Congruency can be gained by ensuring common goals entwine both functions at various levels and incentives encourage them to support each other. For example, coordination improves when event plans, promos, content marketing and other assets are aligned with sales motions.

Sales and marketing alignment can be done by effectively training the sales team about marketing assets. Sales teams may be trained to use different marketing assets at each stage of sales process so that right assets are deployed at right stage. Sales teams must use all marketing assets including blogs, SEO, Media placement to create brand awareness at qualification stage. Case studies, white papers and explainer videos convey experience and expertise, therefore better suited at need analysis stage. Negotiations stage may need ROI or TCO templates, presales led demonstrations and product walkthroughs, product testimonials to address credibility, references and case scenarios. Thought leadership, product manuals, user tools may accelerate closure.

Marketing team must consistently use feedback from sales team to create content that they actually use and create content around sales pipelines. Similarly, HR & marketing teams can work together to create and sustain unique work practices that help them to attract and retain talent. Honour badges, Wall of fame, Hall of Fame, and emergent stars programs need collaborative inputs and execution from different teams.

4. Marketing measurement

The adage what is not measured does not happen is true even for marketing. Most often companies measure the outputs of marketing team which may be in the form of number of

blogs/ Face book posts/ Awards etc. Earlier, only the TOFU (top of the Funnel) activities qualified as marketing and the rest was sales. But as consumers research & educate themselves, 75% of buying decisions are made even before the sale begins. Hence marketing now extends all the way to the bottom of the funnel as well. Like any good performance system, you need both lag and lead measures to tell you what has worked and what could work. Post hoc analytics can help in shaping up further marketing plans for each social media platform.

Aligning marketing team's role and responsibilities, ownership and accountability with the intended outcomes is a tough task. Largely used in Not-for-profit sector, RBM adopts a life-cycle approach to integrating strategy, resources, process, people and results. RBM focus is on integrating measurements that can improve decision making, transparency of the case and effect, and accountability at various levels.

RBM uses a logical relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. Inputs could be financial, manpower, plant, partnerships, etc. that are required to conduct various business activities. The activities would be promotional programs, creation of new sales teams, partner program structures or marketing events which are expected to deliver certain short-term results. These short-term results in RBM parlance are termed outputs. Outcomes are mid-term results that indicate the direction and scale of achievement. Impact is what the company wants to achieve by undertaking the change. The outcome measure reflects the causal effect between resources marshalled and activities pursued to reach certain objectives. The output indicates the results in short-term. Mid-period review using output and outcome measures are useful indicators of what is working and what is not working. The company can quickly calibrate

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alignment between activities, resources and outputs to see the returns are on expected line.

Smarter companies have moved beyond output to measure impact and outcome. Marketing impact is captured in terms of clients recall in sales meetings, % increase in recall, First time meeting request acceptance rate, analysts & reporters meeting request and so on. Outcome is measured in terms of lead growth, awards, thought leadership citations, analyst awards and so on.

Conclusion

Brewing a world class marketing concoction like any other programs will need detailed planning, smart execution and recalibration of the activities to suit local taste. Quality of outcome will indicate the types of changes needed and periodic assessment and lead indicators are key to successful marketing effectiveness programs. We have shared a framework that has been used by many companies to realize an integrated and effective marketing program.

By focusing on achievable and well-paced marketing effectiveness programs companies can realize meaningful market share results while enhancing their brand image. This requires, however, sticking to a simple and yet effective planning and flawless execution.

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