



PIXABAY

MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS TO GREATER HEIGHTS: Building the engine room

By Tony
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Nearly every beginner in marketing can recite the definition of this popular profession and then proceed from there to roll out the famous Ps of marketing. It used to be 4 in the early days of Philip Kotler, but have now multiplied to be 7.

Who knows tomorrow there could yet be more Ps. Shows how much the world is changing, and marketing too! Regardless, the marketing department has and will continue to be the engine room of any truly marketing organisation.

Being defined as engine room conveys a significant responsibility. Yet it could and have often been mis-interpreted as meaning the most important department in any marketing organisation. It is very necessary to state upfront that there is nothing like the “most important” department in an organisation. All departments, properly structured have there define roles in the whole process, and the non-performance of any, carries the capacity to derail the whole organizational goals.

Is marketing or the marketing department important? The answer without any hesitations is a definite yes. Indeed it is very important. The best performing organisations have been noted to have one thing in common; they all have very strong marketing departments. It makes good sense therefore to understand what these organisations are doing and doing right in order to be able to harness the capacity of the marketing department and the marketing team.

1. Believe – It is very important that the organisation as a whole from the Chief executive down to the shop floor believe in marketing. Not just believe but also understand the role of marketing in the organisation. This belief has to be expressed not just in having a marketing department but also in the structure of arrangements within the organisation. It is not just simply about proclaiming, “we are a marketing organisation”. It is a belief that should drive every single process in that organisation. It is a belief that will mean that there is a “marketing check” on any of the many organizational activities.

2. Structure – A professional marketing organisation must have a right structure. The structure depends on the nature of the organisation, is it into production or simply into distributive trade? Questions that need to be addressed – at what level is the head of marketing playing? Is he a member of the management team? In other words, does he respond to the Chief Executive? How is the marketing department structured and manned? For marketing to be properly championed in the organisation, its head must be at a level senior enough to influence the organizational direction.

many people around who want to be marketing professionals or who actually think they are marketing professionals. Sometimes, one gets the feeling that some think the ability to speak fine English is the very qualification required to be a successful marketing professional. Assuming the person has the basic knowledge, undoubtedly good communication skills are key requirements for successful marketing. But the most important attribute required is passion. So searching out for the right people has to be a painstaking exercise. I have one golden rule, if you do not believe in the brand and will not proudly use or

4. Empower – Although this is somehow related to the structure that has been designed, it is important to stress that empowering the marketing function and its people helps tremendously in the running of a marketing organisation. If we take a typical manufacturing organisation as an example, we find that the marketing team seem to have the greatest responsibility but at the same time, the least power. They do not have control over the production process, they do not have control of the logistics of the business, and they do not have control over the sales force. However, they do have responsibility for the brands and the brands performance in the market place. Therein lies the challenge – responsibility without authority. The successful organisations are those who are able to design the structure of relationships and develop the people with the right skill sets to be able to navigate this very difficult set-up.

5. Networking – Whilst the formal structures define the relationship flow, successful organisations understand that in many situations, the informal structures in the organisation can help to make or to mar the achievement of corporate objectives. It is possible to use legitimate bureaucracy to slow down or make some ideas unworkable. It requires a lot of networking skills and if you like a little bit of politics, yes organizational politics, sometimes to make things work. It is possible to achieve through the informal network arrangements what cannot be achieved in the formal arrangements. Therefore successful marketing organisations have learnt to encourage and promote networking skills as a key requirement for the managers in the organisation and especially marketing function.

6. Innovation – At the heart of success of the best performing companies is the spirit of innovation. Many companies mouth innovation, but very few actually practice it. That the world is changing is a known and present fact. What is challenging about that is that the change is happening at such a tremendous speed that sometimes it can be quite difficult following the trends. The changes happening everyday are far too numerous to start itemizing – where does none really start, is it the social media explosion and revolution? Or is it the Internet that has changed everything that we once knew? Truth is that while many companies are taking their time and watching developments, the consumers simply move on and are daily experimenting with new offerings.

- The global media convergence has meant that it takes a few seconds for a trend somewhere in the corner of the earth to be spread globally. Any surprises therefore that we have consumers whose lifestyles are changing by the seconds? In the light of this, brand loyalty, as we know it is under serious assault. Yes, we all probably grew up to know about certain brands. We went to primary and secondary schools still a captive of those brands. We also most probably remained loyal to those brands through the university and maybe our early days of employment. That was the brand journey then and the brand owners only probably just needed a few reinforcing messages to keep us loyal.

But times have changed. No brand loyalty is guaranteed for the next hour. Tomorrow is even too far away. The brand has to work hard and earn continuing loyalty of the consumer. That is why innovation comes in handy and important. It is not just about brand name changes or simply changing of packaging, in themselves very important especially if they define or align with trends. True innovation must be fundamental and futuristic in outlook so that it can serve the consumer trends for a while before the next big wave of lifestyle changes.

Innovation culture must permeate the entire fabric of the company to have a fighting chance of being in the league of truly innovative companies. It is a whole chain, from the head of the organisation to the least person in the organisation. Here, we are not talking about pictures on every wall in the organisation, proclaiming being innovative. We are concerned with real innovation that becomes so much a passion in the organisation that the driver of the MD can chat him in the car and tell him about some brilliant new idea which could well turn out to be the idea that drives the next big innovation.

For an organisation to be a successful innovation driven company, there has to be a structure to harnessing the ideas in the organisation and bringing them to life. Some organisations go as far as having innovation directors and a structure of reward system for the employees who have contributed the most to innovation ideas or implementation of innovation ideas in the course of the year.

7.Consumer Insightful – Closely aligned with innovation is the need to have deep insight about your consumers. Here, we are not talking about simple observation; we are talking about a deep understanding of the consumer that can indeed translate into a new or improved consumer offering. Whilst getting consumer insight is mostly structured and managed by a formal department – research or consumer insight department, it is amazing how much can some times come by simply unleashing the human capital in the organisation to listen to consumers. This could be in the market place, in the bar, in the church, or in the restaurant etc. No one is

acting to please a researcher here, in other words no top boxing. Just the power of observation and listening to consumers and then a good filtering system.

8.Measurement – A good marketing organisation must learn to measure. It is easy and cozy to talk in general terms. “Oh, we shot a beautiful TV campaign”. What does that mean? Absolutely nothing! The objectives of TV campaigns are not to win prizes in cinematography etc. TV campaigns are not designed for entertainment – the consumers already have a full dose of entertainment on both the traditional and new media. Is it good to have TVCs that are beautiful, entertaining, with good visuals? Absolutely. However, I want you to tell me how many consumers you plan to reach with the campaign. I want you to tell me how many consumers you plan to reach will understand the campaign and start patronizing the brand.

Do not tell me the “brand is doing well”. How do you mean doing well? What is the measurement

It is good professional practice to clearly have defined measurement criteria. Investments in marketing can be quite big and could indeed sometimes be the biggest and most important for the company. Against this background, it is very important to have accountability. Therefore, the discipline of measurement should ensure that there are key performance indicators for all marketing activities. All marketing activities and I repeat, all, are indeed measurable. My golden rule is that if you cannot measure it, forget it.

It is not just enough to set up these measurement targets. Responsibilities have to be assigned for the actual measurements and for reporting.



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He has lived a life of marketing with a wealth of experience spanning Bangladesh, where he successfully managed some major UNILEVER household brands and Nigerian breweries, where for over 32 years, he led the teams which built some of Nigeria's iconic brands.

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