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## Navigating your way to marketing implementation success

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*"We are already delivering a successful Marketing Strategy" If only we had a pound for each time we heard this! Yet the proof is just not there. Customer-centricity is still a headache, but why?*

Looking at the performance of many organizations – Large and small - over the past 5 years, we can see that the intention to become more customer-centric whilst driving more profitability is still causing a major headache for most.

To generate more discussion and learning in this area we have set out below a number of the major obstacles that companies are negotiating in order to deliver their "customer focus vision". .. In many cases they are grasping for the easy ways out and not tackling the things that would truly deliver both customer and business success.

### "We have a strategic plan"

Many organizations have a strategy, but how many of these have truly set the agenda for marketing and customer management (CM) implementation in such a way that is meaningful and practical for the staff and management involved?

We have often worked with organisations that have not clarified their overall aims in market or customer terms e.g. Our target customer segment / universe is X, our base today is Y, and our aim is to grow our share of these by Z% in 3 years, through A and B activities....

Their strategies are too often vague, which allows all areas of the organization to adopt their own interpretation of how to deliver to the customer, causing fragmentation and confusion for the customer and internally. The strategies we find are often so broad that they could apply to any organization! And any customer base! Some of the largest consultancies have to take their fair share of blame for this failing.

### Remedy:

- Set out a strategic CM framework or model for your business success and clarify your strategy/ies for the market and customers throughout this framework. This provides the "anchors" for your successful delivery.

### "We are aligning our operation to support our customer focus"

Change and re-organisation is the most lucrative area to be involved in these days, where more than in marketing? We all change our spots at least 4 times per year, but often with little effect. Flexibility is important for organisations and only a very few have an overall vision of where these changes may lead. For many others the change is driven directly as a response to some occurrence in their competitive marketplace (which probably could have been predicted), and an ongoing failure to gain the business or customer successes that had been planned.

We are often asked what the best set up would be to achieve an effective customer implementation. The answer is...there is no answer. However, there are some key considerations that must take priority in making decisions about organizational structure.



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### Quick links to this month's Articles:

- [Marketing Leadership - the key to personal and corporate profit](#)
- [Marketing leadership: Harness the community and integrate campaigns](#)
- [Navigating your way to marketing implementation success](#)
- [Why marketing leadership isn't a mystery](#)
- [New, old, tried and tested models of marketing](#)

### Remedy:

- Understand focus/target segments or customer bases
- Identify priorities for the company and customers and assess business potential of these segments
- Ensure cross functional teams are wrapped around these segments as far as possible, either virtually or physically
- Ensure that targets and measures are reviewed – clashing measures need to be removed or changed and new ones implemented – to motivate, incent and reward these teams for delivering to these segments.
- Understand skills, competencies, knowledge bases and attitudes – and build a plan to encourage the development you require to deliver your CM success.
- Encourage internal and customer input to your organisational structure through feedback and involvement mechanisms.
- DO NOT set up a Customer Management or Central Marketing team with all responsibilities – they will become the “Customer Alibi”, scapegoat or the team that is sidelined or considered as ‘staff’ or ‘overhead’.

- [Marketing Leadership: the Outsider looking IN](#)
  - [The responsibility of Marketing Leaders in raising the professionalism of marketing](#)
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### “Our customers are 95% satisfied”: Blissful ignorance!

- How could all of your customers be this satisfied all of the time?
- What difference does this measure really make to whether they stay with you or buy more?

Most companies we have worked with cannot answer these questions, although customer satisfaction (or similar) usually ranks highest in terms of indicators for the board.

In our experience, many delivery approaches are not grounded enough in what the most important customers truly want and are prepared to pay for. There is often a lot of research or feedback available, but this has not been sufficiently interpreted or linked to real transactional outcomes and channels to ensure that the customer proposition is meaningful, benefits based or targeted. In addition, there is too often little in place to evolve and improve it.

It is in this area that Marketing is most letting the organization and the customer base down!

### Remedy:

- Clarify what a proposition means for the organization;
- Clarify what a proposition means for the customer;
- Plan and set up a universe of customer research and analysis to ensure; successful understanding of customer groups, channels and needs.

### Listen!

- Decide what you can not/will not do (and communicate)
- Drive the change plan from this.

“We measure customer retention”

Great news... a few more of you are doing this! And have even defined what customer retention is (and improvement on product retention), however when we then look into what difference this measurement makes, there is a far less positive story.

People in the organisation are often not truly driven by the key indicators of marketing and customer success, or only driven by the traditional measures of their function relating to these. e.g. marketing simply for lead generation, sales for conversion, customer services for satisfaction and / or retention.

A frequent assumption is that the type of customer that is brought in to the organisation can and will have no bearing on satisfaction and retention. This has proved to be a rather clumsy and inappropriate assumption.

### Remedy:

Develop a set of marketing and customer measures that are:

- Linked to the overall goals of the organisation
- Meaningful to individuals
- Take on at least the next step of the process for customers encouraging cross functional co-operation

- Measurable!

### ***"Our People are Key to Delivery Success"***

Yes, true, but what does this mean for many companies?

For many we have worked with, this means getting in armies of consultants to integrate, set up and deliver new systems and processes. Too often it also means changing measures, terms and conditions for teams without really involving them in the process of change. It can also mean firing the marketing team for lack of success after only 6 months or a year. For others it can mean identifying an elite few who are seen as the potential high risers who will take the company forwards – to then lose a high percentage of them within 2 years... Surely not, I hear you cry!

Many of the areas of pain arise at a time when the organisation is trying to evolve from a product orientated business to one which is really focused on the Customer, or when aiming to deliver value to the company across product or service lines (cross or up-selling), drive Key Account Management across a complex organisation, or deliver successful value propositions for the first time.

#### **Remedy:**

- Believe in your own people! Be clear on why and where consultants might play a role.
- Do not be sold a new IT system to solve all your woes...it needs real work
- Decide (based on your strategic model) on which the core areas of competence are for your company in the future – not today
- Identify key people based on ability and potential, not just for leadership roles
- Set up a complete management and change model for people from recruitment to the day you lose them
- Do not use HR as the scapegoat for things not happening!
- Involve, involve, involve...
- Make tough decisions based on fact (relating to your strategic model) and manage firmly but professionally
- Develop LEADERS not those who deserve a promotion to the role
- Recognize that everybody's role has to change.

### ***"We have delivered major marketing successes"***

Great news! And it is. It seems that some of the traditional measures of marketing success are being brought to the fore again, and challenges are being made of marketing to ensure that spend is really driving profit.

However, this is often focused on short-term successes. This means that organisations tend to focus on the things that are easier to deliver or show immediate successes to the board. These are too often focused around (any) new customer acquisition, and systems implementation!

The things that truly make a difference to the sustained profits of the organisation, and the value to the customer are much more difficult to plan for, resource, set out and deliver in a sustained manner.

The problems start with planning. We have also experienced more and more organisations becoming frustrated with the length of time and cost it takes to plan for major success, and they are discarding proper planning in favour of fast tracking into pilots (or de-scoping the original programme).

We agree; it is taking too long for companies to plan! But we don't agree with the solution that is too often adopted. The reason for this planning delay is often lack of experience, or use of the wrong people or consultants to set out the plan. Knowledge, experience and discipline are key in turning the strategic plan into a deliverable one – and quickly!

#### **Remedy:**

- Set time aside to set up a delivery plan based on experience and the current situation of your company.
- Involve experienced teams in the organisation in the process
- Involve experienced consultants in the key disciplines or customer bases to be delivered to.
- Proactively manage this process
- Set the plan out in terms that will work across the functions of your organisation, e.g. not just a document that will sit on a shelf.

- Set up mechanisms to drive and review the plan on a regular basis.

The Customer Essential Model, Customer Navigator, provides a sound framework for setting out you're an innovative yet pragmatic approach to marketing to, and for managing customers. It is based on leading implementation best practices, which have been learned through the practical experiences of those contributing to its ongoing development. The Customer Navigator approach was built with the challenges mentioned above in mind, and by experienced consultants who firmly believe in ethical consultancy (best fit, knowledge transfer). It provides the company committed to real change with a knowledge base to enable a rapid understanding of current CM performance, setting out realistic deliverables and providing a practical plan for delivery. Implementation action starts sooner with the benefit of the experience and expertise hard won from many years of real implementation based on solid, but accelerated, planning methods.

We continue to learn through planning and implementation experiences, so while we believe we have been able to encode and share more of these than most, we are also aware that as a consumer, business or providers you may have much more you can add – so please contact us soon!

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