

▶ Mastering Marketing Leadership

BY KIM KELLEY, FRBMA

“I was dreaming when I wrote this... forgive me if it goes astray.”

Yes, I was a fan of Prince during my adolescence, and even still when his name became an unpronounceable symbol. Each year, as we approach a new year, the words of one of his most popular songs resonate in my head. But before you go off and party like it's... well, you know the rest... I want you to take some time to ask yourself how you, as a marketer, whether director, VP, or CMO, will help lead your organization to success in 2016.

It feels like 1999 was only yesterday and yet it was 17 years ago. Marketing has changed tremendously in that amount of time and most notably within the last five years. So unlike the time when mainstream media dominated the market, you now have an arsenal of marketing tools at your disposal. What you do with those tools will be the difference between a mid-level marketer mindset and a game changer.

As a marketer, you have most likely been tasked with arriving at new ways of applying marketing strategy to propel growth. The only way to grow is to apply strategy and the only way to apply strategy is to understand how you arrived at strategy and the only way to know that is to have a deep understanding of what your organization is great at in order to identify growth opportunities. These opportunities are found in understanding the customer relationship, trends, recent challenges, and competitive pressures.

Leadership and trusting yourself to lead can be tricky traits to master. Oftentimes, we end up in situations where ‘stepping out from the pack’ is discouraged. Much of the generation before me was the ‘play it safe’ generation. The generation that believed you should not fly too close to the sun. If the essence of those words sounds familiar to you, I encourage you to read “The Icarus Deception” by Seth Godin. It is an inspirational lesson in the ability to harness courage and treat your work as a form of art—to stand up, stand out, and essentially, to lead.

For a marketer to truly lead, you have to gather information, constantly innovate yet be adaptable, be accountable, collaborate, and be prepared to listen. In no particular order, here are my thoughts on how you can best adopt the traits of a successful marketing leader and put this learned behavior into action.

Adaptation

If you were marketing in the early years of radiology marketing like I was, you know your customer has changed. You now have multiple external audiences, an internal audience, and don't even get me started on millennials. With those changes, so too must your marketing change. The use of social media, search engines, tools

to cater to mobile users, and creating a strong brand that clearly communicates the future of your organization's culture should be at the top of your list.


Information gatherer and listener

One of the most powerful sources of information in today's complex marketing world is to champion the voice of the customer and be able to share market insights to lead your company's marketing initiatives. Your current and potential customers have specific needs and interests. In order to establish authority, build trust, and drive them toward actionable decisions, you must understand who they are, where they are, and where and how they source information. Creating buyer personas, analyzing trends, and social listening are tactics that will help you make sound strategy decisions. Through these efforts you can increase credibility and cultivate an environment of trust around your brand. The more your customer trusts you to supply the information they need, the more likely they are to become brand advocates and help to establish your business as a market leader.

Innovation, collaboration, and accountability

With the plethora of marketing channels, opportunities, and activities at your fingertips, innovation has never been easier because there is always something new to try. However, it is impossible for a marketing leader to be an expert in every area. That's where collaboration comes in. Working alongside other marketing team members, staff that work directly with customers, and other department heads, can help to create a marketing strategy that is customer centric and revenue accountable.

The role of the marketer has become more complex, and through focus and leadership, a marketer is able to be strategic and lead the organization through strategy decisions—where to invest, and how to succeed.

2016 will be a good year to be a marketer. 



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