



Anybody Can Be A Marketer
By: Laura Patterson, President

Seth Godin, and lesser known folks, suggest that anyone can be a marketer. And you know it appears to be true. We have biology, art history, anthropology, and various other degreed folk practicing marketing. Maybe that's why the marketing profession isn't as well thought of as we would like by the C-Suite.

It doesn't matter what industry you go to, the perception of marketing by the C-Suite is often lackluster. For example, the 2010 HealthLeaders Media Industry Survey found that the largest disparity between marketing executives and CEOs is their opinion about the quality of marketing at their organizations. Marketers seem quite pleased with their work, with most ranking it "very strong" (30%) or "slightly strong" (41%). CEOs' opinions, on the other hand, are less positive, with just 11.5% selecting "very strong". Our own studies mirror these findings. As do a myriad of other studies, such as the Deloitte Study that highlighted perspectives on marketing effectiveness based on 271 in-depth interviews. Forty-seven of the 66 CEOs (70%) indicated that the role of marketing needs to be better articulated in their organizations, with strategic planning and the steps associated with it being among the most important skills needing to be address by their marketing organization.

Regardless of the size, whether an organization is for or not-for profit, whether it is B2B or B2C, whether it is a services or product company, whether it is local, regional, national or global, every organization needs marketing to help generate revenue, preferably at a good return on resources invested. Certainly someone without a marketing or related degree or extensive marketing experience CAN be or become a good marketer, especially if the company offers a quality product and/or service that solves a real problem, that is price competitive, convenient to buy, well positioned and promoted.

But isn't that what marketers usually address; identifying the needs of the customer in order to create products and services that meet these needs, to ensure a competitive advantage and competitively position the product, service, and organization, and so forth? A person serving in the role of marketing **who can't address the basics of marketing is actually doing more harm than good.** That seems like a high price for an organization to pay for our cavalier approach to the profession.

BUT IF someone has the skills, knows what questions to answer and is able to acquire the answers, then sure, they have what it takes to be a marketer. Which takes us right back to the premise of this article – **Marketing is a discipline and a profession.** Most professions and disciplines have some level of skills and performance requirements. From health care

professionals, to accountants and lawyers, to electricians and plumbers, there are clear standards of skills and performance requirements and expectations.

It's not uncommon for many B2B organizations to believe that if someone has the domain experience they have the making of a good marketer, or to bring people in from the field or product organization or to hire someone out of school with a degree in the domain to perform marketing. By the time these people can really do the **“work of marketing”**, these organizations may have missed important market windows. So maybe on the job training and self-teaching don't work well for organizations with limited runways, budgets and resources who can't afford a lot of trial and error when it comes to market validation, traction and penetration.

For the sake of the discipline and profession of marketing, perhaps it is time to ensure that people entering the marketing profession come with at least a standard set of capabilities. Yes anyone can become a great marketer by graduating from the school of hard knocks, having terrific mentors, learning from peers at conferences or by taking courses and reading books along the way. In fact, even the best of marketers should continue to hone their skills through these channels. But organizations that accept the idea that anyone can be a marketer should take this approach knowing they may pay a high price with many hidden real and lost opportunity costs.

What do you think, can anyone be a marketer?

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