



Do You Have What It Takes To Earn An A?

By: Laura Patterson, President

For the past decade, our annual marketing performance measurement and management survey has asked, "What grade would the CEO give the marketing organization for implementing initiatives that enabled your company to achieve its objectives?" And for the past decade less than a quarter of marketing organizations received an A. Do you know and have what it takes to earn an A?

As a result of this year's survey, we are able to understand what factors actually predict whether the marketing organization would receive an A. Applying ordinal logistic regression (Chi-square = 126.592, df 6, $p < .001$) to the results proves there is a direct relationship between those marketers who clearly convey to the leadership team how marketing is impacting the business *and* who are able to directly link between marketing activities with business outcomes with those marketing organizations that receive an A. There is less than one chance in a thousand this result was due to random variation. What does this mean? It means if you can perform two things convincingly well -- alignment and accountability -- you will go to the head of the class.

Let's quickly examine what is meant by alignment and accountability and what each might require. We are all familiar with alignment, the ability to arrange groups or forces in relation to one another. When there is direct-line-of-sight among marketing activities, tactics and programs with marketing objectives and business outcomes, we foster alignment. The key is direct-line-of-sight and this, at a minimum, requires some type of approach or methodology. The more visual you can make this, the easier it will be for the C-Suite to see the relationship.

When you review the definition of accountability, it doesn't really shed much light on its importance, "ac•count•a•bil•i•ty [uh-koun-tuh-bil-i-tee]: the state of being accountable, liable, or answerable." (Dictionary.com). We can turn to the American Marketing Association for a more specific definition. The AMA defines marketing accountability as:

"The responsibility for the systematic management of marketing resources and processes to achieve measurable gains in return on marketing investment and increased marketing efficiency, while maintaining quality and increasing the value of the corporation."

In practical terms, accountability is the measuring and monitoring of the commitment a person, group, or organization makes to deliver specific, defined results. Measurement is the foundation of accountability. It's is very hard to be accountable without the ability to measure. And measurement typically takes data and analytics capabilities, such as processes, systems, and

skills. And lastly in addition to monitoring and measuring their performance these best-in-class marketers actually report on their performance conveying their metrics on some type of dashboard designed to facilitate strategic decisions and make course corrections.

We realize that alignment and accountability is not an easy undertaking. But if you're aiming for an A for implementing initiatives that enable your company to achieve its objectives then alignment and accountability and what they entail in terms of data, analytics, metrics and the corresponding systems, processes and skills need to be at the top of your list.

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