



How to Take Back the Reins

By: Laura Patterson, President

"Our finance folks said marketing needs to address process improvement without spending any additional money."

"Our sales VP said his team owns the customer relationship so marketing can't invest in any formal customer research."

"The CIO is driving everything in marketing."

If you're the marketer leader in this situation, these statements indicate that you don't have the authority over your own budget or programs. Organizationally your power is diminished. We all need to be solid, dependable team players, but there's a difference between collaborating (working together) and abdicating (relinquishing). If you're ready to take back the reins and re-establish your power, we have some ideas to help.

Before you read further, remind yourself that power isn't a bad word. People often associate power with domination, manipulation and coercion, but these words are not synonymous. Power is the ability, strength, and capacity to do something, and its true synonyms are clout, influence, and authority. Power almost always exists in organizations, and it is recognizing and managing it that is key to being successful.

If you carry the title of vice president or CMO you already have one of the bases of power identified by two American sociologists, F. French and R. Raven -- position in the hierarchy. Position in the hierarchy is a form of power that is determined by one's formal rank within the organization. So if you are performing the role of a VP or CMO but don't

have the title, build the business case for securing the title.

Then take back the reigns by mastering the four influencing strategies posited by Rosabeth Moss Kanter of Harvard Business School who states: "getting ideas off the ground requires personal credibility and power."

- **The power of presence.** Whenever possible, engage face to face. While digital and other remote forms of communication are efficient, there's nothing like physical presence.
- **The power of voice.** Be able to persuasively articulate your ideas.
- **The power of partnering.** Forge solid relationships with peers and key members of the leadership team. If possible, secure an executive champion.
- **The power of persistence.** While it's important to know when to pick your battles, there is a great deal to be said for staying the course.

Title and skills in hand, you will also need the following:

- 1. Reference relationships:** These are the personal connections you have created with others in the organization who are high in the formal and informal hierarchy. If you haven't built these, it's time to start. If you're new to the organization, take the time to determine who these people are and devise a plan to build a tipping point of these relationships. The CFO or one of the CFO's lieutenants must be at the top of your list. And of course, don't forget customers. Customer relationships carry a great deal of clout in many organizations.
- 2. Resource control:** This is your ability to mobilize or deny the mobilization of organizational resources (for example: dollars, people, assets, and external relationships). Your level of resource control directly reflects your degree of power. Determine which metrics demonstrate this competency and focus your measurement efforts in these areas.
- 3. Demonstrated expertise:** Achieve recognition for having the capability and special knowledge in an area of importance to others in the organization. Many marketing leaders are so busy they don't have time to speak at conferences,

contribute articles, and/or serve on panels, and while tweeting and blogging are nice, they don't send the same message of expertise. In addition to developing your reputation as an expert, develop a reputation for -- as we say in Texas -- "getting the job done."

4. Personality power: This is your ability to provide leadership to task and problem-solving teams, engage in and win battles around issues with organizational peers, and represent the organization visibly in the exterior world. To demonstrate this, find and join a key task force tackling a significant initiative. Continually seek opportunities to help and add value both to your organization and to the people in it.

5. Information power: With all the talk about data, analytics and marketing technology, this seems rather obvious. As the marketing leader, you need to know pertinent information about your customers, competitors, and market trends, and have it ready to present at a moment's notice.

The more capable and competent you prove yourself to be at generating value and measuring and communicating your contribution, the more power, influence, and authority you will have. Along with that increase in authority, an increase in your value will follow, enabling you to regain control over your resources

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