



Leveraging Marketing Operations to Facilitate Agility and Marketing as a Center of Excellence

By: Laura Patterson, President

A [Massachusetts Institute of Technology study](#) found that agile firms grow revenue 37% faster and generate 30% higher profits than non-agile companies. The MIT study found that the critical traits of an agile business include rapid decision-making and execution, a high-performance culture, ability to access the right information at the right time, accountability and credibility, and flexible management of teams.

[Recent articles](#) in Forbes Magazine emphasize that the acceleration of changes in customer preferences, the market landscape, and technology coupled with the explosion of data requires their marketing organizations to be more agile. Why? Because agile marketing organizations are able to adapt their marketing efforts, quickly and successfully, in response to changing customer behavior, market conditions and business direction to the benefit of improved market share or customer value.

Accountability helps facilitate agility. Marketers have embraced the metrics aspects of accountability. In fact, many organizations have no shortage of marketing measures. Improving our ability to measure unfortunately hasn't necessarily improved our ability to manage performance or facilitate our agility. In fact, recent headlines (for example eMarketer's December 2011- '[Measurement Challenges Stump Marketing Executives](#)') suggest marketers remain just as challenged by performance management today as we were when we first started the performance measurement journey in earnest back in the early 2000s. Our own research informs us that many marketing organizations are not very satisfied their marketing performance management and measurement (MPM) capabilities, especially when it comes to data, measurement, processes and tools.

One of the reasons these organizations struggle with MPM and agility is that they don't have the infrastructure. A key part of the infrastructure is related to tackling marketing operations, that is, the resources, processes and data the marketing organization needs to create and deliver value to the customers. Many marketing organizations have created a marketing operations role or function. The actions of this function vary considerably with the majority of marketing operations organizations addressing budgeting/planning, market research and data.

Marketing automation platforms (MAPs) and/or marketing resources management (MRM) and digital asset management (DAM) systems are also becoming under the purview of marketing operations as more and more marketing operations organizations take ownership for processes and tools. Marketing Operations as a function still literally remains uncharted territory; that is, few organizations have developed a formal marketing operations charter and roadmap.

MPM and agility necessitates that organizations increase their focus on data, analytics, systems and processes. This increase emphasis on the science-side of marketing offers the opportunity for Marketing Operations to play a more significant role in the terms of managing the processes, technology and metrics to improve Marketing's ability to deliver on performance measurement and management. As a result, the function of Marketing Operations enables Marketing to operate as a Center of Excellence.

Marketing Operations is the infrastructure, the mechanism and the engine that helps Marketing be more agile and generate more value for the business. It develops and implements the processes, systems, tools and skills necessary for marketing to drive business results, to use data to make strategic decisions related to customers, the market and products, to make course corrections, and to measure and report on marketing performance. Marketing operational excellence is the engine for the Marketing function and serves the role as a conduit between Marketing, Sales, Finance and the executive team.

If you're ready to create a fully-functional Marketing Operations that will facilitate agility, performance management, and enabling Marketing to serve as a Center of Excellence, then consider expanding the functions role beyond budgeting and planning and market research to encompass the following within its charter:

- Defining strategy and aligning initiatives, metrics, people and tasks with the firm's business outcomes
- Developing and implementing metrics, infrastructure, and business processes
- Defining and managing systems and tools
- Establishing and communicating best practices
- Managing the Marketing budget and budgeting process
- Deploying technology to support performance measurement and reporting
- Working with the Marketing leadership team in the development of marketing plans
- Supporting Marketing personnel to ensure they are focused on and measuring their contribution to marketing objectives, strategies, programs and activities
- Monitoring Marketing's progress against performance targets and detect gaps and problems.

Disclaimer: Any VEM information or reference to VEM that is to be used in advertising, press releases or promotional materials requires prior written approval from VEM. For permission requests, contact VEM at 512-681-8800 or info@visionedgemarketing.com. Translation and/or localization of this document requires an additional license from VEM. For more information on VEM, visit www.visionedgemarketing.com.