



Three Attributes to Extend Your CMO Longevity

By Laura Patterson, President, VisionEdge Marketing

We're just at the start of 2013 and there have already been a few changes in the CMO line up. You say, that's not news, CMO tenure is always a bit tenuous. Actually, that is less true today than ever. Last summer, SpencerStuart reported their latest findings for the 8th annual CMO tenure study. They found that the tenure for CMOs is now nearly 4 years compared to just 2 years back in 2006. While CMO tenure varies across industries, there are several attributes long-tenured CMOs share. First and foremost, these CMOs can demonstrate positive impact on the company and have impact beyond the "marketing agenda." They also tend to think more like business-people who are able to provide strategic direction and use data and analytics to make fact-based decisions.

In addition to being an exceptional marketer that is technically proficient, there are three attributes we see among successful long-term CMOs.

1. **Customer-centric.** These tenured CMOs connect regularly with customers. They do more than conduct voice of customer research, review customer data, or meet with a customer advisory board. They are actively and regularly engaged in customer conversations. Do you describe your customers for example as engineers with X years of experience in Y industries, Y accreditations, who attends B events, reads Y publications, and uses Z social media? If this example seems familiar you may be missing the mark. These long-tenured CMOs have a deeper understanding of their customers' needs, wants, emotional state and motivations, what it takes to engage them, and the kind of experience that needs to be delivered. These CMOs serve as the window into the customer for their companies. They are relentless in their pursuit to know and understand the customer.
2. **Outcome-oriented.** It is clear to the leadership team that these CMOs have marketing well aligned to the business with metrics and performance targets focused on producing business

outcomes rather than marketing outputs. These CMOs understand that outputs such as visitors, fans, followers, etc. create more contacts, connections and engagements that are important. They also understand that their job is to translate these outputs into something relevant and meaningful to the leadership team, such as how marketing's contribution is reducing the sales cycle/accelerating customer acquisition, reducing the cost of acquisition or retention, and improving product adoption and win rates. These CMOs have an excellent handle on what touch points and channels are most effective and efficient depending on the needle that needs to be moved.

3. Alliance-savvy. There's been a great deal of coverage on how important it is for the CMO to have solid relationships with their sales, IT, and finance colleagues. The VEM/ITSMA 2012 MPM study suggests that best-in-class CMOs do more than that. These CMOs have forged formal explicit partnerships with these counterparts. They invest in these alliances because they believe that the partnership will enable the organization to be more customer-centric and more competitive. As a result, these companies are able to enter new markets and bring new products and services to market faster. What is different about the alliances formed by these CMOs? They work with their colleagues to plan, form, design, and manage a formal working agreement that focuses on developing the right working relationship, taking into the account that each function most likely operates differently. They create and execute an agreement that emphasizes how the organization's committed resources will achieve a common set of objectives, how to leverage the differences to the company's advantage, and how these differences are designed to facilitate collaborative rather than competitive behaviors among all the members of each team. Performance metrics are established to support the alliance with a focus on both the outcome of the alliance as well as the process.

Whether it be the stream of green lights you hit on the way to work or the person that holds the door for you as you juggle groceries, at the end of the day, we are most appreciative of the people and things that make our lives easier. Although technological innovation and automation have given us the ability to soothe many of our woes, we cannot forget that the human element is at the center of all things marketing. In light of this, we must ask ourselves, "Would I be satisfied as a customer or colleague in this process, and if not, how could I change it?" By exemplifying

these traits of a successful CMO, the outlook of your operations will shift from being self-serving to philanthropic in nature.

Laura Patterson is president and co-founder of VisionEdge Marketing, Inc., a recognized leader in enabling organizations to leverage data and analytics to facilitate marketing accountability and operations, measure and improve marketing performance, develop dashboards, and enhance marketing and sales alignment in order to accelerate revenue and create a competitive advantage.

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