



Three Requirements For CMO Longevity

By Laura Patterson

“Needed – new CMO who comes with a passion for winning and enjoys an entrepreneurial atmosphere. The ideal candidate knows how to build and lead a team, use data and analytics intelligently, is experienced at creating AND executing a strategic marketing plan that will drive the business, can be strategic and very hands-on when it comes to doing whatever it takes to accelerate and grow revenues or build a world-class brand. The CMO must be able to build collaborative partnerships internally and externally, and operationally yet fiscally run marketing like a business. Candidates must have demonstrated success in acquiring and retaining customers, increasing conversion rates, and expanding business within an established customer base. Responsibilities include online and offline marketing, customer acquisition, retention and loyalty, social media, marcom, PR, and branding.” This is the compilation of several recent CMO job postings. It’s a demanding position that requires today’s CMOs to have an extensive set of capabilities to be successful that include being able to use both the right and left side of the brain, and move quickly with strategic intent.

The latest CMO SpencerStuart report 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. As the job description above suggests, successful CMOs first and foremost can demonstrate positive impact on the company and have impact beyond the “marketing agenda.” They 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.

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