



Marketing: More than Just a Pretty Face
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The marketing professionals within the customer organizations we work with often tell us they have been relegated merely to tactical implementers who make things pretty. We often hear them say they are perceived as the team that makes the Web site pretty, the presentations prettier, the trade show booth attractive, the online demo cooler, the new product brochure snappier, and so on. Perhaps you're sensing a theme here? Marketing is more than the "make it pretty" department. Our goal as marketers should be to leverage the creative aspects of marketing to enable our organizations to fulfill the role of any business to attract, keep and grow the value of customers.

We can use the American Marketing Association's (AMA) definition of marketing as a guide for how we can be more than just a pretty face. The AMA defines marketing as "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders." This definition dictates that marketing must be more than a creative function. If you want to make over your marketing to play a more strategic role, then focus on leveraging four customer-centric processes:

1. **Create Value** Marketing sits in the space between the company's capabilities and what the customer wants. By understanding the core capabilities of the company, and then matching it with customer wants and needs, marketing drives value creation. This means marketing must fully understand the customer. In this capacity, the marketing organization serves as a driver of an organization's value chain by ensuring that products and services are shaped by customer expectations and demands.
2. **Communicate Value** In order to be the chosen supplier for your customer, you first have to be on your customer's "short list." In order to be on the customer's "short list," you need to know what the customer values so you can communicate how your company and its products/services deliver on this value in such a way as to create preference for your company and its products/services over alternative options. Every customer touchpoint affects the customer's decision and action; therefore, every touchpoint needs to be tied to and communicate the value proposition. 2

3. Deliver Value By establishing a strong link between customer value requirements and the major value-producing activities in the company, marketing has the unique role of enabling the company to deliver on customers' value expectations. Marketing can then use these value expectations to drive customer preference and stimulate purchase decisions. One way to think of this is that at every customer touchpoint -- whenever a customer will be affected by a decision or action -- the people involved in that touchpoint need to understand and deliver on the value. In some organizations this is known as "moments of truth." Marketing is in the unique position of being able to look across all the touchpoints and monitor whether the value is actually delivered. Through constant monitoring, marketing can help determine whether it is delivering on its value promise and whether the value proposition needs modification.

4. Manage customer relationships We need to think beyond technology when we think of customer relationship management (CRM), and instead realize that CRM is a business philosophy in which the customer plays a central and critical role in all business activities. While we can debate who "owns" the customer, marketing is in an ideal position to be the centralized point for aggregating, segmenting and analyzing customer data. This ability to create a single view of the customer comes with responsibility: the responsibility to take a leadership role in creating and managing the processes associated with the company's customer relationships.

For organizations to grow, the leadership team relies on marketing for more "than just the pretty stuff." It should depend on marketing to develop marketing strategies that create and deliver superior perceived customer value. With this emphasis on increasing value, marketing can help the firm achieve growth by penetrating existing segments, developing new markets, and creating new products and services. As a result, marketers should be willing to own and be accountable for these four processes if they want to serve as growth champions within their organization and leave the "make it pretty" syndrome behind.

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