



How Marketing Can Go Beyond 'Make It Pretty' Syndrome

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At a recent conference, Sylvia Reynolds, chief marketing officer for Wells Fargo, asked, "When did Marketing become the make-it-pretty department?" Reynolds then reminded conference participants that the fundamental role of Marketing has always been about the customer.

Essentially, Marketing's role is to find, keep, and grow the value of customers. So what does that mean, and how does a marketer get beyond the "make it pretty" syndrome?

We can use the American Marketing Association's (AMA) definition of marketing as a guide. 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."

By using this definition, we can see that marketing is more than a creative function; rather, it about a set of four critical customer-focused marketing processes.

Creating 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 insuring products and services are shaped by customer expectations and demands.

Communicating Value

To be the chosen supplier for your customer, you first have to be on your customer's short list. To be on the customer's short list, you need to know what the customer values so that 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 touch point affects the customer's decision and action; therefore, every touch point needs to be tied to and communicate the value proposition.

Delivering Value

By establishing a strong link between customer value requirements and the major value-producing activities in the company, Marketing is in the unique position to enable 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 touch point—whenever a customer will be affected by a decision or action—the people involved in that touch point need to understand and deliver on the value. In some organizations this is known as "moments of truth."

Marketing is in the unique role of being able to look across all the touch points 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.

Managing 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, critical role in all business activities.

Though we can debate who "owns" the customer, Marketing is in the 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—to take a leadership role in the creating and managing the processes associated with the company's customer relationships.

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For organizations to grow, the leadership team relies on Marketing for more "than just the pretty stuff." It should be able to 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.

Accordingly, 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.