



Five Steps for Creating a Viable Marketing Dashboard

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The emphasis on proving marketing ROI and accountability has only increased in our current business climate. Even an economic recovery won't eliminate this topic. So, if you have yet to join the marketing accountability bandwagon, it's probably time.

Updates on website visits, open rates, followers and friends are no longer sufficient.

This is where a dashboard comes in handy. Marketing dashboards benefit both marketing and the C-Suite. They can give at-a-glance view that quantifies the overall impact marketing has on the business *and* how marketing initiatives increase customer acquisition, retention and share of wallet. When done right, a marketing dashboard can be invaluable for making course adjustments and aligning with sales.

If you're ready to start a marketing dashboard or yours to the next level, here are five steps to follow.

1. Align Marketing to Business Outcomes

This step may seem obvious, but it's often our first misstep. If you don't know what business needle you need to move, the rest becomes moot. You need to understand which customers, new or existing, how many, and what we want them to purchase comprise this number, if you're to measure performance and define the strategies, programs and tactics to support these objectives.

2. Choose Your Metrics

Select outcome instead of output metrics. Outcome metrics measure marketing's impact, efficiency and value. Typically, these metrics fall into the following categories: customers (acquisition, retention, value), product (adoption, innovation, price and/or margin), competitive positioning (market share, brand preference), and financial (budget, payback).

3. Document the Data Chains

Create the data chains between the marketing activities and programs (i.e. number of webinar participants), objectives (i.e. number of qualified opportunities) and business results (i.e. rate of product adoption in a particular vertical). Data chains help visualize the link between programs, strategies, objectives and outcomes. These are vital to framing your marketing dashboard.

4. Acquire the Data

Measurement requires data; develop a data inventory to identify the data you have and what is missing.

5. Validate and Review

Develop an alpha dashboard to validate the data, data chains, and process. The alpha can reveal whether the marketing dashboard captures the performance information required and/or whether changes are needed. Revise the dashboard and create a beta version you can “float” with stakeholders. Once you have “buy-in”, pilot the dashboard for several quarters to stabilize everything and train everyone. Then you’ll be ready to consider automating the process.

It takes time and investment to create a viable marketing dashboard, but it’s worth the effort. With it you’ll have a visual look at your marketing performance and the health of your programs.

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