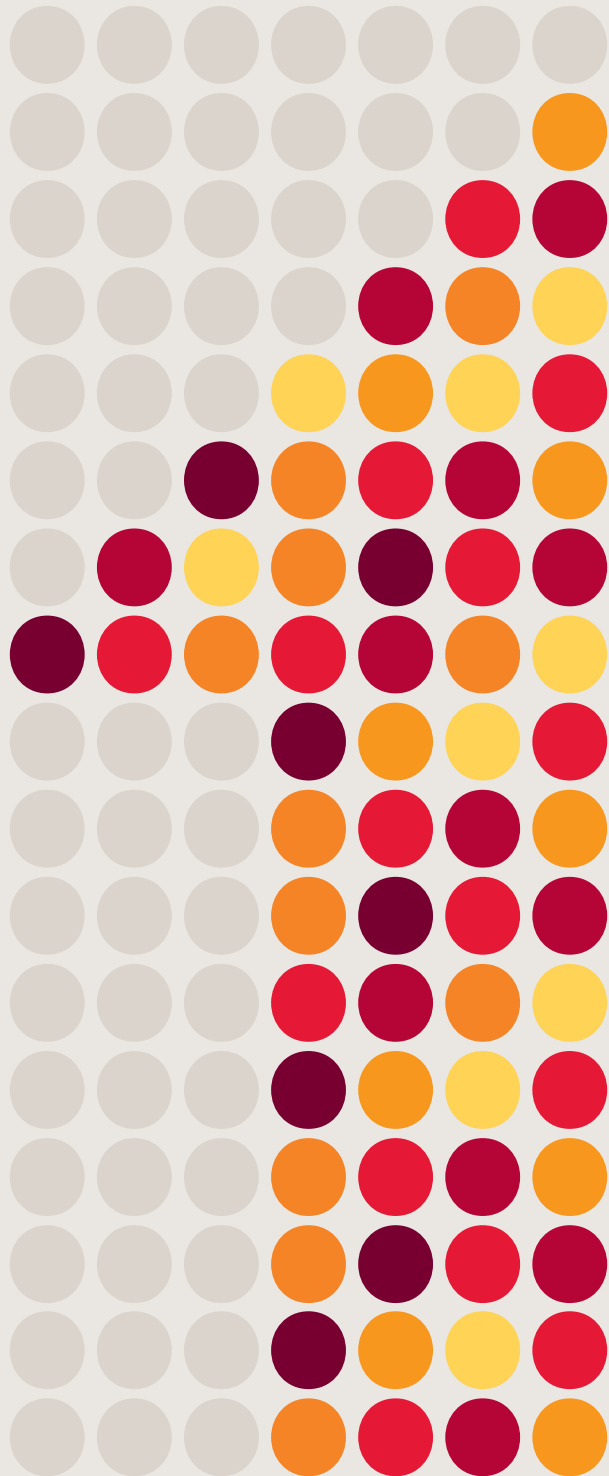


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SEQUEL



Smart CMO: Excel, Beat the Odds and Become a C-Suite Star

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As a CMO, you may often feel there's a target on your back. You're under constant pressure to achieve results, especially in a challenging economy — yet those results can be hard to quantify with the precision other executives are able to summon. It's no wonder that the average CMO's tenure lasts less than two years. The question is, does it have to be that way?

I think not.



For CMOs who take the initiative, these pressures create opportunities. So why not seize these opportunities and turn them to your advantage? There are, in fact, five steps you can take to deliver more value and reshape perception — to gain the respect that your group, and the marketing profession in general, deserve.

ONE

Offer fresh perspective.

CMOs have two distinct advantages over other functional executives. First, they're hard-wired to see the big picture when others can't (see *A Company and Its CMO: Creating a Marriage That Lasts*, Korn Ferry, 2008). Among other traits: They tolerate ambiguity, have no problem thinking outside the box, are able to process large volumes of data and balance long-term strategy with short-term goals. They also tend to be personable, approachable and highly persuasive, which means they can offer convincing long- and short-term market perspective for C-suite peers. What's more, CMOs have a unique position within the organizational structure. Literally no one understands customers better, or has a clearer vision of how product development, marketing and sales must intersect. Because of this, a CMO can answer questions nobody else can, e.g.:

- Are we meeting the needs of our customers?
- Are we calling on the “right” customers?
- Is our value clearly articulated and differentiated from competitors?
- Are our development efforts focused on issues customers care about most?

If you can answer questions like these, your views will carry more weight. Others in the C-suite will come to you, and your personal brand will rise.

TWO

Clearly quantify marketing's impact — and challenges.

Marketing is a visible group and, like most organizations, has a mix of things that work well, things that work less well, and things that don't really work at all. As the marketing leader, your best policy is to provide complete transparency, about both positive and negative aspects of marketing initiatives, using terminology and metrics that are both meaningful and easy to grasp by others in the C-suite. The marketing trade press is full of advice on how to do this, as well as warnings about what measures to avoid. (ROI, for example, is problematic, while ROO — return on objective — is much more easily managed.) By developing a dashboard of metrics that tie to the company's key objectives — e.g., growth — that is clear, honest and substantive, you will gain respect among your peers as a determined, serious C-suite player.

THREE

Foster alignment across the enterprise.

Marketing also has a unique ability to get people on the same page, something that is crucial to the whole company. Think of each person in the company as a vector, a force capable of affecting outcomes. If all vectors are going in the same direction, then strengths become additive. But if vectors are even slightly out of synch, productivity suffers and effectiveness declines. As a CMO, you can help eliminate silos and build greater alignment. You can ensure that everyone understands customers, knows what the competition is up to, and can envision how to work together to innovate and leverage new opportunities. Meld this understanding into a company-wide mantra, and it's not hard to see the impact you'll have: developers focused on real customer needs; products launched and promoted with compelling messages; and a sales team focused on the right customers, armed with the right sales tools.



FOUR

Embrace and drive positive change.

In business, change is inevitable, but for many people it is also one of the hardest things to embrace and leverage. As a CMO, you can use this tendency to your advantage. As a visionary CMO, you are likely to have the desired state clearly in mind — and a better ability than most to vividly paint that future state and its advantages. You can also engage your team to help others bridge the emotional gap between present and future. While change for the sake of change can be stressful, change that addresses where customers are going has a much more positive context. As the executive who understands customers best, a CMO is in position to explain that context and help everyone in the organization move in the right direction.

FIVE

Get an ally with an outside view.

While many executives can confide in their peers, few are as alone (or under more stress) than the executive in charge of marketing. For this reason, successful CMOs often seek outside advisors, people who have been in their shoes before, know how to deal with a changing environment, and are savvy about political issues that arise in dealing with other functional executives. An experienced advisor in your corner, someone with whom you develop close working ties, can offer perspective, collaborate on strategy, and serve as a sounding board on a wide range of issues. If you have an advisor, leverage that relationship to your best advantage. If you don't have one, consider engaging someone who can serve you in that role.

Donald Friedman is principal and thought leader at Sequel. He has been a CMO and senior executive at some of America's best-known companies, including, most recently, CA Technologies, and IBM.

ABOUT SEQUEL

Sequel is a branding, marketing and communications consultancy. We transform companies through a creative, disciplined approach to strategy and design. Our modular, business-focused solutions leverage insight, imagination, experience and expertise. The goal, for every client, is simple: to ignite change and accelerate success.

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