



BRAND LEARNING

20/04/2007 - The Art of Marketing Leadership

Michele McGrath, operating board director Brand Learning says it's time for marketers to stop navel gazing

There has never been a better time for marketing to take the lead in business. Increased competition across industries and the necessity for brands to become closer to consumers has given us the opportunity to become leaders.

Marketing leadership is more important than ever today. But what are the key ingredients for marketers who want to become true leaders and revolutionise their business? The Marketing Society has been running the Marketing Leadership Programme in conjunction with marketing capability consultancy Brand Learning for several years. It's an opportunity for senior marketers on the cusp of leadership roles to strengthen their strategic marketing leadership skills.

This year's programme included coaching from marketing gurus such as Nirmalya Kumar from the London Business School, Ian Crook, marketing director, Tesco, Phil Bentley, managing director of British Gas and Rod Connors, former marketing director Nike. Some of their top tips for marketing leadership are summarised below.

Meanwhile there are three steps that marketers can take in order to become leaders in their industry and profession. First, marketers need to play a stronger role in leading the strategic agenda and develop a vision for the future. Second, they must focus on engaging with the broader organization across different functions and finally they must learn to be accountable and responsible for delivery of the bottom line.

Tesco is an excellent example of marketing leadership. The strategic agenda of the company is marketing-driven. Its desire to gain customer lifetime loyalty is also a brand idea –every little helps. This is a cross-functional goal and is carefully measured across the company.

As Rod Connors points out, becoming a marketing leader is a long journey, there is no finish line. In fact it requires a shift in mindset. You need to think big, think cross-functional and think in terms of top line growth.

There is a danger that marketing is losing touch with the rest of business. The marketing function is increasingly seen as a cost centre rather than a growth driver. And this is why there has never been a better time for marketing to maximise its unique role within organisations. Marketers, it's time to stand up and be counted.

Nirmalya Kumar, professor of marketing, London Business School

Focus on vision

Focus on the commercial reality and bottom line

Energy and passion will overcome obstacles

Go to CEOs with ideas to transform using deep insight

Source: Marketing as Strategy, Nirmalya Kumar



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Rod Connors, former marketing director, Nike

Adopt a winning mindset
"Every touch counts"
Access brilliant thinkers
Have a passion for marketing
Remember there is no finish line

Phil Bentley, managing director, British Gas

Learn and use the language of the boardroom
Own the growth agenda – be the CGO – 'Chief Growth Officer'
Understand your company's business model and marketing's role in it
What gets measures gets done
Understand why things happen and why customers behave the way they do
Drive the creativity and innovation agenda and use disciplined processes
Get the basics right (eg price, service, billing)

Amanda MacKenzie, director of brand marketing, British Gas

Don't preach change until you know about the business
Get to know those around you and bring them with you
Overly cautious won't work
Safe but drab is not an enduring model for growth
Consider how the 'basics' are communicated
The biggest mistake is being 'all mouth and no trousers'

Elen Lewis, Editor of 'Think'
Article written for The Marketing Society

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