

THE ART & SCIENCE OF CONNECTING WITH CONSUMERS

# MARKETING

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## The Future of Engagement

Maintaining connection and impact in the age of social distancing

### Discussion paper and agenda

**Thursday, 21 October, 2021**

10:00am - 11:00am

**TO BE HELD AS A VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE  
(LOGIN DETAILS WILL BE SENT TO YOU PRIOR TO THE EVENT)**

**Marketing Roundtables: Because it's important to share opinions**

### **Agenda**

10:00am – Login and welcome from Rezwana Manjur, Editor in Chief, *MARTKETING-INTERACTIVE*

10:05am – Around the (virtual) table participant introductions

10:10am – Commencement of discussion proper

10:50am – Final thoughts

11:00am – End of discussion

## **Discussion points**

*The following points are good indicators of what will be discussed during the session. However, we are not restricted to these – constructive and spontaneous discussions are welcome.*

### **Engagement, the customer, and your business**

1. How has your mandate changed over the years?
2. What does engagement mean to your business?
3. What does engagement mean to you personally?
4. From conceptualisation to execution, what is your organisation's engagement process like?
5. How important is storytelling when it comes to your brand?

### **Engagement, marketing, and Covid-19**

1. How did your marketing and engagement strategies change post-pandemic?
2. What were the major shifts you saw in terms of consumer behaviour, and what did you do to adapt and stay relevant?
3. What post-pandemic shifts in consumer behaviour do you feel are temporary, and what's here to stay?

### **The state of experiential in an increasingly data-driven world**

1. Have you replaced physical events with virtual substitutes in the wake of Covid-19?
2. Have virtual events allowed you to understand your attendees better than purely physical events?
3. What works best moving forward: virtual, physical or hybrid models? Why?
4. Is your team/department supported to take creative risks, even if there is no definitive evidence that your idea will strike gold?
5. As marketing evolves, how will the client-agency relationship evolve as well?

### **The role of content in leveraging creative expression**

1. What kind of content really works for your audience? What doesn't?
2. What role do events play in your overall marketing strategy?
3. How do you remain agile while planning and producing authentic content quickly and easily?
4. How do you stay cost-effective while getting compelling content and visuals that fits your brand guidelines and brings your ideas to life?
5. How do you ensure that the quality and quantity of your creative content is scalable and flexible?

### **Measuring the magic: metrics and attribution of creativity**

1. What are some of the best ways to measure the effectiveness of your engagement campaigns?
2. How do you attribute your event or engagement campaign to a customer's intent to purchase?
3. How should we be tracking and assessing ROI on when it comes to event campaigns?

All discussions and highlights of the discussion will be featured in a digital article on [www.marketing-interactive.com](http://www.marketing-interactive.com). Of course, all off-the-record, sensitive, and confidential information will not be published.

To have an idea of how you will be featured, here's a past article for your reference:

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### SUCCESS STARTS WITH ALIGNING YOUR SALES AND MARKETING TEAMS

With numbers and measurement playing a more crucial role for a marketer's KPIs, more are under the spotlight to contribute to the company's pipeline and sales. During a recent roundtable discussion hosted by Marketing, marketers in the room discussed how this focus on numbers has driven a greater demand for a deeper alignment between marketing and sales.

"Sales and marketing need to figure out which part [of the customer journey] is their responsibility and hold each other accountable. The alignment is critical in guaranteeing the result because no matter how genius your marketing is, if the sales alignment is not there you won't get the result," said Lynn Huang, head of Asia Pacific marketing at Honeywell.

The relationship between sales and marketing, however, has not always been the most integrated. Karen Kaur, senior digital strategist for Asia Motorola Solutions, said the challenge has been around for decades, despite all the technology available today.

"It's still the same issue where marketing is generating leads, but sales is not progressing even though marketing has the insight," she said. What is missing in terms of measurement is that no one seems to own the customer insights or data sets. This leads to a lack of understanding of a business' customer as no one seems to be talking to customers except the sales guys.

"Getting sales is not a linear process, but we are generally if under a linear model although we know people are not linear," she explained. This could potentially lead to a wastage of 70% to 80% of budgets for many companies, she added.

That being said, this challenge should be viewed as an opportunity which marketing can take on. For Kaur, if a marketer's metrics change from just being about revenue growth to more about how he or she has taken the data and created marketing content that's relevant and helpful to the customer – this might be more effective from a branding and positioning standpoint.

Also weighing in on the topic was Martin Mackay, former president of APAC and chairman at CA Technologies, who said having too much of a focus on the numbers can also put marketers at risk of falling into the trap of chasing numbers.

"You end up ensuring that your marketing metrics are in the green because of the amount of pipeline or sales leads being generated. However, sales may not be great because these leads may not have necessarily been converted or were not appropriate for sales," he explained, adding that these are major challenges for most B2B businesses.

**EMBRACING NUMBERS**  
Despite the challenges focus on metrics brings, Shweta Prasadrahi, head of marketing at ZEE5 and ANZ – Media at Digital Technology, said having numbers has forced marketers to have conversations with their sales teams. This allows marketers to find out how exactly their sales teams are going out to the field and what is working. Kaur, in turn, leading marketing programmes which fit the salesperson's style.

"Many a time, I see a disconnect between

marketing and sales which have two different styles. In many cases, marketing was running a superb programme which brought in many leads, but no closed deals. However, you can't say the salesperson wasn't good [at the job] because maybe the way the marketing was handled was just not their preferred style," she said.

As such, it is all about having a good relationship with the sales team, which also means finding out what the sales team is prioritising as well as its numbers, then building the marketing strategy around it.

"This ensures sales teams are not looking at marketers as their assistant, but [rather] as a function which is there to help them close the deal. It also allows them to reach out to marketing a lot more often than that," she said.

Meanwhile, another important part of the equation is also aligning themselves – both senior and junior – in the process. Jessie Chong, head of marketing for Singapore at Trend Micro, said this means going beyond training junior marketers to the careful crafting of events and marketing communications activities to have the confidence to communicate with the sales teams and be part of the same game plan.

**A DEDICATED COLLABORATION UNIT**  
Organisations include having a dedicated team driving the alignment between sales and marketing. Chong said. For the case of Trend Micro, the company has an extended arm of marketing which sits between both sales and marketing called the "opportunity discovery team". This opportunity discovery team is responsible for looking into two different areas – existing customers with up-selling opportunities and new local opportunities. As such, there are two different strategies going into each different type of prospect in which the team works closely with sales leaders to figure out.

"The team works closely to align sales and marketing and also help our sales team be more educated about marketing initiatives and how they can leverage marketing in their jobs," she explained.

The opportunity discovery team also plays an important role in qualifying the leads and understanding whether potential customers have the right budget, needs and timelines. This team is also tasked with identifying prospects who are only looking to do more two years down the road.

"Although these prospects aren't looking right now, we still need to influence them at the present time because they might be doing research online to find out how to improve their own cybersecurity approach," she said. The earlier this is done, the more chances to influence decision makers.

Similarly for Motorola's Kaur, given the right budget, she would also ideally set up a team called the "customer experience management team" to take on the customer relationship management as part of its long-term strategy and not on an ad hoc basis. This includes talking to customers, understanding them and their pain points without selling them anything.

After analysing customer behaviours and understanding which channels they are on and the content they are consuming, this dedicated team can feed the insights to both the marketing and sales teams. This would allow them to better identify their customer and how to help them.

"If a conversion happens, great. But if you are not being tracked on leads, you don't have that type of prospect, allowing you to focus on creating a personalised experience for the customer," she said.

"The team works closely to align sales and marketing and also help our sales team be more educated about marketing initiatives and how they can leverage marketing in their jobs," she explained.

At the end of the day, it is about going back to basics when it comes to meeting the customer's goals with your solutions. Ashish Nair, managing partner at GetComm, said it is also time to go back to a "boutique-style" of operations when it comes to the B2B space and involve everyone in the company.

"Try and break down some of these artificial barriers which are there and go back to meeting the customer in person and identifying their needs," he said.

But, at the end of the day, be it in sales or marketing, what is crucial is to have the right attitude and know what you are looking for in an era of data overload.

"According to Stacy Seal, head of marketing at CenturyLink, with the huge amount of unstructured data that we work with, if marketers don't know what they are looking for – it is pointless.

"Start with the outcome in mind, then go back, look at the data and figure out a solution from there," she said.

She added that insights can also be mined from across the organisation, mapped out and given to sales to help them better identify the triggers which cause action, as well as the "compelling events" which closes deals. If your target persona is a financial executive, why not talk to your CFO and your financial controller to understand what are their pain points and what jobs need to be done. One could obtain insights from within their own organisation and apply that.

Doing so also helps the sales teams pre-empt what could potentially happen [in a prospect meeting] as well as the various company challenges and common encounters.

"It's a lot more about collaborating with the information that is there," she added.

This includes helping them understand the different content being produced by marketing and how they can leverage that in their sales pitch. At the end of the day, success requires the two to work in tandem.

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### DOES PERSONALISATION NEED TO BE ONE-ON-ONE?

It comes as no surprise that consumer expectations are increasing. This is especially because, today, with more data being shared with brands, consumers expect a more superior experience. Nevertheless, finding the right balance between being there when the customers want, and being creepy, is a challenge which keeps most marketers up at night.

Moreover, while one-on-one personalisation is important in ensuring a brand fosters a connection with its customers, personalisation is also costly. During a recent roundtable discussion hosted by Marketing, marketers in the room agreed that while one-on-one experiences are important, they shouldn't be the only end goal.

Speaking about personalised messaging, Niamh Byrne, head of customer and digital experience for APAC and EMEA at Citibank, said that while developing personalised messaging is extremely important, grouping people according to similar preferences based on specific needs or lifestyles, is still acceptable. For example, people on a certain learning scale tend to have similar demands, albeit not exactly the same.

"There will be people in banking who can offer products based on their lifestyle, so I do think that 'lookalikes' are very important. If you always wait for one-on-one you will be waiting a long time," she said.

Agreeing with her was Avia Eastal, regional head of consumer at Luxasia. She added that in their role, a lot of marketing is done to get customers to the store – especially if the customer is someone who looks like they will visit the store, but haven't as yet.

"Of course, you need to personalise, but you don't have to personalise everything because it's about getting the person to the store – and that is where the real personalisation starts," she said.

**IMPORTANCE OF A FEEDBACK LOOP**  
Another important component when it comes to personalisation is having a feedback loop, said Tomasz Kurczyk, digital transformation director at AXA Insurance. Creating this loop will ensure an understanding of the customer, which in turn, improves how a brand advertises and communicates. It also ensures a brand is able to go back to the product's design, "one of the biggest priorities for us is not just a personalised communication, but also personalised products and services," he said.

He explained that for a long time, it was quite difficult for the insurance segment as insurance traditionally was about having policies with a standard set of benefits and allowing customers to "add or leave it".

But, it's today's world and age, it is important for the brand to ensure the customer doesn't get buyer's remorse, providing something relevant to come along to personalise, he explained.

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"You can personalise your message as much as you want, but at the end of the day, once the purchase experience is a disappointment, it will be game over," he said.

For Clarence Lin, vice-president, regional bancassurance at DBS Bank, personalisation when done right results in a positive customer experience. "It increases engagement, builds loyalty and enhances the lives of our customers so they can live more, and bank less," he said.

There are many ways to personalise, depending on the industry or segment the brand operates in. In the insurance business, for example, it may mean having a bespoke, yet flexible, insurance policy that allows customers to choose their preferred type of cover, premiums to be paid and payment frequency based on their budget and needs. "Brands need not be excessively concerned about over-personalisation as it is always achieved by the power of one," Lin said. He added what's important is ensuring a continuous feedback loop which can be achieved with data and analytics. "The customer needs to walk away saying 'hey they really got the best experience, and no one else in the market being able to provide that same level of satisfaction. That is the holy grail of personalisation.'"

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