



The Chief Marketing Officer: In Charge of Ensuring the Success of a Brand

By Anique Gonzalez

The chief marketing officer, or CMO, oversees the marketing functions of a company in order to accomplish two goals: increase the level of sales and improve the image of the brand. Although some traditional aspects of the job remain the same, such as the oversight of pricing activities, the Internet has drastically changed the role of the CMO in recent years as consumers have become powerful members of the marketplace.



Yes, you know the importance of the four Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. They were drilled into your head in your Marketing Management 101 class, back when you first decided that marketing was the field for you. In fact, now you even know the Ps of the 21st century: people, process, and physical evidence. And yes, you know the importance of branding, promotion, customer retention, and the Pareto principle. But even this

may not be enough. Do you have the ingenuity, the foresight, and the leadership qualities necessary to oversee the marketing operations of an entire company? One whose success is directly dependent upon your strategic vision? Do you have what it takes to become a chief marketing officer?

The Responsibilities of the Chief Marketing Officer

Ultimately, the sole job of the chief marketing officer (CMO) is to increase the level of sales for the company, while at the same time enhancing and improving the positioning and image of the brand. This usually means creating unique customer experiences that ensure retention and contribute to positive relationships between the customer and the company. Consequently, the CMO is not only responsible for overseeing advertising activities that demonstrate what the brand can do for the customer but for ensuring that the promise delivered by a given ad is realized in the eyes of the customer. This, however, is often a difficult task because no matter how great the idea to engage a consumer is, if it does not trickle down from the CMO to the employees on the front line, the customer may not come back.

The Skills Needed to Become a Chief Marketing Officer

The CMO oversees many different areas related to the marketing functions of a company, including sales management, product development, pricing, and marketing communications, among others. This means that the CMO must have a solid foundation in each of these areas. Moreover, because the CMO is responsible

for the oversight of several marketing departments, he or she must have a broad range of skills that enables him or her to quickly switch from analytical to creative tasks.

Due to the fact that the CMO must deal with a diverse group of professionals, he or she must be flexible and willing to change his or her management style depending on the teams with whom he or she is interacting. The CMO also needs to be able to direct the operations of others, while at the same time possessing the ability to take direction since he or she often reports directly to the chief executive officer.

Additionally, the CMO often will serve as a type of liaison between departments and people who are not under his or her direct control in order to complete projects. For instance, when creating a new marketing campaign, the CMO may have to interact with the company's legal department to ensure that there are no legal roadblocks associated with a sweepstakes the company has planned, or he or she may work with the IT department when the company plans to re-launch a website. So, in order to be effective and to ensure that tasks are indeed carried out, the CMO must be proven leader who is able to motivate and bring diverse groups together.

It is also vital that candidates who wish to become CMOs not only possess the ability to develop long-term and strategic marketing plans, but that they are able to generate the tactics necessary to ensure that those plans are realized. In fact, in a study entitled *Define and Align the CMO* (http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:a21ht6nCHeoJ:www.nima.nl/beheer/DynamicMedia/Kennis/Marketingrapporten/define_and_align_CMO_summary.pdf+marketing+execs+still+lack+boardroom+clout&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=6&gl=us), the ability to create effective marketing plans, programs, and deliverables was seen as one of the most important attributes a CMO could possess.

Challenges Faced by the Chief Marketing Officer

A lack of control over people and how they interact with consumers is just one of the reasons cited in a recent study by



C-Level Job Feature

[Spencer Stuart](http://www.spencerstuart.com/home/) (<http://www.spencerstuart.com/home/>) called *CMO Tenure: Slowing Down the Revolving Door* for the finding that the average tenure of a CMO at a major company is only 22.9 months. Compare this to the average CEO tenure of 53.8 months, which is more than twice as long. As stated previously, no matter how great a campaign is, if the promise is not realized in the eyes of the consumer, or if they have a negative experience with a company employee, the customer may never go back. And while the CMO may not have direct control over this, the responsibility for it will inevitably fall on his or her shoulders.

Moreover, another recent [study](http://www.btobonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051130/FREE/511300702) (<http://www.btobonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051130/FREE/511300702>) found that some marketing executives do not possess as much power as other members of the executive team, and may even be overlooked by them including, in some cases, the CEO. This makes it extremely difficult for the CMO to succeed in his or her job because he or she is essentially trying to work "with one hand tied behind his or her back."

The Changing Role of the Chief Marketing Officer

Technology has changed, and will continue to change, the role of the CMO. Previously, issues such as over-saturation and which of the plethora of communications media to use were nearly nonexistent. Now, they are a constant battle. For instance, the Internet has vastly changed the way marketers reach consumers. In addition to traditional forms of media, such as newspapers/magazines, radio, television, and billboards, marketers are now able to communicate with consumers

over the Internet, through their cell phones, or even through technologies such as ATM machines. Which communications media to use, and how often and for what purposes, are constant considerations that must be addressed.

The rise of the Internet, especially, has shifted the power between companies and consumers, as the latter have become much more aware of the power that they hold. They are now able to seek out their own information about products and brands instead of merely listening to what the marketer is telling them. Consequently, consumers are now making demands of companies that the companies must heed, unless they want to run the risk of losing the customers' business.

As Richard Laermer, co-author of [Punk Marketing: Get Off Your Ass and Join the Revolution](http://www.amazon.com/Punk-Marketing-Your-Join-Revolution/dp/0061151106) (<http://www.amazon.com/Punk-Marketing-Your-Join-Revolution/dp/0061151106>), explains, "Consumers are in control of the media, and marketing and corporations are no longer in control...consumers are no longer passive in any way. This whole generation of MySpace, YouTube people who spend all of their time online, they're not very interested in you [marketers and corporations]...It's a real power shift. What consumers want to know is, 'What exactly are you giving me?'"

Compensation for Chief Marketing Officers

The yearly salary of a CMO can vary drastically as employer, years of experience, and location all play a role. However, the average salary for a chief marketing officer is \$196,444.

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