

Chapter 9



THE RELUCTANT MARKETER



What's the Trend?

As marketing becomes broader than just promotion, leaders and organizations abandon traditional silos, embrace content marketing and invest in the customer experience.

The death of marketing is greatly exaggerated on a regular basis.

On the list of the many shifts that have been projected to kill it in recent years are social media, consumer empowerment, ad-skipping technology and the list goes on. Yet for every doomsday prediction about its demise, marketing always survives.

It doesn't, however, have the luxury of surviving unchanged.

Near the end of 2013, the annual meeting of the Association of National Advertisers brought together top marketing executives from all types of brands. At the event, ConAgra Foods chief marketing officer (CMO) Joan Chow publicly wondered "if in five to 10 years whether we should be called chief marketing offices anymore. Consumers don't like to be marketed to. We should be thinking of ourselves as chief value officers."

Other executives shared a similar vision of the changing role of marketing as well. Beth Comstock, CMO at GE suggested that her job was much more similar to a chief growth officer and Walmart CMO Stephen Quinn offered the view that CMOs really need to be chief innovation officers.

Why were all these CMOs actively looking to leave their titles behind? A big reason is the broadening role of marketing itself.

Rather than being responsible for only the messaging and promotion of products and services, marketing is increasingly crossing the line into informing product development and research. Customer care and service is blending with marketing through social media engagement. Even the role of IT is shifting, as leading Gartner analyst Laura McLellan recently predicted that by 2017 CMOs will spend more on technology than CIOs.

On the surface, this may seem to create an inevitable contradiction. If the role of marketing is increasing, and marketing spending is growing, why are so many CMOs trying to rethink their titles instead of embracing the role of being the chief marketer?

The answer lies at the heart of the *Reluctant Marketer* trend, and it has everything to do with what we consider to be great marketing today.

Marketing is about getting consumers to learn about and fall in love with what you do. Increasingly it is being done through stories, word of mouth, conversations and the customer experience itself. As a result, promotion is less dependent on outbound communication and more on rapid word of mouth through connected consumers ready to share their brand experiences instantly.

In a world where experience is the marketing—what you say matters less than what you do and how you do it.

The First Brand to Kill Marketing

On July 1, the world's biggest advertiser officially killed marketing.

As part of a big reorganization at Proctor & Gamble (P&G), the marketing organization was officially renamed “brand management” and hundreds of marketing directors shifted titles to become brand directors instead. The change was deliberate, meant to describe the broader vision brand directors are meant to have over managing an entire customer experience instead of just promoting a product.

At P&G now, brand management breaks down into four categories:

Marketing is the future. All of us, as customers and consumers, are more empowered than ever before, so companies must embrace marketing.

—Rishad Tobaccowala,
Chief Strategist at Publicis Groupe

brand management (formerly called marketing), consumer and marketing knowledge (covering research and insights), communications (mainly external and internal relations) and design.

The last big shift at P&G in the marketing world was back in the 90s when the brand killed the restrictive “advertising manager” title in favor of a broader market-

ing title. The fact that they are doing it again now puts the brand on the front lines of a broader industry shift toward redefining the role of marketing itself.

If the past of marketing was about spending money in order to try and build value and (sometimes) sell a product or service, the future is about nurturing an entire experience that connects with consumers so deeply they can’t help but talk about it.

Luckily, this shift has found a perfect voice in what is currently one of the hottest growth areas in business itself: content marketing.

The Ultimate Reluctant Marketing Tool

Content marketing is based on the principle that if brands can make their marketing more useful and focused on solving problems or answering questions, then consumers will embrace it rather than block it.

Content marketing is the ultimate tactic for reluctant marketers.

Over-the-top “buy one get one free” promotional offers are replaced by “how to” style content helping someone learn to do something better. Insightful experts previously working behind the scenes at organizations can now take center stage as employee spokespeople adding value and answering questions.

All these shifts are leading to marketing that is more human, believable and trusted.

To meet this growing demand for high-quality content, simply shifting the focus of marketing teams isn’t enough—the team itself needs to change. In 2015 brands will continue the shift that has already started

happening, and they will increasingly hire former editors and journalists to produce high-quality media.

Dawn of Brand Journalism

This influx of brand journalists also contributes to the trend of reluctant marketers. As more professionals trained in the balanced and objective ethics of journalism enter into communications roles, there are two predictable effects.

The first, which gets plenty of attention, is that those professionals may be enticed to compromise some of the principles they learned and embraced in journalism school. Indeed this fear has led to many hand-wringing articles by traditional journalists speaking out against colleagues who choose to work with brands. The second effect of this shift is equally significant but gets far less attention.

When you bring more talented, ethical, well-trained content creators into the world of marketing, they will be able to produce better, less-biased content.

Journalists always aim to tell a great story, but they are also reluctant marketers by their very nature. The *story* is far more important than inserting a branded message artificially or making sure the logo appears in just the right place.

Great content can make marketing more meaningful.

Why It Matters

As the definition and practice of marketing broadens beyond promotion, marketers are increasingly encouraged to think bigger than traditional marketing efforts to bring value to their organizations. For example, today's CMO and marketing leader is increasingly managing the customer experience, simplifying and explaining the brand promise, generating growth and sales, investing in technology, inspiring innovation and attracting top talent.

The marketer of the future is not constrained by marketing, and

increasingly takes on that marketing-centric title with reluctance. Instead, these well-rounded leaders are imagining more open, less promotional and more useful brand experiences that cross over from marketing into business operations and ultimately reinvent how customers experience products and services on every level.

Who Should Use This Trend?

This trend most readily affects anyone who is currently working in a marketing position or navigating their path as CMO of an organization. The world of marketing has always changed rapidly, but 2015 will be a defining year for the CMO within an organization and a moment in time for leaders to carve their own path for how they will evolve the role of CMO to suit their own skills and the companies they work in. A secondary audience for this trend is anyone who creates various forms of media and may never have considered the role in the context of marketing, but who may now increasingly be working with organizations to put their skills to work building compelling stories on behalf of companies.

How to Use This Trend

- ✓ **Focus on experiences instead of promotion** – For anyone who has been trained in marketing, other customer experience elements like delivery to service to sales may seem as though they belong outside of marketing. That is increasingly no longer true. Are you building content to help your customers use your products *after* they have already purchased them? The key is using these moments to focus on improving experiences which generate more positive marketing and word of mouth, instead of just trying to upsell more stuff. ✓
- ✓ **Support broader team integration** – Many reluctant marketers will have a background in other disciplines, from operations to finance to documentary storytelling. These

outside skill sets can add big value, so a key priority of marketing leaders is to create a workplace where these sorts of intersections and integrations become commonplace and allow an entire team to escape the traditional confines of their own roles and broaden their collective vision.

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The 2016 Perspective

The marketing industry shift introduced in this trend certainly continued to escalate over the past year as agencies of all types struggled with an identity crisis stemming from industry pressure to abandon the idea of being called agencies at all. Partly fueled by an irreverent and frequently shared conference presentation from Pepsico marketing executive Brad Jakeman where he suggested leaving behind “dated” terms like “digital marketing” or “advertising agency” – marketing shops throughout the past year experimented with a variety of stand-in descriptions for their services.

One agency, for example, described themselves as a “digitally informed marketing lab.” Another settled for being a “reformed ad agency.” Ultimately, all the angst was about more than a name. The fundamental challenge came down to a shift in the industry from niche services to a single integrated agency that could do it all ... and many agencies being unprepared to make the leap.

Outside of the practitioners, the focus on content marketing and saying something valuable instead of interruptive promotional messages continued. Johnnie Walker came back this year with a second edition of its special film called *The Gentleman's Wager II* starring Jude Law. Marriott International invested to build its own in house content studio. Content centric integrated campaigns like Always' #likeagirl campaign took top honors at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. As this blending of marketing, journalism and art continues – the trend of the Reluctant Marketer is likely to impact even more brand communications across 2016.

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