

# John Hancock's chief marketing officer on why digital has been a 'good challenge'

Article

Digital has become critical to consumers and their everyday interactions with apps and websites have made them increasingly discerning about the digital experience. CMOs in

insurance must develop effective digital engagement strategies, working closely with the digital function to ensure every digital customer touch point delivers on the brand promise.

To better understand how CMOs meet the challenge of delivering a superior customer experience, we spoke with **Kate Ardini, the chief marketing officer at John Hancock**. The 10 years she's spent working within the same company have given her a ringside seat on how the CMO's remit has continued to expand and why marketing's responsibility for digital has grown.

*The following are some highlights from our conversation. Click [here to read the full interview](#).*

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## **Insider Intelligence (II): What are the main trends affecting you today?**

**Kate Ardini (KA):** One trend is the role of modern marketing—it really has changed. It's not just the top of the funnel. It has a role to play throughout the customer journey and in delivering on those promises. But for marketing to be viewed as a strategic function, it has to demonstrate a return on investment. That can be a hard-dollar investment through a paid campaign or an hour of someone's time. Your marketing ROI model and your media mix model must show how marketing is contributing to the value and growth of an organization.

## **II: Are you prioritizing specific channels with your campaigns?**

**KA:** Digital is the best way for us to spend our limited media budget, especially when we're targeting an intermediary audience. It's been a good challenge for a 160-year-old organization to become a digital, customer-centric leader—it's accelerated our business, showed us we can react and make changes quickly, and forced us to be better and do better for our customers and for our employees.

There's a role for broadcast and media like out-of-home, but a mix of primarily digital channels has given us the most impact and value. It lets you optimize in real time. You can very quickly see what's working and what's not and make changes. We also know digital is where our audience is spending a lot of their time. But we've also seen success from email marketing with LinkedIn and some industry publications. Just because something is the newest, shiniest, coolest thing doesn't necessarily mean it works for your audience.

## **II: How do you measure the success of your marketing initiatives?**

**KA:** Aside from the bigger picture of quarterly results and our day-to-day campaign measurement, we'll have a learning agenda upfront before we spend time on anything or put something out into the market. We'll agree on what success looks like for a campaign and what we're going to learn along the way.

Then, after campaigns come to life, we're optimizing them and making decisions about whether to stop, keep going, or pivot. Having a common learning agenda upfront helps the team understand what success looks like and how you're going to bring your learnings into what you do next.

Every company will say they have a test-and-learn culture, but there's a difference between that and being agile, being clear with everyone on how the learning agenda will influence your future work and being willing to say, "This thing didn't work and we're going to change it." And to have that be okay—you are creating a safe place to learn and try new things. When you get more senior in your role, you become more comfortable with the fact that everything you do is not going to be a success. It's just not. So as leaders, we need to celebrate our many successes and learn from things that did not go according to plan.

To read more, [\*\*click here\*\*](#). Kate Ardini is one of 10 insurance executives we interviewed for our report, [\*\*The Insurance CMO Report 2022: How to Deliver Profitable Growth in a Demanding Market\*\*](#).