

Vanity Metrics Spread Doubt About Digital Marketing's Effectiveness

Standing by flimsy measurements may prove detrimental

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When pitching their services, marketers love to tout the massive video views and clickthrough rates their campaigns drive. But adhering to flimsy metrics may prove counterproductive, according to a study by [Viant](#).

In a March 2018 survey of 50 CFOs in the US, 36% of respondents said one of their biggest concerns about the digital marketing at their organization is that they measure in vanity metrics. The surveyed CFOs concluded that many data points they're presented with by marketers don't really matter to their ultimate goals.

Concerns About Digital Marketing According to US CFOs/CMOs, March 2018

% of respondents

Seen as a cost center, not a profit center

38%

Measured in vanity metrics (e.g., metrics that make them look good)

36%

The team doesn't measure success in terms of concrete outcomes (e.g., sales)

22%

Don't trust them to show the full picture of successes vs. failures

16%

Source: Viant, "Closing the CMO-CFO Digital Divide" conducted by Censuswide, May 21, 2018

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Obsessing over how much incremental "engagement" a product drove may sound good in a marketer case study, but it won't necessarily garner increased investment from clients.

"Marketers who can prove the value of digital marketing campaigns are in a better position to secure increased marketing investment than those who rely on proxies or vanity metrics and hope for arbitrary increases," Viant researchers wrote. "Simply put, the ability to tie advertising investment to actual purchase and prove return will unlock more budget."

The biggest issue CFOs had with their organization's marketing efforts was that they saw digital marketing as a cost center. The surveyed CFOs perceived that digital marketing isn't adding profit, but instead costs more money to operate than it brings in. They also took issue with how transparent marketers are in presenting their successes and failures and that their marketing teams don't judge success based on concrete outcomes like sales.

From too much reliance on vanity metrics to the belief that digital marketing isn't worth its cost, the CFOs' concerns boiled down to **dissatisfaction with how marketing is measured** and reported.