

How CMOs Can Own the Customer Experience

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eMarketer Editors

Traditionally, organizations haven't viewed the customer experience as a singular thing owned by one particular person or department. That's changed, as brands have worked to put customers at the forefront—and it's given modern CMOs new importance as owners of that experience.

That means being in tune with customer feedback and data from all sources. "I see an increasing number of CMOs interacting more directly with customers and customer feedback, as well as working with them on the perception of their product and influencing more directly the sale of that product," said Leslie McNamara, CMO and head of workforce development at Citi Retail Services, an arm of the firm that provides private-label credit cards for retailers. (*eMarketer spoke with over 60 CMOs for our latest report "The Future of the CMO."*)

Owning the customer experience means CMOs must serve as the voice of the customer internally. For example, Kathryn Frederick, CMO at Ticketmaster, referred to herself as the organization's "ruthless advocate for the consumer," which she says is one of her biggest roles.

But ownership always comes with added responsibility. Many experts who spoke with us for this report noted that complying with customer data regulation such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) is a new part of their

role. At larger organizations, CMOs can work with legal teams and compliance officers. But at smaller companies, marketing is often tasked with leading the charge on consumer privacy.

This can be contentious, as these same privacy concerns and laws often impede on marketing's ability to deliver a personalized experience. Still, protecting customer data was the leading challenge for 42.5% of CMOs worldwide and the top obstacle for working with data, named by respondents in a September 2018 survey from Forbes Insights and The Trade Desk.

There's also the responsibility to think holistically about the journey and create engagement and nurture touchpoints across the entirety of the life cycle—this is especially true for **B2B** and direct-to-consumer (D2C) CMOs who offer recurring revenue services like Software as a Service (SaaS) products or product subscriptions.

Whereas traditional marketing was more heavily focused on bringing in the prospect, in modern marketing, the lines between prospect and customer have blurred, according to Rebecca Martin, CMO of workforce optimization software provider Calabrio. "CMOs have to focus on the customer life cycle with presales and postsales together. It is just as important to keep and retain a customer as it is to acquire one," she said.

In theory, more data means better customer insights, which can help marketers craft a better experience. "Over the past decade, marketers have worked hard to get access to data so we can derive intelligence from it," said **Alicia Tillman, CMO at multinational software company SAP**. With this data, CMOs can learn about the customer and are enabled to shape enhanced experiences. "We can anticipate customer needs better to keep them coming back to us," she said.

But the reality of this work is often more complicated. Four in five CMOs worldwide said delivering a customer experience that is seamless across channels is an important marketing capability that will enable future success, per May 2019 research from Dentsu Aegis Network. Yet only six in 10 CMOs said they had the ability to deliver this experience well.

The same survey (showing data year over year) asked respondents about internal challenges in delivering their marketing strategy. In 2018, 44% said a lack of integration across all elements of the customer experience was an obstacle. In 2019, 41% noted the same challenge.

Similarly, when asked about marketing leadership activities that are challenging to implement regularly, nearly four in 10 CMOs polled in the US cited “infusing the customer’s point of view in business decisions,” according to February 2019 research from Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business, the American Marketing Association and Deloitte.

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Report by Jillian Ryan Oct 21, 2019

The Future of the CMO

THE FUTURE OF THE CMO

More than 60 CMOs Discuss
What It Takes to Succeed in the
Evolving Role

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