

CMOs on Their Paths to Becoming Chief Marketing Officers

ARTICLE | OCTOBER 02, 2019

Blake Drosch

There's no qualifying checklist for a marketer to become a CMO, but most will tell you that the pathway to the helm of a marketing department involves a mix of expertise, diversity of experience and a willingness to learn.

CMOs with a traditional background in branding stress the importance of keeping up on new marketing technology, while digitally native CMOs warn against dismissing brand marketing as a thing of the past. No matter the background, most CMOs will say that exposure to all aspects of a marketing department is a key learning experience for those who aspire to lead them.

For our recent report on the future of the CMO, we asked marketing leaders about the pathways that led them to their current position, and the most valuable experiences they gained along the way.

Allison Lowrie, ANGI Home Services

I took the liberal arts approach in preparing myself for this role. I intentionally sought out diversification in my career so I could have experience in brand, consumer insights, digital marketing and performance marketing. Oftentimes, you see people excel through the ranks because they are an expert in performance marketing, or they are

an expert in brand marketing. You can approach it either way, but a CMO is somebody who has proven themselves as an expert in a specific area, but is open to learning and willing to make lateral moves so they can bolster the diversity of their experience.

Ryan Dell, MVMT

My path happens to be more on the digital, measurement-focused side, but I've had chances throughout my career to also own pieces that are brand-building, communications and creative-focused. It was having the right people on a team that I could learn from. I was lucky enough to work with merchandisers and creative teams to understand their point of view and the best way to communicate that in all kinds of advertising media. So my advice would be to throw yourself into the things you don't have experience with already to build that skill set. If you're coming from a traditional brand-building pedigree, I think that's super valuable in today's CMO role. But you also need to understand how to go direct to the consumer digitally, measure it, test and learn in that environment.

Peter Scherr, Vroom

When I was at jetBlue, I was mostly focused on the digital side, but I was often pulled in to understand brand activities. That gave me a chance to be an integral part of what, in the old days, would have been a brand-driven program with digital as a sidebar. A native digital marketer shouldn't look at the brand side of their company as something that's fading out. You can't ignore TV and brand tracking just because it doesn't have the molecular level measurement that you might get out of digital. I would encourage anyone in that position to insert themselves into the brand discussion and learn that part.

Fabian Seelbach, Curology

The critical skills that help me today is that strategic training I received in consulting. Thinking in terms of where the market is, what the consumers want, and what do I need to offer them as a result? Also, keeping in mind what am I uniquely good at. What capabilities do I need to get better at to optimally serve that customer? There are also a number of skills around being data driven and very analytical. That

natural blend, along with the way we are approaching marketing with Curology, has helped me be successful here.

Kory Marchisotto, e.l.f. Cosmetics

While I was growing up in the walls of Shiseido, I always punched above my weight class. I always asked to be involved in projects that exceeded the scope of my responsibility. I always tried to get a seat at the table for things that were outside of my discipline and allowed me to have oxygen and stimulation that I wouldn't have otherwise had. If you are curious about everything around you, if you get your hands on projects that exceed your scope, you get the learnings necessary to continue to evolve on broader scale.

Mary Leach, Movado Group

Throughout my career I was always in the account management side of the business, partnering with clients to understand their core needs, the areas where they were using advertising to develop solutions or come up with opportunities. I did that for several years before joining Movado Group as part of their creative services team and acted as the in-house version of what I was doing on the agency side. After being here three or four years, I became responsible for public relations and visual merchandising, and also then responsible for media. After having the experience, time and ability to prove myself, I was then promoted into the position of CMO.

For more insights on the future of the chief marketing officer, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our latest report:

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

REPORT BY
JILLIAN RYAN
OCTOBER 21, 2019

CONTRIBUTORS: JOHN CRONIN, LISA HATH, NANCY HATH, TONY TRING, KATHLEEN WILKINSON



Not sure if your company subscribes? [You can find out here.](#)