

How 3 CMOs approach performance and brand marketing

Article

“Let it be okay to also ask dumb questions, because there aren’t any.” That’s thredUP CMO Noelle Sadler Delory’s advice for building a marketing team that understands creative, metrics, and its customers holistically.

Here’s what other CMOs speaking at eTail West last month had to say.

1. Brand challenges can provide marketing opportunities

Furniture rental company Fernish took the past few years of supply chain issues in stride to promote an advantage that it previously took for granted. “Woohoo, we have inventory,” said CMO Evelyn Krasnow.

Fernish changed its messaging to advertise how fast and available products were. Krasnow said it was “a good reminder that going back to the basics can resonate in a very meaningful way.”

“For Marine Layer, [the pandemic] really offered us the opportunity to lean into emotional storytelling and focus on really connecting with our customers,” said CMO Renee Halvorsen, pointing to a catalog campaign that offered “ease” and “respite.”

ThredUP also leans into authenticity, especially as discounted clothing items eat into resale. The resale platform pushes sustainability as a value. “Yes, it might cost the same amount, but it’s so much better for all of us if we buy secondhand,” said Delory.

2. Look at metrics holistically

“About two years ago, I would have said, ‘Oh, it’s all about CLV [customer lifetime value]. But you cannot measure CLV weekly,’” said Halvorsen. Marine Layer pays close attention to customer productivity, total blended cost per acquisition, and total blended return on ad spend to compare data more frequently.

As a rental service, Fernish values renewals and churn. It’s also been able to leverage using unique QR codes for individual instances of out-of-home advertising to see which pieces of creative drive traffic.

3. Brand marketers and performance marketers should be in the same room

Creative directly informs yield, so the people creating campaigns also need to understand performance metrics and language, and vice versa.

“As a business, we’ve really focused on not creating performance versus brand marketing silos to say these great all-around athletes can do a little bit of both,” said Halvorsen. Marine Layer has its creative team focus on asset performance. Halvorsen admits tracking something like paid social metrics is “maybe a little less sexy, but it’s super important.”

A holistic approach also prevents content from becoming robotic. “You never want a customer to say ‘Oh, your SEO is showing,’” said Delory, emphasizing the importance of communication across SEO and creative.

4. Pay attention to each social channel’s tone and style

It’s easy to seem out of touch on social media. “If you’re trying to figure out TikTok, hire people who know how to do TikTok,” said Delory.

On Instagram, both Marine Layer and Fernish have found success viewing influencers as “content collaborators.” The biggest creators don’t necessarily provide the biggest yield. Instead, seek specific creators who can fit your brand’s niche and tell a story. “We’ve had luck with big influencers, and we’ve had tremendous failure with big influencers, and we’ve had sleeper hits [with] micro-influencers,” said Krasnow.

Reddit has become an underrated social listening tool for thredUP, according to Delory. Consumers are discussing any and every product in Reddit threads. Use those for key customer insights.