

CMOs in the C-Suite: Marketers Now Play a Strategic Role in Corporate Leadership

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eMarketer Editors

Before the shift to digital, marketers didn't have a measurable way to track their companies' growth, which would allow them to prove their worth. As Deloitte Digital's CMO Alicia Hatch put it, "In the C-suite, we were essentially speaking Mandarin to English speakers. No one understood what we were talking about."

But now in the age of performance marketing, CMOs have the ability to measure their success, which can help elevate their roles in their companies. For our report "[The Future of the CMO](#)," we spoke with more than 60 marketing leaders about how they communicate their worth and navigate corporate leadership.

Chris Brandt, CMO, Chipotle

One of the most important things is aligning with what the CEO expects from the marketing piece. For most of my career, I've worked with CEOs who are former marketers, so I wasn't in a position where I had to justify the marketing job. But there are jobs where everybody's suspicious of marketing. It's just like understanding your consumer,

you've got to understand your manager or your CEO—and understand what makes them tick.

It's also important for the CMO to have a great relationship with the CFO. It's a very competitive environment. And once growth doesn't happen, for whatever reason, the CMO can become the face of "We're going to get rid of you and try somebody else." And that's unfortunate, because it's not always their fault.

Lynne Capozzi, CMO, Acquia

I'm actively involved with the C-suite, not just in terms of marketing decisions, but in other decisions the company is making. We just acquired a marketing automation platform called Mautic. As CMO, I was involved with the rest of the C-suite regarding who we acquire, what we do with the business, how we grow the business, and what new markets we'll be going into. I'm an active participant in the business and work very closely with sales, because I am a big believer in the partnership between marketing and sales.

Tim Matthews, CMO, Exabeam

I speak in dollars, not marketing—and that helps a lot. When I talk to the executive team or the board, I speak only about pipelines measured in dollars. There are lots of other marketing stats that I know and love that are really worthwhile and useful within the marketing team. But I don't bring those out because they really don't serve a lot of value. I think a lot of CMOs make the mistake of talking about cost per click or clickthrough rates or any number of stats that don't mean much to a board member. With my peers, I try to discuss outcomes, not actions.

Jim Freeze, CMO, Interactions

There are certainly CMO roles that report to a head of sales or the COO. I would always dismiss any opportunity that didn't report directly to the CEO. If it's not reporting to the CEO, it means it's not strategic. If it's not strategic, that's probably something that should be a red flag to anyone interviewing for CMO roles. I think it's become a much more strategic role and one that has tremendous influence in the C-suite.

Andy Grygiel, CMO, project44

I've spent a lot of time around corporate strategy. And I'm leading an effort right now to make sure we have a well-defined and well-articulated corporate strategy, and that our product strategy is embedded in that. Every CMO leans to a certain area, and I've always positioned myself as a strategic CMO, but also one who understands product very well—which is vitally important to an early-stage technology company. I serve all of the marketing types of functions, but I also get very involved in the strategy and lead many strategy initiatives within the company.

Heidi Dorosin, CMO, Madison Reed

I view myself as a business leader on the C-team who has a specialty in marketing—just like I would view our CFO as a business leader who has a specialty in finance. We each bring a core competency, but anybody on a C-team has to be able to engage in all parts of the business, help make decisions, and help the CEO make decisions that span every area of the company. You need to have a broad business view to be successful in the C-suite.

Kristen Alexander, CMO*, Certain

Right now, marketers are driving the pipeline that generates revenues, and I think you'll see more and more of the CMO and sales roles blend. The functions themselves are different, but I think the CMO will also participate in accountability for the results, and that's a shift that's happening now. The other shift is marketing really being the voice of the customer, because there's a real opportunity to tie that through everything marketing does. [**Editor's Note: As of October, Alexander is now marketing advisor at Certain.*]