How to avoid the battle of the dueling marketing plans

Today, customers are in charge of their relationship with brands. They choose when, where, and how they interact with a brand. This power shift has forced brands to be more places at once and open for business 24/7. This can lead to overlap—marketing and customer service both responding to customers via social media, or both creating website content.

To create a consistent customer experience, CMOs need to align all of their company’s communication channels. **PwC reports** that 9 out of 10 CEOs say they are working to strengthen their customer engagement programs.

**Take action. Here are four ways to keep multiple marketing calendars and tactics from creating havoc for your customers.**

1. **Align teams that touch the customer under the chief customer officer**

   At many companies, multiple teams and channels touch the customer, including marketing, public relations, customer service, product marketing, tech support, advertising, and social media—not to mention various geographic locations and international marketing divisions. Depending on whom they talk to and which channel they use, a customer could have a
very different experience with every contact. That’s why there’s a growing trend for companies to move to an omni-channel strategy and align every department that touches the customer under a chief customer officer (CCO), which in many cases is the CMO. The CCO’s role is to bridge communication among all teams that touch the customer, so that the left hand always knows what the right hand is doing and all customers have consistent experiences. But, in order for a CMO to be a successful CCO, not only does he/she need the full support of the CEO, but they also need C-suite support for a shift to a more customer-centric business model, a collaborative relationship with the CIO, and strong relationships with customer service and sales.

Map the customer journey

To support this new type of customer relationship, marketing leaders are beginning to move away from a traditional campaign mindset. Instead, they’re focusing on “customer experience” and creating communications based on the customer journey—the path customers take on the way to purchase—to engage, nurture, and convert them to buying. To succeed, you must understand your customers’ journey and at what stage of the journey they are engaging with your brand. According to a Cone Consumer New Media Study, 53% of customers stop engaging as soon as content becomes irrelevant. Once you know why, when, how, and where customers engage, you can provide them with relevant, useful information, and offers that are more likely to resonate. And, you can better understand and coordinate when and how each customer-facing department can and should interact with customers, avoiding duplicate work and preventing customer experience inconsistencies.
Have a plan

To develop an omni-channel strategy, it’s essential for the CMO/CCO to first identify all of your customer channels and then determine how your company can most effectively and appropriately communicate with your customers via each channel. Since not every customer-facing communication will come from the marketing team, the CCO needs to bridge departments and get alignment under a master communications plan. A master plan can help ensure consistency across channels, with everyone working from the same playbook, and using the same business goals, strategies, customer personas, style guides, messaging, creative assets, and more. As a result, a company with an integrated omni-channel marketing plan can deliver the right information at the right time via the right channel, build on previous customer experiences every time a customer interacts with the brand, collect data about the progress of all marketing and communications efforts, avoid sending mixed messages to customers, and deliver on promises made to customers.

Invest in marketing technology

The truth is, many marketers still use spreadsheets to manage and track marketing efforts. But if you’re moving towards an omni-channel approach, spreadsheets just don’t cut it. Not only do important things slip through the cracks, but spreadsheets require a lot of effort to keep them updated—time that could be spent doing what marketers actually like to do, from strategy to creative to production. Not to mention analytics and testing. When communications go out to customers from different departments, keeping the customer experience consistent is nearly impossible—unless each department’s efforts are transparent and shared. To make the shift to omni-channel, you have to coordinate a lot of moving parts and have the right technology in place to support your efforts. That’s why web-based marketing resource management (MRM) software is a critical investment for most organizations. Good MRM technology should help you control and coordinate workflow across departments, coordinate marketing calendars, better allocate resources, manage budgets, collect data and track results, pinpoint your most effective efforts, monitor quality, automate and streamline approval processes, share and repurpose assets, and assign responsibilities for transparency. Additionally, your MRM technology should send alerts when you’re behind schedule/not meeting deadlines.

This more streamlined, transparent approach will help CMOs avoid “dueling” marketing plans—and realize higher ROI and happier team members who spend less time on administration, and more time doing what they do best—marketing.