



By Richard D. Czerniawski

SHOULDER LEADERSHIP FOR YOUR BRAND

"Become the leader you wish you had."
Simon Sinek

All too often, I hear marketers bewail the lack of senior management leadership. Not only do I listen to it, but I also witness it in terms of the shoddy work marketers share with me and my business partner, Mike Maloney. It is further evidenced by lackluster outcomes from their strategies and initiatives and, worse yet, the inability to identify the source of poor or, for that matter, what will replicate outstanding performance. Where's the "adult" supervision (aka leadership)?

Yet, one organization after another purports to seek "marketing excellence," whatever that means to and for them. In practice, they engage in training programs that they push their marketers through, thinking it will generate marketing excellence. It is a self-deluding fantasy unless marketing is guided by proven principles, best practices, and quality processes that serve to underpin an evidence-based culture. And, there can be no evidence-based culture without senior management leadership participating in the training, instituting and inculturating it into the organization. Top management participation and involvement, going beyond paying lip service to the fantasy, is rarer than the solar eclipse of the moon.

An evidence-based culture leads to marketing excellence. It cannot be achieved without senior management leadership in driving it, except for those cases where individual marketers shoulder the leadership role for its development.

Whenever I hear marketers complain about the lack of senior management leadership—specifically, that their senior managers don't know or appreciate the proven principles, nor do they adopt best practices and quality processes that can lead to the achievement of stretch business objectives—I tell them to accept the mantle of leadership. Leadership is not the product of rank, although those with rank command followers. Instead, leadership comes from taking responsibility and accountability. These marketers—through participation in our intense, hands-on workshops to get real work done—are empowered with the knowledge and skills to be able to do the right things in the right ways. However, it requires courage to embrace responsibility and accountability.

There's simply no excuse for not putting what they've learned to practice on their brands. They can achieve it without creating a spectacle or declaring the emperor (senior management) has no clothes. It is a courageous, responsible act of one who now knows better what it takes to build healthy

brands and create target customer preference. It certainly beats the alternatives of suffering through weak leaders or leaving the company for greener pastures—which are a mirage. They can, in the words of Simon Sinek, “Become the leader you wish you had.”

We, marketers, need to shoulder leadership for our brands, and people, if we are to be responsible stewards of the assets the organization entrusted us—which included the people on our team—to manage and grow. It is about doing the right things in the right ways (proven principles et al.). It’s about applying evidence-based learning in our marketing and managing people. Succeed or fail; we will come out winners as it will contribute to our leadership development.

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