



By Richard D. Czerniawski

THE ROLE OF THE CMO – 3

The role of the CMO is to make marketing work! If marketing is not working for a given organization, it is not the fault of the marketing discipline. Instead, it's a problem with the way marketing is practiced within that company. The responsibility for failure lies at the feet of the CMO regardless of whether s/he agrees with the principle of "extreme leadership" espoused by retired Navy SEAL officers Jocko Willink and Leif Babin. As former President Harry S. Truman stated, "The buck stops here." The "here" is with the CMO.

The CMO's first responsibility is to create an evidence-based marketing culture with clear line-of-sight from strategies and tactics to targeted Business Objectives (i.e., sales, market share, and profit). I talked about this at length in the last article of Marketing Matters and address this subject in my latest book, *AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing*. This musing will deal with the second responsibility: *hire the right people to instill and perpetuate the culture of genuine marketing excellence*.

I recently spoke with a marketing professional experiencing great difficulty in securing a marketing director position with a pharmaceutical company. She has pharmaceutical experience; however, she is not being considered for interviews because her most previous experience has been in the medical device & diagnostics industry. Moreover, she does not have specific experience in the given therapeutic areas for which companies are hiring. In other words, she does not fit the bill concerning a laundry list of special requirements. I'd venture to guess that few marketers would qualify based on the experience requirements, and those that do may not be the best choices for the job. It's possible to look good on paper against experience criteria but perform poorly due to one's missing essential traits.

When she shared her plight with me, I thought, "My goodness, you are dealing with 'flat earth' thinkers." They are valuing experience criteria (such as work in specific industries and therapeutic categories, time in grade or within those industries, etc.) over personal traits or characteristics. Instead, we need to address personal characteristics over experiences if we are to field the kind of team needed to develop an evidence-based culture and make marketing matter more.

It reminded me of what I was told about my military experience when I was entering the workforce in 1972. Many said that employers were not interested in my military experience as a Naval Officer and Aviator, as it had no connection to the business world unless if it was as an airline pilot, which I was not interested in pursuing. I couldn't and didn't believe it! How could they not find value in the traits and characteristics of leadership, decision making, resourcefulness, perseverance, and

teamwork, among many others I demonstrated during my military service?

These flat earth thinkers were using the wrong criteria! Procter& Gamble appreciated my military experiences and the characteristics I showed. They hired me from the small, no-name school where I received my MBA, also despite a concentration in finance, not marketing! As I had one more semester remaining to complete my MBA, I asked if I should switch planned directed studies in finance to marketing. They told me to study what I wanted. P&G would teach me everything I needed to know about marketing.

So, what criteria should CMO's use in selecting marketers to build an evidence-based culture capable of achieving genuine marketing excellence? Here's what I look for in marketers:

- **Creative intelligence:** There are many types of intelligence: intellectual (which everyone in marketing should possess and displayed through their academics), physical, emotional, creative, etc. I'm distinguishing this from creativity, which is another characteristic I look for in marketers. Instead, creative intelligence refers to the ability to identify multiple options and select the most appropriate situation for any given situation. It also includes analytical characteristics—using and making sense of data and marketing research, which is the foundation of an evidence-based culture.
- **Conceptual thinking:** A brand positioning strategy is a concept. It is not a tangible thing. Neither is a creative brief or any of our marketing strategies. They're abstractions. Concepts. Perhaps, I might label this as strategic thinking, but I think this represents more. It would also include pattern recognition, where the marketer can assemble pieces to create an integrated whole. It also includes the ability to read between the lines of marketing research or what customers say to unearth a legitimate and productive insight. It's about capitalizing on an opportunity to add 1 + 1 and getting 3. Got it!?!
- **Curiosity:** Marketers, while they need not necessarily reinvent the wheel, should not except things at face value. That would lead to "keep on keeping on," a stasis that hinders progress. Instead, they need to know "what" and, more importantly, understand "why." When they do, they're better equipped to discover new things that may lead to gaining a competitive advantage through better serving customers and creating a better way to whatever.
- **Creative:** Ideas make the world go around. They're fuel for winning customers! While I want my marketers to be creative, they need not be the BIG idea person. HOWEVER, and this is a big "however," they need to be able to recognize BIG, juicy ideas!
- **Courage:** Marketers need to have a point-of-view and not be afraid to express it. It's not just a random POV but thought leadership. This expression of thought leadership is more important today as there appears to be so much more pressure to go along with the herd. Managers within organizations press for "consensus," which is way different from "collaboration." As Leo Kiely, former President of Coors Brewing Company, said, "Marketers need to be comfortable undressing in Macy's window." He was referring to their flagship store on 34th-street in Manhattan, pre-COVID 19! This trait is essential to keeping the dialogue open and inviting others to share their thinking, leading to improved decision making.
- **Collaborative teamwork:** Perhaps, I may have two traits here. The first is to work well with others both in a lead and follower role, as appropriate. As a follower, the marketer needs to add-value. As a leader, the marketer must make decisions. This second trait, making decisions, is based upon weighing the input from team members, and assuming responsibility for her/his choices.

WOW, there are so very many traits here. Did I overlook any that will help make a real difference? Which ones do you believe are most important? Oh yes, I did talk about other characteristics when I referred to my military experiences, such as leadership and resourcefulness. I hope I covered

them within my C-listing framework of essential Characteristics of effective marketers.

There is one characteristic that helps me sort out the proverbial wheat from the chaff when it comes to building my marketing team. It's the sine qua non. These marketers are winners! They have a significant track record of successes. They've made every team they've ever played for successful. It's not merely about being present at the time of the achievement but driving or, at the least, contributing to the outcome. Winning is neither random nor fortuitous. These marketing candidates know why their thinking or action led to success. Digging deep in a candidate's achievements will reveal whether s/he possesses the crucial characteristics mentioned above to build an evidence-based culture, leading to marketing excellence.

In the movie *Gladiator*, the emperor, Marcus Aurelius, tells his son, Commodus, that Commodus' failures are his failure as a father. The loss of marketing's relevance, and the shortcomings of marketing, are the failures not of the individual marketers, but the failure of the CMO in **NOT hiring the right people to instill and perpetuate an evidence-based culture of genuine marketing excellence**. That's extreme ownership. It's where the buck stops.

Take your marketing to the next level. You can learn how with my new book, **AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing**. Learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>

Stay SAFE and be well!

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