

A 10-Step Cure for Fragmented Marketing

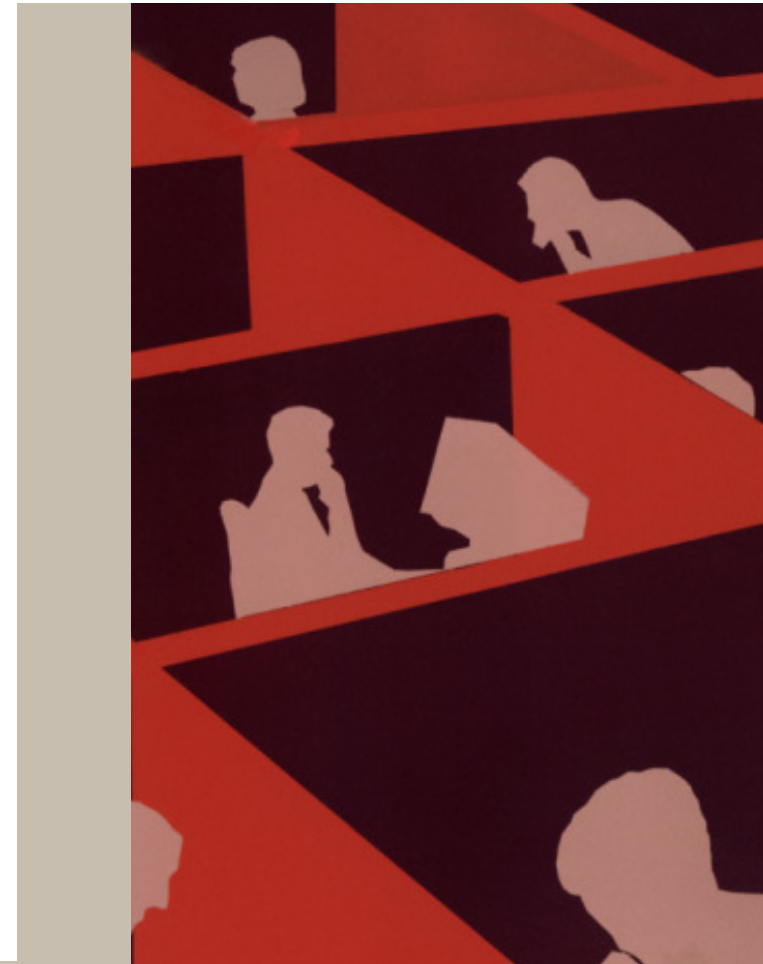
FOR MULTINATIONAL B2B COMPANIES

by Guy Nielsen

As a CMO and consultant for some of the largest B2B companies in the world, I have come to the realization that fragmentation and lack of cohesiveness in marketing is more the norm than the exception. It is also clear that when this inherent weakness is fixed, it can unleash marketing power never before imagined.

Fragmentation is a serious structural issue that if left unaddressed can become an insurmountable barrier to achieving high performance. It leads to duplication of resources, continuous re-inventing of the wheel, inconsistent and incorrect branding and messaging, disjointed processes and lack of connection to the corporate mission. The messaging inconsistencies alone can hinder a company's ability to drive one compelling, powerful voice that is critical in order to stand out in a crowded marketplace.

The severity of fragmentation varies widely and is typically the result of three key factors – the type of business; the extent of autonomy that CEOs give their business unit leaders (regional, country, industry or product P&L leaders); and complacency or apprehension by corporate marketing not to rock the boat.



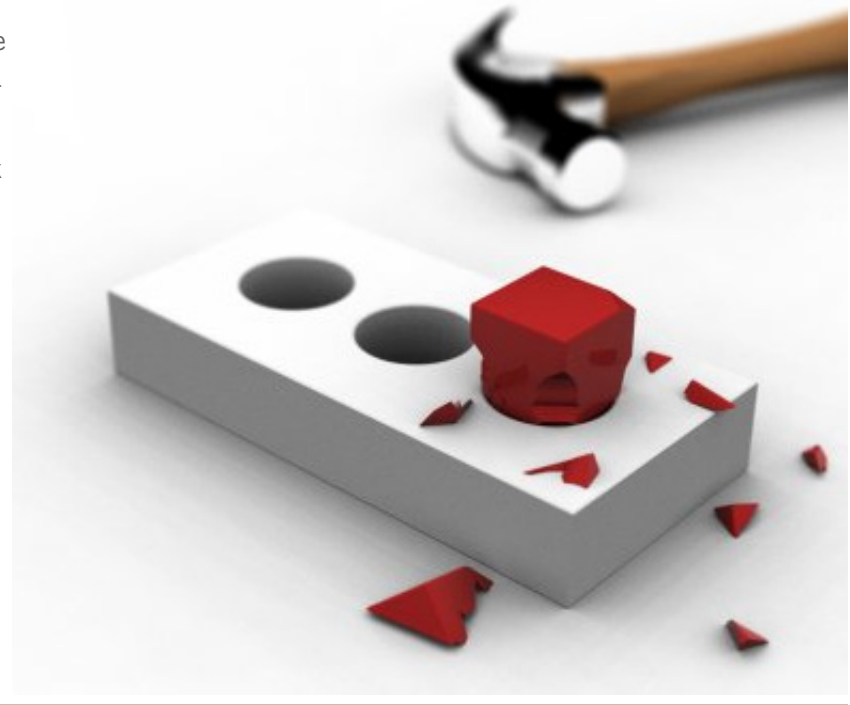
CASE IN POINT,

Case in point regarding the type of business – there is more marketing decentralization with the large global law firms, accounting firms, financial services and insurance companies who sell products and services that are very localized and subject to local regulation. In these organizations it wouldn't be inconceivable that the head of Japan marketing, for example, has never met the head of UK marketing let alone collaborate together.

On the other hand, the large IT companies who strive for a consistent, global approach to serving their multi-national clients have more of a cohesive approach to marketing. They are still decentralized but there is typically a higher level of collaboration and coordination between the country and regional units.

Fragmentation also stems from long-standing organizational norms where business unit executives who manage regional, country, industry or product line P&L's are highly empowered and are essentially given too much autonomy. There is little motivation by these business unit leaders to fix the problem since they prefer having strong control of their own marketing resources and fear that a more balanced and cohesive company-wide approach might dilute the focus on the specific marketing needs of their business unit. These business unit leaders are unfortunately being myopic and could benefit from putting on the “corporate hat”.

Organizations with marketing all rowing in the same direction, with a common vision and culture and a common strategic thread tying everyone together will experience great cost efficiencies and are significantly more effective with their marketing outreach activities. The end result is a greater impact on the profitable growth of a company.





Don't be mistaken – this is not a call to action to centralize marketing. It is about binding a team together with a common vision, strategy, and approach that results in greater efficiencies. It is about improving marketing's focus and effectiveness across all lines of business. There is a delicate balance that needs to be achieved, and it can be accomplished in short order with the right focus and marketing leadership in place.

I want to emphasize what I just touched on. The marketing executive at the helm should have substantial experience managing large and diverse teams, strong leadership skills and the innate ability to earn trust and build consensus. The best transformational marketing executives have specific traits – they are passionate and high energy, understand diplomacy and are not afraid to stand-up against adversity. They also have exceptional change management skills that are critical when trying to spearhead a transformational agenda.

Before outlining the ten steps it is important to point out that a typical Fortune 1000 company will have completed several the steps already, and some in stellar fashion. The key to success is completing all of them. It is only until each and every one of these steps is achieved that marketing will have the right platform in place to springboard toward agility and high performance.

1

DISCOVER AND ALIGN

Conduct a formal discovery phase to identify inefficiencies. Show the CEO and senior management clear examples of duplication, process inefficiencies and messaging inconsistencies and get them aligned and behind the need for change. Remind senior management that your end-game objective is to help each and every one of them achieve success with their own P&L goals. It is vital to get your CEO to champion your change initiatives specifically with a memo to the broader management team stating the importance of working more cohesively in marketing and showing support for your efforts to enact change.

2

CREATE A FUNCTIONAL VISION

Create and promote a function vision for the marketing organization that disassociates marketing from a “back office” tactical function to a high-performing, strategic function that is essential to profitable growth. The vision should emphasize the importance of marketing being a key contributor to strategic planning processes, at the table when corporate and business unit strategies are being developed. The vision should also include a common training and development program for all marketing personnel that will foster consistency and drive up morale; clear roles and responsibilities so there’s no ambiguity and overlap; and a culture of using data, analytics and customer insights to develop marketing plans.

3

FORMALIZE DOTTED-LINE ACCOUNTABILITY

The most fragmented marketing organizations are those that have little or no accountability to a central marketing leader. Take the simple step of formalizing dotted-line accountability to marketing and communicate what that means to all those involved. In the most basic sense it means the corporate marketing leader has a say in performance plans, budget allocations and performance reviews. It is perfectly acceptable and actually preferable to have the business unit marketing directors hard-lined to the business unit. To be successful, these BU directors first and foremost need to be an expert in his/her region, country, industry or product line and has to be able to cultivate trusting relationships with their business unit executive. Hard-lined accountability to the business unit executive is an enabler.

4

FORM A GLOBAL MARKETING COUNCIL

Develop a global marketing leadership council comprised of the regional, country, industry and product line marketing directors. The council meetings will serve as a forum to promote your vision, share best practices and gain visibility into the strengths and weaknesses. It is critical that these council meetings have clear mantra, operating principles and cadence. Make the mission of the council to enhance company-wide marketing performance. Ideally, bake into each of the council members' individual performance plans that they must be a valuable contributor to the council and accountable for the success of the council's mission. The meetings should be interesting, educational, interactive and exclusive. Involve internal and external guest speakers including on occasion your CEO, a board member or outside marketing visionaries.

5

CREATE CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TASK FORCES

As part of the council develop task forces to tackle some of the broader challenges facing the marketing organization. Common examples include a task force on how to create or improve a company-wide lead management process, or how to develop a more cost effective regional shared services model that serves the critical content, creative, and event support needs across all business units. Other examples include sketching out a company-wide marketing training and development program, or refining the company's messaging architecture. Each task force should have a designated leader who is ultimately responsible for successful completion of the task and who communicates the findings and recommendations to the council.

6

DEVELOP A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Develop a strategic framework, or common guidelines for how to approach key activities in marketing such as marketing planning, lead generation, channel marketing and sales support tools. An example is enforcing the use of market intelligence and consumer insights to develop smarter, data-supported marketing plans. Another could be getting everyone to embrace a lead generation approach centered around "compelling content", where fresh, new insights and thought leadership is used to draw prospects to roundtables, conferences, the website and one-on-one sales meetings. The framework and guidelines should be developed by the entire council and should be managed by the corporate marketing executive who leads the council. The benefit of a making this a council-driven initiative is apparent – the council members will automatically take ownership of the guidelines and principles since they are actually the ones developing them.

7

ENABLE COMPANY-WIDE CAMPAIGN VISIBILITY

Develop a simplified process to register campaigns and automatically post them onto a shared calendar. This gives everyone visibility into all the programs and activities so one can easily identify opportunities to repurpose and share best practices. This may sound overly simplistic especially for companies who have invested heavily in expensive marketing automation tools, but you'd be surprised at how few multinational companies have these tools or use them effectively on a company-wide basis. A recent study by TopRight concluded that companies who use industry-leading marketing automation tools only tap into 30% of their full potential on average. A basic, global campaign registration and calendaring process can be the first step in adding more robust functionality such as full-scale campaign management, budget management and lead nurturing.

8

DEVELOP A STANDARD TRAINING CURRICULUM

Take the initiative to develop a common training regimen for all marketing personnel. Begin with developing a spiffy on-boarding program to get all newcomers to marketing quickly aligned with the functional vision, marketing culture and strategic priorities. Implement ongoing web-based and classroom instruction, and set aside budget for outside education to develop skills. Prioritizing continuing education and the development of your people does wonders for morale, loyalty and performance. And a standardized training program drives consistency and keeps the performance bar high. Make this an initiative that is co-led by the corporate HR and Learning & Development directors. Give them ownership and credit for developing a successful program, even if your budget is paying for it.

9

DEVELOP COMMON PERFORMANCE METRICS

Work with Sr. Management and the marketing council to develop a common performance measurement dashboard. The dashboard should include metrics on branding, messaging, communications, lead generation, social media and digital marketing effectiveness. Dashboards change and evolve constantly therefore keep a dynamic frame of reference when developing your dashboard plan and expect it to look very different a year after it is first launched. Also, be careful not to over-do it with too many measurements. It can bog down a marketing team and take away their focus from the more important client-facing activities. Make sure you have the proper reporting cadence – I typically recommend quarterly performance reports and one annual summary.

10

COMMUNICATE

Get out there and be visible with your company’s entire marketing community. Communicate with them regularly. Have ad-hoc town hall meetings with the country or regional marketing teams, and conduct at least one all-hands call per quarter. Continually foster a sense of “one-team”, promote your vision, and continue to bind the team together into one cohesive marketing machine. Your marketing directors around the world will appreciate being part of something bigger and will welcome your initiatives with open arms.

“I would encourage you to start right away with assessing your own marketing organization to determine how far along you are with each of the steps.”

Good chance you've only satisfactory completed less than half of them. Move with speed and purpose to address the gaps and begin down the path of building a high performance marketing team that is a catalyst for growth and profitable. It's amazing what a marketing function can do when you harness the power of consistency across the organization.

Remember it takes time and careful planning to build a foundation of excellence. Many companies are adverse to change, so be sensitive and deliberate in driving the change agenda. Use your leadership and change management skills to win support for your plans, and set expectations that it could take a year or two to begin seeing dividends. Stay the course and your efforts will in no time be a catalyst for profitable growth.



About The Author:

Guy Nielsen is a strategic marketing consultant and former Fortune 500 chief marketing and communications officer. He has successfully transformed global marketing teams for some of the world's largest IT and financial services companies. Guy is an authority on the key challenges facing B2B marketing executives today including organizational alignment, branding, lead generation and marketing automation. He has worked on the global stage with extensive on-the-ground experience in Europe, Latin America, China and Japan. As a managing partner at TopRight, a leading boutique strategic marketing firm, Guy advises CMOs on developing analytics-supported strategies for agile and high performance marketing.

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