



Peter Huskins

Joint Director of ShopAbility

A career retailer who is widely known and respected in the Australian FMCG industry with extensive experience in department stores, DDS, liquor and supermarkets. Peter has been working with suppliers and retailers developing business, category, customer and channel strategy and competitive points of difference for almost 10 years.

Peter Huskins
M: +61 412 574 793
E: peter@shop-ability.com.au

Tips for running a lean, mean, marketing machine

ShopAbility has partnered with the Bevington Group, Australia's most experienced process and productivity improvement specialists.

Coupling the experience of ShopAbility's senior strategy team, all of whom have decades of CEO and Board level experience in retail and FMCG companies, with the Bevington Group's experience in improving business operational processes, we can deliver a unique suite of services that centre on real organisational insight using XeP3.

The organisational insight approach using XeP3 consolidates lessons from more than 400 assignments in some of Australia's largest and best-recognised companies and ShopAbility is exclusively licensing Bevington Group-patented technology and expertise for use in the retail and FMCG sector.

Here in our first article of a series, Roger Perry, the CEO of

the Bevington Group, discusses opportunities for making your marketing department run leaner ... and smoother.

A key feature of the changing economic landscape has been the push to operate in the most efficient manner possible. As revenue has dried up, organisations have been realigning teams, trimming staff, cutting spending, all in the interest of finding the most cost-effective way to operate.

As productivity and restructuring specialists, we have observed the good, the bad and the ugly of organisations' attempts to increase efficiencies, including within marketing teams in various organisations.

From these experiences, we have distilled some critical pieces of advice for any marketer that wants to run their team, department or business as efficiently as possible.

Align the thinkers and doers

In most marketing teams we have encountered, there is a split between strategy execution (often called Comms/Marketing Managers, ie, the doers) and strategy creation (Customer Intelligence, Marketing strategy, ie the thinkers).

While important, we have seen this split become problematic in structures that have divided these functions into two separate teams, with separate reporting lines.

This can lead to a disconnection between the actual intention of the strategy, and its execution, meaning that strategists' advice on campaign execution may be ignored, customer insights disregarded and, at worst, an 'us versus them' mentality can arise between the teams.

Break down this disconnection by creating marketing teams that combine the thinkers and doers. By putting the thinkers and doers





into the same team, the barrier caused by the above structure will be eliminated.

Control the ad hoc work

Often, the lack of a clear process for channeling requests into a marketing team can lead to a high volume of 'backdoor' activity. Because many people find it difficult to say 'no' (especially to a senior stakeholder), ad hoc requests of marketing teams – for data, for new initiatives, for a small (yet inevitably time-consuming) change to a piece of collateral – can become a significant distraction to actually completing the prioritised tasks.

To combat this, it is helpful to have all ad hoc requests go through one person (a 'front door') who can clarify the specific needs of the stakeholders, ensure the necessity of the request and then help prioritise the work.

There should also be clear escalation points to resolve any disagreements.

Streamline the briefing process

The campaign briefing process is the most critical process in a marketing team yet is often inefficient and inconsistently conducted by staff in the same team. This leads to unnecessary use of time for multiple stakeholders – an agency's account managers, the creatives, marketing managers, and even product and legal teams.

It is critical that all people managing the briefing process understand and follow a consistent briefing process. This will reduce confusion internally and teach the agency how to deal with your organisation.

Furthermore, make sure that all relevant parties understand exactly what their role is in the briefing process and exactly at what point they will be engaged.

The role of each party should fit perfectly into the process, and whether it is responsible for an action, accountable for the overall piece of work, is being consulted for advice, or being informed as a courtesy.

Beware the retainer

When agencies are on a retainer, client staff have a tendency to use the agency as if it were 'free'. This has two negative consequences: 1) the agency is called for any problem, no matter how appropriate, leading to inefficient use of agency's time; 2) The

marketing team will send campaign work to the retained agency, even when the campaign would have been better executed by another non-retained agency, because the retained agency is 'free'.

It is important that marketing teams understand the appropriate way to engage a retained agency: agency time isn't 'free', it just comes at the expense of another, deprioritised piece of work; secondly, work that can be done internally should be done internally; finally, prioritise campaign spend to ensure that the most appropriate agency does the job.

Marketing teams that are able to not abuse retainers are able to reduce costs associated with the retainer, and use their and the agencies' time more effectively.

Don't create roles just to fit technology

The technology available to marketers is changing rapidly. Google, Facebook, Twitter and their ilk are expanding the ways that organisations communicate to the market. This means more opportunities – and more work.

As these technologies proliferate, it is tempting to create new roles, and hire extra staff, to fully harness them. Yet because these roles often have little time to mature, some of their output can be of questionable value. In good times, marketing teams can afford the luxury of the learning curve. In tight times, however, this is not the case.

Rather than creating new roles to harness these technologies at the outset, start off by upskilling existing staff in these technologies, or even outsource the work. Over time, as your organisation comes to understand its needs in relation to these technologies, the number of staff dedicated to this area can be scaled up.

Review your reporting

Marketers, particularly in large organisations, produce lots of reports. These are an integral part of a high-performance organisation, and their quality and timeliness are key to good decision-making.

However, we have witnessed many companies – and marketing teams – that spend far more time reporting than is required. This can be due to a number of factors: inefficient reporting processes, poor data quality or the production

of unnecessary reports.

If the issue is data quality or reporting processes, the solutions can often be complex and costly. For these, it is often helpful to enlist the support of outside experts.

However, a simple reporting audit can provide important insights into the value of reports produced by the marketing team. Start by compiling a list of all reports produced – even seeing them all on one page can expose the sheer volume of reporting done.

Follow this by asking the end users about what value they derive from the report and what data they can do without.

Based on this information, it will be much easier to determine which reports should continue, which should stop, and which can be altered to better suit the end-users' needs.

Maintain flexibility

Finally, it is critical not to cut your resources too fine. As organisational imperatives change and the economy picks up, marketing teams will need resource flexibility to ensure they remain agile enough to carry out new initiatives.

Flexibility applies not only to staff members but to staff capability. Leave yourself and your leadership team some room to respond to capability gaps in the new structure. This can involve a staged transition to reduce capability gaps, and a temporary use of contract resources until in-house staff become more familiar with their roles. ■

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The Bevington Group is a productivity improvement service provider. The Group was established in 1993, and has refined its methods in more than 400 assignments. Bevington's core services are: Process Improvement and Restructuring; Continuous Improvement; and Change Management.



About ShopAbility
www.shop-ability.com.au

ShopAbility helps improve manufacturer and retailer thinking and doing capabilities for increased sales in category and channel. Our offers span Research and Insight, Strategy and Planning, Activation and Implementation, and Capability and Training. We work with senior executives, sales departments, category/customer/trade marketing departments, insights people and brand marketers for an integrated 360-degree picture. Call us on 1300 885 644 to discuss your needs.