CMO Insights on the Journey Towards Digital Agility
Digital Agility
The ability to quickly and easily adopt digital technologies to maximize the customer experience

INTRODUCTION

We get it - everyone is talking about digital marketing and technology, right? So why did we feel the need to do this study? Because knowing how your organization’s marketing (and your company) need to become more digitally driven and doing it well are two different things.

As a consulting firm, we specialize in digital marketing and sales strategy through execution. We see firsthand the struggles that many companies have as they embrace (and optimize) digital technologies with the goal of becoming more customer-driven and agile. And we understand all of the strategic and cultural shifts that must go with it.

We've observed, through the use of CRM and marketing automation tools, how the gap between marketing and sales is closing somewhat. However, the gap between marketing and IT is still fairly significant. Particularly when it comes to getting access to important data and installing systems that allow marketing to react quickly to changing customer and market demands.

We believe that digital marketing agility requires the same fundamental approach as the agile development process being embraced by IT departments. Agile software development lays out a set of principles empowering people to build requirements and solutions through the collaborative effort of self-organized cross-functional teams that promote continuous planning, testing and integration. Marketing and IT must embrace this approach to achieve true digital agility.

This study uncovers CMO insights about where they are in this journey. As a member of the CMO Club, we understand how important it to share information with your peers, and we were happy to work with them on this study. And leveraging the best tools and technologies is essential, and we thank Oracle Marketing Cloud for its partnership in creating this report. We appreciate the time and attention of the 82 CMOs who completed the survey, and the eight who participated in the interviews. We hope you enjoy the report and welcome your feedback.

Barbara Angius Saxby,
Managing Director & Founder, Accelent Consulting
Comments from The CMO Club

After a decade of unparalleled volatility and disruptive change, one thing has held constant for savvy marketing leaders around the world: The center of their universe is their customers. It’s on this sacred and common ground where the case for digital agility finds its bedrock.

Today, CMOs have access to unprecedented degrees of customer insight that are rich, real-time, real world, in 360°, and predictive and actionable – all thanks to digital technology. However, capturing and leveraging those insights remains an elusive challenge for the majority of marketers. We embarked – through survey work and one-to-one interviews – to uncover the obstacles and challenges faced in obtaining the digital agility needed by marketers to get closer to their customers, as well as share their tried-and-true best practices and pragmatic ways of overcoming those obstacles. Thus, this CMO Solution Guide captures critical nuggets of insight for customer-led marketing leaders.

Our hope? That our findings will enhance and expand a CMO’s ability to capture, extract and apply customer insights across an organization, then use those insights to more deeply engage with customers and prospects. When it comes to digital agility, it’s all about having intimate knowledge of your customers. Regardless of industry, B2B/B2C or company size, that’s the mantra of every CMO.

_Pete Krainik, CEO & Founder, The CMO Club_

Comments from Oracle Marketing Cloud

It has been said that being agile isn’t as simple as following one single methodology. I could not agree more. The path of the journey to digital agility – as Barbara Saxby astutely pointed out in the Introduction – is paved with continuous planning, testing, and integration.

Translation: Marketers simply cannot rest on any laurels or get comfortable – ever. That may sound extreme but in the world we live in today – our always-on and connected digital world – technology is changing faster than ever before.

Agile marketing – which we define as using data, technology, and processes to build customer experiences that evolve instantly based on the behaviors, interests, and needs of real people – is all about letting customers dictate their own path and have a system that adjusts quickly and intelligently for them across channels in real time and context.

And that system is unquestionably built on an open platform.

The agile Modern Marketing platform must have the agility to integrate third-party applications and data quickly and seamlessly into your marketing processes so you are not constrained by vendor-specific applications, data silos, and proprietary data sources - all of which provide the optimal customer experience each time, every time.

To achieve maximum ROI, it's critical that the CMO and CIO invest in open technology platforms that allow their organization to maximize the marketing technology investments made yesterday and today, while easily integrating the ones that come tomorrow.

_Sylvia Jensen, Senior Director, EMEA Marketing, Oracle Marketing Cloud_
Digital marketing has undergone tremendous change over the past few years due to the introduction of revolutionary new tools and techniques. The result has been a massive cultural shift in which the science of marketing has become at least as important as the art of marketing. The need to act faster and adapt to changing customer and market needs by using this technology has put the concept of digital agility front and center.

This report, *CMO Insights on the Journey to Digital Agility*, provides a snapshot of where marketing leaders stand along this path today. 82 CMOs were surveyed, and the key highlights we gathered are presented here.

**Key Survey Findings**

- Most commonly, the CMO is owner of overall organizational digital strategy, in addition to digital marketing strategy.
- The top three drivers of digital marketing agility are: (1) enhancing the customer experience, (2) improving competitive position and (3) increasing sales.
- Digital skills are now a basic entry requirement for marketing professionals. 71% of CMOs feel that their teams now have at least “basic digital proficiency”.
- In B2B enterprises, enhancing the customer experience is almost twice as important as increasing sales.
- Almost half of CMOs feel that digital marketing has provided a “much enhanced” view of the customer.
- The biggest barrier to marketing digital agility is not having an appropriate technology infrastructure.
- In world-class organizations, responsibility for digital strategy is pushed down the organization, and functional leaders, along with the CMO, are often are the owners of digital strategy.
- Typically, the marketing function defines the need and identifies a solution before turning to the IT function to act as implementer.
- Half of CMOs feel that their traditional and digital marketing is only “somewhat aligned”.
- A new role of marketing technologist is becoming increasingly common.

An in-depth presentation and analysis of the questions and results is presented in the following QUANTITATIVE section.

In addition, eight CMOs from the US, UK, and France, participated in one-to-one interviews to share where they are on their journey to digital agility. No matter what the level of experience and expertise, there was a broad consensus that digital marketing is no longer a competitive differentiator – it is a minimum entry requirement and an essential aspect of all marketing activities. You will find a detailed review of these findings with many quotes from these CMOs in the QUALITATIVE section report.

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1 “World-Class” organisations are those positioned in the top quadrant for both digital marketing maturity AND digital marketing flexibility.
Conclusions & Recommendations

This study has shown that ‘world-class’ digitally-agile enterprises are those with core digital skills, advanced maturity and a desire to proactively seek new digital approaches.

In compiling this report, it became clear that digital agility is not just about understanding what’s needed – it’s also about translating that understanding into action and accelerating adoption. The ROI is clear: reduced costs, increased sales, happier clients, enhanced competitiveness, deeper market understanding and (ultimately) increased revenue and profit.

With this in mind, the top recommendations are:

**Prepare For Change, Always**

Invest in tools that make sense for your organization. Understand what data you need and work with IT to get it in a usable format, and continue to keep the data actionable and current. Place dedicated marketing technologists between marketing and IT. Leverage agile development principals to fully integrate with your IT function to build product and digital roadmaps. The marketing and IT functions can't simply cooperate, they must actively collaborate.

**Increase Focus on Customer Knowledge**

World-class digitally-agile organizations are leveraging technology to build an intimate understanding of customers and markets. If you don’t truly understand your customer, personas and vertical segments, you can’t speak the language they need to hear in order to understand the value of what you offer. Increase personalization and interaction (including behavior and psychological understanding) and deliver content that is relevant so that customers want to engage with you across multiple channels or platforms.

**Staff Marketing with ‘PI-Shaped’ People**

The profile of the marketing professional has changed substantially over the last few years. In addition to specialized marketing skills, marketers must now be conversant with digital and analytical techniques. Organizations should strive to move to a point where digital is naturally part of every marketing activity. It takes time to attract, develop and retain world-class marketing teams, so start today. To be truly agile, it makes sense to adopt a flexible staffing model using consultants, contractors and agencies to plug any capability gaps.

**Don’t be Afraid to Fail – Keep Trying New Things**

Digital marketing is evolving quickly, and its impact can be nearly real-time. You must always start with a well-thought-out strategy for programs, campaigns, content and channels, and have clear goals and KPIs established, or else you are throwing darts to see what works. While effective planning is as important as it ever was, the need to move quickly has never been more acute. Experiment with digital tools and initiatives, try multiple approaches, fail fast, and then try something else. Be creative. Always.

**Build Support At All Levels**

Support for digital marketing starts at the CEO level. Senior leadership must not only ‘buy in’ to digital marketing, they must be champions of it. Once they are on board, drive the strategy down the organization so that everybody feels a sense of ownership and responsibility. And don’t forget to bring in other departments like Sales, Finance, Customer Support, HR and of course IT. They all have a role in delivering customer value, even though, as the CMO, you’re the one in the driver’s seat.
**Digital Agility**

For the purposes of this study, we defined digital marketing as the use of digital technologies to enable or enhance the marketing process, typically falling into two areas:

- Digital marketing tools, such as customer relationship management, marketing resource management and marketing operations management, that improve marketing efficiency.
- Digital marketing techniques, such as search engine marketing, social media marketing and mobile marketing that can be combined with traditional marketing approaches to improve marketing effectiveness.

It's difficult to come up with quantifiable characteristics that define a digitally-agile enterprise. After all, agility involves a range of attributes that encompass areas such as collaborative planning, excellence in implementation and continual measurement and refinement. But, for the purposes of this study, we started by looking at two areas:

- **Maturity** (how long an organization has been embracing digital marketing initiatives).
- **Flexibility** (how adaptive an organization is to emerging digital tools and techniques).

Our rationale was that marketing organizations don't achieve digital excellence overnight. The more they engage in digital marketing programs (maturity), and continually embrace new tools, techniques and technologies (flexibility), the more proficient (and agile) they become.

Using these areas, we found that survey respondents fell into four broad quadrants:

Since study respondents were primarily from larger, more established enterprises, the distribution was as expected. The vast majority of participants fell into the two middle categories with an overall general skew towards higher agility.

It was similarly unsurprising that further analysis of the data found that respondents from B2C enterprises generally scored higher than B2B. This was particularly pronounced in terms of flexibility, where almost a third of B2C enterprises considered themselves “proactively seeking” new digital marketing approaches, compared to a little over 10% in B2B enterprises.
To add an additional layer of granularity, in addition to maturity and flexibility, a third attribute was considered – digital marketing skills. Although skills can be borrowed (from consultants and contractors) or bought (from agencies and outsourced service providers), it’s important that they are also built – with digitally competent internal staff.

The rapid growth of digital skills has been a feature of marketing in the last few years, and this was reflected in the study results. While there is still room for growth, the digital marketing skills gap is closing, with close to three-quarters of respondents saying that their teams have at least “basic proficiency” and around a fifth stating that their teams are “fully fluent”.

Digital Marketing Drivers

Of course, this doesn't mean that anybody can relax, since skills are perishable and must be maintained. The marketing discipline is continually evolving with new tools, technologies and techniques appearing every day.

Drivers and Inhibitors

So what is driving the relentless march towards greater digital agility? A commonly-held belief is that enterprises primarily use digital marketing as just another sales channel. Certainly, this was an early driver. However, the study showed that there are now several other important elements that organizations consider. In fact, sales is now the third most important driver, behind improved customer experience and enhanced competitive positioning.

The importance of improving the customer experience is particularly evident in B2B enterprises, where leveraging digital marketing to get closer to the customer was almost twice as important as using it to increase sales. One hypothesis for this is that one-to-one selling and individual relationships are a much bigger focus for B2B enterprises, where a single customer can have a significant impact on business performance.

An interesting finding was how the drivers seem to change dependent on how digitally agile an enterprise is. The least-digitally-agile organizations focus on using digital to reach customers – enhancing the customer experience and selling them more. More-agile organizations leverage digital to improve competitiveness and build better market positioning. The most-agile organizations use digital to better understand the markets they serve while reinforcing their position in those markets.
The concept of using digital to enhance market knowledge is particularly interesting and indicates that digital marketing is truly evolving from being a sales channel to being an important input to an organization’s go-to-market strategy.

To counteract the drivers, there are a variety of challenges that must be overcome in the journey towards digital agility. The study found that the biggest is having the right infrastructure in place. This is unsurprising since digital marketing is highly dependent on a robust, flexible and (easily) scalable technology infrastructure. What was surprising was that, even in today's highly digitally-oriented business environment, the #2 barrier is organizational support. It seems incredible that organizations still encounter internal resistance to new digital initiatives, but almost a quarter of respondents identified this as a key barrier.

### Barriers to Digital Marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>World Class</th>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Strivers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Support</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Support</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, there seems to be a correlation with how digitally agile an organization is. Less-agile enterprises struggle with expertise and resources while more-agile organizations struggle with infrastructure and support.

It’s worth noting that time is not generally viewed as a significant problem … except for world-class digital enterprises where it rises to third place. This is likely a function of two features:

1. World-class digital marketing organizations do not have significant challenges around funding, expertise and resources (that less digitally savvy organizations do).
2. Because of their willingness to embrace digital, world-class organizations want to engage in more activities than they have the bandwidth to support.

### Digital Alignment

An attribute of digital excellence that emerged in the study was the ability to align digital strategies – within marketing and across all business functions.

Although all respondents indicated that traditional and digital marketing strategies are at least “somewhat aligned”, only 12% claimed “complete alignment”.

### Traditional/Digital Marketing Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alignment Level</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Aligned</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well Aligned</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely Aligned</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But, in world-class performers, the level of alignment was found to be much higher. All world-class respondents felt that digital and traditional marketing
was “well aligned” and close to two-thirds claimed that it was “completely aligned”.

This distribution is similar for broader organizational alignment of digital marketing with digital activities in other functions. Looking at the overall numbers, the vast majority of respondents claimed that the digital marketing organization is “well aligned” with other functions but only 9% claimed that it was “completely aligned”.

Once again, in world-class organizations, three-quarters of respondents claimed that digital activities between functions were at least “well aligned” and a staggering 42% claimed they were “completely aligned”.

This is staggering because achieving this level of alignment, even in the most digitally-agile organizations, is no simple task. It requires people to proactively talk to each other and move along a continuum from simply cooperating (which in itself is quite an achievement) to openly coordinating. Getting people from entirely different backgrounds and disciplines – marketing, HR, finance, legal, IT etc. – to all collaborate effectively is a major triumph.

One of the ways to create a culture of collaboration is to drive it as deep as possible within the organization. While more research could be done in this area, the study showed that this is an effective technique. Forcing digital alignment is difficult and sub-optimal. Instead, digitally-agile organizations create strategic alignment through a more fluid approach.

In world-class organizations, this is taken one step further, with strategic collaboration pushed down the organization to functional owners.
This is especially apparent when looking at who ‘owns’ digital strategy for the organization as a whole. At a high-level, the CMO is the most likely owner followed by the Chief Digital Officer. However, third-place is held by functional leaders.

When the study data is examined in more detail it emerges that, in world-class organizations, functional leaders aren’t just collaborating around digital initiatives, they are also taking responsibility for overall ownership of digital strategy. In fact, they are more likely to have full responsibility than either the CDO or the CMO.

The IT/Marketing Relationship

One area of the study results that was initially surprising was how seldom CIOs and CTOs were identified as responsible for overall digital strategy. Perhaps the CIO/CTO is viewed more pragmatically – as a digital ‘builder’ rather than a digital strategist?

This pragmatic view of the IT function is reinforced when looking at how digital marketing initiatives are introduced. Typically, marketing defines the need and identifies a potential solution before connecting with the IT function to implement the solution.

Overall, the IT function is perceived as an “approver” or “advisor” when it comes to digital strategy, with only a small proportion of respondents indicating that it was a full participant.

And this perception doesn't appear to change for organizations with different levels of digital agility. The only notable difference is that the IT function tends to be viewed more strongly as advisors in less-agile organizations, where presumably technical digital marketing skills are less evident.
The picture becomes a little clearer when looking at the financial thresholds around IT involvement. The IT function tends to get involved when digital projects reach the $10k-$99k level, but not as a full collaborator until projects are >$100k. With many digital marketing initiatives capable of being defined, sourced and implemented for < $100k, this could be why the IT function typically operates in a more supportive rather than collaborative role. IT ensures that digital marketing initiatives fit with the overall technology strategy and infrastructure of the enterprise, but don’t work hand-in-glove on smaller projects.

**View of the Customer**

One area of marketing where digital initiatives have had a significant impact in recent years is the view of the customer. With analytics playing an ever-increasing role in marketing it was expected that the vast majority of respondents would see digital as providing them with at least a “somewhat enhanced” view of the customer. However, the results showed that this area has progressed further than expected and almost half of respondents felt that digital marketing has provided a “much enhanced” view of the customer.

Despite the progress, there are clearly some issues to be resolved. Capturing, integrating and analyzing data emerged as big challenges to gaining a good view of the customer, with integrating perceived as slightly more of a problem. This is perhaps due to the massive growth in the volume of data that has been building in recent years.

**Challenges to View of the Customer**

- **Integrating Data**: 32%
- **Analyzing Data**: 23%
- **Capturing Traditional Data**: 23%
- **Capturing Digital Data**: 23%
Most organizations are finding themselves swimming in data. The depth of their ‘data lakes’ is increasing on a daily basis and they are struggling to get their arms around the technology infrastructure (and have people with appropriate skills) to plumb those depths. Data is building but insight from the data is not necessarily growing at the same rate.

As with other areas in the study, there is variation in customer data considerations between enterprises with different levels of digital agility. Less-digitally-agile enterprises are finding that they have collected vast quantities of data but lack the expertise to extract knowledge from it. More-agile enterprises are building analytical teams, and the challenge is shifting to capturing and integrating data from different sources. The most-agile enterprises have analytical teams in place, and tools and processes for capturing and integrating data from digital sources.
FEATURED CMOS IN THE STUDY

Charlie Breit (US)
Vice President, Marketing
SurePayroll
Online payroll services for small businesses

Corey Maynard (US)
Vice President Marketing
YETI Coolers
Coolers, drinkware and gear for hunting and fishing enthusiasts

Ségolène Finet (FR)
Chief Marketing Officer
TalentSoft
Human Resource Software solutions for talent management

Mirjana Prokic (UK)
International Market Development Director
Farecla Products
Global manufacturer and supplier of surface finishing solutions

Evan Greene (US)
Chief Marketing Officer
The Recording Academy (The GRAMMYS)
Honors achievements in the recording arts and supports the music community

Dominique Vergnolle (FR)
Customer Experience Director
SoLocal Group, includes PagesJaunes (Yellow Pages)
Europe's largest communication provider

Carol Kruse (US)
Chief Marketing Officer
Cambia Health Solutions
Provider of health care insurance plans and services

Anthony Wong (UK)
Chief Marketing Officer
Quint Finance Group
Fintech group operating in the consumer finance market
QUALITATIVE SURVEY FINDINGS

As part of this study, Accelent Consulting conducted eight one-on-one conversations with CMOs from the US, UK and France. They represented organizations that included those just starting the journey towards digital agility, others that have migrated from more traditional marketing and service delivery, and younger companies that were ‘born digital’ and are now at the vanguard of digital marketing.

No matter what the level of experience and expertise, there was a broad consensus that digital marketing is no longer a competitive differentiator – it is a minimum entry requirement and an essential aspect of all marketing activities and forms of customer engagement.

Digital Marketing is Driven and Inhibited by a Variety of Factors

The conversations largely validated the quantitative findings of the survey, with CMOs highlighting many of the same drivers, the same challenges and the same core benefits. Although there was a range of different approaches, the fundamental vision for digital marketing across all of the organizations was consistent:

- Better understand the customer journey and deliver the best experience possible.
- Recognize that digital strategy starts with the CEO, and the CMO must integrate digital marketing across all programs
- Accept that digital marketing is a technology-driven evolving discipline that requires increased support from IT

As expected, all CMOs are very focused on driving sales revenue with digital marketing seen as a powerful demand generation tool. But, several CMOs acknowledged another driver – building closer customer relationships. Digital technologies are seen as a key asset in learning about and enhancing those relationships.

Two key inhibitors emerged. First, there was collective agreement that IT infrastructures are a challenge, often perceived as rigid and difficult to shape to the needs of the marketing function, particularly when it comes to getting at critical data. Second, was organizational alignment and ‘buy-in’. Most CMOs confirmed that cultural, organizational and leadership support continue to be barriers to digital strategy generally.

Digital Marketing Enables Deep Customer Insight but Doesn’t Replace Good Marketing Fundamentals

With technology becoming increasingly pervasive in the customer journey, digital technologies are providing never-before-seen customer insights.

“We are diving deeper into our customer behavior and psychology then tailoring our digital activities accordingly.”

Mirjana Prokic, Farecla

One of the most advanced companies in the study was in the healthcare industry, which is being driven by a need for patients and hospitals to share information quickly and easily across multiple platforms and devices. The CMO focuses heavily on primary research to better define what kinds of tools and information services the company can provide to help people.

“As a provider of healthcare services, information and cost transparency is driving our product and CRM strategies, especially the mobile/digital channels”

Carol Kruse, Cambia Health Solutions
While the potential rewards are huge, the massive explosion of data creates problems. To derive value it must be effectively captured, managed and analyzed.

“Our biggest challenge is identifying our audience in a market that is always shifting. We need to serve relevant content and continuously monitor our digital effectiveness”.

Evan Greene, The Recording Academy (The GRAMMYS)

This is a significant challenge and requires both specialized tools and skilled analysts. Many of the CMOs interviewed are already benefiting from deeper customer understanding and it was clear that there is a keen appetite for more. However, improving access to customer and product data from IT systems in a quick and useful fashion is an essential step in the journey towards digital agility.

“We need the right tools of course, but if we don’t fundamentally understand our audience none of that matters, the technology won’t pay off.”

Charlie Breit, SurePayroll

Although digital marketing is widely perceived as an exciting element of the marketing discipline – and critical to success - many CMOs were keen to point out that it is not a panacea. The basics of marketing haven’t changed. Good story telling matters, compelling offerings matter, and building meaningful relationships with partners, influencers, advisors, investors and (most of all) customers is the core foundation of marketing excellence.

Digital is driving an entirely new culture where the art and science of marketing are more interconnected than at any time in the past. To be agile, any marketing function must be able to quickly embrace new technologies, assess their value and integrate them within the marketing mix.

This requires a mindset of marketing experimentation where new approaches are tried and tested on a continual basis. Some approaches are proven to be successful and embraced, while others that have a lesser impact and are quickly discarded.

“I have a very young team and organization so I did not have to re-tool them. If anyone was retooled, it was I.”

Ségolène Finet, Talentsoft

Hire Experienced Leaders but Empower a Team With Digital Skills and Fresh Thinking

There’s no doubt that the profile of the marketing professional has changed – and continues to change – but experienced leadership was also mentioned as a requirement. It was recommended that the senior teams need to have a sense of what works and what doesn't, how to prioritize digital behavior and understand the end-to-end consumer experience. It was suggested that hiring from companies outside of your industry is a way to bring in fresh thinking and best practices.

Technical and analytical skills are now key attributes with much discussion of ‘T-shaped’, and even ‘pi-shaped’, marketers. Many (perhaps most) organizations have specialized digital marketing teams, but the lines are becoming blurred and all marketing professionals are now expected to have appropriate digital expertise or learn a new role on the job.

“It used to be, ‘let’s come up with a campaign and figure out what the digital extension is’. Now, everything we do starts with digital.”

Evan Greene, The Recording Academy (The GRAMMYS)
CMOs in the early phases of digital adoption agreed that they can leverage digital tools to implement new initiatives but their teams have to be trained on the tools and how to work with the third party vendors. It requires a fundamental shift in the way they work in order to adopt new digital strategies and attitudes.

“We are growing so fast. I am having to split the marketing team’s time between doing things that are very new to them and the traditional work they are required to do.”

Anthony Wong, Quint

Obviously, the more digitally proficient the team is, and the more advanced the tools (and understanding of how to use the tools), the more effective it can be. And the more the team feels empowered to be creative and drive programs and campaigns, the more successful it will be.

The Growing Promise of Agile Processes and Organizational Alignment

All of the CMOs interviewed for this study acknowledged that creating the right environment for digital excellence is a critical success factor. It isn’t enough to establish policies and procedures. Building the right team with the right blend of skills is critical. And collaboration across the entire enterprise must be cultivated.

“The teams are set up intentionally to require collaboration across all functions, and digital is an essential element of any marketing piece we put out.”

Corey Maynard, Yeti Coolers

The most basic approach is to force alignment. This is common when getting the marketing and sales teams to work together. Key individuals and teams are assembled, usually with shared KPIs, and required to work together. It is the least sophisticated model but does kickstart the cultural change required to move from communicating to cooperating.

More advanced organizations encourage and facilitate alignment through a more collaborative approach. In this model, the focus extends beyond shared goals to include mutual benefit, with individuals sharing in the rewards of more successful alignment. This is the model when marketing tools (such as CRM and MRM) begin to move into the mainstream and cooperating moves to coordinating.

“We are collaborating with sales to re-segment the pipeline based on customer adoption stages, not product or budget.”

Dominique Vergnolle, SoLocal Group, includes PagesJaunes (Yellow Pages)

One of the CMOs interviewed gave an example of how marketing has been working to change the cultural mindset of the sales team. Both organizations are aligning around tracking and measuring the customer journey and not the budget or product. Marketing has been working to help sales implement some new segmentation based on the customer engagement stages to better track the pipeline. Everyone is now speaking the same language. This is the goal they are working towards and although not a seamless transition, they are beginning to show positive returns.

“We are collaborating with any sales team is a challenge; they like to do their own thing. The relationship needs a lot more communication and understanding.”

Anthony Wong, Quint

The most digitally-agile organizations nurture alignment. In this approach the responsibility for alignment is pushed down the organization and individuals have both the skills and the tools to move from coordinating to actively collaborating.

“We are collaborating with sales to re-segment the pipeline based on customer adoption stages, not product or budget.”

Dominique Vergnolle, SoLocal Group, includes PagesJaunes (Yellow Pages)

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Marketing And IT Are Friends …
But Not Yet In a ‘Committed Relationship’

There was widespread agreement that the support of the IT function is essential to digital marketing. The IT department has the knowledge and expertise to ensure that appropriate quality standards are achieved, security requirements are met, and relevant interfaces are established between systems.

However, IT infrastructures (and processes) can be a challenge and are occasionally cited as rigid and difficult to shape to the needs of a more agile marketing function. This could explain the proliferation of cloud-based marketing technology, which is largely infrastructure independent.

“We try to make solutions as simply as possible and minimize dependence on IT to get agility. When we need to involve IT, it is much more difficult because marketing projects are then arbitrated along with other IT strategic projects.”

Dominique Vergnolle, SoLocal Group, includes PagesJaunes (Yellow Pages)

Interestingly, there isn’t an obvious ‘best-in-class’ model with different organizations taking different approaches depending on their circumstances. In some organizations, the IT function is ‘embedded’ with marketing and collaborates daily. In others, the IT function is more of a technical artisan, crafting solutions based on the requirements defined by marketing.

“One of the more-agile companies in the study found a way to get IT involved early on in the process as they mapped the customer journey. The IT team could better understand the need to move fast and quickly identify what data flows and systems access marketing would require. Agility was especially important to quickly add new product or service functionality in addition to the benefits of more-agile access to data.”

Corey Maynard, Yeti Coolers

Other CMOs mentioned the emergence of an entirely new role – the marketing technologist. This is driven by the convergence of the huge growth of technology in marketing and the inability of IT generalists to keep abreast of continual changes. As marketing continues the move towards greater technical complexity, marketing technologists are likely to become increasingly common.

“If you’re not engaging with IT, the customer experience of your product or company will be disjointed.”

Charlie Breit, SurePayroll

“Several IT staff now have desks in both the marketing and IT areas, and go back and forth between the two.”

Corey Maynard, Yeti Coolers

One of the most digitally advanced companies interviewed indicated very strong alignment, stating the two teams were “hand in glove” when working on digital initiatives and was one of the few companies to mention they were working on their long-term digital vision and infrastructure platforms.

“The consumer-facing Data & Technology Solutions team and Digital Solutions team have a shared budget and build the digital roadmap together”.

Carol Kruse, Cambia Health Solutions

“In the surface refinish industry, which is very traditional, we are looking at how to more effectively leverage new technologies to better engage with our customers and blow away the competition.”

Mirjana Prokic, Farecla

This early alignment with IT and having a living digital roadmap is seen as essential to ensuring optimal...
customer interaction with a company or brand. Both IT product development and infrastructure systems support will play an increasingly more valuable role in the immediate future.

“As we grow we need a stronger infrastructure with interfaces and more of a more global view of how everything works together so I see that role increasing.”
Ségoîène Finet, Talentsoft

What Is The One Learning or Piece of Advice You Would Offer Other CMOs?

Dominique Vergnolle
“Building a digital marketing strategy is not only the responsibility for the CMO but must be a company strategy. All of the parts of the company are involved and of course it needs to be sponsored by the CEO.”

Ségoîène Finet
“The key thing is to be able to move fast. You have to adapt to customer needs, new announcements, and changes to roadmap, etc. to stay ahead of the game.”

Anthony Wong
“Keep pace with change and talk to your peers to learn as much as you can from each other. It is all about failing fast, learning quickly and finding new ways to innovate.”

Evan Greene
“It is really important to stay nimble, to recognize what the data is telling you, and to be agile enough to make shifts in real time.”

Carol Kruse
“Meaningful digital experience counts, so make sure you have the right people on your team. And if you don’t have a digital roadmap you probably don’t have the right people.”

Corey Maynard
“Marketing’s focus needs to remain on consumer experience and how they interact with the brand. It is very easy to fall in love with technology but it all has to add up to a great story and experience.”

Mirjana Prokic
“Be selective with your investments in technology and resources. Focus on understanding customer behavior and make sure you are implementing programs that will actually make a difference.”

Charlie Breit
“In the grand scheme of things in a rapidly changing landscape, the solution isn’t technology, it’s people. Focus on your customers and building teams that are excited about the work.”
Characteristics of ‘World-Class’ Digital Agility

This study has shown that ‘world-class’ digitally-agile enterprises are those with core digital skills, advanced maturity and a desire to proactively seek new digital approaches. The core characteristics of these enterprises are:

- A highly collaborative approach to digital strategy across the entire enterprise, with responsibility increasingly pushed down the organization.
- A clear view of the customer, enhanced by data from both traditional and digital channels (with an emphasis on capturing and integrating data from traditional and digital channels).
- A focus on combining digital and traditional elements into cohesive marketing programs.
- A drive to leverage digital technology to better understand the market and use this knowledge for competitive advantage.
- An evolving relationship with the IT function, where marketing typically defines the need and sources potential solutions before turning to IT for support and implementation.

Study Participant Profiles

Since the (82) online respondents to this study were members of the CMO Club, it was expected that they would be senior people from large (global) organizations with significant marketing budgets. This proved to be true, but it was gratifying to see a good representation of ‘mid-sized’ enterprises in the responses too. With a roughly equal split of B2B- and B2C-focused enterprises, the results can be reasonably positioned as broadly representative of the market.
Authors
Study design, core analysis and report development by Barbara Angius Saxby (Founder and Managing Director, Accelent) and Roger Alderson (Partner EMEA, Accelent).

About The CMO Club
The CMO Club is the world’s most engaged and inspired community of senior marketing executives, who help each other solve their biggest challenges within a candid, trusted, and sharing environment. Collaboration fueled by inspiring events and within the members-only Digital Solutions Clubhouse raises the standard for what is required to be a Chief Marketing Officer.

http://www.thecmoclub.com

About Accelent Consulting
Founded in 2001 by Barbara Angius Saxby, Accelent Consulting helps companies improve business performance by optimizing marketing & sales strategies, processes, programs and systems and driving digital transformation. We impact results through strategic leadership and execution knowhow.

As an extension to our consulting work in marketing strategy, campaign strategy, marketing automation, CRM and process alignment, our digital transformation practice is focused on helping companies become more flexible and efficient in applying digital strategies and technologies through:

- Digital agility assessments
- Strategic roadmapping sessions
- Digital marketing advisory services

http://www.accelentconsulting.com

About Oracle Marketing Cloud
Modern Marketers choose Oracle Marketing Cloud’s data-driven solutions to create engagement, orchestrate experiences, connect data, and optimize online interactions that attract and retain ideal customers. These Modern Marketing solutions connect cross-channel, content, and social marketing with data management and activation along with hundreds of pre-integrated app and data partners. Leading brands use our award-winning expertise and technology to deliver personal experiences on a system that marketers love and IT trusts. They transform marketing by eliminating data silos, simplifying digital marketing, and spending more time innovating and less time integrating.

oracle.com/marketingcloud.

Disclaimer: Although Oracle Marketing Cloud partnered in this report, those interviewed used a variety of systems, tools and technologies.