

Committing to customer-centricity: 7 key takeaways for CMOs from Adobe Summit 2019

by Janet Balis, EY Global Advisory Leader for Media & Entertainment and EY Americas Marketing Practice Leader

In March at Adobe Summit, I was privileged to lead a conversation with two executives steeped in the future of marketing and customer experience: Gail Horwood, Chief Marketing Officer of The Kellogg Company North America, and Lilian Tomovich, Chief Experience and Marketing Officer of MGM Resorts. Remarkably, across both of these very different businesses, the insights were highly consistent and relevant.

Here are 7 of the most meaningful takeaways from the conversation:



Marketing and CX intertwined: While marketing and customer experience often exist in parallel, there is no question that CMOs are increasingly playing a role that spans the full customer journey. The brand is expressed and realized in a host of functions, some that report to the CMO and some that do not. CMOs are increasingly charged with “connecting the dots” and driving a new operating model that enables companies to objectively see the customer journey end-to-end.



Vision for the “from-to” journey: As the marketing function undergoes transformation, it is critical to be able to communicate the vision of the goal line. Even with agile, dynamic approaches, organizations need to know what they are moving from and what they are moving to. A disciplined approach to communication, collaboration and accountability for change is critical, and transparency breeds trust.



Moving beyond silos: One key to success is getting to a single cross-functional view of performance and metrics. While the KPIs may never be perfect and motivate everyone the same way, leaders across divisions, geographies and functions need to communally view the marketing and experience data to consolidate their nested purpose around driving connected customer impact. The right scorecard must be designed, but more importantly, redesigned and shared frequently.



Outcomes vs. top of funnel: While digital marketing is habituating the industry to expect clearer measurement, brands need to be careful not to skew their thinking purely toward performance marketing. Top-off-funnel marketing still matters, and in fact, CMOs are typically finding there is a flywheel effect around the lift that brand marketing and performance marketing can offer each other. Finding the right balance across the funnel is key here.



Balancing short-term and long-term: The investments that can be made in marketing and experience increasingly involve data and technology, and the returns are not always immediate. Making the right investments in data-driven strategies, regardless of regulatory changes, will likely be fundamental in connecting all the elements of the customer journey. The key is to balance quick wins and ROI with longer-term strategic views that are perhaps less accountable but no less important.



Knowing the use cases: So often the technology stack is built to a standard influenced by innovation in the landscape and perceived benchmarks, but the key is to drive development around use cases. If requirements are defined by use cases, it helps to ensure that investments are not being made before they can generate benefits.



New friends: CMOs are often the “Chief Dot Connectors” across the full C-suite, but they must become fast friends with the CIO and CTO, given that so much of the future of marketing is enabled by data and technology. And there is no question that aligning quickly with the CFO will be critical in making the right business case to drive marketing investment for the short and long term. Finally, sales and marketing are intertwined, so a close relationship between the CMO and the commercial leader is key.

Whether B2B or B2C is the focus of a company, there is no question that marketing transformation is well underway, and the pace of change will not slow any time soon. To move from talking about customer-centricity to truly enabling it requires commitment, agility and focused communication.