

***Editorial: Marketing accountability, critical dimensions of the new marketing organization, quality higher education and understanding the communication of new knowledge***

In 2008, writing about „*Focusing on what is important to customers*” and „*The future marketing department: more customer insight*”, I have underlined the concern that in order to understand what customers expect marketers must be value driven, implementing the knowledge obtained, overcoming the barriers to communications, translating each value proposition into the customer’s language, thinking of expertise as an abundant resource and time to respond as a scarce one, working in a way that enables the relationship marketing process to deliver on keystoneholder expectation, considering that the “machinery” made up of the employees’ engagement and the clients’ engagement can significantly influence the company’s performance. And quoting the well known Don E. Schultz – “Marketing is what the organization does” – I have referred to Schultz’s company proposal concerning a “media consumption model”, and to marketers’ need, within the “next-generation marketing” in which the customer experience is going behind the lines, to start thinking about customers as income flows, then think about all of the ways customers touch the company or the company touches them.

In 2009, in a White Paper entitled „*The Future of Marketing*”, published by the Chartered Institute of Marketing (Evmorfia Argyriou, Peter Leeftang, John Saunders, Peter Verhoeff), it was argued that marketers have a key role to play in better business performance, but marketing can be hampered by short-term thinking by the business and a lack of accountability, creativity and courage on the part of marketers themselves... By having respect for the marketing department activities, recognizing the strategic importance for marketing (there is a well known agreement on marketing’s important contribution to strategy, the exceptional importance of branding, and the need for businesses to be customer centered), *top management can win by backing marketing* (in both B2B and B2C markets, marketing being more developed in its B2C birthplace) *which has the unique ability to add value in the market place and constitutes the facilitator helping the whole organization to survive and thrive by serving customers* (customer proximity being a marketing strength), conveying customer needs across the company and converting best marketers knowledge into product ideas, considering the ingredients of high corporate returns: product quality, innovation and strong brands. As *marketing accountability* is considered being tough intellectually and spiritually, this involves, in the opinion of the mentioned authors, the followings:

- a) projecting and living with financial outcomes of plans and strategies;
- b) developing several skills (forecasting outcomes; dynamic forecasting showing the impact of marketing activities on sales: profits and return on investment);
- c) having courage (this being bundled with analytical skills that are central to market accountability), the courage being considered the greatest of the highlighted trifecta (accountability, creativity and courage);
- c) being creative (engaging not only the left hemisphere of the brain for the sequential and analytical processes necessary for accountability, but also engaging the holistic and intuitive strengths of the right hemisphere that help creative marketing).

In the prestigious McKinsey Quarterly (Marketing & Sales Practice), July 2011, Tom French, Laura LaBerge, and Paul Magill emphasized that „*We’re all marketers now*”, challenged to redefine the traditional marketing organization, while intensively collaborating to adapt the organizations to the way customers now behave, marketing being the company (and the company

being the marketing vehicle) in the era of engagement, but not any kind of marketing, but an accountable one.

In other words, well understanding the difference between being responsible (in a general sense; you can delegate it) for something and being held *accountable* (more measurable; you can't delegate it to anyone) if it goes wrong, McKinsey representatives are pledging for *the need for the marketing organization to become the customer-engagement engine* (a customer engagement going beyond pure communication to include the product or service experience itself), *while considering all related interactions with customers that make up the customer experience* (challenged in turn by the multiplication of the customers renewed touch points used to to interact with companies) within the reality that the buying process has become collaborative, and must ensure critical touch points that drive engagement.

According to Tom French, Laura LaBerge, and Paul Magill, *a new kind of marketing organization must evolve along four critical dimensions*: distribute more activities; more councils and partnerships; elevate the role of customer insights; more data rich and analytically intense. There is a real pressure of quickly responding to the signs of customers' changing needs, focusing on problem-solving and strategic-marketing skills, stimulating cross-functional collaboration and a clear delineation of roles, entering into creative arrangements with outside parties, and raising the organizational barrier to engagement and avoiding the risk of being overtaken by competitors.

Coming back to the beginning of this Editorial and to the opinions expressed in 2008, it is worth to remember another underlined idea on that occasion, namely that *without knowledge through education, innovation suffers in the context of stiff competition, education being the most important instrument of the company for adaptation to economic change as an opportunity*. And there is a very interesting connection with some ideas expressed in another recent Editorial, in the „Romanian Distribution Committee Magazine”, Volume, 6, Issue 6, following the „SANABUNA International 2011”: „**Quality higher education is a powerful growth engine...** Competitive high quality universities systems are indispensable to pursue long-term robust results... Systemic becomes almost a way of being and not just a problem solving methodology... We reiterate the idea that *we cannot be consumers informed of knowledge without reflecting upon this knowledge* (explicit or tacit), developing critical thinking (reasoning used in developing arguments, productive practices, appreciation and understanding of the impact on current life etc.), *understanding the communication of new knowledge which makes the world permanently transforming*”.

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