

Aligning Marketing and Sales within the Evolving CMO Responsibilities: Ensuring Greater CX, Customer Success, and Value

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Abstract

We are witnessing significant CMO predictions, while approaching new marketing and sales strategies, AI and analytics, event marketing and so on. Marketers are under a true pressure of optimizing sales approach, taking initiative, and delivering products and experiences which are the most relevant to a consumer first, blending the physical and digital worlds. There is a real challenge of updating CMO's responsibilities, while looking at customer success as key differentiator for a brand focused on continuously improved CX, holistically thinking about the customer journey, while considering perceptions, recession, ecosystems, digital platforms, revenue marketing engine, and customer-centered action.

Keywords: Marketing and Sales; CMO Responsibilities; Greater CX; Customer Success; Value

JEL Classification: L86; M31; M37; M38; O33

CMO predictions, new marketing and sales strategies, AI and analytics, event marketing

The emergence and evolution of mobile technology, and the “big data” launch into the mainstream were emblematic for this decade close to the end, significantly contributing to a more holistic customers' view, customers already waiting new ways for their support teams to communicate with and learn more about them (searchable text with minimal effort; streamlined chat and text experiences on mobile devices; personal assistant technology interacting with automated support; seeing on-demand content; the best day and time to receive a message, from who, what terminology to be used etc.). (Customer Experience Update, 2019) After traditionally compiling insights and input on CMO predictions from marketing influencers, the integrated marketing and PR firm for B2B technology and healthcare brands PAN Communications revealed significant research findings for 2020 such as: content and information overload and the need to cut through the noise is ranked as no. 1 challenge; data (or analytics) will also play a key role in evaluating CX, assessing strategies, and improving upon the 2019; budget focus (considering its scattering across a variety of areas within the marketing department) should be resultant from each brand's mission, values and business objectives. (Habeshian, 2019) It is no wonder within this framework that the reputed American Marketing Association (AMA) launched an invitation for significant AMA Training Series events: “SEO for Marketers: Strategies, Tactics and Trends” (Tampa, FL, January 30-3, 2020; in order to learn the skills to lead change, influence others and navigate stressful conversations), and “People Skills in the Workplace” (Chicago, IL, February 26-27, 2020; taking into account that in the eyes of their clients and employers a marketer's leadership and interpersonal skills can truly make the necessary difference). (AMA Training, 2019)

Indeed, to survive and thrive in today's economy businesses are beginning to realize the importance of having a data driven approach, many professionals showing eagerness to examine their data and uncover new ways of connecting with customers in innovative and hyper-personalized ways, in this respect already discussing in an enthusiastic manner the promises of artificial intelligence (AI) for delivering better CX while simultaneously reducing the cost to serve. (CX Network, 2019) According to recent research from Sagefrog (based on data from a survey of 100 marketers who work for firms in a wide range of different B2B verticals), the new marketing and sales strategies for 2020 include personalization (47% of respondents) and AI and automation (36%), together with Account Based Marketing (42%), video marketing (41%), inbound marketing (39%), conversational marketing (Chat Bots, 33%), influencer marketing (27%), podcast and livestreaming (22%), programmatic advertising (19%), mobile-first strategy (17%) etc. And this within the context in which the top objectives of B2B marketers in 2020 are to convert more leads into customers, to increase their number of sales leads and brand awareness, to produce thought leadership, and to increase website traffic. (Nanji, 2019)

AI and analytics are important tools used by the sales force (a driving force behind sales performance) in addressing most pressing needs within the context of changing buyer behaviors and of ever-shifting selling environment, as shown by the "2nd Annual CSO Insights Sales Operations & Technology Study", 2019 (CSO Insights being the independent research arm within Miller Heiman Group, dedicated to improving the performance and productivity of complex B2B sales), which included as respondents 807 sales operations leaders, sales executives, sales managers and sales enablement leaders. (Miller Heiman Group, 2019) While struggling to make better decisions, an impediment to AI usage is a lack of data (presupposing that the organization has already a data strategy and implemented a sales tech stack, being equipped to act on the insights AI brings, and also having an adequate forecasting process – for which CRM is a backbone – well aligned to its overall sales process). Sales operations are assisting marketing particularly with lead qualification, data management of marketing data, marketing campaign management, metrics and analysis, and marketing automation management. With regard to the most common use cases for AI, there is clear evidence about lead generation/prospecting (account intelligence, lead scoring, etc.), performance and planning (forecasting, compensation planning, etc.), sales enablement (content management, training, etc.), and sales cycle management (opportunity and account planning). When developing an AI roadmap it is necessary to consider data sources across the organization, options for automating data entry, and methods for cleansing and augmenting data, as argued by CSO Insights.

And speaking about data it is important not to forget that a data-driven strategy to ensure return on investment is event marketing, events being recognized, for example, as an effective marketing channel for reaching their target audience by 83% of US marketers, according to September 2019 research from Demand Metric and PFL. Event organizers need to integrate event data with their sales and marketing systems, so as to ensure the delivery of leads to sales and pushing them rapidly and effectively through the sales pipeline after that event. (eMarketer, 2019) Among the marketing tactics most used by US B2B marketing professionals, according to

an October 2019 report from Sagefrog Marketing Group, 50% of them (% of respondents, Sep 2019) identified trade shows and events as part of their marketing mix, other most used tactics being as follows: email marketing, 84%; social media & social media advertising, 73%; blogging & content marketing, 63%; SEO, 61%; online display & PPC, 48%; PR & editorial pitching 39%; video marketing, 33%; seminars & webinars, 31%; telemarketing, 20%; print ads, 19%; other, 8%.

Optimizing sales approach, taking initiative, and delivering products and experiences which are the most relevant to a consumer first, blending the physical and digital worlds

At the end of the first decade of December this year we remarked an article written by Dave Brock from Partners In EXCELLENCE (Brock have worked in sales, marketing, and executive management capacities with IBM, Tektronix and Keithley Instruments) and entitled “False Choices: Transactional Versus Solution Selling Approaches”. (Brock, 2019) Brock pledges for choosing how the organization effectively and efficiently responds to the way its customers buy, aligning the sales process to how they buy and engage them in ways that create value to that process, by defining its target markets and its ideal customer profiles (ICP), better understanding what problems it is capable of solving, identifying the characteristics of those customers who have those problems (defining this way the organization’s ICP). An optimized sales approach is always driven the target markets/customers, the sales approach being optimized around how these customers buy. The outside-in approach recommended by Brock is considering a most effective sales engagement model to support the customer’s buying process, the engagement model having to be optimized for each buying process (multiple ICPs, different buying processes), and also taking into account that customers’ buying process changes over time.

There is no doubt that sales executives may be facing a more uncertain selling environment, as Seleste Lunsford from CSO Insights underlined recently looking to 2020. And in this perspective, in her opinion it is recommendable for sales executives to take some initiatives with regard to: *pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses in their sales system* (diagnosing what is dampening performance and what can be done to improve efficiency and effectiveness); *rethinking what the organization means by “sales”* (aligning sales, marketing and customer service teams around the customer so as to fit into the larger customer picture); *fusing organization’s disparate sales tech stack* (integrating all of the often-disparate components highlighted by the above mentioned 2nd Annual CSO Insights Sales Operations & Technology Study); *scrutinizing sales talent while market conditions are right* (strategically investing to improve current capability and predict new-hire success); *aiming high when it comes to sales enablement* (on the basis of business plans with realistic and trackable metrics of leading indicators). (Lunsford, 2019) In the same time, it is important to know that commercial capabilities are closely correlated with solution-selling performance, according to a McKinsey’s

analysis which revealed that marketing-and-sales capabilities are strong drivers of B2B sales. McKinsey's representatives argued that there is a much wider gap between average and top performance among solutions providers than among product sellers, showing that sales leaders are typically doing three things in companies which excel at solutions selling (*getting much closer to the customer to innovate, maximizing sales time for salespeople, and quantifying each sale in terms of customer value and lifetime profitability*). (Driedonks et al., 2019)

On the other hand, also looking towards 2020, it is worth showing that eTail eCommerce Innovation Briefing offered us recently a new exclusive look at how major retailers (such as: Adidas, Chubbies, Nike, and Zappos) are preparing for 2020 and beyond, and we have chosen to underline some very interesting aspects from the ongoing digital transformation of Adidas (struggling to improve its digital capabilities along the entire value chain), one of the majors retailers of sporting goods (and also a fashion brand), which is leveraging the power of personalization just from the moment a customer arrives (engaging with it on computers and mobile devices) at its website (thanks to the Salesforce data management platform Adidas' personalized homepage is created by using information gathered and processed accordingly). (eTail West, 2019) Acting like an intelligent shop window Adidas' personalized landing page is identifying customers, ensuring imagery and product recommendations relevant to them.

Recently, the CMO of SAP Customer Experience, Jason Rose (who is responsible for all aspects of marketing strategy and execution), showed that while being on their digital transformation journeys businesses need to have the right mix of digital and physical touchpoints, on the basis of a cohesive strategy, thinking of the total experience, appealing to all of a customer's senses. (Rose, 2019) He recommended some tactics to help brands (B2C or B2B) stand out in a digital world: physical touchpoints keeping a brand at the forefront of a consumer's mind by activating customers' senses and ensuring stronger emotional connections; incentivize action through special offers or promotions (like event tickets within the received mailer, for instance); keep it interesting by finding new ways to engage with audiences or by introducing new inspiring shopping models (such as retailers' "immersive experiential centers" or a "brand store" inviting the consumer to come "inside" the brand).

Also recently, the head of evangelism at Bing/Microsoft, Christi Olson, argued that businesses will further transform (power) CX on the basis of the right strategy, data, and technology, spinning faster thanks to CX flywheels fueling momentum for marketers (rethinking the customer decision journey according to the new shopping ways, going beyond purchasing and retention, to expansion and advocacy) by removing friction and blending the physical and digital worlds, creating more customer engagement opportunities by better understanding the customer decision journey (CDJ, as shown in the figure below): (Olson, 2019)



Figure no. 1: Top benefits experienced from understanding customer decision journey

Source: Olson, C. (2019). *Goodbye Funnel, Hello Flywheel: How to Build the New Customer Experience (CX)*, MarketingProfs, December 4 (work cited)

And in order to build the CX flywheel Olson recommended: *starting with the Cloud* (collecting, managing, and unifying data in the Cloud); *creating meaningful touchpoints which drive insights* (these consumer “action points” working to collect high-quality first-party data and helping build out fuller customer profiles); *establishing trust* (consumers controlling their data). On the other hand, as shown also by Microsoft in October this year, AI (responsible for decision making, speech recognition, visual perception, and engaging customers through just-in-time messages and valuable touchpoints) and Machine Learning (ML being AI brain which makes predictions and determinations), when combined with a high-quality data strategy are helping high performers to deliver personal touchpoints which fuel the marketing flywheel (more customer touchpoints yielding more data, which yields greater personalization and revenue opportunities). (Microsoft Advertising, 2019)

Updating CMO’s responsibilities, while looking at customer success as key differentiator for a brand focused on continuously improved CX, holistically thinking about the customer journey

Over sixty CMOs were asked by eMarketer (for its last report on the “Future of the CMO”) about both the pathways which led them to their current position, and the most valuable experiences gained by them along their challenging way. Their answers comprised references to a natural blend of expertise, diversity of experience, a willingness to learn and keeping up on

new marketing technology (going direct to the consumer digitally, measuring, testing and learning in that environment, inserting into the brand discussion, being data driven and very analytical). (Droesch, 2019) Taking into account the evolution (which includes also complying with customer data regulation such as the GDPR, for instance, because protecting customer data was recognized as the top obstacle for working with data by the respondents in a September 2018 survey from Forbes Insights and The Trade Desk), the modern Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) is also seen as: owner of the customer experience (CX), serving as the voice of the customer internally, and being in tune with customer feedback and data from all relevant sources; enabler to shape enhanced experiences on the basis of intelligence derive from accessing data, delivering a seamless CX across channels being an important marketing capability making possible the future success; holistically thinker about the customer journey, creating engagement and nurturing touchpoints across the whole customer life cycle, with presales and post sales together, considering the blurred lines between prospect and customer. (eMarketer Editors, 2019)

Recently, the Managing Editor for RetailWire, Tom Ryan, submitted for discussion the question whether the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) role should be retired, reinvented or reemphasized, starting from the fact that Coca-Cola is bringing back the CMO only two years after eliminating this role in favor of a Chief Growth Officer (CGO). (Ryan, 2019) Ryann showed that: Coca-Cola made this new structural move trying to integrate more closely marketing within operations; some reputed firms (such as: Uber, Johnson & Johnson, Kellogg's, Walmart) performed similar restructuring, while in other cases the CMO was replaced by its first chief customer officer and chief digital officer (J. C. Penney's) or with an SVP of global marketing and an SVP of marketing technology, but left no C-level marketing position (McDonald's). Comments made within the framework of the lively online discussion forum known as "The RetailWire", brought significant opinions, such as (resuming): CMO is needed as responsible for the entirety of the brand experience (Dave Bruno, Director, Retail Market Insights); CMO must live long as marketing is managing the conversation between the brand and the consumer (Jeff Sward, Founding Partner, Merchandising Metrics); CMO role simply needs to evolve by looking at all of the new ways to market the brand to the target audience (Stephen Rector, Founder, President, Bakertown Consulting); CMO must reflect the ability to create awareness and generate demand (Ralph Jacobson, Global Retail & CPG Sales Strategist, IBM); CMO role is changing as marketing changes, and that's a good thing (Shep Hyken, Chief Amazement Officer, Shepard Presentations, LLC).

The buyer's journey becomes a key component of customer success (which is the North Star for CX leaders), and a key differentiator for a brand focused on CX, according to Christopher Ryan, CEO Fusion Marketing Partners, who highlighted – on the occasion of a recent CustomerThink Thought Leadership Webinar – four imperatives to align B2B marketing and sales: remove customer friction; congruent messaging; demonstrate greater value; utilize the right sales and marketing metrics. (Ryan, 2019)

Within the same context, Bill Price, President Driva Solutions (& Co Founder LimeBridge Global Alliance & Amazon's 1st WW VP of Customer Service) – who defines customer success as listening to and anticipating customer wants and needs as the only way to support customers, one at a time – argued that there are six 6 components of an “Energized Workforce” (seen as one of the four foundations – together with: customer oriented culture, streamlined processes, and integrated channels) which help ensure to achieve, sustain, and expand customer success: right hires; right role models; right rewards; right metrics; right paths; right empowerment. The hierarchy of customer needs plus the above mentioned four foundations can be seen in the figure below: (Price, 2019)

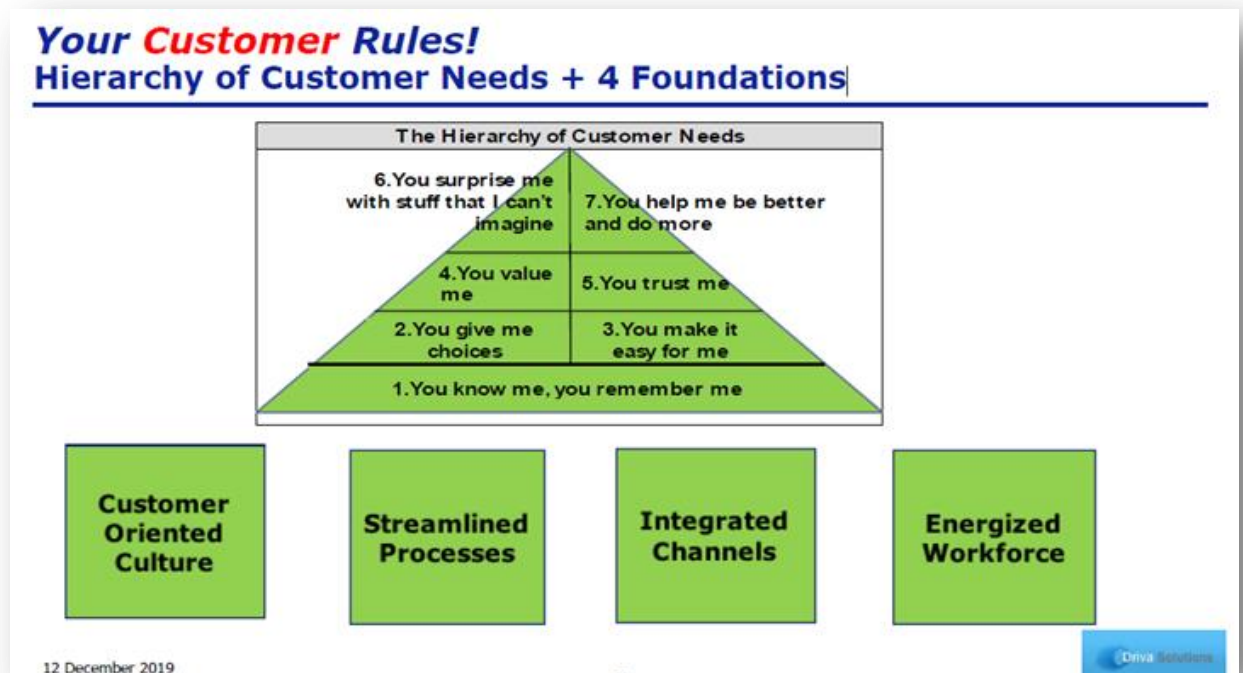


Figure no. 2: The hierarchy of customer needs + 4 foundations

Source: Price, B. (2019). *Creating an Energized Workforce*, Driva Solutions, CustomerThink, Customer Success Webinar, 12 December (work cited)

Instead of conclusions: *Perceptions, Recession, Ecosystems, Digital Platforms, Revenue Marketing Engine, and Customer-Centered Action*

The founder and CEO of Beyond Philosophy, Colin Shaw, reminded us in November 2019 that: perceptions do not always line up with reality, despite the fact that perceptions of how the economy is doing are affecting some portion of how the economy performs, and this within the context in which people tend to feel losses much more profoundly than gains of equal

magnitude; recessions are challenging, being also a chance to make a change for the better, in adversity being also an opportunity, depending of your positioning yourself in order to adequately handle that change, mitigating some stress and difficulty. That's why his recommendation was to prepare for a recession, looking for the opportunity, carrying on making improvements in CX, so as to be in a much stronger position post-recession, refining CX and earning customers' trust, by providing them with more comfort and stability. (Shaw, 2019)

In the same period of time, Richard Straub, Builder of the Peter Drucker Forum recognized globally as a leading management conference, spoke on the occasion of an interview for "The Marketing Journal" (Sarkar, 2019) about the topic for the 11th Global Drucker Forum (Nov 21 & 22, 2019, Vienna, with Professor Philip Kotler, Alexander Osterwalder, inventor of the Canvas business model, and others), "The Power of Ecosystems – Managing in a Networked World", underlining from the very beginning the practical aim of Peter Drucker as a social ecologist to craft a balance between continuity (on one side) and change and innovation (on the other side). And within the ecology we exist in today (composed of the networks reshaped, resized, speeded up and made complex by the digital technology), argued Richard Straub, these concepts of ecology and ecosystems (an ecosystem being defined by McKinsey as "a complex network of interconnected businesses that depend on and feed on each other to deliver value for their customers, to the end users, and their key stakeholders") give us a new means of marking what is happening, making sense of the turbulence around us, and establishing a common language, taking into account the essential characteristics of business ecosystems as highlighted by John Fuller, Michael Jacobides and Martin Reeves in the MIT Sloan Management Review's article "The Myths and Realities of Business Ecosystems" (the complementarity between smartphones and apps being an example of what are often involving the different aspects of competition and collaboration combined by the relationships at the level of these networks). (Fuller, Jacobides and Reeves, 2019) And as players redefine their capabilities and relations to others over time, underlines Straub, they co-evolve in ecosystems.

After reading the above mentioned articles, we felt the need of reading something again:

- an article written by James L. McQuivey, VP, Principal Analyst Forrester, and entitled "It's time to fight for consumer 'hope': The next CX battleground". (McQuivey, 2019) More than a decade ago, McQuivey coined the term "digital platform" to describe a new breed of company (four of the five companies he called digital platforms in 2008 were Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google) which was about to dominate the economic and social discussions (this prediction proved true in time), and this to escape (in contrast) from the above mentioned term "ecosystem", considering that the ecosystems (which can be powerful economic tools) are not as powerful as the digital platforms (which require a home for a consumer: the shopping website in Amazon, the search interface in Google - later the Android mobile OS etc.). McQuivey described the logical shift from product-driven to service-driven companies, signaling the danger for services-based relationships to fall into a convenience trap (gradually losing sight of reminding customers why they would want to do business with them), and underlining that shoppers, for

example, are hoping to find signs of long-term positive intentions (not only to look for these signs). He introduced within this framework the “hope” as an aspirational drive (not just as a danger detector), highlighting: the need to affiliate with people, objects, movements, and groups believed to have the intention to do well by providers (experiencing hope when finding this kind of affiliation); that this is both what is really plaguing digital platforms today is losing the connection to that hope, and the real challenge ahead of the large digital platform companies.

- an article posted in (Pardot, B2B marketing automation by Salesforce) “B2B Marketing, Blog, Sales and Marketing Alignment” in September 2019 attracted also our attention – “How to Build a Revenue Marketing Engine: 6 Lessons Learned, authored by Ljubica Radoicic, Marketing Director APAC, Hexagon PPM (a global leader in sensor, software and autonomous solutions), North Sydney, Australia. (Radoicic, 2019) This Marketing Director did go in her article beyond her introductory propositions (“The traditional view of marketing is flawed. Most organizations view their marketing department as a cost center or a necessity to direct potential customers to the real gem: the product”), sharing with us some vital learned lessons with regard to the value which can be brought through revenue marketing (understood as the development of repeatable prospecting programs that drive customer acquisition and measurable sales – according to the Pedowitz Group’s definition – the revenue marketing’s key being to forecast the results and impact of activities predictably), without neglecting the brand. She pledged for: starting with an overall assessment of the sales and marketing organization and developing a comprehensive change management program; combining dedication, technology, and skills, within the guidance of the so-called “Growth Engine’s Revenue Generation Maturity Framework” (Crawl stage, Walk stage, Run stage, Leap stage – in this last stage the CMO being in charge with a well-defined and optimized team comprised of demand generation, program managers, and digital and content operations, well defined processes marketing technology stack enabling extensive data collection and predictive analytics, performance being measured based on CLV, ROI, conversion rate etc.); a holistic view of the organization going beyond people, process, and technology; revisiting the foundation and adapting continuously.

- Medallia’s Whitepaper “Intelligent Customer Experience. Integrating Human and Artificial Intelligence to Improve Business Results” (Medallia being the leader in Experience Management cloud technology), which underlined three ways to improve business results with artificial and human intelligence (*from reading to counting; from guessing to knowing; from finding problems to evaluating actions*), concluding that companies can now: improve CX by making use of applied AI and machine learning techniques; prioritize and take actions where it matters most, being empowered with new insights. And as a picture is worth a thousand words, let’s finally show a suggestive figure from this above mentioned white paper: (Medallia Inc., 2019)



Figure no. 3: Customer – Centered Action, Medallia

Source: *Intelligent Customer Experience. Integrating Human and Artificial Intelligence to Improve Business Results*, Medallia Inc., 2019. Retrieved from *Medallia_Intelligent_Customer_Experience.pdf* (work cited)

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