Enable Hyperagility

“When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change; at such a moment, there is no point in pretending that nothing has happened or in saying that we are not yet ready. The challenge will not wait.” This quote from Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho emphasizes life’s unpredictability and the need to be as prepared as possible to respond and adapt to whatever obstacles we may face.

The global health crisis and other world events in 2020 have been the catalyst for change for nearly all organizations. Markets shifted abruptly, face-to-face marketing channels were eliminated, and buyers’ needs expanded. These shifts presented an opportunity for marketing operations professionals to reposition short-term and long-term priorities, with a newfound responsibility to the organization to keep what’s most important in perspective. The fast-changing market conditions have illuminated how critical marketing operations is in building marketing’s infrastructure for agility, data-driven decisions, and technologies that empower the business to take quick action. In this guide, based on Forrester SiriusDecisions research, we define five trends that will affect the priorities of marketing operations leaders in 2021.
Nimble Organizations Will Survive

CMOs are preparing for a sustained period of uncertainty and the need for hyperagility within their organization.

Marketing operations is well positioned to help CMOs by developing agility and responsiveness in marketing process execution and partnering with sales to optimize revenue engine processes.

As budgets get tighter and teams get leaner, best-in-class process optimization will minimize disruption in customer experience and enable better results for the organization. Many marketing functions are asking their marketing operations team to tackle deferred process improvements including process audits (eliminating waste and streamlining critical business processes), documentation (creating and communicating process guidelines, RACI matrixes, templates, and intake forms), and automation (proactive workflow management, online review/approval, and global marketing calendars). Optimizing processes also can help the organization scale and grow revenue.

To capitalize on these benefits, marketing operations teams are driving the introduction or expansion of agile methodology into marketing, including the introduction of cross-functional agile teams, iterative planning, and work prioritization approaches. Marketing operations leaders are also establishing and growing project management office (PMO) teams to support marketing functions with process governance, agile leadership, and workflow tool proficiency.

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Operationalize the concept of hyperagility and what it will mean for marketing in the coming year. Identify critical processes, establish effective process standards, and define governance policies to enable faster change when needed. Leverage process methodologies in the right use cases to optimize process flows. Depending on resources, evaluate marketing resource management technology and add staff with project management and agile expertise to PMO teams.
When environments suddenly change, previous performance indicators and predictive models that use historical data may not capture the disruption or indicate the future state.

Additionally, traditional marketing and sales planning that sets the course and defines goals for a fiscal year will no longer suffice. Markets must be reassessed more frequently than annually, and budgets must allow for flexibility and reconfiguration. Organizations that constantly monitor, evaluate, and modify plans maintain greater functional alignment, reduce risk, and are more agile in responding to change.

Marketing operations teams that evaluate data more often can foster organizational transformation when needed. Market assessment evaluations must incorporate not only past performance, but also changes in market conditions to adjust predictive models and support actionable data-based recommendations to plans, budgets, and their associated workflows.

Driven by the CMO and in partnership with sales operations, orchestrate a more frequent, iterative planning process. By gathering data and insights, support the organization in evaluating target markets more often, then ensure that the findings from the market assessments and performance reviews are fed into the planning process on a rolling basis to enable adjustment of the marketing plan and allocated budget when needed.

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Forrester SiriusDecisions research consistently shows that businesses that place the customer at the center of everything they do are the most likely to succeed and grow.

Although sales and marketing leaders commonly support abstract notions of customer obsession, many fail to instill customer obsession into all the ways in which they execute.

B2B sales and marketing leaders have not adjusted their approach to performance management to concentrate on measuring the value produced for buyers and customers. Instead, sales and marketing leadership dashboards are intensely focused on metrics that describe internal achievement (e.g., conversion, velocity, pipeline revenue). Proportionally, according to the Forrester SiriusDecisions 2020 Metrics Study, measures of internal company value outnumber measures of customer value (e.g., customer ROI, ease of doing business, risk mitigation, perception of trust, customer satisfaction) by a ratio of more than 2 to 1 on leadership dashboards — and their teams perform accordingly. Forrester SiriusDecisions research shows that high-performing organizations devote a greater portion of their leadership dashboards to describing customer value than their lower-performing peers.

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Assess and rebalance marketing leadership dashboards to better reflect how value is produced for buyers and customers. Categorize existing metrics according to the value they describe (value created for the organization vs. value created for buyers and customers). Look for opportunities to shift the dashboard focus toward buyer and customer value metrics by aligning with counterparts in customer engagement functions.
Enable data-driven decision-making by focusing on insight requirements, data management, and team enablement. For insight requirements, document the processes data should support and determine what specific data elements are needed by users. For data management, ensure that credible, high-quality, privacy-compliant data can be delivered in the right format to the right audience. For team enablement, which covers competencies, culture, and activation, define and monitor data processes to enable those teams that need to use data to drive the revenue engine.
Although budget cuts may persist into next year, best-in-class marketing functions are continuing to invest in technologies that drive revenue for their organization.

Data management and modeling solutions help organizations focus their diminished budgets on high-propensity prospects. Tools that aggregate buying signals (e.g., intent data monitoring technology) allow organizations to refine their focus and direct marketing program spend toward prospects that are more likely to buy. These same tools ensure organizations don't miss out on active buying cycles, which is crucial in a time when there may be fewer opportunities. Organizations can acquire these tools as an integrated solution or purchase and implement them separately.

As the marketing operations profession has matured in recent years, its role has become more strategic. Today’s marketing operations professionals commonly use their technical and analytical skills to find opportunities to use technology to drive demand and then lead efforts to implement and drive adoption of those technologies. As markets continue to change, marketing operations will be essential in identifying tools to support growth.

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Consider aggressively onboarding technologies that can identify high-propensity and in-market prospects. Also consider tools that establish and track the correlations between the use of marketing resources and the outcomes the business desires. Deploy best-practice change management processes to onboard new technologies in a timely fashion.
Build A Foundation For Marketing Excellence

Marketing operations has access to and depth of experience with systems, tools, and data and is well positioned to align marketing and sales operations to achieve revenue goals. Marketing leaders rely on marketing operations to leverage these competencies when efficiency, customer experience, or growth improvements are being considered. To meet these expectations, marketing operations teams must identify, prioritize, and pilot initiatives in the areas of data, planning, measurement, and agility that can make a transformational impact.
Expert, Straightforward Guidance For Marketing Operations Leaders

Thriving in an unpredictable and fast-changing environment requires agility and resilience. As you plan for 2021, look to Forrester for insights and advice to help chart a successful course.

Forrester SiriusDecisions Research supports marketing operations leaders with strategic insights and functional best practices on key priorities, including:

- Revenue engine alignment
- Planning and budget management
- Measurement and analytics
- Data management
- Marketing technology
- Best-in-class processes and agile marketing
- Roles, responsibilities, and structure

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