

Successful marketing strategies need top-level support



By [Judith Middleton](#), issued by [DUO Marketing + Communications](#)

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The companies we work with tend to be innovative, young and hungry tech companies that are committed to reaching the next step in their growth phase. They value the role marketing can play in helping them achieve this goal. But so often there's a disconnect between the intended importance of marketing and the day-to-day investment of time and energy needed from senior management to make this cooperative process work. Marketing strategies with budgets signed off too often get lost in a filing cabinet or obscure desktop folder, and by the end of the campaign period no one can even remember what was planned.

What happened?

People often base their strategies on a theoretical platform that does not take into account the complexities involved in actual implementation. You need senior management to be part of the strategy formulation process so that there's someone with decision-making power at the top level who can drive strategy implementation.

Most companies have to prioritise activities; few can afford to do everything they want at the intensity required for success. Getting management buy-in is therefore critical to ensuring your marketing campaign is counted among the organisation's priorities and gets the support it needs to have real value.

The consequences of driving marketing strategy implementation without top-level buy-in and support can be dire. For one, any implementation of the marketing strategy will be purely tactical since the lack of executive input means there's a disconnect between marketing objectives and company objectives. This makes it impossible to prove the value and success of marketing activities.

What often happens is that campaign ideas, marketing initiatives and even press releases and designs don't get signed off because it's just not a priority in the busy executives' work day. Morale takes a knock as campaigns fail to launch, and it all goes downhill from there.

So how do we fix this?

- We marketers are often our own worst enemies. Too often we develop spectacular sounding strategies in isolation, removed from the very people at the top of the organisation that can drive the success of our campaigns. For marketers to get the top-level buy-in we need, we need to adhere to the following:
- Know the personalities of the people whose buy-in you want. Tailor your strategy and approach to their needs and preferences. If the CEO hates long meetings, turn the strategy into a 20-minute presentation covering only the main points. If the FD is concerned with costs, highlight how you are curbing expenditure. Don't focus on executives at the expense of the customer, but wherever possible, always highlight what's in it for them.
- Be open to compromise, not in quality but certainly in the scope of activities. If you feel there's not enough internal capacity to really make a success of the 20 marketing activities you want to run, focus instead on 10 that you know you can successfully implement. This keeps you focused and motivated and makes it easier to report back at the end of the campaign period.
- Link all marketing activities to organisational objectives, preferably hard commercial targets (revenue, market share, etc.) This way, any marketing success equates to commercial success; any potential failures or shortcomings will quickly be prioritised across the organisation as executives strive to protect the bottom line.

- Make sure the top level is aware of your team's success. Running ten marketing activities for the year and one just achieved its objectives? Do some internal communications to boast about the team's achievements and make sure you illustrate how achieving this goal is contributing to the organisation's bottom line.

ABOUT JUDITH MIDDLETON

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