

30  
YEARS



KATHY FREEMAN COMPANY  
EXECUTIVE SEARCH FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES

## HOW BEST-IN-CLASS MARKETING LEADERS DIFFERENTIATE THEMSELVES

Marketing leadership has been a key pillar for our search work over the past 3 decades, and we've been witnessing an acceleration in demand for this function throughout the past 18 months. Diminishing profitability and turbulent markets historically drive a heightened focus on the marketing function.

Analyzing insights garnered from extensive interviews conducted with top marketers across the functional landscape, we distilled down what seemed to differentiate the standout leaders, the winners, and those who undeniably impacted their business and teams through their approach.

Let's take a brief look at 4 specific capabilities these leaders possessed above and beyond the table stakes.

### LEARNING AGILITY

The pace of change in marketing is not to be underestimated. A leader's ability to drive impact through their teams and in their organizations hinges on their ability and appetite to digest new tools, technology, new consumer channels, buying behavior, and the evolving products within the business lines they support. Those leaders that set themselves apart provided evidence of how they built into their weekly cadence: time for learning, understanding, and asking critical questions of their business leaders, peers, vendors, and industry colleagues.

### BUSINESS ALIGNMENT

Marketing today is no longer a siloed support function but rather fully integrated into the business. Effective leadership requires building a strategy that aligns directly with the business goals and objectives, as well as incorporates KPIs that measure the impact on business outcomes. Successful leaders were able to provide specific illustrations of driving business impact through the creation of new metrics and incorporating measurement tools that more clearly defined marketing's impact.



A logo consisting of the number '30' in a large, stylized font with 'YEARS' written in a smaller font underneath, all enclosed within a square border.

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## COLLABORATION / INFLUENCE

An already strategic marketing mind today must complement its intellectual rigor with an ability to forge productive and trusted relationships with its business partners. Marketing cannot have an agenda that doesn't have support and buy-in from the business. Simultaneously, the business must eradicate the historical assumption that marketing simply plays a supporting role in their objectives. Today's marketer sits in a powerful seat that enables the voice and message of the business to be scaled and customized to the target audience like never before. Those leaders who built successful collaborative relationships, and were able to influence change forged on trust, truly set themselves apart from their peers.

## PRIORITIZATION

Today's successful marketing leader demonstrates an absolute ability to prioritize across a myriad of competing agendas. Each business line believes their product or service will maximize the firm's potential for success. Then there is opportunity clamoring through new tools and technologies, where the request for investment in bigger and better doesn't end. It is incumbent upon marketing leadership to quiet the noise and distill down for their teams the path and priorities that will drive the most impact. The best-in-class leaders understood and addressed specifically their approach for developing a game plan for their teams which articulated the criticality in prioritizing key elements that when focused on, maximized results.

## SUMMARY

Today's landscape for marketing professionals has never held more promise! Businesses are hungry for the results that marketing is now able to drive with the advent of new tools, technology, and social media, which extends messaging and minimizes the cost required across traditional media channels. However, with all this opportunity, it is incumbent upon marketers who want to excel in their craft, not to overlook the changing business landscape and the adjacent skill sets needed to navigate effectively. Those select leaders who set themselves apart during our assessment and in the eyes of our clients during the past 18 months effectively anchored their illustrations of success around additional dimensions in their leadership toolbox which went beyond understanding modern marketing.

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