

Marketing Roles and Skills

The marketing department's role in too many companies has been limited to carrying out marketing communications. R&D invents the product, and marketing writes the press releases and does the advertising. Too many CEOs think marketing comes into play only after the product has been made and must be sold. Marketing is run like a one-night stand instead of a long affair.

In this case, it would be better to operate two marketing groups, one doing strategy and the other doing tactics. Unless marketing is set up to have an effect on corporate strategy, its promise won't be fulfilled. In fact, I would argue that marketing's main role in the company is to be the driver of corporate strategy and the enforcer of the company's promises to its customers.

For this to happen, companies must move from *tactical* to *holistic marketing*.

- The company needs to enlarge its view of its customers' needs and lifestyles. The company should stop seeing the customer only as a consumer of its current products and start visualizing broader ways to serve its customers.

120 Marketing Insights from A to Z

- The company needs to assess how all of its departments impact on customer satisfaction. Customers are adversely affected when their products arrive late or are damaged, when invoices are inaccurate, when customer service is poor, or when other foul-ups occur.
- The company needs to take a larger view of the company's industry, its players and its evolution. Today many industries are converging (e.g., telecommunications, entertainment, cable, the media, and software), presenting new opportunities and new threats to each industry player.
- The company needs to assess the impact of its actions on all the company's stakeholders—customers, employees, distributors, dealers, and suppliers—not only its shareholders. Any alienated stakeholder group can cause disruption to the company's plans and progress.

So what should be the major roles of marketers with respect to customers? At least the following:

- Detecting and evaluating new opportunities.
- Mapping customer perceptions, preferences, and requirements.
- Communicating customer wants and expectations to product designers.
- Making sure that customer orders are filled correctly and delivered on time.
- Checking that customers have received proper instructions, training, and technical assistance in the use of the product.
- Staying in touch with customers after the sale to ensure that they are satisfied.
- Gathering customer ideas for product and service improvements and conveying them to the appropriate departments.

What marketing skills do marketers need in order to carry out their role? J. S. Armstrong, a professor at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, lists the following skills: *forecasting, planning, analyzing, creating, deciding, motivating, communicating, and implementing*. These skills make up what we call *marketing ability*, and it is marketing ability that companies look for in their search for a marketing vice president.



Markets

Markets can be defined in different ways. Originally a market was a physical place where buyers and sellers gathered. Economists describe a market as a collection of buyers and sellers who transact (in person, over the phone, by mail, whatever) over a particular product or product class. Thus economists talk about the car market or the housing market. But marketers view the sellers as the “industry” and the buyers as the “market.” Thus marketers will talk about markets of “35 to 50-year-old low-income homemakers” or “auto company purchasing agents who buy paint for their companies.”

Clearly markets can be defined broadly or narrowly. The “mass market” is the broadest definition and describes the billions of people who buy and consume basic products (e.g., soap, soft drinks). Much of U.S. economic growth has resulted from Ameri-