

LATEST MARKETERS' CONFIDENCE INDEX RESULTS: THE AI EDITION

QUARTERLY

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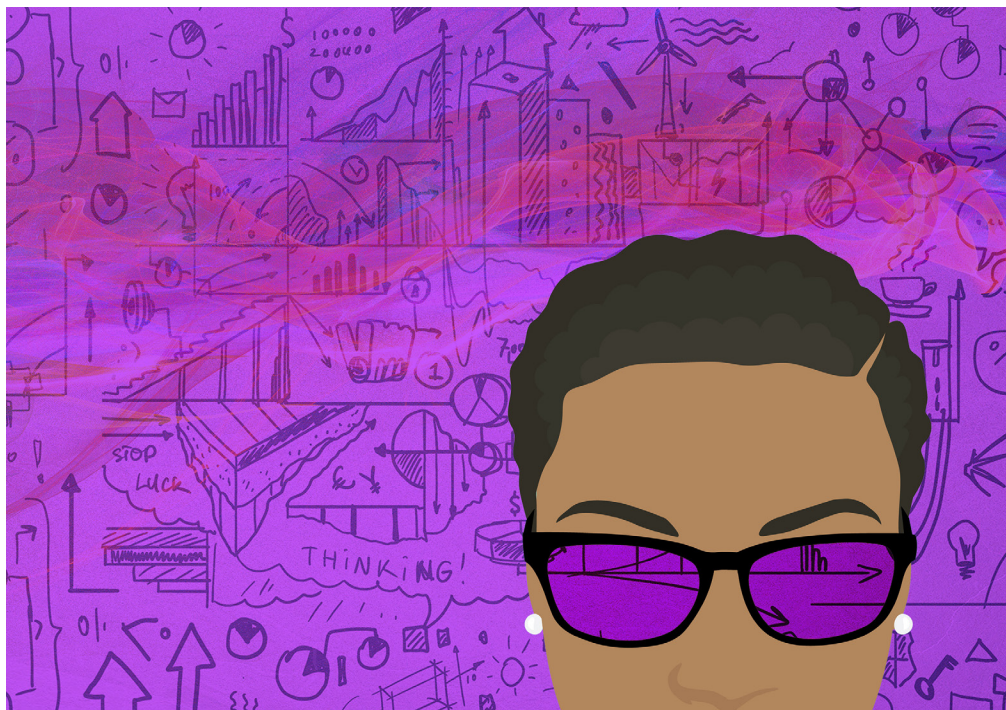


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FALL 2023
VOL. 57 | NO. 4

MarketingNews

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Marketing News (ISSN 0025-3790) is published quarterly by the American Marketing Association, 130 E. Randolph St., 22nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60601.

Circulation: (800) AMA-1150, (312) 542-9000
Tel: (800) AMA-1150, (312) 542-9000

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Long Road Ahead for Broad Application and Understanding of AI in Marketing

BY JORIS ZWEGERS AND ARIEL ROMAIN

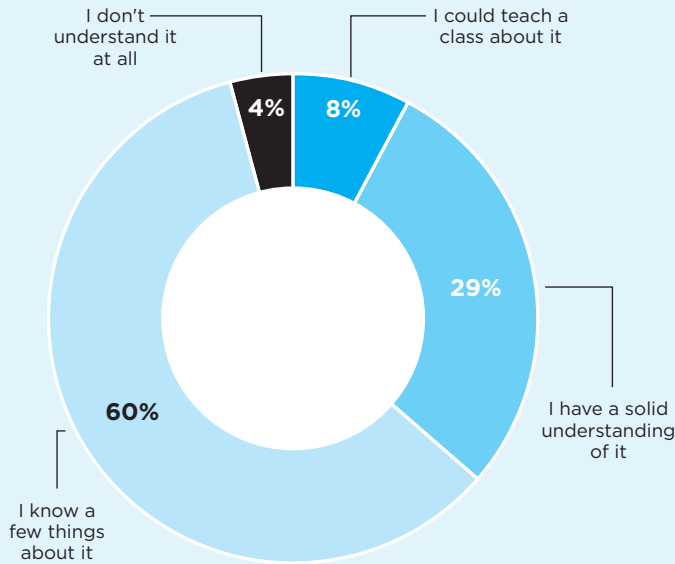


After ChatGPT burst into the public domain, talk about using AI in business, and marketing specifically, increased dramatically. However, although marketers are optimistic about the implications and future of AI in marketing, the understanding of AI for marketing capabilities is limited, and usage is still relatively modest.

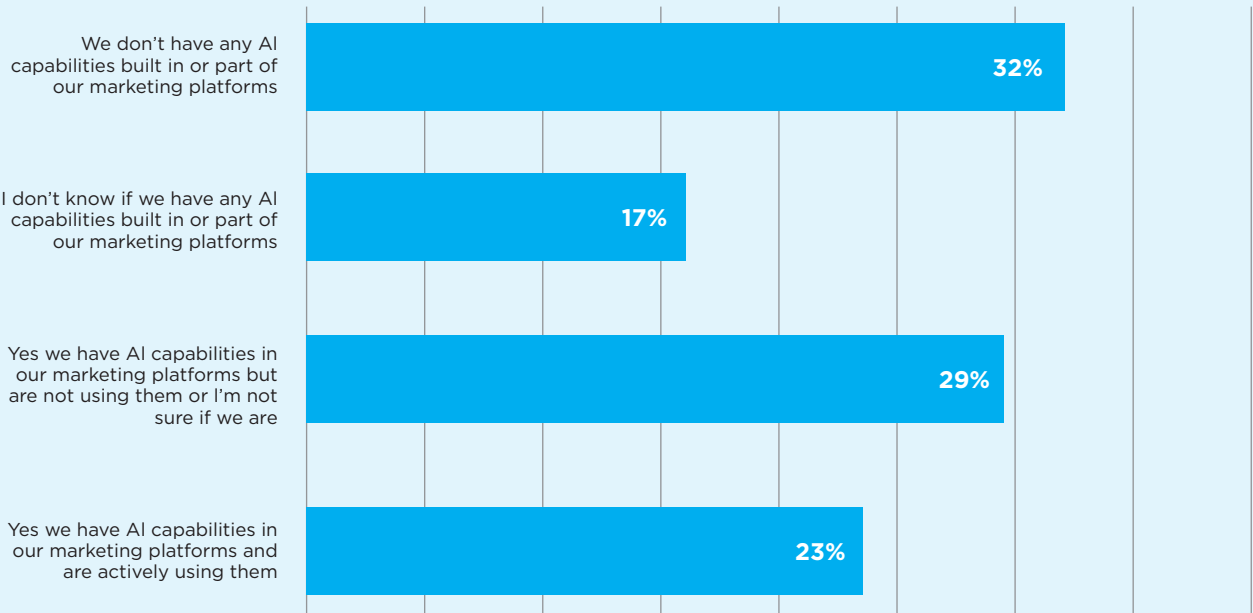
The AMA and Kantar surveyed 184 marketers to better understand the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in marketing. The results illustrate how marketers are currently utilizing AI and the potential future of AI fueled marketing.

With the rise of AI in the news and the proliferation of tools and applications, AI is more accessible and mainstream than ever, and the use of AI could have huge implications for how marketing is done. But do marketers have the expertise to leverage AI technology to drive increased marketing effectiveness? It seems not, as 64% of marketers do not understand AI at all or only know a few things about it. This lack of knowledge is not driven by marketers seeing little potential in AI, as only 4% of marketers feel it's just another fad. Rather, the overwhelming majority (61%) expects it to be a complete gamechanger. This knowledge gap in the understanding of AI capabilities and technology must be closed, and it might just be a matter of leadership priorities to ensure broader and deeper adoption.

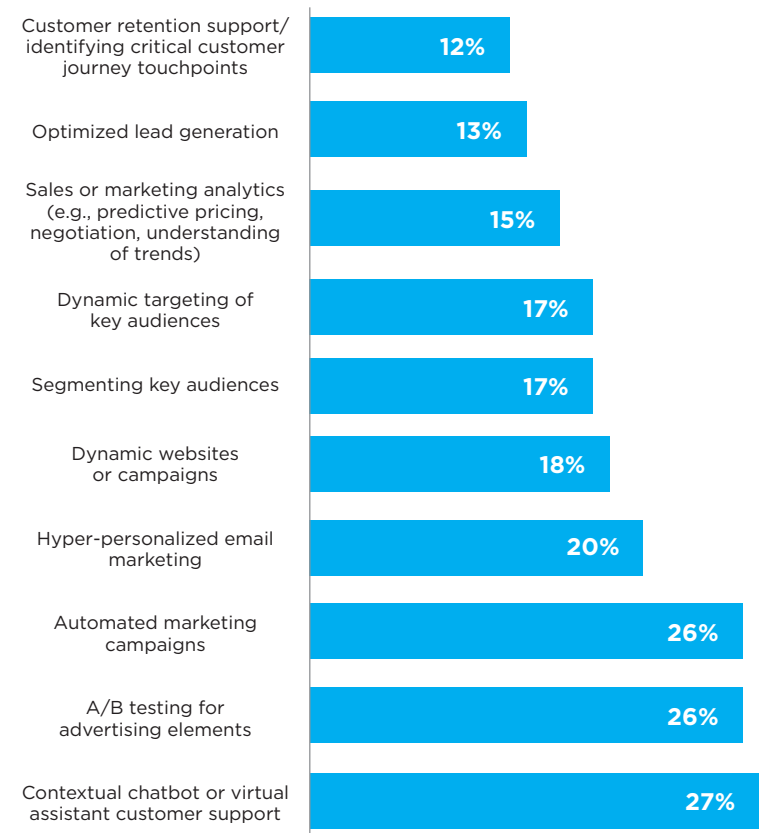
RATE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW AI CAN BE USED IN MARKETING



Although AI knowledge is limited, our data show that organizations have already demonstrated that it can play a role in marketing; indeed, half of the respondents reported they have AI capabilities in their existing marketing platforms (e.g., media targeting, media buying, forecasting). While these capabilities exist, there is an opportunity to use AI capabilities more actively as many are not using them at all or are unsure if they're being used.



IN WHICH OF THESE MARKETING USE CASES IS AI BEING USED WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?



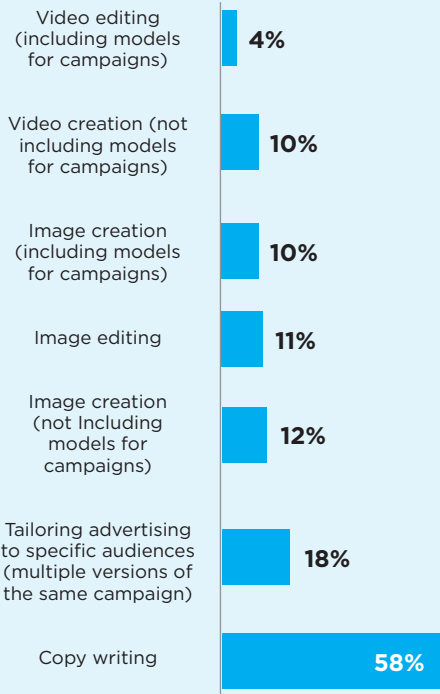
When our respondents' organizations do use AI, use cases vary from A/B testing for advertising elements to using it for chatbots or virtual assistants. The wide use of AI across marketing suggests it is unclear where AI can make the biggest impact, and generally AI best practices have yet to be established. However, when it comes to the advertising, the data show some consensus; in the advertising development process, agency and marketers are using AI predominantly for copy writing.

As investment in the use of AI in marketing continues to grow, organizations need to ensure their marketers have a clear and thorough understanding of how to leverage the technology to drive increased returns on marketing investments. Organizations

should explore reskilling programs and initiatives to equip marketers with the proper skillset to use AI and partner with agencies that are experts in the space. The challenge organizations will face is determining on which use cases to focus their training efforts and investment. Respondents reported that in half of their organizations, the marketing function is responsible for driving implementation of AI. Given the far-reaching organizational implications, it might be worth considering cross-functional teams to ensure the deep expertise on various areas is brought on board when building the strategy and implementation. As AI's role in marketing increases, not only will organizations need to meet the challenge of ensuring their marketers understand

IN WHICH OF THESE AREAS IS MARKETING OR YOUR ADVERTISING AGENCY CURRENTLY USING AI?

SPECIFICALLY FOR ADVERTISING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



and use the technology, but they will also need to address potential racial bias and ethical implications of leveraging AI. Across the various use cases of AI, respondents indicated this as a key concern.

Overall, marketers are optimistic about the future of AI in marketing, and they would like to see increased development and implementation. However, interest alone isn't enough to drive impactful adoption. A clear mandate from senior leadership seems required to drive the necessary organizational transformation.**MN**

Joris Zweegers is a Partner at the Consulting Division of Kantar. Ariel Romain is a Director at the Consulting Division at Kantar.

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A Tale of Two Channels

How digital ads perform in AI recommendation vs. user subscription channels on platforms Like Twitter, Google News, and TikTok

BY BEIBEI DONG, MENGZHOU ZHUANG, ERIC (ER) FANG AND MINXUE HUANG

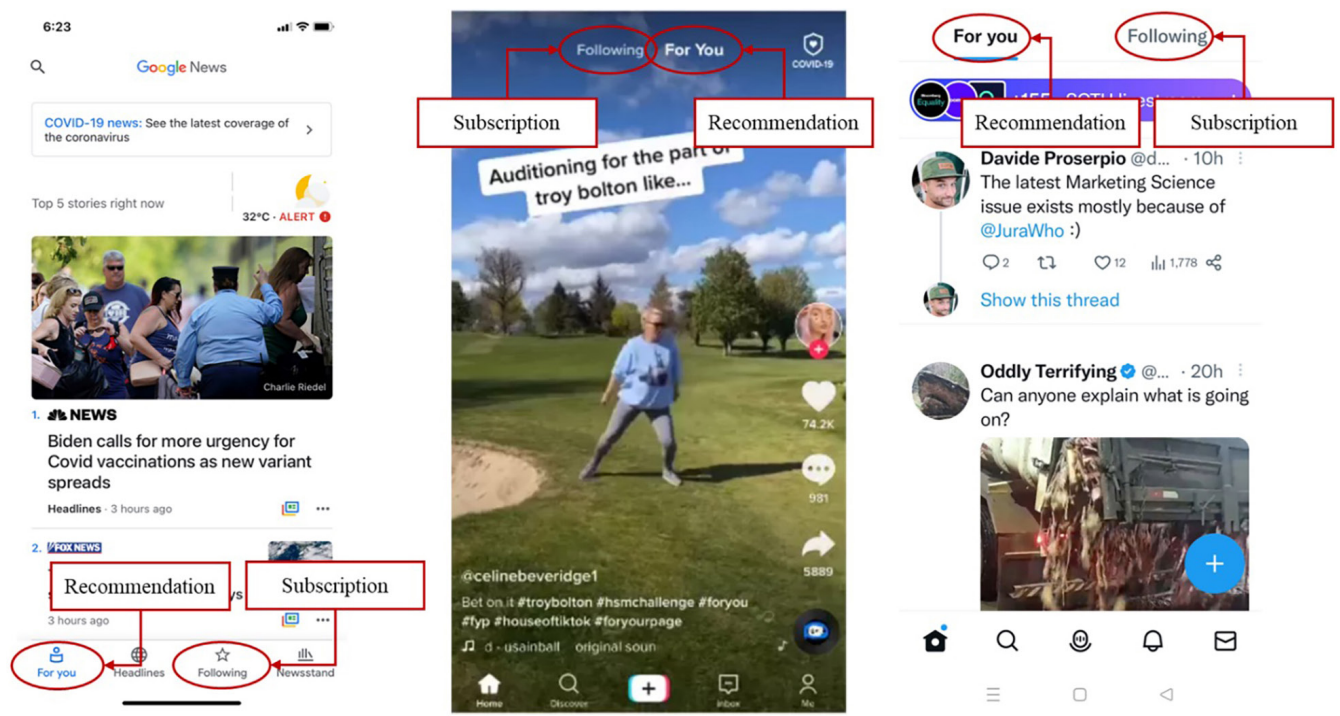
How do you get news on a daily basis? Do you subscribe to topics you are interested in? Or do you let artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms recommend news to you? Platforms like Google News, Twitter, and

TikTok offer two distinct methods of curating organic content: user subscriptions and AI algorithms.

If, for example, you log into Twitter (now known as “X”) and open the “Following” tab, you will encounter posts from the sources to which you are subscribed. But if you open the “For You” tab, you will see content recommended by AI algorithms based on what AI predicts you are interested in viewing.

These different methods of delivering content provide distinct contexts for in-feed ads. However, little is known about how the performance of in-feed ads compares between subscription and AI-recommendation channels.

In a new *Journal of Marketing* study, we look into in-feed advertising and examine its performance across these two channels. In-feed ads blend into your news feed, matching the format and style of content while clearly indicating their sponsored status. These ads can take various forms, from text-based ads on Apple News to eye-catching images on Instagram and engaging videos on TikTok. In-feed advertising has seen significant growth, with 58.3% of U.S. digital display spending allocated to these ads in 2018.



Examples of recommendation vs. subscription posts

In addressing which channel has better ad performance, we show that the recommendation channel underperforms the subscription channel in converting sales but excels at eliciting clicks.

In-feed ads ideally fit seamlessly into the organic content stream, and their effectiveness is determined by both the ads' attributes and where they are placed. Our research team examined how each channel affects ad effectiveness and whether the effects also depend on ad attributes. We considered two core digital ad attributes:

- Ad appeal that describes key content of the ad, which can either be informational (focusing on factual product information) or emotional (emphasizing the product experience through subtle feelings)
- An ad link that leads to consumer action, which can be direct (e.g., "buy now") or indirect (e.g., "click for more information")

Channel Difference and Consumer Engagement

The manner in which content is delivered (through subscription or recommendation) has a big impact on how customers engage with that content. This, in turn, can determine whether they view in-feed ads as intrusive and if they decide to click on the ads and make purchases.

We find that subscription and recommendation channels have two key differences: source credibility and content control. Subscription channels have greater source credibility and more content control because consumers can actively choose their sources, motivating them to exert greater cognitive effort in processing content. In contrast, AI-recommended content may be perceived as less credible, and reliance on algorithms reduces consumers' motivation to exert cognitive effort, leading to lower engagement.

Ad Intrusiveness and Ad Performance

In the subscription channel, high customer engagement with the organic content makes readers more goal-oriented, and they thus end up perceiving ads as more annoying and interruptive. However, customers who do click on an ad, despite the annoyance, show stronger interest and a higher conversion rate. By contrast, in the recommendation channel, customers are in an exploratory state and thus perceive ads as less intrusive. Consequently, customers are more inclined to click on ads in the recommendation channel.

We use two ad performance metrics for our analysis: click-through rate (CTR), the ratio of clicks to exposures, and the conversion rate (CR), the ratio of purchases to clicks. In the subscription channel, higher ad intrusiveness leads to lower

CTRs but higher CRs, while in the recommendation channel, lower ad intrusiveness may generate higher CTRs, but the proportion of genuine interest and subsequent purchases is smaller. Therefore, in addressing which channel has better ad performance, we show that the recommendation channel underperforms the subscription channel in converting sales but excels at eliciting clicks.

Takeaways for CMOs

Our study offers key lessons for Chief Marketing Officers:

- If the goal is to convert ads to sales, companies should strive for high conversion rates. Conversely, if the goal is to drive traffic and generate interest, companies should strive for high click-through rates.
- If advertisers' goal is to maximize click-through rates, the optimal strategy is to release emotional ads with indirect links for both the subscription channel and the recommendation channel. Conversely, if advertisers want to maximize conversion rates, informational ads with indirect links work best for the subscription channel while emotional ads with indirect links are the best for the recommendation channel.
- For recommendation channels, informational ads with direct links have the largest increase in click-through rates and the largest decrease in conversion rates. By contrast, emotional ads with indirect links have the largest decrease in click-through rates and the largest increase in conversion rates. **MM**

Beibei Dong is Associate Professor of Marketing, Lehigh University, USA. Mengzhou Zhuang is Assistant Professor of Marketing, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong. Eric (Er) Fang is Professor of Marketing, Iacocca Chair of Business, and Director of Center of Digital Marketing Strategy and Analytics, Lehigh University, USA. Minxue Huang is Professor of Marketing, Wuhan University, China.



READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Beibei Dong, Mengzhou Zhuang, Eric (Er) Fang, and Minxue Huang, "Tales of Two Channels: Digital Advertising Performance Between AI Recommendation and User Subscription Channels," *Journal of Marketing*.



YOU TUBE/DORITOS

Doritos Time Machine “Crash the Super Bowl” winner from 2014.

How Do Investors React to Crowdsourcing Contests?

BY ZIXIA CAO, HUI FENG AND MICHAEL WILES

Crowdsourcing contests for marketing ideas such as new ads, graphics, and products have become popular based on the premise that no one is smarter than everyone. For example, PepsiCo asked consumers to create videos promoting Doritos in its “Crash the Super Bowl” ad contest, Fossil crowdsourced new packaging ideas, and Ben & Jerry’s “Do Us a Flavor” contest asked the public to create a mouthwatering ice cream flavor.

At the same time, many firms remain unsure about whether these contests pay off with investors and about the worth of their contest design choices. In a new *Journal of Marketing* study, we provide the first comprehensive examination of the stock market effects of these contests and, crucially, of the contest characteristics that may enable such contests to pay off.

We define a marketing ideation crowdsourcing contest (or MICC) as an open tournament-based call for ideas and solutions for marketing-related problems. In an MICC, a firm first broadcasts a call describing the marketing

Results from an event study of 508 marketing ideation crowdsourcing contest announcements reveal that such contests significantly raise a firm's stock price by .18% on average but also significantly increase idiosyncratic risk by .15%.

problem to be solved and any rules for the contestants. The firm then collects the submissions of possible solutions, evaluates those submissions using an expert panel or through crowd voting, and rewards the chosen contest winners. Typical MICCs include (1) promotion-focused crowdsourcing contests to develop ideas and solutions involving ads, logos, slogans, or package designs and (2) contests to conceptualize new product ideas.

Investors Have a Mixed View

Although these marketing ideation crowdsourcing contests can send positive signals to facilitate returns, we find that investors have a mixed view of them. These contests pay off with investors because they can create closer connections with consumers and can generate valuable new ideas that signal growth opportunities for the firm. However, they can also elevate the firm's idiosyncratic risk because they make the brand's future direction less clear. Results from an event study of 508 marketing ideation crowdsourcing contest announcements reveal that such contests significantly raise a firm's stock price by .18% on average but also significantly increase idiosyncratic risk by .15%.

There remains a lack of understanding of how to design profitable crowdsourcing contests, particularly in terms of finding the "right crowd" and doing it "the right way." Firms need to decide if they should invite external professionals or the general public for the contest and if they should rely on crowd voting or an expert panel to decide on the winner. Firms also need to choose how broadly to scope the task and whether to use the contest to develop new products or for promotion ideas.

We found that firms' stock returns increase when the contest is targeted at professionals, when it includes crowd voting, and when the task has a specific scope. Returns further strengthen when contest design choices and the firm's stated contest objective are aligned (i.e., when the firm states its goal is consumer engagement and its contest has crowd judging, as this empowers consumers). However, we find that the stock price bump does not differ between product-focused versus promotion-focused marketing crowdsourcing contests.

Lessons for Chief Marketing Officers

In addition, we explore the question, "for which firms do marketing ideation contests create more shareholder wealth?" Results show that brands' relevant stature positively affects the stock market performance of MICCs, whereas brands' energized differentiation—which is the brand's uniqueness and ability to stand out from competition as well as its ability to meet future consumer needs—has a negative effect. Stock returns are also higher for smaller firms and those with strong brand awareness from advertising.

However, these contests can also create investor uncertainty. Investors may not be clear why firms turned to the crowd for such essential marketing tasks or what precisely the crowd will come up with. We find that these contests increase firm idiosyncratic risk, providing the first evidence of such contests' downsides with investors. In addition, we find that investor uncertainty is heightened when it comes to task-related contest features (i.e., generally-scoped contests and contests to generate new product ideas).

Our findings provide valuable insights for chief marketing officers:

- Firms can now be more confident that their time and monetary investment on MICCs lead to increased stock returns. However, managers also need to consider that MICCs increase idiosyncratic risks.
- Contests targeting professional participants result in higher value and lower risks than MICCs targeting the general public. Involving the crowd in voting enhances the contest's abnormal returns and also enhances buzz.
- Specific contests have higher returns and lower risks than more general contests, and promotion contests provide more favorable effects on risk than new product ideation contests.

In sum, marketers can be more strategic when designing their marketing crowdsourcing contests to enhance their firms' shareholder wealth. **MN**

Zixia Cao is Associate Professor of Marketing, University of Colorado Denver, USA. Hui Feng is Associate Professor, Iowa State University, USA. Michael Wiles is Associate Professor, Arizona State University, USA.



READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Zixia Cao, Hui Feng, and Michael A. Wiles, "When Do Marketing Ideation Crowdsourcing Contests Create Shareholder Value? The Effect of Contest Design and Marketing Resource Factors," *Journal of Marketing*.

Four Questions to Ask Before Partnering

BY JESSICA LEWIS

Alliances, joint ventures, collaborations, partnerships — no matter what you call it, teaming up can be the difference between corporate expansion or going out of business. Working with another team outside of one's organization can help solve tough business problems and win new business. When two or more organizations partner, the combined resources offer exponential intellectual capital and competitive advantage. Ideally, complementary skill matching occurs in areas where one organization lacks the expertise that the other provides and vice versa.

Sean Brown of McKinsey's Strategy & Corporate Finance practice says, "The better companies do at managing such increasingly complex partnerships, the more likely they are to emerge as partners of choice for tackling new markets or channels."

But developing a working partnership that benefits all organizations involved can be a slippery slope.

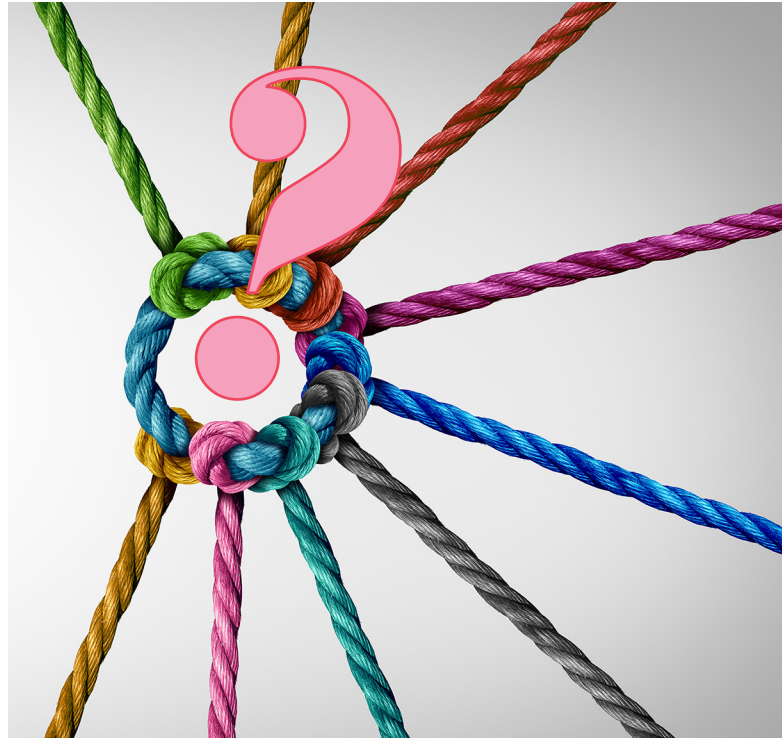
From complicated power dynamics to ownership attributions and even to the delivery of the final packaging of the project, more cooks in the kitchen aren't always ideal. That's why asking questions internally before a partnership ever takes shape is a crucial first step in determining if a partnership is ideal to reach a business goal.

When executed correctly, building a strong, equitable partnership can produce a result where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

To achieve the best outcome, here are four questions to ask before partnering:

1. What skills does our organization lack that we need for a well-executed final deliverable?

- a. You may be thinking about diversifying into a new market. Harvard Business Review conducted a study on "digital diversifiers," companies that leveraged data to enter new markets, like Google entering banking or Apple moving into the fitness market. The study found that digital diversifiers aren't doing this on their own and are engaging with diverse partners to help them compete in the market space. The study



asked questions about what types of partners firms needed and what kind of relationships to forge. The study found two factors that can help determine appropriate partners when entering a new market or disrupting an existing one. The first is data in context, or the data a potential partner can offer, such as industry insights, and the second is operating resources and capabilities.

- b. When seeking a partnership, look internally and audit the gaps for developing the final deliverable. A partner should be able to fill these gaps, whether you're lacking customer profiles and app developers or if you don't have a production plant and established distribution partners. Of course, these gaps may be the initial reason an organization seeks a partnership, but narrowing down the key elements that are "must haves" in a partner can successfully guide the search.

2. How long do we intend for the partnership to last?

- a. Depending on the final deliverable, partnerships should have an end goal. The end goal may be to complete the deliverable by a certain date, which severs the partnership, or the goal may be to create a permanent new department comprised of members of both organizations, which is ongoing.

- b. A hard deadline can be challenging when entering a new market. After all, if the organization could have done it already alone by a deadline, perhaps they would have. A timeframe with success metrics can help level set expectations. For example, if an organization needs to produce one thing before a second part can be produced, then a time frame is necessary. But it's worth approaching a partner at the start with an intended timeframe to discuss possibilities and order of operations.
- c. Further, defining clear expectations of ownership can take the ambiguity out of the production in the partnership. The partnership must function as one contiguous entity, not "them" and "us." Considering who will serve as the stakeholders for the development areas can allow an even more accurate timeline.

3. Who has the final say?

- a. Communication will ultimately serve as the backbone for the success, or failure, of the partnership. Someone, somewhere, must be able to make the final calls when problems arise or make key decisions. According to a McKinsey survey, the top two reasons managers cited for joint-venture success and failure were: alignment on parent and partnership objectives, and effective internal communication and trust. What happens if supply chains are down, costs go up, organizations restructure, or any other unknowns occur that can happen in a business? In a partnership, these concerns become twofold.
- b. One way to ensure more open communication is to include those who will be involved in the project at the onset of the project. McKinsey recommends, "The individuals expected to lead day-to-day operations of the partnership, whether business-unit executives or alliance managers, should be part of negotiations at the outset." Before a partnership ever comes to fruition, an organization must look at its stakeholders and determine not just who will manage the project from their end, but who will move the pieces.

4. How does our corporate social responsibility (CSR) come into play?

- a. One increasingly important question to ask before forming a partnership concerns the morals and ethics of the organizations. A business must consider its CSR strategy and make sure its partner aligns with it. CSR can often be the backbone of an organization, and when it comes to creating a new partnership,



organizations must be willing to take a stand on what they can, and can't, tolerate.

- b. One great example of a partnership with aligned CSR goals is American outdoor clothing retailer Patagonia and a local environmental nonprofit based in Baltimore, MD, Blue Water Baltimore. Patagonia is widely known for its efforts in protecting the environment among other ways they give back to the community. By partnering with a local nonprofit organization whose goal is to restore its community's waterways, the two have been able to work together to create a common good.

Forming a partnership can be the best way to break into a new market, gain resources, and expand capabilities without having to hire new staff or house new equipment. Starbucks and Spotify, GoPro and Red Bull, Taco Bell and Doritos — these are famous collaborations in popular culture that have been a win for both businesses and customers alike. But before a partnership can take place, several crucial questions must be addressed. Clear communication is the baseline for all business deals, but it becomes especially important when forming an external alliance. A partnership becomes its own entity, with its success and failure determined by those who've created its elements. **MN**

Jessica Lewis, Lead Consultant at Washington Business Dynamics, is a CRM and database strategy professional engaging with the firm's Economic, Procurement, and Business Analysis award with the Department of Defense, Defense Information Systems Agency.

Research Insights: Marketing Strategy

Advice from the AMA Journals Research

BY T.J. ANDERSON



Ad Blockers Are an Opportunity, Not a Threat

The rise of ad-blocking software is often considered a threat to publishers and advertisers. Companies currently attempt to evade ad blockers by restricting users who have enabled them, disguising ads, or paying ad block developers so that ads will not be blocked. But are these the right strategies? This study uses an experimental setup and an extensive survey to investigate the impact of ad-blocking software. The findings show that, when forcing banner ads on ad block users, these users (vs. non-ad block users) spend 10%–20% less time on the web page, indicate

lower evaluations of the website, and pay less attention to the banners, whereas the ads are 190% more effective for non-ad block users. Ad blockers thus serve as a self-filtering mechanism that filters out consumers who are less responsive to advertising. Ad blockers help advertisers target the right consumers and increase the value of the remaining ad slots for publishers. Moreover, ad block users are more likely to pay for ad-free content, offering publishers an alternative business model for these consumers.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Ad-blocking software is mainly used by consumers who are less sensitive to advertising, even when advertising is forced on them.
- Ad-block users are more likely to pay for ad-free content; thus, it is better to offer an ad-free (or ad-light) version of a website or app to these users rather than forcing them to turn off their ad blocker.
- Ad blockers can be beneficial for consumer targeting and can increase the value of ad slots for publishers.

READ THE ARTICLE

Evert de Haan (2023), "The Drivers and Consequences of Ad Blocking: A Self-Filtering Mechanism That Increases Ad Effectiveness," *Journal of Interactive Marketing* (published online August 7), doi:10.1177/10949968231180500.

Clicks Versus Shares: What Role Does Culture Play?

When viewing online ads, some consumers click on the information tab to get more information about the brand, product, or service, whereas other consumers share the advertisement with their network. These engagement differences are driven, at least in part, by the cultural characteristics of the consumer. This study finds consumers with cultural characteristics that value individual experiences tend to engage with online marketing materials through clicking behavior, as clicking provides more information to the consumer on a particular brand, product, or service, thus improving the selection and usefulness of a product for that consumer. In contrast, consumers with cultural characteristics that value social experiences tend to engage in online sharing behavior, since sharing is a way to socialize with others in and outside an individual's ingroup. These results have important implications for marketing managers, especially if a firm has products in international markets, as countries vary both in the cultural characteristics of its inhabitants and in the strength to which individuals within the country share similar cultural characteristics.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Consumers with cultural characteristics that value individual experiences tend to engage with online marketing materials through clicking behavior, whereas consumers with cultural characteristics that value social experiences tend to engage in online sharing behavior.
- Marketing managers need to understand which consumer behavior (clicking or sharing) they wish to encourage and target countries where consumers have the appropriate cultural characteristics.

- In countries where consumers vary widely in cultural characteristics, marketing managers should provide the appropriate engagement opportunities and adjust commercial messages to have either (or both) clickable brand content and to be appealing enough to be shared.

READ THE ARTICLE

Frauke Mattison Thompson and Keith D. Brouthers, "Digital Consumer Engagement: National Cultural Differences and Cultural Tightness," *Journal of International Marketing*, 29 (4), 22-44.

Increase Your Firm Value By Marketing Your Use of Mobile Payments

As novel payment technology becomes more available to retailers, relatively little is known about the impact its adoption has on retailers' firm value. This study finds that, on average, retailers stand to gain from accepting mobile payments, with retailers who incentivize customers to adopt mobile payments appearing to realize the greatest benefits. Additionally, more pronounced benefits are received by retailers employing technology through an expansive mobile payment rollout strategy (i.e., national rollout) as opposed to those that use a more conservative, phased rollout strategy. It should be noted, however, that there is considerable variation in the benefits received by retailers. For example, in comparison with Office Depot, whose firm value rose by 3.31% after adopting Apple Pay, Rite Aid's firm value increased by only .04%.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- In general, firm value accrues when retailers adopt and incentivize the



- use of mobile payments to their customers.
- Retailers targeting younger customers, who tend to be less risk averse, benefit more from adopting mobile payments.
- Companies can benefit from an early-mover advantage, which is maximized by an expansive, national rollout strategy.

READ THE ARTICLE

Simbarashe Pasirayi and Patrick B. Fennell, "The Effect of Mobile Payments on Retailer Firm Value: The Moderating Role of Promotions, Customer Segment, and Rollout Strategy," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 58 (1), 90-107.

When You Don't "Want It All": Highlighting a Product's Benefits to Consumers' Personal and Professional Lives Can Backfire

Many companies, including Lululemon, Microsoft, and Ann Taylor, position their products according to their ability to address consumers' professional and personal needs together. However, a work-life positioning strategy can backfire by unintentionally causing consumers to think of work-life conflict, thereby lowering their product interest. From a communications perspective, companies can leverage work-life content in their ads if the product they sell demands relatively few

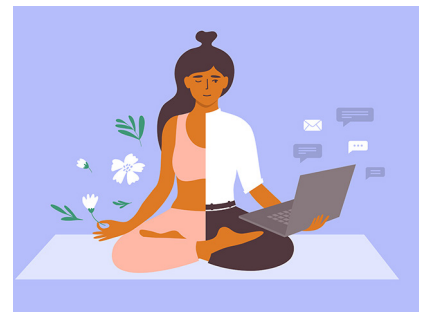
resources. If promoting resource-demanding products, companies might instead want to focus on work or life, but not both. From a targeting perspective, each strategy is likely to work best among consumer segments who experience relatively more work-life conflict, a point that can be applied due to the very fine targeting that is possible with social media ads.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Highlighting that a product addresses work and life needs together can cause consumers to lose interest, as the messaging can inadvertently evoke a sense of work-life conflict that distracts consumers from the advertising.
- Work-life marketing is less effective for resource-demanding products (education, cosmetic surgery, travel, computers) but more effective for simpler products (personal care, daily planners, apparel).
- Consumer segments who experience more work-life conflict, such as executives, conservative working women, and working mothers, react more strongly to work-life marketing.

READ THE ARTICLE

Nita Umashankar, Dhruv Grewal, Abhijit Guha, and Timothy R. Bohling, "Testing Work-Life Theory in Marketing: Evidence from Field Experiments on Social Media," *Journal of Marketing Research* (published online January 10), doi:10.1177/00222437231152894. **MN**





Foundation

The American Marketing Association Foundation (AMAF) champions individual marketers making an impact in our profession and community. We recognize marketing visionaries who have elevated the field, and we support the next generation of marketers who will transform the profession. Congratulations to our most recent award winners!

2023 4 Under 40 Emerging Leaders Award

This award recognizes individuals who have already made significant contributions to the field of marketing and its sub-fields and have demonstrated leadership and continuing service.

WINNERS:



Drew Brucker
Marketing Executive
& AI Consultant



Vannesia Darby
Digital Marketing
Manager,
Shondaland;
CEO, MOXIE
Nashville



Lauren Heath
Marketing Director,
Informa Engage



Rui Yang
Marketing Strategy
Lead, Novartis;
Adjunct Professor
of Marketing,
Stern School of
Business, New York
University



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WINNERS

2023 Williams-Qualls-Spratlen Multicultural Mentoring Award of Excellence

This award recognizes world-class marketing scholars and mentors of color while carrying on the legacy of Jerome Williams, Bill Qualls and Thaddeus Spratlen.

WINNER:



Gail Ayala Taylor

Clinical Professor of Business Administration,
Dartmouth College

 [LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WINNER](#)

2023 Valuing Diversity PhD Scholarship

In partnership with the PhD Project and the AMA Academic Council, this scholarship seeks to widen the opportunities for underrepresented populations to attend marketing doctoral programs.



WINNERS:



Erika Zuloaga Cosme

University of Texas at
San Antonio



Davon Holmes

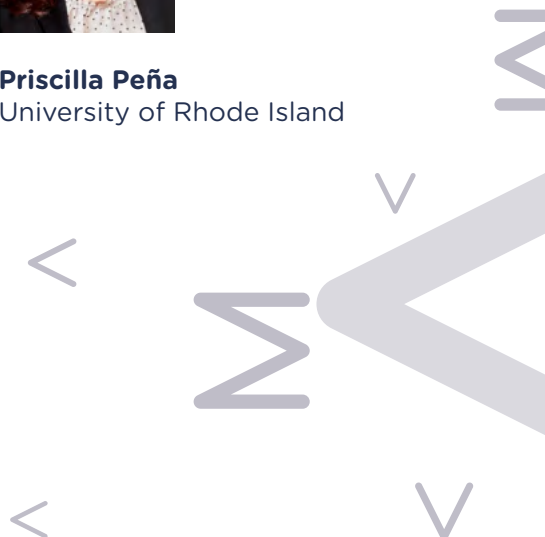
Georgia State University



Priscilla Peña

University of Rhode Island

 [LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WINNERS](#)



#GivingTuesday is November 28!

Mark your calendar and plan to participate in [#GivingTuesday](#) on November 28.

Support the power of marketing research to drive positive societal change, address critical challenges and make a lasting impact on the public good. Your donation to the American Marketing Association Foundation this #GivingTuesday directly impacts initiatives that bridge gaps, foster collaboration and drive positive change!

Call for Nominations

Know any outstanding marketing scholars?
Honor them for their achievements by recommending them for an AMA award. Nominations are currently open for:

- » **AMA-Irwin-McGraw-Hill Distinguished Marketing Educator Award**
ama.marketing/IrwinMcGrawHill
Nominations close **October 25, 2023**
- » **AMA Fellows**
ama.marketing/AMAFellows
Nominations close **October 25, 2023**
- » **John A. Howard/AMA Doctoral Dissertation Award**
ama.marketing/JohnAHoward
Nominations close **October 25, 2023**
- » **Erin Anderson Award for an Emerging Female Marketing Scholar and Mentor**
ama.marketing/ErinAnderson
Nominations close **October 30, 2023**
- » **William L. Wilkie Marketing for a Better World Award**
ama.marketing/WilliamLWilkie
Nominations close **October 31, 2023**
- » **Robert Lusch Early Career Research Award**
ama.marketing/RobertLusch
Nominations close **November 17, 2023**



6 Reasons Why Higher Education Marketers Should Use a Marketing Maturity Model

BY JAIME HUNT

Lleading a marketing communications team through transformative change is typically a multi-year, multi-faceted endeavor—one that can often seem daunting. Compounding the challenge of limited budgets and overwhelmed staff lies a familiar foe: resistance to change. Many articles delve into why our teams might want to stick with what they know, but a common culprit is a lack of understanding of the shared vision and an inability to see a path to the end goal. True forward momentum is often lost to this resistance. For some universities, that lack of momentum could mean the difference between struggling to survive and thriving.

As marketing leaders consider how to overcome these challenges and establish a path to a brighter future, one solution to consider is implementing a marketing maturity model.

A marketing maturity model is a structured framework used to assess and measure the effectiveness and sophistication of your department's marketing capabilities and strategies. Typically, a marketing maturity model consists of several levels or stages, each representing a higher level of maturity in terms of marketing practices, processes, and strategies. As an organization progresses through these stages, they adopt more advanced and strategic approaches to marketing.

A marketing maturity model's ultimate goal is to guide the journey toward achieving better alignment with strategic objectives, more effective use of resources, increased use of data, and higher overall marketing performance.

As you consider whether a marketing maturity matrix is the right solution for your team, consider these six benefits.

1 ASSESSMENT AND BENCHMARKING

A maturity model offers a framework to assess the current state of your marketing efforts and highlight your organization's strengths and weaknesses. As you advance through future stages, you can benchmark your progress and celebrate successes.

2 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

A maturity model can facilitate alignment between marcom efforts and your institution's overall strategic goals by helping your team understand how their activities contribute to broader objectives. It also allows you to frankly assess alignment across decentralized teams.

3 RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Rarely does a higher education marketer feel that their allocated resources are sufficient to achieve desired goals. With limited resources, effective allocation is absolutely

crucial. A maturity model can aid in identifying where resources should be invested for maximum impact.

4 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A maturity model encourages a culture of continuous improvement by promoting a cyclical process of evaluation, planning, implementation, and measurement.

5 STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

A maturity model provides a straightforward way to communicate the progress of marketing efforts to various stakeholders, including senior administration, faculty, and your board. Demonstrating advancement along the maturity model can boost confidence in your marketing team's capabilities—and potentially allow you to make a case for additional resources.

6 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As your team works through the different stages of a maturity model, they gain valuable experience and skills. This benefits your university's marketing efforts and contributes to your team's professional development—something that boosts morale and builds confidence.

A marketing maturity model might be the ideal solution for savvy marketing leaders looking to move continuous improvement off the back burner. This highly customizable strategic tool empowers higher education marketers to systematically assess, plan, execute, and optimize their marketing efforts while fostering growth, alignment, and adaptability. The end game: more effective and impactful marketing strategies that serve your university better. **MM**

Jaime Hunt is the VP for University Communications and Chief Marketing Officer at Old Dominion University.





4 Baseline Strategies for Marketing to Generation Alpha

BY CARRIE PHILLIPS

As marketing and communication leaders, it is our job to stay one step ahead in our marketing efforts. That means talking now about what we are doing to begin marketing to a group of students who will be attending college within the decade. That group of students is part of the newest generation, Generation Alpha. The Annie E. Casey Foundation refers to Generation Alpha as students born from 2013 through 2025, and believes that this is one of the most racially diverse and technology-native groups of learners our campuses will have experienced. That means we should begin planning now for meaningful ways to engage these students when they begin the college exploration process in earnest.

We must find ways to connect our CRM to our websites to effectively communicate to students in an online website world. Corporate America has been doing this for some time, but higher education has lacked the ability or willingness. We must change that to really engage with this audience.

With that in mind, here are four baseline strategies we should consider to ensure that we're best prepared for engaging with this audience.

Authenticity in Branding

This generation, more than many before, is less interested in the “flash” of our picture-perfect marketing campaigns. Having grown up in an iPad and Instagram world, these students have a strong understanding of what is staged versus authentic. They, more than other generations, understand that what's on the grid does not always represent reality. For our marketing and branding campaigns to resonate, our beautiful, scripted messages with perfect production must also incorporate behind-the-scenes content, low-fi student reflections, and candid assessments of where we're going. Without this balance, our branding may fall flat to a generation looking for real students and honesty about what to expect.

Experience Matters

This is a generation that has grown up with everything being a “moment.” Just look at all the teens showing up to the movies in their Barbie pink or attending Taylor Swift or Jojo Siwa concerts with mom. Because cameras are a daily part of life for this generation, they understand and expect pictures and videos to be taken at events—“doing it for the 'Gram” is part of the process. That means we as marketing teams must ensure that interactions with our brand are also experiences. It is no longer enough to set up a backdrop and encourage students to take a selfie. The experience must also translate to our emails and mailed items. To everything. The sooner we start thinking about the experience of our institutions and our processes, the better we can make sure that these things convey our brand and add to the experience we want students to have.

Social Responsibility

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the poverty divide has widened for this generation of

learners, and the split between “haves” and “have nots” is bigger than ever before. Not everyone has the basics, while others have an abundance. This generation sees this in the lunch line and on the playground and wants to do something about it. It is important for our university brands to share how we are being good stewards of resources and the environment. This could be through volunteer programs, no-cost classroom resources, a robust recycling effort, or something else. These students want to know how we're working to improve our local community, provide a level playing field for all students, and treat our planet better.

Website Personalization

This generation has grown up in an Amazon world, where every online experience is personalized—except higher education marketing (specifically our websites). We must change that. My guess is that this generation will use ChatGPT (or its future iteration) to explore and search for colleges. That means we must have accurate content on our websites in order to curate that personalized experience. Additionally, customized search and homepage content is the norm for this audience. We must find ways to connect our CRM to our websites to effectively communicate to students in an online website world. Corporate America has been doing this for some time, but higher education has lacked the ability or willingness. We must change that to really engage with this audience.

Where to Begin

The important thing to understand is that these are generalizations and ideas of where to begin. The bottom line is we need to continually be talking to current and future students to understand what matters. Coming full circle, that means we must continue our work to stay a step ahead to ensure that we are leading the change on our campus and then working to tell those stories in new, creative, authentic ways. **MN**

Carrie Phillips is part creative, part analyst, but fully curious to solve higher education.

It's Time We View Higher Ed CMOs as Institutional Leaders

BY EDDIE FRANCIS

So, there I was one day, manically going through assignments. I felt like a server at a New Orleans restaurant on Mardi Gras weekend. It was as if campus departments were patrons—both intoxicated and obnoxiously sober—and I was running from table to table, feverishly taking orders. That's because I didn't realize that, as the chief marketing officer, I was supposed to be the chef—planning a menu, tracking product quality, monitoring customer satisfaction, and more.

A simple thought from former AMA Symposium for the Marketing of Higher Education planning committee member Chris Hudson changed my mindset about being a higher ed CMO. During one of our meetings he told me, "You have to go from being an order-taker to a strategist." As I grew, I realized that to strategize is to lead. It hit me one day that there are five ways that higher ed CMOs are institutional leaders.

CMOs' expertise authority carries weight

Expertise authority is mastering the skills and knowledge of your discipline. Among campus administrators, a higher ed CMO is most likely the only one who knows the Four Ps (plus the additional three of physical evidence, processes, and people) and can apply them to their institution's specific needs. However, that knowledge doesn't live in a vacuum. It's the key to understanding every segment of the campus in a way that many others outside of the president may not.

CMOs are positioned to be institutional diplomats

In her book "How to Market a University," Terry Flannery suggests that CMOs work with their presidents to form marketing task forces as a way to gain buy-in and input across campus for marketing initiatives. Holy diplomacy, Batman! What a tremendous way to build influence.

Leadership is about people

During a panel discussion with The Chronicle of Higher Education about higher ed's talent crisis, Jaime Hunt, another AMA Symposium for the Marketing of Higher Education planning committee member, noted that leadership is about people. To take it a step further, I see higher education as a people business. It may not be true of every higher ed CMO, but the vast majority understand that colleges and universities thrive when the people who work and enroll there are at the center of how business is conducted.

Marketing means business

One of the reasons that so many of us love higher education is what it means. It meant the world to me to lead marketing at three Historically Black Colleges and Universities, institutions that pride themselves as engines of social mobility. With all the feels, however, my marketing hat stayed on. One faculty member told me that they hate it when higher ed is referred to as a "business." I shot back, "We all find out that it's a business when we lose enrollment."

CMOs adapt quickly to change

I wanted to find out what some of today's biggest leadership challenges are, so I looked at more than 30 articles and conducted an informal social media survey. Among the articles and survey responses, the number one leadership challenge cited is managing change. There is no question that CMOs are highly adaptable, recognizing the need to respond to market changes and trends as well as the need to update approaches in student outreach in addition to other areas.

With all of this higher ed marketing goodness, let's recognize that the more a CMO owns their expertise, the stronger a leader they are. The higher ed marketing space, however, is filled with CMOs and other marketing professionals who don't hesitate to share knowledge with their colleagues. As I have found, sharing even the smallest morsel of insight does wonders for building one's leadership skills. **MN**

Eddie Francis is a member of the planning committee for AMA's Symposium for the Marketing of Higher Education. He hosts the podcast "I Wanna Work There!" which focuses on employer branding in higher education. Eddie is the principal of Edify Ventures, LLC, a brand strategy consultancy based in New Orleans.

