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## Integration of marketing, development is the key to doing things differently

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For many professional service firms, erasing marketing and business development silos can be tough. Their less-than-optimal operational structures and negative cultural traditions can hinder their efforts to integrate marketing and business development.

And yet, when trying to integrate their marketing and business development functions, firms are quite capable of making progress. They've launched noteworthy efforts to address their structural and cultural disconnect challenges. "Doing things differently" is alive and well.

Could doing things differently actually hinder effectiveness? Unfortunately, yes, especially when laudable "change" efforts cause even more structural silos and cultural barriers. This is "the paradox of doing things differently."

Here are some examples.

The first is related to the variable scope and limited responsibilities of a firm's marketing and business development function. There is growing evidence that energetic, persistent marketing and business development leaders are pushing their firms to let them define their functions.

Who can blame them? Since the earliest days of service marketing, it has been up to marketers and business developers to create their own functional purviews, forge their own growth avenues and build their own skills.

Today, many marketers and business developers consider this effort positively; these doing-things-differently pathfinders draw attention to their organizations' flexibility, willingness to evolve and marketplace savvy. Indeed, firms should be living, breathing, malleable enterprises.

But consider what happens if the doing-things-differently champion leaves her firm. Does the function she created remain? Often, when she leaves, her contributions leave, too.

A second example involves narrowly defined marketing and business development initiatives, often championed by professionally brave individuals or small groups. Many of these piecemeal initiatives begin as pilots endorsed by executive committees or special task forces, and have limited implementation (at the geographic, line-of-business or industry level). In concept, pilots make a lot of sense. Internal entrepreneurship is good, right?

But consider what happens if a business unit manager launches a region-specific positioning platform, and it gets out of sync with the rest of the firm. Did executives fully evaluate the integration potential of the platform as a whole for it to help the entire firm move ahead?

All too often, because the pathway was paved by one individual or small team, and accommodated on a situation-specific basis, the answer is no.

Doing things differently with integration as the goal. Despite the fact that these doing-things-differently initiatives signify nimble enterprises and celebrate innovation, individual pathways and narrowly focused initiatives carry the risk of creating organizational barriers.

Without a formal framework for cross-functional or enterprise-wide integration, they can create more disconnect.

Doing things differently with integration in mind carries enormous potential to fulfill the organization's goal of gaining market share, growing the right revenues and optimally serving clients.

Take the example of an internal CEO survey about perceptions of marketing in which a full 75 percent of respondents agreed that marketing is more important than ever. But when they were asked about their perception of marketing's priorities, less than 50 percent of CEOs believed that what keeps them awake at night are at the top of marketing's agenda.

The CEO respondents pointed out that "marketing is not aligned with the CEO's agenda," and that, instead, marketing focuses "on tactical issues such as maintaining branding guidelines, sharing best practices and counseling divisions."

They wanted marketing to provide measurable outcomes and a clear ROI, but they felt that marketing's metrics were not up to the task.

Compare these responses to a survey of marketers that asked about their challenges in becoming more strategically effective. Rather than responding about practice growth or strategic alignment, these marketing respondents brought up other types of issues, including time management and workload.

Talk about a disconnect!

To do things differently, with integration as the ultimate outcome, it is imperative that marketers develop a knowledge base and personal expertise within the company's core business services. By enhancing her strategic contribution to the firm – say, new services, thought leadership initiatives or a research program – a marketer can also advance professionally.

Initiatives like these often lead to significant revenue growth from the practice level to entire enterprises.

The underlying engine is integration. Doing things differently does not need to become a paradox.

Executive managers should continue to welcome internal entrepreneurship and individual professional passion. But they should filter these and other narrowly defined initiatives for their potential to foster marketing and business development integration.

Anything less leaves the organization vulnerable to yet another layer of disconnect.

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