Lesson Eighteen

DON'T REPORT MARKETING METRICS OUTSIDE THE MARKETING TEAM

Though possibly controversial, this is among my favorite lessons from the marketing leaders. The lesson is this: don't share marketing metrics outside of the marketing department.

This sounds counter-intuitive so I'll unpack it a bit. The first element of the lesson is about marketing metrics. Marketers track dozens of metrics to gauge how various campaigns are working. Many of these metrics are granular and don't mean much unless combined with other measurements. Some examples of this are email open rates and click-throughs, the length of time visitors remain on the website, and media mentions. There are literally hundreds of metrics that are reasonable for marketers to track that fall into this category of marketing metrics.

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But the problem with these metrics is that when granular marketing metrics are reported outside the marketing department, they can be perceived as being the goal of marketers. For example, if a marketing team shares the email open rate, non-marketing executives might think that the marketers have email open rates as their goal. Of course, smart marketers know that revenue generation is their goal, and that email open rate is just one of the many gauges they look at to get them to their goal.

I've seen many instances of this – even when marketers do a tremendous job of framing marketing metrics in the context of a revenue-generation goal. Somehow, presenting granular marketing data to non-marketers makes them think marketers are focused on the wrong goals.

That's why I like the idea of not sharing marketing metrics outside of the marketing team. It avoids this issue of non-marketing executives getting side-tracked by operational data. If marketers share only the ultimate goals and metrics – typically qualified leads, revenue and profitability – no one will think they have the wrong priorities or don't understand what marketing's real job is.

Keep in mind that just because marketers aren't reporting marketing data outside of the marketing department, that doesn't mean they aren't reporting it *inside* the marketing team. Marketers know that the desired outcome of qualified leads, revenue, and profitability are the sum total of the many marketing activities, initiatives, and investments they undertake – and that they need to measure all of those activities to gauge performance on a frequent basis. So they have a very detailed scorecard *within* the marketing team for evaluating performance. This scorecard will include dozens of metrics (or more) that help them track and refine results. They just don't share it outside of the marketing function.

Andrew Jenkins offered a caveat to this rule, however. In his experience with implementing digital marketing and social media strategies in large companies, he's seen many examples of silo behaviour – where one team doesn't know what the other team is doing, and certainly doesn't understand why they're doing it. He feels that only reporting on marketing outcomes is a dangerous path and that more detailed reporting leads to better cross-functional understanding and collaboration. In the absence of knowledge of what other teams are working on, it's difficult for people to work effectively together. His recommendation is for marketing leaders to take a hybrid approach to reporting – somewhere between the level of granularity that's reported within the marketing team and the scorecard that the Board of Directors would be interested in.

And Susan Smart provided an additional consideration: "The extent of metrics that you share in the organization should correspond to the nature of the organization and the individual you're reporting to. Some organizations are extremely analytical – if that's the case, provide more metrics and data. Other organizations and individuals are more big-picture oriented. They'll want to know the general direction and success, but they won't be interested in the details. When that's the case, don't overdo the scorecard."

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