

Technology-Driven Marketing or Marketing-Driven Technology: Maximizing the Partnership Between the CMO and CTO in a Digital-First World



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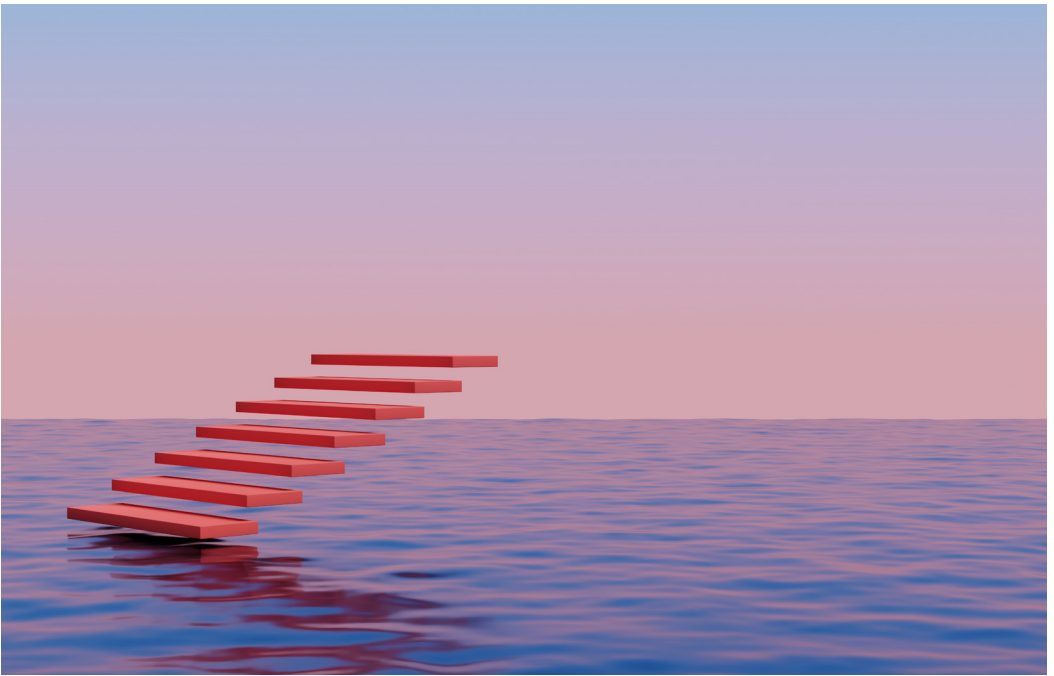
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The average age of Fortune 500 CEOs is nearly 58. That means that many of the leaders of the world's biggest companies have witnessed first-hand the tremendous changes that technology has wrought, both in terms of how the business operates and how it connects with customers and prospects.

As customers have changed – expecting personalized marketing experiences and flawless technology execution at every turn – businesses

have been tasked with meeting those needs. That shift has led to massive changes in how both the marketing and technology functions operate within companies.

As a result, technology has moved from a back-of-the-house cost center to a customer-facing growth lever. Marketing, meanwhile, has transformed from a long-cycle, slow optimization posture to an always-on, always-optimizing approach that is directly influencing sales.



In light of that co-evolution, the most successful businesses foster a strategic partnership between the chief marketing officer (CMO) and the chief technology officer (CTO) in which technology acts as a core enabler of marketing-driven business growth.

— *Rapid Marketing and
Technology Evolution – in Parallel* —

Marketing and technology have historically been very siloed corporate organizations. Back in 2008, while I [Wendy] was at Coca-Cola, the CTO came into my office and said, “I don’t think your team is getting ahead enough on technology.” From first-party data and customized outreach that made the tech work for marketing, he brought the capabilities to the table to bring the marketing team the insights we needed to unfold a future where $1+1=3$. Looking back, many technology professionals

saw the benefits of integrating marketing and technology ahead of marketers. These leaders were closer to the technology and could see how advancements in areas like data capture would impact the continuum of business, not just marketing.

Back then, marketing executed large-scale, time-bound campaigns across limited media channels (like TV, print and early display digital) that had long feedback loops which in turn provided limited insights. Today, marketing has adopted an always-on approach with multiple simultaneous customer journeys playing out over dozens of media touchpoints and owned channels – mainly digital – with abundant data providing profound insight.

Meanwhile, technology has moved from a reactive cost center to a proactive lever of growth. The business technology landscape

has undergone a significant transformation, fundamentally changing how companies operate by adopting a series of technologies like cloud computing and SaaS while innovating work itself through methodologies like Agile. Alongside these technology and workflow transformations, tech leaders have become business leaders with a deep understanding of how technology works in support of business goals, how it drives customer satisfaction and, ultimately, profitability.

The evolutions of marketing and technology are being driven by both the shift in consumers' expectations for a seamless, digital-first omnichannel experience and the technological move to mobile, cloud computing and big data. These changes have brought the marketing and technology organizations together in some unexpected, yet potential-rich, ways.

— *Integrating the Work of* —
Marketing and Technology

The technological shifts driving changes in how both customers and businesses operate necessitate a change in how CMOs and CTOs engage with one another. This transformation means a wide-ranging CMO/CTO relationship that is critical to future business success. It also means the need for co-dependency and co-creation across business relationships, processes, responsibilities and resources.

Shared Relationships

From Google to Amazon to Adobe, the relationships that power today's marketing are the same critical partners for the technology organization. The partners that enable the connection to the

customer across search, video, website and retail experiences for the CMO's team are the same ones that are providing cloud storage, cloud computing, hosting and AI services to the CTO's team.

Marketing and technology are both dependent on these relationships since technology is on the hook for safe, secure implementation throughout the organization while marketing is tasked with using these tools to iteratively execute campaigns and gather data.

Shared Processes

As technology has transitioned to a strategic business function, marketing strategies have evolved in tandem, leveraging automation, analytics and digital platforms to engage audiences with unprecedented precision. The integration of technology enhances customer engagement and drives growth. Martech tools mean marketing teams can work alongside IT to craft data-driven, personalized campaigns that are both agile and responsive to market dynamics.

This evolution means marketing now completes work alongside technology. Agile methodologies, adopted from the tech world, enable marketing teams to quickly adapt to changing consumer trends and technology advancements, fostering a culture of rapid testing and iteration. This shift not only enhances marketing's agility but also underscores the importance of technology in creating personalized, omnichannel customer experiences.

Shared Responsibilities

As marketing tools become more powerful and data-driven, there is a natural requirement to manage data

(and privacy) to protect customers and business interests, as well as deliver personalized experiences to customers.

To this end, marketing and technology must also collaborate on creating and managing shared touchpoints like websites and applications that drive growth. This partnership drives business outcomes through a focus on customer experience as the ultimate competitive differentiator. From deep customer insights that empower tailored marketing to real-time feedback that enables marketers to deliver the right message at the right time, the customer experience has transformed to a point where tech-enabled personalization is possible on a massive scale. This shared responsibility between marketing and technology underscores the critical role this relationship has in driving innovation and competitive advantage for businesses.

Shared Resources

Similar to sharing partnerships, marketing and technology functions are co-dependent on the tools used to drive business growth. The suite of sophisticated martech tools available – from sales enablement, marketing automation and enrichment to social listening, content creation and analytics platforms – enables data-driven, tailored campaigns and measurement.

These tools and the collaboration between marketing and technology have also driven advancements in business intelligence that can be reported up to the C-suite for the benefit of the entire company. This intelligence can be reported and acted on in real time and reshape decision-making and results. Intelligence has

moved from a lagging indicator to an instantaneous indicator to, now, a predictive indicator.

— Empowering a Productive — CMO-CTO Relationship

This relationship between the CMO and CTO is a unique one in the C-suite. These functions meet in a high-pressure, problem-solving-oriented creative space, but there is a significant technical underpinning to both practices. Part of the work we do as an advisory practice at Consello is bringing these sides together to build natural interdependence and enhance operations, but there is much both sides can learn from the other to accelerate this relationship-building.

Wendy's Perspective: How CTOs Can Collaborate with Marketers

While the relationship between technology and marketing has improved in recent years, there are opportunities for top-performing technology functions to up their game and collaborate in ways that work for marketing teams. Key to this partnership is understanding some central tenets of how marketing engages with technology:

1. TECHNOLOGY IS NOT THE STRATEGY, IT IS AN ENABLER OF THE STRATEGY. Great marketing must always have its customers at the center of the strategy. Everything marketing does is to accelerate that impact and outcome with the customer, but technology can make the brand experience and purchase easier, more accessible, faster, more memorable and more valuable. Technology is always in support of that engagement rather than leading it.

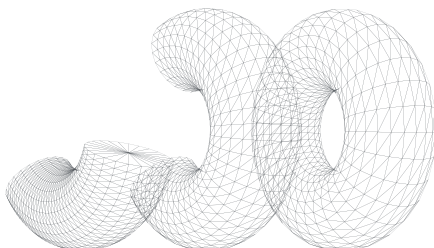
CLOSER COLLABORATION

CMOs and CTOs can cooperate to build the key structures and initiatives to enable and incentivize more productive partnerships.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

SHARED KPIs

SECONDMENTS



2. THE BEST MARKETING COMES AT THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND SCIENCE. The analytics and data-driven focus of marketing must marry with the art of crafting a message that breaks through with customers. Marketers must understand their audience's purchase behavior and habits while concurrently executing a compelling creative effort. The science or art alone does not work. As Jim Collins references in "Built to Last," this dynamic is an example of "the genius of the AND" not "the tyranny of the OR" which unlocks greater value for brands.

3. PERFECTION IS THE ENEMY OF PROGRESS. Marketers and technologists alike can get caught in a loop of seeking perfect outcomes that can stymie progress and rapid adoption of new technology. With the expanse of consumer touchpoints, experimentation is easier, more controlled and more trackable than it

was previously. To create the highest impact, marketing and technology should be constantly learning and prioritize progress over perfection.

[Juan Pablo's Perspective: How CMOs Can Accelerate Technology Implementation](#)

Technologists work better when we're presented with problems and not solutions. By understanding what you're trying to achieve, they can offer the best solutions that might not have been considered. That way, both sides set the partnership up for success. Building these trusting relationships, however, also means understanding critical parts of how technology teams work:

1. THE STRATEGIC DEPTH OF TECH DEBT. CMOs often see tech debt, or the accumulation of outdated or inefficient technology, as a technical obstacle. These systems require

significant time and resources to upgrade because it's not just about fixing old code – it's about how past decisions impact future capabilities. Great CMOs understand how tech debt impacts their agility since high tech debt can slow the implementation of new marketing technologies and limit the company's ability to innovate.

2. THE INVISIBLE WORKLOAD'S IMPACT ON AGILITY.

Routine maintenance, security protocols and data management often go unnoticed by those outside the tech team, but these activities take a significant portion of tech resources. This invisible workload influences tech's capacity to support new marketing initiatives. CMOs who appreciate these tasks can more effectively plan and prioritize their technology goals, ensuring that marketing strategies are not only innovative but also built on a secure and stable digital foundation.

3. THE RISKS AND COSTS OF SHADOW IT.

It can be tempting to implement shadow IT, or technology acquired without knowledge of the IT team. At face value, it can offer quick solutions to marketing problems, but procuring technology without IT's input can lead to security vulnerabilities, data silos and integration headaches. CMOs and technology leaders can partner to ensure new technologies enhance the marketing strategy without compromising the organization's overall tech ecosystem.

4. EXPANDING THE MARKETING TECH STACK WITHOUT SOLID DATA FOUNDATIONS.

The excitement of adding new tools and capabilities, like AI-driven insights, advanced analytics or personalized marketing platforms, to the martech stack can overshadow the need for a robust

data foundation. Without clean, consistent and well-structured data, even the most advanced technologies can lead to wasted resources, missed opportunities and issues of data silos, making it difficult to gain a unified view of the customer journey. For CMOs, understanding the interplay between data infrastructure and martech capabilities is essential for driving meaningful engagement and insights from marketing efforts.

— Building the Infrastructure — for Closer Collaboration

Looking ahead, CMOs and CTOs can cooperate to build the key structures and initiatives to enable and incentivize more productive partnerships.

• LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE:

Both marketing and technology must bring their capabilities to the leadership team. CEOs must have equal visibility into both functions to ensure equivalent exposure and similar opportunities to power this collaboration.

• SHARED KPIS:

CMOs and CTOs must have the same vision of what success looks like at their companies. To drive this point home, leaders may even instill a shared budget to ensure martech truly works hand-in-hand, the agenda is synced and accountability is shared.

• SECONDMENTS:

Marketing and technology leaders can sit on each other's teams for brief projects or extended periods. This kind of engagement can foster a broader set of understanding, empathy, knowledge, visibility and, ultimately, capability by seconding team members across different opportunities.

Building out these structures can improve the effectiveness and impact of marketing. The technology allows marketing to be significantly more efficient, which means CMOs and CTOs have an opportunity to either reinvest and do more with marketing, put that surplus to use elsewhere in the business or drop it to the bottom line.

— *Investing in Relationships* —
— *and Organizational Success* —

The integration of the CMO and CTO is no longer a “nice to do” but an imperative for organizational and brand success. Provocatively, if leaders don’t achieve this collaboration, it will impact their brands and bottom lines in ways they don’t want it to. The CEO must set the expectation of collaboration and require an integrated agenda from these leaders with mutual accountability and responsibility. That includes reporting, budgetary management and capability development that will ensure this collaboration is a success.

Technology is underpinning the growth, advancement and evolution of marketing. It is almost impossible now to think about marketing without thinking about marketing and technology as the path forward as marketing is only getting more technically informed and executed.

Without engagement, marketing becomes irrelevant and a cost line, not a revenue center. For tech, without strategic buy-in, it is hard to keep the talent you need across the organization, which poses an attrition risk in a labor market where tech needs outpace those of other career fields.

These historically siloed organizations have evolved and adapted in the face of rapid technological change and are now co-dependent to the point where collaboration is critical for the success of the company. Forging a productive partnership means identifying the key structures and initiatives that can be put in place to enable and incentivize these organizations to build value for the business.

Addressing this relationship now is critical because technology will only get more complicated. The relationship between these two functions allows us to be more accountable, connected, predictable and measured – with all the capabilities that a technically fueled investment can achieve.

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