

Four Hurdles Standing in the Way

of Marketing's Contribution to Business Objectives

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Introduction

It's not in question that marketing has changed. In fact, [76% of marketers](#) think marketing has changed more in the past two years than in the past 50. For marketing leaders in distributed organizations, the added complexity serves as an effort multiplier and challenges their ability to prove marketing's contribution to business objectives. Complicating things, the corporate marketer's role as the brand's amplifier and chief custodian can often be seen as a play for control by the marketers they support internally, externally, and by the front-line sales organization.

The context is very different when comparing the corporate view to that of a branch or location. While corporate marketers are tasked with improving go-to-market effectiveness and the provision of a consistent brand experience, they are also under the gun to lower costs and improve adoption of the content, collateral, and promotional offers they provide. Local marketers are concerned with getting customers through the door and revenue in the bank. They are concerned about making their content and promotional offers personally relevant to local audiences. While the brand is created at the corporate level, in distributed organizations brand engagement is built locally.

Corporate marketers responsible for providing content, collateral, and resources that activate local marketing efforts have the disadvantage of operating at a distance from the stores, branches, and field sales teams expected to use them. They may not have the data or insights to understand the nuances of each local market or community, but even if they did, managing to each context would be a logistical nightmare. Brand consistency across regions and geographies is a critical concern, but so is the competitive advantage afforded by personalization. However, [74% of marketers in the top performing distributed organizations](#) agree that [personalization is a challenge](#), as well as a top priority.

Supporting the needs of internal teams and external locations presents challenges for content distribution. A factor that increases complexity is the lack of visibility as to how content is being used at the local level and whether it's producing the results it was designed to achieve. This lack of visibility is usually due to a lack of technology capabilities, as well as a lack of integration between point solutions. Attempting to maintain control, corporate marketers have stuck with manual processes to deliver and monitor brand assets as they move across the network—often to their detriment.

The investment made in distributed marketing and sales enablement is not small. Research studies report that the investment in content marketing is growing by more than 15% year-over-year. Gartner research finds that 11.6% of digital marketing budgets is spent on content creation and management with another 5.6% spent on email marketing. It has been estimated that the size of the annual investments made across industries ranges from \$750,000 for a fitness franchise, to \$4 million for a national telecommunications company, and as high as \$10 million for an enterprise property and casualty insurer. Costs can escalate if a company violates compliance and is fined for providing inaccurate information. Forrester estimates that the fines imposed can reach 5% of revenues for financial services companies, for example.

What corporate marketers need to resolve their issues and enable personalization at the local level is a centralized resource to manage, adapt, and distribute content both online and offline and on product: A single platform designed expressly for Content Distribution Management (CDM). This paper takes a look at four hurdles standing in the way of marketing's contribution to business objectives and how CDM can help to remove them.

Four Hurdles to Proving Business Value

Given the investment made in content for distributed organizations, reducing costs is a business imperative that must be achieved while meeting the demands for content and campaigns that continue to increase. Even though the control over brand presentation sought by corporate marketers appears to be at odds with the local marketer's and salesperson's need to adapt content for nuances specific to their customers and the area served, it needn't be. One of the most costly results of leaving this conflict unresolved is in the amount of duplication between the two entities. It has been estimated that as much as 82% of corporate and local marketing is redundant.

By overcoming the four hurdles that most distributed organizations struggle with, marketing will not only be able to prove how its programs contribute to business objectives, but to do so with lower spend.

1. Technology

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Most marketers have met the need to address more channels and deploy content in new ways by adding point solutions based on the identification of a specific purpose. Over the years, the silos in marketing operations have grown as the technologies in use, such as marketing automation, digital asset management, and web content management, have grown. The tendency to implement a variety of point solutions that automate or address one process at a time also increases confusion and frustration at the local level by forcing those entities to juggle multiple platforms and making it difficult to find the content they need. Even when they do find it, customization is either not an option or not made easy.

Unable to get what they need from corporate marketing, local marketers, and salespeople have gone rogue, adopting their own marketing point solutions and hiring local creative resources to help them to execute. The result is a fragmented customer experience that confuses, rather than delights, when customers encounter brand messaging that doesn't match between local and national campaigns.

Part of what's needed from technology is to reduce the high effort often required for local marketers and salespeople to find what they need. It's not uncommon for the corporate office to provide local marketers with an intranet portal for accessing brand assets that links them to three to five additional repositories of content and collateral in a variety of formats, including digital, print, templates, and promotional inventory. Without the ability to customize much of it, local marketers will extract content from the intranet and recreate it in their own platforms or with the help of their local creative agency or printer.

Fragmented technology also fails to enable easy and comprehensive reporting that provides the visibility needed for marketers to gauge the effectiveness of content, campaigns, and offers—either via individual locations or overall. Decisions about which programs and promotions to roll out are often based on intuition, rather than data-driven insights. This, in turn, limits the ability of corporate marketers to tie programs to business objectives and report meaningful metrics indicative of improvements to performance that drives top-line growth.

A CDM platform that enables corporate marketers to lock down the components of brand that matter most, yet allows local marketers to customize the rest, will reduce rogue efforts. Because a CDM platform includes a single repository for market-ready content for both digital and traditional print (including promotional products),

time and effort for local entities is greatly reduced. And so is the need for redundant marketing platforms that local marketers deployed to become more relevant and engaging to their customers and communities.

2. Analytics

Lack of insight into marketing efforts—whether corporate or local—can lead to over-communicating that alienates customers, confusing customer experiences, and brand inconsistency. Reporting based on joint efforts provides evidence about what's working and what's not and the state of performance for both regional and national programs. Considering that [87% of marketers](#) surveyed by Gleanster admitted that their organization's customer experience had the need for improvement, analytics should not be overlooked as a source of insights that enable it. Without knowing which campaigns are executed when by whom, there's a chance that customer sentiment can be adversely affected.

While it's imperative that marketers have timely access to analytics, there is often a long wait for this information. For local marketers executing campaigns from their own platforms, the challenge may exist in a lack of expertise or the time necessary to evaluate marketing effectiveness. Conversely, corporate marketers who lack local expertise may miss nuances in their analysis that could be important for engaging local customers. And let's not forget that fragmented technology means either only a partial view of marketing performance or a lot of time and effort to manually import data from a variety of applications into a spreadsheet for analysis. By the time insights are gleaned, it's too late to make adjustments that could have improved performance.

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Marketing is churning out more content than ever. While a majority of marketers still find it challenging to produce engaging content and to find the time needed to do so, a lack of analytics for content distribution reduces the ability to identify content the field and customers find relevant. By the same token, an inability to diagnose which content is obsolete means that marketing could be making hefty investments to produce content that will never be used. According to Sirius Decisions, as much as [70% of content created by marketing sits unused](#).

A CDM platform that allows local marketers to customize and execute campaigns also enables the timely analysis of campaign effectiveness by corporate and local marketers. Content use across the content repository by all locations can be determined, allowing marketers to identify which is most relevant and which content,

offers or promotional products should be retired. This insight will also help marketers gauge how the direct salespeople are using the content and collateral to streamline efforts expended to create it. Analytics focused on content distribution will help to reduce costs and boost effectiveness.

3. Resources

While corporate marketing is challenged to do more with less, manual and fragmented operations contribute an operational cost that can be working against this objective. Lack of personnel, limited efficiency, slow reaction times, and processes that require “reinventing the wheel” create unnecessary costs. The time and effort delays imposed by those limitations can cost the organization in missed opportunities and the brand for being seen as unresponsive.

Manual processes also introduce room for human error, as does multi-tasking, which many reports find does not improve productivity or accuracy. Marketing teams under stress and resource limitations are known to do both. But they may be expending more effort for less gain than they'd hoped for. Manually tracking how brand assets move across the company network leads to wasted time and effort that could be recouped with CDM automation.

The real costs involved in the use of agencies at the local level due to the inability to customize content should not be overlooked. And, if not supplemented by agency resources, the one-off demands for customized content are likely falling to the corporate marketing team that is already overloaded. And this includes one-off requests from salespeople who are trying to close business and prefer to present personalized content and collateral to increase their chances of winning new business.

A CDM platform that enables salespeople to customize specific areas of the content and collateral they need has been shown to create a reduction of 40% in costs required to do that work for them. A CMO Council study found that 50% of local marketers and front-line salespeople were [calling for access to content that can be customized](#).

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4. Alignment

The mandate for corporate marketing to contribute to top-line growth and increased market share requires alignment with external and internal constituents, including sales. But alignment is not at the head of the class. Sixty-one percent of marketers and direct salespeople gave corporate marketing a C+ when asked to grade their experiences in accessing, applying, and utilizing brand materials locally. Some of the reasons included lack of relevance, delayed access, and the inability to customize for use, according to the CMO Council. That only 7% of marketers are extremely satisfied with the alignment and sharing of resources is evidence that there's a need for improvement.

"Poor execution is a symptom of poor alignment."

A lack of alignment is also obvious in the gap between the roll-out of national or global campaigns and localized efforts—sometimes as far apart as 30 days. Ultimately, this lack of coordinated efforts sends the message loud and clear that the organization isn't aligned with its customers, either. Poor execution is a symptom of poor alignment. With customer experience as one of the core contributors to company success, presenting customers with a consistent experience—whether with local or national campaigns—is an imperative.

When considering the entities that must be aligned, one can begin to understand the complexity involved, as well as the importance. Alignment extends from marketing to internal entities, such as field offices, divisions, and business units and to external entities, including branches, channel partners, and franchises. Add local sales organizations into the mix and you can see how much coordination is required to achieve the state of alignment that will contribute to organizational business objectives.

A CDM platform can provide the connectivity and collaboration between corporate marketing and each of these entities to create the alignment needed to execute strategies aimed to elevate the brand—regardless of where the marketing programs take place. With workflows that align content by business process or function, each entity will have direct access to exactly the material they need to provide relevant customer experiences that lead to better business outcomes.

Four Hurdles to Proving Business Value:

1. Technology
2. Analytics
3. Resources
4. Alignment

Conclusion

Marketing must make the transition from a function highly reliant on people to one highly empowered by technology and automation. Proving the contribution of marketing efforts is dependent on centralized control coupled with localized freedom that can be measured, monitored, and refined to pull the right levers that drive performance. Visibility is a major component of proving contribution, along with alignment to internal and external entities, including the sales organization, and customers.

With a centralized resource to manage, adapt, and distribute content, both online and offline, distributed marketing becomes manageable and more easily optimized. In addition to ensuring the timely access to brand assets and the ability to customize, CDM platform provides email marketing for campaign management, along with direct marketing and production. Rather than deploying yet another standalone point solution, a CDM platform integrates with marketing automation and CRM systems to help create an ecosystem that aligns all the parties involved. Analytics will help to ensure that every investment made in content, collateral, and promotional products provides a return that will contribute to the objectives of the business.



About the Author

Ardath Albee is a B2B Marketing Strategist and CEO of her firm Marketing Interactions, Inc. She helps companies with complex sales turn prospects into buyers with digital marketing strategies and content platforms that show them what's possible, why to embrace change, and how to gain value that drives business. Ardath authored the book, *eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale*, has written an upcoming book, *Digital Relevance*, and has been voted one of the 50 Most Influential People in Sales and Lead Management for the past three years.