HFS

Brave marketers must lead with data to drive change

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The bravest, most outward-looking chief marketing officers (CMOs) must be leaders of change, prioritizing how they work with CTOs and CIOs to build the ecosystems required to gather and respond to the data they need to deliver great experiences and frictionless commerce.

At an HFS Research marketing executive roundtable on March 7, supported by Capgemini, Google's Amy Copeland, Director, Global Data and Tech EMEA, described how she saw success when CMOs understood the need to connect business silos. Building partnerships beyond the business with an experience-first focus is imperative for modern marketers.

Make experience a shared focus, from the boardroom to the shop floor

Beyond having the idea or ambition, CMOs should be effective leaders of change to ensure experience becomes a shared focus from the boardroom to the shop floor.

Cellphone network Three's Fraser Gibson, Head of Channel Marketing, echoed the sentiment as he told the group about a campaign to raise awareness—and ultimately sales—among students.

"We are trying to work in a fully integrated way across marketing teams and focus on the customer to deliver a seamless marketing experience," he explained. Key to that is the idea of "one customer, one budget," focusing spending on the output for the customer rather than an individual department's key performance indicators (KPIs).

Data can give CMOs the backing to make the big leaps

Several marketing leaders at the event raised concerns that too many CMOs had become risk averse despite recognizing the increasing amount of data available, potentially providing the evidence they would need to back themselves in taking the big leaps.

HFS notes that much of the conversation centered on using data to measure outputs and marketing's impact on growth, KPIs, for example. But using customer data to drive decisions that impact those outputs appears less mature in the industry.

A top challenge and imperative for customer experience (CX) leaders is to increase their understanding of customers, an unattainable feat without proper data collection and quality (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: CMOs know they must get to know their customers better, and the key is using data better

What should be the primary imperatives of the CXO in today's enterprise?

Imperative	%
Increasing understanding of our customers	57%
Innovating for customer experiences	45%
Measuring experiences across the enterprise ecosystem	41%
Building customer loyalty and advocacy	37%
Building bridges across more traditional CX functions (e.g., contact center manager)	35%
Increasing understanding of our employees	32%
Getting rid of silos across the customer value chain	28%
Building human-centric experiences; making sure experiences work well for the customer	22%
Don't know or don't have one	1%

Sample: N=300 CX Leaders, 2022, "The Future of Experience in a Hybrid Reality"
Source: HFS Research, 2023

Data interpretation gap limits progress in customer experience

The executives shared concerns about their incomplete understanding of the flow of data into their businesses and their lack of resources for turning that data into insight for enhancing decision making.

A gap remains between what data scientists generate and how marketers can use it. Fraser summarized, "We need people to explain the data to us in a story."

Marketers have data, but they need support interpreting it. When that insight flows to the right decision points in the business, CMOs can become evidence-based drivers of real change—delivering the improvement in customer experience they aspire to.

Capgemini's Abha Singh, Offer Leader – Connected Marketing Operations, explained, "Marketing is evolving rapidly. It must be more agile yet scaled and global in its approach to delivering personalized experiences. All marketing programs need to be data driven and must be measured with relevant metrics to support growth and customer centricity for the brand."

The Bottom Line: Marketers need internal alliances and expert partners to make the best use of data.

The bravest marketers are leading the way in silo-busting alliances with their CTOs and CIOs that access the data they need to drive improvement in customer experience. To join them, marketers should turn to partners with digital and data expertise and the ability to run centralized processes globally at scale to close their interpretation gap and deliver real-time brand experiences. Connecting the dots outside of their businesses and streamlining the partner ecosystem will help CMOs add to HFS OneOffice™ experience-led outcomes with HFS OneEcosystem™ outputs to meet the needs of a customer's end-to-end life cycle.

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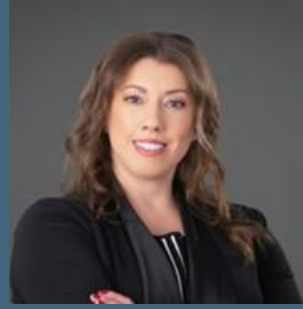
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Melissa O'Brien is an Executive Research Leader and Head of Research Operations at HFS Research. Melissa leads HFS' research initiatives for all things customer experience, including contact center, digital marketing and sales, CX design and conversational AI. Her industry research focuses on key services dynamics within retail, CPG, travel and hospitality firms. Melissa also looks after operations across all research coverage areas, helping HFS realize our own version of OneOffice.

Melissa brings both hands-on industry and analyst experience to her role at HFS.

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HFS is a unique analyst organization that combines deep visionary expertise with rapid demand-side analysis of the Global 2000. Its outlook for the future is admired across the global technology and business operations industries. Its analysts are respected for their no-nonsense insights based on demand-side data and engagements with industry practitioners.

HFS Research introduced the world to terms such as "RPA" (Robotic Process Automation) in 2012 and more recently, Digital OneOffice™ and OneEcosystem™. The HFS mission is to provide visionary insight into the major innovations impacting business operations such as Automation and Process Intelligence, Blockchain, the Metaverse and Web3. HFS has deep business practices across all key industries, IT and business services, sustainability and engineering.