

When Everybody Clicks

SUSTAINABLE
DIGITAL MARKETING

How Collaboration Impacts Digital Innovation

LISA WILLIAMS

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Dedicated to Dana Lookadoo

“Search and social are all about humans looking for answers, with their heads and with their hearts.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lisa Williams is a veteran of digital marketing and the author of "When Everybody Clicks: Sustainable Digital Marketing".

She has been featured in Kiplinger Magazine, Glamour Magazine, Boston Globe and The Oregonian. Lisa is on the SEMpdx (Search Engine Marketing Association of Portland, Oregon) Advisory Board, SocialMedia.org Health Board, and serves as a judge for Healthcare Internet Hall of Fame and US Search Awards.

She speaks at regional, national and international conferences on the topics of digital strategy, marketing integration, team development and leadership.

Acknowledgement

Writing a book should have a specific time limit, like how having a baby takes nine months. It just takes that long; which is a good thing, otherwise parents everywhere would be asking for more time. More time to be smarter, wiser, more prepared, but it doesn't work that way. It takes nine months, give or take, and then you have a baby.

The process of writing this book was a lot like having a baby but without the imposed timeline. I dragged it on as long as possible to make it better and smarter. "Just one more interview," I'd say "just one more perspective," I'd beg. Until those who have already birthed their own books said, "Just finish it for the love of Pete." I'm grateful to those who had been through the pain and understood the fear and anxiety that comes with sharing your chapters with the world (or in my case, with a small, but mighty band of digital marketers). Thank you to Anne Kennedy, Mona Ellesseily, Joe Pulizzi, Lisa Buyer, Ric Dragon, Jon Wuebben, Kristjan Hauksson and Marty Weintraub for sharing your experience.

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PART ONE

DISCOVERY

Be a Revolutionary - Changing the Game

As I embarked on a quest to better understand the qualities of agency and client engagement I naively thought that most were doing this well and I just needed to learn more about how that excellence transpired. What I found was a great deal of crisis within the industry, its talent and its leadership.

Industry Crisis

Brands depend on digital marketing for growth and as a tool for driving their relationships with their customers. Yet only 1 in 3 CMO's said they feel that their companies are spending enough to build out their digital capabilities, strongly indicating that as spending towards digital continues to increase, the industry crisis will become more profound. Now more than ever it's important to address the discrepancy between the responsibility of the digital marketing industry and the talent and leadership needed to bridge the crevasse.

Talent Crisis

It's estimated that marketing & advertising agencies have an annual employee turnover rate of upwards of 30%. To put this in perspective, only the hospitality industry – made

up of people who work at hotels and tourist attractions -- has a higher rate (37%).

There's a great deal of competition for talented digital marketers but the efforts to retain that talent are minimal. "We need to fight with startups, technology and platform companies for talent," according to Maurice Levy, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Publicis Groupe. Even within organizations that provide programs to increase retention, retaining talent is rarely measured, analyzed and reported upon as part of regular health measurement.

For the companies who are leveraging human resources and operational resources to impact talent happiness, engagement and longevity, this data is rarely shared as part of the top-level health of the organization or as a predictor of future performance.

Leadership Crisis

Authors on the topic of leadership share that 7 out of 8 of the 163 million people in the US workforce are unhappy in their jobs. Those numbers may not correlate perfectly in digital marketing, but the high level of turnover in agencies and on marketing teams within brands is illustrative of the problem.

"The spoils go to those who can best imagine state-of-the-art products and creative relationships—and then successfully rewire their enterprises as needed," The Year of the Digital Leader.

This rewiring and revolution requires a change of priorities, a change of thinking and a focus on investing in the relationship at least as much as we invest in

technology. What we're doing isn't working. Turnover in the industry is high, dissatisfaction with the relationship between agency and brand is high and there is a great deal of untapped revenue and human potential.

Developing a long-term strategy for digital commerce and addressing the convergence of digital marketing strategies are recommendations from Gartner, which delivers technology research to global technology business leaders to make informed decisions on key initiatives. Developing a long-term plan for search, social, mobile and emerging channels is a pain point for most organizations.

The sampling of interviewees conducted for this book also illuminated that one of the biggest management missteps is managing to a tactic or limited strategy rather than to a comprehensive long-term digital marketing plan.

"The traditional rules we have for institutions don't work anymore," says Joi Ito, Entrepreneur and past Director of MIT Media Labs. The institutions of marketing and advertising aren't exempt from this reality.

Statistics aside, few would argue that digital marketing is in an industry, talent and leadership crisis that requires revolutionary thinking and action. Part of this revolution could start with addressing the turnover and rejection of the relationships that already exist.

Designating a dedicated functional team of C-Level leadership with a focus on digital expertise is imperative to helping address the crisis. Some companies have even created digital strategy boards and cross-functional teams to address the need.

About nine months into researching and interviewing I had what would become a breakthrough interview with Kevin Lee. I started the discussion with my burning question, "What makes a good relationship between an agency and brand?" He instantly said, "You're asking the wrong question." Fantastic, nine months of interviews and I'm asking the wrong question. I struggled to move from defensive mode to inquisitive researcher mode. "What makes you say that?" Lee went on to point out that the agency/brand relationship was broken. He cited huge turnover in agencies, to a very high level of dissatisfaction of big brands with vendors. CMO's get sold projects from executive level staff that are then executed by junior resources with little experience. Investment in training for junior resources is limited prior to placing them on highly billable projects. Then when those resources turnover, all of the investment made by the client in brand immersion and experience is gone. Lee pointed out that the cost of this model was highly prohibitive and a more sustainable model would need to include a better structure of people and pricing and should include in-house training of teams by consultancies. These are things a lot of agencies are unwilling to do because it can be finite. Lee insisted that agencies who incorporate this client-problem-first approach would succeed in a marketplace where brands aren't always happy with agency results.

Aligning on brand needs (present and future) and agency longevity is another enormous marketing challenge that most veterans in the industry agree is an issue. My initial pursuit was defining the qualities of improving the relationship between an agency or consultant and a brand or company. It evolved into trying to answer the question of improving relationships across all digital marketing endeavors with the understanding that the traditional model has room for improvement. Where

might this take this relatively new but highly impactful industry?

As we look at success across industries, the sharing economy has driven a lot of innovation that is starting to unfold for the digital industry. What we do know about the emerging economies driven by digital innovation and technology is that, if a system isn't working, innovators will find a new way.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. How are you addressing the digital industry, talent, and leadership crisis?
2. Are you measuring the cost of acquiring talent (partners and employees)?
3. Do you have a plan for ongoing investment in that talent?
4. Do you calculate the ROI and how much money your company can save on decreasing turnover rates?
5. If you're a brand, have you dedicated enough resources to managing vendor/agency relationships?
6. If you're a vendor/agency, have you dedicated enough resources into selecting the right brand partners?

Be Inquisitive - Spending Time in Discovery

I set out to understand patterns in establishing the relationship between agency and client.

Several marketers noted that willingness to spend time in negotiation and in discovery were top strategies both brand and agency can do to improve the goal, approach, and results of a sustainable digital marketing project.

Bill Hunt is a global digital marketing specialist, CEO & Founder of Back Azimuth Consulting and author. He shared, "Have the important, sometimes difficult conversation early. No one likes conflict, we don't like to talk about it, but addressing it earlier rather than later can help create a trusting foundation." In discovery Hunt asks, "How do you handle success?" He recommends creating long and short-term goals allowing for both sides to align on, not only what success looks like but also taking a moment to celebrate successes. Hunt asks other hard questions, "When we're interviewing a potential new partner I ask the project sponsor or leader, 'How do you deal with bad news? We will be a strong, fair, trusted partner, but we will at some point fail. Everyone does. How will you handle that failure? Will you quit taking our phone calls, yell at your secretary, how will you handle failure?'

What Hunt is looking for is a partnership pattern. This approach also very cleverly and honestly prepares the client for the inevitability of failure. For that failure to be a learning moment to more powerfully grow success, both the agency and the brand need to agree on how to handle failure and preferably make that agreement up front, not when they're in the heat of the moment or on the heels of a disaster. "You don't need to be their best friend," Hunt says, "but you need to understand them and their problems."

"Discovery is the lynch pin of good marketing relationships", says Anne Kennedy, President of Outlines Venture Group that focuses on early stage investing and mentoring for scalable internet companies. Anne is also one of the authors of Global Search Marketing. "If you skip it, you'll be sorry later."

Greg Jarboe, President and Co-Founder of SEO-PR and contributing author to several strategic digital marketing publications. also shared frustration with brands who say, "I need X service, how much will that cost?" His answer is always, "I can't tell you the cost because I don't know what your problem is yet." Spending time in discovery gives both sides better alignment on the business problem the services are meant to solve.

Bruce Clay, CEO & Founder of Bruce Clay, Inc., speaker, trainer and author shared his approach to crafting the discovery process. He doesn't like RFPs, "99% are very general, don't illustrate the real problem and don't allow for strategic thinking on the part of the agency". Clay likes to test the client in the discovery process, "Now's the time to ask the really hard questions. Now's the time for us to very bluntly share with them what is wrong with their site (call their baby ugly)." He believes that how the client reacts to these questions is a strong indicator of how

they'll react in the relationship. He works very hard to help align the entire organization around the project up front. He also doesn't unreasonably alter the cost, "You pay peanuts you get monkeys," he truthfully shares. All of this upfront work aligns to a single company purpose, "Make every client a testimonial." He adds, "I'll never get them to be a testimonial if they aren't involved."

The discovery process is also a great time to get to know the other vendors and partners on the account. Some brands will initiate this activity on their own, if not, make it part of your requirements to, at the very least, see a flow chart of partnerships and how you work together to achieve success for the brand. Build in the costs for this activity. Don't be too mechanical, make it human. Be confident enough about what you do to embrace and even support other vendors. Agency partners often want to be the superstar and in doing so, undermine their own efforts. Pay close attention to the other partnerships/relationships the brand has had. Past performance is a strong indicator of future performance. Understand where you fit in their global and enterprise objectives.

Discovery is the time to explore cultural alignment. That doesn't mean we all have to have the exact same values or culture to be a good fit and to work together. It does mean that taking a project that you find morally repugnant or even commercially unviable will not likely lead to a good relationship. One interviewee spoke about a project with a large drinks manufacturer that he found later was encouraging women to use formula rather than to nurse in a country where a readily-available water supply was fairly non-existent. You can't excel in creating a marketing strategy to support an initiative that makes you cringe.

Mark Jackson, President & CEO of Vizion Interactive believes that cultivating a culture that encourages asking

questions is a powerful discovery strategy. Simple but perfect. "Questions allow us to define our differences and to help us align."

Creating expectations for all partners, whether that's employees or brands or in-house teams, should be done at the beginning of the relationship, not months or years in.

The discovery process shouldn't be dedicated just at the business partner level but employee level as well. It's difficult to dedicate the time to discovery when you have a very pressing business need, but skipping the step often leads to complications that were avoidable. Those complications can be anything from lack of skill to a lack of cultural fit.

Pilot projects are a great way to build trust between a new agency and brand relationship. Interviewees cited following a process that everyone understands and has access to, such as the S.M.A.R.T. methodology. Make the project: Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Time Bound.

There are times when agencies and brands (and employees) should be fired, but it should be for the right reasons. If the discovery step is done well, there's less opportunity for misalignment and misunderstanding. At the end of the day, most of us want to be successful in our endeavors. We increase the likelihood of success when we all agree upon what success looks like in the very beginning.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Is the process of discovery part of the development of marketing relationships in your organization or is it a "nice to have"?
2. Are you engaging with other agencies or, as a project sponsor, are you encouraging that partnership?
3. Are partners, employees, customers encouraged to ask questions during discovery?
4. Are you documenting discovery for onboarding of new partners?
5. Are you measuring the value of discovery?
6. If you're a brand, are you committing time to the discovery process?
7. If you're a vendor/agency, are you investing time in the discovery process?

Be a Historian - Learning from Other Systems

Brian Clark, Founder & CEO of Copyblogger Media, once shared that the best way for us to learn and improve upon our marketing ecosystem was to study other systems. That advice has moved me to examine politics, law, health care, and even sports systems in an effort to illuminate what drives success.

The goal is exploring the successes and failures of other industries and verticals and adopting their best methods for teaching, innovating, and succeeding. This chapter is dedicated to illuminating opportunities to create deeper sustainability in digital marketing.

Sports

Mark Cuban, successful entrepreneur, and owner of the Dallas Mavericks shares his approach for innovation and change. "Don't worry about being wrong. You'll get feedback...and in the worst-case scenario you learned something". Cuban pointed out that teams were spending \$1 million dollars or more per player and there were a total of three coaches responsible for coaching and providing development for the team.

"We were spending more on training for computers than we were for training our team to be better basketball players." Cuban's idea of having dedicated player development coaches was initially met with criticism, now every team has more player development coaches than players.

Ask CMO's their biggest frustration when working with agencies they will say inexperience of resources on their account. Agencies need to invest in their "players" in a way that's sustainable. I love this hypothetical conversation between a CEO and a believer in investing in your staff, CEO "What if we invest all of this time to make them the best and they leave?" Believer, "What if they don't?"

Linguistics

Mark Pagel, evolutionary biologist and TED speaker shared, "As we spread out around the world we developed thousands of different languages. We use language, not just to cooperate, but to draw rings around our cooperative groups and to establish identities and perhaps to protect our knowledge and wisdom and skills to keep others from eavesdropping from the outside." Different languages slow the flow of ideas between two groups, they slow the flow of technologies." We use our language almost instinctively as a marker of tribal identity. "The wonderful paradox of our tribalism is that we are really remarkably and uniquely cooperative among animals within our tribal groups," says Pagel, "and yet that cooperation that we engage in, at least throughout our history, has largely been confined to other members of our tribe."

This tendency to keep ourselves in isolation crashes head first into our modern world which pushes globalization. Our different languages pose a barrier to

cooperation. We have to agree to each speak a common language as well as to teach each other our languages to create a "dialect" we both understand. The integration of brand and digital marketers into a more cohesive "tribe" is one of the biggest untapped opportunities available to us for growth.

Executive search agency Russell Reynolds points out the enormous gap between digital talent and traditional executive leadership and the need to bridge the gaps between them in order to merge these two important factions cohesively.

Psychology

Harvard Social Psychologist and Professor Amy Cutty studies nonverbal communication. At least half of communication is done through non-verbal signals including verbal cues such as pitch and the speed of your language. She is very interested in power dynamics. She noticed a trend that tends to happen in very competitive environments, particularly in places like Harvard Business School. Male students tend to dominate classroom discussions and women are more likely to stay quiet. Cutty wanted to see if she could change that power dynamic. In the lab she had subjects adopt either high-power poses or low-power poses. Open, expansive postures that occupy space indicate power. Becoming small and taking up less space indicates low power. She found that hormones help tell our bodies we're powerful. The hormone testosterone (in people and in animals) and relatively low cortisol help us feel powerful, that's true for men and women.

More interestingly she found that putting people in low-power and high-power poses induce changes in those hormone levels.

Women are 50% of the digital marketing workforce, but only 15% of leadership positions. In creative it's even lower at 3%. I'm not here to beat the gender-equality drum, which has been expertly and beautifully accomplished by Sheryl Sandberg in *LeanIn*. However, giving women in the industry the tools they need to succeed and move into leadership roles depends partly on how we, men and women, understand the dynamic and explore potential regardless of gender.

When junior resources begin that first level of mastery, men tend to be the ones that speak up to engage with clients, even when they aren't 100% certain of their answer. Women tend to wait until they have a cohesive answer or solution. Both approaches have an up and down side. That's not the point. The point is that the men's action is perceived by the client as an indicator of expertise and success and the women's action as a lack of confidence, rather than a desire to give information based on data rather than the power that comes from powerfully (and often loudly as Cutty pointed out in her work) sharing an opinion.

Larry Kim, CTO and Founder of Mobile Monkey and Wordstream has written several well-balanced articles about furthering the cause of gender equality in marketing. He shared a study that cited Google Adwords accounts managed by women performed better.

As leaders in agencies and brands, recognizing the potential we may be missing out on because we're relying too heavily on an old paradigm of power can be an enormous untapped opportunity for growth.

Government

Fixing the broken congressional and senate voting issue requires spending time on the right things. To get elected to congress one must spend 30-80% of their time raising money. TED speaker Lawrence Lessig recommends giving voters (all voters, not just wealthy donors) credits they can give to congressmen and women and senators so they can focus on their real jobs. This is a perfect analogy for the time spent creating deck after deck after deck for clients.

I couldn't find research to give percentages to the amount of time spent in agencies creating decks but an anecdotal estimate of anywhere between 20 and 40% is likely conservative. Spending the time up front between agencies and brands to align on the goal and how that goal will be tracked and reported helps reduce deck presentation time. How we create strategies and execute against tactics is far too micromanaged. Agencies and consultants should be very transparent about their efforts, budgets, and results. However, they shouldn't have to spend 25% of their time justifying why they have selected this or that strategy or tactic.

According to Tim Ash, Founder of Site Tuners and author of Landing Page Optimization, when a CMO or CEO questions your strategy, he or she is saying, "Assure me." Agencies or in-house team leaders, the best way to assure is to either have experience and case studies that back up your strategy, or agree to test a well-hypothesized strategy. Brands, if you've done your due diligence and selected a partner wisely once you've aligned on the strategy, trust it and let your partner execute. Their job is to bring you results.

Healthcare

Healthcare is a very complicated, challenging, and sometimes broken system but there are many smart people and organizations attempting to solve the problems of health care that come from inherited silos. Rebecca Onie created a system for doctors to address not just the physical ailment of patients but the external factors such as lack of food or heat that exacerbate and even cause the health issue.

Brands can also reflect on the reality that they rarely turn to consultants for their role as advisor, though they are uniquely equipped to fulfill that role. I'm not recommending brands hand over the strategic keys, but to listen to agencies and consultants as trusted advisors, judging them on the merits of past performance. It would be like every time your doctor made a recommendation that you have him or her give you the history behind that decision and to recite every possible outcome of that recommendation. Certainly, we will want more than one opinion and we want sound thinking behind the recommendations made, but I don't need to become an expert just to align with my doctor on next steps.

Travel/Hospitality

It's been more than 20 years since Apple created the Genius Bar and it's still considered a revolutionary experience. Steve Jobs studied amazing customer service experiences and marveled at how the Four Seasons concierge experience delighted customers with a goal of enriching their lives. Apple focused on having employees provide education and guidance rather than sales (there are no clerks at a Genius Bar). Apple reinvented the world of retailing by applying a hospitality experience to a commerce experience.

Transportation

One of the biggest issues of our time is the issue of transportation and mobility. Technology in a crowded planet hopes to change how we get from point A to point B. Just as digital marketing is highly fragmented and siloed, there is little integration between different transportation assets (planes, trains, cars, bikes) and the infrastructure that supports those assets.

Robin Chase, Co-founder and former CEO of ZipCar, believes the future of cars is shared cars. The flexibility of shared cars allows people to use a vehicle that is most appropriate for a specific need, it greatly reduces cost, and doesn't require maintenance. "All of the good stuff and none of the bad". According to AAA data, the average cost of owning a car is nearly \$11,000 a year. Shared ownership doesn't just reduce the cost of car ownership but also encourages people to make better decisions about how and when to use their cars.

As the Former New York City Transportation Commissioner, Janette Sadik-Khan says cities can tackle the challenges of tomorrow by completely re-imagining transportation today. She is creating ways to integrate transportation to improve mobility and advocates looking at transportation as one integrated system rather than several siloed systems that leads to big efficiencies. She made it easier to get around. "For the first time in history most people live in cities," says Sadik-Khan. She worked with past Mayor Bloomberg to create efficiencies in New York's transportation infrastructure. Her efforts focused on creating interconnected cycling lanes, developing a bike sharing system and creating pedestrian-only spaces. Not only did these efforts work very effectively, but it was enormously cost-effective.

Who better to learn innovation from than the Ford family? Henry Ford's great grandson, Bill Ford is the Chairman of Ford Motor company. He envisions a world where people are enabled by integrated transportation to ensure mobility. "I used to worry about what would happen if we couldn't sell more cars and trucks? Now I worry about what will happen if all we do is sell cars and trucks."

Population growth in terms of cars is staggering, there are more than 1.4 billion cars on the road now. That number will grow to between 2 and 4 billion by mid-century. Average American spends about a week a year in traffic jams. Average commute time for those living in Beijing is 5 hours. "The option of doing nothing is not an option." He points out that his great grandfather would say that if he had asked people what they wanted when he set out to invent the car they would have answered "faster horses". The answer to more cars isn't to have more roads. "When we moved west we didn't add more wagon trains, we added railroads," said Ford.

"Today we need that same leap in thinking for us to create a viable future." Ford advocates the building of smart cars, but not just that. He advocates building of smart roads, smart parking, smart public transportation and an integrated system to optimize personal mobility on a massive scale without hassles or compromises. Hong Kong has a system that ties together all transportation assets on the same integrated payment system. Smart solutions are emerging to solve these problems.

What is emerging as digital marketing smart solutions? Integrated dashboards created jointly by multiple partners or long-term project plans that can be seen by all vendors would help pave the way to a reduction of silos, gaining time and cost efficiencies. Aggregating digital marketing

assets in one location or repository is another example of a smart solution.

Bertrand Piccard flew around the world in a hot air balloon. He recognized quickly if he flew much higher he could fly at twice the speed, but realized that if he flew too fast in a couple of hours he would turn left and end up at the North Pole.

"What do you really want? Do you want to go really fast in the wrong direction or slower in the good direction?" Leadership with long-term vision is essential to moving agencies and brands from places that go really fast but not always in the right direction.

Technology

Joi Ito, past Director of Media Labs at MIT, encourages innovators to be "now ists". Focus on leveraging collaboration in the now rather than being a futurist and trying to determine what is coming next. What that means is recognizing that the traditional rules we have for institutions don't work anymore.

The more effort we spend on a practitioner learning experience the smarter, more collaborative and higher performing they will be. "We need to be in favor of compasses rather than maps," Ito shares.

This applies perfectly to agencies and brands as institutions that continue to follow those traditional rules that don't work anymore. Brands create their marketing plans through IDM's usually a year in advance. Those maps can quickly become irrelevant when there are new technologies or platforms that change the dynamic of communication and how we reach and engage with customers. Focusing on "commander's intent" or a "compass" rather than a fully scoped road map can yield

better participation and integration from teams as well as better results.

I've seen few brands embrace this new thinking because it's how the CMO performance is judged. "Here's the goal and strategies you created 12-18 months ago and here's how you're performing against them." That's entirely unrealistic in today's digital marketing climate.

Rebecca Lieb, senior analyst and content strategist, shared "To market effectively requires a strategy, but a simple fact that eludes many marketers is that you are allowed to change the strategy. That's where sustainability comes in. Media consumption patterns change, messaging changes, goals shift, customers change, and so do products. Yet for some reason, marketers believe that once a strategy is established, it's set in stone and unalterable. In the rapidly shifting landscape of digital marketing and media, it's essential to establish a strategy; to know why you are doing what you're doing and how that goal will be achieved. But that in no way precludes frequent checks, shifts, tweaks and adjustments to stay on course. That's how marketing becomes fluid, agile, and sustainable."

Military

The Marine Corp is a more than 200-year old institution. To meet the goals and challenges presented, leaders must have the respect of their followers. If followers do not believe their leader is operating from a foundation of shared values that leader will be ineffective. The success of the entire movement depends on the ability of a single person, then on the local successes of the smaller units that all ladder to the larger objectives of the team. "Marines believe that to be a Marine is special; that those

good enough to become Marines are special and that the institution in which they are bonded is special."

Senior Director, Product Management at Realtor.com and past SEO Manager for Disney Interactive Jeffrey Preston leverages the training of Navy Seals to help align multiple teams on a shared goal. Understanding "commander's intent" and making certain everyone has first, role clarity and second, ownership of their part that contributes to the whole is imperative to success. When his team was charged with integrating and collaborating to bring more than 200 sites into one domain he leveraged knowledge about how Navy Seals become aligned on one goal and thrive as individuals as well as a team.

Executive Leadership that provides "commander's intent", purpose and a destination (role clarity) then gives strategist the ability to have mastery and ownership experience, better integration, and better results.

Personality Testing

There is little standardization of service offerings in digital marketing because every vertical, every business, every objective is unique. That said, we are solving a lot of the same problems over and over again.

Using Personality Testing as a metaphor for business needs, there are only so many versions. In Myers-Briggs there are four segments of analysis and a total of 16 personality types. It impacts how we see the world and make decisions. Imagine the efficiencies and improvement in communications when agencies come to brands with tried and true strategies for digital growth based on their industry and business problem they're trying to solve.

Just as StrengthFinders identifies our top five strengths and helps us focus on those things that are likely to help us excel, rather than spending a lot of time on our weaknesses that aren't likely to measurably improve.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you have examples of other successful systems you'd like to emulate?
2. How can we reimagine with great innovation and build less around siloed strategies and more around integrated strategies and systems to create more viable digital marketing relationships?
3. How are you encouraging critical thinking to get to better, smarter strategies and results?
4. Are your business goals, your "compass" or "commander's intent" clear?
5. Are your systems for communicating, sharing, and measuring clear?

PART 2

EXPERTISE

Be a Researcher - Honing your Craft

Though I started my online marketing career as a content developer, I early on became engaged in search marketing and search engine optimization. Organic search quickly gained traction and is still the number one way people discover sites.

Keyword research was often one of the first foundational steps in the SEO Roadmap. It's a tedious but very important exercise in learning how people query and ask questions about products, topics, and needs. Google slowly began pulling keyword ranking analytics and data and has made "not provided" the rule rather than the exception to search queries. That change has pushed search marketers to get smarter, more granular and more strategic about their keyword and topic research. Though there has been great evolution in understanding searcher query and intention. We've gone from a simpler keyword query match to more complex, semantic search complemented by personalization.

Past founder of Vertical Measures and author of "Accelerate!", Arnie Kuenn, shared what has become an often-used tool in my toolbox for topic and category research. He spoke about how, rather than execute only a keyword research exercise for a large property

management company, he interviewed staff about their apartment hunting experiences. This research led him to better understanding of the pain points associated with finding an apartment and was the cornerstone of the research that drove keyword and topic selection for content development as well as using that data to content map customer needs for his client. With "keyword not provided" now more the rule than the exception, this method is far more relevant than just tool based keyword research.

This may seem like a simple step, but many brands rarely take the time to interview their sales reps, customer service staff, and actual customers to truly understand the pain points and problems that a brand should be solving for their customers. Content mapping the typical questions in the customer journey is an enormously informative and often overlooked process for any brand.

Bruce Clay's organization boasts several countries and top brands around the world. Clay has literally "written the book". Yet he spends two-three hours a day, almost every day, reading and researching about the industry. Research is the lifeblood of his very pragmatic approach to knowing enough to help his team move quickly when things change in the space, but he also spends time researching organizational approaches so that the need to "move quickly and break things" doesn't foster a culture that lacks focus, "it's a delicate balance," he says.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Honing your craft in an ever-evolving industry requires time spent in research and education. How are you making certain that your strategies

are informed by a deep understanding of the customer problem you're trying to solve?

2. How do you support learning in your team?
3. Are you leveraging research as a way to craft strategy?
4. Do you support educational opportunities for your team members?
5. If you're a brand, are you investing in professional development for those that serve in your digital mission?
6. If you're a vendor/agency, are you investing in ongoing education for your junior and senior resources?

Be an Analyst - Uncovering the Truth

Arguably the best tool for bridging the crevasse between traditional/brand marketing and digital marketing is analysis.

Avinash Kaushik is a Digital Marketing Evangelist for Google, co-Founder of Market Motive, author of *Web Analytics 2.0*, and one of the few marketers who gracefully educates both traditional and digital marketers. Though his focus is digital, he sees the analytics world holistically. Few digital marketing plans succinctly address the difference between traffic, share of voice, and true market share. Analyzing with the largest data set possible (lots of decisions are made with 5% of available data, notes Kaushik) allows us to uncover important insights.

Combining analytics languages that originated in traditional and evolved with digital is tantamount to uncovering the truth both sides can agree upon. The passion and zeal of digital marketers who had seen first-hand the powerful impact of strong organic search and paid media campaigns could quickly get lost in the realities of those managing a brand.

What was missing, and sometimes what is still missing, is alignment between the owners of the brand and the owners of digital marketing strategies.

In one of my favorite examples during the process of discovery I could tell the stakeholders were only partially invested in our next steps. I asked question after question about the business and its objectives. Finally I asked, "what percentage of your business comes from your website?" The answer was 1%. This very old, respected, successful and profitable company was understandably having a hard time investing in search and digital content as a viable business building strategy especially considering how time and labor intensive the recommended strategies were.

Eureka! Now we understood the issue and could spend time educating around how search impacts brand discoverability and can even be seen as a defensive marketing move for a company that was used to the brand and its' respected reputation driving success.

Getting on the same page requires more than "coming to the table with all the stuff we can do for you". Digital marketers can be guilty of tunnel vision when it comes to prescribing next steps. Understanding the entire landscape of the brand, not just the website or digital assets in isolation, can help traditional and digital marketers create an integrated analytics approach that will add far more value and insight than efforts in isolation.

Dr. Phil Shelley, Founder of Datametica believed so strongly in big data that he created a start-up technology company in 2012, called MetaScale, around the concept. Shelley is best known for his work in omni-channel integration and is considered a pioneer in "real-time" digital customer engagement. The lesson he shares is that

if you are building something great to solve a problem you (and lots of others) have, you can leverage that solution not just for your own business, but for others.

Sometimes it's not big data, but the simple, single data point that moves the needle of prioritization. Big data can be enormously illuminating, but sometimes "small data" or a single data point can add a lot of value and insight.

"The data science shortage is not being solved," says Shelley. The evolution of data science requires larger data sets with much stricter governance, but the heart of good data science will require diversity in thinking that leads to a single point of truth organizations can rally around.

At a BrightEdge marketing conference, CEO Jim Yu shared an enormously impactful slide with a data point shared by one of their customers "SEO is a \$4B channel". Enough said. When asked about the biggest frustration of sharing the value of Paid, Owned & Earned media with CMO's several marketers spoke of alignment on what's important.

Paid, Owned & Earned are complex ecosystems and it's perfectly understandable when CMO's want to understand how they're spending their budgets and how that impacts the business bottom line.

Rather than focusing on a single campaign, a single landing page a single keyword or single product performance, leveraging data to better understand the top-level value of a channel is a great place to start and it helps drive the engagement from a myopic view of single-tactic focus to a more overarching plan for integrated success.

The benchmark of great analysis is that it solves problems. Lee Blankenship, CEO of Search Discovery, was so frustrated at the lack of a great tag management tool that he set his small team of data scientists to create one they called Satellite. Their dynamic tag management was so good in fact that Adobe purchased the tool which is now part of their marketing suite called Adobe DTM (Dynamic Tag Management). This required investment and lots of unbillable hours, not easy to accomplish for what was at the time a less than 25-person shop. Being an analyst isn't just about the data, it's about using the data to get to the truth.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. What does success look like?
2. Can you use your analytics investments to help others with the same problem?
3. Are you using the right tools and dashboards to measure that success?
4. Are you differentiating the data for the right audience?
5. Are you aligning data across more than just digital data systems?
6. If you're a brand, are you asking the right data questions that get you to a better understanding of your audience?
7. If you're a vendor/agency, do you have the right people at the table to serve analytics needs?

Be a Strategist - Establishing Methodology

As I strove to better understand the benchmarks of a great agency and client relationship, practitioners shared their desire to create or participate in strategy. Yet oftentimes they are engaged to execute a tactic. When I asked the question, "What's your biggest frustration?" The answer often had to do with skipping strategy and going straight to tactic. Taking the time to understand the overarching goals and objectives and getting alignment between partners on strategy is imperative but not always easy.

Which tactics you should execute will entirely depend on strategy but how often have you been asked questions like, "Do you think we should be on Facebook (Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram, et al)." That answer depends on your communications/messaging strategy, it depends on if your customers are there, it depends first on goals and strategies.

Practitioners who had a methodology for illustrating this process had better buy-in at the beginning and throughout their engagements.

Ian Lurie, past Founder and CEO at Portent Interactive created the Marketing Stack which shows Content,

Analytics and Infrastructure as the foundational elements and Paid, Owned and Earned as the channels.

Joe Pulizzi, Founder of Content Marketing Institute and author of several content strategy and marketing books not only solves problems for brands but he tackles the hard questions and delivers answers for brands and B2B on how to leverage content to grow. Pulizzi's approach is so simplistically brilliant that it is often misunderstood.

There is a great deal of complexity in filling the roles and defining the strategies to deliver a great content marketing program. The beauty is that it focuses on the one thing you can't avoid - your business is driven by relationships, relationships are based on communication. Great architecture and a strong technical foundation may help your content rank but if that content isn't the right messaging for the right person at the right time it will be ignored. Pulizzi created a 7-step content marketing framework which includes the following:

1. Plan
2. Audience
3. Story
4. Channel
5. Conversation
6. Process
7. Measurement

"It is not an invention, but an observation. It is a recognition of a beautiful design, a set of principles that govern the conduct of the world of storytelling the

way physics and chemistry govern the physical world," Pulizzi shares.

This methodology is driven by content, but what part of any digital marketing plan DOESN'T live in this framework? This is inclusive of content, search, social, paid media, email, influencer identification, and outreach, PR, CRM, user experience, loyalty...all of it.

This is where content as a methodology is misunderstood. Content is the message, in a relationship (between a brand and their customers) it's the most important factor. How you communicate your value proposition, your customer service, your engagement, your problem solving, your loyalty are all expressed in content; whether that's words or images or video. Where content as a digital marketing strategy goes wrong is when it's created in isolation. Content strategy *IS* business strategy.

Greg Boser, President and Co-founder of Foundation Digital, speaker and blogger said it best when he said, "Creating the content is the easy part." Before my content developing brethren get in a tizzy, understand that he means that the content strategy (the how) and the promotion and the seeding the content with influencers and measuring the performance on business impact isn't easy. The internet is littered with the believers who thought that when it came to online content, "If you build it, they will come."

Google has fantastic documentation that few digital marketers take advantage of. Their "Think With Google" series is full of guidance on being more strategic. Their "goal/approach/results" methodology is adopted by companies large and small.

Once you've aligned on goals and you've taken the time to create a strong strategy, then "move quickly and break stuff" as Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg says. Or "Deploy or die" as Joi Ito says, a little more dramatic but you get the point.

Find the balance between taking time to collaboratively craft the "goal" stage, once the goal and strategy have been thoughtfully crafted then move quickly, learn and adjust based on those learnings in the "approach" stage so you can perform in the results stage.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. What pain point are you or your clients having over and over again?
2. How can you invest resources in strategically solving that problem, not just for you but for a lot of other people?
3. Have you researched and adopted a digital marketing methodology?
4. Have you shared it at all levels?
5. Have you created case studies and shared results to encourage adoption?

PART 3

RETENTION

Be an Embracer of Your "Why" - Knowing Why You Exist

It wasn't surprising that having impact on strategy ranked high on practitioners lists of success metrics for continued client engagement. In assessing how digital marketing practitioners retain talent, partners and relationships, "knowing your why" emerged as imperative to retention.

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast". This quote from Peter Drucker (there's debate if he said this first, but whoever originated the saying) speaks volumes to one of digital marketing's biggest issues today and that's "knowing your why".

Agencies often hire quickly, pay well, and their people burn out. Churn is one of the most threatening crises to digital marketing. It's been hard to solve because initially online marketing excellence was born of great individual effort and bucking the odds with singular grit and determination. The industry has historically rewarded driving innovation like we are in the Wild West, but it's time for us to homestead and put thought into our "why".

As Simon Sinek aptly shares in his book titled "Start with Why", stating your values is the easy part. Aligning your actions with what you say your values are is the hard part. As an organization, you can't share in every monthly

team email how important culture is to your company, then at quarterly reporting time neglect any metric that involves your culture.

Moz, an inbound marketing software company, has a "TAGFEE Code". Their mission is to be as Transparent, Authentic, Generous, Fun, Empathetic, and Exceptional as possible. They spend a great deal of time, money and resources investing in those beliefs.

Chick Fil A guiding principles are posted on their walls and every single employee from executive leadership to store owner to cook knows them. Chick Fil A locations are closed on Sunday. Regardless of religious beliefs this is enormously admirable. They believe their employees should have time for their families and a day of rest. They know their "why" and they won't be moved by profits to change it. Think about that. Seven days in the week, doing one simple thing, staying open on Sundays could make your company more profitable by potentially 14%+. This is alignment of actions with belief in the most powerful way. What's the business result? Less turnover, happier employees which make happier customers that become raving fans which result in consistency and profitability.

I went to my first conference "Web Attack" in 1999. Dennis Rodman rode in on his motorcycle (not sure what that had to do with marketing, but fun anyway). It was early on in Amazon's story as a book retailer and just shy of the beginning of the dot com bubble burst and someone from the audience said, "I've done the math and if you guys sell every single book on the planet you wouldn't break even" and the Amazon employee simply said, "What makes you think we're just selling books?" Amazon's why is selling everything from A to Z. They focus on logistics that are nearly impossible to beat.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Does everyone, employees, customers and clients, know your "why"?
2. Are you willing to sacrifice to align your actions with your beliefs?
3. If you're a brand, are you selecting vendors/agencies that align with your "why"?
4. If you're a vendor/agency, do you keep alignment with your "why" as a priority for selecting clients?

Be Transparent & Authentic - Becoming Great by Being Vulnerable

This lesson came less from the interview questions and more from the great stories and positive results those stories generated.

Google's algorithm includes an element of transparency for reviews. If you have 100 reviews and every single one is a glowing recommendation and accolades for your company, Google knows it's not legitimate. Part of being transparent is being honest about your failures. On a recent online reputation management panel, a business owner asked, "What do I do to get rid of bad customer reviews?" One of the panelists replied, "Quit sucking." There's nowhere to hide in digital marketing. Customers have a podium and a voice unlike any other time in history.

Jeffrey Hayzlett, CMO whisperer and past VP of Marketing of Kodak shared a very painful, but revealing story. He and his team had the challenge of trying to turn around market share and the impression of an old respected company that stoically fought the trends (digital cameras) that threatened to choke the life out of Kodak. As they began to fully embrace their new digital roots; crowdsourcing feedback for product features and

engaging with their newly emerging market, they also embraced technology to share their new messaging.

Hayzlett and his team created a campaign that would include a commercial that would run in movie theaters prior to upcoming trailers. At the end of the commercial a code is given for interested prospects to text to Kodak. But what happens when you go to the movie? You turn your phone off. "Crickets," says Hayzlett. Sharing this failure is a brave and authentic act.

I asked Mike Grehan, Past CMO & Managing Director at Acronym Media and SEO pioneer, what's the most important factor in creating a sustainable client/vendor relationship? His answer was simple, "The truth".

"No one wants to be the bearer of bad news, we've all had failures, we've all dropped the ball. But rather than say 'sorry I didn't respond to that email, it must have ended up in my spam folder' share the reality. 'I'm sorry for my slow response time, we're diving into an issue that needs to be resolved and we don't have the answers yet. Do you have a minute to review so we can get on the same page?'"

In Claudio Fernandez-Araoz's book, "It's Not the How or the What but the Who" he writes about the importance of vetting employees to make sure the relationship is a good fit and how little time is invested in this very important process. He also notes the absolute lack of candor that occurs in interviews. He calls it "a discussion between two liars". It's not that any of us aspires to lie in these situations, but it's protocol for all of us employees, employer, brand, vendor to focus on our strengths and ignore some of the realities.

In an environment where people are incentivized to "fake it till you make it" a lack of transparency can foster a culture of mistrust.

Agencies are often asked to create POV's (point of views). An interviewee shared that after Facebook's purchase of Instagram a client wanted to better understand how that channel could potentially help them grow their Fortune 500 travel/hospitality business. The client was charged a great deal of money to get a POV from a junior resource who not only didn't have experience executing a campaign on Instagram, but who didn't even use the channel personally. "Don't give me a deliverable I can Google for myself." It's okay if you decide to do intensive research and share your learnings on an emerging channel that you haven't yet executed in, but be honest about its' origins, the recommendations and next steps.

This is a fine time to introduce a test, learn and suck less every time pilot project, it's not the time to call yourselves experts on a channel when all you've expertly executed is paying a resource to research a topic, pay the resource \$30 an hour and charge the client \$250 an hour. This is where we lose trust and faith with clients. It's okay to fail honestly, it's not okay to fail a client and pretend like it's winning.

If a CMO says, "I know my product inside and out, but I need to better understand the options available to reach our target market with Paid Media strategies across multiple channels," and you don't have the answer, don't fake it. Starting with the authentic position of "I don't know everything" (spoiler alert, that's everybody) allows for those with expertise in specific digital marketing strategies to show (not tell) how they can help you.

Having a digital marketing strategist share "I've worked across multiple digital marketing strategies but my focus and subject matter expertise is in content strategy. I work with SEO's, Paid Media, PR and Social Marketing teams to grow the story and messaging that best represents your brand and best serves your customers." Is far more honest than, "I know everything about digital marketing".

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Is transparency and authenticity valued in your organizations?
2. Do you honestly share your capabilities?
3. If your employees and clients had full transparency into the process would they find it authentic?

Be a Good Listener - Having Empathy to Get to Trust

One of my favorite nuggets of learning from my interviews was this, "We have two ears and one mouth, but for some reason there's still a lot more talking than listening going on."

Marty Weintraub, Founder and Evangelist of aimClear Online Marketing Agency and author very quickly grew his small consultancy to a sought-after boutique agency because of his ability to listen. He listens to brands outline their pain points, he listens to team members share their dreams, he listens to the industry to make sure he's informed.

This is so much more difficult than it sounds. It's our gut reaction when we hear, "I don't feel:

1. supported
 2. like I have role clarity
 3. like I have ownership
 4. as if my efforts align to my pay
- that my work is respected"

to give reasons why that assertion is wrong. Fight the urge. The minute people have the bravery to share and that sharing is met with rejection, you've lost the opportunity to be trusted and to lead.

Rachel Heseltine is the VP of Consumer Growth at Trader Interactive, past Senior Director of Audience at AOL, and a speaker and frequent blogger. AOL was one of the largest media companies in the world and Rachel's job for several years was "getting SEO into the DNA of the company". That mandate has evolved dramatically. Heseltine works closely with management, IT, social, and content developers to make sure their stories are discoverable "in the right place, by the right audience at the right time". As her position has evolved from SEO to content, search, and social her skills have evolved to include persona modeling and audience engagement, her skills to address the strategic problems at hand, not just those that impact SEO, has been pivotal to her success.

When AOL purchased the Huffington Post the stories and assets to optimize grew enormously. Prior to her work with AOL she worked agency-side. When asked, "What were your biggest frustrations when working with big companies," she quickly answered, "Not getting recommendations implemented."

This is a very common problem for the client/vendor relationship. Particularly when it comes to technical SEO, very small changes can have enormous financial impact. Having the ability to listen to management then demonstrate the potential business impact of the change will move the recommendations from a "nice to have" to an "implementation priority" more quickly says Heseltine. "Listening and helping them understand how a recommended solution solves their problem is far more

effective than just giving them an implementation list of technical fixes."

Marshall Simmonds, Founder of Define Media Group, Inc. and past Chief Search Strategist for New York Times Digital cautions against spending too much time in the lab or behind a screen. If you want to understand user behavior, "get off the computer and talk to people!"

Adam Audette is the SEO Business Leader at Blend360 and past Chief Knowledge Officer at RKG Merkle. He is considered to be the first second-generation SEO (following in his father John Audette's footsteps). Audette works with enormous sites and executes against a methodology that embraces scalability. Though his initial expertise was in search engine optimization he quickly learned not to prioritize projects from that lens, but to understand goals and needs from all available perspectives. He interviews architects, UX/UI, IT, marketing and other stakeholders to understand why decisions were made and what concerns there are about next steps. Part of his success comes from his ability to hear the problems first before crafting a plan.

Listening done at an enterprise level can include a lot of different tools. Aligning our workforces with performance reviews to provide feedback and opportunity for growth can be very illuminating. Yet, it doesn't mean anything if we don't measure and evaluate it. Simply understanding someone's strengths isn't the same as aligning it with support strengths and listening to how that improves performance.

Whether you embrace Myers-Briggs or other personality testing, make it mean something. Nothing erodes trust more quickly than

an employee taking a test that never gets leveraged for the growth of the team.

The SAP tool SuccessFactors does a great deal to further the relationship equation into a business model, yet the metrics and learnings associated with SuccessFactors is rarely shared with the people in the trenches or as a metric for top-level organizational health. It's often leveraged as part of a checklist rather than an integral part of the company ethos.

This isn't just a case of new world ideas. Even Henry Ford, one of the great capitalists of the last century includes being in service as part of a model for success, "To do more for the world than the world does for you. That is success."

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Are you measuring and creating a culture of listening?
2. Have you adopted a personality testing protocol and trained against it?
3. Do you embrace a performance review process that has team buy-in?
4. Is listening a skill valued in your organization?

Be Adamant - Sticking to Your True North

When attempting to understand the benchmarks of good client and vendor engagements it became clear after the first seven or eight interviews that digital marketers who stick to their guns (on pricing, on terms of engagement, on discovery, on the importance of longer term rather than 90-day projects) have greater success than those who are willing to "adjust their compass" with every client.

Raise your hand if a CMO has handed you a laundry list of tactics to execute to help grow their brand. Bill Hunt shared that he had turned down an RFP from a very large, prominent technology company. Hunt ignored the RFP and staff continued to request a response from his agency. He finally shared that he didn't view the company as a viable partner, the company had had five agencies in seven years and he had no reason to believe his would net different results. He also shared that the RFP outlined the specifics of the work to be executed. "We're not just tacticians, we're strategists. If you already have a strategy in place, you don't need us."

What Hunt understands (that frankly most agencies and consultants don't) is the need to know who you are and what you want and to never abandon that understanding, regardless of the potential revenue.

Every project Hunt chooses has to meet this simple but profound test:

- 1) Is it revenue generating?
- 2) Is it intellectually stimulating?
- 3) Is it fun?

If the project doesn't meet the criteria, they don't engage. Of all the pain suffered in agency and brand relationships, much of that pain, frustration and eventual loss comes from not knowing who you are and what you stand for as an organization.

Lack of understanding

When asked "What is the number one cause of failure in digital marketing relationships between agencies and brands?" Ian Lurie, author and Founder of Portent Interactive shared, "It's a tie." The agency comes in with their List Of Things We Will Do and charges ahead, not really understanding the client's needs or purpose. The client comes in laser-focused on one tactic and won't accept advice, no matter how good, because they fail to understand the agency's role as an advisor. Those realities make for difficult relationship building.

Lack of leadership

A client is paralyzed, because there are conflicts between departments or decision makers and their boss won't make a call. Or an agency makes random decisions regarding services, budget or staffing, constantly veering from one workflow to another.

The onus is on the agency to understand the client's problem, but the client or CMO has to be willing to provide clarity about the problem and both need to agree upon the course of action to resolve the problem.

Greg Jarboe, Founder & CEO of SEO-PR, shared how he and his team choose which clients they work with. Jarboe comes back from a conference or presentation and passes all of his leads, sometimes more than 100, to his internal staff. A staff member executes a vetting process with military-like precision and passes the newly vetted list back to Jarboe, usually whittled down to just 3 or 4. Jarboe shared that in their long working relationship of more than 10 years he's only gone against her advice three times and every time he regretted that choice. She saw something Jarboe didn't; unrealistic expectations, too many vendor relationships in a short period of time, inability to give time to the discovery process or unwillingness to commit to time in strategy before jumping into tactical execution.

Few agencies, consultants or companies spend enough time in the vetting process. It's usually not about "good or bad", that gets weeded out pretty quickly by cursory reference checks, it's about what makes teams, projects, people and processes click. It's about alignment.

Lisa Buyer, Founder and Editor of Female Disruptors and author of "Social PR Secrets" shared that her priority for selecting new business included chemistry, "Is there a mutual and beneficial reason we should do business together? Both the agency and client must understand and agree on basic needs and have a mutual level of understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses to trust the relationship."

As CMO's add digital marketing strategies into the mix of brand and product marketing a deeper relationship, understanding and trust of digital marketing practitioners is imperative. As digital marketing becomes less siloed and more deeply ingrained in the CMO day-to-day the responsibility is on digital marketers to educate and integrate.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. As a brand, are you interested in having an agency as a partner or just as a tactical executor of your planned strategies?
2. As a vendor/agency, do you have a methodology for how you choose projects and vendors?
3. Do you have a list of guidelines for engaging new partners?

Be an Evangelist - Sharing your Way to Greatness

Of the many things on our lists to achieve digital marketing greatness, sometimes sharing can go to the bottom of the list. Yet this quality often materialized in conversations with successful practitioners.

I met Wil Reynolds, Founder & CEO of Seer Interactive when he keynoted the SearchFest conference in Portland, Oregon. What struck me most about his presentation was his absolute commitment and willingness to be a sharer of all he has learned. He does more than just evangelize, he helps. He commits several hours per week answering questions on Twitter, LinkedIn, and other platforms. He shares his research and methodologies, his theories and both successes and failures. One of the most interesting things he did was CEO swap with Rand Fishkin, past Founder of Moz and author of “Lost and Founder”. They shared their findings and experiences. This is the soul of leadership and evangelism. The willingness to spend our precious time when the only outcome and reward is learning that impacts the whole.

Michael King, Owner of iPullRank, speaker and blogger, writes 5000 word articles that outline the process he embarks upon to test a theory. He shares the successes and failures of his research and then sets the next

research goal. He is in a constant state of testing, learning and improving. Not only is there great clarity in his methodology but great transparency in his learnings. Willingness to work hard and then share the results of that hard work is the most important benchmark of an evangelist.

Marty Weintraub, Founder and Owner of AimClear quickly became a beloved practitioner and expert in the digital marketing space and impacted great brands such as Martha Stewart by evangelizing for deep understanding of your market.

His and his team's research and execution in Facebook has become legendary because he evangelized two things, one that you could learn a lot about your persona or target market with Facebook and other social platforms, and two that testing against and improving on your theories will bring great insight and ultimately brand success.

Richard Zwicky is a strategic management consultant with retail, technology, and digital marketing expertise. He's known for making difficult concepts manageable and spends a great deal of time sharing his expertise. "I learn at least as much from mentees as they do from me," says Zwicky. "If you want to make traction in this fast-paced, fairly volatile space it's important to recognize the need for sharing. Strategists will get lost in the shuffle if they learn in a vacuum and keep their findings to themselves."

Do you believe in a goal or a system? A goal quickly becomes the thing we're to do or be and we're always behind it until we achieve it. A system is something you can live every day. It's sustainable. Regardless of where digital marketing goes, Wil Reynolds approach of learn

and share will always be relevant, it's the difference between a goal and a system.

CMO's and digital marketers that share not only get a high level of respect from those they help. Answering questions and diving deep into an issue (even if it isn't your own) helps broaden your understanding and expertise.

In Jonah Berger's book, "Contagious" he talks about the phenomenon of social currency. If people have questions but there isn't a strong culture of sharing, not only do people feel like outsiders in their own company, but they're loath to raise their hands and ask questions for fear of looking like an outsider.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you or does someone on your team commit time for the purpose of sharing?
2. Do you share your expertise freely?
3. Do you foster a culture of sharing?

Be Agile - Getting Used to Constant Change

During the past nearly three decades as a content developer/online marketer/SEO/inbound marketer/internet marketer/social marketer/content marketer/digital marketer one truth has been made enormously evident; it's best to get used to the name changing.

We are in the midst of a revolution that changes more rapidly than any other our world has ever known. Don't get bogged down by attachment to anything but change.

Though only a part of digital marketing has to do with Google, it's a big part. An exploration into the changes at Google help us recognize the importance of agility.

In the customer journey, Google, Bing and other search engines are how people discover content and it's a big part of their exploration process. Of all search engines, Google still dominates with more than 85% of search traffic (depending on the data points and the data source you look at). So when we talk about Google, the reasoning would apply to other search engines or social platforms or other digital channels yet to be created. A large focus of this book focuses on paid (media), owned (website, customer email lists) and earned (organic search, local search, social search) since they are the strategies which

account for the largest digital marketing revenue generated. Shout out to Dana Lookadoo for the perspective that social search was much like organic and local search, with slightly different intent.

When Google's algorithm was created by Sergey Brin and Larry Page, linking was seen as a vote of popularity and as businesses began to understand this algorithmic element, there were plenty of marketing practitioners that focused on the quantity rather than the quality and relevance of those links. As Google's algorithm has become more sophisticated, link building has thankfully become more of a brand building exercise and about sharing the right content with the right audience at the right time to acquire authority and serve as the best place for their customers to get answers.

As a litmus test, Eric Ward, Past President at EricWard.com and consultant to many large brands, used to ask "if you didn't get an increase in rank from a link would you still want it?" His point being that the value of a link to a site as a vote from another authoritative site would come from the audience that site delivers. The link as a measurement of value to increase ranking shouldn't be (and for the most part now isn't) the only purpose of the link.

Eric Enge, co-author of "The Art of SEO" shared, "Honestly, the main thing you need to be prepared for is constant change. The change in technology is faster today than it has ever been, AND, the rate of change is still accelerating. You have to have the right mindset to deal with this. It's not enough to be 'up to the challenge', you need to revel in the chance to keep learning and thrive on the opportunity to master something new."

When Social Media became prolific, many brands chose to stay on the sidelines muttering, "If we can't own the conversation, we're not going to participate in the conversation". But the reality was that customers were having the conversation, with or without brand participation. Charlene Li, expert on disruption strategy and leadership, entrepreneur, and NY Times bestselling author of "Groundswell" shared great stories of brand after brand refusing to participate in what was to become one of marketing's most important channels, social platforms and the conversations they encourage.

Of all of the lessons I've learned as a marketer, this is my favorite, "If you can understand the problem, help solve that problem, and understand that the problem will constantly change, you'll always have a job."

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Digital marketers who have stood the test of time understand that constant change is the state necessary to accommodate the innovative thinking that must evolve to embrace new technology. Are you allowing for change?
2. Do you annually re-evaluate your methodologies to confirm their relevance and efficacy?
3. Do you have a methodology for testing new channels or emerging digital marketing strategies?
4. How do you account for change in your quarterly and annual planning?

Be an Influencer - Nurturing an Audience

One quality that seemed to emerge from every interview was that person's ability to influence. It wasn't enough to show up with a widget to sell, successful practitioners have a real passion for digital marketing and that passion can be very influential. Don't get me wrong, passion without expertise or planning won't get you far, but you can't get far without it.

Being an influencer isn't for everyone. This truly is a skill for people with a unique set of qualities. If you're not an influencer, don't despair, but you need one, every team does.

There are several types of influencers and I'll share a few industry examples to help identify them. Having people at all levels in your organization that are capable of influencing and nurturing change or even an initiative is necessary to its growth and success.

Influencers are important because they are the nurturers of the seeds you sow, whether that has to do with seeds for developing a winning team or seeds to support an initiative.

Anne Kennedy is co-owner of Outlines Venture Group, author and marketer with more than 40 years of experience. Kennedy says her only skill is connecting people (that's modesty, she's great at a lot of things but this truly is her gift). In her extensive travels around the world she meets a lot of people. She has this spreadsheet in her head with basically two columns A) Someone's problem or pain point B) Someone with the answer. Her job is getting those people connected. And the most amazing part, she does this job for the joy she experiences from making those connections. These people are priceless in that they help provide context in a very complex networked world.

Whether your audience is your staff, your partners or your customers, identification of and a plan of outreach for influencers is critical.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Who are your brands or agencies influencers?
2. Do you have a strategy for connecting with and engaging influencers?
3. Have you clearly shared your goals with your influencers?
4. Are you measuring the value of the quality of influencer relationships to your bottom line?

PART 4

LOYALTY

Be a Student - Pursuing Learning

Education and ongoing learning was messaged strongly by many of the interviewees and is best summed up by Joi Ito's quote that "Education is what people do to you, learning is what you do to yourself".

Digital marketing is a discipline that changes all the time. New channels, new tools and new thinking will continue to drive innovation that improves our ability to get the right message to the right audience at the right time. *Your education is never done.*

Traditionally, a marketer would study marketing and the four P's and be fairly prepared for a career in marketing brands and products.

The path to becoming a digital marketer is diverse. I interviewed marketers with experience as journalists, computer scientists, librarians, musicians and programmers. The commonality in this list is a combination of being inquisitive and wanting to solve problems.

The disconnect between education and experience needed today to excel in digital marketing is enormous.

Shari Thurow, Founder and SEO Director at Omni Media Interactive and author of "Search Engine Visibility" and "When Search Meets Web Visibility" developed expertise while running a business and doing graduate work in Library and Information Sciences. Her excellence comes from a combination of hands-on learning, formal education and testing.

Focus groups are a great way to embrace the role of student, forget your preconceived notions about the brand and watch how people engage. My team was tasked with creating three templates for three different pages/user experiences for the B2C experience for a large retail/manufacturing company. Some of the product shots included people. The VP of Global Marketing was participating in the focus groups and told us to pull all the images with people. "The product is the focus and all of our hero shots should include just the product, no people". I had a strong subject matter expert on my team, but usability is not my main area of expertise so I reached out to Thurow to get advice on how to delicately, but firmly handle the issue. "That's what focus groups are for. Management doesn't decide, users decide. You don't have to prove anything. Let the research and their users prove the results." Not surprisingly the images and experiences that featured people defeated the product-only hero shots by a landslide.

Tim Ash, CEO of Site Tuners and author of "Landing Page Optimization" wants to encourage all digital marketers to school themselves on conversion optimization. Whether you're a brand, an SEO or in paid media, conversion optimization can have enormous impact on the bottom line. Much of digital marketing is focused on driving traffic, particularly paid and owned strategies. Helping your website continually improve and get better at converting should be an ongoing endeavor.

Current estimates put average landing page conversion between 2 and 3%. Think about that, 97% or more of the traffic you so lovingly (and expensively) send to your website leaves without doing the thing you want them to do. Becoming a student of conversion optimization helps us laser focus around not just driving traffic, but around driving business.

Amazon very methodically tests user experience changes constantly and embraces the champion/challenger philosophy. They don't change a lot of things at once, which can make it difficult to define what drove performance and conversion improvement. By testing one element at a time you can always be in champion/challenger mode (test, learn and suck less every time!) However, Todd Friesen, VP, Marketing Operations and Digital Experience at Vimeo and past Director of SEO at Salesforce.com says, "You're not Amazon. You can learn from Amazon, but remember, you're not Amazon".

The lesson? Being a great student means creating a workable hypothesis and testing it.

There are a number of skills that people own that need to be aggregated to successfully execute a strong digital marketing program. There are a select few people who have overlapping skills that make them truly special in their ability to assess needs and define next steps in a way that nearly always leads to success. Jonathon Colman chose to go to school to learn information architecture to support his love of content marketing and content strategy.

Heather Lloyd Martin is the CEO of Successworks and author of the first marketing book I ever read, "SEO Copywriting". The coolest part about the book is that it

was not just the first SEO Copywriting book, but in 1999 it was the first book that really spoke to engaging users with content, not just ranking with content. Every word she wrote about SEO copywriting had to do with the user experience first and the search engines second.

A regular on the speaking circuit, Heather would share the "bad" of SEO copywriting and content development. "We have cashmere sweaters, our cashmere sweaters are the best cashmere sweaters. Shopping for a cashmere sweater? Buy our cashmere sweaters".

Many organizations leverage hours/project tracking tools to help identify where resources spend time and align that to company performance. An absolutely necessary strategy for organizational health. But when you don't give a task code for learning, researching and education you make it irrelevant. If your company has a "read and research on your own time" policy, the learning, thinking, innovation and creativity that comes from educating ourselves will be lost. Google famously allows all of their employees 20% of their time to dedicate whatever they believe is important and some of the company's best ideas and initiatives come from this encouragement for people to become subject matter experts as well as autonomous.

If, as an organization, you say learning is important but you don't have a methodology (like Google's) to encourage that learning it will always be a "nice to have" rather than part of your culture.

Bruce Clay insists on a high level of training for his employees (training which he also packages and executes in workshops around the world). He also insists on educating his clients. "People walk around talking about how stupid this client or this partner is. You're the stupid

one if you know something and you believe it's important for partners to know and you keep it to yourself," he shared.

Chris Brogan has this great process of defining three things at the beginning of every year and that drives the strategies. His system of a lifetime of learning is driven by a simple philosophy. Choose three things, strategies for the year should align to those three things. It's so much more powerful than goals that come and go, it's a system he has adopted that stands the test of time.

If you were to ask any CMO if they value education in support of digital marketing they would nearly all say yes. If you were to ask if they have a way to execute and measure against that goal most would not. Learning, absolutely fundamental to success in digital marketing, will always be a nice-to-have rather than an imperative unless we execute and measure against learning.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a plan for ongoing education and learning in your organization?
2. Have you joined an organization that focuses on that learning?
3. Do you encourage your teams to make education and learning a priority?
4. Do you include learning as part of day-to-day duties?
5. Do you measure the value of ongoing education and learning?

Be a Parent & Teacher - Investing in People for the Greater Good

Good leadership can sometimes look like good parenting. Doing things for the selfless goal of making things better for those we serve.

Bill Hunt likened growing a business to growing a family. If you have one child, you have substantial resources, hands, money, and love to have a big impact. As your family grows larger, you either get help or things go by the wayside. Being honest about how much you can commit, to children or to projects or to team members, depends on acceptance of the reality that growing a family or a business includes a change in dynamic that requires new thinking, new people and new resources.

Rand Fishkin moved his consulting business to a SaaS model with a great and growing platform which included some important research tools for digital marketing. When his company reached a certain size, he passed the CEO torch to a very bright and capable leader whom he knew embodied some of the necessary skills of growing a 100+ person company. This kind of "parenting" is full of selflessness and love for what we create.

People may balk at this analogy, but the reality is that your team is like your family, with all of its dysfunctions and joy, imperfections, and excellence.

"The number one determinant of happiness is a job. Work that is meaningful and done in the company of people we care about." John Mackey, author of "Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business".

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Are you invested in your individual team members' success (and yes, happiness)?
2. Are you willing to make hard choices to benefit your team?
3. Do you give credit to your team when things go well and take responsibility when things go poorly?

Be a Leader - Taking (and Giving) a Seat at the Table

Leadership was the area where people had the most diverse answers as to how leadership was pivotal to sustainable digital marketing. It was a balance of leadership on each side of the table as well as our ability to give a seat at the leadership table.

So how does this change and build better, more trusting relationships? "Relationships are like seat belts, if it doesn't click we don't feel safe," Simon Sinek, author of "Start with Why".

Doesn't matter how great your product is if the relationships are bad. Leadership means asking yourself every day, "What are you doing to help the person next to you?"

"I came by my leadership skills one bruise at a time. I WILL say that any CEO needs to understand the basic craft involved in the service their company provides. The subject matter expertise should come first, not the title," shared Ian Lurie, author and past Founder of Portent Interactive. "I'm very, very biased about this, and I can't point to any 'studies' about it, but any really successful CEO I can think of knew at least a bit about the industry

they served. You don't have to be an EXPERT. You need to understand enough to make smart decisions about resources, judge performance in context, etc. Otherwise, you make very bad decisions. As far as learning the subject matter, I see two ways: Start on the ground, or build something. If you start on the ground, then you've actually done the work, and leadership came later. If you build something, you personally oversee the strategic and tactical work involved in several projects. You see the day-to-day of what gets done. You also participate in that day-to-day. You repeat that process until you understand. "

As search-focused digital leaders, it's easy to stay focused solely on impressions, CTR, share of voice and other top-level metrics, but giving creative a seat at the search table is often overlooked. Even Google, the epitome of a data-driven organization, has experimented with how creative can drive messaging to support their brand. In a famous example of creative meets search, Google's Creative Lab launched their "Parisian Love" campaign. The video tells a love story that starts with the query "how to impress a French girl" and ends with "how to assemble a crib". It's touching and heartfelt and adds a very human element to a very algorithmic equation.

Barry Wehmiller speaks of the great joy and grave responsibility of leadership and articulating beliefs as a guiding business principle the way companies might articulate profitability goals. Once those goals are clear, leadership upholds them and engages those they lead to demonstrate those beliefs.

Simon Sinek's TED Talk and book, "Start with Why" have truly launched a revolution around leadership. Simon opines that people and organizations who are more innovative and do a better job of nurturing their talent are more profitable. He shared that those who start with their

“why” inspire people to achieve remarkable things and that they never manipulate, but inspire with honesty and true alignment on their actions with their “why”.

The military is an ecosystem that not just needs people to emerge as leaders but depends upon it. From Sergeant to General, Marines thrive because individuals at every level recognize the need for leadership as well as the reality that the line between leaders and the led is less about being the boss and more about the bond that develops between leaders and the led.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for leaders is striking the balance between sharing purpose and giving autonomy to support that purpose.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Regardless of your level, have you defined and tried to live your leadership goals?
2. Have you selected a leader you admire to emulate?
3. Have you surveyed your teams to assess leadership strengths?
4. Do you hire mastery?
5. Do you share your purpose?
6. Do you give autonomy?

Be a Partner - Understanding the Difference Between a Contract and a Partnership

As I asked questions about partnerships in digital marketing; partnerships between a brand and its' digital marketing vendors, partnerships between employees and employers, partnerships between C-Suite peers I learned there's a big difference between a contract and a partnership.

Throughout commerce history, a big part of business success relies on the quality of the relationship between a business and the services or products needed for that business that comes from other partners.

Companies like Nike, Disney and Starbucks depend on their sourcing relationships. Those relationships can last for decades. The relationship between agency and brand lasts between two and three years. The amount of time invested in choosing a partner includes due diligence, on site interviews, cross-team buy in, statements of work and other fail safes.

When agencies are a revolving door of talent, that's a whole other level of loss. It has a big impact on the ability to effectively partner.

"Brands treating an agency as a vendor versus a partner (is a challenge). Agencies thrive on being a client partner dedicated to solving a business challenge. Brands who treat agencies poorly or subserviently often get a poor reputation that causes a ripple effect. Agencies can't hire or retain top talent to service the business and the brands subsequently don't get quality work. This is still a relationship-based business. Bottom line, if a brand has a person he or she can trust, that trumps any superior technology, method, or process," shared Daina Middleton, Business Consultant and past CEO of Performics and Head of Global Business Marketing at Twitter.

The partnership often starts not with a contract, but with the pitching process. In an effort to better understand what makes for a winning business development pitch I interviewed several executive leaders responsible for growing business for their agencies. What I learned was that much of the "for the win" attributes were about cohesiveness of the group, clarity of messaging, connection as a pitching team, and clear pricing structure. The soft skills inherent in a winning pitch team were just as much about the service offering and how that aligned with the business problem.

A great business development pitch is art and science. It's part research and part storytelling. Chemistry of the team is just as important as clarity on the pricing model and financials.

Understanding not just the business needs, but the social styles and pain points of each of the decision makers is imperative. Mapping agency or consultant strengths to business problems can also include showing where you're not a good fit. If there's a huge need for

persona creation or customer segmentation and that's not your sweet spot, being honest and proposing other partners can seem counterintuitive to the objective but it can be a strong signal that you care as much about the success and overarching business needs as you do your own bottom line.

Part of the reason an agency or vendor doesn't get selected in the business development process is often that they didn't solve the business problem. If the pitch team isn't credible or it's disjointed that doesn't inspire confidence in service offering. If the proposed solution seemed "generic" rather than specific it's an indication you weren't tailoring a specific solution.

Brands, rightly so, leverage the pitch process as an opportunity to understand the qualities of the vendor. If the pitch team has misunderstood the ask, or it's not clear who's going to do what on the pitch and in the engagement, that's a red flag.

When asked about the benchmarks for sustainable digital marketing relationships between brands and agencies/vendors, Kent Lewis, Founder of Anvil Media shared, "While every company and agency relationship is different, a successful relationship will outline KPIs (objectives > goals > metrics) up front and manage those ruthlessly."

You've gotten everyone to agree on the KPI's (well done you!) The next objection you may hear is about trusting the data. I've seen teams try to push through this objection without really resolving how seriously the data will be considered. Stop. "What do we have to do to trust the data?" Do we start over, are we okay with the data being directional if we have more than one data source? Moving forward and defining what success looks like isn't

truly possible unless there's alignment about trusting the data.

Being a partner and trusted advisor is key for both agency and client. A fully vetted and invested partnership stands a much better chance of surviving the many changes in channels, tools, algorithms, and other uncertainties of the fast-paced, online marketing ecosystem.

Chris Boggs, Business Consultant, takes this a step further. "Don't chase clients". If a client isn't willing to put in the time in the beginning to align on goals they won't put the time in for growing the relationship and they won't invest in you as a vendor." Pay attention to behavior and attitudes at the offset of first discussions, it's not going to get better and it may even get worse." Boggs' experience spans big brands in many verticals including technology, pharmaceutical, retail, and more but his advice for crafting the relationship is the same regardless of the industry.

An important element of partnership is trust. One strong signal for partnership is how partners execute meetings together. Does your vendor come to weekly meetings prepared to tell you "all the things" they did last week or do they come to the table to illustrate how they are helping you solve problems? In many cases, this one data point can be the litmus test for the entire relationship. Vendor weekly meetings should be time for crafting alignment around the path forward, not for sharing the litany of to-do's executed by your vendor partner.

When I asked about the dissolving of the brand and vendor relationship, the discussion points that emerged were surprising. Relationships of years could be dissolved with a simple email. Often leaving the vendor at a loss for understanding and no protocol in place for resolution.

Partnership in tooling platforms continues to drive enormous innovation for digital marketing. Alliances can often start with language. One of my favorite answers to "How do you create partnership?" came from Scott Abel, author and owner of Content Wrangler. All partners were asked to come to the table with a vocabulary list of terms they use often in their decks, strategies, tactics, reporting and day-to-day discussions and review them together. This exercise goes a long way in showing a couple of things. First, sometimes we use words that we don't really mean or don't really understand. Say the word "omni-channel" and unless you've case studied a great example you'll get laughed out of a room. Omni-channel marketing isn't impossible, but we're in the infancy of true omni-channel marketing and throwing the word around like it's as easy as falling off a chair will show you to be either ignorant, arrogant or both. Second, if we are going to incentivize teams to work together aligned on a single purpose then our words need to reflect that alignment. To some people SEM (search engine marketing) means only Paid Search or Paid Media. To some it's the aggregation of both Paid and Organic Search. Say "social ROI" and some will have metrics that align to engagement and others will think it's truly a last-click attribution model ROI from social channels. Third, it helps step up everyone's game when we're asked to give meaning to the words we often use but don't always understand.

You know what you know, they know what they know. If they don't know something they should know so we can align on next steps to succeed, it's your failure if they don't get it. If you strongly believe in your recommendations, help teams prioritize.

Having a great partnership doesn't mean blind faith. Your recommendations won't be implemented if you don't make a strong business case to support them.

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. Are you willing to invest in partnerships?
2. Do you know the costs of onboarding new partners/vendors?
3. Could your Statements of Work and Master Services Agreements become Partnership Agreements?
4. Do you measure the value of partner/vendor retention?
5. Do you make an effort to speak the same language?
6. Do your partners have alignment on goals/objectives?

Be Integrated - When Everybody Clicks

I struggled with where to put this chapter, at the beginning or the end, it could have belonged in either place but I choose to put it at the end because so much about becoming integrated has everything to do with understanding the other elements of the research results. Being partners, leaders, evangelists, students, researchers, strategists, analysts and influencers are all necessary to becoming integrated.

As digital marketers, we have some very big problems to solve. How do we merge traditional marketing and brand expertise with digital? What is the right mix of digital marketing strategies for my company? How do we stay on top of emerging trends and balance testing that innovation with long-term projects and business goals? How invested is your talent in helping solve those problems? How empowered are your partners to help solve those problems?

Larry Kim shared, "The integration you speak of is not possible unless the person at the very top (the person running the company and/or marketing) understands how all of the above (Paid/SEO/Social, etc.) works together and is directly involved in it." The expert practitioners across various silos need to become experts beyond their

silo, then become CMOs or founders of an organization so that their knowledge and experience is in the DNA of the company. That's how Wordstream and other companies like Moz do it. The founder (or someone at a very high level) is essentially a marketer. "I have never seen as much success where you try to infuse this kind of integration from the bottom-up in an organization," shared Kim.

When asked about the biggest pain points of integration and creating long-term agency/consultant and brand engagement, Daina Middleton shared, "The biggest pain point is procurement. Procurement has instituted regular partner reviews that include agencies, and sometimes as often as yearly review cycles. Clients often don't realize the time and energy that goes into agency reviews – client development and retention are a top order of business for any agency. If an agency has a yearly review, the amount of time the team actually spends focusing on delivering results for that client versus retaining the business becomes incredibly imbalanced."

She believes that Investment in integration from a partnership perspective needs to include investment and a fair pricing model on both sides. "Starting at the beginning 'discovery' and focusing on the result of 'integration', agencies and brands are tempted to call these expenses COB-Cost of Business. Calling these activities out as very real and very important business deliverables gives them the heft, time and importance they are due."

When it comes to establishing the realities of the partnership, the pitch process itself requires coming to the table with either an integrated approach that involves other vendors or your internal integrated media plan can illustrate what that might look like.

Investment in an integrated project plan can often happen before there's ever a contract. Many interviewees shared they don't participate in the RFP process for that reason. Whether or not you choose as a brand to insist on an RFP process or as an agency to participate in that process, there's no doubt that commitment to the process helps establish the tone of the engagement even before there is an engagement.

"Overall, I'm seeing brands finally starting to integrate traditional and digital strategies in an effective, measurable manner. Companies like P&G, Red Bull and others are very effective at integrating digital elements into their campaigns," says Kent Lewis, CEO & Founder of Anvil Media.

Joe Pulizzi's research at Content Marketing Institute indicates that integration is at about 40%, still a long way to go.

At the Content Marketing World conference, the largest and most respected conference of its kind in the world, big brands talk about integration as being an enormous pain point.

In his seven-step content methodology of Plan, Audience, Story, Channel, Conversation, Process and Measurement discussed earlier, he outlines in the initial planning phase the importance of a Content Council. This is a group including content developers, strategists, executive leadership, anyone who participates with content to come to the table once a quarter to review successes and failures and get on the same page. It's a powerful process for alignment and understanding.

One of the first efforts of integration I was lucky to participate in at Avery Dennison was a project called

S.V.O.T. (Single Version of the Truth). As a consultant for their eCommerce group we had noted that it was difficult to get alignment on product SKU information. Our lead Robin MacMillan spearheaded the project as a way to consolidate disparate information across SKU's. This was an arduous task, at least three databases existed that included SKU information. A product in the manufacturing database might say "purple" and the product management database might say "violet" and the eCommerce database might say "grape". Though a primary key existed, the commonality of the description was missing. MacMillan did a great job of bringing together all the right stakeholders (IT, marketing, manufacturing, eCommerce) and getting buy-in based on time-savings and consumer and B2B product consistency. It was a thrilling example of what happens when people align around and are incentivized to pursue the same goal with different perspectives.

Avery did, and still does, a great job of partnering with companies such as Staples, Modern Postcard, HP, Microsoft, Zazzle and Martha Stewart to align on collaborative goals as a way to bring two projects or companies together to engage and delight the customer.

Procter and Gamble spoke at Search Engine Strategies on a panel about integrated marketing. P & G has many products that the representative felt were being under optimized. For example, if you typed in "Tide Tabs" in YouTube the result with a P&G channel and product information was on page two. How could he get the product managers to collaborate with the SEO's? He made a very compelling argument for breaking down the silos between these marketing groups. I credit Dana Todd for her insight in assembling this panel because it very adeptly shone the light on the lack of integration for large brands with all of the channels and people necessary for product and campaign success.

Procter & Gamble has taken this one step further and removed marketing from its positions and focused on brand management.

Liana Li Evans, author of "Social Media Marketing" and Professor at Rutgers has worked with big brands like QVC, Caring.com and Comcast. Evans has been a programmer since she was in 6th grade. Her love of social media is a great compliment to her coding skills and one of the reasons she is great at integration. When she speaks with brands she helps them see the full scope of how social can impact their business. She asks questions like, "Do you have someone from human resources dedicated to social media?" She insists on spending the time to understand the customer problem and builds in time for research so they can come up with a low-hanging fruit strategy. If her initial discovery doesn't include discussions between departments, she sees that as a red flag. An unwillingness to integrate will manifest itself in her inability to help integrate social into the DNA of the company and its people. She makes an effort to get to know the people who strongly impact social media, even though it's not their first order of business, like the PR team. Another reason she's great at integration, once she's done the integration work, she gets quickly to the business impact so leadership understands the value of that integration.

She shared a story about a coupon site she worked with. After a launch she helped coordinate with the integrated team, in six hours there were 11K visits and a 60% conversion rate. She was then able to continue integration with the media team for buys that she could now more easily justify. That integration of content, search, media, SEO and social is a powerful combination, not just for the brand but for the customer journey.

John Shehata, Audience Growth Advisor & Consultant and Former Global VP of Audience Development at Condé Nast is the poster child for integration. His title, a combination of search and social, was fairly new when it was bestowed on him. Shehata has a unique combination of data analysis and language analysis.

He helps train journalists to adopt the digital realities and skills necessary to increase content discoverability and drive more readership. Once they experience the higher level of engagement that comes from their content assets being properly optimized they become more engaged in the process. One of the things that makes Shehata so good at his job is that he recognizes how important it is to take the time to patiently and with data educate not just journalists but upper management. Too often digital marketers expect management to understand their desire to implement a strategy without arming them with the right information and education that helps executive leadership make sound digital marketing decisions.

He uses data and business impact analysis to show missed opportunities. Shehata has been successful in this role for so long because he is willing to take the time to educate. He's able to demonstrate to management the longer term success of a project, not just what numbers their efforts are driving tomorrow. That benchmark of sustainability is driven by his mantra, "good content, well-optimized and well-promoted pays off in the short and long-term," says Shehata.

Eleanor Hong, Director Of Audience Development & Engagement at WORLD Channel, focuses on editorial management, SEO, social, and audience integration. Hong is great at bridging the gap between great journalists

and their audience. She helps teach them the language of analysts so she can provide them with great data they'll use. She teaches the value of what they could potentially be losing by helping them understand competitive analysis. She meets with reporters regularly to share with them what's trending. She also helps them understand emerging channels such as YouTube, Twitter and others which can impact their reach. Getting granular with segmenting audience needs is also a strong skill set for Hong to help drive relevancy.

Great communicators and writers armed with data are a powerful combination. Hong was at the forefront of the struggle to help big brands understand that social wasn't a trend, it needed to be a department. With relationship building across multiple teams, she pushed people out of their comfort zones and into each-others' paths to get them to coordinate. "Sharing different perspectives, from different life experiences is crucial to getting people on the same page."

Integration is a fiendishly complex undertaking, but just the simple reminder of the need for integration can be powerful. One past partner at Rosetta (a Publicis Company) and my past boss, Jason Tabeling, often shared a picture of himself in front of a whiteboard with the words, "Is it integrated?" Obvious, sure. Unforgettable, absolutely. I still giggle when I think about Tabeling in front of this simple message with a goofy look on his face that says, "Yep, this is goofy, but damn if it's not something we really need to focus on to get better." He sponsored a quarterly meeting which included a competition of teams sharing case studies that showed the team and business value of integration.

There are a number of statistics that point to improved performance that comes from integration. "Where CMO's

and CIO's work together the company is 76% more likely to outperform in terms of revenue and profitability," According to an IBM study.

What's the value of integration? How do we monitor, measure and improve the relationship aspect of integration? When we measure and report top-level success as a brand or agency that measurement is most often quantitative. Measuring, analyzing and reporting on this metric requires a mix of qualitative and quantitative measurement. Some ideas included cost-savings across channels, factoring co-exposure and intake for surveys. They may also include a matrix of partners with longevity and cost-savings for ramp-up of new partners.

According to researcher Brene Brown, being integrated happens when individuals and teams are "connected". People perform at their very best when they are connected. When they fully understand purpose and are granted autonomy to achieve the part they contribute to that purpose.

Some of you will say that human resources and operations are fulfilling this goal. In most companies, they're not. HR is seen as the onboarder and exiter of talent, not always as the nurturer of that talent.

In state of the union, stakeholder quarterly updates and town hall meetings how often do we hear the traction, growth and stability of the relationships of that organization shared as a metric for success? The quality of the relationships necessary to drive business will never be an integral part of the formula for success until we measure against it and hold leadership accountable to improving and maintaining it.

Indeed, relationships are difficult to measure, it won't be a perfect mathematical equation, but there are a number of metrics identified throughout this book to help create reporting. The goal of most measurements is to get a baseline and then work towards improvement.

Though measuring the business relationships necessary for digital marketing (whether that's brand and vendor, agency employees or in-house staff) will be largely directional, that's okay. You just need a baseline. Just as we can calculate a churn rate for our marketing programs, so can we develop a calculation for understanding the impact of attrition on our organizations and partnerships.

It might include

1. Cost of hiring
2. Cost of training
3. Cost of replacing
4. Cost of ramp up
5. Investment in leadership
6. Investment in soft skills
7. Partner/agency turnover

If partner/agency turnover became part of the dashboard for CMO success, perhaps investment in the discovery, acquisition, retention and loyalty of that partner would encourage a more thoughtful approach that values both sides of the partnership.

Even if the measurement for calculating the baseline and improvement for digital marketing relationships is as

simple as qualitative surveys, it's a start. A mix of more in-depth qualitative and quantitative is recommended as it's more likely to gather traction, interest and understanding at all levels of the organization. It's also more likely to become a more permanent fixture in reporting if it's a combination of both qualitative and quantitative that illuminates the value of measuring and reporting on relationships.

Integrating marketing and technology metrics with relationship metrics needs to start at the top. Even if you aren't at the top you can impact that story. If you're the lead of a small team, integrate relationship metrics into your reporting. If what you're sharing is compelling to the organization's success, the CMO may consider including the metric. Perhaps a Chief Relationship Officer role responsible for the workflows and engagement points and metrics for reporting on the health of the relationships is in order.

Whether you're on the agency side or brand side or in operations, looking to create a new paradigm of digital marketing relationships making the measurement of those relationships part of your most valued business metrics is how we create a culture in support of "when everybody clicks".

COLLABORATION QUESTIONS

1. However you choose to measure and report on the relationships that drive your organization, it's imperative to solving our talent, leadership and industry crisis.
2. What investments (agency or brand) have you made to improve relationships?
3. How can you make integration a bigger priority in your organization?
4. Are you measuring investment of integration with qualitative (surveys) and quantitative (revenue growth, cost savings from alignment, etc) metrics?

Takeaway

Every chapter in this book captures the human, relationship side of the spreadsheet, analytics dashboard, mixed-media modeling, ROI-driven industry we all toil in and love beyond measure. After capturing these lessons and stories my hope is to integrate, align and make creating great relationships a core business priority.

After countless interviews, emails, filled notebooks, TED talk reviews, drafts of chapter titles and book organization it boiled down to that. And that terrified me. I nearly lost my bravery and passed on writing this book in fear that no one would take a "relationship" book seriously in what is a very technology-driven industry. None of this is that hard, in many ways it's common sense (though common sense has been rumored to be a superpower).

My inspiration and fearlessness to press on came in the form of a TED talk on healthcare reform. Rebecca Onie noted that after her speech on aligning healthcare with basic needs such as food and electricity, someone came up to her and said, "No offense, but this is really obvious" to which she shared, "No offense, but if it's so obvious, why aren't we doing it?"

I hope this is just the beginning of the conversations, sharing and thinking that will move the digital marketing

industry to prioritize relationships as strategically as we do technology.

I'd love to hear from you. How are you measuring the value of the relationships that drive digital marketing? Visit www.wheneverybodyclicks.com and share. Your input will help educate as we all work together to improve the state of digital marketing.

Bio

I started my career as a journalist. In high school I was the editor of my newspaper and yearbook. I love interviewing and learning from people and I like writing. I made a terrible reporter, I hated the newsroom. People screamed at each other, smoked cigarettes, drank copious amounts of coffee (and sometimes whiskey) and dropped dead at 51. The frantic deadlines left little time for celebration or reflection, two pastimes I adore. So when I started my job as a Content Developer for a small internet company in Hood River, Oregon I was lucky to stumble upon what became my calling.

I've spent the past nearly three decades in digital marketing and though the description of my duties changed from content developer to SEO to inbound marketer to integrated marketer to customer relationship manager to digital strategist, the goal has remained constant; to execute proven and developing digital strategies to serve business growth and loyalty.

My next goal is to take all of the great learnings curated in my search to write this book and do two things: first apply them to get to the next level of digital marketing excellence and second, have digital marketers weigh in on the topic of sustainable digital marketing so we can continue to learn from each other. Thank you for reading the book and participating in this goal.