

Optimization: The Glue Between Marketing and IT

By Heath Podvesker

We all know this: interactive is becoming an ever larger part of the marketing supply chain. The days of focusing on how a brand is delivered on TV are diminishing daily. Large scale CRM systems are still widely used to retain and grow the customer base and the internet is a critical channel for acquisition. Moreover, measurement, ROI, and accountability are forefront on people's minds. What these things lead to is an increasing reliance on technology to deploy marketing programs, measure results, and optimize performance. An existing challenge that few are talking about is a people issue: the dynamics and working relationship between Marketing and IT.

Marketing and IT are perceived to be very different organizations that can never truly develop a high-performance team dynamic because of differing remits, people skills, challenges, personalities, and goals. After all, how can a marketing organization that focuses on creative concepts, value propositions, and spreadsheets of results collaborate successfully with an IT organization that focuses on network architecture, redundancy, software deployment, and the latest patch from Microsoft? Given the trends in the industry, a closer and more dynamic relationship between marketing and IT must be formed, but first there needs to be a bridge between the two: that bridge will be optimization.

Marketing began working closely with IT during the advent of direct marketing. Direct marketers needed lists and they needed reports. These two relatively simple needs grew to requests for data warehouses, data stores, CRM systems, reporting/OLAP systems, and, of course, web sites. Moreover, statisticians and analysts required complex data pulls and transformations. Marketers were often considered clients of IT. There was a working relationship between the groups, but true collaboration was not happening. In fact, tensions often resulted when marketers required deliverables in very aggressive timeframes that did not always reflect the realities of how long it took IT to accomplish those tasks. Back in the days of legacy systems, getting data in was far easier than getting data out.

Common goals are an important factor in building strong team dynamics. Online marketing efforts from web development to online advertising almost always require technical expertise from IT. So the dynamic has evolved from direct marketers dropping a ticket for a report to a matrixed team working on many online projects. A matrixed structure with defined roles and responsibilities is the first step to building true collaboration. We're seeing this with some clients in how they structure teams, but not often enough.

Optimization requires an intimate relationship between marketing and IT. Optimization includes all aspects of online marketing including site development, creative development, and analytics. Optimization allows marketing and IT to team on multiple facets of the optimization process including set-up (choosing placements and deploying tags and/or an xml



solution), content management (storage of and changing digital assets), and analytics (reporting). As optimization is a goals driven practice, IT and marketing can share common goals – a critical first step for the two organizations to evolve from functioning workgroups to dynamic teams.

Site development is also a bridge between the two groups, but the major difference between site development and optimization is the ongoing nature of optimization. Site development projects are one-off projects (although some may feel as if they last an eternity), but optimization is an ongoing discipline that requires a consistent team. The long-term nature of optimization and the discipline it requires provides the foundation for both groups to develop stronger foundations.

Using optimization and defined roles and responsibilities in a matrixed org chart are tactical ways to increase team dynamics between marketing and IT. What is also required is for executives from both IT and marketing to commit to making both groups function more efficiently together by facilitating process that encourages collaboration rather than bureaucratic hurdles, by enabling knowledge transfer and cross-training, and to establish a tone of partnership.

As marketing gets more ‘digital’, IT and marketing will only get closer in their day to day operations. Soon, we’ll be able to target broadcast ads to individual viewers, optimize communications across all channels, have even deeper analytics, and engage the user in a relevant dialogue from exposure to a general ad through conversion. To enable this, we’ll need lots of brilliant engineers and dazzling technology; to ensure the technology is functionally spot-on, we’ll need lots of creative and cunning marketing professionals. I’m sure we can make all of this brilliance work together and play nice.

ABOUT [x+1]

New York-based [x+1] (www.xplusone.com) provides a continuous optimization solution that equips online marketers with real-time, automated decision making that lifts ad and site conversion rates. This simplifies their online marketing and achieves greater return on their overall marketing investment.

[x+1]’s market-leading solutions, *site+1* and *media+1*, empower marketers with instant insights derived from complex data. These solutions are powered by our groundbreaking technology: the Progressive Optimization Engine™ (POE). Leading companies in financial services, telecommunications, on-line services, and automotive industries have significantly increased message accuracy, customer response and ROI with [x+1].

To find out more please contact us at:



470 Park Avenue South, 7N
New York, NY 10016
Phone: 212.741.4222
Fax: 212.741.4224
xplusone.com