

AI Is Giving CMOs Their Power Back With Sumit Virmani of Infosys

More than ever before, CMOs belong in the C-suite. Sumit Virmani, CMO of Infosys, has a strong case to back this stance up.

In this episode of Marketing Vanguard, live from the 2026 World Economic Forum in Davos, Sumit breaks down the necessary evolution of the CMO, what AI has to do with it, and the strategic imperative of aligning with C-suite priorities.

What you'll learn:

- Why CMOs need to operate within the full C-suite context, not just marketing bubbles
- How to position yourself as a transformation partner, not a marketing operator
- The critical difference between using AI to do marketing better versus using AI to expand your business influence
- Why advocating for marketing's "seat at the strategy table" requires complementing creative genius with AI-powered analytics
- How to build an undeniable business case for attending high-level forums like Davos

Sumit Virmani is the chief marketing officer at Infosys, a global IT services leader with nearly \$20 billion in revenues and 350,000 employees across 60 countries. Known for his strategic vision on elevating the CMO role within the C-suite, Sumit brings over a decade of experience navigating high-level business forums and driving enterprise growth through

integrated marketing and technology initiatives.

For CMOs aspiring to greater organizational influence and relevance, his insights on bridging the gap between marketing creativity and enterprise technology offer essential guidance for modern leadership.

Episode Highlights:

[01:25] Marketing as the Growth Catalyst – Sumit positions marketing as the organizational growth catalyst, arguing that CMOs earn their rightful place at the strategy table by shaping business direction rather than merely executing campaigns. This perspective is critical for CMOs who want to elevate their influence beyond departmental budgets and creative output.

To implement this shift, CMOs must actively participate in cross-functional business debates, contributing customer insights and market intelligence to CEO-level strategic discussions.

[06:45] AI as the Permission Structure for Marketing Expansion – Sumit argues that AI represents an unprecedented inflection point for CMOs, offering access to enterprise analytics and data partnerships previously unavailable, which enables marketers to position themselves as transformation partners and strategy orchestrators.

Rather than using AI merely to automate marketing workflows and improve campaign efficiency, the strategic opportunity lies in leveraging AI-driven insights to contribute to product development, customer experience reimagining, and enterprise-wide decisions.

[08:45] Redefining Marketing Success as Transformation and Growth – Sumit challenges CMOs to honestly assess their definition of marketing success: If it centers on creating

great advertising, expanding scope is optional; if it focuses on driving transformation and growth, scope expansion becomes mandatory for competitive survival.

This distinction directly impacts how CMOs prioritize their time and resources, as well as which capabilities they develop and invest in building. The underlying tension is that CMOs are often hired for their creative credentials and advertising expertise, yet strategic influence requires complementary skills in data analytics, business operations and enterprise problem-solving.

So, to succeed, CMOs must deliberately shift their identity from creative leaders to business transformation partners, which means building internal credibility through contributions beyond campaign development—customer intelligence, market analysis and operational optimization.

[11:26] Turning Conferences into Business Multipliers – Sumit demonstrates how CMOs can maximize return on attendance at high-level platforms by operating across three concurrent objectives: brand showcase and visibility, customer relationship deepening and peer learning and context gathering.

Rather than treating conference attendance as a single-purpose activity, strategic leaders approach these events as concentrated windows for business acceleration—conducting hundreds of meaningful meetings in just three days to consolidate customer relationships, learn competitive intelligence, and gather market insights.

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