An Inflection Point for Marketers—and Adweek

In my first six months as chief content officer at Adweek, I've reflected a lot on the role of the marketer in the global economy and the future of our company's business.

Given the state of the world and our industry, it's easy to explain why. In 2022, chief marketing officers and their organizations have faced one crisis after the next: supply chain shortages, persistent inflation and geopolitical risks, all while the trajectory of climate change grows ever more distressing. Factor in the new threats to brand safety posed by the uncertainty surrounding social media platforms, and it's clear the job of the marketer is massive and getting more challenging every day.

Watching these developments closely, I've marveled at the resiliency of our community. The last several years of the pandemic have demonstrated the power of marketing to not only manage customer journeys but be a catalyst for business change, an engine for growth and a driver of business transformation. Though the CMO's role has been the subject of constant reinvention for much of the past decade, it was the CMO that emerged from the early pandemic with a broader remit than arguably any other C-suite member. When economies shuttered and people were stuck in their homes, marketers got to work creating new value for customers and using new technologies to transform the customer experience. And despite all the challenges of 2022, that essential work they do continues today, more boldly than ever before.

Now, as we look to 2023 and a possible recession, marketing budgets are under attack—again. We've seen this story play out

before. It seems that every time we experience an economic downturn, marketing budgets are the first to be cut. When this happens, marketers must do more with less, amid turbulence and volatility.

For all these reasons and more, Adweek must recommit itself to serving the marketer.

Especially in these times of economic upheaval, Adweek must continue to be a critical resource for marketers. We must go beyond just reporting on the news of the day. We must provide marketers with practical insights, advice and connections across the community to help them grow their business and careers. We must help marketers stay ahead of the velocity of change.

Importantly, we must continue to focus on people. I often have to remind myself that it's not the company that makes the decision—it's a person working at a company who makes the decision. Which is why we need to humanize marketing again by focusing on the stories of real people doing real marketing. One thing my career in publishing has taught me is that people want to read about other people. The more radically human, the better.

In this spirit of getting back to fundamentals, we will be fearless about how we cover our industry. Marketers are constantly trying to innovate to grow their businesses. It defines our industry: the drive to bring breakthrough ideas to the world. But not everything works, and we have to be honest and transparent with ourselves and readers about that so we can all learn from it together. There are always important lessons to be learned from what went wrong. At Adweek, we will focus on what didn't work with the same rigor as we focus on what did work.

How we will serve marketers

Adweek's mission is to "inspire, connect and guide the global

marketing community to navigate the future.” But just as with any global marketing campaign, our success in making this mission statement a reality hinges on execution. So just how will we serve marketers?

With disruption being a permanent reality, we will focus on the people, technologies and strategies that are upending the status quo to uncover new pockets of opportunity and business growth. We will bring our community the latest trends, developments and insights that can be translated into actionable information to help them conquer disruption and be the disrupters themselves.

In times of duress, unlikely partnerships and alliances can be a lifeline. We will focus on how CMOs and other component parts of the marketing industry are collaborating to effect real, meaningful and lasting change.

With marketing budgets in jeopardy, the progress we have made as an industry in diversity, equality, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) could be erased if we are not careful. As Lewis Williams, head of brand impact at Weber Shandwick, told me recently, “We are beginning to go backward again.” This is gravely concerning. Imagine if DEIA gets deprioritized in marketing organizations? The impact could be catastrophic. That’s why we will focus even greater editorial attention and rigor on the marketing practices that ensure equal access to information, resources and opportunities to everyone, especially those who are marginalized. Through our coverage, we will not just report on new initiatives; we will provide readers with an actionable blueprint for advancing their own DEIA agendas during tough economic times.

Speaking of marketing budgets, we will focus more on the measurement of people and processes and the new data, tools and research that define success in our industry. With chief financial officers, chief operating officers and chief executive officers demanding greater clarity on marketing

spend, we will work to deliver the latest trends and insights to help marketers innovate in how they measure what they do.

Of course, at the apex of everything is growth. When we focus on marketers, we also focus on business growth. With intentionality and diligence, we will delve into our industry's practice of driving brand and business momentum that yields financial gain. And with the same ethos, we will chronicle the impact that marketing and marketers make on their companies and society.

In this way, our focus on marketing is really on business itself. Peter Drucker, famed business consultant, once said, "Because the purpose of business is to create a customer, the business enterprise has two—and only two—basic functions: marketing and innovation. Marketing and innovation produce results; all the rest are costs."

"Marketing is the distinguishing, unique function of the business," he added.

Challenges and all, I am privileged to be guiding Adweek's content strategy during this time. What makes me most excited about what's to come is the community surrounding me. The year ahead and beyond will require new models of leadership, playbooks for success and, most of all, strong connections and collaborations across our industry. I look forward to the journey with all of you.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/media/an-inflection-point-for-marketers-and-adweek/