

The Greatest Hits of Raja Rajamannar, CMO of Mastercard

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Welcome to this special greatest hits episode of the Marketing Vanguard podcast. It's a pleasure to welcome Raja Rajamannar, Mastercard's chief marketing and communications officer and founding president of its healthcare business.

Rajamannar is a transformation leader with substantial senior management experience at companies around the world. He has managed large-scale businesses at Fortune 500 companies across financial services, consumer-packaged goods and healthcare, including at Unilever, Citigroup and Anthem.

Rajamannar shares his journey from environmental engineering to marketing and emphasizes the importance of continuous learning. He discusses the evolving role of CMOs, the need for collaboration with other executives, and the balance between innovation and driving business results.



He also highlights the importance of both creativity and logic in marketing, and challenges the outdated marketing curriculum in business schools.

“The role of CMOs is changing rapidly. We can no longer just focus on creative campaigns and brand building,” he says on the podcast. “We have to be data-driven and analytical. It’s about combining left-brain and right-brain skills to drive business results. We need to be able to tell a compelling story with data.”

Tune in to gain valuable insights from Rajamannar’s experience and expertise.

Key takeaways:

02:36 – The Power of Continuous Learning in Marketing: Rajamannar finds joy in pushing marketing boundaries, exemplified by his book *Quantum Marketing*, which is now published in 10 languages and taught at 300 universities. To extend this work, he began a successful LinkedIn newsletter, *Marketing Sense*, with 125,000 organic subscribers. This ongoing process of learning, including interviews with CMOs and academics, brings him immense satisfaction.

10:32 – Balancing Innovation and Driving Business Results:

Rajamannar advises against jumping at every new marketing idea. Instead, he stresses the need to evaluate ideas based on their relevance, scalability and alignment with key objectives. Focus on whether they enhance the brand, drive business or build competitive advantage. Allocate 3-5% of the marketing budget for experimentation, ensuring ideas are tested and scaled or discarded based on their effectiveness.

14:05 – The Need to Collaborate with C-Suite Leaders:

Rajamannar reflects on his experience in managing businesses and P&L, noting a common challenge: Marketing teams often struggle to show how their spending impacts business results. To address this, they established a CFO for marketing to ensure transparency and build trust. He also emphasized the need for collaboration with other departments, like technology and human resources, to align marketing with broader business goals.

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