What Makes a Good Marketing Manager?

June 16, 2020 7 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

Many marketing professionals aspire to become excellent marketing managers who can direct entire teams toward commercial and creative success. Despite the allure of becoming a marketing manager, however, it’s an immensely difficult position to master. Many marketing specialists do quite well when producing content or conducting research but lack the skills and experience needed to be good marketing managers. Business owners and marketing gurus are thus left grappling with the question of what makes a good marketing manager so great, and how to avoid making mistakes that stymie the whole team’s progress.

Here’s a review of what it takes to become a good marketing manager, and what techniques to avoid if you want your team to remain successful over the long term.

Know your role as a marketing manager

If you’re a marketing manager or are angling to become one, there’s a good chance that you possess some experience working in the lower rungs of the marketing hierarchy. Producing content, making pitches, and conducting research are all things that some marketing managers can involve themselves with, but at the end of the day, you’ll ultimately be shying away from these tasks to focus more on the overall management

of your marketing community. This is because your role isn't to be a creative guru who produces excellent copy or shapes the media narrative, but rather to be the excellent team leader who steers others toward success while preventing burnout, inter-team disputes, and costly over budgeting.

There are best practices to follow, but understand that much of this will be learning as you go. This is because excellent marketing managers can't be churned out in a factory-like procession, but must instead cut their teeth by personally involving themselves in the nitty-gritty of running a marketing operation. Much of your work will likely involve budgeting, so upping your financial literacy is strongly recommended if you seek to become a marketing manager one day.

Related: B2B Sales and Marketing Strategies for the "New Normal" of COVID-19

Not all marketing managers are financial geniuses, but those managers who want to churn out a marketing strategy that works need a comprehensive understanding of money in a way that other marketing specialists don't. You'll also need to become adept at explaining complex topics to your subordinates, as they may not possess the industry experience or level of education that you possess as a manager. Time and time again, good marketing managers make time for their team members and ensure that nobody is left behind. Otherwise, the entire marketing plan quickly falls apart.

The ins and outs of leading a team

If you have little to no experience leading a team, becoming a marketing manager can be an incredibly intimidating experience. This is because exceptional marketing managers understand how to set a clear vision for their team before enabling their individual team members to fulfill that vision in the most effective way possible. Sometimes, a subordinate

will have a plan or approach that you yourself could not implement, and in this situation being an excellent marketing manager entails supporting them as they work to implement that plan in a way that only they can.

You should also know that leading a team necessitates taking responsibility for your failures. If the marketing manager is the person in charge, then they're also the person who needs to take the blame when something goes wrong. Sometimes, marketing managers suffer because they're totally unfamiliar with the common mistakes of the position. Reading up on those errors is a surefire way to avoid them in your own future. Many senior marketing managers feel threatened by the presence of other seasoned professionals, for example, and only hire largely unqualified candidates to ensure they remain the top dog. By depriving your team of the expertise you need, you're acting as a bad manager.

Related: 10 Marketing Strategies to Fuel Your Business Growth

Good marketing managers also know when to let an unproductive employee go. If your organization is failing to achieve its marketing goals, there's a very good chance that your current team isn't sufficiently streamlined. Lackluster content producers need to be replaced by savvy marketing managers who understand how to find replacements that can get the job done. Relying on freelancers and third parties can help you keep your budget under control, but full-time content specialists are even better in terms of the materials they churn out.

Fail to make the difficult decisions about hiring and firing as a marketing manager, and you'll never rise high up the ranks of the industry.

Learning how to implement change

One of the most important elements of any marketing manager's commercial success is whether or not they can implement

change. Many people can recognize the need for change, but relatively few of them can actually implement it. This is because change is inherently disruptive and threatens the status quo, which in turn entrenches itself. Good marketing managers are those professionals who know how to implement team-wide changes without disrupting individual team members.

Sometimes, you won't be able to count on the help of your team when implementing changes. This is because your content specialists and other team members may be preoccupied elsewhere, forcing you to grapple with change alone. *Target Marketing* has done an excellent review of how to go about implementing marketing changes in such a scenario. Marketing is ever-changing, and those managers who don't become masterful implementers of innovation will quickly find themselves obsolete and replaced.

Sometimes, the changes you'll be implementing have nothing to do with your team and everything to do with convincing a client to adjust their marketing strategy. In this scenario, you'll need to rely on your mastery of finance to argue that certain changes are needed from a budgetary perspective. Elsewhere, you'll need to potently argue that certain changes simply must be fostered if you intend to reach a target audience with a message that will resonate. Oftentimes, clients will be hesitant to implement sweeping changes that undo previous work or imperil past investments, but your job as a manager is to cut through this doubt and force through painful yet necessary innovations.

You need to take responsibility

Finally, good marketing managers need to take responsibility for their failures. This is the marketing industry – it is inevitable that you're going to fail, as even consumers don't always know what they want to buy. If you react to failure by melting down, blaming your team, and refusing to foster much-

needed changes, you'll continue to wallow in obscurity at the bottom of the industry. Real marketing professionals take responsibility for their failures, identify what caused a given marketing strategy to backfire, and come up with plans to do better in the future.

Related: Now Is the Ideal Time to Invest in Influencer Marketing

If this sounds difficult, that's because it is. Being a marketing manager isn't easy, and involves constantly reassessing your strategy to identify and expunge any flaws you find. Marketing managers can produce powerful results when they follow this playbook, though, and will soon find themselves in hot demand if they capably steer their teams toward the finish line in a timely fashion while remaining under budget. Want to become a great marketing manager? Start by improving yourself before pivoting to a position of team leadership, and you'll be masterfully implementing marketing plans in no time.https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/351731