Workday CMO Emma Chalwin on Humanizing B2B Marketing

CMOs can drive business revenue—this is an established fact. But how can they do it better, bigger, and stronger in the age of AI?

We're unpacking this in the latest episode of Marketing Vanguard, live from the 2026 World Economic Forum in Davos. Tune in as Emma Chalwin, CMO at Workday, breaks down the evolving strategic role of CMOs at major enterprises, the intersection of AI and human-centered marketing, and how chief marketing officers can become essential drivers of business growth.

What you'll learn:

- How to position CMOs as strategic business leaders in the age of AI
- The "art and science" framework for modern CMOs to thrive
- Why AI adoption requires a human-centered brand narrative
- How to reframe customer relationships from acquisition to retention
- The "B2B to B2H" (Business to Human) messaging approach and why it's critical
- How to embed brand values as competitive differentiation

With 30 years of experience in B2B tech marketing across startups and Fortune 500 companies, Emma has become a vocal advocate for elevating the CMO role from a support function to a strategic business driver. Her work at Workday demonstrates how forward-thinking CMOs can shape organizational narratives

and influence C-suite strategy during periods of transformational change.

Episode Highlights:

[03:36] From "Mad" to "Math" for Marketer Success – Emma explains that modern CMOs must evolve beyond pure storytelling to become data-driven growth officers who understand business fundamentals and ROI metrics, because CMOs who only focus on brand awareness and advertising lack the credibility needed to influence C-suite decisions and secure budget allocation for strategic initiatives. CMOs should establish clear KPIs connecting brand campaigns to revenue generation, customer retention, and pipeline impact, integrating financial literacy into their marketing strategies.

[08:37] Building Consumer Trust Through Advisor-Based Marketing – Emma emphasizes that CMOs must redirect their strategic focus from acquiring new customers to retaining and deepening relationships with existing ones, particularly in an era of market uncertainty and fear around AI and workforce transformation. This shift matters because customers are experiencing anxiety about the future of work and desperately seeking trusted partners who understand their challenges, not vendors pushing solutions. CMOs should reposition their marketing as providing genuine business advisory value—showcasing customer success stories, demonstrating genuine AI benefits tied to human elevation, and maintaining consistent dialogue about evolving customer needs.

[11:54] Lean Into Brand Values as Competitive Differentiation in a Choice-Rich Market – Emma stresses that in an increasingly commoditized enterprise software landscape, CMOs must anchor brand strategy in distinctive organizational values that competitors cannot replicate, creating emotional connection beyond functional benefits. This differentiation is critical because B2B buyers now have abundant options, making the tone, personality, and values of a vendor increasingly

important in decision-making, especially during uncertain times when trust and cultural alignment matter. Start by identifying one or two core brand values and embed them consistently throughout campaigns, customer experiences, and storytelling that makes the brand unmistakably recognizable.

[12:16] B2B to B2H (Business to Human) – Emma advocates for a fundamental repositioning of B2B marketing toward “B2H” (Business to Human), emphasizing that messaging must speak directly to individual decision-makers with humble, helpful language instead of corporate jargon and marketing fluff. This approach is essential because enterprise buyers are fatigued by generic messaging and demand transparency about how solutions directly address their pain points and fears in the context of rapid change. To implement B2H messaging, CMOs should develop deep audience segmentation tied to specific job roles, business contexts, and emotional drivers, then customize content that speaks directly to those personas’ unique anxieties and aspirations.

Recommended videos
https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/workday-cmo-emma-chalwin-on-humanizing-b2b-marketing/