

Bridging the Gap: How CIOs & CMOs Can Collaborate in the Age of Data-Driven Marketing



Auria Moore, Director of Solution Strategy for Customer Master Data Management, Stibo Systems

Data is shaping our businesses and is changing how we interact with each other.

In this age of data-driven marketing, data determines how marketing engages with customers, and most enterprises have even evolved to rely on data to validate business decisions. A recent study revealed that 79% of enterprise executives agree that companies that do not embrace big data will lose their competitive position and may face extinction.

The CIO and CMO are both critical in turning data into growth and opportunity. The only problem is, they're almost native rivals. Until recently, many such teams tried to avoid each other. Kudos to all in marketing and IT who know that collaboration is key and have aligned. For those still looking to bridge the gap to drive a shared business agenda, there are a few easy ways for these leaders and their teams to kick start a newly-formed friendship (or reshape an old one).

Show compassion and R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Before collaboration can begin, the CIO and CMO must be willing to show some respect for each other's teams. IT is not

just a silent back office group that fixes your laptop when it crashes. They facilitate the flow of information, oversee the implementation and maintenance of systems within a business and ensure it runs smoothly. Marketing doesn't just create pretty ads and tweet. They are the voice behind how products/solutions are sold, they enable sales to sell and they manage the brand.

Two different groups, but they are equally valuable to any business, and both touch enterprise data consistently. A little respect from both sides early on will go a long way.

Be clear on swim lanes

No one likes their toes stepped on. CIOs and CMOs are both extremely engaged in leveraging technology to drive a superior and differentiated experience, and on acting on insights to facilitate strategic competitive advantage. But their roles are very different, and how they approach data is very different.

Marketers tend to think of brand recognition, lead generation and results. IT thinks of processes, systems and operations.

When marketing says they want to collect more data to improve campaigns, it's IT that will ask how it will be collected, where it will be stored and how privacy is impacted.

Marketing has historically liked to do their own thing, and IT has too. Having clear and open conversations to determine who owns strategy, budget, and decision governance on big data projects – and collaborating on all the above – will only close gaps sooner.

Learn new lingos

Math is a universal language and so is data. But how a CIO will talk about data is completely different than how a CMO will – one is more technical and the other is more business-

focused. For both to be successful, they need to learn how to blend their languages.

Marketing must talk technical and IT must talk big picture. Reading technical implementation guides or sitting-in on implementation calls can give marketing a jump start on learning IT's language. For IT, they can comb their company's website and marketing content (e.g. webinars) to brush up on marketing terminology.

If the language challenge and overall gaps are still too great, then some companies turn to balancers focused on analytics. In some cases, it might be the Chief Data Officer. The CDO complements both the CIO and CMO and is responsible for data strategy, privacy and optimizing the value of the organization's data assets.

Sharing is caring

In new relationships, transparency is the best policy, and over-communication can only help. CIOs and CMOs need to meet regularly – in-person and virtually – to discuss data strategy, projects and progress.

The sooner marketing can share their roadmap and plans to incorporate new technology with IT, the better. Because IT is process-oriented, they operate in planned (and practical) phases or releases. And although IT can make improvements to their flexibility, they'll be very grateful for marketing's advance notice, so they can add new activities to their always-busy schedule.

CIOs and CMOs also need to communicate challenges and roadblocks, as well as the steps that were taken to resolve them. Delays happen, and other priorities come up, but if marketing needs to make additions or edits to the data being collected and they're expecting the changes made to support an upcoming campaign, IT should notify marketing if those

expectations are unrealistic, so the greater business isn't affected. Similarly, if IT is running on a tight schedule, and marketing is moving up a campaign that requires changes sooner than planned, waiting until the last minute to notify IT is always a bad idea and will only put strain on the relationship.

Make sure your data is trustworthy

Experience has become as important, and often more valuable, than brand these days. Whatever kind your business is focused on – customer experience, digital experience, product experience, etc. – building and delivering it as part of an overall customer journey is a joint responsibility of the CMO and the CIO. This common goal is mandatory for creating a strong relationship between these two leaders.

Of course, one can't speak of experience without personalization. Customers today demand, and expect, a unique, one-to-one relationship customized to their unique wants and needs. If they don't get it, they often find comfort in the fact that an alternative is just a click away. To provide that level of personalization, businesses rely on a constantly growing stream of data from a myriad of disparate sources, applications, systems and locations. To make use of that data to achieve customer centricity and deliver competitive advantage, it needs to be available, accurate, consistent, private and secure.

Here is where bridging the gap goes from optional to mandatory. The CMO and CIO need to collaborate to break down data silos across the organization and create a "single golden record" or source of truth for every customer, product, location and supplier to deliver this type of data integrity.

Building a new relationship with a closed-minded partner will be doomed before it can even begin. We're operating in a business environment unlike anything we've seen before, and it

requires departments that rarely interacted before to now be closer than ever. To win with customers in a time where personalization trumps all, CIOs need to blend their insights with their CMO's knowledge of the market, customer and brand to deliver a memorable experience. Siloed data only hurts businesses, and siloed departments are no different.

About the Author: *Auria Moore is Director of Solution Strategy for Customer Master Data Management at Stibo Systems. She has more than 15 years of experience in the data space across a variety of industries, and a passion for driving value-based outcomes for customers and helping companies succeed in all aspects of their data management and digital transformation strategies.*