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**Your thoughts on 'Success by numbers'**

*'We live in highly wasteful times because of a general flight from reason and accountability. The decline in interest, by the advertising and marketing communities, in any form of genuine accountability is placing our painstakingly built media system in grave danger'*  
**Paul Ashby**

*'Pieces of marketing that engage their target and provide positive measurable results will show their creators to be the successful marketers'*  
**Dave Elledge**

*'Tomorrow's marketers will need to be ever-more numerate and data-led to have a credible voice in business decision-making. But being only numerate isn't enough. A spark for innovative thought (rather than creativity, which is worth buying in from a specialist third party) drives bigger and better actions and sells more'*  
**Chris Penrose**

*'If marketing roles are seen to be too analytical, data- and sales-driven, they are unlikely to attract the best talent. Marketing roles need to have a healthy balance with the sexy, creative stuff directly contributing to driving real growth'*  
**Andrew Watson**

*'Could it be that the woefully high failure rate of new product development in part reflects over-focus on creativity, and too little focus on analysis, measurement and accountability?'*  
**Julian Thomas**

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# How to get ahead in marketing: Success by numbers

The accountability imperative is creating a new breed of marketing analyst. Jonathan Turner and Lindsay Leslie-Miller report on how marketers will need to hone their skills, in the third of our four-part series on career development

Jonathan Turner is managing consultant at Oxford Strategic Marketing, specialists in strategic marketing consultancy and marketing capability development. [www.oxfordsm.com](http://www.oxfordsm.com)

Lindsay Leslie-Miller is managing director of HunterMiller, the UK's leading executive search firm for consumer-facing organisations. [www.hunter-miller.co.uk](http://www.hunter-miller.co.uk)

While many marketers consider themselves creative minded, companies are increasingly looking for marketers with analytical skills. It is no longer acceptable to claim that you don't know which bits of your marketing work. Employers are demanding marketers who are willing and able to be more accountable. The quest for accountability can be summarised by the three p's: profitability, processes and purpose.

The first of these is the most traditional, with finance directors and chief executives challenging marketers to scrutinise their activities to prove that they are profitable. The desire for such factual justification for promotional spend has led companies to move toward econometric models that examine economic trends and relationships.

Companies that understand the power of analysis—financial services companies such as HSBC and Barclays or telecoms firms such as BT and Orange—are recruiting data-literate marketers and it will become vital for young marketers to have these skills or future options will be limited.

The trend toward more rigorous processes requires marketers to be answerable for how they do things, as well as the results

they achieve, which can feel intrusive in a profession where the end has traditionally post-rationalised the means.

The final issue is to make marketers more accountable for the purpose of marketing within the organisation. As marketing has become more fragmented, so marketers have to fight to justify their role. This means influencing skills are more important than ever and are often cited as a key requirement.

To prove their worth to the board, marketers have to work hard. They have to find and champion a specific purpose for marketing in their company, be it brand activation or customer focus. This form of accountability is less clear-cut, and may be delivered through relationship-building and reporting, but it is vital that it is linked to the board agenda.

The following questions are key to marketers determined to make their way within the landscape of accountability.

**What sort of organisation should I choose?**

Most marketers agree that traditional FMCG firms offer the best general grounding. But when it comes to profit-level accountability, other types of business have the edge.

Service industries are leading the way in measuring the total consumer experience. The best ones identify what drives overall customer satisfaction and loyalty and then fix, maintain or drive critical elements such as competitive pricing, strong customer support and consistent innovation. Measurement is then linked back to essential metrics within the customer experience, such as call response times. These evaluation skills are often reflected in recruitment briefs. Marketing leaders in financial services and telecoms businesses look to recruit marketers with statistical qualifications and the experience to allow them to stretch their organisations' capability further.

Measurement experience – understanding individual customer profitability and lifetime value – is more likely to come from these sectors, so if you want to be at the cutting edge of accountability, this is the place to start.

Leading marketers already know how to analyse and invest in the capability to improve accountability; Tesco's strategic stake in dunnhumby is a compelling example. In the future, these investments will be reflected in individual roles—expect to see more titles such as marketing capabilities director. These will not be loosely-defined strategic roles, but major budget centres.

**What culture is best?**

Choice of culture is deeply personal. What appears to be poor accountability to one manager can seem like laxity or even duplicity to another. 'I have always been led by my values. I gravitate toward companies that are meritocratic, but still find room to value difference,' says Ian Ryder, chief executive of branding agency UffindellWest, and a veteran of Unisys and Hewlett-Packard. 'A culture of accountability is very important to me,' he adds.

Any company can become toxic if you cannot navigate the internal politics. The reality of accountability is that achieving career progress means winning the trust of colleagues. If marketing is to make a contribution, it must be able to communi-

cate and justify its needs and contributions to operational colleagues as well as traditional sparring partners in sales or finance. If you can't win influence with engineers and designers, you will not be able to get to the top. As Alison Canning, a non-executive director at communications group AAB, puts it: 'If your aspiration is to build a communications-led organisation, you had better know how to communicate.'

Developing resilient, purpose-led accountability involves open conversations across the organisation, so look for a culture that gives everyone sufficient room to make mistakes, and which also rewards measurable successes.

**What skills do I need?**

Many marketers are still financially illiterate; of the IPA's recent analysis of 203 return-on-investment case studies, just 39 were without obvious errors. With the growth of econometrics, learning financial discipline is critical.

When it comes to process-level accountability, you need to have a solid grasp of marketing principles and processes and learn to devise and stick to specific, measurable, achievable and timely objectives. An academic grounding through an MBA or CIM qualification can help, but it is more important to acquire experience of change programmes or restructuring.

Many senior marketers are seeing a major restructuring of responsibilities and processes to improve their accountability. 'We have moved local managers from an opt-in model on global branding to an opt-out model. They now need to explain why they should be exempt from central positioning plans,' says James Hallett, global planning manager for Sensodyne at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK). 'It is improving brand consistency, but we leave local markets alone when it comes to implementing initiatives. We would never have thought about advertising toothpaste on beer mats, but they did in Ireland and it worked.'

**What sort of brand is best?**

In theory, any brand can provide a good grounding in accountability, but in practice there are some ground rules that are

## Essentials Advice from the top



**David Lundholm is pioneer programme director at Norwich Union**

**Q What is your view on marketing accountability and effectiveness?**

A It is not only desirable, it is essential. Marketers must be accountable for the ideas they present and the results they deliver. As the IPA Effectiveness papers have shown, it is possible to measure and deliver marketing effectively. There

is a fresh generation of marketers who have grown up in the digital space, where in theory, if not yet fully in practice, every digital contact is measurable and with straight-through processing, can be managed throughout a customer's life cycle.

**Q What does this accountability mean for your organisation?**

A More of our business is being done online. We are looking at ways to reinvent our business model to keep pace with our customers' future needs.

**Q What advice would you give young marketers today?**

A Get exposure to market research. You must understand data. Look for ways to get numerate on the data that is used in marketing. You will not be able to make business decisions or recommend solutions without it. But equally, never underestimate the ability of your customer to outthink you. Use the data, but don't rely on it. And build some evidence of your own accountability.



**Chris Harris is global marketing director of luxury mobile phone brand, Vertu**

**Q What does accountability mean for your marketing team?**

A Accountability depends upon the role of marketing within the organisation. If your task is customer insight, then you need to be accountable for making that insight stick within the company and showing that you help everybody win.

**Q What do these trends mean for your business?**

A It is important to show we are spending marketing money wisely. But it is even more vital to show that marketing is adding value – translating customer insights into a language that our R&D and sales colleagues can make good use of. We are here to help create better phones that sell faster for higher premiums. Achieving this is about listening to colleagues and earning the right to do what you believe in.

**Q What advice would you give young marketers today?**

A Question your own judgment. Look for proof of your assumptions. You might assume that all affluent, status-conscious consumers think alike. It doesn't work like that. Make sure you go somewhere that takes marketing seriously and test yourself in tougher environments where marketing doesn't call the shots. And keep it simple. The more complex marketing becomes, the more crucial it is to keep things simple.

worth taking note of. First, accountability is much easier to achieve in a successful company. As alluring as it is to steer a turnaround, accountability will always be warped in these situations. When there is little budget to invest in effective measurement, deep-seated assumptions will often be relied upon during the decision-making process, rather than facts.

Second, in most cases, the more choices a company is facing, the more important accountability becomes. In businesses that experience rapid innovation, such as Skype or Google, it is critical to identify those features responsible for creating customer loyalty and deserve further investment, and those elements that are simply background noise.

A competitive market also makes accountability more crucial, as does a fragmented distribution strategy where channel allocation needs careful planning. Beyond this, look for brands with a direct relationship with customers, and look for the presence of an experienced marketer at the top of the organisation to set a strong accountability agenda.

Many companies have delegated accountability to their agencies. While this creates a veneer of tactical accountability in the short term, it does not enable real ROI-based learning and improvement of the processes involved. Seek out strong management information and insight departments that create rigorous testing programmes, such as those at Reckitt Benckiser. Diageo has historically ranked all its marketing activities and then reallocated the budget for the bottom 20% into higher-performing activities and testing.

If you want to be truly accountable, you need to look for marketing teams that have retained their accountability for profit, process and purpose. The consequence of this will be a marketing department that is valued, is capable of learning and can justify its role.

**'If your aspiration is to build a communication-led organisation, you had better know how to communicate.'**

**Alison Canning**  
AAB plc

**Best practice: GSK Breathe Right**

Following its acquisition of healthcare goods manufacturer CNS, GSK worked with MediaCom Business Science to investigate global opportunities for Breathe Right, the nasal strips brand. The two developed feeds from commercial data and consumer survey data, enabling GSK to allocate resources across a number of criteria, such as how much to invest in each country to deliver the greatest overall profit. A big issue was deciding the proportion of spend to be used to build awareness of the product's benefits and growing the market, and how much should be spent on promotions to drive trial.

The aim was to capture the long-term impact of decision-making on profit. GSK's work also exposed where there were opportunities in existing markets for building greater sales and revealed where the business should re-evaluate the balance between brand awareness work and trial. This had a significant effect on the shape of the campaign.

'At the planning stage, MediaCom helped us understand the scale of the global opportunity,' explains Dave Thomas, global launch director for Breathe Right at GSK. 'It not only put the consumer at the heart of the debate, but also gave us facts with which to plan our business strategy.'

The analytics also revealed that two of the main product benefits, which include snoring prevention, cold and flu relief and exercise performance, clearly outstripped others in terms of volume potential. By focusing on these benefits, the firm could develop clearer messaging. 'The key is to distil complex results into clear real-world actions,' says Andy Crang, associate director at MediaCom Business Science. 'It gives us control.'