

Why marketing doesn't enjoy a key position at the boardroom table



By [Bridget von Holdt](#)

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In a recent global study of over 1,200 large companies, 80% of CEOs did not really trust their marketers, while in comparison, 90% of them trusted and valued the opinion and work of their CFOs and CIOs.

CEOs think that marketers are too disconnected from the financial reality of a company and too often lose sight of their real jobs, which is to create continual customer demand for their product or service in a quantifiable and business-measurable way.

It is all about perception. Many CEOs believe that marketers live in a creative social media bubble and focus too much on the 'likes', 'tweets', 'feeds' or 'followers' of social media. These parameters make it difficult to prove that more business or customer demand for products or services has been generated. The message that CFOs need to embrace is that the internet has made marketing far more measurable (and therefore more accountable to the CEO and CFO) than ever before.

Producing a good brief

While marketers are focusing on the latest marketing technologies, such as marketing automation, lead management and CRM to generate customer demand, most CEOs still believe that the marketing director is failing to deliver the level of incremental customer demand expected of them.

A skilled marketing director knows the way to win the CEO's trust is to cut the verbal, especially if you want to have a bigger impact in the boardroom and transform into true business-driven ROI. If you don't, you will remain in what 65% of the CEOs call 'Marketing la-la land'.

A well-developed brief is a blue print that details objectives, audience, the message, timing and budget, which helps marketing to deliver high quality, effective, measurable creative work. A good brief liberates the creative process, provides a springboard for ideation and informs, interests, persuades, guides and inspires the CEO, CFO and the agency appointed to execute the work. A carefully planned brief is key to the success of any marketing project.

Consider the analogy of Michelangelo receiving a brief to paint the Sistine Chapel. Imagine you are Michelangelo and you are told: *Please paint the ceiling...*

There is no doubt that this is what Michelangelo was being asked to do, but this brief gives him no hints as to what the

solution to the request might be. It leaves all the decisions and thinking up to the artist before he can begin.



Or you are told to paint the ceiling using red, green and yellow paint...

This brief is worse. Not only does it not tell him what to paint but it gives him a number of restrictions, which will inevitably prove irksome and distract him from his main task.

I doubt anyone would be motivated with this brief: *We've got terrible problems with cracks in the ceiling. Can you cover it up for us?*

This is much worse. It still does not tell him what to do and it gives him irrelevant and depressing information that implies no one is interested in what he paints, because it won't be long before the ceiling falls in. How much effort is he likely to put into it?

Be specific

However, your creativity starts to come to light when you are asked to paint biblical scenes on the ceiling incorporating some or all of the following: God, Adam, angels, cupids, devils and saints...

Now you are beginning to give Michelangelo some direction. You haven't given him the full picture yet, but at least he knows the important elements. This is the sort of brief that most of us would have given, but it does not go that one step beyond, towards an idea and a solution.

Here is the brief that Michelangelo was actually given: *Paint our ceiling for the greater glory of God and as an inspiration and lesson to his people...*

Michelangelo took this brief and painted frescoes, which depicted the creation of the world, the fall, mankind's degradation by sin, the divine wrath of the deluge and the preservation of Noah and his family. He knew what to do - and was inspired by the importance of the project. With direction like this, he was free to devote his attention to executing the details of the brief in the best way he knew how.

In conclusion, gone are the days of the marketing director who is not fluent in metrics, analytics and spreadsheets. (Especially the simple brief given to Michelangelo). The internet has made marketing far more measurable than ever. Sadly, marketing managers and directors are struggling to find the right metrics that ensure credibility with the CEO and CFO, and prove the real contribution of marketing within a company.

ABOUT BRIDGET VON HOLDT

Bridget von Holdt is the Business Director at BCW Africa. Bridget's experience in public relations spans over 30 years and is a registered APR. A revered name in South African Public Relations and communication circles and a recipient of the PRISM Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018, Bridget is known for her vision to see beyond the conventional in the communication industry.

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