

## **Maximize The Benefit Of Your Marketing Programs**

by Avinoam Nowogrodski, Thursday, Sep 4, 2008 5:00 AM ET

Marketing managers face the daily challenge of executing projects in their marketing calendar on-time, on-budget and with the right quality. Stories about missing a deadline for a lead generation campaign because the creative and content were delayed, or the distribution of an email campaign for an online seminar was too late to deliver the attendance are all too common.

Most marketing teams suffer from similar issues constantly leading to misspending funds and a gap between plans and results. Is there anything marketing can do to improve results by creating a better discipline around execution? It is not only possible, it is easy. Below are some of the issues facing marketing managers.

### **Problem #1: Is there a project plan?**

Most marketing projects require collaboration and typically include numerous steps and tasks that are completed by a variety of people and departments. To ensure that the project is completed on time, all of the steps in a project must be well choreographed - a difficult task when managing just one project. Imagine having dozens of projects at the same time - from lead generation campaigns to online and print advertisements, from trade shows to brochures, from podcasts to speaking opportunities - all of which are executed by a team of limited capacity, with each member working on multiple projects simultaneously. Without a clearly defined project plan, tasks are likely to slip through the cracks and delay projects.

### **Problem #2: Is the execution against project plan being tracked and managed?**

A good project plan is a starting point. However, the success of a project is derived 20% from good planning and 80% from solid execution. A project manager requires visibility into the status of each member's tasks to track its status. This allows the manager to revise and communicate a new plan, schedule, dependencies and due dates to team members - a process which can be a huge drain on time. As a result, most marketing managers take short cuts in tracking and managing to project plan -- resulting in delays and last-minute surprises.

### **Problem #3: Is the team on the same page?**

One of the biggest reasons that marketing projects are delayed is because team members are not on the same page. The manager must ensure that all team members understand their tasks, schedules and dependencies and understands project specifications, revisions and assumptions. Only when everyone is on the same page and executing appropriately do the odds of projects being completed on-time increase significantly. Traditional

project management tools are weak in accomplishing this and require team members to take the initiative themselves to ensure that they are on the same page. This significantly increases the risk of a break between the plan and actuals.

**Problem #4: Does your project management tool map to your requirements?**

A desktop-based project management system is not well equipped to drive flawless execution, mainly because it does not enable team collaboration. Usually, such a program is designed for full-time project managers and is too complex for the everyday user. Such programs were designed to be used by the project manager on a laptop or desktop in a pre-Internet era and do not have the capability to automatically query team members and capture the status of their tasks or enable collaboration. The ability to view an up-to-date report on the status of the project and have people on the same page frees many hours from a project manager's schedule.

**The Next Generation of Project Management Systems**

New collaboration technologies have brought the next generation of project management applications to the forefront. They are designed to specifically address collaboration problems and enable successful execution. Leveraging email as a mechanism to automatically query team members to get the status of their tasks and update the plan allows automatic project tracking and instant updates and highlights. It allows managers to stay on top of a project's status and proactively address potential issues. Team collaboration in these solutions allows the sharing of documents, plans, designs, dependencies, etc. The always-on Internet allows team members access to their project plans, task schedules and associated documents anytime, from anywhere. As a result, these systems significantly reduce unpleasant surprises.

The next generation of project systems provides a significant advantage for marketing organizations by completing their programs and campaigns on time and within budget, significantly reducing the gap between plans and results.



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