

Building Flexible Marketing Teams with Resourcing

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Sometimes marketing managers need skills and resources not available from their own teams. Resourcing—hiring people for a fixed period of time—can provide a flexible alternative to recruiting new staff or retraining your current employees. It's ideal for providing diverse or specialist skills on a short or mid-term basis for projects like events, conferences, product launches, or tactical campaigns. Resourcing provides a cost-effective solution to peaks and troughs in marketing activity.

What You Need to Know

What's the difference between resourcing and contracting?

If you take on contract staff, you are normally required to hire them for a fixed period. Resourcing is a more flexible option, enabling you to take on the skills you need for short or long periods, depending on the requirement.

Is it not better to recruit permanent marketing staff to increase resources?

Permanent staff certainly give you additional resources, but may not have the specific skills you require. You should also take into consideration the full cost of recruiting, training, and employing permanent staff. Resourcing may be a more cost-effective option, as well as providing specific skills.

What to Do

Fill a Short-Term Gap

Resourcing is ideal for organizations who need high-caliber people for mid-term, project-based assignments. Resourcing brings a fresh approach to staffing and project management by combining the focus of headhunting with the flexibility of project contracting. The contractors work directly for the resourcing agency, but are based in your marketing department. Resourcing offers a number of important benefits:

- creates a more dynamic, flexible marketing team

- meets the demands of shrinking development cycles for rollouts, launches, events, and tactical campaigns
- supports the increasing focus on quarterly activities and results
- provides a more effective solution than recruitment or stretching existing resources
- enhances team performance by providing diverse or specialist skills on a short or midterm basis
- removes the HR burden from internal teams
- provides a cost-effective solution to peaks and troughs in marketing activity

Combine Resourcing with Agency Services

If you need people to run a specific marketing project and the services of an agency to provide the campaign deliverables, a resourcing agency may be able to provide a managed marketing service. The contractors are based in your marketing department for the duration of the project and they use the planning, creative, and production services of a specific agency. This is a useful solution for self-contained projects while you retain your normal agency relationships for your other marketing activities. This type of service may be suitable for time-critical projects or specialist programs where your regular agencies do not have the appropriate skills. Managed marketing offers a range of benefits:

- puts responsibility for results on the contractor and agency
- helps to reduce headcount, while retaining the project plans and momentum
- improves program results through a closer client/agency working relationship
- provides a scalable solution that meets short- and mid-term campaign needs

Use Freelance Staff for Short-Term Projects

If you need people for short-term projects, consider using experienced freelance staff. A typical example would be an audit or a research project lasting between one and three months. The freelance researcher would give you temporary resources for an agreed monthly charge. Using freelance services offers a number of benefits:

- provides access to specialist skills for specific projects
- supplements existing skills without long-term commitment
- provides a cost-effective solution to short-term requirements

Support Marketing Communications

Effective marketing communications are now more important than ever for technology companies. With tighter budget control, greater focus on quarterly activity, and a growing emphasis on measuring return on marketing investment, the marketing team must be able to deliver results and demonstrate that they are adding value. Resourcing can provide talent in areas of marketing communications where you might need specialist experience or additional campaign resources. This could be on long-term assignments such as developing a Web presence or building market share, or on shorter-term projects such as managing a time-limited campaign.

Support Events

Events are a key element in technology marketing, contributing to the success of product and service launches, partner activities, and product communications. However, they can also represent a drain on budgets and resources, so they must be highly focused with tangible and demonstrable benefits. Typically, events are time limited but resource intensive, and marketers often struggle to give events the time and commitment they need.

Resourcing can provide you with an event specialist who can deliver the right mix of organizational, logistics, and planning skills, combined with results-driven messaging and event-focused marketing communications.

Support Markets and Sectors

Focusing on a specific sector or regional market significantly improves your marketing precision and return on investment. It is vital to fully understand the current issues and challenges for individual niche markets, whether you segment them by horizontal or vertical sector, size of business, or region. The tight focus means you do not just communicate the relevant benefits and value points of your products, you also deliver them in an empathetic way that recognizes the concerns of key decision makers in each sector. Resourcing can provide people to manage individual sectors through effective liaison with many different internal departments, as well as key client contacts, adding real value to your sector or marketing ambitions.

Support Channel Marketing

Developing and optimizing indirect channels is becoming increasingly critical to competitiveness and profitability. It is vital to identify and build the right relationships, maximize opportunities, and improve performance. Successful channel management requires experienced professionals with

a combination of marketing, business development, and strategic skills. Resourcing can help you establish or enhance a channel marketing team that can react quickly and effectively to change and short-term opportunities.

Support Intelligence and Research Programs

Market intelligence gives your marketing and communications programs the vital focus for continuing long-term success. It is vital to planning precisely-targeted campaigns that deliver the right return on investment and is an integral element of e-marketing programs. Resourcing can help you establish or enhance a marketing intelligence team that can identify and communicate the important trends and developments that could impact your organization. This is an ideal solution for mid- and long-term assignments, or for additional resources to meet short-term requirements for specific audits or research programs.

Support Business Development

To maintain growth, companies need to acquire more customers, reduce churn, and increase the lifetime value of existing accounts. Growing the business is no longer the sole responsibility of the sales team. Everyone in the organization needs to have a business development mindset and take an increasingly creative approach to generating new business. This proactive approach is not always possible when marketers are under pressure to focus on quarterly activity, achieve measurable return on marketing investment, and deliver results under the constraint of tightening budget controls. Resourcing can provide business development specialists to work within client teams, helping you achieve purchase cycle acceleration by providing the skills you need to improve customer acquisition and retention.

Support Alliances and Partnerships

Increasingly, companies are looking toward alliance relationships as the route to strategic growth and enhanced competitiveness. However, many businesses do not have the resources to establish and manage a strategic alliance team, even though this can be the route to significant business development opportunities. Resourcing can provide you with professionals with the skills and experience to address the alliance and partner development activities. They can develop the partner alliance infrastructure, right through to the execution and management of managed co-market development activities.

Support Online Activities

Companies are putting an increasing emphasis on interactive and online marketing as they seek to squeeze even more value from shrinking budgets. E-marketing offers extremely high levels of precision and cost-effectiveness, while the use of the Web to run tactical campaigns and provide customer information has proved to be a fast, convenient medium that outperforms conventional print in terms of cost and flexibility. It is essential to maintain a fresh, dynamic Web presence to encourage visitors to keep returning to a Web Site, and use powerful interactive techniques to turn browsers into buyers. Resourcing can provide skilled Web professionals who can enhance your Web presence or provide additional resource if you are planning e-marketing campaigns. They can also add the extra Web dimension to an event, communications program, or other campaign.

Support Public Relations Programs

Public relations programs remain a key element of marketing as companies seek to build preferred supplier status with their customers. To accomplish that means building confidence and understanding in the company, as well as its products and solutions. Effective PR teams help to maintain that vital “front of mind” position that is vital to market leadership. Resourcing can provide high-caliber public relations executives with a track record of success. They can take on long-term assignments to develop and enhance the corporate reputation through corporate public relations activities, or manage mid-term tactical activities to support product launches or market development programs. Resourcing can also provide talent to meet short-term requirements for event support, ad-hoc campaigns, or crisis management.

What to Avoid

You Try To Cope with Existing Resources

Short-term marketing programs such as exhibitions or events can impose considerable pressure on the existing marketing team, distracting them from their main priorities. This can lead to demoralization and poor results.

You Hire Full-Time Specialists

You may need specialist skills to manage projects such as roadshows or advertising campaigns. However, if these requirements are only short-term, you may find that the specialists are underused, and this could prove an expensive solution.

Where to Learn More

Book:

Schweyer, Allan, Talent Management Systems: Best Practices in Technology Solutions for Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Planning. Wiley, 2004.

Web Site:

The Herman Group: www.hermangroup.com/alert/alert_index.html