

Sleeping with the enemy



IT and marketing, worlds apart but closer than you think. **LINDA KING** of G2G3 explains why they should kiss and make up.

DESPITE THE leaps and bounds of technological advancement, IT and technology related departments have an enduring perception of being 'nerdy', often dull, and rarely exciting.

IT is a brand which today screams more about servers, hardware and endless acronyms, than the reality of the exciting future promised from the limitless possibilities offered by technology. Despite being 'accepted' as an organisational function, the general cross-organisational perception of the IT department and the CIO is often negative, with the true contribution and importance of IT projects to the business often unseen, unheard and significantly underestimated.

At the opposite end of the organisational spectrum to IT is Marketing: a department often viewed with disdain by those on the technical side of the business; a department seen as being driven by gut and creativity, with little or no regard to budget or process. Rarely do organisations truly integrate marketing as a mindset throughout the entire business. Because of this, relationships between

the IT department and Marketing have traditionally been strained, with little mutual understanding around activities, goals and shared synergies.

It doesn't have to be this way. The IT department and the Marketing department can have a very healthy, mutually beneficial relationship. Marketing has much to offer IT, and likewise, IT has much to offer Marketing. Exploring and exploiting these synergies will not only positively impact the business and create more successful IT project initiatives, but will elevate brand IT and Marketing, as well as the personal careers of all those involved.

Understand the power of brand

Let's start with brand. A brand is much more than a logo; it is a promise of performance and a signature of reputation. There are clear links between strong brands and strong performance. The importance of brand now spreads beyond the traditional confines of marketing, and IT leaders must consider both the brand of IT, as well as their own personal brands. Improving the perception of both can

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have a significant and positive impact, not only internally within the organization, but also externally.

E.ON, a leading European energy organisation, launched a new IT help desk facility. In considering how best to create maximum interest and uptake around these new facilities, the decision was taken to undertake a marketing- and brand-led approach. A marketing consultancy was engaged, and quickly created a branded launch programme, which included a logo, tagline, podcasts, posters and branded promotional items in order to make a strong statement about the new IT help desk and its services all across the business. The launch was highly memorable and a resounding success.

There are many tools and techniques that IT can borrow from Marketing to successfully build the brand. On a personal brand level, every member of the IT department can create strong and up-to-date professional profiles on sites such as LinkedIn, Ryze, Ziggs and others. Network, network, network! Build strong relationships and join relevant groups and associations. Make yourself accessible, visible and (even more) personable. Also, be open to opportunities outside the confines of the organisation. For IT leaders, talk to the business media (yes, please do! Ed) and participate in opportunities which allow you to highlight your success. Be innovative and forward thinking in your communications, while using the technologies at your disposal - blog, podcast and vodcast. Become more visual in your approach, using infographics as opposed to text to communicate complex information. Also, love them or loathe them, social networking sites are here to stay. The Internet provides powerful networking opportunities to assert you and your department's presence online and reach more

potential customers, business partners and employees. Leverage Facebook, Twitter and other similar sites to create and maintain a strong brand image of IT.

Creating successful IT projects

Marketing techniques can not only help improve the standing and position of brand IT across the organisation, but also help drive the success of IT projects and change initiatives. One of the most important (and overlooked) aspects of success is communication. IT leaders and project managers need to realise this and understand that communicating early and often is vital to an effective project or change effort. The problem with many communications typically generated by IT is that they are very 'corporate' in terms of

content and delivery mechanisms, therefore often perceived as nothing but corporate jargon that's way too easy to tune out. To rise about the 'noise', IT leaders and project managers should look to implement simple marketing communications techniques, and ensure that all project communications are treated like a marketing campaign, with communications that are targeted, engaging, stimulating and effective.

DHL, a leading global logistics organization, took this approach when implementing a global rollout of ITIL best practice



processes. The importance of the success of this strategic project was recognised, and marketing was used as the key driver for success. A branded marketing programme called 'Olympus' was created to promote the goals of the project, which included innovative communication techniques such as simulation, e-newsletters, infographics, video previews and communication roadshows. Excitement and commitment were generated globally, and the project was very successful. The project won a 'Project of the Year' award from the IT Service Management Forum (itSMF) for its innovative approach, transforming what would otherwise have been considered a dry subject matter into inspirational and compelling content which crossed geographic and organisational boundaries.

IT can reciprocate

Marketing can also benefit significantly from increased collaboration. Despite the frustrations voiced between the two departments, they will often have successfully collaborated on a variety of initiatives, including web sites or CRM systems. However, IT has much more to offer. Greater collaboration could provide Marketing with many more powerful tools - for example, improved web presence, tools for measuring marketing effectiveness, customer data warehouse and analysis, improved business intelligence, eCommerce improvements and many more. The positive impact of this increased collaboration on Marketing, and ultimately on customer acquisition and retention, could be significant.

Appreciate the process

There is also often frustration expressed between the IT department and the Marketing department with respect to the processes connected to formal collaboration initiatives. Marketing may feel that IT has far too much process, while IT may feel that Marketing has little or no respect for process, with frequent last minute change requests being given to IT from Marketing. The answer is to create clear and mutually agreeable processes around collaboration projects. IT and Marketing representatives may also benefit from participating in an IT process-based simulation. These innovative simulations utilise gaming dynamics to bring to life the importance of process to IT and the business, and will allow Marketing and business representatives to walk a mile in the shoes of IT.

Kiss and make up

Last, but by certainly no means least, the personal perspective. Focus must be placed on the one-to-one relationships between the IT leaders and the Marketing leaders. Both must

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learn to respect each other's differences, and appreciate the differing expertise that each brings to the table. Not only this, but they must make a visible display of their strong partnership. Forging a trusting relationship around common goals and representing themselves as a united team will create a positive behaviour model for their respective teams.

In these difficult times, it is vital that IT builds a brand that reflects the reality of the significant contribution it makes to business. It is time for IT and Marketing to focus on the benefits of a partnership rather than continue the animosity of the past. [UITAL](http://www.g2g3.com)
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