



## CMOs: Building Teams, Building Careers

No marketer is an island. Whether imbuing an industrial organization with a consumer focus, dramatically boosting social media engagement or attracting top talent with a compelling vision, CMOs cannot perform these feats alone. Nor can they advance their careers without mentors, collaborators and compatriots in the trenches. At our 14th Annual CMO Summit, Kathy Button Bell, vice president and chief marketing officer of Emerson; Esther Lee, executive vice president and global chief marketing officer of MetLife; and Deborah Wahl, chief marketing officer of McDonald's USA, explored how marketing leaders can surround themselves with best-in-class talent, continue to develop their teams and how to position themselves for greater career heights. Here are some takeaways from the discussion.

### Looking only at specific skill-sets may be short-sighted.

One of the allures of marketing — continual evolution — can also present a significant obstacle when building teams. “What I love about marketing is that it’s constantly changing, but what makes it hard to have that perfect skill-set on your team is this constant change,” said Lee. Nowhere is this more visible than with the rise of digital, where the emergence of each new technology seems to translate into yet another must-have capability. While organizations need marketing talent who understand customer engagement in a mobile world, Wahl cautions that in pursuit of digital’s “world of shiny toys,” organizations can risk missing the bigger picture.

Eighteen months ago, McDonald’s did not engage in social media; after doubling the size of its marketing team and bringing on digital horsepower, the company now responds every 10 seconds. Such a significant investment in new capabilities can raise new questions for marketing leaders. “Sometimes we get too caught up on a skill-set that we lose sight of the strategic implications,” Wahl said. “We have people with all these skill-sets and now the question is how do we make the best use of all these resources? How do we stay laser-focused on strategic priorities?” It can also be a struggle to find digital talent that is also strategically minded, according to Button Bell. To bridge the gap, Emerson partners with external agencies and individual contractors.

## Insights are in demand.

With marketing playing the role of the voice of the consumer — and with more tools than ever before to understand trends, purchase journeys and behavior — talent who can glean actionable insights from data have become increasingly valuable. Button Bell has hired a global market insights team that includes cultural anthropologists

in Romania and talent in China. One-hundred percent of the positions for which she's been recruiting are in market research to help drive insights sooner. To gain support for investment in this area, Lee found success making the business case that bringing in more consumer perspectives earlier can avoid costly false starts downstream.

## Seek talent with “magic.”

Even in an age where data analysis is prized, Button Bell encouraged marketing leaders to “find the people who have a little bit of magic. Think of the ‘Mad Men’ mentality of the ‘50s and ‘60s,” she said. “Those were brilliant creative people. You still need them in your market research department, in your creative because they're the ones who see something someone else doesn't. That's something you have to find — you don't make that in somebody. Sometimes, they're the highest-maintenance person on your team, which is tough, but magic comes in many forms. Sometimes

you have to pay the piper for that.” Magic is not isolated to the creative realm. Lee added a leader with a corporate strategy background to her team, resulting in smarter marketing than if the team consisted of purely marketing expertise. Button Bell noted that the talent Emerson needs most are those who can collaborate well and who can translate consumer insights for the organization's engineers. At times, “magic” may be unproven, but worth the risk. “You sometimes have to hire someone who can do the work versus someone who has done the work,” said Lee.

## Develop talent — and reinvigorate marketing — by stepping out of the day job.

The majority of CMO Summit attendees use cross-functional assignments to develop their teams, and the panelists echoed the importance of being exposed to areas outside one's regular responsibilities. “Everyone gets really focused on their job, so we send people out what we call ‘questing’ so they can see things from the

customer's point of view,” said Wahl. McDonald's also enrolls marketing talent in Hamburger University, where teams work in restaurants to see firsthand how their ideas and technologies are implemented and used by the customer.

## The age of transparency doesn't just apply to consumers.

“We talk all about our transparency with our customers, but how about our employees?” posed Button Bell. She observed that with digital platforms such as LinkedIn and Glassdoor, team members know how much they're worth and are greeted daily with new job opportunities. In response, according to Button Bell, “Our job has

turned very much into one of trying to cultivate great culture and a pleasant career environment. I'm finding that the marketing we do inside is becoming louder and I'm making sure I'm spending as much time putting color and light and fun inside the company as we do outside.”

## To attract talent, sell the vision versus the role.

Lee recalled a conversation with an entrepreneur who assumed she had a difficult time finding and attracting good talent in the insurance industry. She has found the opposite to be true — top talent is drawn to the mission of MetLife. “If you're looking for impact players, they're looking for where they can make an impact,” she said, and suggested that marketing leaders clearly communicate the organization's broader mission. “You're not selling a job, you're inviting someone into sharing a vision.” Wahl has

found that the opportunity to be part of something significant not only attracts top talent, but can motivate them to succeed amid major challenges. “We had to make a big change with all-day breakfast,” said Wahl. “It was really a challenge for the company to execute and almost seen as an impossibility, but it was that vision of what it could do and how it could change and how you could be relevant to customers which makes people feel really excited about their work.”

## Don't give into pressure to maintain the status quo.

According to Lee, culture change is one of the most important components of a business or marketing transformation — and one of the longest and toughest processes. “Until you're behaving a certain way, you're not really changing the culture,” Lee observed. “The question I always ask is, ‘How are we operationalizing that in terms of behaviors, management routines and processes?’” Additionally, successful organizational-wide culture change requires that people understand the “why” and the “how” of the shift; she noted that communicating these messages and driving change from the top enabled AT&T to evolve from a phone company to an innovation company during her tenure there.

In the face of resistance to change, Button Bell said, “One of the toughest things is to not lose that original bravery.” While being dramatically more progressive may be met with resistance, she has found that surprising the organization with new approaches can help create momentum. “How you talk an old company into doing something new is by asking, ‘Who doesn't want to be more cool and more hip than they were yesterday?’ If you can put something a little more interesting in front of them that they didn't expect, they're delighted and the more you can delight the culture, the more you can get them to change.”

## ADVICE FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREERS AND LEADERSHIP

Wisdom from the CMO Summit panel on how to develop your career and become a better leader.

### 1. Be willing to take on a challenge.

When building her team, Wahl looks for people who are willing to take on a challenge and who can learn. With a natural bias toward intuition, she needed to become more facile with analytics as part of her own career development. “We can’t possibly teach everyone everything,” she said. “Everyone has to get self-motivated to understand an area they want to specialize in.”

### 2. Speak the language of the culture.

During her tenure at The Coca-Cola Company as chief creative officer, Lee found that inspirational communication was most effective; but at MetLife, being too conceptual can undermine the message and leading with data works best. In the first month in a new role, she recommended marketers focus less on talking and more on listening and learning the language of the organization’s culture.

### 3. Listen to “tough love” advice.

Wahl observed that the hardest part of mentorship is listening to the mentor and actually changing. Lee recalled receiving “tough love” feedback from a former boss in a public forum: “I want to hear your point of view louder and more often.” While the guidance was not the softer “behind-a-closed-door mentoring,” it helped her shift from executing to leading.

### 4. Identify who you want in your foxhole.

Button Bell advocated an exercise where leaders create a list of individuals in their personal “foxhole” — trusted colleagues they could call upon in tough situations for guidance and feedback. It’s important for marketing leaders to have a personal advisory board to provide fresh perspectives on how to navigate challenges.

### 5. Be willing to do the work yourself.

Button Bell hires and promotes leaders who are willing to roll up their sleeves and do the work, whether it’s staying up all night to fix an underwhelming report or helping to elevate the work of another.

### 6. Decide what type of leader you want to be.

Lee described leadership as a pendulum, with a focus on orchestrating work on one end to influencing an entire company, creating a vision and empowering teams on the other. She recommended marketing executives determine which path they want to take and pursue experiences that will build those specific capabilities.

### 7. Don’t just check the box.

With the growing importance of cross-functional experience for general management roles, Button Bell finds some candidates are simply looking to complete a stint in marketing as a gateway to their next roles. Demonstrating a sincere interest in marketing and doing homework can go a long way to help you advance in your career. After her mentee assembled a thorough presentation about next steps for his career development, she noted, “I’m more invested in his career because he put forth the effort.”

### 8. Go to every IT meeting you can.

Button Bell recommended that leaders attend as many IT meetings as possible to build the relationship and to understand technology’s role in marketing.

### 9. Always assume you have a seat at the table — and be gracious when you get there.

Wahl encouraged marketing leaders to assume they have a seat at the table and be confident in the value of their opinions. She advised executives not to underestimate the power of being “kind, generous and inclusive every day.”

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