

INNOVATE

your Marketing

By Ginger Conlon

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CMOs Aren't Innovating Because They're Too Busy Being Busy

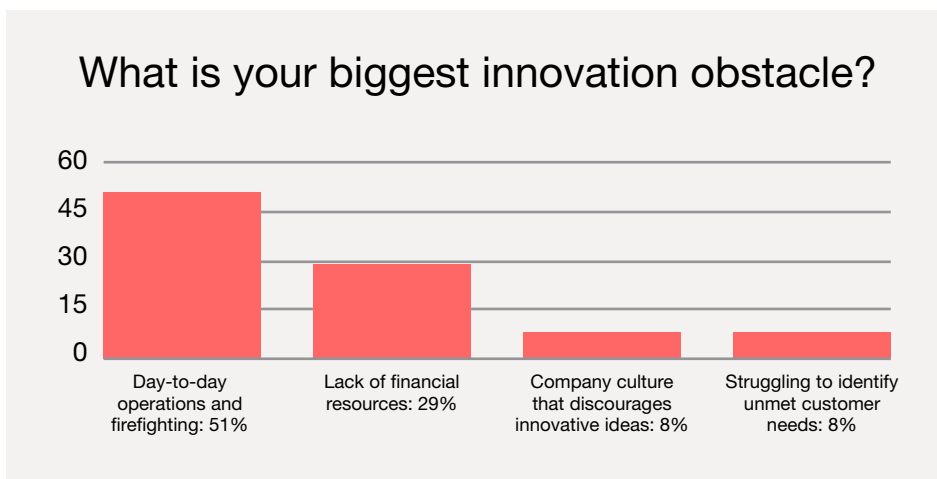
The number one obstacle CMOs say is stalling their efforts to innovate? Day-to-day operations and fire-fighting, according to EnergizeGrowth's fifth annual "CMO Innovation Trends" study.

One CMO surveyed said, "Keeping up with our workload leaves little time for innovation." Another bemoaned her inbox: "On average, I receive 100 voicemails and emails [from vendors] each day. So, what do I do? I delete all the messages.... We're suffering from innovation fatigue."

Tough as it may be to find time to innovate, maintaining the status quo is not an option.

Upstart and innovative competitors, demanding customers, and market momentum will leave complacent companies in the dust.

"CMOs have to invest the money to learn and grow," says Lisa Nirell, chief energy officer of EnergizeGrowth. "If you're too busy firefighting and checking emails, you're not taking the time you need to learn and innovate."



BEYOND THE CRAMMED CALENDARS

Overscheduling and overflowing inboxes aren't the only challenges stalling marketing innovation—and marketing success overall.

Three of the biggest obstacles to success the CMOs polled observe among their peers include a lack of alignment (52%), the inability to stay current with technology (51%), and a lack of sufficient resources to invest in innovation (47%).

“The lack of budget isn’t a surprise,” Nirell says. “If you’re too busy being busy, you’re not going to get the ear of the CFO.”

Those challenges echo the obstacles the CMOs say they face in achieving personal success today. Their top three issues are a lack of funding (61%), a lack of alignment (50%), and a lack of skilled employees (37%).

TECHNOLOGY IS NOT THE ANSWER

In some cases, CMOs are looking to technologies that can support their efforts to innovate. Doing so is important, but it’s no panacea.

According to Nirell, the study found no correlation between efficacy and the amount of technology available to CMO and their teams. “Despite all their technology investments,” she says, “technology isn’t doing enough to help them anticipate and identify customer needs.”

Worse, Nirell says, martech can become “a huge time suck.”

“Martech is not saving the world,” she asserts. “In fact, it’s causing more confusion than anything else. CMOs need to refine their marketing stack by getting rid of unnecessary tools and keeping only those that help meet their strategic goals.”

So, what are CMOs doing to drive and support innovation? Nearly half are hiring people who they consider to be curious and innovative. Additionally, 44% of the CMOs polled are rewarding innovative ideas and learning from failures, and 43% are attending outside events and “unplugging.”

CMOs are also taking steps to address their other obstacles to marketing success. These include investing more funds into marketing operations (39%),

revising their content management strategies (20%), and reorganizing their teams (19%).

GET TO KNOW CUSTOMERS—AND YOURSELF

These are positive steps forward, but not enough, Nirell asserts. “Despite all the technology, the AI, CMOs and their teams still can’t identify unmet customer needs,” she says. “The reason is simple: CMOs aren’t spending enough time with customers. Until they do, they’re not going to achieve anything meaningful or innovate in ways that create customer value.”

Nirell also recommends that CMOs increase their self-awareness. “Ask, ‘What are my strengths and how do they map to this moment in history and this company?’” she says. “If you’re a firefighter, go find a job that fits that strength; where it’s OK to not have

a strategic seat at the table—somewhere that needs blocking and tackling and basic digital. Not every chief marketer needs a seat at the C-suite table; some companies just need to get the fundamentals in place. If you’re a strategic person, hire people



to do the blocking and tackling.”

Finally, Nirell suggests that CMOs rethink their habits and workdays to increase productivity, create alignment, and build collaboration. And, that they eliminate schedule-sucking distractions such as “zombie projects” that make no impact on marketing performance.

Ultimately, CMOs need to make time to innovate, not make excuses for why they can’t—no matter how valid those reasons may be.

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The full study, which includes information on changes over the course of the five years of the study, is available here, and requires registration.



Many Paths Lead to Marketing Innovation. Choose yours

Henry Ford's assertion, "Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right" is just as applicable to marketing innovation as to any other aspect of life.

"The first point of innovations resistance? You," host Lisa Nirell, chief energy officer of Energize-Growth, said during her opening remarks at the CMOs Leading Innovation Conference 2017 (CLIC 2017). Nirell added that CMOs need a mind-set shift to enable their own and their team's innovation.

Innovative CMOs, Nirell said, think differently. They have a propensity for applying creativity to problem solving, thinking critically, and taking risks—and are always willing to drive toward a new desired state for their brand and customers when change is warranted. Innovative CMOs also are comfortable letting go of "zombie projects" and eliminating bureaucracy holding back their team's progress—and proactively find ways to do so.

A mind-set shift is only the first step. CMOs also need to address their processes and work habits. "CMOs get so distracted by tactical issues that they don't take the time they need to innovate," Nirell said, citing the results of EnergizeGrowth's fifth

annual "CMO Innovation Trends" study. She recommends rethinking priorities, delegating the blocking and tackling type tasks, and retaining only on the technologies that support strategic goals to allow more time focus on innovation.

View the article to listen to a podcast interview with Lisa Nirell on more advice for CMO on driving innovation.



Photo courtesy of Chris Zegal



MKTGinsight Chief Editor Ginger Conlon with Netflix star and author Leon Logothetis

TRY A LITTLE KINDNESS

Nirell wasn't the only one to provide advice on removing roadblocks to innovation. Keynote speaker Leon Logothetis challenged attendees to use kindness as inspiration for innovation. "Next time you're creating a campaign, ask yourself, 'Will it help more than the bottom line? Will it help the hearts and minds of the people who will see it?'" said Logothetis, star of the acclaimed Netflix series *The Kindness Diaries*, author of the book of the same name, and a global adventurer and philanthropist.

PAVE YOUR OWN PATH FORWARD

During his CLIC 2017 presentation, Parkmobile CMO Jeff Perkins recommended that chief marketers think like the CMO of a startup, despite the size of the company they work for. He shared seven ways to do just that, including building the right team, prioritizing wisely, maximizing resources, optimizing everything, thinking big, being transparent, and being customer-centric enough to create raving fans.

Monique Elliott, global head of digital commerce at GE Power, explained during her CLIC 2017 presentation that she uses creativity, determination, and evangelism to innovate. Elliott saw an opportunity to "innovate" and increase online revenue by taking a more B2C approach to e-commerce. "I didn't invent anything new; it was just new for the space," she said. To get the initiative moving, Elliott enlisted the support of distributor partners and internal constituents, reframed marketing and risk taking, tracked competitors' sites and customers' preferences, and even changed her title from CMO to global head of digital commerce. "So, when we came out with the latest version of our



MKTGinsight Chief Editor Ginger Conlon with GE Power's Monique Elliott, global head of digital commerce

e-commerce site," she said, "we... leapfrogged many of our competitors as a result."

As Katie Keating, CMO of SRI International, said during her CLIC 2017 session, it's essential for chief marketers to create and maintain a culture of marketing innovation. But, as she pointed out, innovation doesn't happen by serendipity; it has to be institutionalized as an integral element of a business's culture. Innovation has to be intentional, she said; it



MKTGinsight Chief Editor Ginger Conlon with Katie Keating, CMO of SRI International

has to be a process that marketers spend time and energy on. And, Keating added, innovation is most likely to happen when a diverse, cross-functional team comes together.

Certainly, innovation rarely happens in a vacuum. But there are as many paths to innovation as there are problems to solve and opportunities to harness. So, the road that marketers travel to innovation can be as unique as they, their team, and their companies are.

What path will you choose?

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How GE Power's Monique Elliott Drives Marketing Innovation

Creativity, determination, and evangelism. Those are Monique Elliott's preferred tools to drive innovation.

During Elliott's presentation at EnergizeGrowth's CMOs Leading Innovation Conference 2017 (CLIC 2017), the global head of digital commerce at GE Power shared an example of how her approach led to significant business growth for the division.

Elliott saw an opportunity to "innovate" and increase online revenue by taking a more B2C approach to e-commerce. "I didn't invent anything new; it was just new for the space," she said. To get the initiative moving, Elliott looked for the distributor partners who wanted to come along on the journey and involved them in the process.

Elliott approached internal constituents creatively when she was trying to build her team and get investments for the e-commerce site. Taking a page from the sales playbook, she reframed marketing: "I stopped talking about projects, which have a budget and an end-date," Elliott said. "I started talking about product, which has a lifecycle and ongoing investment and a product owner and a dedicated team."

She also stopped talking about testing and started talking about experiments. "Testing is pass/fail," she explained. "Experimentation is learning." This one change helped her team get more comfortable taking risks.

Elliott even changed her title from CMO to global head of digital commerce. "Language matters," she said.

Her advice for other CMOs looking to move innovation forward:

- **Own the number** – Elliott and her team have quarterly operating plans and targets.

- **Form a cross-functional team** – Elliott's team is a fully staffed digital commerce team that includes expertise in IT, marketing, communications, and finance.

- **Establish operating rigor** – The team works within a weekly pacing, hosts monthly operations reviews, and uses real-time reporting.

- **Put the customer first** – Elliott and her team define their strategies by customer ecosystems and based on customers' preferred order entry methods. Plus, they take the time to understand their customers and competition: "We gather feedback, listen, and act," she said.

- **Keep a startup mentality** – Speed to market matters, so Elliott and her team embody a Fastworks approach every day. This means taking a new offering to market and asking for opinions before it's perfect. "Bring it to market at 70%, instead of 98% or 100%," she advised.

"We were not first among our competitors. We had become somewhat complacent in our online technology," Elliott admitted. "So, when we came out with the latest version of our e-commerce site, we had learned from competitors' sites and from customers and leapfrogged many of our competitors as a result."

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Advice From an Enterprise Marketer Gone Start-up

Talk about culture shock.

Jeff Perkins spent most of his career in marketing working at large enterprises such as AutoTrader.com, PGi, Euro RSCG Worldwide, and Saatchi. And then he decided to take a big risk and accept the job as CMO of QASymphony, a test management SaaS startup.

When he arrived at the office on his first day, he had to go right back out and buy his own desk and laptop. He thought, “What have I gotten myself into?” After nearly three years of challenges, growth, and successes, Perkins, now CMO of Parkmobile, looks back on it all as an auspicious experience.

During his session at Energize Growth’s CLIC 2017 conference, Perkins shared his advice—for any marketer—from an enterprise marketer gone start-up:

1. BUILD THE RIGHT TEAM

You may never realize how important it is to have

the right team until you can only hire one or two people, Perkins said. “When you don’t have the ability to hire a lot of people, hiring A players is essential,” he said, adding that, even with technology, there’s nothing automated about marketing—even today. “You don’t need a tech stack; you need a people stack.”

Don’t move “nice” people who aren’t good performers to other teams, hoping they’ll be a better fit and perform better, he advised. Make the tough calls instead, and marketing performance will improve.

The same applies to agencies. Your people stack includes your agency network, he said. Perkins recommends tapping small agencies started by top players from big agencies that went out on their own. They tend to have niche expertise and move faster.

“When you have the right team, there’s nothing you can’t do,” Perkins said.

2. FOCUS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FIRST

“Marketers are the most shiny-object focused people in the company,” Perkins asserted. But, he added, you won’t accomplish anything if you try to do everything. So, you need to focus on what’s most important.

Perkins focused his team on what was most important by asking them to fill in the blanks on these two sentences:

We’re are not growing revenue because of

We are losing deals because of

Those the two issues also helped the team focus on what tech to buy, by considering whether it would help resolve or improve one or both issues.

3. MAXIMIZE LIMITED RESOURCES

“It’s scary when you go to a startup and see your budget,” Perkins said. “You think: It’s not enough money to do anything.” So, he and his team “got in the weeds” to determine exactly where the company audience is online. For QASymphony, one hot spot was sites such as SoftwareTestingHelp.com and SoftwareTestingClub.com. A small spend on those sites resulted in big returns.

The company also hosted its own webinars instead of working with an industry publication. The twice monthly webinars would each feature a thought leader and draw anywhere from about 200 to 1,000 registrants; the marketing for each comprised a few hundred dollars of email and social promotion. It was an excellent funnel builder, Perkins said. “Don’t pay for things you can do for free,” he said.

4. TRACK, ANALYZE, AND OPTIMIZE

Perkins and his team would diligently track in great detail where leads came from and what they did in, as well as campaign and channel performance. Doing so help them eliminate campaigns that attracted lower quality leads. The also conducted A/B testing on web pages, which helped improve conversions significantly.

5. THINK BIG

A small budget doesn’t mean you can’t do big things, Perkins said. “We wanted to host a user conference,” he cited as an example. Perkins and his team built a site, booked a space, did promotion... and sold one ticket. Eventually, they gave away tickets and 150 people showed up.

Year two had 400 people for a two-day event. Right after the event, the company closed a deal with one of the largest U.S. quick-serve restaurant chains, which wasn’t even a lead before the event. “Getting customers together to talk about your product and gripe about competitors is a big win,” he said, adding that attendees barely even want to talk to QASymphony staff; they mostly wanted to talk to each other.

6. BE TRANSPARENT

CFOs think that marketers burn money, Perkins noted. In a startup, they’re even more focused on marketing spend than in larger firms. So, it’s best to partner with the CFO and it’s essential to help non-marketers understand the value marketing provides.

Perkins’ approach is to compile detailed reports that help C-suite executives see the value of marketing: Here’s how much we spent on what, how each is performing, and the ROI for each. This allows for much more constructive conversations with the C-suite, Perkins said. In one case, a CFO actually came to him to offer more budget because of this transparency.

7. CREATE RAVING FANS

First and foremost, Perkins said, be a good partner to work with. Make it easy to do business with you. And listen to your customers. He cited as an example how shocked and surprised one customer was that the company implemented a functionality he requested—before his company was even ready to use it.

“There are things you can do that don’t cost a lot that make your customers love you,” Perkins said. “We created fans because we went out of our way to help them.”

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The Marketing-Kindness Connection

“How we show up in the world and how we treat others matters” —in life and in marketing.

Leon Logothetis reminded attendees of this during his keynote at Energize Growth’s CLIC 2017. Logothetis is the star of the acclaimed Netflix series “The Kindness Diaries,” author of the book of the same name, and a global adventurer and philanthropist.

Everyone knows what it’s like to be alone, he said. The most profound thing we can do is to be kind by making other people feel less alone. The way to do that is by seeing someone; by seeing another human being.

“You have the power to change the world,” Logothetis said. “I say that because to change the world, all you have to do is change one life.” Most people, especially marketers, have the opportunity to impact many people. They impact friends, family, coworkers. Marketers have the potential to impact the lives of millions of people through their messaging and communications.



Lisa Nirell, founder of EnergizeGrowth and CLIC 2017 conference host, with Leon Logothetis



You get to choose whether you want to be kind or not, he said. You get to choose how you show up; how you inspire others. And if you inspire someone through kindness, Logothetis said, you change lives.

There is, of course, no perfect. But if you make a commitment to kindness, lives will be changed, Logothetis said. If you fall off the kindness wagon, just get back on it.

One surprising place kindness can impact marketing: innovation. “The reality is, kindness is one of the most cutting-edge innovations available today,” he said. Yes, go and make money, he added. Make as much as you want, but change lives, too.

Logothetis’ advice to marketers: “Next time you’re creating a campaign, ask yourself, ‘Will it help more than the bottom line? Will it help the hearts and minds of the people who will see it?’”

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EnergizeGrowth helps courageous CEOs and CMOs accelerate growth and innovation. Since 1983 Lisa Nirell, Chief Energy Officer of EnergizeGrowth, has worked with numerous leading organizations, including Infor, Bozzuto, Hilton, Google, BMC Software, Adobe, and Microsoft, as well as hundreds of entrepreneurs in nine countries. Lisa is an award-winning expert speaker and author of the acclaimed EnergizeGrowth® NOW: The Marketing Guide to a Wealthy Company and The Mindful Marketer: How to Stay Present and Profitable in a Data-Driven World.

MKTG insight

Change Happens.
Take Change.

MKTGinsight catalyzes change in marketing organizations.

The publication prepares marketers to take charge of the staggering changes in customer experience, data analytics, and marketing technology. Our unique, immersive content helps marketing leaders not only confront the elephants in the room, but also escort them out to make space for better, more customer-centric, and more profitable marketing strategies.

MKTGinsight serves senior marketers across industries who lead a sizable team and are going through the pains of keeping pace with changes in customer expectations and behaviors, data/analytics, and marketing technology.

Designed by James Jarnot

