



Marketing Operations: 10 Signs That Your Marketing Organization Is Ready To Change Its M.O. Now

By Gary M. Katz

Our last article, [“Marketing Operations: Solving Marketing’s Seven Deadly Sins,”](#) provided a glimpse into the motivation of admired technology companies to address their biggest marketing challenges by employing an integrated, end-to-end Marketing Operations (M.O.) methodology

M.O. is an emerging discipline with the potential to significantly increase performance and accountability in complex marketing organizations. It addresses the “seven deadliest marketing sins” that plague organizations of all sizes by leveraging a strong front-end infrastructure to reinforce marketing strategy and back-end programs and tactics. This article identifies those characteristics that signal an organization’s readiness for M.O. and answers these questions: What does that organization look like? What are its primary pain points? What is its vision for the future? What pressures are driving it to consider undergoing substantial change?

M.O. Readiness: A Checklist for Your Company

To see if your company is a good candidate for M.O., check all the characteristics listed below that apply.

- My company is mid-size or larger.
- My company’s marketplace is dynamic and highly competitive.
- My company’s marketing has evolved into a complex and multi-dimensional function.
- My company has a significant marketing budget
- A diverse mix of programs and resources are funded to reach a breadth of audiences (segments, sales channels, internal and external stakeholders, etc.).
- My company faces government and regulatory compliance pressures.
- My company’s marketing processes have evolved to the point that they are no longer well coordinated or even well understood.
- My company values best practices but lacks process, technology and metrics to achieve them.
- My company is pressuring marketing to assume a more strategic role.
- Within my company, many believe that marketing must deliver greater value for the company’s investment.

If you checked half or more of the above statements, your company is a great candidate to benefit by leveraging the power of Marketing Operations.

M.O. Readiness: Where Do You Feel the Pain?

If your company is feeling some pain, you're probably acutely aware of it. Arriving at an accurate diagnosis, however, requires a careful examination. Before reviewing the checklist below to identify localized pain points, first consider the general health of your marketing effort. Does marketing currently receive wide recognition for its strategic leadership and bottom-line contribution? Is marketing in complete alignment with your company's strategic goals and other key functions? Can marketing clearly measure its success and demonstrate ROI to your executive team?

Marketing Operations is specifically designed to address these corporate pain points:

- Marketing focused on firefighting and tactics rather than on strategy.
- Marketing experiencing difficulty measuring ROI and demonstrating value.
- Marketing success tied to other groups that have different or even conflicting goals.
- A corporate environment that fails to support collaboration and consequently loses opportunities for synergy.
- Employee defections that jeopardize continuity and place at risk institutional knowledge and expertise.
- Marketing processes that too often constrain internal efficiencies and effectiveness instead of enabling them.
- Poor coordination of shared processes across functions.
- Difficulty assimilating and integrating programs, systems and resources obtained from corporate mergers or acquisitions
- Marketing often on the defensive, needing to justify its role and contribution to C-level executives

If you resonate with two or more of the above statements, your organization may be in enough pain to be ready to embrace Marketing Operations.

M.O. Readiness: – What's Your Vision of Marketing's Contribution?

In a perfect world, marketing operates as a very creative, fast-paced, results-driven function that stays close to the customer and its other stakeholders. It is not only aligned with the company's strategic goals but also helps define them. It is well integrated with other corporate functions and takes full advantage of the power and discipline of a strategically designed Marketing Operations infrastructure.

The M.O. infrastructure layers into the marketing function those processes, metrics, and technology solutions required by an efficient operation that delivers outstanding value on a consistent basis. Such an M.O. infrastructure enables informed decision-making, accountability, sustainability, visibility, teamwork, strategic thinking, and repeatable best practices execution.

A marketing organization is ready to think seriously about embracing M.O. when it feels internal and external pressures to make systemic changes because it has not been delivering on its vision and has consistently failed to achieve its operational goals.

- The CEO considers the CMO/Marketing VP to be a valued strategic partner.
- Marketing is fully aligned with other company functions and stakeholders.
- Marketing efforts accelerate new product adoption, strengthen customer relationships, and increase market penetration rate.
- Marketing leverages metrics and dashboards to measure and track results, and continually improve them.
- Dashboards rapidly and accurately inform decision makers.
- Metrics are aligned with corporate goals and increasingly drive marketing expenditures.
- The marketing team is energized and highly effective.
- Employee and customer loyalty are consistently high.
- High return on marketing investment is clearly recognized companywide.

Unless you've checked at least half of the above statements, there is a large gap between your vision and your current reality. Your company is ripe—or more than ripe—for M.O.

M.O. Prospect Characteristics	M.O. Drivers	M.O. Vision
Mid-size or larger	Unmanageable complexity	Valued strategic partner of CEO
Dynamic, competitive market	Firefighting, tactical focus	Marketing aligned with stakeholders
Complex, multi-dimensional function	Difficulty measuring ROI, demonstrating value	Marketing drives innovation, market penetration
Significant budget	Conflicting goals despite interdependence	Marketing leverages metrics
Diverse programs, resources, audiences	Poor collaboration, synergy	Dashboards inform decision-making
Compliance pressures	Employee turnover	Metrics drive spend decisions
Poorly-coordinated processes	Constraining processes	Team energized, effective
Ineffective or no dashboards	Shared but uncoordinated processes	High employee, customer loyalty
Pressure to become more strategic	M&A integration challenges	Recognized for high ROI, contribution
Not delivering expected value	Marketing on defensive	

Figure 1: Assessing M.O. Readiness

Marketing Operations: The Bottom Line

Bringing the benefits of Marketing Operations into your marketing function should be considered an evolutionary process. M.O. is both a serious commitment and a great opportunity. Like all change initiatives, it requires careful and comprehensive thought and exacting implementation. Key players in marketing and other cross-functional organizations, such as sales and product development, need to be invited into the process early on and need to stay involved to achieve stakeholder ownership and buy-in.

The effort, however, yields impressive rewards. Marketing Operations has the power to re-position and re-energize a company's marketing function, moving it past stubborn barriers to unprecedented levels of performance and success. Leveraging the discipline and rewards of an M.O. approach places marketing in the perfect position to influence strategic decisions and help increase corporate revenue, decrease costs, and sustain high levels of customer and employee satisfaction. In short, Marketing Operations, when thoughtfully implemented, has the potential to transform a "marketing function" into a "marketing powerhouse."

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In future articles, we'll look at the best practices of Marketing Operations pioneers.

M.O. Readiness: Making the Assessment

If you've completed the above checklists, you probably have a good idea whether learning more about Marketing Operations would be worthwhile. But it's also true that it can be tough for marketing insiders to have a clear and objective view of their own operation. Please feel free to contact me at gary@mopartners.com if you'd like some professional help to assess your organization's readiness to move forward with a new M.O..

Gary M. Katz is CEO of Marketing Operations Partners, a Santa Clara, California-based services and solutions firm focused on changing the M.O. of marketing by helping clients leverage process, technology and metrics to run the marketing function like a fully accountable business. For more information, visit www.mopartners.com.

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