



The New Skills Marketers Need To Help Their Companies Win

Building "Market Shapers™"

By:

Impact Planning Group, LLC
Tom Spitale
Mary Abbazia
Sean Welham

1 BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

Why We Conducted This Study
And How We Uncovered the
“Market Shapers™” Theme

BACKGROUND

Could These Skills Represent a New Set of Marketing Fundamentals?

One of the alarming trends in business is the increasing dysfunction between marketing and sales teams. Whatever the reason for this growing divide, it is a costly rift. According to Aberdeen Research, companies who are “best-in-class” at aligning marketing and sales had a 20 percent average growth in annual revenue as opposed to a 4 percent decline in “laggard” organizations.

When asked by one of our clients to help them figure out how to bridge this gap, we knew that plenty of our other clients were feeling the same pain. We had a hunch that the collective thinking of this broad array of commercial executives would yield some great ideas for harmonizing marketing and sales efforts.

What we didn’t know was how profoundly the findings of our inquiries to these executives would change the way we thought about -- and teach -- marketing skills. To be honest, our hypothesis was that marketers simply needed to do a better job of orchestrating the company around the strategic marketing fundamentals we have historically taught. We also believed that more involvement with the sales team (and other departments) in the strategy development process would achieve the desired alignment and cross-functional execution.

Instead, we consistently heard about three new challenges, each demanding new marketing skills that go beyond the fundamentals that we have taught for over 35 years. Could these skills represent a new set of “marketing fundamentals”?

We’ll let you be the judge of that. But from our vantage point of studying, living, eating and breathing marketing every day of our professional lives, we are certain that the skills we call “market-shaping” will do more than increase marketing’s value to the sales force. If mastered, these capabilities will allow companies to constantly stay in front of the frenetic pace of change and truly differentiate their companies in a time of increasing commoditization.

METHODOLOGY

A Simple Question Yields Significant Insights

Based on a fundamental premise that sales reps like to work with marketers who help them close more deals, our approach to surveying our clients was straightforward. Instead of quantitative survey instruments, we conducted one-on-one interviews with many of our clients from a “who’s who” list of Fortune 500 companies over the first half of 2015. (See graphic below for a partial list of our clients.)

These interviews centered around a single question: “What are the things that the marketers who are most sought after by your sales teams do differently?” Many of our interviewees – most of whom are marketers -- took this question back to their sales teams and came back with the surprising insights that are featured in the rest of this white paper.

The discussions did include the topic of “how sales teams could work better with marketers.” To be sure, we are not suggesting that healing the sales-marketing divide is solely the responsibility of marketers. Nor are we suggesting success simply hinges on marketers doing what the sales team directs them to do.

But as a marketing-focused organization, we chose to focus on the implications of the discussions to marketers. However, we think you’ll agree that the findings of the study lead directly to the conclusion that marketers must play a leading role in setting company strategy.



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PROBLEM & SOLUTION

The Forces Mandating a New
Approach and the Traits of a
Market Shaper™

THE PROBLEM

What Forces Are Making Strategic Marketing More Difficult Than Ever?

As we collected the insights from our clients on the traits of “sought-after” marketers, we also asked about the root causes that were necessitating the new marketing skills we were hearing about. We heard that new technologies have created challenges that ask much more of marketers than ever before -- particularly in the b-to-b industrial markets where many of our clients compete.

We categorized these problems into the three “forces”, categorized below. Subsequent discussions with other clients have proven that virtually all industries are facing at least one of these three forces, and most are dealing with all three:

FORCE #1: OVERWHELMED CUSTOMERS:

Business is changing too fast for customers to keep up with their options. Asking them what they want is no longer enough. Marketers and sales personnel must interact with customers to not only help them see the future – they have to help design solutions that help customers face an uncertain future with *proactivity and confidence*.

FORCE #2: COMPETITION FROM EVERYWHERE:

Barriers to entry are at an all-time low. It is no longer possible to predict who a company's future competitors are going to be, even in the near-term. Marketers must have the *bravery* to cultivate a company mindset of *continuous reinvention, even in industries where its company is the current leader*

FORCE #3: LESS CONTROL OF BRAND:

Companies used to have significantly more control of the dialogue about their brand. Social media and new technologies have placed control of that *dialogue largely into the hands of customers*. Marketers must have the *perspective and skills* to understand what they can and cannot control when it comes to brand, and have the ability to act appropriately and effectively.

THE SOLUTION

The Three Traits of the Sought-After Marketer or “Market Shaper™”

As we learned about the characteristics of these sought-after marketers, we were struck by the proactive nature of their capabilities. Instead of simply reacting to the business needs prescribed to them by sales or other functions, these individuals help their organizations act on the three forces described on the previous page.

In searching for a moniker to describe these proactive marketers, we settled on the term “**Market Shapers™.**” Moving far beyond the typical marketing roles of promotional tacticians and collateral builders here are some of the skills that **Market Shapers™** demonstrate:

Masters of Customer Dialogue: Because customers are often overwhelmed by the pace of change, many of them can’t tell you what they want beyond very basic needs (see “Force #1: Overwhelmed Customers” on the previous page.) Sales teams want to work with marketing colleagues that can help sales reps fashion new dialogue “angles” with customers – areas of inquiry and discussion that sales reps can use to help customers anticipate trends and begin to make sense of the future.

Market Shapers™ are skilled at participating in – and collaborating with sales in – moving *far beyond* prototypical customer interaction. Possessing the skills of trusted business advisors, they are *comfortable being uncomfortable* in talking to customers about issues that may seem outside of their company’s solution set. They are also able to provide materials and coaching that can help the sales team confidently lead these types of discussions with customers.

With one foot in the present to drive current results, market shaping “Masters of Customer Dialogue” also have one foot in the future. They are always seeking to help customers anticipate the next big technological, demographic or economic change and how it is going to effect their markets.

This skill (in conjunction with the next skill) provides their organization with a *competitive advantage* because opportunities emerge *that competitors would never even broach.*

“If I would have asked customers what they wanted, they would have said ‘faster horses’”

Henry Ford



THE SOLUTION (CON'T.)

Trait 2 of the Market Shaper™

“Intrapreneurial Provocateurs”: A new dialogue angle is only helpful if it connects with a unique and profitable value proposition that a company can offer. Market Shapers™ are looked at by their colleagues as creative “thought partners” and “solution architects” that help them solve customer problems.

Market Shapers™ *embrace the uncertainty* of constant change, successfully partnering with customers, internal functions and leveraging innovation tools to creatively connect emerging customer needs with viable value propositions.

These marketers have many of the qualities of entrepreneurs while also being skilled at operating within a corporation. Unconstrained by “the way things are done in this industry,” they must be respectfully but unabashedly provocative. These “Intrapreneurial Provocateurs” are great at helping the sales team brainstorm unique solutions for specific, bespoke customer problems.

Even more importantly, these marketers craft scalable “stories” that sales reps can use across a broad array of selling situations. These stories help the sales team position the company as industry leaders, helping their customers stay ahead of market shifts.

*“When the rate of change on the outside exceeds the rate of change on the inside, the end is near.” **Jack Welch***



THE SOLUTION (CON'T.)

Trait 3 of the Market Shaper™

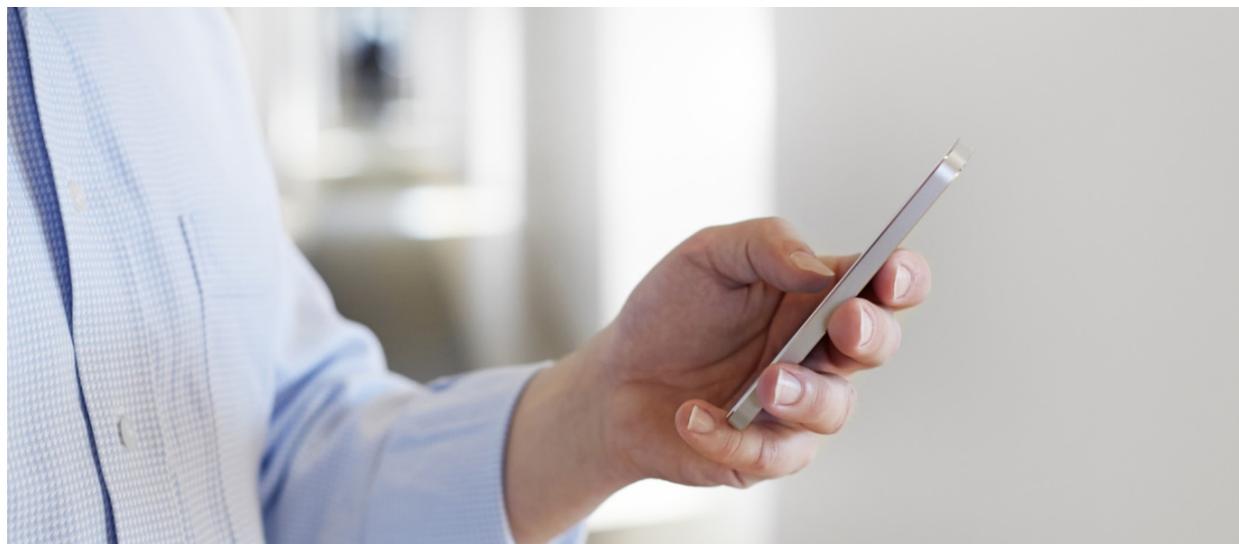
Leaders of Thought: While traits #1 and #2 are especially helpful with existing clients, sales teams also covet marketers that can help them find new selling opportunities. Ironically, the path to great lead generation in today's world is through refraining from selling too soon.

Whether becoming thought leaders themselves or simply orchestrating their company's thought leadership strategy, Market Shapers™ understand the new reality of branding: helping customers become better informed buyers is "in," shamelessly plugging one's products is "out." They constantly conceive of and develop content marketing strategies consistent with the "new rules" of marketing, and build a trusted environment for dialogue with an industry's customers.

Market Shapers™ design and/or author thought leadership campaigns that prospective customers value because they make the customer *smarter*. Sales people benefit from a steady stream of these neutral, though-provoking presentations, articles, etc. about industry issues to provide to customers.

Why? Because content that enriches potential customers whether they do business with your company or not has the effect of creating a fertile ground to discuss solutions – at the appropriate time. Market Shapers™ are invaluable in creating this productive selling environment.

*"Thought leaders advance the marketplace of ideas by posing actionable, commercially relevant...new points of view... as opposed to simply churning out product-focused, brand-centric white papers or curated content that shares or mimics others' ideas." **Craig Badings and Liz Alexander***



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CREATING MARKET SHAPERS

Tips For Building the Skills To
Shape Markets

BUILDING MARKET SHAPING SKILLS

Implications For Commercial Skills Building

Reviewing traditional marketing and commercial skills fundamentals in light of these findings uncovers some important implications:

Customer Dialogue Skills: It is no longer sufficient to improve customer dialogue skills to the point that the customer is simply comfortable opening up about a broader set of their “known” needs. Commercial personnel need to have the ability to lead customers in discovering emerging, latent needs that demonstrate the seller’s mastery of industry knowledge and trends. Marketing must help sales to consider, analyze, choose and scale these conversations.

Innovation Skills: When it comes to developing unique value propositions that support profitable price points, not all customer dialogue angles are equal. Commercial strategists now need the skills to determine how to construct value propositions that connect emerging customer needs to the differentiating capabilities a company has, or can acquire. This is not easy to do.

This goes beyond the ability to simply highlight an existing feature, function or position of a product. It requires an ability to conceive of myriad ways to construct potential offers and business models, and the analytical skills to ultimately choose the few that are profitable, differentiating, and scalable.

Thought Leadership Skills: Beyond developing collateral that presents existing products and services in the most favorable light, today’s marketers need the skills to parlay the new dialogue and value proposition angles uncovered above into thought leadership campaigns that build customer and prospect trust.

Most commercial personnel are comfortable being cheerleaders for the company’s products and services. But now they must lay a foundation that enables company sales and executives to credibly champion a compelling “take” on the industry’s future. This is a change in perspective for most commercial personnel, but has the benefit of driving an improved and permanent appreciation of the customers’ circumstances.

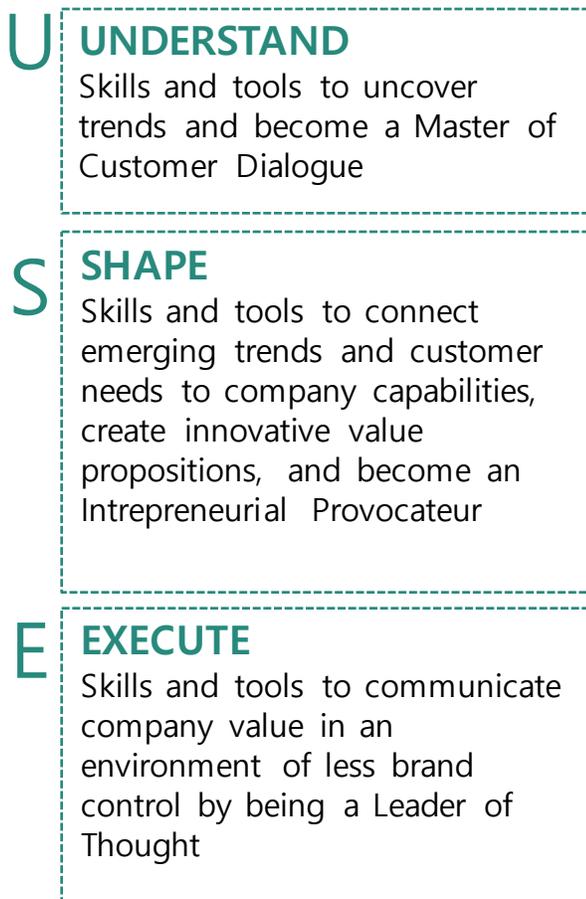
The USE Model Creates Market Shaping Strategies and Plans

Traditional marketing skills courses have focused on the fundamentals of segmentation, targeting and positioning (STP). We have postulated a new model that incorporates all of the elements of STP (see sample agenda on the next page), but organizes skills building around the three areas highlighted in this white paper.

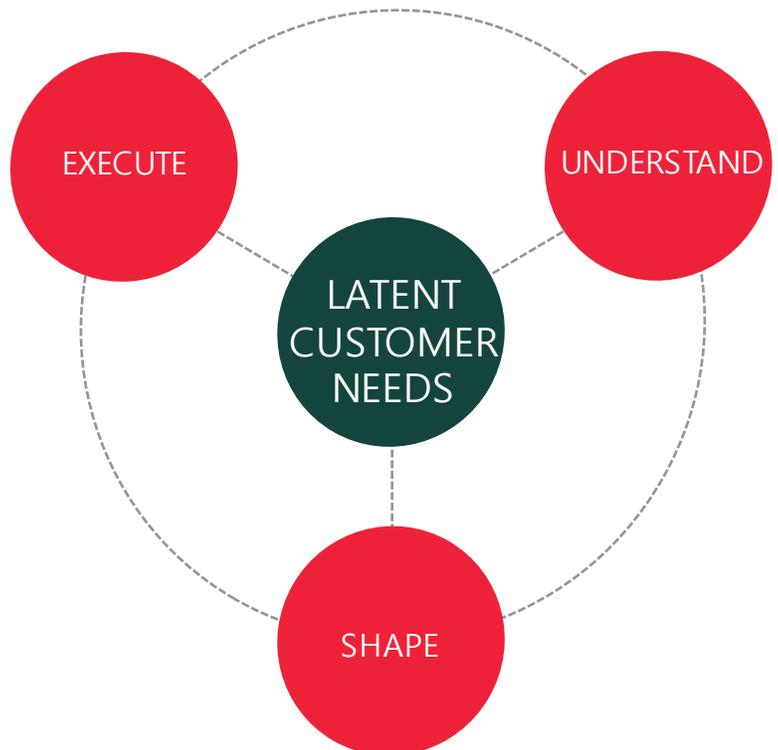
Understand: Commercial personnel first seek to recognize how commoditized their business is when competing to serve known customer needs. They then learn how to uncover trends that reveal emerging customer needs that are likely unmet by any competitor.

Shape: Tools are introduced which develop capabilities to hypothesize numerous creative value propositions/business models and to help analyze/choose those that are most differentiating and profitable.

Execute: Marketers learn how to scale new customer dialogue angles, value proposition pitches and thought leadership platforms to make them accessible to all commercial personnel and executive leadership.



The USE Commercialization Model



BUILDING MARKET SHAPING SKILLS

A High Level Agenda For Building Market Shaping Skills

Though there can be a wide range of appropriate variance in both model, venue (e.g., live, virtual/on demand, 2 days vs. 3, etc.) and topics, the following agenda represents one approach to a curriculum for building Market Shapers™ :

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3
<p>Understand Mastering Customer Dialogue</p>	<p>Shape Skills of the Intrapreneurial Provocateur</p>	<p>Execute Becoming A Leader of Thought</p>
<p>TOPICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining the Characteristics of a Market Shaper • Understanding the Current State: How Commoditized Has Your Industry Become? • Mastering Customer Dialogue To Uncover Current – and Future – Customer Needs • Identifying the Indirect Competitors That Can Kill 	<p>TOPICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive Innovation and Idea Generation • Prioritizing Innovation Opportunities • Analyzing Innovations and Business Models for Sustainable Profitability (Value-Based Pricing) • Shaping the Market with the Future State Ability to Compete (FATC) • Innovative Segmentation and Targeting: Strategic Position Analysis (SPA) 	<p>TOPICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positioning to Reorient the Customer • Translating Trends for Customer – and Your Company’s – Benefit • Building Content Plans By Leveraging “The New Rules of Marketing” and Storytelling • Providing High Value Input and “Scale” to Sales Strategies

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CONCLUSION

**Making Progress In a
Challenging Environment**

CONCLUSION

The Best is the Enemy of the Better

The initial reaction amongst the early reviewers of the content in this white paper typically includes a recognition of the problems, interest in the solutions, and fear. The fear is usually expressed with a quote not unlike the following: "We are so far away from being able to execute on these new skills!" Even those contributing to this study admitted that the sought-after marketers in their firms were uniquely skilled individuals, and not representative of their entire marketing organization.

Unfortunately, the contemporary forces of business are unsentimental. Companies that learn to do the things outlined in this report will have an indisputable advantage in today's tough business environment. The good news is that institutionalizing these skills will require quite a significant effort from even the most sophisticated marketing organizations.

Our advice to anyone interested in figuring out how to progress against these skills is twofold. First, just be sure you are moving faster than the competition in mastering these commercial capabilities. It can be truly intimidating to guess when your company might reach world-class status in market shaping. But don't let "the best be the enemy of the better." Figure out how you are going to begin the journey and get started.

Secondly, make wise use of commercial partnerships. Certain marketing skills are difficult to develop quickly in-house from a cold start. But if you have partners that can contribute to aspects of a market shaping plan -- trend-spotting, developing innovative value propositions, content development, etc., -- utilize them for certain individual tasks in the early days of your market-shaping transition.

Just make sure that your marketing team oversees the entire program. As your team sees "what good looks like" when it comes to individual market shaping components developed by partners, they will make rapid progress towards owning the skills.

The contemporary business environment is asking more of commercial personnel and marketers than ever. From our standpoint, this makes now the best time to be involved in the commercial function. We wish you the best of success in shaping the markets that you compete in!

ABOUT IMPACT PLANNING GROUP

Impact Planning Group is a strategic marketing consultancy. Over the past 35 years, Impact has dissected the business world's greatest marketing successes and developed practical strategy-creating tools used everyday by Fortune 500 companies worldwide. The company empowers its clients to BE DIFFERENT™ and develop products and services that are unique, customer-focused AND profitable.

In 2014, the company wrote *The Accidental Marketer* (published by Wiley) featuring its most powerful tools and frameworks.

WHITE PAPER AUTHORS



Tom Spitale - Author & Partner, Impact Planning Group

Tom Spitale is the co-author, of *The Accidental Marketer*. He has spent the last 20 years studying and unlocking the mysteries of marketing success.

As a speaker, consultant and trainer he has launched thousands of strategic initiatives and plans in the Americas, Europe and Asia for Fortune 500 companies and for lesser-known organizations in highly-specialized markets.

Tom creates tools and frameworks that his clients use in workshop settings, helping them uncover the keys to differentiating their products and services in as little as two days. His goal is to help elevate the role of marketers in the modern organization to be the "orchestrators of company strategy."

Tom is a dynamic facilitator who has led engagements in industries as diverse as technology, healthcare, financial services,, manufacturing and distribution businesses. He specializes in helping superior companies gain above-average prices and profits through meeting more customer needs than the competition.

Prior to his consulting career, Tom held a variety of marketing, pricing and actuarial positions for Wal-Mart, General Electric and Great American Insurance Company. He is a husband, father, entrepreneur, investor, musician, golfer, sports fan and cook. His hobbies expose him to successful practitioners in many different areas, which he finds extremely helpful in his work as a marketer.



Mary Abbazia, Managing Director, Impact Planning Group, LLC

Mary Abbazia is Managing Director of Impact Planning Group and Co-Author of *The Accidental Marketer*. She is known for her ability to infuse enthusiasm for the discipline of marketing. She is a strategic marketer who helps Fortune 1000 clients (such as GE, Pfizer, UTC and Marriott) grow their business by developing marketing skills and dynamic market strategies. She also teaches marketing to executives at Columbia University and at California Institute of Technology.

Mary is originally from California where she started her career at Intel, and later joined The BASES Group, as a Vice President forecasting new products & services. Over the past 25 years, her vision to galvanize professionals has resulted in successful marketing strategies across a variety of sectors and markets. She is a renowned speaker, an executive educator and business coach. Her practical approach and proven frameworks enable clients to transform their business challenges into innovative marketing strategies.

Mary earned a Bachelor of Science in managerial economics from the University of California at Davis and received an MBA from Golden Gate University in San Francisco, CA. She loves to travel and explore different cultures. Mary now resides in Connecticut with her husband and two children.



Sean Welham, Head of European Operations, Impact Planning Group

Sean is a compelling communicator and an innovative and practiced strategic marketing executive bringing fifteen years of experience working in Europe and North America with General Electric and Barclays PLC to Impact Planning Group clients. Sean has managed global sales programs and developed sales force effectiveness training in Europe, Asia, and North America. His past business experience has created a high level of real world implementation knowledge which Sean now applies to client companies in the UK and Europe.

Sean shares his significant strategic planning and commercial execution experience including new product development, brand positioning, value proposition development, and strategic market planning.

Sean is a great advocate of new technology and leveraging that technology to enhance commercial propositions such as product and service enhancements like the introduction of Sales Force Automation, Pioneering Internet trading system, driving \$200mm of revenue per year, web based on-line auctions, fully integrated finance system with a major customer enterprise system, web based marketing communication using 'intelligent interface' web sales tools using next generation video technology, retail B2C site development, commercial property 'peer to peer' information system, and vehicle tracking and mobile solutions development.

Sean holds an MBA from the University of Manchester (UK) Business School. He is also trained as a Six Sigma Master Black Belt.