

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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## HIRING A MARKETECT

A few months back there was an unusual “want ad” inside an issue of *Brandweek* magazine. It was actually a tongue-in-cheek attention-getter for a recruiting firm, but the message it contained was nevertheless a telling one. It went like this:

What’s so telling about this message, of course, is the inherent truth that underpins it: namely, the skills a marketer needs to be successful today (successful, as in winning versus the competition) are quite different than those needed twenty, ten, or even five years ago. And these skills do indeed comprise a wide range of roles that today’s marketer must deftly be able to slip in and out of.

For some time now we have been advocating the emergence of a new breed of marketer ourselves, one we’ve labeled the Marketect. If you have been following our thinking on this new breed you know that, unlike the average, run-of-the-mill marketer, the Marketect consistently out-thinks and “out-creates” her or his competition to *effect a change in the way customers and consumers perceive an entire category of class of products...a way that favors the Marketect’s brand but not the competition.* Actually, becoming a Marketect today requires many of the very



same skill sets identified in the *Brandweek* ad...much more so than those standard skill sets for marketers of yesteryear: being highly analytical, being mass-media proficient, and, yes, having an MBA.

What’s changed? In the past, say, twenty-five years ago, when the original concept of brand management was in its heyday, many brands enjoyed the luxury of being superior performers in their respective categories. They were more efficacious in some consumer-meaningful way than their major competitors. Just as significant, it was an age of “attention” in which marketers were able to capture their target’s attention via dual-source media (mainly television and magazines).

So, naturally, most fast-moving consumer goods companies hired for marketers who were analytically inclined...to oversee on-going product performance testing, media testing, promotion testing—all in an effort to sustain a superior advantage. And, consistent with this orientation, there was a general philosophy at work that brand managers should be “generalists,” managing the entire business and thereby aspire to become General Managers. Said another way, in those days the demand for *differentiating Ideas*—advertising ideas, promotion ideas, interactive ideas, social networking ideas—was quite low to non-existent.

But today we no longer have so many brands with on-going superior product performance advantages; we no longer go to market in an age of attention but rather in an age of “attraction”—in which successful marketers must continually find clever ways to attract loyal and prospective new users to their brands. And of course, the days of dual-source media are long over. That’s why the *Brandweek* ad so definitively insists “Web experience a must” and so nonchalantly allows that, if one already has an MBA, fine (but it’s not really required).

All of these developments got us to thinking even more about what specific competencies we would insist upon if **we** were hiring for a marketer of the future, hiring for a Marketect today. So, for this week’s Boats & Helicopters here is our list of Core Competencies for Today’s Marketect. In an age of attraction, Ideas are more and more the differentiator from one brand to another. As we have observed in many previous editions of our weekly *Dispatches*, brands like Dove, MasterCard, Duracell, and HSBC have found that a Big Idea overcomes parity product performance—for sustained share growth!

#### **BOATS & HELICOPTERS** - The Marketect’s Core Competencies

1. **Curious** - This demonstrated trait is by far the first thing we would hire for. A person who is naturally curious has many and far-ranging interests. A person who is inherently curious is always exploring, seeking out *stimulus*—to learn new things! And it is this very curiosity that fosters an idea-driven environment. What are some of the indicators we would look for to signal a naturally curious marketer? Things like: what are all the ways they use the internet; what books they read and how often; what entertainments do they regularly engage in; what brand marketing ideas they admire and why; what travels they have completed and plan to complete; what informal education endeavors have they participated in.
2. **Competitive** - In hiring for this all-essential characteristic, we would expect to discover its manifestation in two dimensions: documented past experiences of continual (not occasional) competitive activities, both professional and personal; and a “fire in the belly” attitude that comes across naturally in the candidate’s personal interaction. We want marketers who always start with the perspective of “What strategy or idea can we create that our competitors would find incredibly uncomfortable, and very difficult, if not impossible, to imitate?” And, for sure, competitive marketers always aim for ways to gain a perceived (if not real) meaningful advantage over other brands.

3. **Coach-like & Coach-able** - Everyone looks for “team players,” right? But we want than and more. We want marketers who, regardless of level in the organization, can deftly *add value* to whatever the team is working on. Rather than say what is wrong with something, why something will never work, or simply why they don’t like it, they find ways to build and make something better. These are the coaches. And just as important, as these young marketer-coaches gain responsibility, they must also be coach-able. That means they can appreciate suggestions to make a strategy or initiative stronger, they can learn to grow their skills as they are being coached. (Actually, they *want* to be coached!)
  
4. **Corroborative** - An unusual adjective, this. But one who corroborates is one who constantly “inspects what he or she expects.” In other words, a marketer who demands, no insists that whatever initiatives the brand engages in be tied to specific and measurable objectives that are then either confirmed or denied. A corroborative marketer would never invest the company’s money without first having in place a methodology for tracking the results. His real motivation in doing this? Aside from simply being a responsible steward of the company’s assets, he wants the results to reinforce that a Big Idea can make all the difference.

Are there other core competencies we would look for in hiring prospective Marketects? Sure. But unless these four were clearly in place first, we would say, “Keep the search going.”

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