

# Walking Uphill, Both Ways: How Today's Market Demands Make Jobs Harder Than Ever

Teresa Caro, September 2009

Someday our kids will become marketers (at least that's the plan for mine) and we will marvel at how easy they have it. And yes, the day will come when we hear ourselves say, "Kid, in my day..." and then we'll know we are truly old.

Alas, in my day (today) I see customer-centric organizations becoming more commonplace and individual departments asked to work together through leadership consolidations or task forces. Don't get me wrong, this is great news. Yet, as the groups come together and compare notes, I see them confronting the reality of a multitude of agencies, platforms, and reporting and monitoring tools. They are finding disparate customer databases and missed monetization opportunities. They are receiving more reports and yet having less confidence in the findings. And yes, they are being asked to streamline their workforces and whoever is left is expected to be the expert in everything.

This shouldn't be the end of the story we tell our children. Why not take inventory of what causes you (or your resources) to walk up that very big hill everyday to get anything done? And then why not lay out a plan to fix it?

Not certain where you should start? Following are the top 5 "hills" we have observed recently:

1. Multitude of Vendors/Partners/Contractors – Have you taken a full inventory of all the external resources you engage to run your marketing organization? Have you taken a close look at the steps needed to get a campaign out the door and evaluate the results? What steps have you taken to streamline these efforts?

Just remember if you choose to manage your multiple vendors through one point of contact (as is the trend these days), ensure you have the right measures in place so one weak link (vendor) doesn't bring down the entire effort.

2. Disparate Databases – In this day of "clicks and bricks" do you know where you are storing all your data? Do you have a single view of the customer? Do you have a desired profile and a plan in place to gather this data over time? Do you know how you plan to leverage that data – cross-sell/up-sell, grow, migrate, retain, winback? Are you missing out on monetizing your customer database or leveraging it to find more prospects that share the characteristics of your most valuable customers?

As you embark on your customer data integration (CDI) effort, remember not everything needs to be consolidated in one place. Chances are it will take too long and you'll forget why you needed all this information when you get there. Understand what profile data you

need to accomplish your marketing goals and drive towards bringing only that data together in one place, no more. K-I-S-S certainly applies here.

3. Disparate Agendas – Has word gotten out that your website and email efforts drive a ton of revenue? Do you have all the brands, sectors, and/or departments vying for the same real estate on a website, email, or newsletter? Are your results declining because your customers are struggling to find what they need or understand the core message?

As you struggle to make everyone happy, know that you can tackle this challenge from top down and bottom up. First, the top of your organization should have a business plan in place with revenue targets and brand/sector priorities (if not, that's another hill for another time). Leverage this plan to create your framework and calendar for the year. Second, leverage your customer data to know what your customers want to see. Personalization and targeting has come a long way – and if you engage your technology and data resources from the beginning, you can build landing pages and emails with dynamically generated content meeting each customer's unique needs and expectations.

4. Platform Paralysis – Do you wish for a tool that would allow you to get a campaign out the door without manually updating spreadsheets, to-do lists, and sticky notes? Do you have a tool that you grew out of a year ago and is more trouble than it's worth? Have you tried to find something new, yet keep running into problems, so it's easier to just keep going the way you're going? Have you been putting off that upgrade and now your vendor is threatening to stop supporting you?

When you are ready to try for the first time (or again), know that you will be more successful if before you see the first vendor demo, you have created a very detailed requirements list and you have agreed upon priorities. Before you allow the platform vendor to cross your threshold with their fancy presentations, leverage your right to issue an RFI (and use that spreadsheet one more time to compare them side-by-side and apply your pre-determined prioritization). It's only once you create your short list based on capabilities that you start bringing them in and determining who you really want to work with. They have what you need, now who will make a great partner?

5. New Channels – Are you holding back because it disrupts a well-oiled measurement machine? Are you afraid you will lose control of your message? Not certain how you are supposed to support the new effort?

There was a time not so long ago when existing channels were not so easily measured, yet people moved forward and reaped the rewards. And a wise man at Yelp once said, "The genie is out of the bottle." People are already talking about you, so you might as well engage. So, what can you put in place to appease these fears and figure out how to support it? Consider allocating a certain percentage of your budget to the tried and true (to get your bonus) and then a smaller percentage allocated to testing, within parameters, maybe with some contracted support, and no fear of failing (to find that big win and get promoted).

What else is on your list? How are you addressing your challenges today so we can tell our children tomorrow how lucky they are we fixed it all before they got their jobs?

Need some help? The Razorfish operations team is organized to support a multi-agency network. In many cases we provide full support and management of vendors. The success of CRM is

primarily related to operational efficiency, and looking for ways to save money is core to this team's mission. Please contact Razorfish CRM/eCRM solutions with any questions.

## About the Author



### **Teresa Caro**

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Teresa Caro is a Director Strategy for Razorfish, providing expertise on relationship marketing strategy, e-commerce, targeting and personalization, social interaction marketing, email marketing, search marketing, and Web analytics for clients such as AT&T, Belk Department Stores, and State Farm.

Before her return to the corporate world and after 10 years as a successful strategic marketer for several corporations, Teresa launched Caro Consulting. Feature clients include ING, HoneyBaked Ham, FootSmart.com, Fabric.com. Teresa has also worked on the client side for KnowledgeStorm, RealEstate.com, ANTEC (now Scientific Atlanta), and Ford Motor Company.

Teresa is a past president of the Atlanta Interactive Marketing Association (AiMA), has been the recipient of the Atlanta Business Chronicle's Marketing Award for Excellence for best new product introduction, and provided significant input to business intelligence expert and author Guy R. Powell, to finalize his book, "Return on Marketing Investment." She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Villanova University and an MBA from Georgia State University.

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Razorfish is one of the largest interactive marketing and technology companies in the world, and also one of the largest buyers of digital advertising space. With a demonstrated commitment to innovation, Razorfish counsels its clients on how to leverage digital channels such as the Web, mobile devices, in-store technologies and other emerging media to engage people, build brand loyalty and provide excellent customer service. The company is increasingly advising marketers on Social Influence Marketing™, its approach for employing social media and social influencers to achieve the marketing and business needs of an organization. Its award-winning client teams provide solutions through their strategic counsel, digital advertising and content creation, media buying, analytics, technology and user experience. Razorfish has offices in markets across the United States, and in Australia, China, France, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom. Clients--many of them served in multiple markets--include Carnival Cruise Lines, Coors Brewing Company, Levi's, McDonald's and Starwood Hotels. Visit <http://www.razorfish.com> for more information.

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