AN INTEGRATED MARKETING APPROACH -
MARKETING'S HOLY GRAIL

interlinkONE™

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Introduction

Have you ever seen a marketing department rejoice? It can be a wonderful thing. When a campaign achieves its objectives, it can bring many benefits to a company, from publicity to profits. Ultimately, a campaign that delivers has a direct effect on the success of a product or service. However, achieving success can be a long, bumpy road as marketing departments face multiple challenges as they create and implement campaigns.

Like a (hopefully) well-oiled machine, there are several moving parts to the marketing department and those moving parts then carry out the many stages of a marketing campaign. The moving parts might include the people, design and production. The stages might take you from the planning, to budgeting and then building. Finally, there is the management and execution of a campaign. Of course, you can't forget the measurement stage, where you calculate the actual impact, good or bad, the campaign has made.

When everything works smoothly for this marketing engine, the result is the delivery of a consistent brand message and positive experience to a prospect or customer. However, for many marketing departments, the technology they have available to them fails to deliver through these various processes. Oftentimes, this leads to campaign failure: the wrong message being delivered, at the wrong time, and sometimes to the wrong people.

Integrated marketing is the Holy Grail for marketing departments within the enterprise. It is a platform that brings all the marketing processes together and unifies them. It enables you to deliver relevant content at a time when it will have the biggest impact on each individual.

What does Integrated Marketing Mean?

Integrated marketing is
- An end-to-end process of managing all activities, including marketing projects, planning, process flows, assets, supporting documentation, authorization.
- It includes the management of the people involved, the vendors, and the client relationships.
- Building, managing and executing all outbound and inbound marketing communications.
- Emphasis on measuring the campaign using clearly defined analytical tools

"Measure all channels and audiences? With integrated marketing, this measurement is possible."

Proving the success of a campaign can be quite satisfying. However, many companies have a hard time trying to actually measure that success. A campaign needs to be measured across all channels. These channels may include e-mail, SMS, Print, Internet, Trade Shows, Seminars, and more. Through each of these channels there may be different target audiences, which lead you to multiple data sources. Also, multiple response mechanisms are necessary to collect the data.

When the marketing department develops measurement tools, it shouldn't be asking whether it's possible to measure all these channels and all these target markets. Instead, the question for the marketing department to brainstorm is: HOW do you measure all channels and all target markets?

With integrated marketing, this measurement IS possible. However, in light of today's technology, the platform needs to be able to embrace new media communications channels like social media. Without integration, the processes that occur in a marketing department remain fragments, pieces of the puzzle that can easily become impossible to control and manage. In the end, this translates into providing the marketing message recipient with uncoordinated views of your business; the target customer or prospect does not enjoy a unified experience.

Marketing without Integration – How it Affects Relationships

Here is an example: Let's discuss a cross-media approach using a Direct Mail Piece and a Personalized URL response mechanism. Personalized URLs are being used by companies to generate greater response rates for the enterprise campaigns. Service providers are achieving success offering Personalized URLs to compliment their print and/or mail services. It is looked upon as a low cost of entry into the "marketing service provider" game. But when service providers or enterprises alike embrace this specific cross-media approach, they fall victim to another challenge that marketing departments are continuously trying to avoid and can be easily seen as one disastrous step leading to another:

> **If** you can easily analyze the results, your next marketing effort will be that much better. **"**

1. The Personalized URL is created in a system outside of the marketing management system that actually manages the information about the printed piece.
2. The data associated with the contact for the campaign (contact management/CRM solution) is located in another system outside of the database that generated the Personalized URL.
3. The end result is that both of these items are directed and executed off of independent databases and outside of the whole marketing campaign.   Therefore the information gathered may not be 100% on the mark in terms of truly measuring the campaign.

Now we add some online ordering of printed materials, commonly known as web-to-print. Perhaps the sales reps need to order mailers for a specific list, and they want those mailers to contain Personalized URLs. If they are placing their orders and uploading their list into a system that is different from the one where the Personalized URLs are created, we've now added a third (and possibly fourth), disconnected outside database into the mix.

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(Example of a mailer with a Personalized URL)

Just for kicks, we'll add one more - the e-mail communications engine. Often, the email effort is outsourced to a vendor who manages the digital marketing communications. Yes, we're talking about another outside cog trying to work within the wheels of your marketing engine.

To summarize, we have a separate database for these different efforts:
- Personalized URLs
    - Created outside of your internal marketing management system
    - Data gathered is handled by another outside source
- 1-800 Number / Call Center
- Web-to-Print
- E-Mails

While having multiple channels and response mechanisms for your campaign can reap many benefits, running them through different systems may result in a world of problems. If you cannot easily analyze the results across the different channels and response types, then you may have a difficult time learning what has worked, what hasn't, and then – how to do it more efficiently in your next marketing effort. Think about comparing apples to oranges to kumquats to avocados. Sure, they're all fruit, but they taste different, they look different…besides the whole fruit thing, they are different. Any comparisons between the fruits would be difficult to quantify. And when you try to analyze results across multiple systems it can also be difficult to quantify, often resulting in wrong or misleading interpretations of data.

To demonstrate how this approach could adversely affect a relationship, let's walk through an example.

Most individuals have had some sort of relationship with a financial services company, typically in terms of obtaining and using a credit card. In that scenario, you provide a lot of data to the credit card company, personal details about your profession, your banking institution and more. You get approved and you go ahead and use the credit card at different stores, for different products. You pay your bills each month. Well, if we provide this much data, then why do so many credit card companies still send messages that treat us like we are "new" to them? Think about it. How many times have you received an application from an organization that you already have a credit card from? It's as if they can't even take the time to visit their own database to see who their customers are.   Instead, they treat you like a stranger and send you an application that is tantamount to junk mail. When that happens, it cannot provide a very favorable impression for that organization. Think of the opportunities that they are missing if they truly put that data to use!

You wonder how something like this could happen. But all signs point to the fact that they fail to implement a single, integrated platform from which to operate. Rather, they are using multiple applications to perform their outbound activities, in the process wasting their money and our time.

"…Using multiple applications to perform outbound activities wastes their money and our time."

Another real-life example would be the cross-over with email and printed mail communications. Think about the time you may have signed up to only receive email communications from a company in hopes of cutting down on junk mail and wasted paper. Yet, you still receive printed mail pieces in your mailbox. Chances are the company is using two different databases and your preference for email hasn't crossed over to the database that deals with printed mail.

Another Reason to Move to an Integrated Platform

This is my personal favorite. Recently, I received a voicemail at my office from one of the top three U.S. cell phone providers.   Here was the gist of their message: "We would like the chance to demonstrate how we could save you money by switching providers."

The problem? I am already their customer! All of our business cell phones are serviced by that provider. Asking me if I'd like to switch to them borders on irritating. What contact/CRM database were they looking at? Clearly, their marketing efforts are being performed in an unprofessional and uncoordinated manner.

You will pay dearly when you do not provide a unified experience for your prospect/customer. As they experience your differing messages, they will be left with a sense of confusion and disillusion. Who wants to work with a business that doesn't seem to know what it's doing? And the confusion doesn't stop just with your customer. By using multiple vendors and agencies and performing uncoordinated multi-channel marketing efforts, you will face quite the challenge trying to measure your campaign across different channels, data sources, and response types.

Dare I say this might be one reason for the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) turnover?

How to Unify Marketing Communications

If we are responsible for executing and measuring the marketing activities for our organization or for our customers, we are faced with a hurdle – how do we deliver a unified experience of our marketing messages to our target audience?

The answer is simple: All marketing activities should be managed in one integrated marketing solution.

Using point solutions from multiple vendors that have overlapping tendencies (and often conflict with each other) will only cause problems. However, many companies continue to dive into the multiple point solution approach. Why? One contributing factor - industry analysts who support "best-of-breed" approach and that advise a point solution mentality for buyers. This may sound familiar: "Buy the software that just creates the Personalized URLs - it will get you into the game."

It may get you in the marketing game, but for how long and at what cost in the long run?

Here are some of the pitfalls for companies that have taken this approach:
- Management of multiple databases
- Increased training on different solutions which strains budgets and time
- Inability to grow when adoption of a new media adoption is necessary
- Business becomes less attractive to potential buyers should you decide to sell

It's tempting to jump into the marketing game at what seems a cheap price to pay for a point solution, but the ultimate goal of providing a unified marketing experience cannot be achieved easily through this approach. I always feel bad when print service providers and enterprises alike buy multiple point solutions. They end up reducing their return on investment on their marketing activities. Also, it ultimately costs them more money in terms of resources to manage disparate systems. If the goal is to help marketing departments as their service provider and you choose different point solutions, then you're wasting their time and you are left holding software that is useless because it did not solve a larger problem of the marketing organization.

And while this is an ugly situation for the marketing department, who truly gets hurt the most? It's the prospect or customer who receives uncoordinated messages and materials, whether they be digital or static, who is left confused and disappointed with the communications received.

Why the Sales Department Will Love You

A unified marketing solution can reap many benefits for lead generation. Just as important, it will tremendously help your sales team as they try to move leads through the funnel. The unified approach allows for inquiries and leads to be acted upon immediately.

Sales or business support reps can immediately dip into the marketing platform to access the material they need to touch the prospect. They will not need to log out and log into another system to get information that is stored in another database.

For example, a sales rep needs to follow up on someone who clicked through on the latest email blast effort. The sales rep wants to know 1) was the prospect sent the mail with the Personalized URL, 2) did the prospect click through, responding using that Personalized URL, and 3) what did that prospect actually answer when using that Personalized URL. If the campaign isn't integrated and is in fact using different systems to be implemented, then that sale rep will have to jump through several hoops in order to track down that information.

The Integrated Marketing Software Approach - in Action

> **"** …they are able to easily deploy multi-channel campaigns. **"**

Cedar Graphics has been a full-service printing company since 1986. However, they needed a platform to help them go to market as a marketing service provider. When looking for software to help reach their goals, they found various point solutions that could meet their individual needs. However, this would have required that they piece together different software solutions to deliver applications to their clients.

Cedar Graphics decided to go a different route - they selected an integrated marketing software solution. They are thus able to solve the end-to-end needs of a marketing operation - from creation to execution to measurement and to fulfillment - with one solution.

As their business grows, they are able to easily deploy multi-channel campaigns. They can increase the effectiveness of marketing efforts because the data is in one central location.

Cedar Graphics is able to provide reporting on each aspect of a campaign via one dashboard. Those results might include:

- E-Mail Blasts (Indicating which emails have been sent, opened, clicked-through)
- Direct Mail (Postcards, Newsletters, Inserts, and more)
- Calls (Inbound and Outbound Activity)
- Web activity (How many people visited the landing page? Which items have been downloaded? How many people signed up for future communications?)
- Sales Pipeline (How many new leads do we have? How many demos have been scheduled? How many proposals have been sent out?
- And more…!

Conclusion

The consequences of performing uncoordinated marketing efforts may have devastating effects. Sounds overly-dramatic. But is it? In the end, a unified marketing solution will save time and money, and it builds value for all involved.

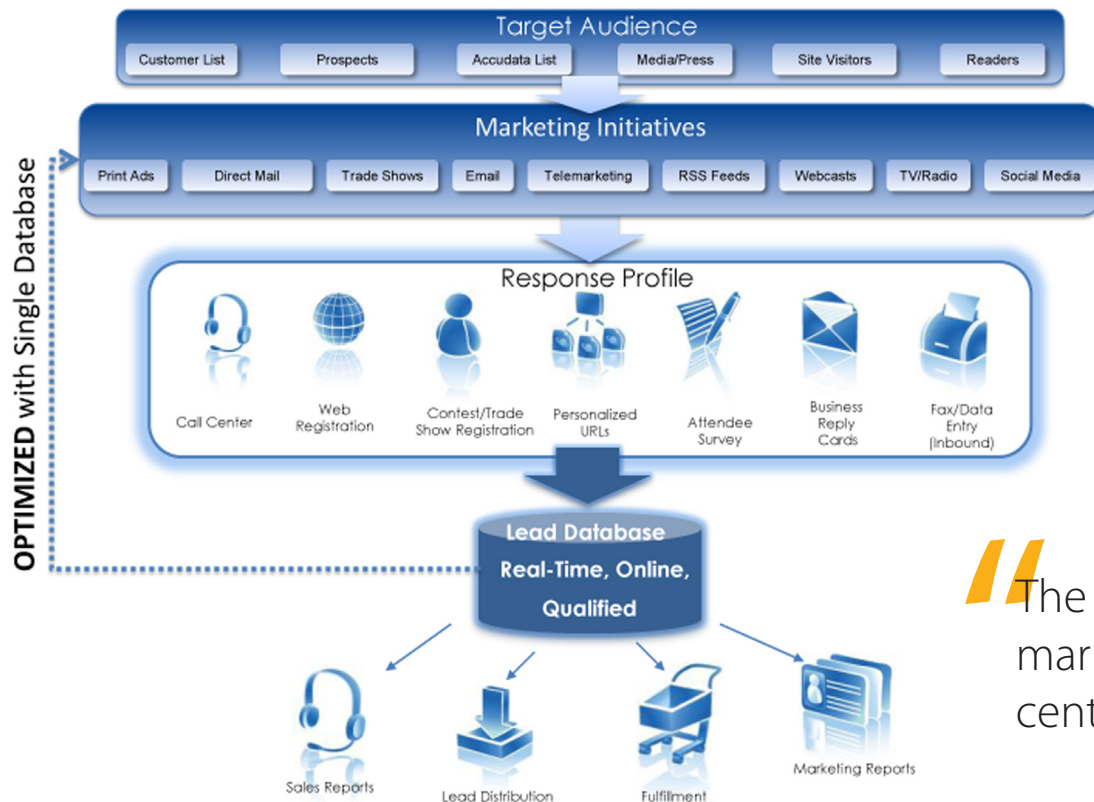By using an integrated marketing approach, you will have:
- A comprehensive view of all marketing activities. Marketing activities are not overlooked and you will build prospect and customer value rather than eroding their experience and perception.
- Provided a consistent brand and message across all channels all the time resulting in the elimination of conflicting views for the customer.
- A coherent view of combined activities and strategies, allowing for standard measurement for all of them and encompassed in a dashboard view for marketing to act upon.
- Inclusive marketing efforts and permissions based on what your customer or prospects want. No longer irritating them by allowing the call center to call when they have opted out. Or by sending a direct mail piece when they have stated they want digital communications.

" In the end, a unified marketing solution will save time and money, and it builds value for all involved. "

The integrated marketing software platform is used to manage the entire marketing life cycle, unifying multiple disparate activities. We're talking from top to bottom, end to end; the integration involves everything from planning and execution, to managing and measuring all marketing efforts and campaigns. And this solution allows for all personnel involved in the marketing process to have complete control and oversight of the entire campaign process.

When working with this type of approach…we call it marketing done right.   Effective marketing that allows for brand and message consistency. Marketing that allows your communications to carry a consistent look, feel, and message across all channels. Successful marketing that adds value to your brand and delivers a unified experience to your prospects and customers.

Diagram of Unified Marketing

> The key to an integrated marketing approach is a centralized database

An Integrated Marketing Approach – Marketing's Holy Grail

About interlinkONE, inc.

interlinkONE delivers a software solution that manages all your marketing needs.

Our online, integrated software enables companies to build, manage, execute and measure all aspects of their marketing efforts and initiatives in one solution.

The solution streamlines operations and reduces cost by unifying all marketing communications and initiatives. It brings together the people and processes involved to ensure a consistent message is delivered across all outbound and inbound marketing campaigns. The integrated marketing software solution provides a holistic view of your entire marketing operation.

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