

# Five Fundamentals of Integrated Marketing

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By Elana Anderson, *ClickZ*, Apr 10, 2008

A top exec from an online marketing services company recently asked me if I had any great examples of companies that truly excel at integrated marketing. Sadly, my response was, “No.”

Perhaps that’s not entirely fair. There are lots of good examples of integrated marketing campaigns. We read about them in the press all the time, and we watch companies and agencies win accolades for them. But the keyword is “campaign.” These typically isolated campaigns leverage multiple tactical elements across channels. I’m not aware of any company that’s truly integrated in its approach to marketing. Why? Well, truly integrated marketing is hard, darn it...

## **Fundamental 1: Integrated Marketing Starts With the Customer**

When I ask marketers to define “integrated marketing,” the word “multichannel” typically comes up very quickly. Many marketers believe that integrated marketing is about message and content consistency across channels. Other marketers take the multichannel idea a bit further, emphasizing that different channels have different strengths and should therefore play different roles in an integrated marketing campaign.

My beef with these definitions? They’re inside out; they’re from the marketing organization’s point of view, not the customer’s. A marketing organization that excels at integrated marketing puts the customer at the center of its strategy and executes extremely well across channels and lines of business.

## **Fundamental 2: Integrated Marketing Emphasizes Customer Processes**

Think about it this way. Your customers don’t care that you’re only responsible for e-mail, not the Web site, direct mail, or call center. When a customer or prospect clicks through an e-mail and lands on your home page, or receives an offer in the mail and calls customer service to inquire further, she expects a seamless handoff. Most integrated marketing examples I learn about (over)emphasize coordinating creative elements instead of understanding and coordinating how each channel and customer touch point helps the customer achieve her goal. The result? For the customer, dead ends and unnecessary frustration. For the company, lost opportunities and damage to the brand.

## **Fundamental 3: Integrated Marketing Transcends Campaigns**

I find that most marketing organizations still think in terms of campaigns and launches or pushes, rather than programs. When it comes to measuring success, these organizations tend to agonize over issues like attribution (i.e., which communication should get credit for generating a response or sale). While I don’t mean to minimize the importance of understanding campaign performance, overemphasis on individual campaign performance is a common barrier to integrated marketing. Believe it or not, it’s possible to optimize response to individual campaigns to the detriment of the overall program and customer value. Integrated marketing requires that marketers evaluate metrics that transcend an individual campaign, namely customer metrics like engagement, value, and profitability.

## **Fundamental 4: Integrated Marketing Requires Interaction and Dialogue**

Although some marketing organizations are experimenting with trigger-based communications and onsite dynamic content delivery, these tactics pale in comparison to traditional push-marketing tactics. Yet when considered from the outside -- from the customer’s perspective -- integrated marketing is inherently two way and responsive to customer behaviors.

## **Fundamental 5: Integrated Marketing Is a Fusion of Sales, Marketing, and Service**

Integrated marketing doesn’t stop at the organizational boundaries of the marketing department. Integrated marketing requires an integrated approach to marketing, sales, and service. Does this expand the definition of “integrated marketing”? I think not.

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Step back and consider this issue from the customer's perspective. How do customers develop their perspective on the companies and brands with which they do business? And without conducting a major quantitative study, ask yourself: do marketing campaigns or individual interactions with a company have a bigger impact on how customers and prospects perceive your company? I think that's a pretty easy question to answer. And, correct me if I'm wrong, but marketing is responsible for how the company is perceived.

### **CMOs Must Lead the Way to Integrated Marketing**

I realize the implications of what I've outlined here. Integrated marketing is customer-focused marketing. Customer-focused marketing requires relevant communications, interactions, and content, regardless of channel and customer interaction point. That's a tall order and requires an incredibly strong leader. There's a lot of inconsistency in how CMOs perceive themselves and how their job is perceived by others. And senior marketing execs often express frustration with how the marketing function is viewed. CMOs must define and lead a customer-focused marketing strategy that crosses product, channel, geographic, even functional boundaries. Otherwise, they risk losing the customer.

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