

Are you leading technology changes or is technology leading you?

Jean-Luc Ambrosi | 29 March, 2017 09:57 | 0 Comments | [✉](#) | [📄](#) | [Share this post](#) |

In a recent conversation with a chief technology officer, he asserted all digital technology changes in his organisation were being led by IT and not by marketing.

Initially, I thought he might be referring to the technical components of digital changes and that his marketing team was focused on the experiential changes. But no, he reaffirmed marketing was not in the driving seat nor at the conversation table.

It made me wonder: How long a marketing function like this could survive?

I understand, as a marketer, that the technological landscape is daunting. As soon as we want to initiate changes, we suddenly face the exponential proliferation of zeros linked to cost of implementation. Not to mention dealing with the creative fertility of new technical terms that even we marketers would only dream of conceiving.

But with many business models moving to a digital-first environment, marketing has no choice but to take a leadership role or at least be at the discussion table. These technological decisions will have a direct impact on customer interaction models and the ability for brands to differentiate themselves.

But understanding the technology by itself is almost, dare I say, irrelevant. What marketers must do is understand the concrete impact and opportunity these technological changes bring to the fore. What opportunities do they generate and, one must also ask, what do they limit? Technology is about choices and customer interactions will always be impacted by these choices.

As an enabler, technology really empowers us to question things. This then allows us to differentiate through real change and to identify fads from critical trends where a core investment needs to be made. But to do this, marketers need to get their heads around technology.

For example, adopting APIs will allow marketers to integrate different vendor applications, enabling the enrichment of customer interactions in different shapes and forms. But this also requires changes to the way an organisation builds its infrastructure. On the flip side, keeping a closed ecosystem might not rock the boat, but will limit this flexibility.

Surely most marketers would want a say in this?

The reality is that many, if not most, marketers want to shape change. Issues arise when marketers don't voice their needs in technology transformation programs because these are seen as technology driven rather than business need driven. Hence, an understanding of technology, from an end user point of view, must be part of every marketing leader's arsenal. This is critical to mitigating the risk of becoming a prisoner of platforms that do not meet marketing core requirements, customer and brand strategies.

So as the Baron de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games used to say: "What really matters is to participate".



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