READY FOR AGILE MARKETING?

- Accelerated speed-to-market for marketing ideas, initiatives and campaigns
- Greater adaptiveness to changing circumstances and environments
- Being more attuned to customer needs and demands

MARKETING AGILE CHECKLIST INCLUDED

What do IBM, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Santander, Hilton, HubSpot, Travelocity, Salesforce, Kraft, Dell, Adobe, Oracle, Expedia, Pepsi, Fidelity Investments, Kissmetrics, Vistaprint, Xerox, Avaya, Symantec, and Sainsbury's (to name a few) all have in common?

Answer: they're all moving to, or at least piloting, using Agile Marketing practices to plan, execute and optimise their marketing activities.

In fact, according to the State of Agile Marketing survey, 37% of marketers report using some form of Agile to manage their work, with nearly two-thirds (61%) of traditional marketers planning to start an Agile implementation within the next twelve months.[1]

Agile Marketing has started to gain real traction and momentum as a new philosophy and approach to marketing. Yet many marketing teams still haven't made the move to Agile ways-of-working. As such, they risk getting left behind, not only by their competitors but also by the rest of their organisations.

This introduction will give you an outline of what Agile Marketing is, and then highlight how it results in it's three core benefits:

• Accelerated speed-to-market for marketing ideas, initiatives and campaigns
• Greater adaptiveness to changing circumstances and environments
• Being more attuned to customer needs and demands

At the end you'll find an Agile Marketing Checklist to assess your organisation's and team's readiness for adopting Agile Marketing practices.

What is Agile Marketing?

The Agile Marketing Framework

If we take the verb 'agile' it's defined as being *nimble, responsive, dynamic, adaptive* and *fast* - all characteristics that we can aspire to and see the clear benefits of for modern marketing teams.

To achieve these though we have to adopt 'Agile' as a discipline, we have to actually change the way we act and work.

It's best to think of Agile as a series of layers with each building on the previous, as in the following diagram:

APPROACH
Agile Marketing Manifesto

METHODOLOGIES
Scrum, Kanban, Lean

PRACTICES
Backlogs, Sprints, Stand-ups, Workflow Visualisation

1. Approach

Firstly, Agile is a set of principles and values that collectively guide how we should think, behave and, importantly, respond to different situations and scenarios. At its core, an Agile approach to Marketing means flexible planning that's responsive to change, validating learnings through testing and data, customer-focused collaboration, adaptive and iterative campaigns rather than big-bangs, and ongoing experimentation.

2. Methodologies

This approach is delivered through a set of methodologies. In all, there are around 100 different Agile methodologies that could be applied, the more familiar being Lean, Scrum and Kanban. Which ones to use, and specifically how, will depend on the context of the business in question, and will change over time as circumstances shift and the organisation becomes more accustomed to Agile ways-of-working. It's crucial to work with people who understand and have experience of Agile to help decide which methodologies make sense for your business.

3. Practices

Within these methodologies are defined practices - specific roles, meetings, rituals, tools and tasks that make up the methodology. You may have come across concepts such as sprint cycles, stand-ups, backlogs, and Kanban Boards as examples of Agile practices.

A New Operating Model For Marketing

Taking these layers of Agile Marketing as a whole, it represents a completely new way for marketing teams and functions to work. This can be considered as a new 'operating model' for marketing.

An operating model consists of the processes, systems and structures that an organisation uses to deliver value to its customers and beneficiaries. It focuses on how the organisation actually runs to create the outcomes it desires; at an operational level how the strategic inputs materialise into tactical outputs:

Agile Marketing connects an upfront marketing strategy with the end tactical execution (i.e. content, search, advertising, social media, and so on). It provides a model for how to leverage people, processes and technology in unison to make strategies happen in a more customer-centred, responsive and effective way.

Accelerated Speed-To-Market

Why Speed Matters

Given the relentless pace of today's customers and markets, speed is everything. Yet research from McKinsey found that 58% of marketing initiatives still take more than six months to make it to market, with the average at just over eight months.

Yet, speed-to-market is crucial for modern marketing teams as:

- the advent of digital media means that customers' expectations have been set to demand instant responses and reactions from the companies and brands they engage with and buy from,

- digital has also accelerated the news cycle making speed to react and stay fresh imperative if brands are to remain relevant,

- with increasing competition comes greater pressure to be first on the market with new products; companies are entering into an upward spiral that is driven and accelerated by new offers.

How Agile Marketing Accelerates Speed-To-Market

"Agile allows us to match the clock-speed of our customers." Paul Acito, CMO 3M

Agile Marketing absolutely isn't about simply rushing to get things done quicker. Rather, it creates focus and prioritization on what needs to be done, reduces interruptions and distractions, and maximizes collaboration to solve problems and move things forward. In these respects it creates urgency and reduces friction resulting in accelerated speed. This speed needs to be controlled though –how do we execute faster when an increased tempo benefits us, whilst avoiding knee-jerk reactions and overheating churn in our strategy? It isn't about working harder…it's about working smarter! The following Agile Marketing practices are core to operating with controlled speed:

1. Collapsed planning cycles

Agile does away with traditional back-and-forth marketing development and planning processes, instead creating intense, short, time-boxed cycles, aka 'Sprints'. These usually last one to four weeks, with two or three weeks being most common. Sprints impose size limitations forcing marketing to increase both the frequency of planning and, significantly, the intensity of work. Sprints create clarity on what work is to be done in the short-term, as well as an accountability and urgency to then get it done within the timescale.

2. Putting work live sooner

Sprints give the team a short-term target for deploying work into the market sooner rather than later. With traditional marketing, campaigns and programs would be held until they were fully built-out and polished before being released. Agile favors an iterative approach of getting activities to market quickly, gaining audience feedback, and making improvements on an ongoing basis. Marketing has shifted from one-off, episodic campaigns to more 'always-on' programs which dictate continuous evolution and refinement.

3. Rapid innovation

Over time, all marketing performance will degrade as audience attention wanes, competitor noise intensifies, and the quality of new prospects reached reduces. It's imperative, therefore, that we try new things. Agile Marketing gives us the ability to rapidly experiment. The limited time windows of sprints encourages us to keep experiments small so we can quickly implement and get feedback. Working in cycles means that we're able to analyse the performance of recent experiments and then try new variations of a particular initiative or move onto something else. We're thereby able to rapidly innovate to move forward quicker with new ideas and initiatives.

The Impact of Agile Marketing on Speed-To-Market

93% of CMOs who employ Agile methods state that their speed-to-market for ideas, campaigns and products has increased – CMG Partners

Typically, Agile Marketing teams see a 600% increase in speed-to-market – McKinsey

Innovation cycles can be compressed by more than 75 percent thanks to Agile – Harvard Business Review

Why Adaptiveness Matters

The one constant in business is change. Yet, according to PwC, only 36% of CEOs believe that their marketing organisations can respond to transformative changes. This stat is even more concerning given that Forrester found that almost all marketers (96%) believe the rate of change in marketing will continue to increase.

Marketing has to therefore become more adaptive given:

- audiences and customers are growing more diverse, their behaviours more erratic, and their needs and demands more aggressive,
- markets are becoming increasingly dynamic with new entrants and disruptive offerings,
- technology is developing at exponential rates offering marketers a plethora of new tools, channels and platforms.

Adaptive to Change

How Agile Marketing is More Adaptive to Change

"Because of the volume of projects that come up in the web environment, your changing things on an ongoing basis. A way to manage those and prioritise them so you're always working on the highest value projects is very much congruent with how Agile operates." Judith Frey, VP Interactive Marketing Xerox

In a constantly shifting environment, Marketing needs to rapidly sense and respond to those changes and Agile Marketing gives us a framework to accommodate this growing fluidity. It enables faster feedback and adaptability to test and learn, reducing the risk of making heavy investments in unproven channels and campaigns, whilst it promotes rapid experimentation to uncover new opportunities. It does this through the following approaches and practices:

1. **Planning for change**
   Traditional marketing teams find themselves blindly following a plan and thereby missing opportunities to create more impactful, resonant and engaging marketing. Change is outside the plan and therefore reactionary - which comes at a cost. By contrast, Agile Marketing accommodates change systematically. Each sprint is an opportunity to learn and adapt the approach based on changes in the market. As new events unfold, the team incorporates those realities, each becoming the opportunity to provide additional value instead of an obstacle to avoid. The flexibility of Agile actually increases project stability, because change becomes predictable and manageable.

2. **Regular prioritisation**
   As part of our sprint cycles, we're frequently reviewing the work priorities of the team to ensure that they're always focusing on the highest value tasks. A central master to-do list, known as the 'backlog', is constantly cleaned and prioritised to balance the long-term strategic direction with emerging information regarding market conditions and customer demands. The backlog is reviewed and discussed at the start of each sprint giving regular opportunities to revisit plans, adapt to changing situations, and accommodate any incoming requests.

3. **Daily standups**
   One of the key rituals of Agile Marketing is the Daily Standup (also know as the Daily Scrum). This short gathering gives the chance for everybody on the team to share the status of the work they're doing and flag any hurdles or blockers that they've encountered. By surfacing this information every single day the team is able to share knowledge and ideas so they can quickly find solutions to move things forward.

The Impact of Agile Marketing on Adaptiveness

93% of Agile Marketers say it helps them to switch gears quickly and more effectively – CMG Partners

41% of Agile Marketers claim they identify roadblocks and problems sooner – AgileSherpas

Agile projects are 28% more successful than traditional projects – PwC

Attuned To Customers

Why Being Attuned to Customers Matters

A study by McKinsey found that only 10% of marketers think they are good at feeding customer insights back into their organisations to improve performance. O2's Director of Customer Experience Sandra Fazackerleystresses, "Through having conversations with customers, you can really begin to understand their challenges and how to address their pain points. Once you have created the meaning, you then need to embed the definition and ethos within the organisation." Being attuned to customers is more important than ever given:

- customers are increasingly demanding and expecting tailored and personalised experiences from the brands they engage with and products/services that they consume
- 1 in 3 customers will leave a brand they love after just one bad experience (PwC)
- by 2020, customer experience will overtake price and product as the primary brand differentiator (Walker Research)

How Agile Marketing Enables You to be More Attuned to Customers

"The power of Agile Marketing is testing every assumption and tactic every step of the way and only pursuing a direction when we have evidence it will work." Anna Guerrero, Canva

Agile Marketing places the customer voice at the heart of all activity, creating a customer-centricity that many organizations are struggling to achieve. The focus isn't on work product, but on client outcomes – is what we're producing truly impacting the customer in a positive way? To determine this, we must first create a comprehensive, relevant, and, crucially, ongoing understanding of the customer. Here are some of the ways that Agile Marketing addresses this:

1. Customer discovery

Agile Marketing emphasises continuous discovery of our customers. Customer discovery focuses on testing hypotheses and understanding customer problems and needs –with actual customers. By structuring all of our marketing as a learning exercise, we can continuously understand who our customers are, what they think, what their problems and concerns are, what they're interested in, and how we can serve them to add value. Agile marketers build customer discovery into their DNA; it's baked into all of their plans and activities to build an ongoing and relevant repository of customer knowledge and insights that is shared and accessible to all.

2. Validated learning

As marketers, we often get caught by inertia. Whether explicitly or not, we're frequently faced with the "this is the way it's always been done", or "this is best practice" mentality. We're focused on how people have always done things so we ignore the opportunities to do them differently and potentially better. Agile Marketing favours frequently running tests to validate our assumptions and find better ways of doing things. It's all about, "Did we test it? Do we have data? Do we have the right metrics?" We're able to conduct small experiments rapidly and regularly, meaning quicker results and less risk. Our past experience of what works does matter, but we should always be striving for improvements. We do this through learning backed by data which is much harder to dismiss. Agile is all about letting the best ideas win.

3. Writing 'user' stories

Agile marketing requires constant focus on the needs of the customer and creating user stories are a great way to ensure your team keeps that focus. User stories involve writing the tasks you want to accomplish from the customers perspective. They force us to be really clear about who we're looking to communicate or engage with, what their needs or wants are, and how we can specifically meet them as outcomes. The term 'user' stories is derived from software development, but it doesn't really matter whether we look at them as users, consumers, customers, clients, personas, etc. –the idea is to ground our marketing work in their shoes.

The Impact of Agile Marketing on Being Attuned to Customers

80% of CMOs who employ Agile said switching helped them deliver a better, more relevant end product to customers – CMG Partners

Agile Marketing Checklist

The advantages of Agile Marketing are clear, but to make a successful transition to Agile Marketing practices and ways-of working it's important to assess whether your business situation, organisational culture, and team are positioned to do so. Answer the following questions to see how geared you are to make the move. If you're scoring low and it looks like conditions aren't quite right, don't worry –concentrate on putting these aspects in place and then take small steps to test the waters as you embark on your Agile Marketing journey.

Business Situation

1. Does the business operate in a dynamic, fluidly changing market environment?

2. Do your customers' needs and preferences change frequently?

3. Is speed-to-market important for ideas and initiatives?

4. Internally, does marketing face a constant flood of incoming demands and requests for work from the rest of the organisation?

5. Is it feasible to break longer-term initiatives and projects into shorter parts?

6. Are you able to rapidly generate data that can be turned into feedback and insights?

7. Does marketing have the scope to try new ways-of-working to produce better results?

Organisational Culture

8. Do business and marketing leadership support moving to an Agile approach?

9. Is the business open to an experimental approach – are people able to try things and take risks without fear of retribution or ridicule?

10. Is leadership prepared to cede control by allowing the team to define their own actions in order to find the best solutions to deliver the desired outcomes and results?

11. Are marketing leaders prepared to support the team by ensuring that they have the resources, scope and freedom to deliver the desired outcomes and results?

12. Is the wider organisation open to greater cross-functional collaboration?

Team

13. Is the team made up of people with a broad mix of skills and backgrounds?

14. Can the team collectively deliver outcomes without needing external support or resources?

15. Are individuals prepared to take ownership and be accountable for delivering prioritised tasks without necessarily being assigned them?

16. Is the team empowered to make decisions?

17. Is the team open to being transparent about the work they're doing as individuals?

18. Can the team commit to consistently holding 15 minute daily meetings (in-person or virtual)?

19. Does the team have the tools to be able to constantly communicate with each other, share and collaborate on work-in-progress, and track deliverables?

20. Is the team able to get together face-to-face at least once a Quarter?

Overall Score (Out of 20): _____

Nearly one third of marketing teams report that the lack of an internal expert is holding them back from adopting Agile Marketing.

Julie Housby is a qualified, experienced Feeelance Marker providing clients with consultancy, training and coaching to get up-and-running with Agile Marketing, fast. Through tailored support, workshops, and focused coaching, Julie will give you the playbook to make your marketing more attuned to your customers, responsive to change, and overall more effective in today's rapidly changing world.

Hi – I'm Julie Housby, a freelance Marketer, Trainer & Coach. Having spent over 20 years working in traditional marketing, I understand the frustrations of drawn out planning processes, lack of responsiveness, and working in silos.

Having the spent the last 4 years working internationally in agile organisations, I experienced how Agile can be applied to Marketing and the power of Agile Marketing to unlock team potential and drive both customer and revenue growth.

Agile Marketing can be implemented in any sector. I now help clients develop their Agile Marketing approach and make the transformation to Agile Marketing through training and coaching teams.

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