

Assessing marketing for business relevance

 By [Jonathan Houston](#), issued by [HKLM](#)

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Two different Forrester reports published in 2018 ring the alarm bells for branding, communications and traditional advertising agencies.



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The first report, published in January 2018, outlines how global consultancies are changing the game for both agencies and marketers and says consultants bring skills and a model that disrupts the marketing game. The report warns agencies and marketers that they will feel the influence of consultants on the C-suite irrespective of whether they are engaging with them or not and argues that consultants are challenging the traditional role of marketers.

Consulting companies like Accenture, Deloitte and PwC have managed, in the past few years, to build extensive marketing capabilities and are rapidly encroaching on space traditionally reserved for the advertising industry. According to Forrester's research, 75% of marketers are willing to work with consultants on digital work. Even more alarming is the fact that for the first time ever consulting companies are being included in agency rankings listings.

The second Forrester report, published in August last year, warns that the chief marketing officer/agency relationship is at risk for a variety of reasons including more and more brands turning to in-house agencies; consultants swooping in to take high-margin experience technology services; advertising budgets under constant pressure; and chief information officers (CIOs) being bought in to meet company growth agendas. The report urges advertising

holding companies to re-architect their 'raison d'être' and shape distinct offerings that CMOs recognise as right for their current needs.

One of the reasons many organisations have turned to consultancies is because they battle to fully understand their own problems. Consultants are then roped in to investigate and identify the major issues and develop a solution. However, this is something organisations can do themselves as long as they are prepared to be rigorously honest and brutal in their self-assessment in order to uncover potential weaknesses.

HKLM has designed a number of self-assessment tools which allow businesses to investigate and evaluate their own strengths, weaknesses and challenges. The idea behind these self-assessments is to assist companies to be better prepared for consultants. Having completed the self-assessment, businesses will be in a better position to address those issues within their control and can safely steer incoming consultants towards the particular areas they require assistance on and are not able to address themselves.

The first two self-assessment tools to be designed by the agency include a comprehensive brand self-assessment and a customer centricity self-assessment. The most recent addition is a four-dimensional digital marketing self-assessment tool which measures four areas: a personal view; a peer view; a leader's view; and a skills assessment. The aim of the assessment is to yield iterative and replicable metrics to provide an accurate and traceable view of the marketing capability within a specific company.

The assessment provides insights in terms of where skills are lacking or are strong and allow companies to plot a level of maturity with regards to specific digital marketing skills within the company. HKLM will in due course be developing

additional self-assessment tools.

As the Forrester report so accurately points out, consultancies – with their heritage rooted in business strategy and technology implementation - have their eye “on the bigger prize of business and digital transformation” and tend to prioritise digital experiences over brand building campaigns.

The challenge for marketers, therefore, is to take control and firm leadership of their marketing efforts. The first step in asserting their marketing leadership is by ensuring they have a thorough understanding of their brand’s weaknesses, a good grasp of the brand’s stance on customer centricity and are displaying a readiness for the digital age. These steps will undoubtedly provide a good platform for ensuring the brand’s future sustainability.

ABOUT JONATHAN HOUSTON

Jonathan is passionate about the convergence of technology and marketing to solve business relevant and customer experience problems through creative strategy design and integrated implementation. As the General Manager for HKLM a strategic brand and communications agency; Jonathan's work includes strategy creation (aligning brand; customer and technology to fulfil an organisation-wide brand-led objective) through to overseeing the successful implementation and operational embedding of the solution. In 2013 Jonathan's first book "Internet Marketing for Entrepreneurs", was published and he continues to write for many leading online publications locally and abroad on a wide range of topics including culture change, technology, marketing and strategy.

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