

New role unites marketing and technology

Skills

Finding people with the right expertise can be difficult, writes *Paul Solman*

Fujitsu used to produce a print magazine for information technology executives, but the possibilities created by internet technology mean the Japanese group now targets them via its I-CIO digital platform.

“Technology has given us the ability to be very quick and personalised in reaching our customers,” says Simon Carter, the Japanese company’s executive director of marketing for the UK and Ireland.

“As big data comes alive, that ability to be able to use this great library of information and hone it down to what is important to customers will become very powerful.”

There can be few marketing operations that have not been touched by digital technology. And, as Mr Carter suggests, many are only beginning to grasp what is possible with data analytics.

Yet as the marketing operations have become

There is a shortage of professionals with that mix of abilities, recruitment experts say, and those businesses that do find a CMT are likely to have to pay a premium.

Deborah Op den Kamp, co-leader of the chief marketing officer practice at Russell Reynolds Associates, an executive search group, says there are two streams of people who are senior enough to be marketing technology chiefs but lack the combined experience that companies are looking for today.

The first group, she says, came up through the brands route and is unlikely to have been very digitally grounded, while the second started in the technology field but never had to have strong brand experiences.

“A very rare breed of person has both sets of experience,” she says.

Companies looking for technologists will be faced with people who claim they are technologists but lack the range of skills, says Ms Swan.

“You hear marketing people say, I know social media, I know technology; but they don’t understand how to use it to make decisions and for insight.”

inseparable from IT, there is evidence that the skills of marketing professionals' are also evolving to create a new kind of role which marries marketing expertise with a high level of technological knowhow: the marketing technologist.

A report this year by Gartner suggests that 81 per cent of organisations now have the equivalent of a chief marketing technologist (exact job titles vary); another 8 per cent plan to add a chief marketing technologist in the next two years.

Businesses with revenues of \$500m-\$1bn have the highest percentage of people in this role, with the high-tech, communications and retail sectors leading the way.

Laura McLellan, vice-president of marketing strategy at Gartner, sees three main advantages in having such a person.

"First, companies with CMTs tend to have better processes to decide what to investigate and test, and to decide what works.

"Second, there is so much noise from software providers offering software to marketers that companies need an expert filter.

"Third, a CMT is the perfect way to build a bridge between IT and marketing."

The problem, however, is finding the right person to do the job.

The skills of the chief marketing technologist are fundamentally different from those of the traditional marketing professional, says Mara Swan, executive vice-president of global talent and strategy at ManpowerGroup, the recruitment company.

"Traditional marketing people are left-brain, creative, extrovert; they have an idea a minute," she says. "With market technologists, you are talking about a skillset that is left-brain *and* right-brain, much more analytical."

Until the job market catches up with the needs of the chief marketing technologist role, companies will have to look at other ways to cover it.

Michael Stull, vice-president of global marketing at ManpowerGroup, says: "There are a few companies that can find this talent and pay for it. But the rest are going to need to think about investing and developing those skillsets themselves."

Some companies are appointing combined teams to do the job, adds

'There is so much noise from software providers . . . that companies need an expert filter'

Ms Op den Kamp. "You cover all those skillsets in a team, as opposed to trying to find them in a single individual," she says.

Nevertheless, Matt Beck, vice-president of marketing solutions consulting at FICO, an analytics company, says he has yet to see widespread demand for marketing technologists.

"If you take an organisation such as a retailer or a grocer, I don't see somebody who is a deep technologist aligning themselves with the marketing function," he says. "I still see them aligning themselves with the technology function; that's where they would see their career path."

And Mr Carter at Fujitsu stresses that marketing departments will still need people who have basic marketing skills.

He says: "Click-throughs and Facebook likes are easy to measure, but the question I always ask is: 'So what, how much have you sold on the back of that?'"