

# psmg



## The war for talent

**PSMG**  
A MANIFESTO FOR  
MARKETING

PSMG meets The Marketing Society

# A manifesto for marketing



**In the spring of 2005, The Marketing Society published a Manifesto for marketing – a clarion call to the marketing profession to change, improve their performance and claim their rightful place as one of the key drivers of business.**

The PSMG's co-chairs Mark King and Chris Hinze, met with Chris Macleod, chairman of The Marketing Society, to discuss the Manifesto and how it may help inspire and support PSMG members. PSMG executive director Michael Sugg chaired the discussion.

## **Why do we need a Manifesto?**

*"Business needs marketing more than ever to deliver profitable growth, but there is a view that marketers are not rising to the challenge."*

"The need for this manifesto is born out of the fact that marketing is widely misunderstood," says Macleod. "Marketing is seen as a cost, not an investment. Implementation is given more focus than strategy, and marketing people are generally seen as not being accountable. This Manifesto is a call to action for both the profession and for individual marketers."

A fact not disputed by King: "Professional services marketers would by and large agree and we recognise that not all is healthy at the moment." A fact that is perhaps reflected by the recent introduction of the PSMG professional services marketing qualification.

It is a strange paradox that whilst many businesses are valued at levels far above their underlying assets (witness the recent purchase of Gillette by Procter and Gamble for a substantial premium) there is little recognition that this added value is, according to Macleod, frequently a direct result of their marketing efforts. It is an imbalance that needs to be addressed.

## **The business opportunity for marketing**

*"Marketing has the opportunity to drive the direction and performance of business as never before."*

The professions face many different challenges and opportunities when compared against consumer marketing. "Whereas classic FMCG marketers may control the traditional 'four Ps' of marketing, professional services marketers do not," says Hinze. "However our firms have the one thing every FMCG company would kill for – a one to one relationship with the customer."

And the drivers of customer expenditure are also different. "Many accounting or legal purchases could be seen as a regulatory-driven or similar compulsory purchase," says Hinze. "The statutory audit, litigation services, or even insurance cover, can all be seen as compulsory purchases – where the customer makes a choice about the service provider rather than the service itself. Increasingly the big ticket work is going to a select few."

"For a particular size or type of company, either they or their advisers or investors tend to require certain professional services to be provided by a member of the Big Four accounting firms or 'magic circle' law firms," adds Hinze. "These clients are buying basic hygiene factors – assumed quality of service, a perceived reputation for having a 'safe pair of hands', geographic spread, and breadth of services able to be provided. Differentiating in that environment becomes hard, and is ultimately based on the people skills and behaviours of the practice professionals."

But the basic premise remains says Macleod; marketing should be driving business growth. "Structural factors can all too easily be used as an excuse for not having developed distinctive brand positionings that have a compelling logic and appeal in the market place; perhaps being controversial, this might reflect a weakness in some professional services marketing."

## **The challenges for today's marketers**

*"Marketers are not currently perceived by many CEOs to be up to the challenge. ... they are perceived to be inflexible and arrogant, lacking the discipline and capabilities to drive profitable growth."*

"A number of mid-tier and smaller firms are currently recruiting marketing professionals at the board level. These firms are facing the strongest pressures in the market place – in terms of having to focus on a limited range of services, the ability to be distinctive in the market and to continue growing or preserving their profitability – and this is where marketing can play a key role," says Hinze.

"The bigger firms face a different challenge; that of consistency of the range of services they provide, delivery methodologies and absolute quality levels around the world. They have to be able to speak to the client with one consistent voice. Again a marketing issue, but where the lines between CRM, branding and other marketing disciplines become increasingly blurred," adds Hinze.

"It becomes more about the brand," adds King, "and this is where marketing needs to get out of its narrow confines and start working with HR and the management teams. It is about people, not putting out another brochure or press release, and it's not easy. Whereas every Twix bar is the same, every lawyer or accountant is different and that presents a real challenge."

Buying patterns remain quite conservative in professional services, bought largely on reputation, personal relationships and chemistry. Technical ability whilst important is often an assumed given. "This represents a classic opportunity for branding," says Macleod. "And this is where marketing ought to have the ability to understand and reflect this to those making the pitch," adds King.

### A new role for marketers

*"Marketers must become customer champions, business innovators, and growth drivers."*

"I believe we are seeing a polarisation of the skill sets being deployed in professional services marketing departments," says Hinze. "Some firms want people to manage tenders. Others are saying they want account developers who come from the same industry as the client and can speak their business language. The generic marketing person is starting to disappear in favour of teams of different specialists who are led by a senior marketer with a solid strategic view and understanding of the business needs."

"The Manifesto is also trying to encourage marketers to take a broader business view," says Macleod. "Marketers are often too focused on implementation and whilst this will always be important, we also need to be seen as a source of consumer insight and strategic growth opportunities if we are to command influence at the most senior levels in firms."

However the right to be heard has to come from somewhere, as King explains. "Implementation will often give you the right to advise on strategy."

### A new style of marketer

*"...marketers will need to behave in new ways and develop new capabilities ...business requires marketers to be more accountable, collaborative, and commercial."*

"Marketing people need to make themselves more visible externally and then they will become more visible internally," says Hinze. "Credibility is important in professional services and for marketers to have a voice in their own market in their own right can create a halo effect internally if managed properly."

King agrees, "People buy people and the same principles operate both inside and outside an organisation. Those who have a profile outside their own organisation offer a degree of comfort to those internally. But we are not talking about self aggrandisement."

"I would also suggest that marketers learn how their firm and sector works; learn their language, the pressures they face in terms of firm economics and service delivery and stop talking 'marketing speak'. Start talking on their terms," adds Hinze.

In concluding the discussion it is clear that marketers whether from FMCG or professional services, need to wake up to the challenges facing the profession. If marketers cannot change, then there is a real danger that they will become an increasingly isolated and irrelevant function, with businesses looking to other disciplines more willing to accept the challenge and accountability for business success.

