MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
Working Group

RECAP

November 4 - 5 | Washington, DC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marketing and Communications professionals from Council member firms gathered last week at The Council's Marketing & Communications Working Group to discuss the importance of the client experience. As marketing teams across all industries take ownership of driving the customer experience, the goal of this meeting was to have a dialogue at a bigger, more strategic level because marketing needs to leverage all client touchpoints. How do we do that? "So much of marketing is about having a vision," said Council President/CEO Ken Crerar in his introductory remarks. "One of the things our industry has not done well in the past is marketing and telling our story. There is a huge opportunity for all of you to use marketing to better understand your clients and the questions you need to ask about your clients."

PARTICIPANTS FIRMS

Twenty (20) participants from the following member firms were in attendance:

- Assurance Agency, Ltd.
- BancorpSouth Insurance Services, Inc.
- CBIZ Benefits & Insurance Services, Inc.
- Flood and Peterson
- Frost Insurance
- Gehring Group, Inc.
- Harden
- Heffernan Insurance Brokers
- INSURICA
- J.W. Terrill, Inc.
- Kraus-Anderson Insurance
- Lockton, Inc.
- M3 Insurance Solutions, Inc.
- Marsh & McLennan Agency LLC
- Murray Securus
- RCM&D, Inc.
- The IMA Financial Group, Inc.
- The Plexus Groupe LLC

THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: BEST PRACTICES

> **"A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is—it is what consumers tell each other it is."**
> *– Scott Cook, Co-Founder, Intuit*

Company success is determined by how you engage with your customers. A recent Forrester Study identified four pillars of the Age of the Customer:

1. Turn big data into business insights – what does the information mean?
2. Transform the customer experience – marketing is playing a bigger role
3. Embrace the mobile mind shift – it's no longer "digital marketing" – it's just "marketing." If you're not digital by now, what are you doing?
4. Accelerate your digital business

Participants shared examples of ways in which their marketing teams are having an impact on their customers' experience. There was discussion around brand experience and personal interaction – rethinking some of the things they do with their clients and how they can strengthen those relationships.

Highlights

- Client portals with a library of resources/central hub that collects and uses data to identify which tools, resources and information may be of interest based on what pages they've visited in the past
  - Some best practices shared: building a mobile version of the portal, producing short videos in-house to add to their library, rolling out their portal with a test group prior to full client launch (Resources: EPIC, CSR24)
  - Highlighting "Great Place to Work" brand and running client workshops to demonstrate/ educate on best practices as to how clients can create this environment in their own firms
- Quarterly client surveys, conducted by an independent third party, to glean a baseline re: client experience and to show the life cycle of the client relationship. Cost was offset by some seed money from carrier partner.
- Providing media training for clients
- Seminars and webinars on a range of topics to show off expertise
  - Video Recording of all seminars – creating a library of online resources
    - – Programs deliver CE credits, HR credits, CPA credits, Dept. of Insurance credits
    - – Marketing develops materials, produces events, helps subject matter experts develop content
- Community/Foundation work
  - Client-facing themed events, with some social and mainstream media pick-up
  - Digital billboards connected to social feeds
- Custom greeting cards for employees to send to clients
- Some firms have already mapped their buyers' journeys. Some firms are beginning to look into mapping the customer journey to enhance the experience.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A REVENUE GENERATOR AND BRAND DIFFERENTIATOR

> **"Your brand is a story unfolding across all customer touch points."**
> *– Jonah Sachs, Author & Entrepreneur*

Beth Ruoff, a branding expert and a leader in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) presented to the group on sustainability and CSR as a revenue generator and brand differentiator. CSR, according to Ruoff, is a business approach that "delivers value for its investors, customers and employees; improves the living standards of its employees and the communities it touches; makes wise use of its natural resources and treats people fairly."

CSR has become one of the many areas that can help you engage with your clients. Regardless of what you call it (it often falls under the guise of corporate citizenship, strategic philanthropy, business responsibility, etc.), it's critical that your customers are at the heart of everything you do. CSR can be anything from philanthropic efforts to the strategic integration of products. The key is measuring your efforts and marketing it well to clients and prospects.

Why CSR?

- Enhances reputation and builds trust
- Helps attract and retain employees
- Allows you to differentiate your firm from your competition
- Builds long-term relationships
- Reduces operating costs
- Reduces regulatory oversight
- Increases revenue – if all of the above happens, it will ultimately increase company revenue

Ways to Enhance the Experience

- **Be visible in the CSR community** (e.g., “Great places to work”)
  - Join a CSR organization
  - Seek third-party endorsement
- **Strengthen the sell**
  - Leverage your customer’s CSR terminology, definition and goals
  - Your products can help them deliver towards those goals
  - Your knowledge and resources can do “double duty”
- **Leverage existing programs**
  - Turn your initiatives into measurable case studies or corporate advertising (impact numbers, demonstrate your commitment to the environment, for example)
- **Measure and benchmark with a credible partner**
  - Impact
  - Turn products into case studies
  - Philanthropic partnerships – find opportunities to measure
- **Be on top of “issues of the day”**

TOP OF MIND CHALLENGES & BEST PRACTICES

> **“Get closer than ever to your customers. So close that you tell them what they need well before they realize it.”**
> *– Steve Jobs, Apple Co-Founder*

Participants discussed their top challenges, including, but not limited to, experience with technologies and different workflow systems, as well as identifying new opportunities to enhance profitability for their firms.

Highlights

- **How do you handle working with producers to acquire new business and sell?**
  - Conduct producer interviews to better understand their targets and needs. It’s not helpful to hear about one-off brochures they want, it’s about listening to their objectives and presenting them with a plan.
  - “Marketing Champions” – Once a month, the champions inform the Marketing & Communications team of the firm’s needs, providing feedback and driving a unified message
  - Many efforts to connect sales and marketing teams; sales leaders need to be M&C ambassadors
  - Start with year planning with the producers/exec team – align their goals with the long range marketing plan
  - From a data perspective, identify all digital interactions and engagement from prospects and create marketing opportunities with producers to re-target

- **How do you handle presentations and last minute RFP requests (which take up a lot of M&C time)?**
  - Build templates and materials for employees to draw from
  - Train administrative staff to master the templates and issue them accordingly

- **How are you growing your marketing team?**
  - Cut out freelancers and hire full-time in-house talent to accommodate needs. Cuts down on turnaround time
  - In-house M&C specialists embedded within a given specialty niche
  - Need for more analytical talent. Anticipating a shift in marketing’s role in driving revenue
  - One firm created an Innovation Committee (pulled from various disciplines)

Highlights *(continued)*

- **How do strategic goals align for the company (in terms of working with IT)?**
  - Who owns what? What is in the IT domain? What is in the M&C domain? What happens when IT is making decisions on the technology that marketing uses?
  - Strategy needs to be set together. If the goal is to improve the client experience, then the internal team needs to get that strategy, and it's marketing's job to make that happen.
  - Who owns the user experience and whose job is it to make it a directive so everyone cares and client experience is better?
  - User experience needs to be valued

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

> **"When you start with what's at stake for the buyer, you earn the right to their attention."**
> *– Jake Sorofman, Gartner, Inc.*

The Council's Joel Kopperud and Brittany Thune Lindberg spoke with the group about the importance of building relationships and educating Members of Congress, and how The Council's political action committee, CouncilPAC, plays a role in those efforts. Kopperud and Lindberg also discussed the 2016 election and which party is positioned to control the Senate.

Advocacy Issues:

- Cadillac Tax – 40% excise tax on health plans, to be implemented in 2018
  - Repealing this tax is The Council's #1 priority issue
  - Lots of momentum around a repeal, but hurdles still remain
- Employer-provided group marketplace – our goal is to preserve it
- Easing employer reporting requirements
- FATCA
- PAC update
  - CouncilPAC raised more than $1 million in 2015, making it the top insurance trade PAC this year
  - Together, all members of The Council have their finger on the pulse of Congress

KEY THEMES AND PLANNING FOR NEXT WORKING GROUP

February topics for consideration included refining marketing plans to get to the next level (six months from now, five years from now); how to brand M&C to the rest of the firm; and how M&C is becoming (or how it CAN become) a strategic component to the overall growth of the firm. Will we see the role/model of producer changing (and will marketing influence that model)?

Save the Date

The next Marketing & Communications Working Group meeting will be held during The Council's Legislative & Working Groups Summit, **February 8-11, 2016**. In the meantime, be sure to stay in touch with the group on Basecamp or contact Susan Rushford directly at susan.rushford@ciab.com with any questions.