

conversations on leadership

The Talent Innovation Formula for Transformational Marketing

*By Kristi Maynor and Sarah Van Dyck
Egon Zehnder*

Any good marketing team reviews its spending mix. But what about its talent mix?

Too often, successful companies stall because they've failed to keep the proper talent mix in their marketing teams. But what is the right balance between traditionalists and change makers? In our experience, we've found the formula used by innovation leaders can also create a marketing talent blueprint. By adopting this innovation framework, companies can better ensure the placement of the right talent to drive transformational change.

The Talent Innovation Formula: 70/20/10

This well-known recipe guides marketers in the allocation of innovation funds: Spend 70% of the budget on proven tactics, 20% on tactics proven successful in other organizations and 10% on true innovation – never-before-seen projects.

In our experience, this formula represents the marketplace of marketing talent today.

- **70% are “The Perfect Performers.”** These are individuals with a solid track record of success. They are performance oriented and they manage risk well. They’re often an immediate culture fit when they arrive on staff.
- **20% are “The Mavericks.”** These are individuals driven by a combination of passion, purpose and performance. They are adept at working change “on the edge of the rules”. They’ll take calculated risks and likely have at least one big failure behind them (but have made up for it with a couple of huge wins). Mavericks have a knack for drawing followers because there is an excitement and thrill to the work they lead.
- **10% are “The Creative Sparks.”** These are the true instigators. They are idea-oriented. They hate being in any kind of box and they thrive on personal risk. Rules? What rules? They follow their passion even if that doesn’t perfectly align with their business. Their career history and work style could generously be described as “spiky.” These are the revolutionaries in our midst, but they aren’t always the easiest to integrate into a large multinational organization.



conversations on leadership

While the optimal balance isn't the same for every company or business situation, it is something you should seek to align to your company's transformation goals.

Many established companies have a healthy stock of Perfect Performers. After all, the bigger the company the more important it is to show steady performance while managing big risks – and that is the Perfect Performer's specialty. However, often these companies fail to recruit the right number of Creative Sparks and – most especially – Mavericks. In fact, integrating this talent into an organization dominated by Perfect Performers can be difficult as they are often viewed as culture mismatches. As a result, the transformation strategy may stall since there are few voices on the marketing team generating the transformational (and high risk, high reward) ideas while building internal support that might help jumpstart growth.

The Impact

In watching major companies navigate the challenges of growth and transformation, we can see many of them putting this theory to work.

A large complement of Perfect Performers is often a sign a company has arrived. As a general rule a startup is spurred by a Creative Spark, someone who sees the world with a completely different lens. The early partners are often Mavericks who enjoy the high risk, high reward potential. Yet as a business scales, they benefit by bringing in more of the Perfect Performers who can help them scale in a more consistent fashion. We have witnessed this as the likes of Google and other tech companies have recruited dozens of senior marketers from the big consumer product companies, and in return these leaders have brought tremendous insight on how to scale consistently.

That said, Perfect Performers can't do everything. We can see that in the story of a major CPG client. The company was big yet had stalling growth. They had mostly Perfect Performers and knew they could benefit by looking outside its organization to hire a few Mavericks who could bring in new ideas for their stalling brands. Adept at managing change within a large organization, the new marketing leaders brought both passion and purpose to the brand. That in turn brought new energy to the organization's turnaround.

While these companies have delivered big growth by balancing their talent mix, others have not. Broadly speaking, the CPG and Retail category has fallen into this trap. Marketing ranks across the industry leaders are filled with Perfect Performers who are a great and reliable pair of safe hands to steward the brand forward, yet today they are being challenged by hundreds of startups led by Creative Sparks and Mavericks. This imbalance of talent inside the industry leaders keeps the companies from generating the game-changing innovations that can move them forward.

conversations on leadership

For companies seeking to break this pattern, the key is to make the distinction between the types of marketing personalities and know how to recruit them. For a leading firm full of Perfect Performers, the mandate will be to keep them in the majority, but diversify their ranks by crafting an environment that will be attractive to these additional talents. Creative Sparks are looking for a job that aligns with their passion. They want a chance to do something big rather than incremental. Meanwhile, Mavericks want to see a pattern in your company of people who have been rewarded for risk-taking. They'll want room to run and a job that moves them up the food chain (rather than a lateral move). Since the Maverick is often the bridge element who will connect the Perfect Performers to the Creative Sparks, they are in high demand and the hardest to recruit.

Crafting the right marketing talent mix takes intention and effort. But without the balance, you risk missing out on the transformation sweeping your industry. Let the math of innovation be your guide.

Authors



Kristi Maynor

Dallas

Kristi.Maynor@egonzehnder.com

+1 972 728 5935



Sarah Van Dyck

San Francisco

Sarah.VanDyck@egonzehnder.com

+1 415 963 8520

Since 1964, Egon Zehnder has been at the forefront of defining great leadership in the face of changing economic conditions, emerging opportunities and evolving business goals. With more than 440 consultants in 69 offices and 41 countries around the globe, we work closely with public and private corporations, family-owned enterprises and nonprofit and government agencies to provide board advisory services, CEO and leadership succession planning, executive search and assessment, and leadership development. For more information visit www.egonzehnder.com and follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

Amsterdam	Madrid
Athens	Malmö
Atlanta	Melbourne
Bangalore	Mexico
Barcelona	Miami
Beijing	Milan
Berlin	Montreal
Bogotá	Moscow
Boston	Mumbai
Bratislava	Munich
Brussels	New Delhi
Budapest	New York
Buenos Aires	Oslo
Calgary	Palo Alto
Chicago	Paris
Copenhagen	Prague
Dallas	Rio de Janeiro
Dubai	Rome
Düsseldorf	San Francisco
Frankfurt	Santiago
Geneva	São Paulo
Hamburg	Seoul
Helsinki	Shanghai
Hong Kong	Singapore
Houston	Stockholm
Istanbul	Stuttgart
Jakarta	Sydney
Jeddah	Tel Aviv
Johannesburg	Tokyo
Kuala Lumpur	Toronto
Lisbon	Vienna
London	Warsaw
Los Angeles	Washington, D.C.
Luxembourg	Zurich
Lyon	

© 2018 Egon Zehnder International, Inc.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise — without the prior permission of Egon Zehnder.