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The Walt Disney Company claims to be doing intensive research to learn more about its target market, allowing it to take advantage of growth opportunities globally. Disney corporate officials say they are committed to staying up to the tone with the technologies children use, with the shows they watch and how they incorporate technology into their lives. For example, Disney offers discounts for advertising on Twitter and games on Facebook. She makes sure his licensed characters like Mickey Mouse and Spider-Man advance toward new platforms. Demonstrating its leadership in marketing to reach children and families, Disney in 2006 announced that it would be able to reach children and families. The phone used GPS capabilities to allow parents to control who their children communicate with and track where they are. It's part of Disney's strategy to be relevant to the modern family lifestyle. Disney is also continuing to appeal to teenagers and their parents by staying up to date with digital games and opportunities on social media, such as the acquisition of online board game leader Playdom Inc. According to small business strategist DEMC, Disney recognizes that many people don't have the opportunity to travel to the United States to visit Walt Disney World or Disneyland. As a result, Disney has developed theme parks around the world to conquer the market, adapting them to local cultures. They include Disneyland Paris, Tokyo Disney and Hong Kong Disneyland. By expanding around the world, Disney aims to increase its market and expand its brand. Disney's ownership of media networks such as ABC, Disney Channel and ESPN is a strategy the company uses to market its brand to Americans. This includes systematic access to television advertising, as well as radio advertisements, print, outdoor advertising and mobile initiatives, promoting discounts on resorts and family packages. To reach teenagers, Disney has launched advergaming, which puts ad messages into online and video games. The goal is to reach out directly to children and encourage them to appeal to parents to visit the Disney park for a family experience. As part of its marketing strategy, Disney believes in innovation to stay ahead of the competition and build a business. With rapid advances in technology, traditional passive television audiences are in transition, no longer trapped in prime-time schedules on major networks. Disney's strategy is to connect with children directly through storytelling using multiple technologies. While they all sound the same, interactive, digital and online marketing is unique. But what makes them different? We often use them interchangeably, and this can cause confusion. Each marketing area requires a knowledge base for different products and different strategies. Interactive marketing refers to a marketing strategy that encourages active participation between consumers and marketing campaigns. This term often refers to a fast-growing shift away from a one-sided customer for a two-way chat. Interactive marketing is becoming a trend due to customer demand for a better online experience and improved internet technology. Customers want the company to know who they are as individuals, not as a demographic or just a number. For example, every time a customer signs up to a company's website, a person may want to see their name displayed along with product interests and communication preferences. Interactive marketing gives users the power to receive and give up-to-date, minute-by-minute feedback on a particular business or product. When you think about interactive marketing, a great example is Amazon. Amazon is known as the biggest trailblazer in this marketing area. The company collects and stores information about customer search and purchase behavior. It also remembers customer names, provides suggested reading sections for book searches, suggested products based on past shopping behaviors, and consistently seeks customer feedback on items they've purchased. Digital marketing is a marketing campaign that takes place using a digital platform. Digital defines the media used to deliver a campaign. Digital marketing could easily be considered and explained as a push/pull marketing technique. If you're not familiar with marketing campaigns, it's your advertising blitz to sell your service or product. The push part allows you to get in touch with consumers and inspire them to buy your service or product. There are many ways to achieve pushing. You can use technologies such as instant messaging, text messages, content marketing, podcasting, mobile marketing, and email. Also, there are many marketing tools that you can use such as pay-per-click, search engine optimization (SEO), and even online banner advertising. The pull technique occurs when consumers take the initiative to locate your business through online digital marketing search. For example, they can do a search online using your name. Users then establish a link through your website, where they can easily contact your business or track your business. For example, they can sign up for text messages, streaming videos, emails, newsletters, or podcasts on your site. So you're pulling in, or attracting, customers. Internet or Internet marketing is a marketing campaign that requires an Internet connection. This marketing technique allows you to reach customers, conduct research and sell your product or services online. For example, you can promote your company's message. The definition varies depending on how it is used. A domestic business person can refer to this marketing as an online sale. However, if you have a website, you can call it blogging – writing articles or placing banner ads on other websites to drive traffic to your site. It is important to note that there are many for online marketing such as web marketing, online marketing and website promotion. Pages. Balance Small Business uses cookies to give you a great user experience. By using Balance Small Business, you agree to our use of cookies. Marketing literature is full of research and analysis to help managers devise market-friendly marketing strategies. Yet when it comes to implementing these strategies, literature is silent, and self-help books ring hollow. What top management needs in the 1980s are not new answers to questions about strategy, but increased attention to marketing practices, to the roadmae of good marketing management that steer smart strategies towards successful market results. The purpose of this article is to explain and help diagnose and solve the problem of marketing implementation, catalogue common problems of translating marketing strategies into management acts and recommend tactics to increase the efficiency of marketing practices. Examples and conclusions are drawn from a three-year clinical research program I conducted to initiate a course on marketing implementation at Harvard Business School (see insert for details of this study). The data for this article originated from a course development project and marketing implementation research. Although I'm still conducting research, I've compiled 35 case studies on marketing practice issues to date. All examples in the article, with one exception, are drawn directly from these cases. They cover different sizes and types of companies. The cases fall into the four structural categories I cited in the article. Some cases illustrate lower levels of functional marketing problems, such as how Hertz can pull out of its no mileage, ever price scheme, if that becomes appropriate. Others show problems at the program level, concerning a synergy combination of marketing functions in order to market a particular product or sell a special segment. Key account management cases are a major concern here. There are cases of marketing systems, in which management is problematic or concerned about information that has (or does not) be available to guide and control marketing efforts. There are cases of marketing policy directives, formal or informal policies by which management tries to target all marketing results. I have collected many such cases on marketing topic and leadership. One of the reasons I started a course on marketing implementation was that top executives often complained to me that newly minted MBA's are generally big strategists, but I can't arrange a three-car funeral when it comes to executing marketing plans in the field. The results of teaching the course for three years indicate that effective performance in marketing can be taught. The results of the research project show that marketing practice is as valuable to the detailed attention of management and academic study as the formulation of the strategy. It's always easier to think about smart marketing but to operate under the constraints of companies, competitors and customers. Consider a pipe company that invented a new type of triangular tube 180% more efficient than the existing line, which needs only two-thirds of the material. Based on value to users, the new vice president of marketing wanted to appreciate the new tube highly. However, he feared that a lack of support from other top managers, the company's marketing systems and sales forces would hamper his strategy. Everything three generations of managers have learned about doing business in this market, all that the company is, he complained, seems to have conspired against being able to properly introduce this innovation. What to do — a marketing strategy — is clear to this vice president: price by value, encouraging cannibalization of existing lines, and making a profit. It is problematic how to achieve a strategy – marketing implementation. This family-owned company typically produced pipes in large quantities and sold it in a low-margin non-grogy market. The company started each year with high margins, but due to competitive pressure and the need to keep its facilities in capacity, it ended up cutting costs in the heat of the sales season. Plant managers are paid on the basis of the manufactured pipe per minute. The sales forces thought in terms of reducing list prices to stimulate orders and secure commissions. Top management has encouraged this commodity-oriented culture by setting a budget with high fixed costs and maintaining a measurement system designed to track the selling price of each unit of raw material, not the pipe itself. The vice president was rightly concerned that simply declaring a high price on a new pipe with fiat or even building an innovation marketing program would be ineffective in combating an entrenched and commodity-focused way of doing business. As this example suggests, problems in marketing practice have two components: structural and human. Structural includes the company's marketing functions, such as pricing and sales, as well as any program based on these functions, all control systems, and policy directives. The second component is the people themselves, the managers in charge of carrying out the marketing work. Strategy or implementation? Marketing strategy and implementation affect each other. While the strategy clearly affects actions, execution also affects marketing strategies, especially over time. Despite the blurred line between strategy and execution, it is not difficult to diagnose marketing deployment problems and distinguish them from strategy flaws. When the sales force of a 50-person computer terminal sells only 39 new lines of the company's smart microcomputers during a sales blitz that predicted sales of more than 500 units, is the problem with sales force management or with the strategy a move to smart machines? The question is responsible. Intense competition erodes margins on your old stupid terminals. In addition, the smart terminal category is expected to grow by more than 500% during the 1980s. The new product, a portable microcomputer with a built-in printer and memory, has many advantages that target market values. But since sales reps already earn an average of more than $50,000 a year, they have little incentive to fight an unknown new product. Management also inexplicably set the fee for incentives to sell on new machines lower than on older ones. Finally, old terminals have a half-to-new sales cycle and don't require software knowledge or support. Here is a case where poor execution stifles a good strategy. The exhibition shows how marketing strategy and implementation affect each other. The computer example falls within the lower left cell of the matrix and illustrates an important rule on strategy and implementation: poor implementation can mask a good strategy. As the exhibition shows, when both strategy and implementation are on the upsues, the company has done everything it can to ensure success. Similarly, when a strategy is inappropriate and implementation is poor, implementation gaps can mask problems with the strategy; not only is failure a likely result, but such failures will be particularly intractive due to difficulties in identifying the cause of the problem. Proof Marketing strategy and diagnosis of implementation problems When a strategy is appropriate, but implementation is poor or vice versa, diagnosis becomes tricky. Poor marketing performance can cause management to doubt even healthy strategies because they are masked by the inadequacies of implementation (the lower left cell of the exhibition). As the computer company example suggests, management can accelerate market failure if it then changes its strategy. I have marked such a situation as a problematic cell on the matrix because poor performance hampers the confirmation of the correctness of the strategy and can cause unnecessary changes. When a strategy is inappropriate and performance is excellent (top right cell), management usually ends over time to recognize and fix its strategic errors. Good branch bosses, for example, have been known to change potentially disastrous HQ directives. Indeed, some companies that are known for excellent marketing performance, like Frito-Lay, expect such modifications from their managers. But at other times, good execution of a bad strategy acts as an engine on a plane in the nose – it accelerates the crash. Since it is difficult to predict the result of an inappropriate strategy along with good execution, I mark this cell as rescue or ruin. Two points stand out from this analysis to help managers diagnose marketing implementation issues. First, poor performance seeks to mask both the suitability and inadequacy of the strategy. Therefore, when they are unsure of the causes of poor marketing results, managers should look to marketing practices before Customizations. By carefully examining how the issues, the implementing ones, can often identify the culprit for execution responsible for problems that are seemingly strategic. Structural problems of marketing practice In his book Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Robert Pirsig proposes a catalogue of pitfalls that can sap mechanic determination for quality work. He tells, for example, how a five-cent bolt holding an access cover in place can, if stuck, make a $4,000 motorcycle worthless, and a mechanic a frustrated wreck heading for genuinely grave mistakes. Like mechanics, managers need a catalogue of pitfalls in marketing practice. In the following sections, I take the problems and pitfalls of each level or place in the structural hierarchy of marketing practice: functions, programs, systems, and policy directives. I then discuss the implementation skills required of those involved in marketing. Functions: Fundamentals Marketing functions include sales, store promotion and distributor management. These low-level tasks are foundations, blocking and dealing with marketers. Nevertheless, I have noticed that most companies and their managers have great difficulty with these tasks. Often the difficulties stem from a failure to realize marketing fundamentals in any decisive way, such as when one CEO suspected that the company's show expenditures were a good marketing communications device, but he continued to approve $1 million each year thinking the company had to be there. Although the traps inherent in each function are worthy of a separate article, there are some management problems that are common to everyone. Marketing functionality issues generally outsma set out issues at the marketing, system, and policy level. Managers usually have trouble managing sales forces, managing distributors, or pricing moves. When functions go wrong, this is often because HQ simply assumes that the function in question will be performed well by someone else, elsewhere, and thus ignored until the crisis intervenes. At one company, for example, management decided to offer low prices with correspondingly low price list discounts. However, in enacting what it thought was a good pricing move for its line of graphics computers, management failed to take into account how prices were implemented. The pricing scheme that resulted in no one satisfying as customers proved their effectiveness by the size of the discounts received. Thus, the problems of implementation at the level of functions are caused primarily by incorrect managerial assumptions or, as they say in the sports world, not looking after the ball. As might be expected, this disease is more prevalent in large operational units, where administrators have functional specialists to rely on, than in small ones. Another cause of problems with the marketing function is a structural contradiction. Very promising start-up with $600,000 in revenue after careful consideration, expand your domestic distribution network by setting up – at great cost – your own sales offices. The purpose was to control his distribution channels. For international distribution, however, governance was torn between the need for control and insueveration with international markets. The conflict was heightened when a potential foreign partner said it would guarantee a $30 million sale. Management was confused. Her policy dictated that foreign channels should be owned, but implementation was beyond its means. Cash flow needs eventually seduced the company into deciding indirect foreign distribution, with a different partner and arrangement in each country. The overall result was a complicated patchwork of direct and indirect distribution, which thin queues of executives could not handle. Management's attempts to balance the contradiction between preferred control policies and the distribution structure at a functional level have been ineffective and have led to conflicts among company executives and foreign distributors. And the third cause of the problem is when head office fails to select a single marketing function for special concentration and competence and instead takes pleasure in doing an adequate job with each - what I call global mediocrity. Officials thus expand resources and administrative talent democratically but inefficiently. Usually prices, advertising, promotion and distribution functions are satisfactory, but no function is outstanding. The best companies have an object to handle one or two marketing functions and are competent in the rest. No marketer is good at everything, but the saddest concentrate on outstanding work on several marketing functions. Frito-Lay is an example of a company that has perfected two functional skills – sales and distribution – to such heights that they serve as the marketing basis of the company. Gillette's personal care department creates advertising science. Both of these companies allocate resources, often unequally, to maintain competitive overeminance in showcase functions. Programs: A real combined A marketing program is a combination of marketing and nonmarket functions, such as sales promotion and manufacturing, for a specific product or market. Marketing programs are the basic reference point for marketing practice analyses; of these, it is possible to look below at functions consisting of programmes or upwards on systems and policies that direct the implementation of programmes. At the program level, management strives to combine marketing and nonmarketing functions in an attempt to sell a specific product line or penetrate the target segment. Managing all aspects of the Silkience hair conditioner line is an example of a marketing program; so is managing the company's key accounts and their special needs. If the functions are to block and resolve execution issues, marketing programs are a manual that shows how customers will court and Confused. A computer vendor, for example, wanted to install a national account program to better serve its small but growing number of key accounts. The supplier recruited a highly respected national account manager from another company, gave him a secretary and issued a presidential mandate to draw up a key account program. How exactly could this be done? Perhaps the manager should try to create a dedicated national sales force with headquarters despite the side risks that competition with the vice president of sales, its supervisor, entailed. Or was he better off working in point capacity through the company's sales manager, not trying any coordination of sales or services other than simple interfunctional persuasion and with different risks with the customer base? The art of mixing functions into programs is poorly understood at best, often left to learning at work through trial and error. One common programming problem stems from what I call empty marketing promises, stemming from the introduction of programs that are either contrary to the company's identity or are beyond its functional capabilities. The computer graphics company she was involved on had previously made a generalized piece of computer equipment that served all segments of the industry, but most of the customers were small users with one page. Indeed, with the exception of its national account manager, every implementing measure and policy directive targets the company to small customers. Unlike many companies that get 80% of their revenues from the largest 20% of customers, this company received only 30% of its revenue from its large accounts. In short, the company's national account program was contrary to what the company was founded in marketing. The program was an empty promise internally and to the market. In another case, the country's largest private label bulb manufacturer decided that it had to give its bulbs a brand name and put them on grocery shelves to premeditae others from attacking its profitable main business. The company, which specializes in industrial lighting products, had no experience in consumer marketing or advertising and only a little in important retail areas such as store promotion. Nevertheless, he created project shopping cart. After spending several million dollars to design a new display and packaging for light bulbs, and even more to sponsor sporting events and hire a multitude of light bulb brokers, management has lost 0.3% in two years on the market. Marketing functions in this industrial and generic-oriented company were unable to deliver retail blocking and addressing that headquarters simply assumed that it would be there to implement its well-conceived program. The second error in execution at the program level is the one that I term rabbit marketing. This does not stem from a functional inability to carry out a programming plan, but from a lack of top management. One heavy production production He was constantly frustrated that he came out late with new products in an industry where spare parts stocks and operator loyalty give the first supplier a significant advantage. One of its products, a machine for special mining conditions, came out almost two years after entering the tender. HQ has kept its thin development engineering staff busy with a spate of engineering projects, some for processing machines already in the field, one to come up with a prototype automatic machine under government support and the other to design a new machine. In short, the abundance of programs had no focus because it stemmed from a bad sense of what the company was and what it had done. The presence of many smart marketing programs — a great playbook — is often associated with deployment issues. This is because when there is no strong sense of marketing identity and direction, programs tend to go in all directions. Such bunny marketing results in diffusion of effort and random results. Systems: Bureaucratic barriers Marketing systems include formal organization, monitoring, budgeting and other layers that encourage or hinder good marketing practices. Systems can be as simple as voice telecommunications or stacked as profit accounting. Of the systems at lower organizational levels, the most tame is the reporting and control of the sales force. Of the ubiquitous systems, those engaged in the allocation of marketing resources and those who help management track results are bugbears in all but a few companies. Especially in smaller companies, distribution systems cause many problems; control systems do more damage. Other types of systems, as well as staff and formal organizational structure can also be problematic, but managers can usually bypass these barriers by practicing their execution skills. The three problems that usually occur at the system level are errors of ritual, politicization and unavailability. Ritual errors occur when the company's systems run it along normal paths, even when good judgment dictates a different direction. With one concrete manufacturer, the marketing control system relied on a measure of residual plants. When the backlog was low, sales forces beat the bush for jobs no matter how marginal they were, appraisers (who control prices at construction companies) shaved the margins, and everyone from the CEO down became nervous. When the backlog was high, reactions were the opposite. As a consequence, a low-margin business undertaken in bad times hampered the company when it sought high-margin business in better times. When the President accepted proposals for a new sales control system to address the problem, he established new forms and reports, but refused to either modify the management of the backlog or approach job profitability as a means to more efficient segmentation and sales. The problem of politicization is never more evident than when looking at reporting on sales control systems, in particular call reports. Sales managers often cough up their call reports to match their biases. Even more dangerously, call reports can completely lose their intelligence function and instead become a device with which to punish sales reps who hand over inappropriate ones. However, the politicization of the system is in no way limited to sales controls. In one case, departmental management at the equipment rental company decided to report to headquarters that its new pricing scheme would increase unit revenues by 11% and margins by 13%. It neglected, unfortunately, that the rental equipment would become obsolete a year before headquarters planned! The final and most pervasive problem of the system is unavailability. That is, some systems designed to make the life of line officers easier simply do not. In all but a handful of companies I have studied, for example, financial accounting and sales accounting systems can only be called perverse in failing to meet marketing requirements. It would be expected that in today's data-oriented companies managers could make projections based on a detailed analysis of the results. However, few executives have any idea about profitability by segment, to name one element. Less common are still good profitability numbers per product, and only once have I seen a system that allowed profitability to be calculated on an individual account. Instead, managers are treated with incomprehensible, foot-thick printouts of non-aggregated data or told in response to their demands that accounting will not give them to us in this way. The inevitable result is a kind of bell-jar environment in which it is impossible to make healthy decisions. Policies: Spoken and unspoken At the broadest structural level of marketing practice, there are policy directives. While policies cover the spectrum of administrative activities, here I focus on two particularly important marketing enforcement policies: identity policies — those related to what a company — and orientation policies — are about what it does. By policy, I don't just mean verbal or written statements; indeed, some of the policies that are most important for good marketing practice are unspoken. Identity problems are most often political difficulties and, paradoxically, occur more often in mature ones than in young business units. Marketing theme and marketing culture are two terms I use to capture the strong but often unspoken sense of common purpose that the best enforcers have and others don't. The topic and culture convey the company's identity policy. A marketing topic is a vague but significant term that refers to management's shared understanding of marketing purposes. In one company, some executives perceived themselves as at the forefront of commodity suppliers, and the only hope for the future is blue-sky research and development projects. Others are that the company's key attribute is in baseline differentiation. Managers have consistently functioned in line with their understanding, and the result was a confused and ineffective marketing effort - a sales force that thought its headquarters gave it contradictory signals, a divisive store and unhappy customers. By contrast, the management of another company and the entire 10,000-person sales force could recite (with conviction): We are the main supplier of snack foods in this country. Our products are great. But we only have two seconds to get to the supermarket customer, so we live or die at the service. A common understanding of management and continuous strengthening (through compensation, training, etc.) of this topic, simply though it sounds, has promoted extremely effective sales performance and consistent customer reactions. It is tempting to dismiss the idea of fostering a common understanding of the company's marketing theme as a vague and insignificant idea. A test of your executives' perceptions on the subject may raise concerns. To run this test, write one sentence describing the marketing essence of your business. Then let your key men do the same. The results are usually as common as they are shocking. Marketing culture is a broader idea than a topic. While topics can often be verbalized, culture is a fundamental and usually unspoken social network of governance. Subtle but strongly channels the behavior of managers into comfortable rut. Culture can be clearly viewed from things like dining room conversations and the motto that management puts on walls. For example, when I asked managers at one company why they were planning a $700 million addition to the plant to support a new product line that market research suggested would require only one half of that capacity, the vice president of marketing replied: We don't see much point here in a chinning on the curb. Direction policies apply to both marketing strategy and leadership. While the marketing strategy is outside the scope of this article, leadership deserves attention as a key aspect of implementation. It has become fashionable in corporations to blame shortcomings in practice on culture. It is arguably true, however, that some top marketing managers are top leaders and others are not. The first inspire us with their desire to get out in the field; they are smart in designing simple and effective tracking methods, and their understanding of customers is powerful. Others are much less effective as leaders, immersed in complex conceptualization or unwilling to leave their leather chairs for the market; they are inspirational only as models of what their juniors hope not to become. The quality of marketing leadership has a more far-reaching effect on the quality of marketing practices. Indeed, of the business units I noticed that they had low-caliber leaders, none had high-quality marketing practices in general. Whether a strong theme and culture is brought about by the charisma of a person at the top or orchestrated through memoranda is irrelevant. The (song) the question is whether these intangible identities exist, or who we are, and direction, or who we are, as powerful, albeit immeasurable forces imposed on the observer in the same way that pervades the company. Gap Bridging: Execution skills Up to this point I analyzed the motorcycle without much attention to the mechanic. Indeed, the primary reason good marketing practices occur is that managers often use their personal skills to replace, support, and sometimes quietly bring down inadequate practice structures. I call this replacement of personal skills for a weak structure a subversion to quality. Poorly functioning formal marketing systems are often patched up when managers using them use informal organizational skills. Similarly, informal monitoring programmes are often created to obtain data that cannot be checked by the control system, and budget redistributions are often designed to prevent formal policy constraints. Managers bring four execution skills to a marketing job: interaction, assignment, tracking, and organizing. Interaction Marketing business by its very nature is one of the influences on others inside and outside the corporation. Inside, there is a regular parade of peers over which the marketer does not have the power to impose preferences; instead he has to strike horse trades. Externally, the marketer deals with a multitude of helpers, including ad agencies, consultants, manufacturer representatives and the like, each with an agenda and a grinding axe. I have noticed that those managers who show empathy, that is, the ability to understand how others feel and have good negotiating skills are the best enforcers. Assigning enforcers must divide everyone's time, tasks, and other resources among the marketing jobs to be done. Able managers don't have a false sense of egalitarianism or charity, but they are firm and honest in putting people and dollars where they will be most effective. Those less able routinely set aside too many dollars and people for mature programs and too little for riskier and amorphous programs. Tracking Using tracking skills, a manager can do the most to reconstruct degraded corporate information and control systems. Good enforcers struggle and wrestle with their markets and businesses until they simply and strongly express the back-of-the-envelope ratios needed to run a business, regardless of the shortcomings of a formal control system. Poor enforcers either blithely wallow in industrial clichés or get carried away in phenomenal and often quantitative complexity that no one understands. The general manager of a company with 38 plants and 300,000 customers, for example, led everything he considered pivotal to notes on two three-by-five inch index cards. In contrast, the company's sales manager about a hundredth of that size generated hand-truck computer prints per month in his supervisory heat, then let them age like cheese. Organizing good enforcers has an almost incredible create an informal organisation or network anew to match any problem they face. They know someone in every part of the organization (and beyond) who, based on mutual respect, attraction or some other tie, can and will help with any problem. That is, these managers are reconstructing the organization to suit the marketing work that needs to be done. They adapt their informal organisation to facilitate good execution. Often their organization and formal have little in common. Good practice in marketing Marketing administration is problematic in all but a few companies, and management adequacy is often limited to several functions or programs within the marketing discipline. Nevertheless, some of the companies in my sample have shown a truly excellent marketing implementation, and some simple but important characteristics appear from them that distinguish good marketing practice: In the best companies, there is a strong sense of identity and direction in marketing policies. There is no confusion and little disagreement among managers over who they are. Furthermore, leaders are strong and capable. There is, indeed, clarity of subject matter and vision. The best enforcers continuously appeal to customers, including trade or distributors, in several unusual ways. Customer concern is an entrenched part of the culture and is always highlighted in the theme of the best enforcers. Interestingly, distributors are also seen as customers, and management has the main goal of maintaining partnerships with both distributors and end users. I call this behavior a for-profit partnership with a broad definition. I have not found that good enforcers are less profit-oriented than the poor; Contrary. Nevertheless, managers who are the best at executing especially make sure that end-users also profit in terms of true value for the money they spend. Profits from trade in more traditional ways, with dollar margins, but also benefits from being seen by good enforcers as key accounts. Companies less competent in implementation never form a partnership with these two key marketing constituencies or, worse, lose the focus they once had. In the best organizations, management is able and willing to mistake their own skills for flaws in the formal structure. United Parcel Service speaks with some pride of regional manager who took it upon himself to untangle a misdireed shipment of Christmas presents by hiring an entire train and diverting two UPS-owned 727s from their flight plans.1 When top management learned of his actions, he praised and rewarded him. Culture supported the manager's replacement of skill for the structure, but the regional manager was also combatively prepared to defend his judgment. Finally, in the companies best engaged in execution, top management has a markedly different view of both the marketing structure and the managers than the bosses in Company. In the best companies, without exception, the importance of executives dominates the importance of the execution structure. That is, marketing (and other) managers are key accounts of top management and are treated with latitude not found in other corporations. Top executives at companies that are good at marketing encourage their followers to challenge and overshoot them because it's not always possible for those at the top to be right. Those who are poor at squeezing constantly feel a tendency for policies and structure to become religions, causing the administration to lose its flexibility in times of change.2 This process can be characterized as a common theme of good leaders, poor followers. Top managers in the best companies also take a different view of the marketing structure. They tend to foster a philosophy of distributing extravagance with program pickiness in marketing investments. It is not always easy to get new programs approved by these managers, but the plans that are supported are staffed, funded and otherwise fully supported to increase their chances of success. Full support for fewer sound marketing programs seems to give these officers the critical mass they need for programs to work in good times and bad and limit risk to the company. This approach worked well for one business jet distributor I studied, who weathered the recession of the early 1980s in much better shape than her more program prolific peers. Again, in the best companies, management concentrates on one or several marketing functions that encourage and nurture a competitive difference through expertise. When combining a strong theme and culture, program pickiness, and function-level concentration, the conclusion that emerges is that companies best at marketing performance drive reliability at the top (policies) and at the bottom (functions), not on glaring in the middle (programs). When all is said and done, quality in marketing practice is not a guarantee of good market results. There is too much luck, competitive jockeying and perversity of customers hoping for that kind of predictive accuracy. Instead, good marketing practice means skillfully using the skill to deal with inevitable enforcement crises that cloud strategies for managing clients and intermediaries. Individually, such threats are not much to fear. Collectively, they're killer strategies. Killers.