

Observations on Strengthening Digital Capability

Chapter 1 Increase Impact Through Integration

Chapter 2 Focus Content Strategy and Activation

Chapter 3 Strengthen Multichannel Analytics

Integrating marketing communications is hard—and that’s not a new concept. But with the rising prominence of digital channels, the issue of integration has gotten more complex. Many marketers have embedded digital tactics into broader marketing campaigns, but continuously optimizing connections between digital tactics is territory that many companies only recently are charting.

This chapter will explore different observations for how companies are approaching digital integration. But first, it will look at how the nature of integration is changing with the declining importance of distinct campaigns and the rising need to continuously manage your digital presence or “footprint.”

This chapter may be of particular interest if you identify with any of the following:

- Digital tactics are treated like an afterthought in campaign planning.
- I feel much of our online presence isn’t being managed in a coherent way.
- The two halves of search performance—paid search and organic search—are managed entirely separately .
- We are increasingly recognizing that our organizational structure is not designed for the emerging realities in digital marketing.
- We know we waste resources when we fail to identify and take advantage of potential synergies between communication channels.

The Changing Face of Integration

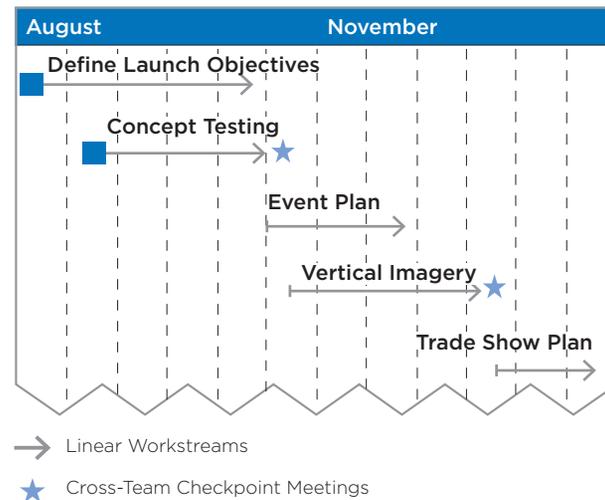
Unified management of an organization's digital footprint increasingly requires continuous, real-time collaboration at the tactic level.

Today, digital integration can be divided into two concepts: integrating tactics into the development of broader marketing campaigns and then continuously monitoring and managing your digital presence or footprint in a unified way (including corporate website, social platforms, blogs, search, communities, and potentially paid search and online advertising).

Campaign integration typically involves adhering to a rigorous process of short, contained periods of collaboration punctuated by large, consensus-based decision-making meetings. In contrast, unified management of your digital presence increasingly requires collaboration on small decisions continuously over time (Figure 8). Many companies have begun to appreciate this new paradigm for integration of their digital footprint, with more companies opting to reshape their organizations to better support it, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

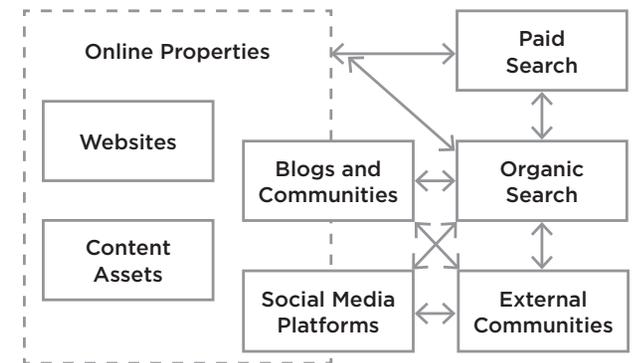
Figure 8: Two Distinct Aspects of Managing Integration of Digital Tactics

Integrating Digital Tactics into Campaign Planning



Management framework highlights checkpoints for collaboration on key decisions across tactics within a given campaign across time.

Integrating Ongoing Management of Your Digital Footprint



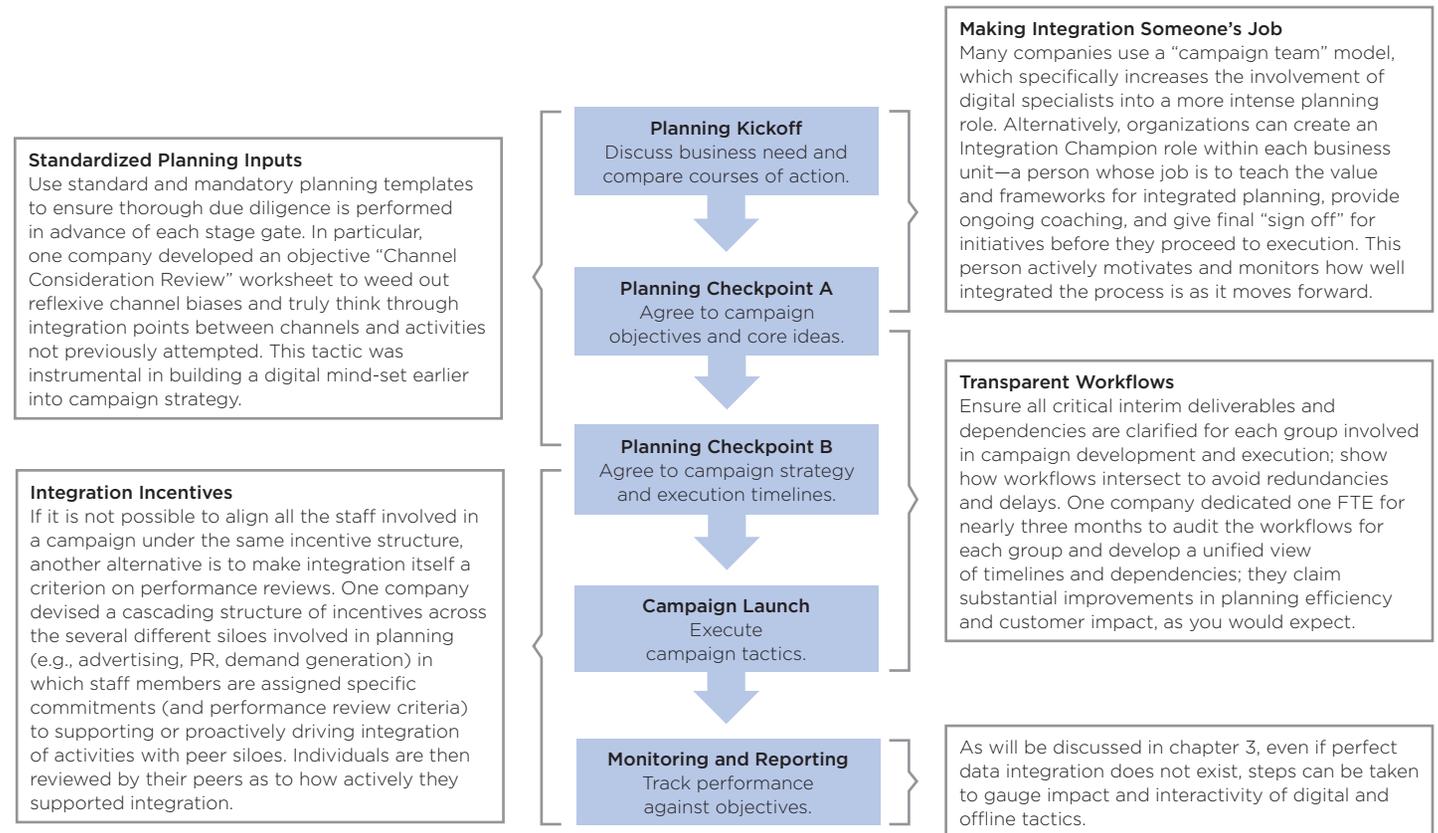
Management framework highlights points of interaction that require sustained collaboration on many small decisions continuously.

Integrated Campaign Planning

Although still challenging, progressive companies have developed ways to promote integration of digital tactics into stage-gated campaign planning processes (with clearly defined “checkpoints” where relevant specialists come together to hash out and reach consensus on specific decisions). The practices we found effective for boosting integration in a campaign-planning process are highlighted in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Progressive Practices in Improving Campaign Integration

Based on Observations from Several B2B Organizations



Standardizing Campaign Architecture

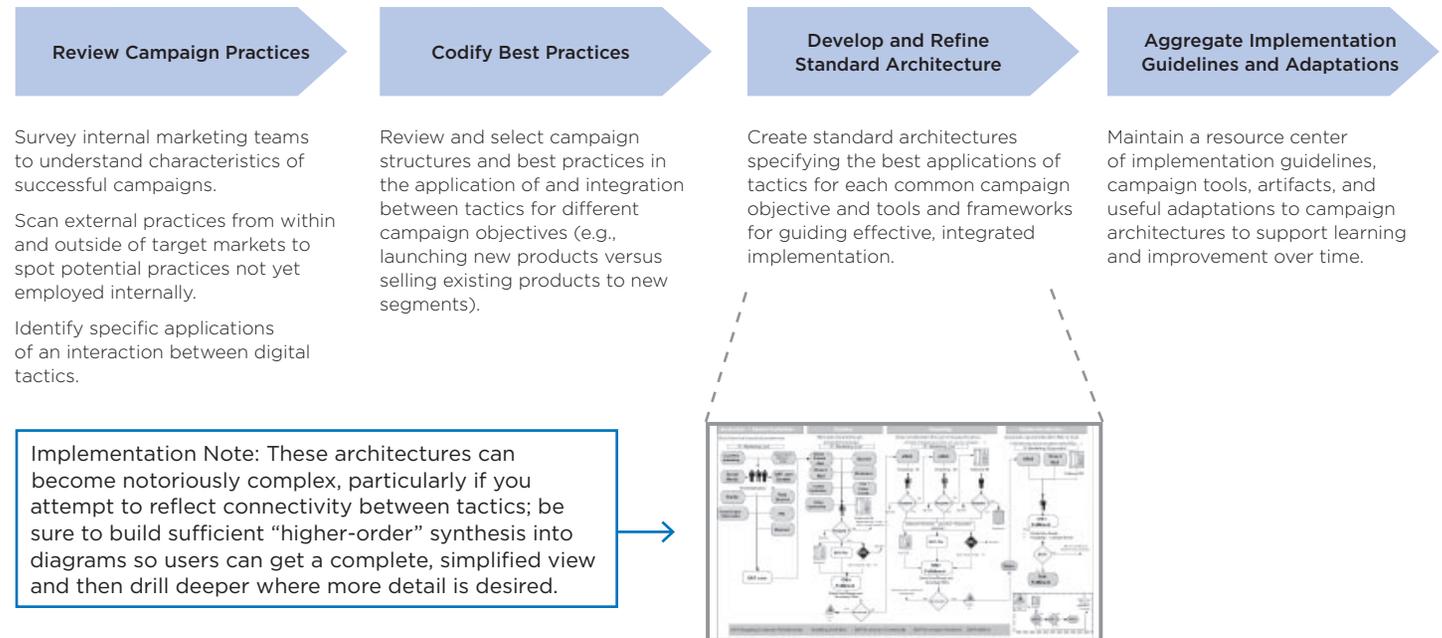
Leading marketers are improving integration by documenting and standardizing proven campaign architectures, making explicit the most meaningful applications of and connections between tactics.

To improve integration, B2B marketers are documenting and standardizing proven campaign architectures and identifying connections between tactics as well as their most meaningful applications (Figure 10). For many commonly experienced marketing scenarios (e.g., generating awareness and demand for a new product) effective campaigns are likely to reflect similar principles and marketing tactics. Compared to the relatively open-ended campaign planning processes discussed on the previous page, formalized campaign architectures can be effective for ensuring up-front integration of digital tactics.

This practice is especially prevalent among marketers who have recently implemented a marketing automation platform (MAP). Any vendor or consultant will tell you that “without the process and buy-in from all relevant stakeholders, a MAP implementation will likely fail.” Most organizations seem to heed this advice. In fact, planning for the implementation of a MAP motivates many marketers to go through and map out an integrated demand generation program architecture for the first time—end-to-end, from early stimulus through to sales management. Going through this process naturally reveals several points where integration can be enabled, mandated, or automated in the pursuit of shared objectives and goals.

Figure 10: Process Overview for Development of Standardized Campaign Architectures

Based on Observations from Several B2B Organizations



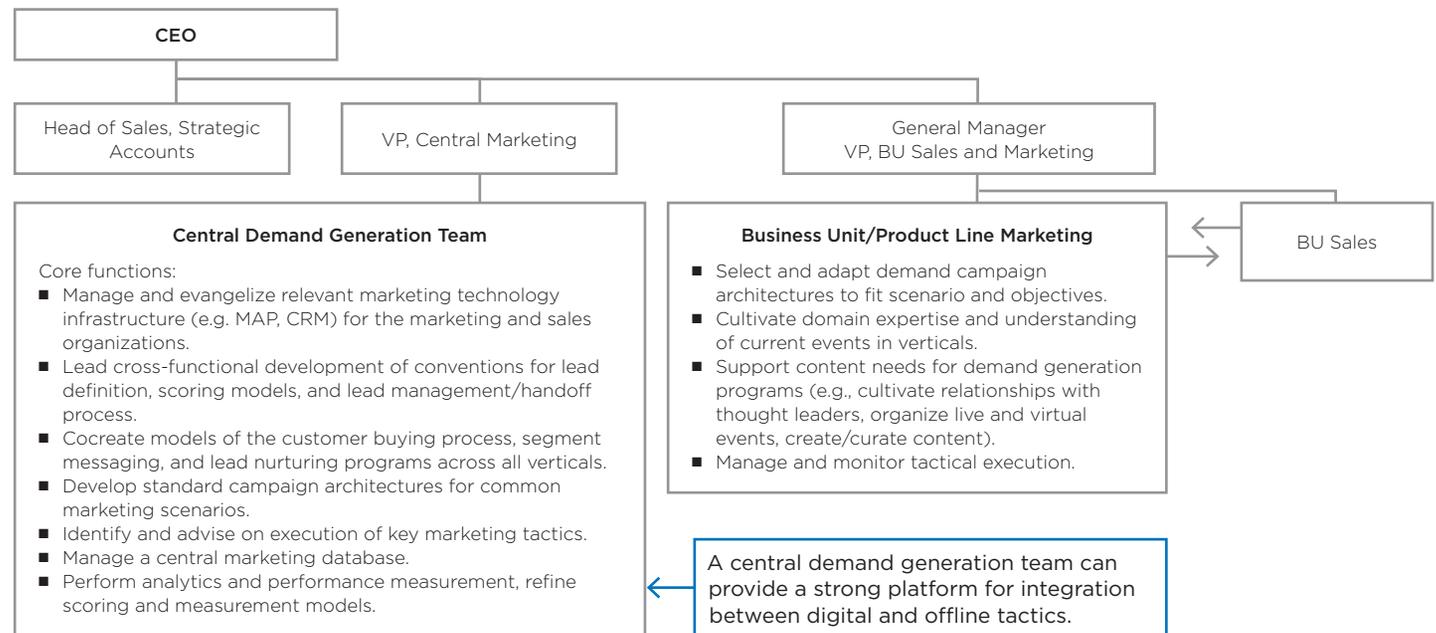
The Rise of Central Demand Generation Teams

Some organizations have made significant structural changes in the name of integration, including forming centralized demand generation teams.

Some organizations have opted to make more considerable structural changes, creating a unified demand generation team that seeks scale and integration across campaigns (Figure 11). Although companies commonly build central teams to cultivate expertise in particular tactics, such as paid search (as discussed earlier), this type of team structure is notably different; it looks to integrate multiple tactics with the demand-generation process and infrastructure. This structure is focused on a process (rather than a tactic) and maintains a strong influence on everything that goes into that process—from technologies to planning frameworks to implementation and performance monitoring. In terms of integration, this team can provide a large boost not only within marketing but also between marketing and sales activities. This path forward makes sense for a lot of B2B companies.

Figure 11: Composite Model of a Demand Generation Organizational Structure

Based on Observations from Several B2B Organizations



Campaigns Are Only Part of the Integration Picture

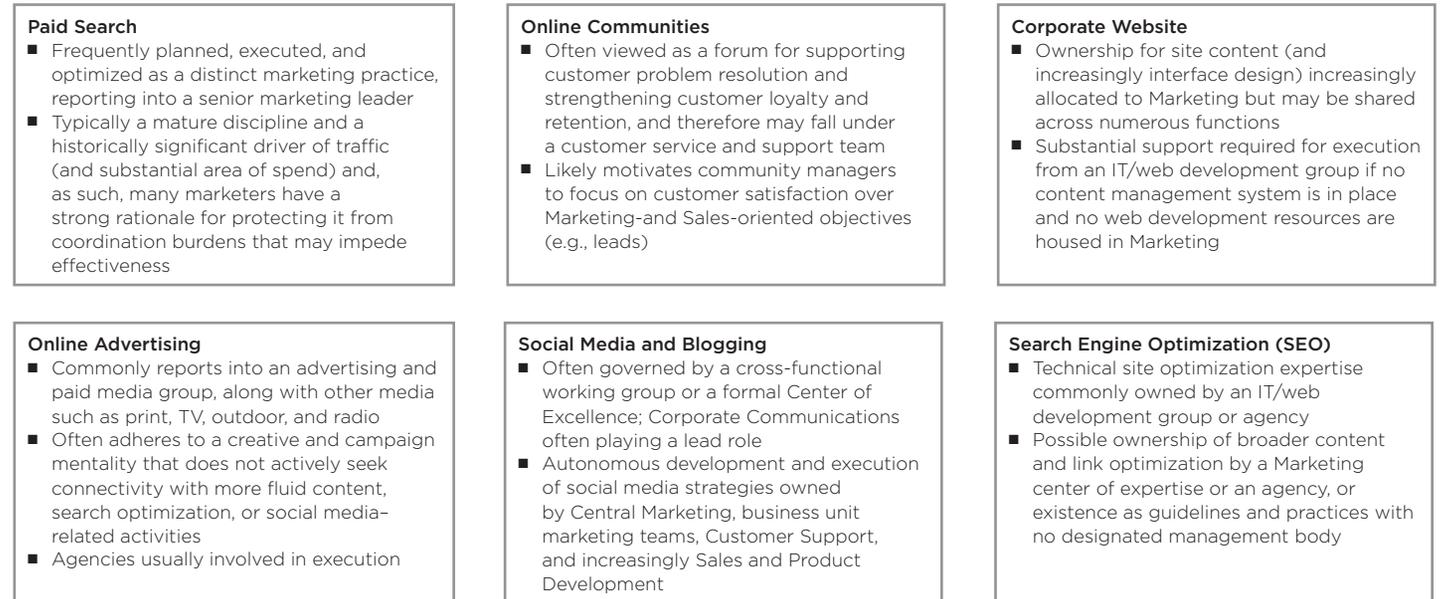
Shaping and maintaining a digital footprint requires continuous, interactive management, which is difficult to achieve with current organizational siloes.

The concept of integrated communications extends far outside the bounds of the campaigns. Today, the various “always-on” channels that make up your digital presence or “footprint” (including websites, social media accounts, search results [organic and paid]), online communities, events, and digital content) require sustained attention and maintenance. You can corral various siloed groups to collaborate on individual campaigns, but shaping and managing a digital footprint requires more continuous, interactive management than most organizational structures can support.

It is rare among B2B companies for all key digital teams to be united under a single individual who can be held accountable for ongoing, collective performance. As one executive put it, “No one is going to get fired if all these pieces don’t work well together outside of a campaign. It’s very easy to point a finger at someone else.” And in many cases, the finger is most easily pointed at an agency partner that is notionally “in charge” of integrating a disjointed marketing organization (but without being in a strong enough position to actually do so). Summarized in Figure 12 are observations in how digital tactics are managed at many mid-spectrum companies.

Figure 12: Trends in Ownership Model for Digital Tactics

Based on Observations from Several B2B Organizations



Moving to a More Integrated Structure

A few executives shared their recent efforts to connect previously siloed groups in charge of their digital footprints. Highlighted below are case snapshots of two companies that have recently taken steps in this direction.



¹

Alpha Company pushes for a more holistic approach to managing search engine performance and coordinating digital tactics:

Scenario—The VP of Digital Marketing for Alpha Company, commented on the substantial progress they have made beyond their former “meeting minimum requirements” mentality toward digital. Nowadays, digital proficiency is viewed as a distinct source of competitive advantage, and Alpha Company’s business units are actively experimenting and learning from each other to achieve greater collective scale and impact. Centrally, Marketing takes responsibility for competency building in certain key scalable activities, including their recent effort to establish a more holistic approach to search engine performance. When they “developed a website, it went through SEO best practices, but that was the extent of it. There was no ongoing maintenance. SEO was very much a non-entity.” Paid search, on the other hand, tended to get buried under the more campaign-driven advertising and media group. To help advance more active management of their digital presence, they sought a structural solution.

Action—In a significant step forward, Alpha Company separated out paid search and partnered it with organic search to consolidate responsibility for Alpha Company’s presence on all major search engines. This group now serves as the management hub for search, coordinating all relevant agencies as well as with the social media team, the commercial content team, and agency partners to manage online traffic acquisition more holistically and continuously. “We’ve gotten to the point where accountability for ongoing search performance is more concentrated in one group, with stronger coordinating mechanisms across the other teams affecting our digital presence,” the VP of Digital Marketing claimed, adding, “It’s not complete integration yet, but we are moving in the right direction.”



¹

Beta Company pushes for an “ecosystem” approach to structuring and managing digital tactics:

Scenario—The head of Marketing, Web, and Social Media at Beta Company, described her organization’s origins as having a predominately social media and community focus. Her team was initially comprised of specialists responsible for supporting relevant blogs, social media platforms, customer forums, and cultivating relationships with experts and influencers within their assigned market segments. However, recognizing the growing overlap of digital tactics, Beta Company sought to consolidate dispersed digital responsibilities into a unified group.

Action—Motivated to redefine management of digital channels to more of an “ecosystem model, rather than as distinct pockets of activity,” Beta Company gradually consolidated ownership for social media and communities, all of Beta Company’s websites and their search optimization practice, which had previously been located in the IT group, as well as the paid search practice, which had previously been located in the paid media group. The new team continues to refine an integrated and continuous management framework that breaks from the typical campaign mentality and supports sustained action over time.

¹ Pseudonym.

Continuous Collective Management

EMC marketing organization has progressed far along the path to integrated and continuous management of digital tactics, as detailed below.



Scenario—Capability and responsibility for digital tactics were distributed across several groups within EMC. But growing recognition of the need for tighter integration—to support more effective campaign execution and continuous engagement with EMC’s active and digitally savvy customer-base—sparked a substantial restructuring effort.

Action—Todd Forsythe, VP of Marketing for EMC, sums up their current focus as “trying to blur the lines between the marketing tactics, and develop high-quality engagement across interactions over time so it feels like one consistent experience.” To reflect this new mentality, EMC underwent a substantial restructuring, significantly expanding the scope of the marketing group. All customer communities, social media operations, website and search optimization were consolidated into the central marketing group, along with paid media and paid search. EMC also established a new Marketing Sciences group, which is primarily responsible for data quality management, modeling and analytics, and supporting learning and optimization efforts. This combined structure (totaling about 25 people) provides substantial interconnectivity in the management of digital tactics that, although not impossible in the old structure, is proving far more efficient and productive.

At the center of the new structure is an integrated listening platform, which provides the primary basis for monitoring changes across EMC’s digital presence and supporting continuous, collective management. Paid search, site optimization (SEO), social media, and community managers all work from listening center data to understand key trends and define action steps within their domains (e.g., by shifting keyword bids, updating onsite content and meta-tags, refocusing keyword density in new blogs). The result is a relatively fluid digital footprint that responds to changes in customer perceptions and interests, helping EMC optimize impact.

The listening center also supports individual interventions where required (e.g., a customer issue or a specific sales opportunity is identified through the listening center). Marketing may respond directly in such situations or involve EMC’s Inside Sales team, which plays a lead role in converting potential leads identified through digital channels into qualified leads for the sales force (known as their Social Selling program).

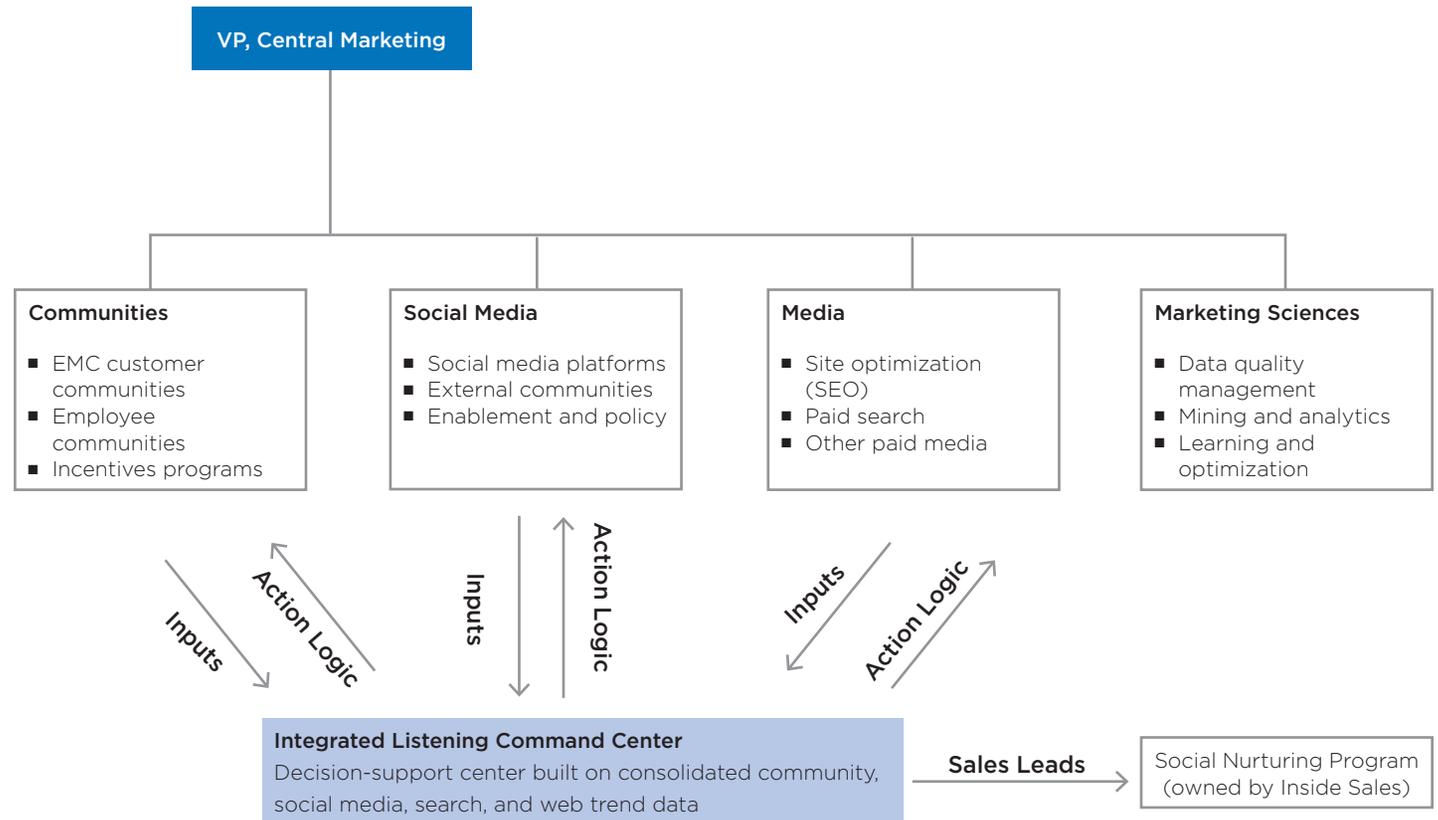
Impact—Todd estimates that Marketing’s new structure and integrated listening system is helping to reduce the acquisition cost for new inquiries by about 30%. The new structure is essential in EMC’s move to a more continuous engagement model—blending digital and live interactions—that has helped to extend its impact in key markets while containing costs. Todd believes the new approach is a major step forward in their evolution, saying that what they’re aiming for “isn’t really about tactics, it’s about community engagement...creating an evergreen environment, across platforms, in which customers can connect and learn.”

A Collectivist Approach



Figure 13 highlights the key elements of EMC’s new operational model for integrated digital management.

Figure 13: EMC’s Integrated Marketing Group



“[EMC is] trying to blur the lines between marketing tactics and develop high-quality engagement across interactions over time so it feels like one consistent experience.”

Todd Forsyth
VP Marketing
EMC²

Integrating for Impact

Key Findings from This Chapter

- Companies still struggle to integrate digital tactics deep into broader marketing campaigns, but there are a few key points of leverage (such as pushing to mandate an objective “Channel Consideration Review” early in the process) that can help weed out reflexive channel bias, opening the door for digital influence.
- Armed with past performance data and evidence from external best practices, a growing number of marketers are pushing to develop standardized campaign architectures, which offer a strong platform for promoting the best applications and integration points for digital tactics.
- Increased digital marketing efforts demand continuous and collective management, something few companies are designed to support. The value destroyed by this misfit approach—although hard to quantify—is potentially very large. Several companies are taking steps to restructure as a result.

Recommendations

- Review your campaign planning process and look for opportunities to apply the practices outlined on p. 14; in particular, seek ways to hardwire a consideration of digital tactics earlier in the planning process.
- Evaluate several campaigns with similar objectives and identify a reasonable opportunity to develop a standard architecture for your teams to align to. As noted on p. 15, be sure to look not only inside your own organization’s past campaigns and performance data, but seek out industry and outside of industry campaigns as a reference for new ideas and best practices.
- Take a few hours to exhaustively sketch out the various activities shaping your digital footprint and compare that back to the organizational structure and processes accountable for managing those activities. Then identify all of the specific areas where you could be potentially “leaking” or losing potential value by not executing in a more coordinated way. Chances are there are several low-hanging fruits for improving integration (e.g., a more frequent or intense coordinating mechanism between SEO and social media) as well as some larger battles (e.g., relocating paid search from the media team to an integration search performance team). Consider tackling a small one and pushing a large one this year.

Take the Online Diagnostic

As a part of this research, we created a tool to help you gauge alignment and integration among different facets of digital marketing and determine areas where value may be “leaking.” Do you want to benchmark yourself against your peers? At the site for this research there is a tab labeled Self-Assessment that provides information and access to the survey. You can also participate in the self-assessments for the other chapters of this research.

<https://www.cebglobal.com/marketing-communications/digital-evolution/digital-integration.html>