



Take a look at current trends, and you'll see why global marketing leaders have one of the most difficult jobs going today. That's because marketing – the way companies create customers and enable sales -- is being turned on its head like never before. Metrosexuality is in. The nuclear family is going away. High-income groups are spending on 'anti-luxury', and vice versa. Connectivity is dramatically increasing transparency – and placing a premium on authenticity. People are being empowered to have more choices – and having the technology to enforce them.

To truly succeed in this brave new world, marketing leaders are going to have to adopt a global brand CEO mindset. Because the question is not whether to go global, but how to do so most effectively. Yet, typical corporate structures provide them with no control over local marketing teams who are expected to deliver top-line growth. Uncoordinated resources and 'secret' regional projects go hand in hand with insufficiently resourced global projects that strike at the heart of a brand's global competitiveness. The results are often increased market research costs as global marketers find local marketing colleagues 'checking' that the global mix will actually deliver in their countries. Local marketers often feel misunderstood and even disenfranchised by global marketers, who may be perceived as lacking understanding of the local market reality and have no P&L accountability for actually landing initiatives in real markets.

Effective global brand CEOs are those who have succeeded in rising above these challenges. More often than not, they have done so by committing to a five-step process in which they connect, inspire, focus, organise and build deep marketing capability across the board, around the world.

Over the past seven years, EffectiveBrands' ongoing Leading Global Brands project has provided a fact-based foundation for our work with global brand leaders on improving the effectiveness of their global marketing machine. The project includes contributions from more than 135 global brands, 1,350 global brand leaders, and a database of results from over 13,500 global marketers.

Our experience is that new global brand leaders are typically quite comfortable developing the 'what' of global marketing: insights, innovation and communication. However, we have found that what keeps many global brand leaders awake at night is the challenge of global leverage—the 'how' of global marketing: working with local marketers on executing a single global brand strategy, enabling global marketing team alignment, improving speed-to-market and sharing brand expertise across geographies.

Understanding One Another

To connect and develop crucial interdependence between global

INCREASING MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS IN TODAY'S GLOBAL ECONOMY



by
ROXANNE AQUINO
and **DAVID SHAW**

and local teams (each of whom feel they know what's best for the brand), local teams must first be convinced that their market success is what drives the global team's work. Global teams, meanwhile, must understand that looking for similarities rather than differences has become the local groups' prevailing mindset.

When Starbucks' former VP-Marketing Karin Koonings first joined Starbucks' international team in 2004, she found that their local marketers around the world were unimpressed by global efforts; mostly because they were clueless about them. Ms Koonings' first order of business was to connect personally with regional and local teams to listen and determine firsthand their challenges and opportunities. She then briefed her teams to better connect with international markets via regular personal visits, telephone calls and new 'immersions' at corporate and regional offices. After that, connecting disparate markets was taken a step further by promoting a virtual exchange program among employee partners.

Internal Communications

After connecting, you must inspire and energise passion around the brand. Behind every successful global brand is the gem of a universal insight that attracts consumers, and has the power to inspire all who work with the brand around the world.

From the insight that only 2% of women in the world felt comfortable saying they were beautiful, Silvia Lagnado, former global brand VP for Dove, developed a mission to forge a stronger emotional bond between Dove and women based on the insight around building self-esteem – and started at the very top to focus Dove's global brand priorities in order to win big. She masterminded the creation of a video clip to represent the inspiration for the brand – and boldly played it to Unilever's board of directors. The film showed children while the narration talked about their negative self-image as a result of the messages our society transmits about beauty. But here's the thing: The talent featured in the film were the children of Unilever's board members. At the end of the showing, there wasn't a single board member who did not believe devoutly in the cause that Dove was about to embark on.

Ms Lagnado went further. She dramatically reduced company's innovation projects globally from 400 to fewer than 20; and consolidated five distinct regional business plans into a one-page global strategy document.

Consolidation Is Key

Next is organising, and one thing is certain: Consensus-driven cultures don't work. A leader must not be afraid to enforce alignment and then give full decision-making responsibility to those accountable.

During her time at Dove, Ms Lagnado cancelled ineffective 30-person global brand team meetings in favour of an empowered Dove Board of seven senior marketers, charged with oversight of a single global brand strategy. Starbucks brought all its regional marketing leaders together for a two-day summit and forced explicit agreement on who led and who followed for all key brand decisions. More recently, PC giant Lenovo has established a global marketing hub in India, collapsing the planning and production of independent regional marketing initiatives into one centralised effort emanating out of Bangalore.

But beware the hit to the motivation of local market talent when they consequently lose some of the most enjoyable parts of their jobs. It is crucial to impart to local employees the strategic importance of their refocused roles, and to celebrate their activation successes. Companies which ignore this critical change management effort seldom taste the fruits of global marketing effectiveness.

Sustaining Consistency

Now try to maintain all this for the long haul. Building brand consistency, avoiding the reinvention of programmes, and accelerating the rollout of successful brand programmes globally are all challenges global marketers face everywhere. Achieving these long-term goals takes global brand leadership that focuses ample time on educating anyone who touches the brand, harvesting learning from other countries.

Our Leading Global Brands study provides robust evidence that companies and marketers who tenaciously prioritise these efforts to connect, inspire, focus, organise and build global marketing capability are well-positioned to win in the marketplace today.

You may well feel that these are seemingly straightforward imperatives, simple to execute and lacking in strategic pizzazz. There must be some secret sauce. Why aren't more companies accelerating growth by deepening their global leverage and local relevance?

To which we simply observe that there are many Bibles in the world... but not many Christians.

Roxanne Aquino is Managing Director and David Shaw, a Director at EffectiveBrands (www.effectivebrands.com), the global marketing consultancy that focuses specifically on the opportunities and challenges of global brand marketers. This article is based on a keynote address recently delivered by EffectiveBrands' chairman Marc de Swaan Arons at the Brand Couture congress in November 2008.