

THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING

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Using **Managed Services partners (MSPs)** to support the various elements of Marketing and its Operations is widely considered to offer strategic advantage and is one of the most effective and focussed solutions for planning and delivering a successful Marketing strategy for your business.

MSPs can also be a vital route to accessing the vast array of Marketing Technology (MarTech) innovations and disciplines that today's Marketing professionals increasingly want to access and use to deliver value for their businesses.

BUT WHY IS THIS?

PUT REALLY SIMPLY, MARKETING IS COMPLEX AND CAN BE DIFFICULT TO GET RIGHT IF YOU GO IT ALONE.

There are many established **MSPs** in a wide range of Marketing sectors with specific expertise and competencies supporting the breadth of Marketing and operational disciplines, who successfully partner with brands to drive Award winning success. In short, they possess the deep expertise to orchestrate the strategic constructs and operational apparatus required to deliver strong Marketing results.

These partners typically have experience of supporting Global and Regio-centric organisations, and therefore they are well equipped to harness their gained knowledge and offer very quick time-to-value, **freeing up marketers to focus on adjacent value-add activities that deliver on their brand, product and commercial goals.**

In practice this does not mean there is a binary approach to 'outsource' Marketing and its Operations, rather this is about creating clearly

defined strategic and/or service partnerships and optimising the balance and value mix between highly competent external and highly capable in-house teams and resources.

Whether your business is looking to rapidly grow its brand, products or service offering in existing markets, entering into new markets, changing the relationship you have with your customers, or creating a completely new-from-new start up, doing any of these successfully will require a specific set of Marketing and operational skills, capabilities and tools.

Whether you are a Global Enterprise, Medium sized business, SOHO or start up, building out the Marketing and technical capabilities to achieve your commercial goals with a purely in-house teams is not always the most accelerated or cost-efficient solution.

SO WHAT EXACTLY ARE MANAGED MARKETING SERVICES?

There are many ways to categorise 'Managed Marketing Services' and the **MSPs** that provide them, and it encompasses many well-defined sectors and business such Marketing Agencies, Customer Experience Management companies and Consultancies offering complete end to end Marketing and Technology services spanning the entire Marketing mix, and with many specialising in specific disciplines such as creative strategy and production, media planning and buying, data, analytics and insights and Marketing technology and many more categories. Some for the leading **MSP's** are listed within these highly regarded sources:

[Data & Marketing Association Members \(DMA\)](#)

[Marketing Agencies - School Reports 2021](#)

A simple definition of the role of **MSPs** is the practice of outsourcing the responsibility for formulating, designing, planning, implementing, maintaining, and anticipating the need for, the range of functions and processes to improve Marketing and its Operations. There are many and various services mixes and models for **MSPs** that range from high value, long term retained contracts with always on 24/7 services levels with significant resources to support them, to ad hoc, on-demand services where the customer only pays for the work done.

Implementing a Managed Services Provider approach lets you create an appropriate framework and environment for the scale, impact, momentum and agility needed for your business.

This is often done through the implementation of a set of agreed services, processes and service levels with the **MSP**. These expert partners then take on the various functions and processes, which are often the existing responsibility of time constrained in-house resources. A natural outcome of this approach is quite often freeing up in-house teams and resources to focus fully on internally prioritised Marketing activities such as growth planning, brand equity development, insight led decision making and many more business needs within Marketing's 7Ps mix. [Marketing 7Ps - The Chartered Institute of Marketing](#)

When it comes to Managed Service Solutions within Marketing, there are a range of processes and functions that a client may look to outsource. Some examples of key areas where specialist **MSPs** offer well packaged and curated client services are:

CREATIVE PRODUCTION & DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

Large businesses have been innovators at setting out in-house and **MSP** outsourced creative production models and also in-housing this entirely, with examples like **Royal Bank of Scotland** who run their own in-house Creative Production capabilities and Jaguar Landover who's joint venture with spark44 was an industry first, with **spark44** now positioned as a Global end-to-end customer experience company, recently been augmented by its partnership with Accenture Interactive in May 2021.

An exemplar of this model is Unilever's partnership with **OLIVER** that delivers U-Studio, a full service in-housed Creative Agency, which has grown from strength to strength. As a testament to U-Studio success in 2020 they won Campaign Magazine **Agency of the Year 2020** against the Agency sectors best and biggest players. Though unless your business is this scale and has specially trained creatives and designers as part of your Marketing team, then the chances are your business will be better off outsourcing your Marketing, branding, creative and design needs to specialists.

When an area of Marketing is very specialised and for small to medium sized business needed more ad hoc, it can be more effective to have this supported by **MSPs** rather than with salaried hires.

PRIVACY SAFE DIGITAL CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

A tag, **sometimes called a pixel tag**, is a piece of JavaScript code that most Martech vendors require users to integrate into their web and mobile sites to perform a task such as advertising, live chat, and product recommendations and these 'tags' collect unique visitor behaviour information that support most digital Marketing strategy.

Where privacy safe permissions allow this behavioural data can be deterministically or probabilistically observed across the multiple touchpoints that customers and prospects interact with, untimely creating richer views of customers that can fuel insights for decision making. **Partnering with outsourced specialists in this area adds significant value into every stage of the Marketing planning and operations process.**

PPC ADVERTISING

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) as a managed service is the process of overseeing and managing a company's PPC Ad spend. This includes strategies and Ad buys while minimising the overall expenditure.

Effective PPC management revolves around keyword analysis, channel strategy, monitoring, competitor analysis and split testing. Dedicated PPC management uses significant expertise in the area, as well as industry contacts and established connections to existing advertising platforms.

SEO AND AFFILIATE NETWORKS

When businesses use managed SEO and Affiliate solutions, all aspects of SEO strategy are looked after for you. SEO teams are experts in each element, including keyword research/keyword targeting, technical SEO audits, implementation, content creation, link building and reporting, which in turn leads to boost traffic to a business' websites.

SOCIAL MEDIA (PAID AND ORGANIC)

For the majority of businesses these days, **social media plays a huge part within a Marketing strategy**, whether that be developing and running high revenue generating paid social advertising campaigns or building and sustaining a Brand footprint across diverse Global audiences.

Though many organisations underestimate the focus and time needed to implement, grow and maintain these core Marketing activities successfully.

By partnering with specialist **MSPs** to manage your paid or owned social media and the content assets required, effectively and methodically, will often lead to substantial ROI over time, whilst also allowing in-house teams to spend their time on other value driving Marketing activities.

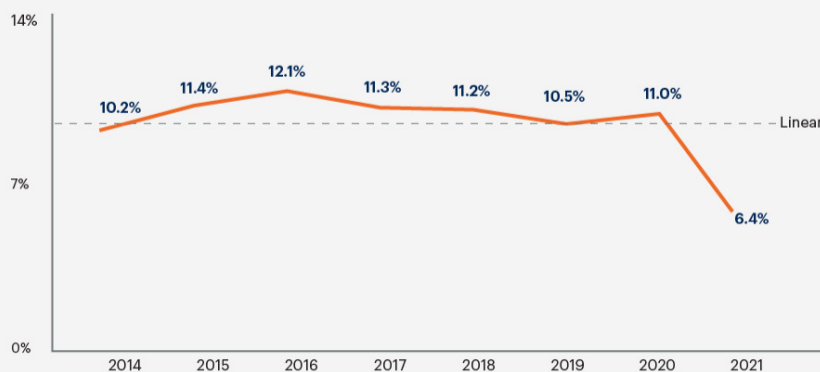
SO HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO OUTSOURCE TO A MANAGED SERVICES PROVIDER AND WHAT TO RETAIN IN-HOUSE? AND IMPORTANTLY 'WHEN'?

Every business wants to ensure that their Marketing team is fulfilling its potential.

Often as businesses grow, linearly expanding in-house processes is a natural response and aligns to existing ways to working, with in-house controls and governance of Marketing activity being managed internally. Though its often not that case that existing ways of working are fit for purpose or cost effective as organisations change and grow, new models and approaches are often where the step changes in performance occur.

This recent research from **Gartner** (Gartner CMO Spend Survey Research – July 2021) reports a significant downturn in Marketing Budgets compared to 2020, as many organisations wrestle with COVID-19 impacts. The proportion of company revenue allocated to Marketing is just 6.4% in 2021 - a cut of 4.6% from 2020, the lowest proportion allocated to Marketing in the history of Gartner's CMO Spend Survey.

2021 Marketing Budget as % of Total Revenue



n = 400 marketing leaders (2021); 342 (2020); 342 (2019); 618 (2018); 350 (2017); 375 (2016); 424 (2015); 363 (2014), excluding Don't know
Q. What percentage of your revenue is allocated to your total marketing expense budget for the current fiscal year?
Source: Gartner CMO Spend Survey, 2021-2022
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Gartner

THIS REALITY PLACES INCREASING PRESSURE ON GETTING MORE FROM EVERY £ OR \$ SPENT ON MARKETING IN 2021 AND BEYOND.

“

**MARKETING BUDGETS
HAVE BEEN SLASHED,
FALLING FROM 11.0%
OF REVENUE IN 2020
TO 6.4% IN 2021**

”

As Marketing Leaders look to harness more ROI for less hard investment, Gartner affirm the continued focus for Marketing teams in 2021 is optimising the balance and value mix between in-housing and MSPs, with the majority of marketers now looking beyond in-sourcing of higher volume, lower value services, which have also historically been key domains of MSPs and now encompassing the more high cost strategic services investments, as they strive to strike the right in-house / outsource resourcing model for their organisation and constrained budgets.

Looking deeper at where the 2021 spend is being prioritised and placed, high up on the CMO list in the Top 3 are: Digital Commerce, Marketing Operations and Brand Strategy, with 26.6% of overall 2021 budget being allocated to MarTech.

As discussed on the Team 6ix article: [Why the right MarTech is more important than ever in a remote working world](#) the MarTech industry is continuously evolving and as a sector experiencing 5,233% growth since 2011 (Source: www.chiefmartec.com 2020) there are now over 8,000 vendors to choose from, spanning every part of the Marketing ecosystem from Advertising & Promotion, Content & Experiences, Social & Relationships, Commerce & Sales, Data & Management.

Against this backdrop, constantly challenging what you do in-house versus what you outsource to fine-tune your operating model is now a pre-requisite Marketing management task. If your business has primarily been going to market in predominantly physical channels and wants to move activities to digital, partnering with an MSP that understands this discipline, knowing what will be effective for your company, and how to put together a digital strategy that will target and attract your ideal customers or clients, without neglecting your existing, loyal ones, can be a fast-track route to digital strategy success.

Smaller in-house Marketing teams might feel constantly time-pressed without the necessary strategies and systems in place to run their Marketing as efficiently as they would like. It might be that 2 or 3 people are wearing many Marketing hats e.g. trying to do copywriting, SEO, design and run CRM campaigns, and this is when using an MSP can offer the essential expertise and bandwidth to dial up output.

MAKING THE CASE FOR ADOPTING MANAGED MARKETING SERVICES MODELS

As we discuss above the decision to adopt a Managed Marketing Services approach within your business model is not a binary one, and there are many pros and cons depending on the business scenario and market context.

This, combined with an increasing trend in 2021 to strike an in-housing balance with Marketing Services that have traditionally be outsourced, and the drive to continue focus on Digital Commerce, Marketing Operations, Brand Strategy and MarTech, means navigating the right model for your business, has some key considerations:

ACCESS TO INDUSTRY LEADING USE CASES, MSPS EXPERTISE AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The deep and broad expertise in the many disciplines MSPs offer can be augmented with in-house, high-performance teams to provide thought leadership, expertise or sheer bandwidth in many areas. A highly relevant example is the ever-increasing importance of MarTech tools. Becoming MarTech proficient in tools such Adobe Experience Platform, Braze, Salesforce or Veeva Vault requires significant upfront investments, dedicated resources, technology change and Marketing and operational process change, which can be a daunting prospect even for the most seasoned marketer.

MSPs often have dedicated teams that focus on managing synergistic relationships with MarTech vendors, which in turn leads a positive impact for any business with their MSP talking to the 'right' people, externally, to ensure that new tech, integrations and strategies are carried through optimally.

What a good MSP in the MarTech space will be able to do is draw upon a wide range of relevant experiences and analyse where a MarTech platform could best fit, perform at its best, design best in class operating model blueprints, pre-empt adoption issues, share problem solves from other use case experiences and avoid issues. Overall making for a smoother, more motivating and engaging Marketing change experience.

SCALING UP (OR DOWN), QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY

As your Marketing and Operational goals and challenges evolve over time so will requirements for new skills, tools and ways of working, they'll need to be scaled up, down or changed completely. Working with MSPs means that they can be proactively monitoring, analysing and reporting on the need and business cases for these types of needs and also quickly respond to changing needs, scaling up (or down) quickly and efficiently.

Practically, there are times in an organisations operating cadence where adding employee headcount or approving a new innovation business case can be challenging, and in these cases working with an MSP can be a great solution to progressing certain Marketing activities and ensure continuity to achieve planned targets and goals.

GETTING THE MOST FROM MARKETING BUDGETS

For many Global Businesses, an MSP is the most cost-effective way of managing Marketing on a big scale, by adopting a Global Standardisation Strategy.

This essentially means using standardised methodologies to Marketing, campaigns and messaging across different markets, countries and cultures.

Global standardisation provides significant cost benefits as a result of less customisation and greater re-use.

An example of a big-name global business that repeats their Marketing operations functions around the world is Dominos Pizza. Half of their menu offering is the same wherever you go globally, and therefore the same Marketing tech, assets and messaging available for the teams, all whilst still adapting elements of their Marketing strategy for different countries e.g. promoting fish-based topping on their pizzas for the Asian market. Dominos move to investing more in their Digital Marketing several years ago by using MSPs, including the development of AI and mobile Marketing has helped them become immensely successful.

BEST-IN-CLASS EXAMPLES

There are many examples of Brands and **MSPs** working symbiotically to create truly mutually beneficially sustainable relationships across almost every sector, whether that's the likes of **Unilever** at a Global Enterprise scale, who's **MSPs** partnership with **Oliver** delivers **500+ employees across 21 studios and 18 countries**, spanning a multitude of disciplines and catering to the real-time Marketing needs of Unilever's brands.

Or specialist performance Marketing agency **croud** who generate incremental ROI uplifts across digital Marketing spend for many global D2C brands.

So whilst there is no single approach there are many case studies where getting the Managed Marketing Services mix right has reaped huge benefits for not only the Brand and **MSPs**, though ultimately the customer, who receives more relevant, appropriate and timely experiences from the Brands they interact with, more often.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Hard is Head of Strategy at Team 6ix with over 25 years' client and agency side experience in marketing technology strategy and implementation.

Jason has been trusted to architect and deliver enterprise scale marketing technology, data and customer management capabilities and teams for clients and Agencies such as **M&C Saatchi, Verizon, The Body Shop, IKEA, RBS/NatWest, Three, Telefonica O2, Santander, Barclays, Vodafone, EDF, BskyB, British Gas.**

IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HOW TEAM 6IX HAVE HELPED MANY LARGE AND SMALLER SCALE CLIENTS NAVIGATE TO THE OPTIMAL BALANCE OF IN-HOUSE AND MANAGED MARKETING SERVICES CAPABILITIES, THEN CONTACT US TODAY.