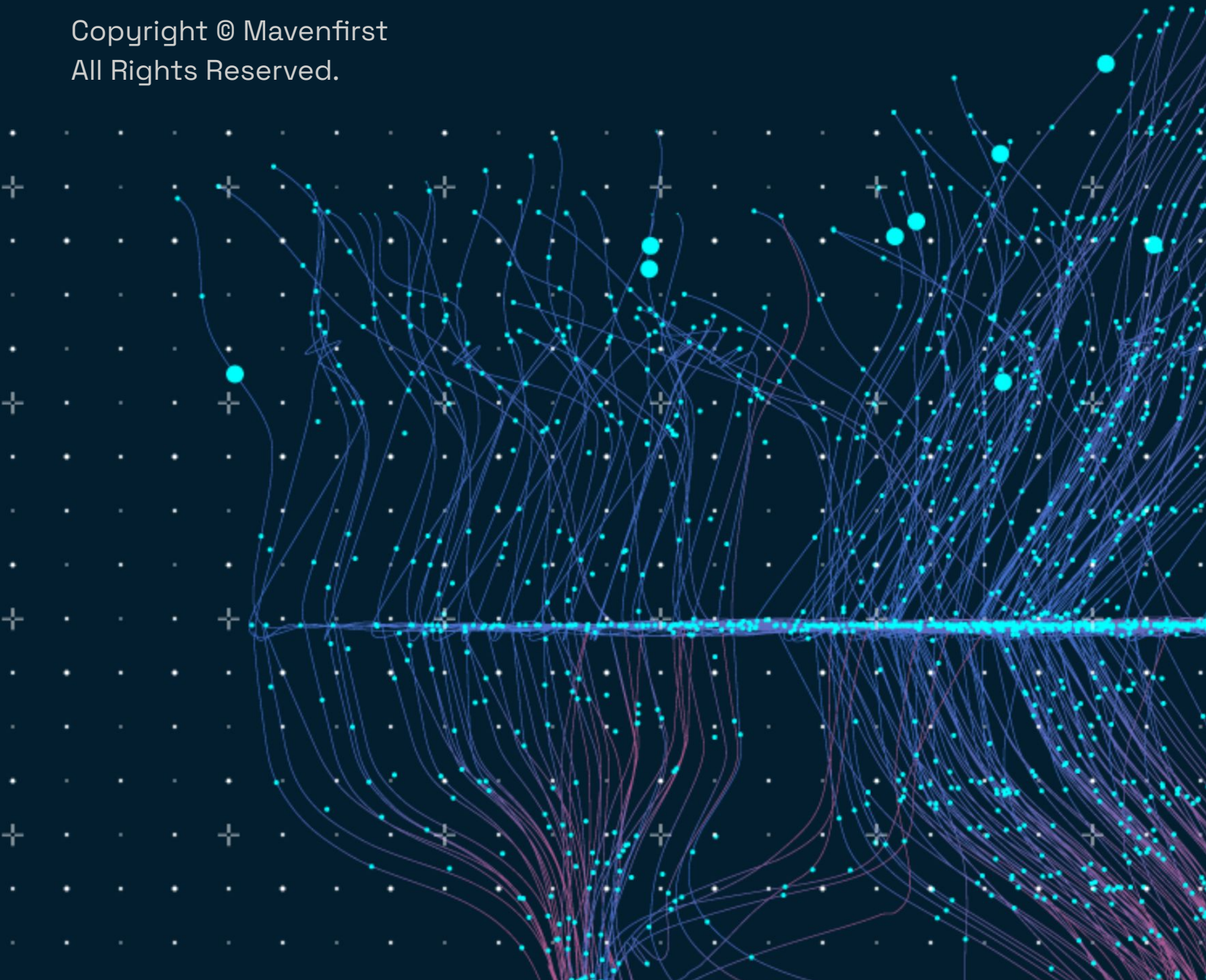


MAVENFIRST

EXECUTIVE GUIDE FOR SENIOR MARKETING EXECUTIVES  
IN COMPLEX B2B INDUSTRIES —

# What would a more strategic role for your marketing function look like?

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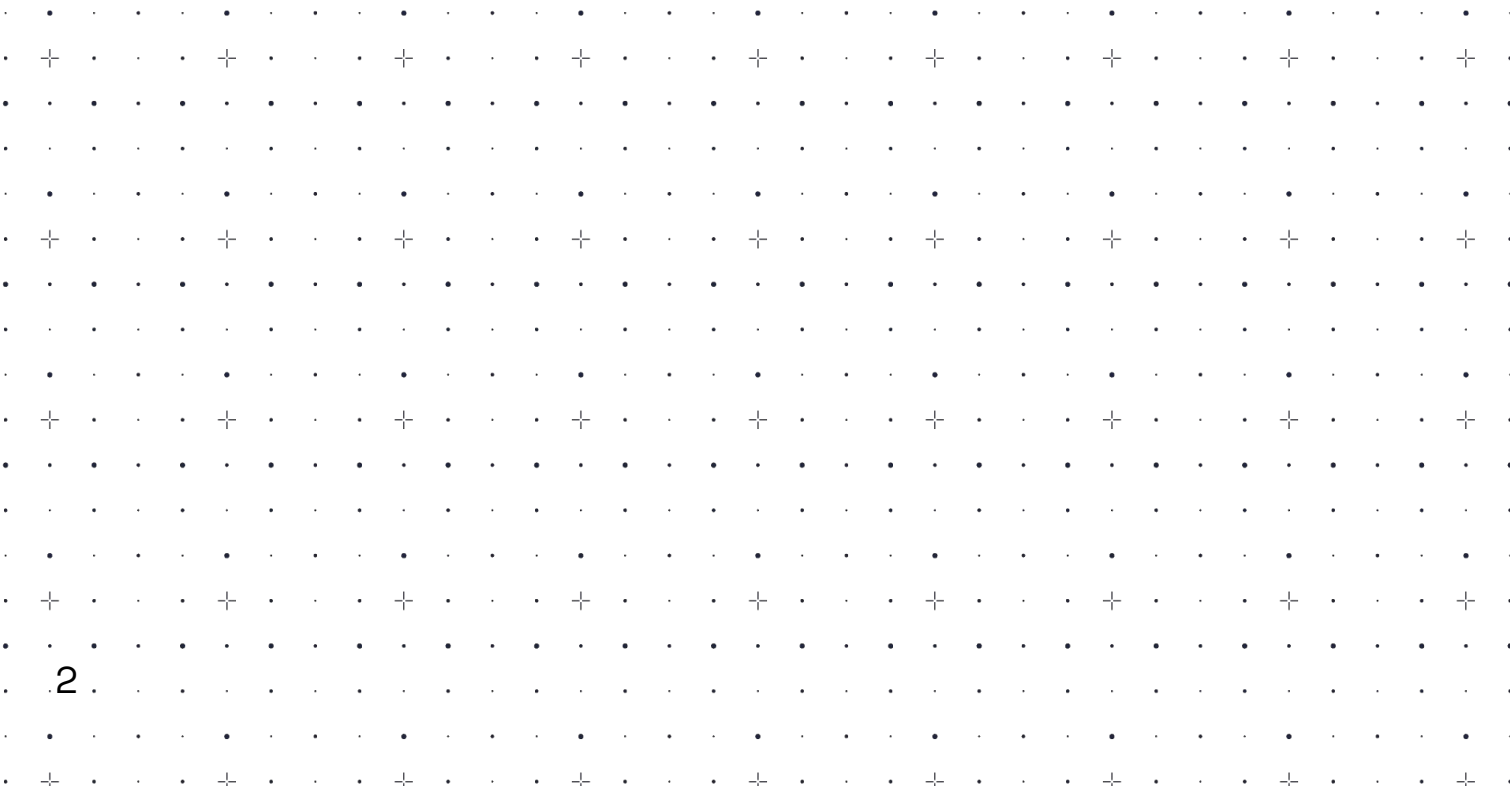
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# Introduction:

## What is a more strategic role for marketing?

We have asked marketing executives to raise their hands countless times in our executive roundtables, during our assessments and in our engagements:

*“Do you think building a more strategic role for your marketing function is important?”*

Most CMOs will raise their hand. Would you raise yours?

When we continue the discussion about what that really means and what actions are needed to achieve that role, the conversation typically revolves around improving what we already do. The idea is that if we just do this better, our role will be more strategic in the future.

For some, it is about how we work with our stakeholders. For others, a more strategic role would be the ability to influence strategy and plans earlier in the process, thus changing our current “Production House” role.

And of course, there is no one definitive answer to what a more strategic role looks like. Every company is different, and the role marketing plays in the “business concept” highly influences what will get us to that highly sought-after strategic role.

### **Strategic = Important**

One conclusion we can make: A strategic role always needs to be important for the success of the business. And to be important, we need to create enough value for the business to make us essential.

# Do you need a more strategic role for your function?

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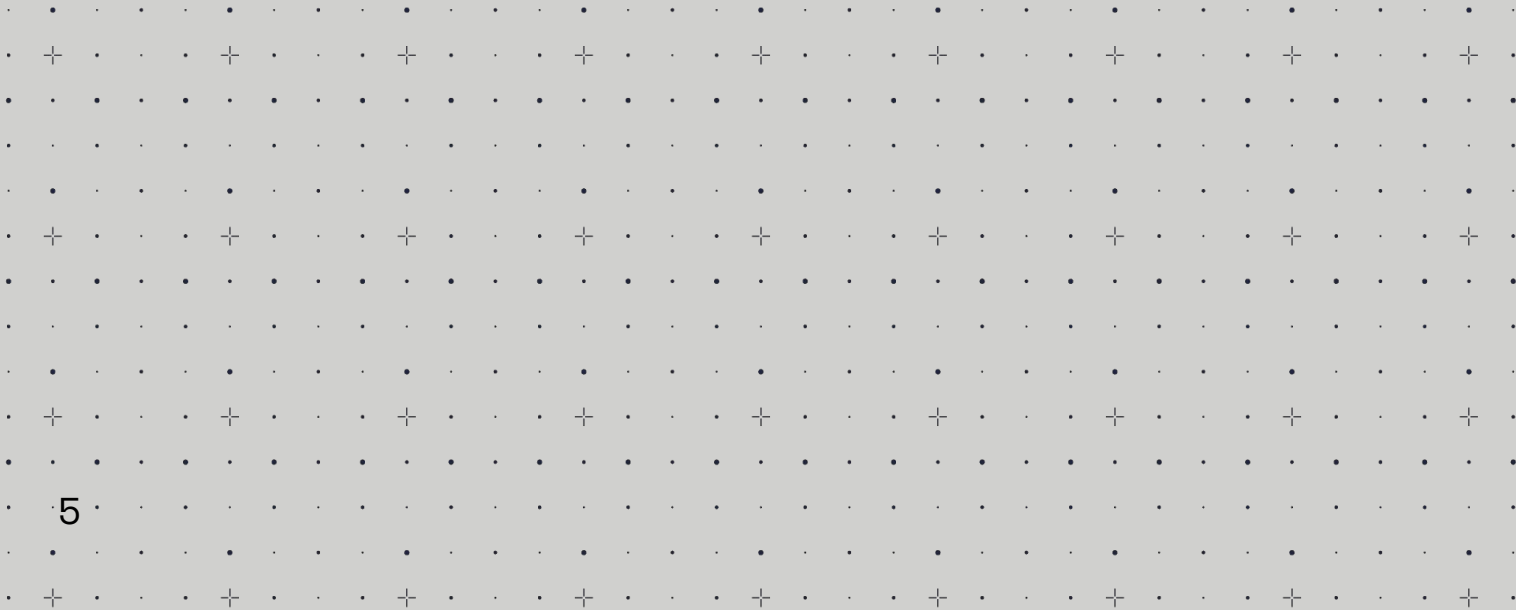
Based on our experience, the single biggest reason marketing executives seek a more strategic role is their belief that the marketing function could be significantly more valuable to the company. For some reason, this potential is not being realized within marketing's current role. This maximum value is far higher than what our current ways of working allow us to achieve.

**Common indicators based on our assessments:**

- Inability to prove marketing value: value is scattered or fragmented, making defending or increasing the budget a major challenge.
- Lack of alignment and clear expectations from business stakeholders, resulting in marketing having to “guesstimate” needs or “overservice” those stakeholders.
- Marketing department operates in ad hoc, leading to shortsighted tactics.
- CMO's time is consumed by short-term, reactive firefighting. This makes it challenging to work “on marketing” rather than “in marketing,” preventing focus on strategic topics.
- The level of discussion with key stakeholders easily drops to tactics and outputs, instead of focusing on outcomes.

Questions to guide your thinking

- + Can you measure the success of marketing or prove marketing value?
- + Do you think that the current measures are presenting the role and the total value you bring to the organization?
- + What is expected from you as the marketing executive? Is your success in the role clear? Do you share that view with your boss?
- + How would you evaluate someone else’s success in your role for a year? Is this based on outcomes and value or more on the outputs?



# What needs to happen to get to a more strategic role?

One thing. You need to be more important for the success of the business. Eventually, becoming part of the “business concept” will make marketing a vital factor in achieving business success.

To take a deeper dive, there are typically these things we can make sure:

Your role and value is fully understood (and believed). Not just the value you help achieve, but also the specific role marketing played in that success.

Your “capabilities” are recognized.

The marketing organization’s role is clearly defined by the capabilities we bring and the outcomes we can affect with them.

You can communicate the value.

You are able to dollarize the marketing value with clear ties to business value.

Your value is “important”. It shifts from nice-to-have to a must-have.

In the end, marketing must have a defined role in the business concept or in the fundamental way the company does business.

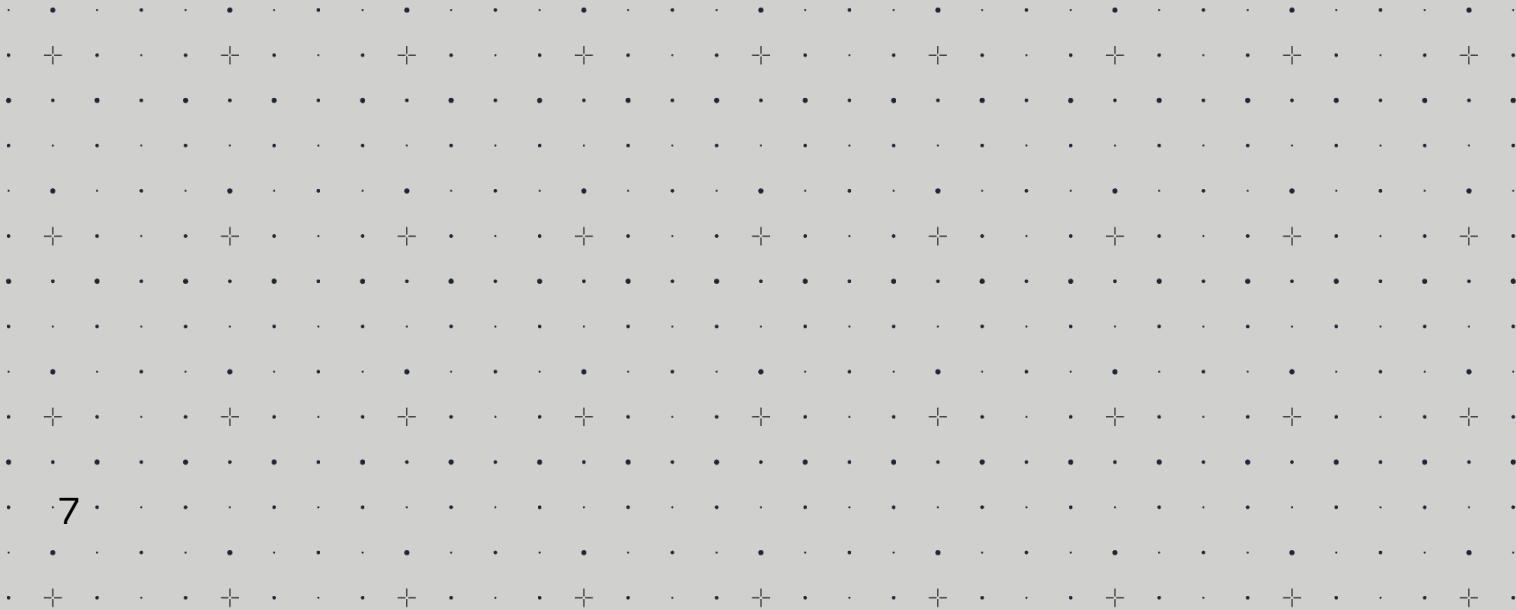
Is there a difference:

When marketing feels they are more strategic?

When business stakeholders think marketing is strategic?

Questions to guide your thinking

- + Do you feel it is clear what marketing is accountable for in terms of results?
- + If above is questioned, what would your business stakeholders answer to the question:  
*“How would you describe the current role of our marketing at Your Company Ltd?”*  
Would they start with the tactics or business outcomes you influence?
- + If given the freedom, budget and trust, do you believe you could provide 5 times the value for the organization’s most important priorities?



# How to evaluate if the change is needed?

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If you are still reading, you probably agree that some level of change is necessary. Based on our experience, the shift to a more strategic role is significant. A typical complex B2B marketing organization needs to evaluate changes across three key dimensions:

- How can we work more closely with our main business stakeholders?
- How do we operate internally as a marketing function?
- What can we do to improve our value creation (e.g., what specific marketing strategies have we chosen to pursue)?

A key success factor for this level of change initiative is the reason for change. To drive this, you must understand what needs to change and why. Keep the mission to provide more value to the business central to the effort. What are the concrete things you want to change?



## EXAMPLE: Use case of evaluating the key areas of change in a client engagement

In the client engagements, we evaluate every area of the change first through current situation and what does the leader want to change. This gives you as a leader a great tool for prioritization and strengthens the business case for a change. We start with going through each of the following category.

Marketing strategy

Role

Value we bring

Organization

Skills & Resources

Way we operate

Tactics

## Questions to think about:

### Marketing Strategy —

- Are we aligned with the business in targets, message and strategic goal and role for marketing?

### Role

- Are the role and “internal brand” of marketing clear?
- Is it clear what the business is expecting from marketing?
- Are these aligned with how you see your function’s role and value marketing provides?

### Value we bring —

- Is the value you bring to the business clearly identified and/or quantified?
- Is the value communicated to the business in an understandable way?

### Organization —

- Are we in the right place inside the organization?
- Is my department organized in the way that best supports our goal and role?
- If I would be able to instantly change our organization model – would I change that?

### Skills & Resources

- Do you have the right people on the right seats? Do your existing resources support achieving your targets?
- Are there some capabilities or skills missing?
- If I would be able to instantly change my team’s skill set or ratio junior/senior – would I change that?

### Way we operate

- How do we operate as a part of the organization? Do we have the right level of autonomy or are we too much in the “order-taker” role?
- How do we operate as a team? Does our operating model help as minimize ad hoc and support us achieving our goals?

### Tactics

- Are your current tactics and activities providing desired results?
- Do I believe that if nothing changes in the tactics, we still get the results we are expected to?

EXAMPLE: Use case of evaluating the key areas of change in a client engagement

Things you want to change:

	Things you want to change
Marketing strategy	Aligned with business in targets (target audiences and segments), messaging and strategic goal need clarifying.
Role	Our current role is highly supportive. We are aiming to shift away from being the “production and execution engine” and target a more strategic role.
Value we bring	Currently, the value is measured mostly by leads, but we feel the broader contribution is being neglected.
Organization	We are currently operating under the Sales Department, but our long-term goal is to achieve a more strategic level and establish a dedicated, autonomous function within the organization.
Skills & Resources	We need to improve our team's project management skills and business acumen. Our current budget is too small to effectively support these development goals.
Way we operate	We must increase a more proactive problem-solving attitude and improve our data-driven approach across the team.
Tactics	Lead generation is not bringing the best results anymore and we’d need to move towards a more account-based approach.

# What is the reason for the change?

Now, if you identified some categories you want to change, what is the reason for the change? What are the benefits for your business, function and for you as a leader?

**Business Case —**

- More Impact
- More value for the same investment?
- Competitive advantage
- Mission critical initiatives
- Cost of inaction — what we lose if we don't change?

**Function specific —**

- Team retention and willingness to stay
- Capability to hire more senior talent
- Improved motivation (Purpose, Mastery, Autonomy)
- More control over our work and less ad hoc

**Your own motivations —**

- Feeling appreciated
- Able to make impact
- Personal growth
- Career growth
- More influence in the organization
- Improved day-to-day work life

Questions to guide your thinking

- + With these changes, can you increase the value to the organization to makes this change worthwhile?
- + With guaranteed success, if this would cost 10% of your yearly marketing budget for 2 years, would it still be worth doing and a sane business decision? Why?
- + How would your own day-to-day improve? What is this for you?

# What would your more strategic function look like?

So. You're thinking about that question. *What would a more strategic marketing function look like in the next 5 years?* A great bold vision needs to answer the questions:

- "Where are we heading as a function?"
- "Where am I taking this function as a leader?"
- "Why should you care?"

"Vision states why the marketing function exists and where the function wants to be in the future to achieve a more strategic role in the organization. It helps you as a leader to set your sight from day-to-day in marketing actions to on marketing and a bigger picture."

When working on your vision, there are two particular areas you need to concentrate on:

1. What value do we want to provide to the organization?
2. What should our marketing function look like?

Let's start from the value part.

## What's our role in creating value for our organization?

Let's start with the value creation. Think big enough.

To put it simply, your vision determines which value levers you should drive: Commercial efficiency, Pricing power and/or Competitive advantage. It clearly states the role we want to play in our organization's success.

There is no right or wrong answer, and you don't need to instantly declare you want to affect all three levers. However, the role must be clear, something marketing can be accountable for, and something your business stakeholders will believe and align with.

### Pricing Power —

Do you want marketing to influence Pricing Power / willingness to pay?

Examples:

- Premium Branding
- Value-driven case studies
- TVP - tailored value propositions

### Commercial Efficiency —

Do you want and is it expected from marketing to Impact Commercial Efficiency?

Examples:

- Strategic ABM
- Pursuit ABM
- Thought leadership

### Competitive Advantage —

What can you do to build Competitive Advantage?

Examples:

- Own proprietary research
- Buying Journey research / forecast
- Arranging the biggest must-attend industry seminar

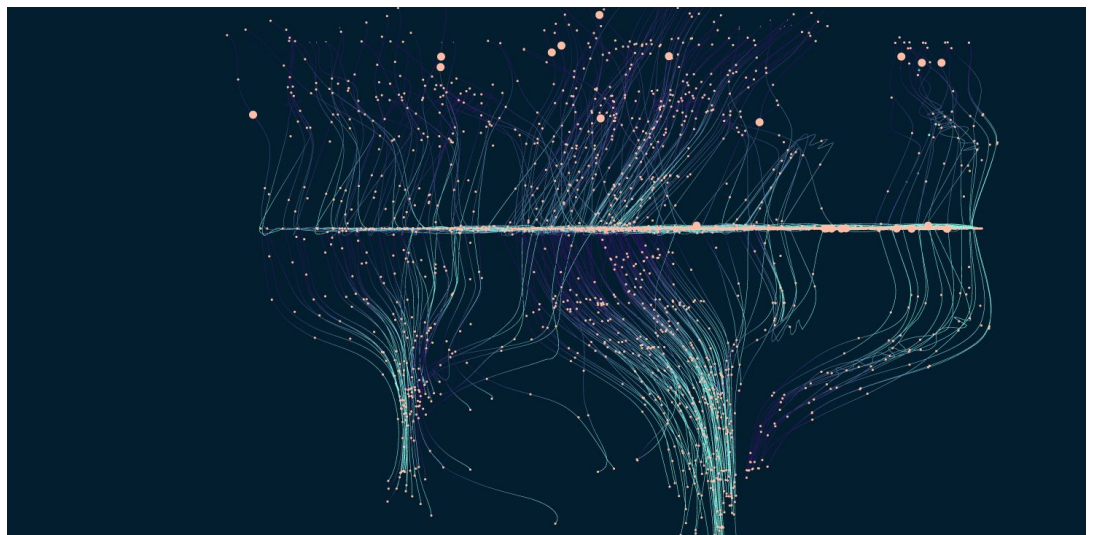
Mavenfirst Value Lever framework™

## How should we work as a function?

Once you've identified the value part of the vision, it's time to focus on the function itself. How to drive the change? What kind of change is needed?

In an ideal state, how would your organization work as a function? This encompasses roles and responsibilities, ways of working, processes, capabilities and skills. Some view this as the "boring side" of marketing leadership. For us, it is one of the most critical sides.

When assessing your function, it's important to stay at high level. Marketing is typically being evaluated based on activities instead of outcomes or the targets achieved. This part of the vision defines how you want and need to work as a function to achieve the desired vision and value. Once you have a clear "North star" in the value part, clarifying how your function should look ensures you can actually make things happen as efficiently as possible.





Questions to guide your thinking

- + Do you want marketing to influence **Willingness to Pay or Pricing Power**? How?
- + Is it expected from marketing to impact our **Commercial Efficiency**? Is this the only role we are expected to deliver value?
- + What can we do to build marketing originated **Competitive Advantage** in the next five years?
- + How is our function organized? Does it align with my 5-year vision and where we want to be? Does it align with how the business is structured?
- + Do we have the right people on the right seats? Do we need new capabilities and skills with AI, data-driven approach or maybe with a better business alignment?
- + What are the rules to live by for our team? Can I evaluate my function's success based on accountability?

## Next steps

Great, you made it here. As an end result, you should now have clarity on whether a change in your marketing function is needed, what the change should look like, how you work as a part of the organization and what value you bring to your organization.

Ensure *your vision* clearly states which of the value levers you want to impact, what role does marketing play in the organization's success and what the more strategic role for your marketing function is. Is it being involved in strategic decision making earlier? Or is it something else?

We help our clients navigate this change and improve marketing value day in, day out. If you feel this is something you'd want to hear more about, we're here for you. DM us on LinkedIn, reach out to us through our website or use any method you prefer. And subscribe to our newsletter to stay ahead with our bi-weekly insights for senior marketing executives



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