

Risk of being pigeonholed and stifling career prospects is a real headache

Marketing dilemma

I am currently working as an in-house marketing communications executive and enjoying my job. However, I'm afraid that unless I move to a broader role covering all marketing disciplines, I may be pigeonholed and stifle my promotion prospects, as within my organisation there are many more opportunities for this type of role. Should I make the move across before it's too late and how can I prepare myself to take on the extra responsibilities?

David Hensley, managing partner at Vivaldi Partners This depends on your personal ambitions, in terms of the level you aspire to and how soon you hope to be promoted. You may have to trade off longer-term goals against short-term ambitions. If you aspire to on-going promotion up to a marketing director level position, then in time you should broaden your experience and skills across the marketing disciplines.

Marketing as a function is broadening and becoming more commercial than just

communications, so I would recommend that you also try to gain financial skills and sales experience.

The combination of audience fragmentation and media convergence will mean that in the future a breadth of understanding will be an increasingly valuable asset.

You should consider building your career across more than one organisation, so you might look at moving to a different company, or even getting some agency side experience to broaden you.

To be promoted in the short to medium-term, deeper expertise in one discipline may be more advantageous, though does, as you suggest, risk pigeonholing you.

Anne Bahr Thompson, founder and managing partner at Onesixtyfourth There really are no rights and wrongs when it comes to planning your career. Every company has a different culture – in some marketing departments promotions may come faster by staying in a single area, while in others, experience across the board wins you points and your personality, ambition and even serendipity play essential roles in career success. This is not to imply you needn't think through your moves and set ambitious goals and objectives for yourself, however.

The fact that you ask the question indicates that you are fairly ambitious.

Given this, first-hand knowledge of the many facets of marketing in the first few years of your career will be a positive thing. You really don't know what will interest you most unless you've experienced it, nor will you discover how good you really can be without giving something new and challenging a go.

You have probably developed a rapport with one or two of the managers across the marketing department of your company. Ask to speak to them over a coffee or lunch to suss out what their area is like and get a better read on the opportunities that are open. And, of course, plant the seeds that you would be interested in working with them.

With regard to how to prepare for the extra responsibilities, speak to people and read books, industry

and general business publications. But don't fret over the challenges your new role will bring. Just be yourself and get on with it!

Narelle Lester, managing director at Regan and Dean Recruitment

Your company should want and indeed expect you to further your career and if they value your contribution, they will be open to you applying for other roles within the company.

As you progress, the more exposure that you have had to other departments the better – this will enable you to look at strategies, problems and issues from an all round perspective. Additionally, someone who has worked across varied departments can really add value to an employer as they will understand the workings, structure and pressures of each.

It's important, however, to ensure that you have been in your current role long enough to have covered the full spectrum of projects/events and have developed the right sorts of skill sets needed to progress into a more varied role.

Prepare by talking to colleagues already doing those roles in order to get an idea of the main criteria and try to develop and manage projects that will expand your skill/experience base and therefore increase your chances of getting that full mix role.

Depending on the size of your company, request an appointment with HR or a senior director/line manager to discuss protocol.

Chris Dabbs, group account director, Creative Tank Much depends on the current size of your department and the long-term promotion prospects that it has to offer. However, if it looks as if your current employers have much to offer you within the organisation, work out your strengths and talk to those who can help improve your weaknesses.

The key is to take on more responsibility in all areas of the marketing mix. Be an essential part of the team without being threatening to those around you.

If you think that you are seriously lacking in any particular area, take evening courses to increase your skill set and your professional qualifications. This

"Talk to those around you, get involved"



will put you in good shape for promotion within your company and your future career growth.

Also consider focusing on becoming a specialist in a single area. You will always need to have grounding in all areas of marketing. However, this makes you a valuable resource both independently and within an organisation. As marketing integration becomes more essential, more specialisations appear that are managed by marketing directors (in-house) and account managers (agencies).

Being the boss does not always pay the best. However, to follow this route, you must be one of the best in that field. Talk to those around you, get involved and get learning.

DILEMMAS TO COME

Each week, we pose a new dilemma about a situation that can emerge while working in the media or marketing business, inviting readers to respond with their viewpoint or advice. Your responses to our latest dilemma (below) can be e-mailed to amandal@mediaweek.co.uk

I've recently joined a media agency where there is loads of office banter. But I tend to keep my head down and not talk very much, so I struggle to keep up with jokes. Things have got worse since I bought a gold car. My colleagues have taken to calling me Goldie Lookin' Chain, much to the amusement of the office. I don't find this funny in the slightest but they repeat it ad nauseum. I feel like I'm going to explode – Help! What can I do?

I work at a well-known agency and, despite always achieving my targets, my salary has only increased slightly since I started. A friend of mine who does the same job in a different team has just been promoted and I'm feeling jealous. She is always telling me how little work she does and her colleagues are always complaining about how little she does. Clearly I am doing something wrong. I'm so frustrated, should I speak to my friend to see how she achieved promotion?

Do you have a marketing dilemma? E-mail juliam@mediaweek.co.uk