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on point

Tales from the Top of the Marketing Pyramid

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SMPS

Marketing Resource Management

BY CRAIG PARK, FSMPS, ASSOCIATE AIA

By now almost everyone has heard of client relationship management (CRM)—at least if you've been regularly reading this column. These advanced data-driven systems help marketers and business developers mine the collected knowledge about their clients (and potential clients) to help strategically and tactically target their responses to requests for qualifications and proposals.

Next on the horizon of technology-enabled processes are marketing resource management (MRM) systems: tools to help you manage multiple projects associated with marketing and communications in your firm. From direct mail, to client events, to public speaking and public relations, every marketing department worth its salt is usually buried in projects related to promoting the firm with, more often than not, conflicting priorities.

Marketing campaigns in all their types share many attributes and, as such, lend themselves to a multi-linear project management approach. They share schedule (time), logistics (resources), and budget (money) factors that variously influence their priority and importance to the overall marketing strategic plan. Technology-driven communications systems can help teams work more effectively. They enable a logical tracking of progress and expense, intra-team communication, and review, while at the same time keeping management apprised with a high-level view on a regular basis.

I found that, today, most firms are getting by with e-mail and file transfer protocol (FTP) to manage their marketing workflow. The folks at MarketingCentral (more on them later) noted that, "While e-mail may be electronic and instantaneous, it is not a project management tool and is not inherently collaborative. In many ways, e-mail is as inefficient as couriers and faxes."

E-mail is great, most of the time—as long as there aren't any large files attached and as long as the conversation is short and only between two people. E-mail communication gets progressively worse as time, distance, and the number of collaborators increase. It suffers from a lack of security, spam, remote e-mail

access, etc. E-mail has no way to ensure that team members have a consistent and up-to-date view of the evolving information.

What Web-based tools offer is a collaborative environment that is much more than e-mail. Web-based marketing resource tools afford a new way for organizations to collaborate and communicate effectively, saving time, effort, and budget.

True MRM tools include everything from project-type specific systems (e.g., Vocus for public relations) to more universal tools (e.g., MarketingCentral and RoboHead) for almost any type of marketing campaign. The following will give you a brief overview of each. I encourage you to explore their Web sites, take a tour and get a demo. You may find a new way to simplify and improve your management of marketing projects, and as a result, save yourself some time and money.

RoboHead

RoboHead did not come from a planet far, far away. It is a Web-based tool created by Aquent, a professional services firm based in Boston providing resources for creative services organizations. Drawing from their experience working with more than 200 of the Fortune 500, Aquent is an application service provider (ASP), and RoboHead is its subscription-based tool designed to simply and effectively manage any type of creative work (including print, interactive, or broadcast) for online review and approval.

As most can attest, our organizations have tried (and usually failed) to manage their marketing projects with "sticky notes" and e-mail. Using FTP sites for routing job files and schedules can be painful. What you will find with RoboHead is your very own "robot" assistant that works on all the things you and your team just doesn't have time to complete. RoboHead was designed to be simple and easy to use for everyone involved in creative marketing, from traffic, project, and account managers to designers, art directors, writers, and project executives. RoboHead can route creative work, chase down team members for comments or approval, and remind you of important meetings. This tool allows your entire marketing workflow

process to be automated, reducing or, in some cases, totally eliminating time-wasting paperwork.

Because RoboHead is accessed via the Internet, local team members, co-workers, clients, and even vendors in remote locations can all access critical information. Typically, the larger or more collaborative the project is, the more inefficient these ad hoc manual processes become. RoboHead provides a real-time annotation system so you immediately know who has signed off on a project and who still needs to see it.

This versatile and powerful tool helps you successfully juggle all your project schedules, allows for online review and approval, and collects and posts team communications. Online annotation lets everyone know who made what comments and when they were made. Their centralized file storage means you have password-protected access to your files no matter where you are, 24/7.

One of the advantages of RoboHead is that it keeps your work moving forward with proactive alerts and notifications to just the people who need to know, not the entire team. By configuring when and how you want to be notified, you can be kept informed in the format that works best for you. As a Web-based tool, Aquent has included a 128-bit SSL-encryption system, which is the same level of security used by most e-commerce sites. This means you can safely and securely transmit information and files over the Internet.

MarketingCentral

Like Aquent, **MarketingCentral** provides Web-based marketing automation tools. Its suite of marketing resource management tools can be used separately or combined as needed to meet your organization's needs. Its subscription basis makes total marketing resource management affordable and accessible to companies of all sizes.

MarketingCentral includes a complete set of marketing resource management tools to help you:

- plan objectives and budgets
- schedule, traffic, and coordinate work
- gather feedback, review, and approve marketing materials
- track time and expenses
- measure results against plans
- publish digital assets
- publish marketing event calendars.

In its own words, MarketingCentral's marketing resource management system was designed with an understanding that marketing is "part art, part skill, and part science." (I liked that

MRM Resources

⌘ Aquent:	www.aquent.com
⌘ MarketingCentral:	www.marketingcentral.com
⌘ RoboHead:	www.robhead.com
⌘ Vocus:	www.vocus.com

one.) All of its MRM tools are flexible and integrated to make it easy for you to respond to the changing dynamics in marketing today.

With any marketing resource management tool, you get out what you put into it. MarketingCentral's MRM system is designed to be simple to configure for your team, allowing you to get results fast (always a good selling point to management). MRM can help you improve quality, reduce errors, speed delivery time, improve visibility, control vendors, and produce more work. By centralizing the management function for all marketing projects, it reduces the cost of labor needed for oversight and coordination. Because it speeds and improves communications, it can also reduce production labor and improve project completion schedules.

Vocus

The **Vocus** Web-based software suite is more targeted at the public relations communications needs of your organization. It provides extensive tools to manage relationships and communications with journalists, analysts, public officials, and other key audiences. Its integrated software modules address all of the functions of corporate communications and public relations, including:

- **contact management**—with access to a database of 800,000 media contacts
- **news**—via an automated clipping service
- **collateral**—access shared files including photos, executive bios, and annual reports
- **project management**—check milestones, reminders, resources, and team assignments
- **e-mail campaigns**—manage press releases electronically
- **analytics**—analyze data, produce graphical reports, and provide assessment of your communications efforts
- **newsrooms**—post breaking news, press releases, executive bios, photos, and other corporate collateral for access by the press
- **compliance reporting**—ensure compliance with contribution limits and filing requirements for public projects

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Keynote Address is Peter van Stolk, President and CEO of Jones Soda. This marketing maverick has a unique, interactive approach to grounding his products, an intense connection to his customers, and an uncanny ability to predict trends.

Focus Speaker is Al Laufenstlager, award-winning marketing/HR consultant, direct mail specialist, speaker, entrepreneur, and author of *Guestilla Marketing In 30 Days*.

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- **issues and legislation**—for publicly funded projects, find bill information, bill status, and legislator voting records and sponsorship activity for federal legislation that you are following.

Vocus' on-demand infrastructure can help your organization deliver scalable solutions, manage large amounts of information, deliver consistent and well-executed communications, collaborate among large or geographically dispersed teams, and analyze and report on the effectiveness of their corporate communications and public relations.

Vocus' public relations software integrates powerful contact management features with essential PR functions like contact management, news management, activities and project management, collateral management, analysis, e-mail campaigns, and online newsrooms. By combining all these functions into a single online system that delivers greater ease of use and increased productivity, Vocus has built a veritable Swiss army knife for the PR professional.

Collaborating online

All of these marketing resource management systems feature simple yet powerful browser-based software. With them you can plan, track, and manage your firm's marketing communications projects, engaging and collaborating with teams that can be anywhere in the world. State-of-the-art security encryption protects your data. Scalable and component-based suites allow you to customize your subscription to those tools you need and allow you to add more any time. These Web-based subscription applications bode well for the future of all collaboration, so it might be wise to get online and take the ride. You never know: MRM might just make your life simpler and your marketing efforts more effective. **M**



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