

# 10 TIPS FOR BECOMING AN AGILE MARKETING TEAM

Virtually everything related to marketing is changing, starting with consumers who have transformed their buying habits, the ways they discover brands and products, and how they share their information with other potential purchasers.

The technology that consumers are (constantly) using, including smartphones, social media and even wearables, is helping hasten these changes. Accordingly, marketing technology is evolving too, with digital marketing tools and solutions undergoing unprecedented change during the last five years.

Yet while the vast majority of marketing departments have mastered the basics of digital marketing, much remains to be done to step up to higher levels of competence and innovation and deliver an outstanding customer experience. A recent IBM study found that although 80 percent of marketers strongly believe they have a holistic view of individual customers, only 22 percent of consumers say the average retailer understands them as an individual.<sup>1</sup>

These figures suggest that many marketing organizations need to shift their approach or risk losing business. One smart way to do so is by becoming more agile so you can better adjust to customer and prospect needs and more quickly implement tactics that will enhance their experience.

Agile is a term typically associated with software development (see sidebar on p. 3), but more recently some marketing departments have adopted aspects of agile with great success.

This tip sheet outlines the 10 key aspects of agile marketing. You might be tempted to cherry-pick a few tactics to implement, but this will generally prevent you from realizing the full benefits of an agile marketing approach. Instead, try to adopt each item in the list to more substantially increase your effectiveness.

## 1 Apply agile to a critical part of marketing.

For many marketing departments, time and resources are at a premium. Rather than attempting to implement an agile approach for every facet of your marketing process, try applying the agile marketing methodologies to the most important aspects of your business.

Ask yourself what marketing projects are likely to drive more revenue, impact customer satisfaction or improve the efficiency of the department. Start with these areas.

## 2 Isolate the project.

The goal is to avoid the dreaded “paralysis by analysis” syndrome, so don’t spend weeks or months crunching numbers or conducting massive strategy sessions. Instead, break your objective into small bite-sized pieces. Isolate a small subset of what you want to accomplish and communicate that to the organization. By doing so, you’ll make the task(s) less daunting and help increase the likelihood you’ll get your agile marketing project off the ground.



### 3 Identify the outcome at the beginning.

All too often, projects get bloated, growing in size and requirements until they become unwieldy, unable-to-deliver endeavors. In many cases, this happens when the team loses sight of the outcome.

To keep your team on track, remember one of business author Stephen Covey's most famous quotes: "Begin with the end in mind." As you're thinking about the ideal project outcome, keep these two considerations front and center:

- **Make your goals near-term:** Projects or goals that are more than 12 months in duration usually have a high failure rate. The reason? It's often hard to keep momentum over such an extended period of time, especially in a marketing world in which the playing field is constantly changing. What might be a good idea at the beginning of one year could be obsolete in 18 months. Can you define a project that can be delivered in three months? That's a great candidate for agile approaches.
- **Define your objective:** A thoroughly defined goal will allow everyone to be on the same page. Be careful, though – this doesn't mean taking months documenting and planning every aspect of the project. Crisply define what you set out to do, but don't fall victim to the aforementioned "analysis paralysis."

### 4 Formulate agile teams.

As you're looking to bring people together for these new projects, remember these key tenets of creating agile marketing teams:

- **Small:** Teams of fewer than 12 are generally best, and six or fewer individuals is usually even better. The larger the team, the more consensus-driven the group decision-making style, and the greater the likelihood the project will stall out.
- **Cross-Functional:** In order to succeed, you'll typically need a core nucleus of varied talents. An example of a great cross-functional



Tips for Building an Agile Marketing Team

- team might include a writer, designer, programmer, marketing automation specialist, videographer, database specialist and analyst. Define the skills you need and recruit your teammates. If this is an internal project, you might want to include the "customer" in the group as well.
- **Collaborative:** Consider co-locating everyone in a single room for the duration of the agile project. If that's not possible, make ample use of Skype, Google Hangouts or Facetime to work with remote team members.
- **Innovative:** Strive to do something new. It will raise visibility for what you're trying to do. Agile is all about making significant progress happen for you, your team and your company.
- **Accountable:** In agile marketing, there are no idle observers. Everyone that's part of the team should have a valuable contribution to make. Should you make it on to an agile marketing team, know that the rest of the team is counting on you to deliver on your commitments.
- **Equal:** With agile marketing, roles, titles and seniority are tossed out. Everyone needs to show up and contribute.

## 5 Conduct a daily stand-up meeting.

The daily stand-up meeting is at the heart of agile marketing. Every day — yes, that’s right — the team should assemble to quickly review what everyone has before them for that day. As individuals, everyone commits to their contribution to the project and what they are going to deliver *that day*.

Keep in mind that the meetings are “standing up” to keep them short and to the point. If anything is brought up that’s outside of the scope of this quick meeting, put it into a “parking lot” for future consideration. A large team whiteboard will help document the daily stand-up discussions and parking lot items.

Benefits of the daily stand-up include:

- Ensuring everyone is on track
- Continuously agreeing to commitments
- Rapidly identifying roadblocks
- Improving team awareness and transparency

## 6 Assign a quarterback.

This is the person who will lead the stand-up meetings, assess overall project delivery timetables, backfill team members who need to drop out of the agile team, and assimilate new team members. Your quarterback will also oversee project perspective, scope and deliverables, so this is the one team member who needs to have an anticipatory view. Ideally, the quarterback will be someone with a strong understanding of agile practices and a knack for facilitating meetings and negotiating consensus.

## 7 Consider a “FedEx Day.”

In his book *Drive*, Daniel Pink describes a “FedEx Day.” During these 24-hour periods, team members can work on anything they want – and then show colleagues what they’ve done. Pink calls them

## THE AGILE APPROACH: FROM SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT TO MARKETING

In the early 2000s, agile techniques helped revolutionize the way software was developed and enhanced. “The Manifesto for Agile Software Development,” published in 2001, outlined a new approach to creating software in which cross-functional teams worked in a collaborative fashion with an emphasis on flexibility and rapid adaptation. Benefits of this agile development process included faster delivery of new solutions, higher satisfaction and easier accommodation of changes and user input.

Today, with communication platforms, marketing technology and customer expectations evolving at a rapid pace, it’s a perfect time to incorporate the agile approach into your marketing organization. Agile marketers can move quickly, launch new campaigns with confidence, embrace technical innovation

where it makes sense for their company, and rapidly iterate those existing processes and projects to make sure they are continuously delivering highly effective results.

Fully embraced, agile marketing can transform the way your department works. Some folks think just having a daily stand-up meeting fulfills the tenants of being an agile marketer, but that’s not the case. You really need to adhere to all the principles to fully realize the power of agile marketing.

You’ll likely find that agile team members approach their jobs with a new mind-set, with an eye toward faster time to revenue for each project. The good news is that agile marketing doesn’t necessarily mean working longer hours; rather, it’s a way of working more efficiently.



“one-day bursts of autonomy.” Your team might want to consider its own form of a 24-hour burst to see what you can deliver and how these creative sessions can help you break out of any ruts into which you may have fallen.

## 8 Put testing at the core.

Agile marketing should allow you to try new creative, content and more. Mistakes and stumbles are inevitable, so just remember to “fail fast.” Success is largely a matter of how you respond when things go wrong.

To that end, testing and reporting should be among the final arbiters as to what works and what’s less than successful. Test whether various campaign elements are resonating and quickly regroup and try something else if your results are less than stellar.

## 9 Consider done better than perfect.

A hallmark of agile is that you deliver as soon as you possibly can and then immediately begin to iterate on what you’ve done to make it better. For example, you might create a welcome email for anyone who opts in to your database, follow up by building a multi-part welcome series, and then begin work on a data-driven, behavior-based onboarding series.

Getting to the last phase may take some time, but starting with the basics will allow you to begin and start realizing the benefits of your new initiative. Plus, your innovation doesn’t get stuck in the “too hard” pile for years. One caveat: To remain agile, deliver in rapid cycles of a few weeks or months, but not years

## 10 Remember: Speed often wins, and being first counts for a lot.

Many marketers have a high level of perfection about everything they do. This is completely understandable and partly a relic from the days of having to print many marketing materials. In the analog world, marketers had to work much slower, performing extra editing and proofing while getting many sign-offs and approvals. Because lots of budget dollars were spent to print these materials, they had to be perfect.

As a result, becoming more agile sometimes requires having to “untrain” yourself and let go of previous work habits. Being extra cautious and getting substantial consensus takes valuable time, and that’s time when you could be in the market with new campaigns — time when a competitor could get in the market before you. Applying agile marketing principles will help ensure that you’re early, not late.

### Footnotes

1-“[Listening to the customer: 7 key customer experience trends](#)”

## 10 Tips for Becoming an Agile Marketing Team



Silverpop, an IBM Company, is a cloud-based digital marketing provider that offers email marketing, lead-to-revenue management and mobile engagement solutions. Silverpop Engage — the foundation of the IBM Marketing Cloud — uses customer data and individual behaviors, collected from a variety of sources, to inform and drive personalized interactions in real time. IBM Marketing Cloud powers the delivery of exceptional experiences for customers across the buyer journey by leveraging key data, providing analytical insights and automating relevant cross-channel interactions. As part of IBM Marketing Solutions, Silverpop helps make it easier to design meaningful customer experiences across applications, devices and time, accelerating today’s results and tomorrow’s ambitions. Silverpop is trusted by more than 5,000 brands around the globe. For more information, [view our demo](#) and visit [silverpop.com](#).