

# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FROM THE EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN ALLIANCE



BY LARRAINE SEGIL

Is the role of CMO defunct? And will it be overcome by the role of COO? A recent Fortune Magazine article poses that question in the wake of companies such as UPS, Etsy, and Walgreens having eliminated their CMO positions.

I asked several of our EWA Thought Leaders who are current or recent CMOs to weigh in on this topic and organizational trend.



**Jourdan M. Hathaway, CMO, General Assembly**

"My previous role of SVP of Operations was the best thing that could have happened in my marketing career. It gave me a financial foundation that really changed how I approach marketing. When I became CMO, I had a much broader view of the business."

"So, I've experienced first-hand how these two disciplines overlap, influence, and enhance each other. It will be interesting to see how this trend of COOs and CROs absorbing the CMO role evolves. I suspect the pendulum will swing back to the inevitable return of the CMO position."



**Shari Hofer, former CMO, Wiley**

"The CMO role needs a definition and authority aligned with accountability. I'm not sure you can categorically eliminate the CMO role and integrate it under the COO's responsibility. However, if the COO were a former CMO and understood marketing and its impact on the organization, I would see that as a positive."

"AI brings exciting innovations such as SGE (search generative experiences) to support LLM (large language models) which bring into question a great deal of marketing's convention wisdom. Seeing these tools in action and their impact on the future of marketing makes me feel that the distinct and separate role of CMO is more important than ever."



**Melanie Marcus, CMO, Surescripts**

"The CMO role definition, as well as where it sits in an organization, depends on many factors such as a company's business model, growth stage and size."

"For example, a B2B company on a growth path needs a CMO to align strategically with the market, use the brand to pave a path in the market and with employees, and of course lead demand generation. For a start-up, the CMO role is very different."

"When an organization reaches a plateau, the CMO could find themselves taking on other responsibilities more typical to a COO. Personally, I feel the more interesting extensions for a CMO are in customer experience and strategy. But in any case, eventually that company will need the CMO in their full CMO capacity again to keep evolving and growing."



**Amy Radin, Pragmatic Innovation Partners LLC, Marketing, Digital, Innovation expert**

"Marketing is a business discipline that calls upon a unique and complex set of skills. The discipline has moved from being about 'the four P's' – Product, Place, Price and Promotion – to now being heavily driven by emerging technology, data analytics, customer experience, critical thinking, strategy and financial analysis. Marketers must be empathetic listeners, intellectually curious, resourceful, and adaptable. Irrespective of the title, the question to ask is: Does the executive accountable for marketing have the skills, leadership capacity, and mindset to lead a modern-day marketing function? Do they recognize how quickly the field is evolving, and do they demonstrate the ability to build, develop and motivate a diverse team encompassing these skills and abilities? These are the critical questions to answer in figuring out how to situate the function in the organization."

This topic is definitely one to watch. I'd love to know your thoughts and what you are seeing in your organizations.

Until next time,

*Lorraine*

Founder, Chair & CFO  
Exceptional Women Alliance Foundation

Follow Us

