

Timing Right for Kronos to Develop New Marketing Metrics and Dashboard

The Situation

Founded in 1977 and headquartered in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, Kronos Incorporated empowers organizations around the world to effectively manage their workforce. As a global provider of human capital management solutions, Kronos is an expert at enabling organizations to reduce costs, increase productivity, improve employee satisfaction, and ultimately enhance the level of service they provide. Widely recognized as a market and thought leader in managing the workforce, Kronos has unrivaled reach with more than 30 million people using a Kronos solution every day.

Over the years, Kronos marketing had developed various lead generation reports to track specific programs but the reports did not link marketing activity directly to sales results or to business goals. When Stuart Itkin joined Kronos as chief marketing officer, he brought with him a passion for metrics, measuring marketing investments and marketing dashboards.

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The Need

The company had a number of new corporate goals which offered an opportunity for the marketing team to revisit the use of metrics. “We needed a more integrated view of marketing. We also needed to be able to demonstrate the link between marketing investments and the attainment of key corporate initiatives,” said Itkin. Previous scorecards did not provide actionable information or show how marketing activity was helping the organization achieve its goals.

The Decision

Kronos chose to use an external consultant to support its marketing dashboard initiative. “We wanted to work with someone who could provide both expertise and bandwidth,” offered Itkin. VisionEdge Marketing (VEM) had been invited to present at a Kronos marketing meeting and the attendees liked VEM’s perspective on marketing metrics. As the

requirement to build a marketing dashboard became a priority, VEM was a natural choice.

The Process

VisionEdge Marketing deployed its MetricsFirst™ service to support the Kronos project. As part of the first step in the process, VEM reviewed the existing scorecards and data. In the meantime, Kronos established a small project team led by Nina Giovannelli, strategic initiatives business manager.

During an on-site session, VEM shared the results of the critical review of the scorecards with the project team. The team acknowledged that existing tools didn’t provide the insight Kronos needed to evaluate marketing’s impact on the business.

“The on-site session served as a catalyst,” said Giovannelli. “VEM helped us realize we needed to reframe the marketing objectives within the context of desired business outcomes. So we went back to square one, which was a discussion of the corporate goals. Then we discussed how marketing could impact these specific outcomes. If marketing was moving the needle, we had to know how much.” At the end of the session, the project team had a list of measurable objectives and performance targets, expressed in marketing terms and linked directly to business outcomes.

The next step was to determine whether there were data sources to support the metrics. Because the team had to rely on multiple systems to track the effectiveness of marketing activities, there were some data inconsistencies. “This step forced us to have critical conversations about definitions. For example, we had different criteria across the organization for what defined a customer. The limitations imposed on us by the data itself didn’t deter us, though. We agreed that the specific number wasn’t nearly as important as the trends that would emerge,” added Giovannelli.

After the data sources were identified and terms defined, a pro-forma dashboard was created using historical data. The pro-forma was built and designed by an internal team member who was instrumental in assembling data and in designing the visual display of complex information. It sparked more conversations about assumptions related to uplift, close rates, and the length of the sales cycle. According to Giovannelli, one of the key learnings applicable to any company considering this type of project

was the realization that companies probably have better data than they think they have. “The exercise is worth doing because it forces you to hone in on the key variables. We built the model so that we can plug in new assumptions when better information becomes available.”

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The project team then began to develop the beta version of the dashboard. Data was scrubbed, assumptions were clearly spelled out, and the model was tested by adding additional quarters of information. This step began to provide insight into how far the needle has to move and how much of an investment is required.

Once the beta was produced the team began to make formal presentations to the rest of the marketing organization. “We found it much easier to socialize the data and the dashboard because we had engaged key members of the marketing management team throughout the entire process. We acknowledged the data issues early on, keeping these issues from becoming barriers to acceptance,” stated Giovannelli.

In less than six months the company went from scorecard review to having a production dashboard. The new dashboard provides actionable data to facilitate decisions in several key areas such as marketing’s impact related to add-on products, upgrades, and penetration of new markets.

The Results

“Had we done this work on our own, we might have been content to look at traditional marcom metrics without explicitly showing the link between marketing effort and the corporate goals,” commented Itkin.

The company achieved several other benefits that are relevant to any company. The marketing team is now more integrated and collaborative. Everyone is working from the same set of marketing objectives that are directly tied to corporate initiatives and the same set of metrics, enabling better integration, collaboration, as well as improved efficiencies. Employees are suggesting ways for better focus and targeting.

“We have changed the way we think and are now asking different questions,” said Itkin. “People began to realize that our current efforts were potentially insufficient to meet the goals and the teams are reevaluating their plans. The very existence of the dashboard is helping create better alignment between marketing and other organizations, such as sales and services.”

About VisionEdge Marketing

VisionEdge Marketing (www.visionedgemarketing.com) is a data-driven metrics-based strategic and product marketing consulting firm recognized as a thought leader in the area of marketing performance management. The company excels at helping companies strengthen their competitive advantage, accelerate their ability to acquire, keep, and grow profitable customers, and measure marketing’s contribute to business goals. Founded in 1999, VisionEdge Marketing is located in Austin, Texas.

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