

The First 100 Days: Your Window for Opportunity



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The Digital Marketing Leader's First 100 Days

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The role of digital marketing leader is broad in remit, incorporating strategic leadership and execution, and touching many stakeholders. Your performance in the first 100 days sets the trajectory for your career in the organization. This research offers advice and resources to help you succeed.

Key Findings

- Success as a digital marketing leader depends on identifying, prioritizing and driving digital marketing — the campaigns, marketing programs and activities that will build customer consideration, deliver revenue and increase lifetime value to your business.
- This role requires a broad set of skills, from strategic and leadership to analytical, creative and technical. You already possess some of these skills, but your success will depend on your ability to build and mobilize a team to complement your skills.
- Your role is broad and, consequently, excellent stakeholder management and influencing skills are essential. Demonstrating and socializing evidence of the value you bring to the business will help you attain buy-in and secure support from your team and your stakeholders.

Recommendations

- Set clear priorities. Quickly identify the three digital marketing issues or opportunities you will address to make the most meaningful impact in your first 100 days. Be careful not to overcommit.
- Assess your team to understand their skills, strengths and weaknesses. Identify opportunities for development and skill gaps that need to be filled. Build a resource plan, setting out whose skills should be developed, where you need to hire, where you need to partner and where you need to trim.
- Identify the stakeholders who have the greatest impact and influence on your role. Build an engagement plan that will help you better understand their goals. Clearly communicate how your role fits with their role, and how you will help them achieve their goals.

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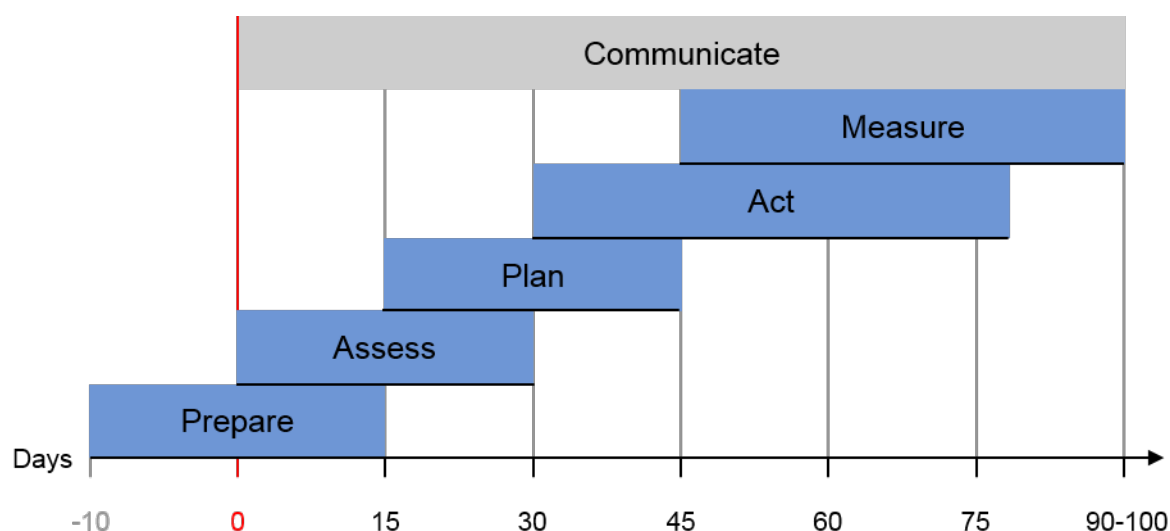
Introduction

The first 100 days constitute an expected "honeymoon" or transition period. This all-too-brief period is yours to formulate a course of action, make connections, and establish and communicate a personal management style. It is within this critical period that you establish yourself and create the basic perceptions that others will, for better or worse, associate with your subsequent plans and actions.

Proper preparation, assessment, planning, acting, measuring and, above all, communicating can greatly enhance your chances of success. This research highlights the key activities that focus on critical issues and provides actions and resources to help you achieve your intended outcomes.

We break down your first 100 days into six phases, each overlapping with suggested durations that you can customize. Each phase includes critical target outcomes, actions and resources, as well as some optional ideas to consider as time and resources allow. The Communicate Phase spans the full duration, and we include specific actions for effective communication for each phase.

Figure 1. First 100 Days Roadmap



Source: Gartner (March 2016)

A successful agenda for the first 100 days should:

- Begin prior to your arrival by researching the organization's digital marketing experience.
- Identify and focus on key issues and opportunities. Build an action plan that will impact business results.
- Develop and communicate your digital marketing vision and plan to stakeholders.
- Define and communicate realistic, measurable and time-bound goals, and track progress.

- Establish strong relationships with your peers and communicate a clear vision of the strengths, weaknesses and evolution plan for your team.

The First 100 Days Plan

Prepare Phase (Days –10 to 15)

Take action before your start date to learn about your role, the marketing activities of the organization, and how you will work with your team and your colleagues.

Target Outcomes for the Prepare Phase

- Define your role's scope. Reach agreements with your supervisor on what you're accountable for, how you'll be measured and what are your success criteria. Define the authority that you have to make changes to how you plan and deliver digital marketing. At this stage, it's important to ascertain if the scope of your role has changed since you accepted the position. For example, do you now have revenue accountability for online sales channels?
- Identify and suggest the digital marketing strategic key performance indicators that are linked to the organization's strategy, if success metrics are not clear. Suggest how they will link to marketing performance measures. Validate by aligning with your supervisor and defining must-do marketing priorities — how is the supervisor performing and how is that performance measured? And, what does "good" look like?
- Close the gaps between accountability and authority. Let's say you are accountable for the delivery of the digital marketing strategy, but execution happens outside your team. Suggest the processes that will help you bridge that gap.

Actions for the Prepare Phase

- **Learn the business:** Get to know the appropriate industry terms, trends and issues. Join relevant LinkedIn groups, and familiarize yourself with the latest news and developments from trade sites.
- **Observe marketing:** See how the organization uses marketing channels and tactics. What's their presence look like on their websites, third-party retail sites, search engines and social media? Sign-up for emails and download mobile apps.
- **Be the customer:** Experience the end-to-end customer experience, for both online and offline channels. Build an understanding of how well online and offline channels and activities integrate, and where there's room for improvement.

Communications in the Prepare Phase

Before Day 1

Meet the agencies: Schedule an introduction meeting with the key contacts in your agencies. Get a feel for how the organization interacts with them, how they are structured and how you measure and reward their performance. Get an early view on what's working, and what's not, in the agency/client relationship.

Write an introduction: Prepare introductory communication material about yourself, your background and your initial thoughts on joining the organization. Make this content as fact-based and neutral as possible, and keep it short and succinct. For example, try a 100-word bio, along with some personal information about your key priorities in life and work, your value systems and integrity.

Draft Discussion Guides:

- **Stakeholder discussions:** Prepare a list of no more than five questions, some specific and others open-ended, that will ensure the early stakeholder conversations yield insights beyond the polite meet and greets. For example, while meeting key business stakeholders, ask them about their perception and satisfaction levels with the organization's current state of marketing, in general, and digital marketing, specifically. Ensure you capture any urgent issues, chronic pain areas, priorities and general expectations.
- **Staff discussions:** Prepare a list of similar questions for your first meeting with your team. Ask them about their key work challenges and constraints, and their perception and satisfaction levels with their team and wider organization. Aim to understand not just their day-to-day, but their aspirations and motivations for growth so that you can keep this in mind as you formulate your vision for your team's evolution.

Actions and Communications on Day 1

Meet and Greet: Call a meeting for everyone in your direct team, in person and through videoconferencing or audio conferencing for remote workers. This meeting has two objectives: to introduce yourself and to show that you are approachable and available to everyone. Offer no opinions of any kind. Explain that you are still gathering information and are not yet ready to make decisions or changes.

During the meet and greet:

- Deliver the introductory message you drafted in advance, setting out who you are and how you'd like to work with them. State when you will report back to the team with updates on your progress.
- Let the people attending the meeting introduce themselves in their own way and ask whatever questions are on their minds.

- Remember some detail about each person that will help you start conversations later.
- Be mindful of any apparent biases — identify internal political/social issues that may remain from your predecessors.
- Be careful not to come on too strong or appear as a threat or hurdle to your team and their performance — first impressions are lasting ones. You need to clearly establish your leadership credentials and your gravitas, while showing that you are accessible and mindful of their thoughts, aspirations, experience and concerns.
- Understand your direct reports' concerns, priorities and career aspirations. Which ones understand and can articulate the bigger picture? Which ones seem siloed in their views? Where do they need immediate help?

Regroup With Your Manager: Wrap up the Prepare Phase with a meeting with your manager that covers:

- Key challenges and opportunities from your point of view
- Preliminary strategic vision
- Communications schedule for the future between the two of you

Resources for the Prepare Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

"Seven Habits of High Performing Marketing Organizations"

"The Digital Marketing Transit Maps"

"How to Tell Memorable Marketing Stories"

"Use Gartner's Marketing Maturity Model to Build Digital Marketing Muscle"

"A New Marketing Analytics Framework for CMOs"

Other Suggested Resources

"5 Tips for New Team Leaders," Harvard Business Review

"Perfecting Your Personal Pitch: A Case of Self-Branding," LinkedIn

Assess Phase (Days 0 to 30)

In this phase, focus on understanding your organization's culture. Your observations of the organization and of marketing operations in this phase will start to form your embryonic digital marketing strategy.

Use this time to build a picture of business performance, both at a corporate level and specifically in its marketing activities. Focus on identifying the levers that drive performance, and who has control of these levers. Work with your team and your agencies to understand performance across channels — how well aligned are the marketing and digital objectives with the corporate objectives? What does current performance look like? It's important that you don't restrict your observations to purely internal measures, but also look at performance in the context of the wider market.

You may have inherited issues and challenges from your predecessor, and as a result, it can be easy to be drawn into firefighting during the first 30 days. Articulate what will and will not be addressed at this stage because it can be easy to be drawn into tactical and operational issues. This will stymie your ability to build the strategy and to focus on the activities that will help you deliver the most value in the immediate term.

Clearly communicating your observations, and how they're informing your positions is important at this stage.

Target Outcomes for the Assess Phase

- Determine corporate goals, marketing strategy and fit with the digital marketing strategy.
- Define the capabilities and resources that are available to you, and define where there are gaps.
- Build the basis of your digital strategy, and socialize this plan with key stakeholders to attain early buy in.

Actions for the Assess Phase

- **Manage requests to fight immediate "fires":** Ensure that you have the space to build the strategy, and that you aren't pulled into protracted issues quickly.
- **Define the decision-making framework:** Understand how decisions are made and the scope of your decision making in the business. How does your remit fit with the CMO and other key stakeholders?
- **Review the strategy:** Review the incumbent digital marketing strategy. Determine the corporate goals and wider marketing strategy and priorities. Determine how well digital marketing is aligned with the corporate and marketing strategy. Can you establish a link between the corporate goals and digital marketing's strategic and tactical levers? For example, if the business goal is to grow the lifetime value of your existing customers, then are the media, channels and tactics aligned with this goal?
- **Assess digital marketing performance:** Identify digital marketing metrics and key performance indicators, how they link with the wider marketing measures, and how they are aligned with the corporate goals. Is all the required data available, and of the right quality? Perform a 24-month audit by assessing digital marketing programs and campaigns 12 months forward and back.

- **Identify your customers:** Understand your customer and anticipate and meeting their needs as it is the key tenet of your role. Meet with the customer insights team — or, better yet, with customers themselves. Spend time looking over target vs. actual audience. Build a picture of who your customers are, what their motivations are and what their current feelings are about your brand.
- **Sketch out the customer experience:** Look at the macro level, even though it's too early to build a detailed picture of the customer experience. Where does it perform well and where are the pain points? How well does this fit with assumptions of customer experience within the organization?
- **Audit your resources:** Determine whether you will be able to meet digital marketing objectives with these resources. Consider:
 - **Budget:** Review allocation by marketing channel relative to impact and performance. Do you have sufficient budget to meet goals? What is the split between digital budgets and offline channels? How was the budget set, and how well has it been managed in the past?
 - **Talent:** Define the digital marketing maturity of your team. Are they commensurate with organization's goals? Identify gaps and determine your ability to bridge the gaps.
 - **Technology:** Review the portfolio of platforms and tools that you and your team use. For example, consider the tools and platforms used to manage your website, deliver you commerce experience and monitor and manage your social interactions — do you have the ability to flex and change where required?
 - **Time:** Evaluate processes, such as development, to see what you can and can't accelerate.
- **Build a strategic outline:** Start with a strength, weakness opportunity and threat analysis. From this build a set of positions and an agenda for change. At this stage, this is just a strawman. Clearly communicate this to your key stakeholders.

Communications in the Assess Phase

- **Continue the dialogue:** Following initial inductions so now you need to schedule regular meetings with your team and key stakeholders. Understand that not all associates have a clear view of your role and its responsibilities, so state in simple and unambiguous terms the scope of your role, how it fits with their role, and how you'll work together to meet the organization's goals. At this stage, you should have an understanding of which stakeholders are supportive of your role. Develop a relationship with them because they will be important to help build buy-in across the organization.
- **Engage with your supervisor:** Keep them apprised of your observations, processes for collecting information and the development of the digital marketing strategy. Use your supervisor as a sounding board to test your positions before communicating with the wider business.
- **Don't "endgame":** At this stage, you're still in information gathering mode. Your positions will become the basis for your digital marketing strategy, but they are still in development, and will require deeper insights before a fully formed plan that can be presented to the business.

Resources for the Assess Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

"Gartner's Intelligent Brand Framework Informs a Holistic Digital Marketing Strategy"

"Leading the Change in the Digital Marketing Transformation"

"Use Gartner's Marketing Maturity Model to Build Digital Marketing Muscle"

Other Suggested Resources

"[Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practices](#)," Pearson

"[Three Elements of Successful Change Management](#)," MarketingProfs

Plan Phase (Days 15 to 45)

After a couple of weeks, you'll start to settle into the organization and become more familiar with your team. You're an exciting new hire, so in this phase it's important that you start to deliver tangible value to the business — this will help you build valuable momentum. But be sure to do so in a way that doesn't set binding commitments for the midterm and long term because you'll want to hone the longer-term deliverables once your plan is solidified.

From the Assess Phase you'll already have a thumbnail sketch of your plan. It's time to validate your assumptions and create a clear action plan, stating realistically what you'll deliver in the near term (within the first three months). Your actions should be based on organizational realities and should reflect the tolerance for change within the business.

Near-term actions should be balanced against a view of what will be delivered within the year and the long term. For midterm and longer-term actions, be clear that these are in draft form, and will be firmed up on agreement of the digital marketing strategy.

Target Outcomes for the Plan Phase

- Define the burning imperative — the key deliverable that will drive your team onward to a shared purpose.
- Obtain a clear picture of the tolerance for change. What can be realistically changed and by when?
- Identify early wins. These are projects you should be overinvesting in the near term.

Actions for the Plan Phase

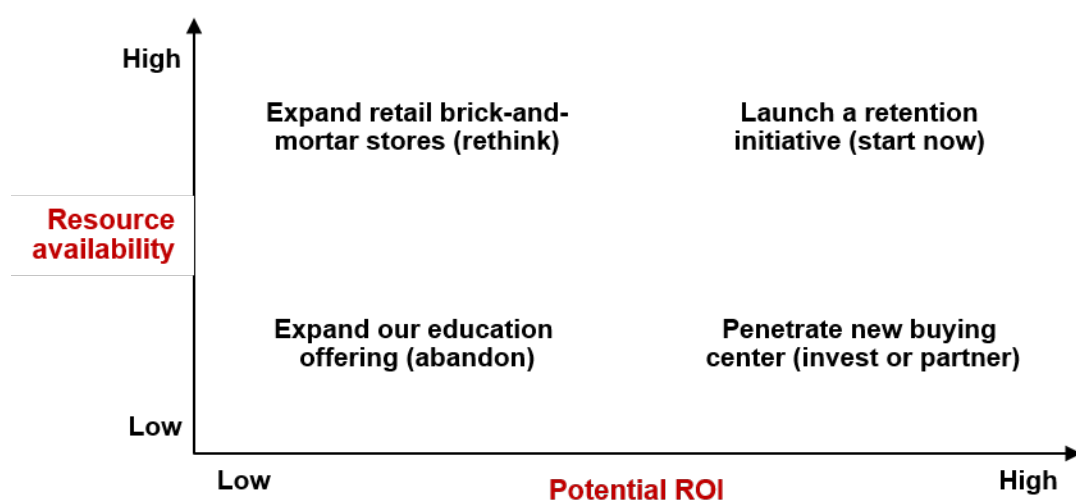
- **Identify a burning imperative:** In the Assess Phase, you executed a listening campaign and dug into strategy and performance data. You accumulated various ideas, diverging opinions and

priorities others deemed as critical. But before you try and address everything (the biggest mistake new leaders tend to make), take a step back and remember the advice to "make few commitments and keep every one of them." Identify the burning imperative that reveals itself from your research, the common denominator surfacing from your conversations. For example:

- Identify key pain points that can be easily fixed to drive-up conversions and revenue, for example, usability fixes on marketing website.
- Address areas in your team where duplication in effort is driving-up costs; for example, the online retail team and the online advertising team operating competing paid search campaigns.
- Introduce new tactics; for example, implementing remarketing with discount vouchers to win back prospective customers who abandon the shopping cart on your store before completing their transaction.
- **Understand the tolerance for change:** You will now have a good understanding of the organization and how marketing operations function. Take this to the next level, building a clear picture of the tolerance for change within the organization. Take care not to dismiss existing tools, processes and ways of working out of hand without first understanding the context for their existence. A common mistake that leaders make is negating decisions that predate their tenure without understanding the organizational context or the tolerance for change. Apply this knowledge to your burning imperative, ensuring that you don't try to drive too much jarring change too quickly while you're still establishing your position in the business.
- **Evaluate organization design:** Apply your lessons regarding tolerance for change to the design of your team. Ensure that you have the right capabilities and resources to support your burning imperative, while building a longer-term view of the structure required to support your near, midterm and long-term action plans. Discuss with your supervisor proposed changes, being sensitive of areas where the required capabilities and resources fall outside your current team.
- **Review digital marketing budget and spending:** In the Assess Phase, you dug into budgets and spending. It's now time to undertake a deeper audit, building a picture of how your digital budget stack-up against other businesses (see "Presentation for CMO Spend Survey, 2015-2016"). Also compare against the wider marketing spending in the organization, and build a picture of how well the budget is aligned with the corporate and digital marketing goals. Define the areas of flex within the budget, specifically in line with your burning imperative, but also in reference to your longer-term action plans.
- **Review channel choices:** Your success will be defined by your ability to select the channels that allow for cost-effective customer acquisition, while building the long-term value and profitability of your customers. Looking at previous campaigns and activation, how well integrated are your channels? Do they match the decision making and buying journeys of your current and prospective customers? Are you attributing value across all material channels, or is there too strong a focus at the bottom of the funnel? While your focus is digital, you should take a holistic view, considering online and offline channels and how they integrate.
- **Plan for early wins:** Start building project plans for early wins, stating clearly the deliverables and benefits. You will already have identified the resources and budget that you can use to drive

success with the project in the first 100 days. Focus on the areas where you see both existing capacity to effect change and the potential for highest returns. The model in Figure 2 shows a framework for defining the best bets for delivering an early win. Concentrate on projects where there is high resource availability and high potential ROI; for example, if you already have a strong paid search capability and budget, and you have identified opportunities to significantly increase efficiency and conversions by boosting investment in remarketing, this could be a strong candidate for an early win. Other projects, such as making large-scale user experience changes to your site, or developing new capabilities from scratch, would not be strong candidates to deliver in the short term. Delegate ownership of the projects to members of your team, focusing on those who you have established as trusted and capable.

Figure 2. Invest in Early Wins That Have High Value and Probability of Successful Delivery



Source: Gartner (March 2016)

Map your early wins using Figure 2. Focus in the opportunities that fall in the top right hand corner of the grid.

Communications in the Plan Phase

- **Support your plan:** Ensure you support your plan with data such as conversion rates, cost-per-visitor or revenue. Clearly cite your data in the communications around the easy win projects, reinforcing that you have made pragmatic decisions based on your assessment of the current situation and the opportunities that arise.
- **State caveats:** You may not always have all the data you need to support the decision regarding your plan. Be clear about where you have had to make assumptions.
- **Define goals and metrics:** Specify what you will be delivering and by when. This needs to be communicated to your supervisor and your team, but also to your stakeholders.

- **Track progress:** Report on progress and early successes to your supervisor, team and stakeholders.
- **Celebrate success:** Delegate important projects to your team as a key way of building trust and commitment. Reward that trust by openly celebrating and sharing their success throughout the delivery of the project.

Resources for the Plan Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

"Presentation for CMO Spend Survey 2015-2016: Digital Marketing Comes of Age"

"Toolkit: Compare Your Digital Marketing Spending With Your Peers', 2015-2016"

"Toolkit: Move to a Digital Marketing Brief to Create Customer-Centric Marketing Programs"

Other Suggested Resources

"[The Quick Wins Paradox](#)" Harvard Business Review

Act Phase (Days 30 to 80)

The Act Phase is all about performance. You will now be delivering your quick wins, proving your assumptions, gaining legitimacy in the business and setting out your approach moving forward.

Target Outcomes for the Act Phase

- Deliver tangible benefits to the business through early win projects.
- Solidify relationships across the business, both with your team and your stakeholders.
- Set clear expectations of the results your early wins will deliver.

Actions for the Act Phase

- **Deliver early wins:** In the Plan Phase, you outlined ways to deliver tangible value to the business, fast. You now need to clearly demonstrate that the projects you initiated are paying off. Through clear communication of your success to stakeholders across the business, you will gain legitimacy in the business. You'll prove that the assumptions that you made were correct, which you'll be able to leverage, enabling you to execute the rest of the items on your action plan.
- **Build and mobilize the team:** Depending on the organization, you may have direct accountability for the teams that build and execute digital marketing projects and campaigns. Alternatively, these teams may be dispersed across the business. Regardless, you need to formalize the structure and nature of your communications. Initiate digital marketing steering meetings, bringing together the senior stakeholders from across the business to discuss the

digital marketing roadmap, performance and progress of key programs. For any direct reports, adopt an agile approach to your meetings with short daily meetings where you can quickly get up to speed with progress and potential impediments for performance. Establish regular meetings with the broader digital marketing team, using this as an important forum to communicate the vision and strategy, communicate progress and identify potential issues.

- **Draft a measurement framework:** You need to demonstrate the success of your early wins. Be clear, show the current state and the incremental benefit that your projects will deliver. For example, by implementing remarketing across our sites we anticipate we will increase conversion rates from 0.8% in June to 1.3% in August, delivering 3,500 additional sales.
- **Stay agile:** Your early wins are a reflection of the agility you employed in the Prepare, Assess and Plan Phases. Chunk up projects on your action plan. This can be a challenge in large hierarchical organization, but your agility is key to ensuring your longer term success and your ability to deliver against your action plan.
- **Get feedback:** At this pivotal stage, make sure you're meeting the expectations of your supervisor, and your peers and team. Solicit feedback. Factor the results to tweak and hone your plans and your interactions moving forward.

Communications in the Act Phase

- **Keep it simple:** The nature of your role means that you have a diverse range of stakeholders, from subject matter experts to digital marketing novices. In all instances, keep your communications simple and focused on business outcomes and results.
- **Be hands on:** Your role balances the ability to build a robust digital marketing strategy and the ability to drive excellent execution. In the Act Phase, you will solidify your position as a conductor orchestrating digital success through your team, rather than an aloof blue sky thinker.
- **Be collegial and collaborative:** Your success will depend on the great relationships you have with stakeholders across the business, from the marketing leadership team to sales and IT leaders. Do not forget the excellent relationship you develop with your agencies and partners. Strike the right tone of collaboration in the Act Phase of communications
- **Be continuous:** Formalize and regulate your communications, setting clear expectations of what will be delivered to whom and by when.
- **Get feedback:** You still have much to learn from your team, so engaging in feedback at this stage clearly shows you value their thoughts. Also be free in your feedback to your team. Rewarding and praising exemplary behavior is important, both in your early days and throughout your career.

Resources for the Act Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

"What It Means to Be an Agile Marketer"

"A New Marketing Analytics Framework for CMOs"

"The Seven Habits of High-Performing Marketing Cultures"

Other Suggested Resources

"Daily Meetings, Guide to Agile Practices," Agile Alliance

Measure Phase (Days 45 to 100)

You've put in all the ground work — it's now time to review how things have gone. Use your data to dig into what went well, and what didn't land as you thought it would. What progress can you report to the business against your goals, and how do they link with the wider marketing strategy and business objectives?

Target Outcomes for the Measure Phase

- Review progress against goals
- Validate/invalidate any assumptions — identifying new sources of insights
- Formalize your metrics framework
- Make data the center of your decision making framework

Actions for the Measure Phase

- **Review detailed metrics:** Define your progress against the initial goals you set. Were you able to fully deliver on the easy wins you identified? Validate assumptions you made and where incorrect assumptions were made.
- **Communicate lessons and correct assumptions:** If you were not able to deliver early wins, then it is vitally important that you communicate lessons and correct assumptions. Incorrect first impressions must not set the mood for later decision making. Capture and summarize your findings and outcomes and share with your key stakeholders with an honest appraisal of what worked, what did not.
- **Formalize your measurement framework:** You should already have gotten an understanding of the availability of data and current state of metrics. Now you will be in a position to define the key metrics to track the success of your programs. Be clear on the hierarchy of metrics, setting out:
 - Strong link with organizational goals and the wider marketing strategy.

- Clear distinction between the tactical/optimization measures and the strategic diagnostics and levers.
- An honest view of target vs. actual performance.
- A view of the metrics that are included, and those that will not. Often there's a legacy of metrics in the organization, some of which offer great value. Be prepared to exclude those that are not useful in decision making.
- **Make data the center of your decision-making framework:** As digital marketing leader, you should be at the center of building a data-driven decision-making culture in your organization. Set example behavior from the start, ensuring that you use data as the basis for success:

Communications in the Measure Phase

- **Make your story fact-based:** Use data to inform your story. Don't rely on anecdote alone.
- **Keep it simple and to the point:** Similar to the technique you used in the Plan Phase, keep it simple, summarized, and be sure your results tell a story that others can understand and internalize.
- **Be confident, but not boastful:** Even if you won big, resist the temptation run a victory lap. Demonstrate some reserve and humility in your communications.
- **Ensure you are alert, but not demoralized:** If your early wins failed to come to fruition, then demonstrate how you've actively learned from the experience and how it will inform your next set of actions. It's OK to be disappointed, but don't communicate negativity. Look forward, not back.
- **Be mindful of what lies ahead:** Regardless of whether your first 100 days has gone specifically as planned, demonstrate that you're mindful of the road ahead. After all, your role as a digital marketing leader will be longer than the first 100 days. Your goal is to make these early days the springboard for a long and successful tenure.

Resources for the Measure Phase

Gartner Research and Tools

"How Leaders Manage Data-Driven Marketing"

"Survey Analysis: How B2B Leaders Manage Data-Driven Marketing and What B2C Leaders Can Learn From Them"

"How to Measure a Digital Marketing Campaign"

"Use the Hierarchy of Digital Commerce Marketing Metrics to Balance Business Results"

"How Leaders Manage Data-Driven Marketing"

Other Suggested Resources

["How to Embrace the Five Steps of Data-Driven Marketing,"](#) Forbes

Gartner Recommended Reading

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

"The Rise of the Digital CMO"

"Marketing Management Primer for 2016"

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