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Marketing directors shake up traditional firm structures

by Sharon Krugman

Some marketers are unclear about what their roles are within firms, and whether there is even room for advancement within their current job position.

A full 43 percent of marketing directors would like to become principals of their firms, while 42 percent said that they could not, according to a survey conducted by Capstone Marketing Inc., a company specializing in providing marketing consulting services to accounting and law firms.

"One of the most interesting findings of this survey is that the 42 percent of marketing di-

rectors who indicated that they were not sure whether they could become principals in their firms are interested in the opportunity," said

Jean Marie Caragher, president of Capstone Marketing. "Marketing directors must meet with firm management to define their career paths and determine the criteria by which they can achieve principalship."

Of 64 marketing directors surveyed, 38 percent were not sure if they could become principals of their firms and 19 percent indicated that they could. In some

cases, marketing directors are being misinformed, or firm partnerships aren't interested in hiring high-level marketing directors, Caragher said.

The surveyed directors had an average of 3.4 years of tenure with their firms, an average of 4.3 years of professional services marketing experience and an average of 9.4 years of total marketing experience, Capstone reported.

Russ Molinar, associate director of the Global Assurance and Advisory Business (See MARKETING page 56)



Jean Marie Caragher
CAPSTONE MARKETING

MARKETING

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Services at Ernst & Young, and the president of the Association for Accounting Marketing, thinks that one reason that marketers don't know their potential for growth is because they have not asked.

"In most firms there is not anyone in sales/marketing on a principal level," said Molinar. "A marketer should be able to sit down with a managing partner and ask, 'What will it take for me to become a principal?'" he said.

Molinar also said that there might be confusion, even among partners, as to what role a marketer can play in a firm.

"Increasingly, expectations are changing. Often, managing partners look for a connection between marketing and sales," he said, adding that this miscommunication is partly the fault of both marketing directors and managing partners. "Marketing directors don't take the time to educate managing partners on what marketing is," he said.

The trademark role of a marketing director generally includes design, newsletters, event planning, seminar throw-

ing, tactical, as opposed to strategic activities, and writing press releases, said Molinar.

"Marketing is more support for accountants rather than people being responsible for getting business for the firm," said Jeffrey Weiner, managing

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partner of Woodbury, N.Y.-based Marcum and Kliegman. "They basically help accountants with marketing plans."

He would consider making a marketing director a principal, he said. "I have no problem sitting down with people and going over goals and objectives at any level," said Weiner. "Every day someone wants to know how to get ahead — it is to our advantage."

Not all firms feel that way. Patricia Luchs, who is currently the national marketing director at the Chicago-based law firm Seyfarth & Shaw, switched firms to advance her career, an opportunity that she felt she did not have before joining Seyfarth. "I felt that my old firm was a great place to work, but I wanted to grow in my profes-

sional career," said Luchs. "I made very specific requests to be made a partner. At one point a managing partner told me that I was too old. Change is good for personal growth but it was sad that this request was never taken seriously. I came to

the conclusion that I would never be made a partner." Since she has switched firms Luchs has also taken another view on becoming a partner.

"The freedom to change firms now is more important to me than being a partner," she said. "I have concluded that the advantages to not being a partner have outweighed the advantages of being one. It limits your mobility."

Susan Lanfray, the director of marketing at Ellenbogen Rubenstein Eisdorfer & Co. has different thoughts. "One of the reasons I accepted the position here at Ellenbogen was because the partners saw marketing as an essential component and a key driver of future growth of the firm."

Through networking at con-

ferences, Lanfray has learned that different marketers choose different paths. She was sure she wanted to be made a principal. "Ellenbogen was looking for a senior marketer who had a potential to become principal of the firm," said Lanfray. "This

was right in line with where I wanted to go with my career. There was no room for advancement at my prior firm."

Five years ago, when the principal category was introduced at New York-based David Berdon & Co., Thalia Zetlin saw an opportunity for herself, as did the managing partner.

She suggests that "many firms have preconceived notions of what marketers can do. At these firms, marketers are given so many mundane tasks that there is not an opportunity to pursue the more strategic aspects of marketing," said Zetlin. "We, as marketers, have to work harder and longer to prove ourselves — more so than a certified public accountant."

Lynne Noella, the managing director of the Larson Allen

Marketing Group, a Minneapolis-based marketing strategy, branding and e-commerce marketing firm, is waiting to learn if she will become a principal of her firm or not.

"Whether I am made a principal or not has no effect on how well I do my job or how effective I am. I get many benefits the principals do," she said.

She suggests that a marketing director should really think over whether they would like to become a principal of the firm. "It would be embarrassing for a firm if they left. As time goes on, hierarchy and titles become less important because people have so many choices now," said Noella. "It's not the big cherry on top of the cake now."

Others really take on jobs because they want to be assured of their career paths. Marc Busny, a principal and marketing director at Tofias, Fleishman, Shapiro & Co., of Cambridge, Mass., joined the firm in 1997 because he was made aware of his potential growth within the firm.

"I clearly understood the avenue I had to take to get to principal," he said. "Every year, I would have a review and it was clear to me that I was on that