

Industry: Licensing the technology & hosting services for secure extranets for Business to Business e-commerce
Business: Internet Commerce
Title **Marketing Manager**
Interviewee Erin

Entering the Profession

Erin is in her late 20's and has been in marketing/advertising positions for the past 7 years. Erin graduated with an undergraduate degree in Biology and wanted to go into academia as a Professor of Biology. She worked in a laboratory as a researcher in infectious diseases like Tuberculosis and wanted to go on to work for the Center for Disease Control. Before she took on the commitment for a Ph.D. program she wanted to explore opportunities in areas where more human interaction was required. A family friend and mentor recommended the Marketing field and she took an Internship position as a Marketing Associate for a semester at a major global technology company. During her final year in school, Erin accepted a position with the same company.

In her current position as Marketing Manager, Erin has three marketing associates who directly report to her and she reports to the Director of Marketing, who then reports to the Vice President of Sales & Marketing. Major customers of these products and its services are Master Card, Visa, Deutch Telecom and American Express.

The most important thing to learn in marketing is to think like a customer, to think how customers or partners would feel about anything she said or did beforehand. It is important to have a mindset that is customer focused rather than technology driven. Within the organization Erin feels that the marketing department needs to be more involved especially in new product development to coordinate and implement the long-term marketing goals.

The most important job responsibility that Erin has is to create and direct marketing and advertising campaigns with the variety of products and services handled by the firm. She has also been part of a team to create the short and long term Action Plans for the Marketing Organization. Recently she also conducted through an independent market research firm a focused customer survey to examine the weaknesses and grow company's strengths in the American market. She stays in close touch with Europe and Asia area managers to implement market strategies and share customer insights.

Erin often has to make presentations to customers about the products, as well as presenting at trade shows about the brand, thus providing a mechanism for increasing Brand Awareness. Among other things Erin has to spend time mentoring her staff to achieve the requisite competencies. She also reviews each customer's home web portal developed by her reports.

At this time, Erin feels that growing to the next position will be a long haul. She believes that she would need to either get an MBA or get experience of at least 10 years in the various other areas of business to become a well-rounded executive.

Training

The Sales and Marketing force usually come from non-computer backgrounds and do not, coming in, have much information about the company's products and services. Training is brief, with people expected to come up to speed quickly.

Fortunately, my boss was an excellent mentor who guided me through my first three months as Marketing Associate for Distribution Channels and Alliances. I got a lot of help in interacting with partners and was taught the basics of our products and services. Mentoring was key to my surviving those first months, including giving me the basics of marketing and an understanding of business strategy.

To be successful in marketing Erin feels that the new recruits should be people-persons and enjoy interacting with customers. She also feels that it is critical for marketing or sales personnel to have excellent talking skills to make presentations to larger groups of people. She also looks to see if the interviewees have good writing skills. She asks her recruits to keep in touch with developments in the market through a lot of reading. A willingness to travel is an important ingredient to success in marketing and sales according to Erin.

Performance Determinants & Compensation

Performance reviews are held for the Sales and Marketing Organization once every six months. Depending upon the performance relative to goals, there is a percentage of the commitments achieved score. This figure is then multiplied with the achievements of the business unit as a whole. The resulting number is the percentage of bonus given to the employee. The total bonus given to the employee does not go beyond a percentage of the employee's salary.

Performance reviews are also held once a year where the longer-term growth and employee commitments are discussed. This is an opportunity for the employee to state his/her worth to the organization and request increments in salary or position.

Other bonus rewards are at the discretion of the manager. On achievement of a goal the manager can give a check as an 'Achievement Award'. This is usually \$500 or less.

The company also has a unique way of classifying an employee known as Employee Banding. Narrowly defined salary grades are collapsed into fewer and wider Career Bands. As a result, salary grades have been consolidated into eight bands. Labeling systems that use numbers or letters emphasize a hierarchy of status and position. With Career Bands, colors are used to reduce the sense of hierarchy and to emphasize a flatter, less bureaucratic structure.

Career Banding encourages a reduction in the number of levels in organizational structures, allowing for a more flexible organization. This process encourages a more rapid response to customer needs. The system is also designed to encourage cross-functional mobility:

Cross-functional mobility is encouraged as a more effective and results-oriented way to work; the emphasis is not on vertical boundaries for employee engagement. Employee development is focused on adding value to the organization. Employees are encouraged to expand their horizons through improving their skills, adding to their competencies and gaining new experiences and this occurs by expanding across functions. The company values this a lot.

Compensation can therefore be more flexible focusing on paying the employee specifically for his or her performance and competencies rather than paying for the job or grade. The employees' knowledge and contribution to the company are the key.

Greatest Challenges and Rewards

The greatest challenge that Erin faces is red tape. The problem is the Brand is a startup which is a very small business within a much bigger company. As Erin says:

We want to move at the speed of a startup despite the fact that the parent company is behemoth that lumbers along.

This makes it very difficult to react to a twist in customer offerings by competitors especially with the fast pace of change in the industry. Competitors can also react much faster to any marketing wrinkle that Erin comes up with.

Another challenge has been to keep up with technology change and the number of possible ways that the services can be configured. Erin tries to counter this by having a number of work-sessions with the technical team.

Another major challenge to Erin has been to manage customer and internal technical staff relations. Since service is a key component of the total package, Erin feels the need to make the engineers more customer focused rather than technology driven. She would like to manage the implementation and delivery of the package of solutions to her customers but thinks that her other responsibilities would then suffer.

Of late a growing challenge to Erin has been finding qualified manpower. She realizes she has high standards for her team of marketing associates as she seeks the right mix of attitude, business knowledge, technical skill and drive.