

Key findings from Warc's 2019 Future of Strategy report

Warc has released its 2019 Future of Strategy report on the changing role of strategy within the marketing landscape.



Image credit: Zoe Holling on Unsplash.

Now in its third year, the report is based on a survey of 800 senior strategists from around the world who provide an in-depth study of both the challenges and opportunities for strategists going forward.



The Future of Strategy Report 2018 is released by Warc

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Warc's Future of Strategy 2019 key findings are:

Seeing the power of CX

Customer experience (CX) is dominating the marketing agenda. Almost half of the strategists surveyed are doing more work on CX for clients this year and, for a quarter, work for direct-to-to-consumer (DTC) brands have increased.

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Respondents see this as an exciting opportunity as the strategist role and craft skills evolve to shape brand experiences and brand truths. Tom Morton, US Chief Strategy Officer, R/GA, says: "If experience is the new high ground for brands, experience strategists are the new brand guardians."

Strategists are in high demand

The growth in CX is driving demand for the strategic services of consultancies, which have used their tech and data heritage to position themselves as experience experts. One outcome of increased competition is that strategists are becoming untethered from their traditional place within agencies, with more career options to choose from.

Whilst 40% of strategists surveyed say their team has grown over the past year, 63% do not think their next role will be with an agency.

Agencies undervalue strategy

The movement of strategists away from agencies may be exacerbated by the perception that strategy is being undervalued in agencies. Though most believe their influence is growing internally, selling the value of strategic services to clients is a challenge in an environment of budget cuts and a lack of understanding around the role.



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Strategists see their value in working on upstream business problems and drawing insights from data. However, the reality is that they spend their time juggling both upstream and downstream work.

Andreas Krasser, CEO of DDB Group Hong Kong, commenting on the value of strategy in Asia says: "Short-term-orientated planning approaches and an overtly executional focus in many of the region's marketing communities make it difficult for strategists to prove their worth."

Data + 'real-life' = creativity

Strategists were almost unanimous (92%) in the feeling that they would do a better job if they had more access to client data. In the age of 'big data', the disciplines of strategy and analytics are increasingly merging as strategists are being asked to make use of the wealth of first-party data that brands now own.



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However, data alone will lead to predictable, unexciting advertising. Strategists need to retain the link to 'real-life' and use their understanding of consumers and culture to drive creativity. Emily Rule, strategy director at BBH London, says: "There is a widespread assumption that data equals insight and strategic direction. But in the context of creativity, data is useless

without imagination."

“ COMING SOON: Want to know what Neil Godber from [@WunThompson](#) and other experts think about the future of [#strategy](#)? Stay tuned for our new report, out this Wednesday!

In the meantime, access a recording of our [#FutureofStrategy](#) session at [#canneslions](#) - <https://t.co/6M6y4dOO46pic.twitter.com/EdlpnMFZTp>— WARC (@WARCEditors) [August 27, 2019](#) ”

Summing up, Amy Rodgers, managing editor of research and rankings at Warc, says: "Warc's Future of Strategy 2019 report reveals a discipline that is changing. We see an increased focus on customer experience, growing competition from non-agency shops, and the continuing battle to sell and price its value.

"And whilst the influence of strategists has increased, the role needs clarity in both function and value if it is to thrive."

A free sample of the report is available to download [here](#).

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