Brand campaign automation key to driving channel and field sales

PALO ALTO, US: A new CMO Council report finds challenges in localisation strategies as chief marketing officers look to use new digital channels to support customer engagement through local sales networks.

The marketing buzzword "SoLoMo" - for social, local and mobile - is the latest way national marketers are seeking to connect with customers and lure them into neighbourhood stores, dealerships, branch offices and service outlets nationwide. However, a new study from the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Council reveals many companies, dissatisfied with the effectiveness of local channel and field sales partners, are looking to maximise the impact of national campaigns by using new digital media avenues and localised engagement activities but still question the impact and value of mobile investments.

The report, entitled "Brand Automation for Local Activation," conducted in partnership with Balihoo, finds that only 8% of the 296 brand marketers surveyed were extremely satisfied with the way new product, pricing or promotional campaigns are executed and leveraged by local field sales, reseller, franchise or partner networks. To improve these ties, 52% of marketers believe comprehensive brand campaign automation is necessary to strengthen ties between the head office and local customer-facing resources and touchpoints.

Relying on in-house teams

Despite 59% of national marketers noting that local demand generation was essential to their business growth, only 7% feel they have highly evolved campaigns and measures in place that can activate consumers at a local level. Marketers are relying on in-house teams to manage, monitor and measure local marketing campaigns across all traditional and digital channels and have amassed a complex mix of individual point solutions that automate a variety of tasks but do little to streamline the entire process.

Over-reliance on resources managing a diversified and disconnected marketing mix - including live events, email, direct mail, social media, local search, as well as a range of traditional channels, such as print and outdoor - has created a localisation gap that sees local roll-outs of campaigns in days, if not months, after national launches. In addition, of the digital and social resources being leveraged, few are truly local engagements as the majority of marketers are simply leveraging national channels like corporate websites and social media outlets across their local markets. Only 9% of marketers believe mobile will be critical to further local connections and only 12% see mobile as a successful advertising channel, while 33% are still investigating the opportunity.

How to power local marketing effectiveness still a challenge

"Marketing continues to struggle with how to power local marketing effectiveness. There's an over-reliance on people and not enough focus on cloud-based platforms that bring process, discipline and timeliness to local market provisioning," stated Donovan Neale-May, Executive Director of the CMO Council. "If you look at market leaders, they are the ones extracting the most performance from their networks by providing timely access to relevant and targeted content without breaking the bank or the backs of their internal teams."

While 30% of marketers execute local campaigns within eight to 20 days of a national launch, 31% require in excess of 30 days to distribute local marketing materials. Nearly one-third of marketers believe this delay is a direct correlation to a lack of resources and bandwidth to tackle both global/national and local campaigns.

The payoff for shorter timelines is underscored by the fact that 88% of respondents who have executed local and national campaigns simultaneously believe this has given their brand a competitive advantage.

Localisation problems lead to losses

"According to the US State Department, American businesses lose $50 billion annually in potential sales because of problems with localisation, so it is clear that this localisation gap has a significant lost opportunity cost to any business willing to allow 30 days to pass before driving relevant content into a local marketplace," Neale-May explained.

Marketers intend to develop more comprehensive strategies to activate local assets but will also look to automate the local marketing process to better connect with their sales networks and deliver updated content in a more immediate and measurable fashion. Until now, automation has largely been at the point-solution level, creating an overload of measurement dashboards and reports.

"The challenges facing local marketing are easy to misdiagnose, leading many organisations to load up on point solutions or bring on new engagement channels like mobile or social without having the right platform infrastructure to monitor and manage execution across a broad network," said Pete Gombert, CEO of Balihoo. "In a world when marketing simply cannot attack all of the mandates being laid out before them, marketers must approach this marketing-at-scale issue with a clear strategy, the ability to measure results and a reliance on technology to execute the heavy lifting."

Other key issues covered in the comprehensive 75-page report include:

• The landscape of the local marketing media mix and confidence levels in a local marketing cost/benefit model
• Outlooks for automation and the impact technology can have on local campaigns
• Challenges to monitor and measure across a large distributed network
• Key insights and intelligence marketers are looking to integrate into their local lexicon
• Interviews with leading brand marketers who are executing across all channels and demonstrating best practices

The detailed findings of this study, along with summaries of in-depth interviews with marketing leaders from Arby's Restaurant Group, Carhartt, CAR-X, Celestial Seasonings, Dell, Farmers Insurance, FedEx, Red Robin, Scott Kay, Sears Hometown Stores, The North Face and Wells Fargo Advisors, are included in the 75-page comprehensive report, now available for download here. The online audit, conducted from the fourth quarter of 2012 into February of 2013, is outlined question by question through a summary of findings and detailed charts.