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Kristy Short • Jul. 19, 2018

Part 1: The Big Picture

There is no shortage of articles that provide guidance on how to develop a marketing program for firms. But what's not being discussed currently is the concept of *culture*. Beyond standard tactical tips, it's critical to first understand the broader idea of creating the right marketing culture—one that will fuel sound, effective and qualified lead-bolstering communication efforts. This article, the first in a series, will focus on the concept of marketing culture and what this means to firms. [Go to Part II.](#)

Step one: Let's answer the question, "What is culture?" Broadly speaking, a commonly agreed upon definition among marketers is that, "Culture is the collective beliefs and behaviors about your organization." Culture tends to fall on one side of the spectrum or the other—positive or negative. In the minds of consumers, it's often "I love them" or "I hate them." Landing on the "love them" side is where, of course, you want to be.

Understand also that your firm's broad culture is an amalgam of several parts. It is made up of several individual cultures. You have a technology culture, a business model culture and, yes, a marketing culture. The series of articles to come will be a study in how you give shape to beliefs and behaviors in your firm that are related to marketing, and how you can ensure that your marketing culture is truly world-class.

Step two: Let's also consider the question, "What is marketing?" Most people view the word *marketing* as interchangeable with *advertising*, but that's not the case. Advertising is a specialized type of persuasive communication with your prospective

clients to promise them benefits and motivate them to buy. Advertising—in its many

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everyone on your team is aware of the true breadth and significance of marketing.

So what's wrapped up in marketing? Here are the four P's:

1. **Product.** You need to design and offer products that satisfy the needs and desires of your ideal clients. Bundling basic accounting services into turnkey packages is one example of a product strategy. Another might be offering product line extensions; for example, rolling out personal financial services to business owners as part of a monthly engagement. Products designed for a specialized niche, such as dental practices or restaurants, is another example. Defining your products starts with a vision of who your *ideal* clients are—the type of client that fits best with the way you do business.
2. **Price.** Your product offerings need to be attainable by your ideal clients while also being profitable for the firm. Pricing strategy is a balance of being competitive in the marketplace, maximizing your earnings, and creating room to grow your engagements in the future (scalability).
3. **Place.** In consumer products marketing, this term refers to distribution strategy. For our purposes, think of it as how your products and services are delivered. In a modern firm, this includes cloud computing, software stack, website, and all other means of exchanging data and doing business with clients in a modern, collaborative way.
4. **Promotion.** Here's where communication fits. The promotional aspect of marketing includes all forms of communication, such as advertising, email, direct mail, and even such things as educational workshops or seminars for prospective clients.

Items 1–3 above are high-level activities tackled by partners, but it's important to remember that the specifics of each must be clearly communicated to all team members—including marketing staff. Everyone in the organization needs to fully understand the firm's product offerings, pricing strategy and service delivery model

—as well as understand how it all fits into the firm’s mission and vision to create a

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off, it negatively affects your broad culture...the collective beliefs about your firm. Giving proper attention to your marketing culture will greatly benefit your firm in the long run by attracting the right clients and helping you build a world-class business.

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