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## Career Shot: Marketing and Marketing Management

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All businesses need a plan and a process for marketing their products or services, and all but the smallest companies have professionals dedicated solely to this function. Marketing, along with sales, production, and finance, is a core functional area in most companies. Indeed, many businesses -- including some of the largest in the world -- rely on marketing strategy to drive company profits.

Marketing executives have a prominent place among the senior managers of any business. In fact, in many "marketing-driven" firms -- such as large consumer-products companies -- the most senior general managers typically advance to their positions from the marketing function.

Marketing professionals interface extensively with a company's other major business functions. For example:

- Marketing strategy affects the company's business development strategy (and vice-versa) and the allocation of advertising resources.
- Marketing works closely with the company's production or service delivery departments to ensure that product or service specifications will meet consumers' demands.
- Marketing professionals must understand the company's finances and the costs and profits associated with a particular product or service.
- Marketers have to get involved in the company's long-term strategic planning, including assessing market changes and the potential that new business alliances may bring.

Given the scope of business concerns that marketing professionals interact with, it's not surprising that marketing is often thought of as a "microcosm" of the entire business enterprise. Marketing managers must have strong skills in business analysis and a broad-based appreciation for business as a whole. Therefore, many people see experience in this discipline as ideal training for general management.

Different marketing professionals take different approaches to their work. They may:

- develop strengths in specialty areas, such as market research, marketing strategy, and creativity (as it relates to the language and imagery associated with a product's advertising and packaging)
- develop general management abilities
- approach marketing as an extension of sales, using direct interaction with customers and the intuition they've developed by working "in the field" to inform their decisions
- rely on sophisticated analyses of market dynamics to guide their marketing plans
- combine sales and market-analysis approaches

Sometimes different marketing styles can lead to specific careers within the field. For example:

- Professionals with a more analytical approach to the discipline may gravitate toward roles such as director of marketing research.
- Those who like to combine a sales approach with analysis may head for a position as vice president of sales and marketing.
- The more creatively inclined may choose to work with advertising firms or actually join an advertising firm.

The individual styles and interests of managers within all three kinds of firms exert a strong influence on the way a company handles marketing.

People enter marketing careers in different ways.

- Individuals with business or liberal arts undergraduate degrees, or those who have some sales experience, can often find entry-level positions in this line of work. These positions require both analytical ability and creativity. However, entry-level positions within large, established consumer-product companies can be somewhat difficult to come by right out of college. So, consider starting off in either a strategic-planning or account-management role within an advertising agency.
- Also consider getting an entry-level sales position within a company or industry that interests you. You would gain first-hand knowledge of customers' thoughts and feelings, which you could then use strategically in a marketing role.

In a consumer-products company, successful performance in entry-level staff roles can lead to the assistant brand manager role. The assistant brand manager works under a brand manager who has ultimate responsibility for the marketing of a particular product.

In several ways, brand managers' work strongly resembles that of general managers:

- Brand managers have profit-and-loss responsibility for the product they manage.
- In the case of a high-revenue product, brand managers lead a large team dedicated to that product.