



Blue Shield

"I wanted to elevate Marketing to strategic partner status inside the business as a crucial element to driving growth."

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Corporate Marketing, Blue Shield

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Introduction

Marketing is so often seen as the group that designs brochures, implements promotional campaigns...and spends money. In too few organizations is it valued as a strategic partner. That is, one that works with the CEO and Business Unit Managers to formulate profit and growth strategies. The Corporate Marketing Group at Blue Shield used MarketCulture Strategies as a partner for its upskilling programs to achieve this goal.

Setting

Blue Shield of California is a \$9 billion health insurance provider. Its mission is "To ensure all Californians have access to high-quality health care at a reasonable price." It has 4800 employees, 65 of whom work in Corporate Marketing.

Marketing had recently become a centralized corporate function. The Vice President of Corporate Marketing, Doug Biehl, wanted to elevate marketing to strategic status inside the business.

Problem

An internal review showed that Business Unit leaders saw Corporate Marketing as ineffective.

The initial reaction to this was to consider a business acumen skills based program. However, a further analysis showed that the real problem was Corporate Marketing's inability to communicate and collaborate effectively with their internal stakeholders. This became the immediate priority for a new skills program.

*"I set out to lift the interpersonal and collaborative skills of my team in Corporate Marketing."
Doug Biehl*

Solution

Doug engaged MarketCulture Strategies to develop and deliver an appropriate program.

The senior marketing leadership team and a cross-section of people in the marketing team were interviewed. Also discussions were held with senior managers in the Business Units. Then MarketCulture Strategies worked with Doug and the Director of Marketing Strategy, Seth Berman, to design a two level program:

- a) A one day leadership program titled “Leading the Revolution” for the senior executive team.
- b) A two day collaborative skills workshop for the whole marketing team. This included several half day follow-up workshops.

According to Seth “In developing the program, the MCS team listened to the needs of the marketing leadership, marketing associates, and our stakeholders. As our needs shifted over time, the MarketCulture team adapted quickly while ensuring a lasting impact of the skills our team developed through participation in the program.”

The purpose was to build the marketers’ skill sets to enable them to take a consultative approach with their stakeholders.

Action

This program was implemented over a 6 month period. It began with the senior executive leadership workshop. This was followed by several Collaborative Skills workshops

The next step of the project was to redesign marketing competencies by job function. This included a system to help managers evaluate the competencies of existing staff in relation to their roles. This enabled managers to better coach staff on specific skill areas that needed development. It also helped employees track their progress.

The skills program was well received by the whole team and motivated them to actively engage with their Business Unit colleagues.

Results

Marketers significantly improved their working relationships with their stakeholders, built trust and gained more recognition.

According to Doug, "MCS developed an innovative and effective marketing excellence program that targeted critical marketing capabilities required to drive business results. They demonstrated deep knowledge of Strategic Marketing competencies and an ability to design a program that engaged the workforce. Also, more importantly, they increased the level of marketing capabilities within Corporate Marketing."