

Defining the Roles of Marketing and Related Fields

As a professional marketer for more than 15 years, I have heard many misconceptions of what marketing is and what a marketer does. There are many related fields and areas of business that work hand in hand with marketing, however, there are differences that should be noted. It's important as a business professional, at any stage of your career, that you know the differences between these closely related fields. This understanding and definition of roles is intended to help business professionals know the capabilities of each field and know what to look for when hiring people in these fields of work.

Here are the fields of work I will be discussing in this article. Please note these are many other fields of work aside from these. However, these are the 10 most common and closely related fields.

1. Marketing
2. Business Development
3. Sales
4. Advertising
5. Graphic Design
6. Photographer
7. Videographer
8. Market Research
9. Web Developer
10. Public Relations

One of the most important concepts to understand in the world of business is that sales does not dictate the direction of a business and should not be the go to team for entering into new markets, services, or verticals. Rather, a sales team or salesperson should take direction from a person or team that has a more holistic view of the business. This is not to say certain people are incapable of such a task, rather a matter of setting an efficient, accountable, effective business structure. If your sales team is doing market research on breaking into foreign markets, they are not selling. Of course there is a presumption of business size, and I realize most startups and small businesses may not have resources for all of these roles. Again, this is to merely point out the distinctions between roles. Let's continue..

A marketer, and marketing team are ideally concerned with the overall strategic direction, continuous success, and perception of the company. Subsequently, the aforementioned 10 fields of work fall in one of these three categories of marketing. Not as a role defining mechanism, instead for understanding of overall capabilities. In the big picture, marketing is the driving force behind the business, while other essential departments are in place to stabilize, operate, and maintain existing business. These are departments such as finance, operations, quality, IT/IS.

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Below is a chart that consists of these 10 fields, depicting each as a subset of the marketing picture.



This is NOT an example of how to structure a marketing department/team. Read my article entitled “How to Structure a Marketing Department” for detail on that topic.

Here are each of the subset fields, defined:

Business Development – Similar to sales, and often used interchangeably, the term business development has become the newer way to say sales. This field is intended for someone making calls, following up with leads, networking, and ultimately working to close deals.

Sales – Again, nearly synonymous with the BD field. Salespeople are cold calling, following up on leads, networking, sometimes working on RFPs/RFIs/RFQs.

Advertising – A subset of marketing focused on the planning, creation, execution, monitoring of advertising campaigns. Ad campaigns include (not a complete list) Search Engine Marketing and Pay Per Click advertising (Digital Advertising), broadcast advertising on radio and TV, Out of Home advertising such as billboards, Print advertising such as newspaper or trade publications.

Graphic Design – A graphic designer can work in many different areas of marketing, such as branding, sales material, web and social, among others. Typically working in software programs like Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Illustrator, creating digital assets for specific campaigns or initiatives. A graphic designer is not an advertiser, nor a marketer, though they typically work under the direction of one of these two.

Photographer – Professional photographers are great at capturing brands in the most ideal settings according to the brand guidelines. They are well trained in how to use various cameras, lenses, lighting, and photography tools to capture pictures for use in marketing.

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Videographer – Pro videographers, much like photographers, are great at capturing scenes and moments on video utilizing the right camera, lens, lighting, and other tools. A lot of videographers also do video editing and audio editing.

Market Research – This field does in-depth research on a particular product, industry, target market, company, or brand. A very valuable piece of the marketing picture.

Web Developer – A field that focuses on developing websites. A web developer works with marketing, graphic designers and other fields to bring the vision of a website to reality.

Public Relations – The Public Relations field deals mostly with relationships between an organization and media outlets. A PR person or firm is usually responsible for getting newsworthy content published in local or national news publications for the sake of gaining exposure. Also sometimes interchangeable with Communications.

In conclusion, marketing typically oversees these fields and works in coordination with, and is part of the executive team and decision making process of a business. A good marketing team or leader will plan and develop the future plans of a business, providing the company tremendous value by setting the strategic direction, maintaining relevancy through innovation, capitalizing on opportunities, and developing a well-recognized brand.