

Helping chief marketing officers earn the right to disrupt

By [Jonathan Houston](#), issued by [HKLM](#)

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Branding agency HKLM has launched the Digital CMO Lab to empower chief marketing officers with a playbook to assist them to harness and focus the technological disruption needed to position their organisations for the future.

The marketer's role is changing every day. Understanding how the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) can bridge the technology gap between traditional marketing and digital marketing in order to disrupt the market, is a key business transformation skill that will elevate marketers to having a strong voice on Exco.

A traditional marketer understands traditional marketing – but many are struggling to bridge the technology knowledge gap and understand the priorities they should be focussing on to get them there, when they should be getting closer to the CEO and playing a strategic role in business transformation.

Of all the positions on Exco, the two who are struggling the most to have their voices heard, are the CMO and CIO (Chief Information Officer). The CMO and CIO only earn the right to disrupt the organisation digitally, once they have the basics right (the operational reliability); and they have become more innovative (that is where service excellence comes into it).

CMOs primarily understand what they are trying to do and what the client experience is; but there is a level of misalignment in terms of what technology their organisation already has and what it can do. It is important that the culture of your organisation supports digital disruption; that you understand how it will affect your people; that your people are behind it; and that it is fit for purpose. You stand to lose a lot if you get it wrong.



Jonathan Houston

Digital CMO Lab

HKLM has been around for 15 years and has some of the country's biggest brands as clients and the tenure we have had with CMOs gives us a lot of insight into how CMOs think. We are geared to help the CMO succeed, to not only earn the right to disrupt, but to earn the right to have a voice at Exco and help the business succeed.

What we are trying to do is give CMOs the tools they need to leverage off personal transformation and digital transformation to respond to the CEO's client strategy; how the brand identity can be scaled and relevant to any platform or device; and ensuring the marketing team are skilled and strong in communications skills to help navigate digital transformation in the organisation.

We have devised the Digital Chief Marketing Officer's playbook, where we effectively co-create a 90-day intervention with a CMO to empower them to disrupt their organisation and the market.

We start before the time, interviewing their company leadership on the CMO's mandate and evaluate how they are doing; and we also do background research on the organisation and industry. The information gathered is then played back in a focused one-day workshop. The workshop is about understanding that you can't start playing with these new technologies, like AI, robotics and VR, without first having bedded down operational reliability or service excellence.

Intervention

This is an intervention; it is not a service where we do the work for you. We mitigate risk. We are not coming there to tell you your top 10 priorities, we are going to call you out on them and “sense check them”. As a CMO, your role is changing every day. Tech is changing every day. Consumer needs are changing every day.

We spend time looking at the digital ecosystem and the skills set of the CMO's team. We have some pretty frank conversations and help the CMO change thinking and the way that they exercise their authority.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Houston is the General Manager at HKLM

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