

Digital technology to ignite marketing over next five years

By [Richard Mullins](#), issued by [Acceleration](#)

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Marketing directors and chief marketing officers (CMOs) need to become more immersed in digital technology and its role in customer engagement and conversion if they are to help their organisations grow and prosper over the next five years.

So says Richard Mullins, director at Acceleration, commenting on one of the major themes of the Acceleration Digital Ignition Symposium that took place on 12 and 13 June in Franschhoek. The conference featured Liz Miller, Vice President for Global Programs & Operations at the CMO Council, speaking about the future of marketing in a digital world. Speakers from Acceleration Media, Google, Acceleration, Sky and Adobe also presented at this event.

Information technology (IT) is taking centre stage in marketing, demanding that marketers sharpen their technical understanding and start working closely with IT departments in true partnerships, says Mullins.

Gartner predicts that the CMO will outspend the chief information officer (CIO) on IT by 2017 as control of technology budgets shift towards the marketing department. This trend is being driven by the fact that marketing is becoming increasingly technology dependent as digital channels proliferate and huge volumes of customer data are collected.

Says Mullins: "Marketers are under enormous pressure to use technology to automate operations and increase efficiency by using digital channels. They are also expected to use analytics to understand customer data better so that they can personalise communications and target more effectively. And marketing departments must also show that they have the metrics to demonstrate return on investment to line of business management and the board of directors. This all means that better data, better systems integration and better automation platforms are absolutely central in any senior marketing manager's life."

Yet most marketers are not yet ready for this massive sea change, he adds. A CMO survey conducted by Acceleration and the CMO Council revealed that one-third of respondents felt that their digital marketing portfolio was little more than a random collection of point solutions that were poorly integrated.

For example, marketing processes and technologies such as Web analytics, customer relationship management, ad-serving, email, search and electronic commerce don't fit together in most organisations. The challenge the marketers face, therefore, is to start integrating the many databases and systems they run into a single view of the customer says Mullins.

Yet the CMO survey shows that marketers are not making use of the very people and resources which could help them to address their integration headaches. Only 32% are working with IT to specify needs and requirements and even fewer (26%) are developing multidisciplinary task forces to lead the assessment process.

This will empower them to start understanding customer behaviour across channels better and to start targeting their customers much more effectively. With integrated systems underpinned by a robust enterprise architecture, marketers can connect marketing silos for improved collaboration, integration, workflow and use of critical data.