

Rich insights and data, the bedrock of any marketing strategy



By [Amanda Reekie](#), issued by [imagineNATION Alliance](#)

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I don't want to age myself and reminisce about the good old days, but...if I think back to the start of my career as a brand manager at Reckitt Benckisser or Colgate Palmolive, it was marketing at its most pure. As brand managers, we were responsible for the P and L of our brands and this included, for example, picking fragrances for soaps to make the product both margin-rich and at the same time laden with consumer appeal, so that it not only flew off the shelf but flew off the shelf profitably. Brand managers were responsible for the value proposition in its entirety and we led the business teams and new business development initiatives.



Amanda Reekie is founding director of imagineNATION Alliance

Communicating the needs of the market is the key role of marketers

Through the years, I have watched marketers, in the main, move more and more into the domain of communication only in terms of their influence and responsibility. What this means is that marketers are asked to communicate “already-baked” products and services without the ability or with limited ability to give input into what the needs of the market really are.

I have thought a lot about why this is; is it because the scope of work involved in just doing the communication piece of the four P's marketing has expanded? After all, it is a way more complex environment with the proliferation of media and the surge in the use of technology meaning real-time measurement and therefore an ongoing requirement for action. Or is it because the pace of business has accelerated leaving less time to properly evaluate a brand's value proposition? And do marketers spend enough time on strategy or are they merely existing on an operational treadmill?

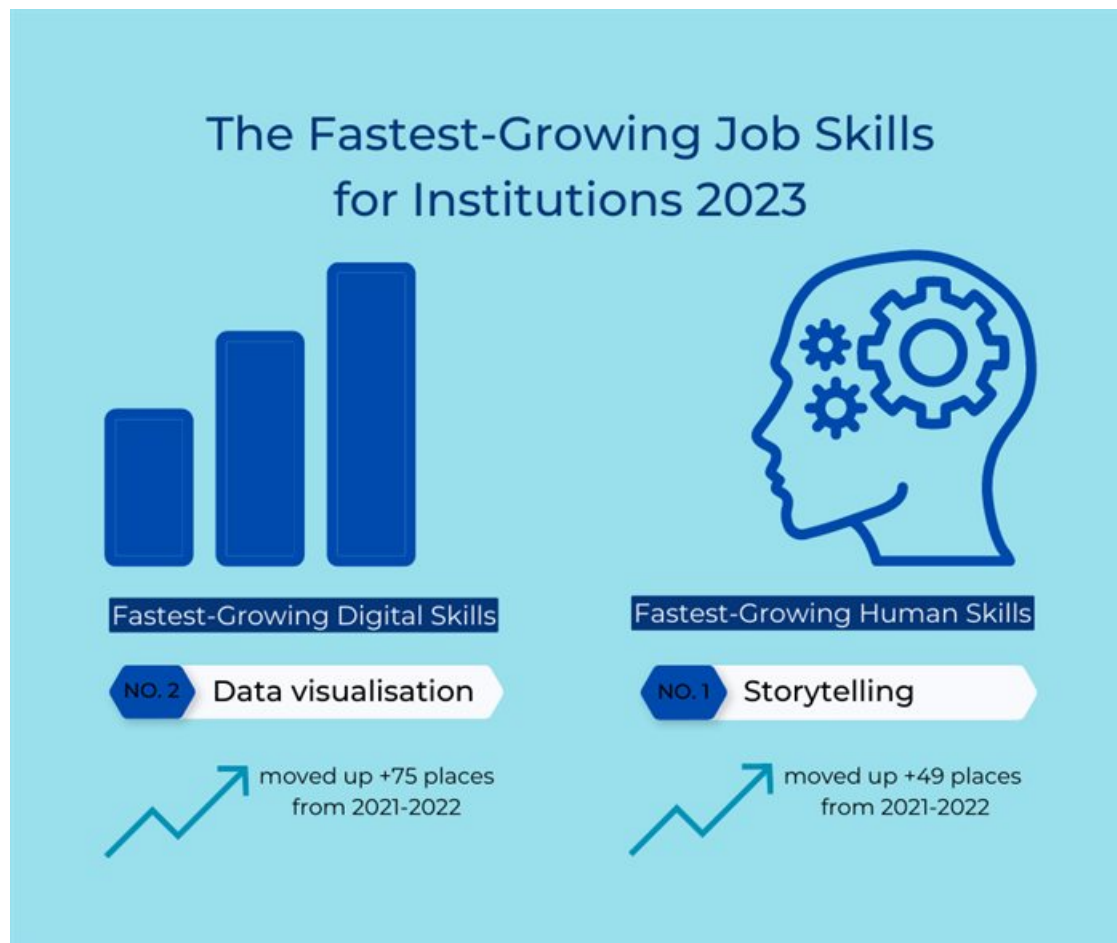
All in all, a lot of questions but regardless of the answers, I believe that marketers do have an important role to play in business, this is not only in bringing customers in by designing effective communication that lures people in (acquisition) but also in ensuring that once lured in, the products and services offered meet customers' everchanging needs (retention).

Acquisition and retention is at the core of any business so marketers cannot only be the people that “make things pretty”, we have to take our rightful place at the business table by being the link to the market and by that, I mean consumers or

customers but also key competitors as we have to know how their propositions stack up versus ours.

The new soil of marketing strategies

One of my gurus, David McCandless in his [TedTalk](#), says that data is the “new soil” and I believe that data is indeed the soil in which to grow creative and effective marketing strategies. The most solid and growth-creating marketing strategies are based on solid insights and on data.



Without data, you are operating in a subjective vacuum and using guess work. Business decisions, after all need to be made based on data and not conjecture. It is not enough to bring the insights and data to the business but also important that you are able to communicate in a way that gets the message landed.

A marketers job therefore is to:

1. to ascertain what is happening in the category and to our brand in that category,
2. to discern what data is most important (what the levers in your business and market are),
3. to make sense of the emergent external and internal data and
4. communicate it all back via visualisation and storytelling in order to get buy-in to strategies.

The importance of being data-literate in the context of the above, cannot be understated. According to Coursera’s [“The Job Skills of 2023”](#) report, data visualisation is the second fastest growing digital skill in terms of demand and data literacy is a prerequisite for data visualisation. Storytelling is the number one human skill. So marketers, being at that business table requires you to “sell” your strategies into the business, to do this, you need to have the irrefutable data and unique insight to base the strategies on but just as importantly, you need to take the business with you by using visualisations and storytelling to communicate effectively.

About the Author:

Amanda Reekie is an experienced brand strategist and researcher who thrives on uncovering insight and wrangling meaning out of data. She has over 30 years of marketing and consumer insights predominantly in retail, e-commerce and in fast-moving consumer goods at Reckitt-Benckiser, Colgate-Palmolive, Edcon and Wooltru where she was one of the team members that launched inthebag, the first online shopping site in South Africa. imagineNATION Alliance and ovatoyou's clients are across all sectors and include Clicks, P'nPay, Mr Delivery, Lancewood, Santam, Sanlam and WWF amongst others. She is the founder of ovatoyou, an HTML and app based research tool with an associated panel of over 27 000+ online South Africans. Amanda was nominated for Shoprite/ Checkers woman of the year in 2006 for the womenNATION project. Amanda Reekie is also a Knowledge Partner for the [Data Principles and Visualisation online short course](#) offered via the Red and Yellow school.

ABOUT AMANDA REEKIE

Amanda Reekie is founding director of ovatoyou and imagineNATION Alliance, and has spent the large majority of her 31-year career in retail and working with retailers. The ovatoyou research platform has a panel of 23,000+ respondents in SA and more in Africa. The technology allows video, photo and audio sharing so that communication can be tested. It also allows for photo-upload so that a textured view of consumers' worlds is possible.

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