

Is unqualified success possible in the 21st Century?

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When Cambridge Marketing Colleges and the PSMG collaborated to develop the only CIM accredited professional services alternative to the Professional Diploma in Marketing the purpose was clear; a qualification was needed that was more relevant to the needs of professional services marketers, that was credible with employers and which gave delegates the tools that they needed to build successful careers in the industry.

The credibility of marketing and marketers within professional services is a perennial issue. Many marketers in the sector find the low esteem in which they are held by the firms that employ them both frustrating and demotivating.

However, credibility and the opportunities to do stretching and challenging work are not birthrights but must be earned. One of the foundations is a solid grounding in marketing theory coupled with its application to professional services.

Without a fundamental understanding of their own profession how can marketers truly expect to be taken seriously? This is especially true when practising in environments which, quite rightly, hold academic qualification in such high regard.

It is also clear that marketers in the professional services sector are "time poor"; any qualification route must be flexible and allow them to study in a way which accommodates the often unpredictable work-patterns of their organisations. The Cambridge Marketing Colleges' approach and course structure provides the required level of flexibility to allow busy, committed people to balance the work-pressures of today with the imperative to invest in their future careers.

Cambridge Marketing College has a long and successful history as a leading provider of marketing education in the UK and internationally. With over 1200 delegates from 50 countries, it is the largest professional marketing college in Europe and with pass rates approaching 100% (significantly above the CIM average) it is also highly successful.

The College pioneered the development of customised programmes that recognise the different competitive situations faced by organisations across diverse sectors. It now runs five sector specific programmes.

A broad spectrum of the professions is represented by delegates on the programme, including the fields of accountancy, architecture, engineering, insurance, law and property. Households names such as Slaughter & May, tp bennett, Carter Jonas and Simmons & Simmons all have employees enrolled on the professional services diploma.

At the outset of the programme, delegates attend a specialist one-day course on the nature of the professional services environment and then elect to study by distance learning or intensive weekend course. The programme normally takes twelve months to complete.

Each of the four modules is assessed with a three-part work-related assignment, considering the application of their learning to the professional services industry.

Academia in a vacuum is of little use in the hard-nosed business world faced by many professionals today. The application of knowledge to commercial opportunities and challenges is what is required and this is the focus of the college and its tutors. Consequently, the professional services diploma is supported by leading consultants operating in the sector. By using only professionals working in a commercial environment, the college ensures that delegates benefit from up-to-the-minute thinking, real life experience and expertise.

If we are to progress towards a more mature approach to our discipline then all competent marketing directors should be encouraging, if not mandating, their less experienced colleagues to acquire the foundations of understanding that a marketing qualification brings. This is, of course, in addition to providing relevant and challenging on-the-job experience. Not to do so is a dereliction of their responsibility to develop their people and provide long-term career paths within their organisations.

Sophisticated firms now make CIM qualifications one of the “must have” filters in their recruitment process. As professionalism rises within our sector this trend will only continue; the days of the amiable and dedicated marketer without the intellectual rigour and bedrock of understanding imparted by a marketing qualification are surely numbered.

General enrolment is taking place throughout January and February for the 2007 year. For the distance learning programme there is a back-stop of the end of March. For those already enrolled on the traditional CIM route there is also an option to transfer credits to the professional services diploma, so ensuring that they benefit from the increased focus that the course brings to their work situation. Fees include all course materials as well as membership of the CIM. Members of the PSMG can obtain a further £100 discount on the course fee. More details are available at www.marketingcollege.com.

At less than £1500 a year (inclusive of CIM membership and assessment fees) for the distance learning programme, this is a tax-deductible investment that all but the most myopic firms will be

prepared to make and an opportunity that marketers with a commitment to career development should grasp eagerly.

Just as there is no longer a place for professionals operating as heroic sole practitioners within increasingly complex and sophisticated professional service firms, for marketers the ability to forge a career built on being an “unqualified” success is fast becoming a thing of the past!



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Hedley Consulting advises the leadership teams of professional service firms on business development and change strategies that deliver immediate and sustainable improvements in business performance.