

# Marketing Career Maze - The Interview



It's that time of the year when marketing graduates are pounding the pavements looking to get their foot on the first rung of the marketing ladder. Here, **Rory Brennan** gives some insights into the marketing recruitment selection process in Ireland.

It's not surprising that during my 20 years of recruiting marketers for many of Ireland's leading companies, never has a marketer asked me do I get bored selecting marketing talent for clients. Why? Because for them winning the marketing role that advances their career and boosts their salary is a deadly serious business.

If you have ever been outbid for a house you really want, well that's the exact same feeling, of when you get rejected for a marketing vacancy that you rigorously set your stall out to get.

For me every client selection process is a moveable feast with a multitude of variable inputs and hidden agendas for me to scope out and match the right marketing talent to deliver my client's needs. Trust me it's far from boring.

As discussed previously in *IMJ*, mapping your marketing career from college and doing everything in your power to get fast tracked into large progressive marketing talent hubs is the best way to improve your odds of winning the roles you desire throughout your marketing career.

But even with a strong CV – you still have demonstrate to the interview panel that you are the marketer they need for the job and will fit well into their culture. So let's look at the cornerstones that my clients evaluate most during the marketing interview process.

**Marketing Prowess:** At graduate intake level, the client will be looking at your marketing grades and projects completed and relevance of your limited experience in evaluating your marketing ability. So you must show initiative and be proactive at the interview. The key is to demonstrate you can hit the ground running,

or learn on the fly as one client likes to call this competency.

Problem solving and creativity in your approach to tasks will be looked at closely. As your marketing career evolves – it will be your strategic input that will be closely scrutinised and what impact your marketing decisions have had on the business unit.

Great marketers drive change and simplify the marketing message resulting in higher return on investment and market share.

**Stakeholder Management:** The new buzz word for influencing skills – and the more senior you are the more critical they are to winning a recruitment process. Ireland is the hub of international companies – and most marketers will be well versed in dealing with matrix marketing structures across different time zones during the course of the marketing role. Even small indigenous operations will still have a number of key stakeholders which you will have to manage and influence effectively to deliver your own job goals. So you need to demonstrate you have the courage of your convictions and stand up for what you believe in and face difficult situations. You need to give examples of how you have inspired and influenced stakeholders to act.

**Communications:** You need to communicate with enthusiasm and clarity. You should command attention when you are presenting information. Be clear and concise when talking and enthuse your audience so that they have confidence in you and your ability to do the job and to blend into

the company's culture.

Clients demand positive marketers who will be able to work to the pressures and demands of their business model. The reality is that your style may not suit the job you are interviewing for and that's why you may be rejected. A word of warning – don't change your style at interview to try and win the interview.

**Management/Leadership:** Demonstrate your ability to lead and get results through effective people management. Show you can maintain co-operation and have productive inter-departmental relationships in delivering your teams goals. Typical question would be: How would your team describe your management style? Remember the company you are applying to will have an existing culture and they won't tell you if they want to change that culture or continue in the same status quo with the new recruit. So your answers alone could put you out of the running, regardless if you ace all the other criteria. The interview is a two-way process – so probe all you want, as if you're told they want change but the reality is through your research change is unlikely because of the present management structure or ownership – then back away fast. Again always research if a company has had a high turnover of marketers in recent years – normally a clear indicator to avoid.

**Research/Preparation:** Once you get the invite for a client interview, regardless of what level you are it, you have the opportunity to win the recruitment processes, get the offer and then decide to accept or reject. Once you walk into the interview room or conduct a Skype/Facetime conversation, you have the opportunity to win.

The client has already deemed your CV is acceptable, so don't waste the opportunity; it's your time as well as theirs.

Research and understand the key triggers in their business and the key competitors. Then condense your research into a couple of high impact points which you then proceed to bring out during the interview process.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that chief marketing officers now have more responsibility for business growth than ever before and as marketing's role in business strategy increases, there will always be a need for fresh marketing talent. Happy hunting. **IMJ**

Rory Brennan is managing director of Marketing Career Recruitment.

