Can you describe your role and what it entails?

**Chris Padgett:** I focus on digital, social and global marketing for Purina PetCare. My primary role is to lead all things digital for Purina, which, at a high level, is about building organizational capabilities to employ digital marketing to further brand objectives and strategy. Part of that is building the infrastructure to help our marketers do this—whether it’s around social listening, search, CRM, sharing best practices, identifying agency partners or spearheading partnerships with Facebook or Twitter. My team serves our marketing organization, and we’re trying to build brand affinity and sales digitally.

My vision for the future is that there won’t be a separate group of digital experts. What we want, ultimately, is for marketers to be competent and confident about integrating digital touchpoints, programs and platforms when they’re thinking about their marketing objectives and strategies.

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Purina is a global business—we’re organized around three zones: Europe; America; and Africa, Asia and Oceania. I’m responsible for leading the overall digital roadmap as well as the high-level strategy globally, and then enabling each of the regions to accelerate the pace of their digital adoption and performance.

While I would say the US market is probably the furthest ahead in digital among all the regions and markets for Purina, there are some real bright spots in other areas. Sharing that intelligence with everyone else is a big part of what we’re trying to do to accelerate competence and performance globally.
We translate a lot of best practices and knowledge from the US into other markets. I think one of our blind spots is in trying to understand the global market dynamics from St. Louis. We have to better understand dynamics like the overall adoption of certain digital platforms and the consumption of digital media vs. traditional media in certain markets so when we help brand teams with their strategies, we have a better context.

It sounds like your team serves a consultative role to all of the brands.

Padgett: Yes, we're the place of deepest expertise when it comes to digital touchpoints. We also have centers of excellence with experts in things like search, social media, CRM, mobile and more. The brands rely on us for best practices, our thought leadership and to determine key performance indicators.

We have a team of strategists who lead communications planning and strategy for the brands to ensure we're integrating both traditional and digital touchpoints. We consult, but we're also leading all the innovation and exploration when it comes to digital and social.

We're a team of 15 people with our own budget, but typically we're collaborating with brands and with agency and vendor partners to figure out what's next. Or, if resources already exist, we determine how best to use them. We have 40 brands, and 20 are big brands with meaningful budgets. We're focused on the segment leaders that are fully activated and communicating with consumers such as Purina Dog Chow, Purina Cat Chow, Purina Fancy Feast, Purina Pro Plan, Purina ONE, Beneful and the Purina brand itself.

What are your top business priorities?

Padgett: We're continuing to maximize the ways we engage and communicate with our target and current consumers. Consumer behavior with media continues to change—how they spend their time, the devices they use and so forth.

It's a lot more complex to get a share of a consumer's mind now than it was 20 years ago. Beyond that, my priority is continuing to grow our business through delivering better value and a better experience than our competitors.

How has eMarketer helped you understand the digital landscape better?

Padgett: At a high level, we have a digital summit every year, and one of the first things I do to kick off the discussion is to show an eMarketer chart that exhibits media consumption changes between the use of traditional media vs. digital and the time spent changes year over year.

Beyond that, the information and insights we pull from eMarketer are priceless to us—they are also very easy to find. So whether it's specifically about the power of CRM or what the ROI of Facebook is, the data oftentimes corroborates what we're saying to the marketing teams. It's sort of like an expert third party. Two or three years ago, we didn't necessarily have the organizational credibility we do today. Resources like eMarketer have added to our credibility.

And sometimes it's simply a great resource to get marketing people more up to speed on all things digital when they're new to it. And there are still an awful lot of marketing people who are new to it, especially middle to senior manager marketing people. So we tend to point them in the eMarketer direction and build primers of information about digital that is full of your insights and charts.

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How have you and your team relied upon eMarketer insight to inform a plan or a project?

Padgett: We've used eMarketer research and data for both our work in communications strategy and supporting our brands. For our internal team, eMarketer data helps us paint a picture of how consumers engage with media today, particularly their multiscreen behavior. The research on millennials' media behavior helped our brands develop strategies around reaching this key target audience.

In addition, eMarketer data on multitasking behavior prompted two of our brands—Busy Bone and Tidy Cats—to place always-on calls to action on TV spots.

A report on real-time marketing is a great example of a concept we're exploring. We want to do it better to increase consumer engagement. We participated in the report, and it was important to see our peers who were in it too—it was immensely useful to us. The specific examples in reports are crucial when we are trying to figure out better ways of...
doing search or mobile initiatives, for example. The depth of information is great, and the insights from our peers like Kellogg Company and Procter & Gamble are really important. You can put a name and a face to the person interviewed in a report, and then you can reach out to that person to expand your network.

Our centers of excellence use eMarketer to bone up on what marketers are doing. If a brand person says, “I’m interested in this thing,” but he or she is not an expert on it, eMarketer is one of the first places to go to become a little more conversant.

How have you used eMarketer to build a business case?

Padgett: We use eMarketer a lot when we’re exploring a new platform or trend. For example, a year or so ago, we were looking at Pinterest and rather than just throwing money at it, we tried to understand with as much information and insights as possible what the current thinking was—how we should approach it, or who had it figured out and if we could contact them. Or we look at CPG companies that are using it already.

We’re getting into Tumblr now. I’m certain the person in our group who’s leading that exploration is on eMarketer to try to figure out what marketers are doing with that platform. We know we’re behind, but there’s got to be a wealth of information already out there about how we should approach it. It helps make it easier to sell into a brand or two by showing what others are doing and what the data reveals.

What do you like best about eMarketer?

Padgett: I like the ease of finding what I’m looking for and that the information is updated frequently. It’s the accessibility and curation that are key—I don’t have time to be searching and searching for stuff, so it’s probably the fastest route to the kind of information I need from any resource that I have. In addition, eMarketer offers the depth of coverage on hot topics like real-time marketing, and the peer perspective is really important.

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What keeps you motivated?

Padgett: The variety in my work and the challenge of opportunity. There’s so much more we can do, and it just keeps piling on—the new things we can explore and integrate into what we’re doing. The pace continues unabated.