How would you describe MRM and its offerings?

Michael McLaren: MRM is a global digital marketing company. It’s McCann Worldgroup’s digital customer experience and engagement company and has a direct marketing heritage. Just as the industry shifted into customer relationship management (CRM) and then eCRM, the acquisition and retention of customers is moving into the digital realm. The company has increasingly gravitated to a set of digital capabilities.

We attack the business from what we call the “marketing lane,” which includes all the marketing programs we support on behalf of clients such as CRM programs, customer acquisition and customer loyalty. We also have a very strong “technology lane” with hundreds of technology experts—software developers, designers, content developers, user experience engineers—so we can implement many of the program concepts on the marketing side. This dual-lane approach is unique, and we think it’s a strong value proposition for our clients.

General Motors is our largest global client. We also work with Verizon FiOS, the US Army, MasterCard, Intel and Google. In Europe, we do all the CRM and customer acquisition work for Direct Line Insurance Group, and we also picked up the Luxe division of L’Oreal.

“An emerging school of thought is forming around the idea of CXM—customer experience management.”

How do you focus on the customer experience?

McLaren: An emerging school of thought is forming around the idea of CXM—customer experience management. It’s saying, “Let’s understand our current customers’ view on the world and let’s put them at the center of everything we do.” We need to see the world through their eyes. For example, customers need to be able to engage with brand X in any channel they want, any time they want and any way they want.
What we have to do is challenge the conventional marketing model and put customers first and think about the way they want to engage with the brand, whether it’s in social media or it includes commerce. We need to know where they’re getting information, who is influencing them and how they’re being influenced. Where are they placing their points of view and opinions? How much control should customers take of your brand? These sorts of questions challenge the traditional marketing model and are emerging in the world of customer experience management.

**What are your biggest business priorities?**

**Mclaren:** We are focused on scaling our CRM and CXM capabilities. We have a center of excellence (COE) model on a global basis—different markets have pockets of excellence against different types of capabilities. For example, we have a very strong data and analytics practice in Hong Kong, so we want to share some of these COE capabilities to offer enhanced services to clients in any market.

On the technology side, we’re focused on continuing to expand the breadth and scale of our technology expertise. That includes our content management system and asset management capabilities, as well as social interaction, engagement and commerce capabilities.

**What do you see as the greatest challenges in your business?**

**Mclaren:** The biggest challenge that both clients and agencies face is the pace of transformation—the speed of innovation and technological change and the ability to understand where and how technology is going to affect our business and consumers’ lives.

Clients are challenged by how much control they’re willing to cede to their consumers and how quickly they want to do it. From the agency perspective, we are challenged in recalibrating our capabilities to execute the “customer-is-the-center-of-everything-we-do” philosophy.

Collectively, we all face what I call a talent arms race because there are so many new and emerging areas—data and analytics, gamification of technologies in a website environment, 3-D, RFID [radio-frequency identification] tagging—that require specific expertise and skill sets that are in high demand. And whether you’re a client or an agency, you need the best talent you can get. Getting access to really talented people is going to be a continuing challenge in our industry.

The other challenge we have is that the world is not flat. When you’re running a global organization, it’s very important to understand the dynamics in respective regions around the world. For example, what’s the situation in Argentina and Brazil? How is the mobile business exploding in China or India? What kind of growth is taking place in Japan? All of these markets have unique situations. It’s an endless search for balance between my global priorities and mission and the skills I need to develop on a global basis.

**How are you and your team using eMarketer to help address these challenges and inform your planning?**

**Mclaren:** First of all, we love eMarketer. It’s a very valuable resource for us.

We have a model where we try to interrogate both the mindset and the data set. The mindset tends to be more qualitative, more ethnographic—we want to know what’s going on in the hearts and minds of a particular constituency. With the data set, we’re trying to understand the macro trends and influences such as where consumers spend their time. The importance of doing our homework cannot be overstated.

“We use eMarketer as one of our intelligence fact-gathering tools for new business pitches to help us get smarter about the world of our customers.”

We have a number of go-to sources, but for all our folks—particularly our account teams, strategic planners and senior creative folks—eMarketer is a very valuable resource. We use it across a range of different industries and clients and frankly, for prospects. We use eMarketer as one of our intelligence fact-gathering tools for new business pitches to help us get smarter about the world of our customers.

I mentioned that in Europe, we recently won the L’Oréal Luxe business. The team did an extensive survey on digital marketing of luxury brands—they found an eMarketer report and did a deep dive on affluent consumers. In that context, the team found eMarketer to be extremely valuable in narrowing down the strategic recommendations.
We work with MasterCard on customer journey work. eMarketer’s industry trends, data and information on financial services have been extremely valuable in informing our strategies.

Can you explain why MRM chose to offer everyone in the company access to eMarketer?

Mclaren: We use eMarketer to help us get smarter about the world of our customers. If we’re going to expect our people to walk a mile in their customers’ shoes, we need to give them the tools to be able to do that.

We asked our top 10 managers around the organization, “Which do you consider key information sources and partners that we want to work with to get smarter?” So that is how full access to eMarketer emerged.

What does the disintermediation of business intelligence mean to you?

Mclaren: It’s a completely anachronistic view of the world to have “papal-type” characters—owners of all the information who hand it out in sort of cherished dollops along the way. That model just doesn’t work for us.

I want everybody—from the most junior person to the most senior person—to have an informed point of view. I have an expectation that they’ve done their homework, and to meet that expectation, they need access. My personal opinion, and I think our organizational opinion, is that those days of having one person in control of information are over.

“With eMarketer, I find it easy to get to the information I’m looking for without having to plow through hundreds of different documents.”

What do you like best about eMarketer?

Mclaren: With eMarketer, I find it easy to get to the information I’m looking for without having to plow through hundreds of different documents. It’s intuitive the way the content is served up—it actually allows us to get at real nuggets of useful information faster. And it maps to our categorization of how we look at industry trends. We consider it to be a trusted source, so reputation is very important. If we’re standing in front of a prospect and we support one of our propositions with some context from eMarketer and all of the appropriate citations, it’s credible. And that’s very important for us.

To learn how eMarketer can help your business, please contact us at:
Direct: 212-763-6010 or Toll-free: 800-405-0844
sales@emarketer.com
www.emarketer.com

Read more interviews with eMarketer clients:
www.emarketer.com/Corporate/Clients

Do you have an Inside Digital story to tell?
Contact David Iankelevich at:
diankelevich@emarketer.com Direct: 212-763-6037