Critical Mass has a diverse client portfolio. From your vantage point, what are the most critical needs of your clients today?

Roger Gagnon: CMOs are looking for us to help them be more nimble and get to solutions more quickly. They want us to help them create more meaningful connections with their consumers across the digital ecosystem and—most importantly—they’re asking us to help them stand out and be different. We’re bombarded by so much media in our daily life that it’s difficult to pay attention to everything, so those three things—nimbleness, creating meaningful connections and generating unique ideas that help them stand out—are the three needs we hear the most. Marketers are trying to figure out where their customers are, where they should be speaking with them and what type of media they should see at each touchpoint.

“Marketing is experiencing a time of reinvention.”

CMOs today are looking for opportunities to align business and brand opportunities with customer needs. I think the most successful agencies are going to be those that quickly identify opportunities that live in that overlap. Successful agencies will bring ideas to the table that connect with consumers in a human and meaningful way across all the different touchpoints that they interact with while delivering tangible business results.

We’re noticing that the approach to marketing hasn’t changed quickly enough. Marketing is experiencing a time of reinvention. It’s not just about product attributes, benefits or features. We see clients trying to optimize their media mix to tell better stories and connect more powerfully with the consumer. It’s about having a strong, emotional story that connects with the consumer on a personal level.
You mentioned marketing is experiencing a time of reinvention. What do you mean by that?

Gagnon: When we think about moving our clients’ business forward, we think about shifting them from the traditional mindset of having a great product, putting it in the right place, promoting it and pricing it competitively—the “four P’s.” Of course, they also need the four P’s, but marketing is really about going from product to the productivity of the solution and finding that need that the brand is uniquely positioned to fill.

“We often say that [eMarketer’s] ‘red-and-black’ means immediately credible data.”

Consumers live and operate in a multichannel world, and a lot of them are becoming what we would call “media omnivores.” They seek the path of least resistance when they’re trying to find information about a brand, whether it’s higher up in the funnel or part of a sales or service function.

What we are trying to do with a lot of our clients is suggest that consumers are going to try to connect with them in any channel that’s available. That means the customer experience needs to be great in all of those channels. We put a lot of care and attention into figuring out what the optimal role of each touchpoint is. For clients that don’t have optimized touchpoints, it’s a challenge.

How do eMarketer resources help you navigate the evolving marketing landscape on behalf of your clients?

Gagnon: We find that eMarketer is a great tool in helping to get to insights more quickly. We often say that [eMarketer’s] “red-and-black” means immediately credible data. And it is. The charts and graphs are great because they allow that data to be quickly and visually understood. The formats make it easy for us to dig into our day-to-day work, as well as our pitches. It’s not like we have to do a whole bunch of transposing or recoding to drop the data in. The data just has that extra layer of credibility that allows us to have the client say “yes” more quickly.

When I think about moving clients from product to the productivity of solutions, eMarketer’s usage and attitude data helps us identify not only what the behaviors are today, but it gives us a jumping off point for identifying additional needs. eMarketer gives us a lot more credibility when we’re talking about solutions to clients, and we use it throughout the creative process.

Beyond the usage and attitude data, the forecast data plays a role not only in telling us how we should be using a consumer touchpoint, but also where that touchpoint might shift in the future and what we should be considering. The data is pretty nuanced and if you ask the team, they’ll say that eMarketer is the go-to source for quick snippets of international research that are really difficult to pull from other places.