Driving marketing team coordination through cross-functional collaboration and communication

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of cross-functional collaboration and communication in enhancing the coordination of marketing teams within industries. Employing a descriptive research design, data were collected from 110 marketing team employees and analyzed using chi-square test to assess the association between collaborative factors (involvement, transparency, mindfulness, synergy, overall collaboration) and perceived coordination both within a team (team A) and between two teams (team A and team B). The findings revealed a significant positive association within team A, indicating effective internal cross-functional dynamics. However, no significant association was found between the collaborative factors and perceived coordination between team A and team B, highlighting challenges in inter-team collaboration and communication. The study underscores the importance of fostering strong internal team collaboration while addressing barriers to effective communication and collaboration across different marketing teams to optimize overall marketing coordination.

Keywords: Cross-functional collaboration; marketing team coordination; inter-team collaboration; communication barriers

INTRODUCTION

Marketing team coordination in the industry is influenced by factors operating at different levels within the marketing system.

The term cross-functional collaboration is defined as dividing the word into two parts:

Cross-functional: As in, across or between functions (Rho et al 1994).

Collaboration: To join forces, unite in a project or idea and otherwise work together (Griffin and Hauser 1996).

Coordinating various departments within an organization is achieved through cross-functional integration (Rho et al 1994, Griffin and Hauser 1996). Cross-functional teams (CFTs) enable this integration by uniting members from various functions to perform tasks and make decisions collaboratively (Dougherty 1992, Edmondson and Nembhard 2009). CFTs can only fully succeed with strong internal dynamics that foster collaboration (Daspit et al 2013). The main emphasis of current literature on CFTs is their influence on areas like process/project performance, product research and development, supply chain and knowledge management (Maltz and Kohli 1996, Thomsen 2006).

While much research on CFTs uses quantitative methods, the internal workings of these teams remain underexplored. This study investigates how cross-functional collaboration and communication improve marketing team coordination across industries and examines the impact of diverse team characteristics on these internal dynamics within organizational processes.

Cross-functional collaboration happens between internal teams like product marketing and content marketing, whereas, collaboration between departments involves broader business functions such as marketing and sales. Consequently, inter-

departmental collaboration can introduce diverse expertise, inputs and interactions that would be absent in isolated efforts. Cross-functional collaboration involves individuals or teams from various organizational functions or departments working cooperatively, leveraging their diverse expertise and perspectives for efficient common goal achievement (Dougherty 1992).

The smooth functioning and ultimate success of business operations significantly hinge on robust coordination within cross-functional teams. This coordinated approach ensures team members collaborate seamlessly towards common objectives, streamlining communication, resource allocation and the integration of diverse tasks (Eleogu et al 2024, Ezeh et al 2024, Nwosu et al 2024).

The purpose of communication is to foster positive and non-confrontational interpersonal relationships focused on achieving common goals. This includes enhancing skills, motivating employees towards evolving objectives and maximizing workforce potential in response to changing production methods. These aims align with factors that explain the growing importance of communication within organizations (Bucăţa and Rizescu 2017).

In contrast, cross-functional teams work simultaneously across various aspects of a product. Furthermore, these teams enhance communication and cooperation throughout the entire organization. Close collaboration enables team members to develop a shared understanding of the project's objectives and challenges (Mahadik et al 2024).

The ability to communicate and collaborate effectively across these boundaries can significantly enhance the overall performance of the marketing department and by extension, the organization as a whole.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was adopted to explore coordination mechanisms, strategies and challenges that influence marketing team performance, focusing on cross-functional collaboration and communication. The population comprised marketing team employees across various industries, with a sample of 110 participants, including 50 coordinators and 60 team members from agri-input companies, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure balanced representation from both coordinators and team members, capturing diverse experiences in collaboration practices. Data collection involved a structured survey with both Likert scale-based closed-ended questions and open-ended questions, collecting data on organizational structure, coordination strategies and challenges.

Primary data were gathered through questionnaires distributed to participants, focusing on coordination practices, while secondary data were sourced from industry reports and academic literature for additional context on industry trends and technology. For data analysis, MS Excel was used with statistical tools to evaluate responses, ensuring accuracy. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the distribution of responses, identifying trends and patterns in coordination practices. The chi-square test was applied to examine relationships between cross-functional collaboration within and between teams, providing insights into coordination effectiveness. The chi-square test is a statistical method used to determine if there is a significant association between two categorical variables. In this context, it helps in understanding whether the level of collaboration and communication within a team differs significantly from that between teams.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The findings on marketing team coordination in the industry, focusing on organizational structure, strategies and the role of technology are presented hereunder. How cross-functional collaboration and communication enhance team coordination and key challenges related to coordination and collaboration are given.

Cross-functional collaboration, communication in improving marketing team coordination
Effective coordination within and between teams is crucial for enhancing operational efficiency, driving innovation and ensuring the successful execution of marketing strategies.

Cross-functional collaboration, communication within team A
Table 1 captures the responses of team members regarding their experience with cross-functional collaboration and communication within their

team. The respondents were asked to rate their agreement with statements related to increasing involvement, transparency, mindfulness, synergy and collaboration within their team. The ratings were categorized as Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly disagree.

Table 2 calculates the expected frequency for each figure under the null hypothesis of no association between the statements and the responses. The expected value (E) was calculated using the formula:

E = Row total × Column total/Grand total

These values represent the frequencies that would be expected if there were no relationships between the statements and the respondents' level of agreement.

Table 3 calculates the contribution of each figure to the overall chi-square statistic. The chi-square value indicates how much the observed frequencies deviated from the expected frequencies. A higher contribution value suggested a greater deviation, which

might indicate a significant association between the statements and the respondents' level of agreement. The contribution of each figure to the chi-square statistic was calculated using the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O - E)2/E$$

where O = Observed frequency, E = Expected frequency

The sum of these values gave the overall chi-square statistic, which was then used to determine the p-value and test the null hypothesis.

Each figure contained the chsi-square value for that very figure, representing how much that specific observation deviated from the expectation. Larger values indicated a greater deviation from the expected frequency.

The final result showed a chi-square value χ^2 = 26.6 with 16 degrees of freedom. Given that the p-value is 0.0454940, which was less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis (H_0) got rejected. This indicates that there was a significant association between the statements related to cross-functional collaboration and

Table 1. Responses to cross-functional collaboration within team A (observed frequencies)

Component	Respondents (n = 110) response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Increase involvement in teams	44	8	4	3	1
Increase transparency in teams	42	10	6	1	1
Increase mindfulness in teams	45	10	1	1	3
Increase synergy in teams	33	13	5	6	3
Increase collaboration in general	32	13	2	10	3

Table 2. Response to cross-functional collaboration within team A (expected frequencies)

Component	Respondents (n = 110) response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Increase involvement in teams	39.2	10.8	3.6	4.2	2.2
Increase transparency in teams	39.2	10.8	3.6	4.2	2.2
Increase mindfulness in teams	39.2	10.8	3.6	4.2	2.2
Increase synergy in teams	39.2	10.8	3.6	4.2	2.2
Increase collaboration in general	39.2	10.8	3.6	4.2	2.2

Table 3. Final contribution of each response

Component	Respondents (n = 110) response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Increase involvement in teams	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.7
Increase transparency in teams	0.2	0.1	1.6	2.4	0.7
Increase mindfulness in teams	0.9	0.1	1.9	2.4	0.3
Increase synergy in teams	1.0	0.4	0.5	0.8	0.3
Increase collaboration in general	1.3	0.4	0.7	8.0	0.3

χ^2: 26.6, df: 16, p-value: 0.0454940, 0.05 <H_0: H_0: There is no association, 0.05 >H_1: H_1: There is association

the responses of the participants within a team. Therefore, it can be concluded that the levels of agreement among respondents were not uniformly distributed across the statements, implying that some aspects of collaboration were perceived differently by the team members.

Cross-functional collaboration, communication between teams A and B

Table 4 displays the observed frequencies of responses from a survey measuring cross-functional collaboration between teams A and B.

The survey consisted of five statements, each assessing different dimensions of collaboration, such as involvement, transparency, mindfulness, synergy and overall collaboration. Respondents rated their level of agreement on a Likert scale, with options ranging from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree.

Table 5 presents the expected frequencies of responses for each statement if there were no associations between the statements and the levels of agreement. The expected frequencies were calculated based on the assumption that the distribution of responses would be uniform if there were no significant relationships between the variables.

$$E = Row\ total \times Column\ total / Grand\ total$$

These values represented the frequencies that would be expected if there were no relationships between the statements and the respondents' level of agreement.

The contribution of each figure in the Table to the overall chi-square statistic is calculated. The chi-square value indicated how much the observed frequencies deviate from the expected frequencies. A higher contribution value suggested a greater deviation, which might indicate a significant association between the statements and the respondents' level of agreement. The contribution of each figure to the chi-square statistic was calculated using the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O - E)2/E$$

where O = Observed frequency, E = Expected frequency

Table 4. Responses to cross-functional collaboration between teams A and B (observed frequencies)

Component	Respondents (n = 110) response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Increase involvement in teams	4	6	13	26	11
Increase transparency in teams	4	7	15	21	13
Increase mindfulness in teams	1	5	10	28	16
Increase synergy in teams	6	5	8	22	19
Increase collaboration in general	2	7	12	25	14

Table 5. Response to cross-functional collaboration between teams A and B (expected frequencies)

Component	Respondents (n = 110) response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Increase involvement in teams	3.4	6.0	11.6	24.4	14.6
Increase transparency in teams	3.4	6.0	11.6	24.4	14.6
Increase mindfulness in teams	3.4	6.0	11.6	24.4	14.6
Increase synergy in teams	3.4	6.0	11.6	24.4	14.6
Increase collaboration in general	3.4	6.0	11.6	24.4	14.6

Table 6. Final contributions of each response

Component	Respondents (n = 110) response				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Increase involvement in teams	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.9
Increase transparency in teams	0.1	0.2	1.0	0.5	0.2
Increase mindfulness in teams	1.7	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.1
Increase synergy in teams	2.0	0.2	1.1	0.2	1.3
Increase collaboration in general	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0

χ^2: 11.06, df: 16, p-value: 0.773, 0.05 <H_0: H_0: There is no association, 0.05 >H_1: H_1: There is association

The sum of these values gave the overall chi-square statistic, which was then used to determine the p-value and test the null hypothesis. The values in the figures represented the individual chi-square contributions, showing how much each observed frequency differed from its expected frequency.

The final chi-square statistic was $\chi^2 = 11.06$, with 16 degrees of freedom (Table 6). The p-value associated with this chi-square statistic was 0.773, which was greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) couldn't be rejected. This result indicated that there was no significant association between the statements related to cross-functional collaboration and the respondents' levels of agreement between teams. In other words, the responses were uniformly distributed across the statements, suggesting that the perception of collaboration was consistent among the team members.

The results showed a clear difference in how well cross-functional collaboration worked within a single team compared to between different teams. Within team A, the chi-square test revealed a significant connection between the factors like involvement, transparency, mindfulness, synergy and general collaboration and how team members perceived them. This indicated a positive outcome, with more active participation and better understanding among team members. The lower levels of disagreement and neutral responses suggested that team A was more cohesive, with members who were aligned and actively engaged.

Whereas, between teams A and B, the chi-square test did not show a significant connection between the collaborative factors and the responses, the higher levels of disagreement and neutral responses, along with a lack of strong agreement, suggested that collaboration and communication between these teams were not as effective. This pointed to potential barriers or misunderstandings that made it harder for these teams to work together well.

Overall, the comparison highlighted the importance of strong collaboration within teams and the need to address challenges in communication between teams to ensure effective cross-functional collaboration across the organization.

CONCLUSION

Effective cross-functional collaboration and communication significantly enhance coordination within marketing teams, fostering involvement, transparency, mindfulness and synergy. However, a key challenge is the lack of this association between different marketing teams, indicating inter-team silos.

Organizations should prioritize building strong internal team dynamics through open communication, shared understanding and defined roles. Crucially, targeted strategies are needed to break down inter-team silos via formal channels, cross-team projects and mutual understanding initiatives, championed by leaders.

Transparent communication across all levels is vital for seamless information flow. Addressing inefficient inter-team collaboration can streamline processes and improve overall marketing outcomes. While essential within teams, cultivating effective collaboration between teams is vital for unlocking the full potential of marketing functions and achieving holistic organizational success.

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