

Marketing is a way of life

MYTH BUSTER V Pradeep Kumar dispels some common misconceptions regarding a marketing career

Recently, at a leading management institute, my lecture on career opportunities in marketing was the last in the series. The hall was full of students even though many of them had already chosen their specialisation for the second year of management course.

Interacting with the students, I asked them why many of them had already decided not to opt for marketing. The students were aware of the opportunities that a marketing career offered, but had many apprehensions:

- 'A marketing career means door-to-door selling' - Shruti.
- 'Cold calling customers, has a high ratio of rejection, and is mentally disturbing' - Johnson.
- 'Nature of job is door-to-door selling which continues through out the career' - Raghav.
- 'It's impossible to tolerate harsh climatic conditions in a marketing job' - Priya.
- 'You have to be an extrovert to succeed in a marketing job and hence a marketing career is not suitable for all' - Vijay.

Instead of dwelling more on opportunities in marketing, I focused on clearing their apprehensions.

Apprehensions about a marketing job

■ Door-to-door selling:

This is indeed a common apprehension. Firstly, not all marketing jobs are door-to-door. Secondly, most products and services sold today use a backend support. This means, the backend support system is responsible for many activities earlier done by a marketing executive such as identifying potential customers, qualifying their interest level and fixing meetings. Hence, these support services make the marketing process efficient, while making an executive's life comfortable.

■ Cold calling is stressful:

Marketing executives approach cold calling with a different mental framework, anticipating and preparing for rejections. Experiences of marketing several products and services indicate

that cold calling (meeting without pre-fixed appointment) success is higher than other methods. Strange as it may seem, this is a reality and explains the popularity of cold calling.

■ Adverse climatic conditions: It's true that as a marketing executive, you work despite harsh climatic conditions. This doesn't mean that you continue to work drenched in rain or walk in hot and humid climate. However, this emphasises the importance of planning your daily schedule of appointments with a logical route plan, which minimises your exposure to adverse climatic conditions, while maximising your productivity.

■ You have to be an extrovert: While being an extrovert helps, this is not a must. Customers buy products and services evaluating many factors such as features, advantages and benefits. In fact, these days, customers are skeptical about aggressive and pushy marketing executives and prefer to deal with calm and composed executives. As we say in marketing parlance, customers

prefer to buy rather than being sold to. This is a significant change in the mindset of customers, in the 21st century.

■ Nature of job remains the same:

Nothing else can be further from the truth. A typical marketing job starts with 70-80% fieldwork but this progressively diminishes, as you rise in the hierarchy with other responsibilities.

All marketing jobs including those at the level of CEOs have a certain level of interaction with customers, which is a corporate necessity. As you rise in the hierarchy, the objective of the customer interaction is not always to generate business; it's more often to sustain or build a relationship.

As the lecture ended, students were more than convinced that their earlier opinions were merely figments of their imagination.

Your surroundings, the character of the people with whom you come in contact with and other external factors, do influence you. However, do not accept things at face value; develop an analytical mind to probe and un-

cover the truth.

Marketing is lucrative

A marketing career is still the most lucrative career a young graduate can take up, as it's the ideal combination of freedom to work independently with fixed and variable pay, which depends only on your performance. Further, it doesn't really matter what you have specialised in — a basic degree in arts, science or commerce, an engineering degree or an MBA. What's more important is whether you have an aptitude and passion for a marketing career. A significant and visible benefit of a marketing career is that it develops and transforms you into a strong and smart individual, ready to take on the world. Marketing therefore isn't just a profession; it's also a way of life.

John Ruskin, British critic and social thinker said, "When love and skill work together, expect a master piece". The secret of success of most CEOs is their marketing career, which is a strong foundation, and paves the way for ultimate corporate success.

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