

GIRL POWER

Unlike other business functions, the gender gap in B2B marketing is far less distinct.

Lucy Fisher investigates the stats, stereotypes and success stories of women in marketing

You only have to attend a few industry events to see that, as a discipline, B2B marketing is populated relatively evenly by both male and female marketers.

This is certainly the case when you compare it to stereotypically male careers, such as finance or IT.

There's no lack of successful women in the field either. This was illustrated by the fact that the winner of the coveted B2B Marketer of the Year accolade at the B2B Marketing Awards 2010 was a woman – step forward Stephanie Doyle, marketing and business development manager at law firm Berwin Leighton Paisner LL (BLP).

But as we all know, appearances can be deceiving. Have we really achieved gender equality in B2B marketing? And do the statistics back up such promising indicators?

A level playing field?

According to Paul Sykes, managing director at specialist recruiter Michael Page Marketing, the answer is a firm yes.

"Looking at the placements we make, there just isn't a gender divide," he says. "Marketing has become more measurable and people are being judged on results, so the opportunities are there whether you are male or female."

The statistics, at first glance, back up this argument. The Chartered Institute of Marketing's (CIM) membership base, for

example, demonstrates a largely even split between the genders, with a very slight skew, in fact, towards women: 50.5 per cent of its current members are female and 49.5 per cent are male.

Yet the gender gaps within the memberships of the Institute of Direct Marketing (IDM) and The Marketing Society are not quite so negligible, with both at 60/40, and the skew towards male members. Delving a little deeper, there are other areas where women remain under-represented, too.

Firstly, the CIM has two types of member; studying and professional. The group that is studying is much more densely populated by females than the professional group, at 61.6 per cent versus 43 per cent respectively. This could be a positive sign that rather than women failing to fulfil potential in their careers, there are in fact many highly motivated and skilled female marketers due to emerge from formal training courses. However, there is also evidence of some disparity between the numbers of men and women at marketing director level and their levels of remuneration at this stage of seniority.

According to the CIM's Croner Rewards Survey 2010, the median basic pay for women was £65,000 versus £75,000 for men at the same level. Moreover, only one in three marketing directors who responded to this survey was a woman, whereas women from all job grades made

up 69 per cent of the total respondents. In addition, out of the IDM's entire membership base, 72 per cent of those with director in their title are men.

Why are there less women at marketing director or board level, even though there is a predominance of women undertaking formal studies to support a successful career in marketing?

It's a controversial question, but many successful female B2B marketers believe that the issue has something to do with women leaving their careers or taking breaks to have children. According to Amanda Rendle, HSBC's global head of marketing and propositions, commercial banking, "It's a fact that women tend to do more childcare. What turns women off is that they get tired of wrestling with children and then trying to do a job. I've seen so many good women walk away because they get tired."

Flexible working

Rendle, however, has three children herself and says that she managed to juggle career and a family by championing flexible working patterns. Modern technologies are making it easier to be flexible, she says.

Shane Redding, director at Cyance, set up her own limited company after having her second child, so that she could enjoy more flexibility in her working patterns. She now holds a variety of non-executive directorships, is a lecturer at the IDM, and

Just look at the number of women compared to men doing science subjects at A-level, and the numbers doing computing and engineering degrees. I think most of this is conditioning



Claire Macland
European head of marketing
Avaya

Vox pop: B2B survival – does gender matter?

Ewa Johnson, head of marketing communications, Vodafone Global Enterprise: "Women naturally think about a number of different things at a given time, with an inherent ability to see these from end-to-end. This includes seeing the consequences of actions taken and instinctively planning contingencies."

Stephanie Doyle, marketing and business development manager, Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP: "Good people want to work with good people and it doesn't matter if you're male or female. The only way to negate the sexism is to succeed on your merit."

Amanda Jobbins, vice president, European marketing, Cisco: "In B2B, you can still count the number of women in the top marketing role on one hand, even though the marketing teams have a high proportion of women overall."

I think this is typically because in B2B women do not spread their knowledge to learn enough about the technical side of the business, and instead limit themselves to the pure communications aspects of marketing."

a consultant at Think Direct. She believes that up to marketing manager level, there is a fairly even split of men and women in B2B marketing, but admits that at board level she is in a minority. However, she thinks this is less to do with whether or not women choose to have children, and more to do with the choices that people at both ends of the hiring process make in general.

“It’s not about lack of opportunity now,” she says. “I find sometimes women hit a barrier that they may perceive as sexist, when in fact they may lack a skills set, or they may decline a promotion because they are not prepared to work 100-hour weeks.”

Redding believes that a career in marketing often allows a high degree of flexibility and agrees that recent moves towards greater flexibility in working conditions, especially in large companies, will improve choice for everyone, and that this may help eradicate what is left of any gender divide.

A good education

Other successful female B2B marketers believe that any remaining gender gap within the industry is due in large part to social conditioning, education choices and expectations.

Claire Macland, European head of marketing for networking firm Avaya, agrees that there is a lot more equality within the marketing space compared to areas such as finance, legal and medicine. However she says that in her experience, there is a divide within B2B technology marketing in terms of a higher percentage of men in more technical roles, such as product marketing, and women in events, or as brand leads, or in field marketing roles.

“I think this is due to education choices. It’s a reflection of the background they have,” she says. “Thirteen product marketers work for me at Avaya, and only one is a woman. However, in field marketing I have 20 people, and the majority are women – there are only four men in this function.”

In creative areas, Macland thinks women are probably equally represented, as the decision as to who gets placed in these roles tends to be not so dominated by education choices. But she suspects that she sees more men in heavily strategic or analytical roles because they come from a stats background, “Just look at the number of women compared to men doing science subjects at A-level, and the numbers doing computing and engineering degrees. I think most of this is conditioning.”

Both Macland and BLP’s Doyle point out that they are speaking in very general terms, but add that they have seen many women ending up in certain types of marketing roles having proved that they are

hyper-organised and good at multi-tasking in various support roles. This allows them to make the move from admin or secretarial to marketing functions such as events management. A key piece of advice from successful female B2B marketers is to remember that the types of roles people choose, from very early stages, have a huge impact on where their careers can go. You very rarely see a marketing director who has come up from an events management background, but somebody in product marketing or management could often become a marketing director, they say.

So, rather than claiming that male and female brains are wired differently, some argue that old stereotypes have hard-wired men and women to make certain choices – and that newer, emerging marketing roles, unfortunately, might reflect the same social and behavioural patterns.



What turns women off is that they get tired of wrestling with children and then trying to do a job. I’ve seen so many good women walk away because they get tired



Amanda Rendle
global head of marketing &
propositions, commercial banking
HSBC

Macland fears that the explosion of digital media and social marketing is unlikely to make any significant difference to this. Although she sees just as many women as men in roles focusing on these new and emerging channels – and believes that the fragmentation into technology, analysis and creative roles hasn’t happened yet – she believes that, when this happens, we’ll see a similar split. “I think people will fall into similar choices. That’s a shame,” she says.

The Mars vs Venus debate

Whether or not men and women differ in terms of their innate capabilities remains an area of contention. Other highly successful female B2B marketers believe that men and women boast differing – and often complementary – innate capabilities. Debbie Williams, chair of the IDM’s B2B Council, says that she is seeing successful females come in and translate the technical into practical value propositions which are compelling for the customer.

Five top tips: How women marketers can supercharge their careers

- 1. Be strategic** in the types of role that you choose. Ensure your CV includes roles that are directly aligned with business strategy, rather than solely execution, creative or communications roles.
- 2. Be seen as an equal.** Don’t be afraid of roles that interface heavily with traditionally male-dominated discipline such as IT sales.
- 3. Learn new skills.** Don’t underestimate the importance of formal education or networking opportunities. Ensure that you have sufficient digital or online marketing skills.
- 4. Get savvy to ROI.** Demonstrate that you understand how marketing impacts the bottom line.
- 5. Believe in yourself.** Recognise that positivity, passion, and self-confidence sell.

She believes there are some fundamental female attributes that work really well within marketing, such as good communication skills, intuition, patience and tenacity. These qualities are really important in a B2B environment with long sales cycles and various stakeholders, she says. “We’ve moved away from a traditional hard sell. Look at the explosion of social media and digital media. A CMO needs to be able to create a dialogue with customers. Females can be very empathetic, which is useful when you’re dealing with diverse teams and stakeholders, too.”

Experts agree that today’s marketer needs such a rounded blend of skills that so-called gender skills hardly matter. Data analysis, for example, involves both the left and right side of the brain; mathematical segmentation is just as important as insightful interpretation. And marketing remains a developing science, too. “Over the years, it has changed,” says HSBC’s Rendle. “DM used to be seen as separate and it was more about advertising and communications. You get more rounded marketers now, and you need many strings to your bow.”

Pride and prejudice

To routinely assume that there are differences between men and women is to perhaps reinforce longstanding prejudice. One thing that is clear is whether or not you believe there are certain gender skills, the number of successful women we see in B2B marketing today proves that we are no longer prisoners of our sex. A successful marketer today has so many areas in which to prove themselves and there are no insurmountable barriers to either gender achieving their true potential.