



How HR & Marketing Can Build a Better Brand Together

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Enduring brands are built by people – not ads, clicks or views.

Marketing has traditionally taken the lead in communicating the corporate brand promise, but when it comes to delivering on those promises, its people from all around the organization who have to do the meticulous work of successfully bringing the brand promise to life.

In fact, employees need to do many things (often behind the scenes) that are ‘on brand’ across dozens of customer touch points. Ultimately, it’s the organizational culture – ‘the way things are done around here’ – that becomes the true brand differentiator.

And that’s precisely why HR has a significant role to play in the process. It’s time to recognize and leverage the critical role employees play in enhancing and delivering the brand promise.

The Challenge

The digital age has brought forth exceptional corporate transparency. In order to productively drive cohesion and a seamless customer experience, organizations have to communicate internally with employees as aggressively and consistently as they do externally with customers.

Branding is no longer just visual identity and an external promise to customers, but has become a means of executing business strategy via internal brand-led behavior and culture change to create a compelling customer experience delivered by the entire organization.

Rather than viewing our brand as an outcome or intangible asset, the concept of employee-based brand equity affords us the opportunity to use our brand as a lever to value and capture returns across the organization, and this is achieved with HR practices at the core.

What HR gains from their partnership with Marketing

Recruiting top-tier talent is crucial for any organization wanting to achieve and sustain success, and hiring the right people is essential to building a workforce that's truly engaged in what your company does.

However, attracting that talent has become an increasingly challenging proposition, as candidates have become more discerning, and have far greater resources for evaluating their fit with your organization.

Discovering brand inconsistencies between what's promised externally and the internal reality employees experience could be enough of a deal-breaker to turn-off those coveted candidates.

To prevent that from occurring, we have to consistently tell our brand story through a variety of channels, not just to reach customers but to reach prospective employees as well. Many companies fall short on doing a good job of communicating with current employees, much less extending the brand story to those they hope to recruit.

Marketing has the talent to help HR target an employee audience – just like it does a customer audience – and bring the brand alive by creating passionate, emotional connections with potential candidates. The qualities that matter to customers also matter to the high-potentials we want to recruit – especially on the topics of culture, leadership, challenge and growth.

Marketers know how to drive and measure audience engagement, how to create engaging experiences, how to nurture audiences, and how to tell a story that keeps people interested and engaged over a long period of time.

Invite Marketing to help you map the employee journey, understand what matters to potential employees, how to find them and capture their attention, how to woo them into an employment

relationship, and how to nurture, grow, and retain them as valuable leaders at all levels of the company.

Likewise, invoke Marketing's assistance to craft congruent messages so what new employees are presented with is consistent with the brand promise.

What Marketing gains from their partnership with HR

HR's role is to connect the dots between the customer value proposition/brand position and the various codes of conduct around the organization – starting with the mission, vision and values, to the employee value proposition and leadership model. A frequent challenge is that these values are often generic, disconnected, and say very little about the brand they represent.

HR professionals should take branding out of the marketing communications silo and into employee and organizational processes that underpin the delivery of the brand. Reconfigure existing HR processes like hiring, onboarding, training, reward and recognition – adapting them to ensure effective delivery of the brand and strategy.

And Marketers' ongoing quest for authentic and compelling brand stories can be supplemented by human resources. Partner with HR to not only to tell the brand story through them, but also to discover new stories about why people come to work at the company, what matters to them, and how their own stories mesh with the brand story. This provides marketers insight into how their efforts make a difference in helping to recruit the right people.

Making It Work

Marketing and HR need to talk about what HR wants to accomplish with new and existing employees, and explore how the message and the experience between the brand and new employee onboarding can be unified.

In "Experiences: The 7th Era of Marketing," authors Carla Johnson and Robert Rose support increased collaboration between HR and Marketing, and outline a plan for making a partnership like this work.

- Extend the brand story through HR so the people recruited fit the culture, believe in the company's purpose, and seamlessly step in to begin contributing in significant ways, and creating delightful experiences for customers.
- Reach candidates and new hires in new and meaningful ways based on their generational preferences.
- Decide how and when to bring IT into the picture so the candidate experience is easy and user-friendly.
- Help colleagues understand what could be, how all the brand pieces fit together, and how to work together to create new and different experiences for both employees and customers.

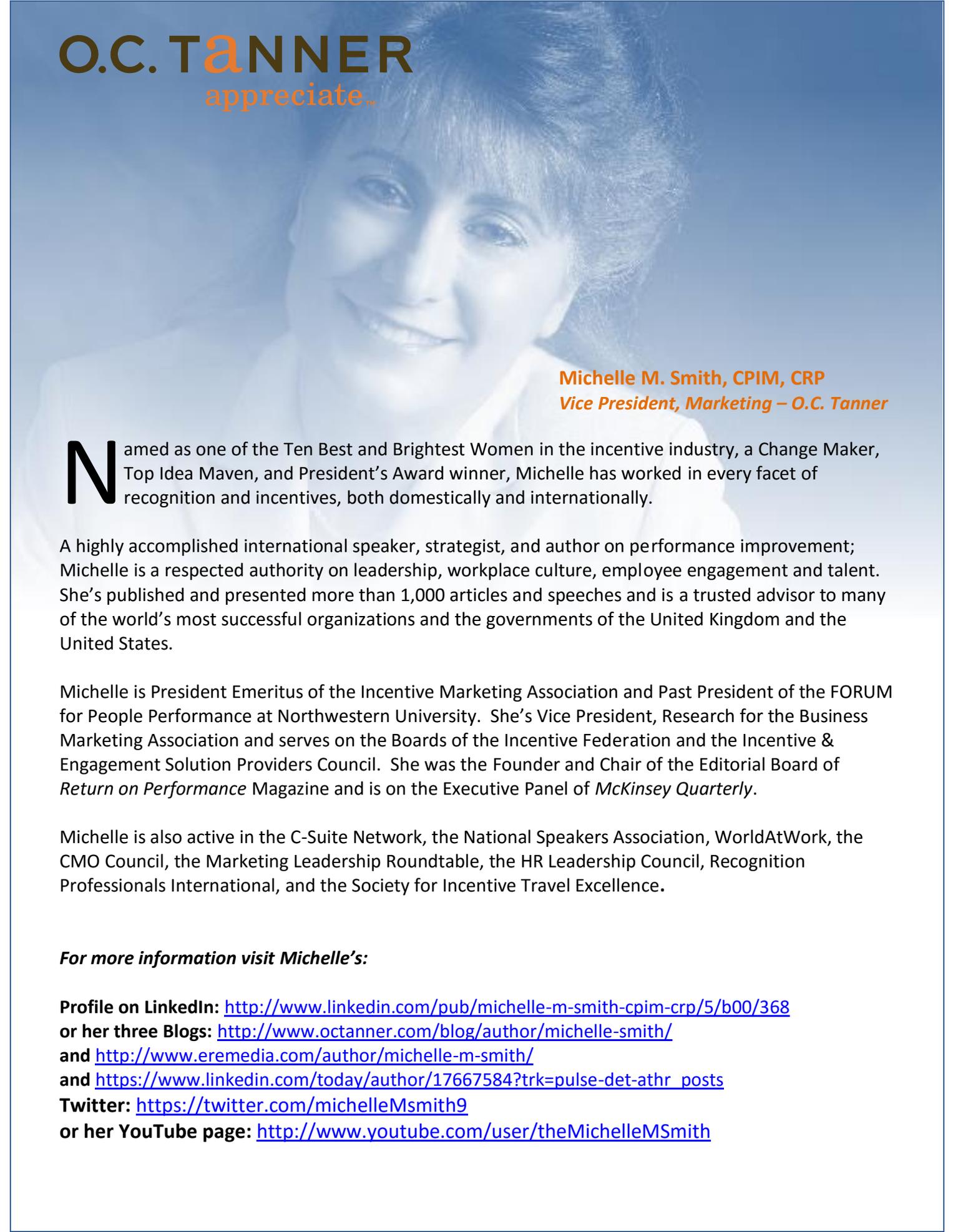
As the War for Talent continues to rage, and customer expectations continue to escalate, we need to begin to create incredibly customized and personal experiences for those who have such enormous impact on our organizations and our ability to achieve our corporate goals. Increased and targeted collaboration between Marketing and HR will go a long way in helping to accomplish those goals.

Named one of the most influential women in the incentive industry, Michelle M. Smith, CPIM, CRP, is an accomplished international author and speaker, past-president of the FORUM at Northwestern University, president emeritus of the Incentive Marketing Association, vice-president of research for the Business Marketing Association, and vice-president of marketing for O.C. Tanner.



O.C. TANNER

appreciate..

A portrait of Michelle M. Smith, a woman with short, dark, curly hair, smiling. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is positioned to the right of her face.

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Named as one of the Ten Best and Brightest Women in the incentive industry, a Change Maker, Top Idea Maven, and President's Award winner, Michelle has worked in every facet of recognition and incentives, both domestically and internationally.

A highly accomplished international speaker, strategist, and author on performance improvement; Michelle is a respected authority on leadership, workplace culture, employee engagement and talent. She's published and presented more than 1,000 articles and speeches and is a trusted advisor to many of the world's most successful organizations and the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States.

Michelle is President Emeritus of the Incentive Marketing Association and Past President of the FORUM for People Performance at Northwestern University. She's Vice President, Research for the Business Marketing Association and serves on the Boards of the Incentive Federation and the Incentive & Engagement Solution Providers Council. She was the Founder and Chair of the Editorial Board of *Return on Performance* Magazine and is on the Executive Panel of *McKinsey Quarterly*.

Michelle is also active in the C-Suite Network, the National Speakers Association, WorldAtWork, the CMO Council, the Marketing Leadership Roundtable, the HR Leadership Council, Recognition Professionals International, and the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence.

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