Takeaways from our Live Session on Center of Excellence Teams for Data and Content

By Claire McBride // October 25, 2023 // Research, Webinars

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Stratably hosted Jonathan Maier from Salsify to share why a Center of Excellence (CoE) team can help scale your digital data operations effectively and efficiently – and how to actually set up the CoE for success.

Key topics:

1. Why it's important to scale digital data operations
2. Key organizational components for digital growth, like executive vision, change management, and a CoE
3. The unlock of automation within your data and content processes, and what it means for human resources inside the organization
4. The anatomy of a digital CoE, including two use cases with real org charts

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Action items for brands:

1. **Create a well-designed CoE team** to improve content speed to market, content quality, and content compliance. Our benchmarking data shows 42% of consumer brands still do not have a CoE team that supports content strategy and execution.
2. **Don't sleep on organizational change management.** Change management works hand-in-hand with CoE initiatives, executive vision, and other critical digital growth precepts and

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deserves greater urgency inside most consumer brand organizations.
3. **Bring IT and Master Data Management (MDM) teams into business conversations as early as possible** to ensure all parties are aligned on needs and realities, and to give adequate time for IT work to be done.
4. **Consider speed as a KPI** for your data and content CoE team and other parts of the organization. Winning in eCommerce requires speed which is typically a more challenging skill for large and mature consumer brand organizations.
5. **Leverage "evangelists" on CoE teams** to interview stakeholders in different markets to inform CoE initiatives and make your digital scaling program more effective.

Here's what we found most interesting:

1. **CoEs should be made up of both part-time and full-time resources that still report into their respective departments** like IT, sales, or marketing. Do not detach these professionals from their original department of expertise as that can lead to relevant knowledge atrophying from the CoE – and therefore the organization – over time.
2. **The biggest benefit from data/content CoEs is the reduction in time** it takes from initial product (and content) creation to when that product (and content) is ultimately available for sale at retail – with some case studies showing an almost 80% reduction in speed to market. Accordingly, speed to market is the most common KPI CoE teams are focused on.
3. **Other common KPIs** include improved content quality scores and reductions in fines and other consequences for noncompliant content with retailers.
4. There is no silver bullet answer to CoE team size or the level of broad resources your organization requires for eCommerce. This depends on structure, number of brands, number of markets, etc. **Instead of solving for team size first, start with what functions and business needs do we need the CoE to address**, and use that as a guide get to the right mix of full-time, part-time, and external resources.
5. **CoEs should not be a temporary team**, but the makeup of and hours devoted to the CoE should be flexible and evolve over time based on maturity of the team and the organization's digital initiatives and needs.
6. Automation and effective staffing through a CoE allow you to do more with less resources, ultimately **shifting team members from remedial or reactive data/content tasks to higher-value work**. This unlock can be meaningful in today's environment where brands are 1) focused on optimizations and cost savings, and 2) having to be sharper and work more strategically to maintain growth in a highly competitive market.

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