



Executive  
Marketing Recruitment.



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# Clear Conversations: Setting B2B growth strategies for 2021 - Beyond recovery

A report from tml Partners and Clear M&C Saatchi  
from their panel debate with B2B marketing leaders

Event co-hosted by Clear M&C Saatchi & tml Partners



Demand for marketing professionals specifically has remained strong throughout UK economy. We have found it really encouraging that many of our clients have continued to invest in business critical hires during the pandemic - which clearly illustrates the importance and value of marketing and communications - as true driver of growth."

Charlie Green, tml Partners

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# Introduction

Continuing a successful partnership, tml Partners recently hosted a webinar with Clear M&C Saatchi, bringing together Chief Marketing Officers from leading B2B firms to discuss the challenges of setting growth strategies for 2021 in a post-COVID world.

The discussion was moderated by Geraint Jones, Global Marketing Director at Clear M&C Saatchi and our panel featured:

**Bonnie Pelosi**  
Brand, Marketing  
& Communications  
Director, UK&I  
**EY**

**Claire Gosnell**  
Global Head of Brand,  
Communications  
and Marketing  
**Clifford Chance LLP**

**Jo Ouvry**  
Director of  
Corporate  
Affairs  
**Deloitte**

**Charlie Green**  
Partner,  
**tml Partners**

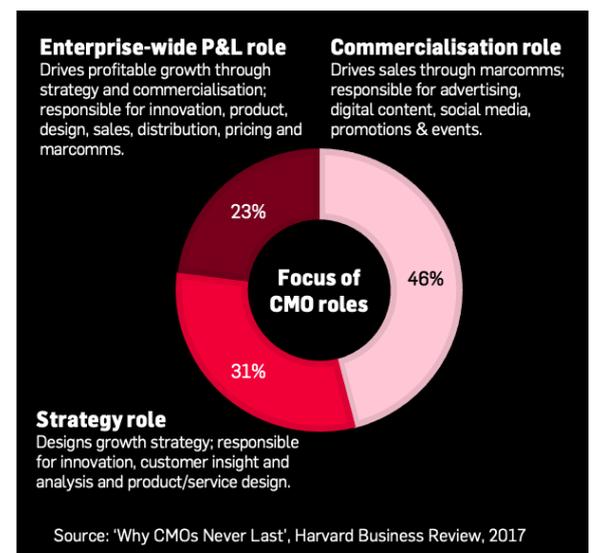
**Jamie Moran**  
Chief Marketing  
Officer, EMEA  
**JLL**

**Rosa Wilkinson**  
Director, Corporate  
and B2B  
**CLEAR M&C Saatchi**

Rosa Wilkinson started the conversation with her thoughts on this topic by looking at how the role of the CMO was already evolving in recent years, with the traditional 'commercialisation' type leader found in B2B companies shifting to those who played a greater role in driving growth and strategy.

In times like these, all CMOs have a unique capability and responsibility to lead the way, with the ability to keep organisational focus on changes to the customer and the outside world whilst blending data and creativity to drive demand. And when crisis or transformation dominates the agenda, these more strategic or enterprise-focused CMOs will drive even greater value for their businesses.

## The evolving role of the CMO



# The time is now.

**Setting the agenda for 2021:  
What can B2B marketing leaders  
bring to the table?**

**DIRECTION**

**GROWTH**

**CONFIDENCE**

Rosa noted the ongoing debate about the value of marketing at C-suite level and discussed how ambitious marketing leaders now have the chance to set the agenda for 2021, in three critical areas:

- 1.** Direction: Determining how to adapt the current 'BAU' experience and offer without losing relevance and distinctiveness. A timely opportunity to revisit the relevance of what you do for clients, given changing contexts and expectations.
- 2.** Growth: Finding additional or replacement sources of growth across new markets and shifting competitive landscapes. Help identify and prioritise areas for innovation, particularly in organisations where sudden digitisation has ignited colleagues' enthusiasm to gain competitive advantage.
- 3.** Confidence: Giving colleagues what they need to deliver evolved offers and experiences; managing the gap between intent and perception, internally and externally. Bringing key audiences along with you, being mindful to build on the established strengths and reputation of your brand.

The conversation then opened up to a panel discussion, which focused on some of the challenges the panel had faced during the COVID-19 crisis, which they anticipated would continue to shape their priorities as CMOs into the 2021 planning cycle.

- 1.** How to balance short-term tactics with long-term strategies
- 2.** How to balance human and digital elements of the client experience
- 3.** How to rebalance tone of voice to align with a more empathetic way of doing business
- 4.** How to refocus, support and upskill marketing teams
- 5.** How to re-orientate your business as a force for good; transcending COVID to address wider societal issues

## I. How to balance short-term tactics with long-term strategies responsibility for client experience?

The panel all recognised the need to quickly adapt and respond to short-term issues during the COVID 19 crisis. But also the importance of keeping one eye on the long-term; not getting side-tracked from the bigger goals you are trying to achieve.

Several of our panel highlighted the importance of staying true to your long-term business vision throughout the crisis. Jamie Moran noted that "real-estate is a long-term industry. So our plans and strategies are based on long-term themes that we just don't see changing, like climate change or digitisation".

A clear business vision can also help to guide your responses in a rapidly changing environment, as Clare Gosnell pointed out: "our perspective has potentially even been strengthened in the current environment as you really need to know what to hold true to".

Many found that this short-term/long-term balance had actually evolved throughout COVID. "At the beginning there was an initial desire to quickly put out our insights and perspectives, but now we find ourselves being more deliberate about what we put out into the market and how we engage with clients" said Jo Ouvry.

All saw the value in stepping back and evaluate how much of your existing strategy was still valuable and relevant to the post COVID future, and then deciding what needs to be adapted whilst still maintaining your clear 'brand thread'.



Real-estate is a long-term industry. So our plans and strategies are based on long-term themes that we just don't see changing, like climate change or digitisation"

Jamie Moran, JLL

## 2. How to balance human and digital elements of the client experience

The panel then moved on to discuss the challenges of managing the evolving client experience, in an environment where everything has rapidly shifted to digital channels at a previously-incredible pace!

Although the group noted it was more challenging to win work and serve clients in a world where face to face interactions were not an option, they praised the speed and ease at which usual processes had migrated online during lockdown.

The bigger challenge came when thinking about the future use of digital channels, beyond lockdown. All noted that digital initiatives should add genuine value to their client experiences and be guided by the changing needs of their clients. "Don't just start loads of digital initiatives that aren't going to be truly meaningful", said Jamie. Claire agreed and warned that digital (or any other technique) needs to remain at the service of the bigger goal – what the client is actually trying to achieve.

As always, focus is key. It's about identifying those aspects throughout the client journey that are going to change and so require you to think differently about digitisation. But also identifying where digital can add most value, bearing in mind that there will still be aspects where F2F is most appropriate. As Rosa noted, "you can't just stick everything on Zoom and hope it works"!

Rosa also highlighted the crucial role that human-led experiences can play in creating brand differentiation in B2B, and particularly in professional or advisory sectors. "As it's often a service or advisory offer delivered by people, it's the distinctiveness of the culture that really shines through and creates that differentiation in market". Claire agreed and shared that, whether in a face-to-face meeting, using AI tools or reaching out to clients through digital channels, the primary question remained whether that felt "like a consistent and seamless Clifford Chance experience".



When businesses hinge on a service or advisory offer delivered by people, it's the distinctiveness of the culture that really shines through and creates that differentiation in market"

Rosa Wilkinson, Clear M&C Saatchi



We need to be more issues-led in our comms, that is more important than ever. We need to put more care and attention into our tone and messaging”

Jo Ouvry, Deloitte

### 3. How to rebalance your tone of voice to align with a more personal and empathetic way of doing business

Both the style and content of corporate communications are under scrutiny like never before. As Jo noted, “we need to be more issues-led in our comms, that is more important than ever. We need to put more care and attention into our tone and messaging”. Claire added that at Clifford Chance, “we put in some rules of the road really fast around our external messaging and comms, around things we wouldn't PR and words we wouldn't use”.

Many found their tone naturally shifting towards a more personal and empathetic way of doing business. “You move towards “serve not sell” – you really need to be listening, more than ever, to what your clients are really interested in and

what their issues are”, as Jo observed.

But the panel didn't see this as a short-term adjustment either. COVID has acted more as a natural inflection point for businesses to re-evaluate how they want to communicate in the long-term. The challenge is how to balance this new way of communicating with your existing tone of voice. As Claire summed up: “We're in a real flux moment. We've had a huge amount of very personal and authentic communication coming out internally and externally, which isn't entirely aligned with our corporate tone of voice. We need to decide where we want to go with this – and what kind of brand does Clifford Chance want to be”.

## 4. How to refocus, support and upskill your internal teams during a time of flux

Discussion then turned to the evolving skillsets required in B2B marketing in a post-COVID environment. Agility and flexibility were mentioned countless times as being vital in these changing times. Digital marketing and the investment in MarTech is now front and centre for all companies in the 'new normal' and the panel praised the agility of their established marketing teams to shift gears and transforming their go-to-market strategies to become 'digital first'.

This skill of adaptability will be even more crucial in the modern marketing team as priorities, plans, channels and ways of working constantly evolve in the coming months and years.

Bonnie shared that, "during COVID some projects were stopped and we had to reallocate teams. And people were fantastic – putting up their hands, rolling up their sleeves and just getting involved".

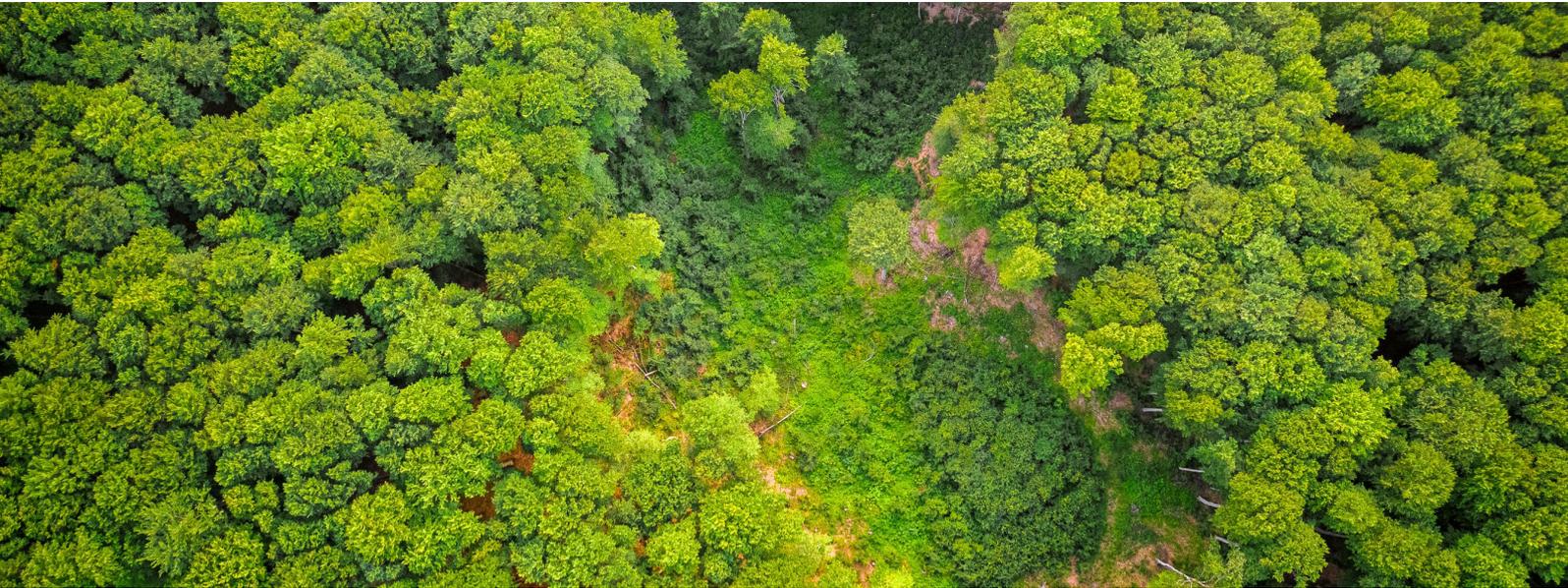
The panel also talked about the importance of displaying empathy, not just externally, but internally too. "We're all in the same storm, but all in different boats. We need to stay adaptable, but always show empathy" said Bonnie. We will continue to see a focus on mental health and wellbeing, with marketing and corporate affairs teams playing an integral role, via more thoughtful and strategic internal engagement and communications.



We're all in the same storm, but all in different boats. We need to stay adaptable, but always show empathy"

Bonnie Pelosi, EY

## 5. How to re-orientate your business as a force for good; transcending COVID to address wider societal issues



The discussion concluded by looking at issues that transcend COVID and how B2B marketers can effectively respond to those. We have seen how COVID has brought some background issues to the fore, such as the contract that exists between businesses, society and government. Now more than ever, there is a clear need for business to demonstrate that they are a force for good, and to showcase the value that they bring, beyond just profit.

The panel were encouraged to see that corporate purpose (and narrative) are back on the agenda at a board level. Drawing from recent client conversations, Rosa pointed out that "purpose now means something. Lots of companies are taking this opportunity to re-think purpose and really embed it into their organisations". Many businesses have expressed that CSR, wellbeing and diversity initiatives are priorities that their teams will partly be expected to drive and develop policy around. Linked to that, Charlie shared that communications

professionals with experience of mental health and wellbeing initiatives will be increasingly sought after.

Looking beyond today, one thing that the pandemic has done is to highlight big inequalities that exist in our society. This is reflected in broader topical issues such as anti-racism and sustainability. Marketing will continue to be guided by these major issues as they shape their strategies for 2021 and beyond. In Bonnie's words, "right now is the survival piece. But as you start to move into the 'next and beyond' phases, these issues will come more to the fore... when you're looking at new technology, are you looking at it with the lens of sustainability?"

All panel members stressed the important of doing not just saying, with Jo reflecting that tokenistic moves were no longer acceptable instead of meaningful action.



## Conclusion

B2B marketing is in a state of flux, with priorities focused on short-term crisis handling and action-planning. Whilst CMOs are still dealing with the immediate adaptation, our panellists all recognised there were more fundamental shifts in play – from discussions around intelligent management of digital and human touchpoints, the need for greater agility in a modern B2B marketing team and the reset of how a business interacts with its clients and society.

Now is the time not just to ensure marketing functions are fit for the future, but for marketing leaders to give C-suite peers the confidence and clarity to move forward with an evolving client experience and offer.



## About Clear M&C Saatchi

Clear is a global strategy consultancy specialising in brand, experience and innovation.

Our speaker, Rosa Wilkinson leads the thinking and growth for our B2B and Corporate practice. She delivers global engagements combining a broad range of brand and marketing disciplines (including insight, strategy, identity, innovation, experience, capabilities and internal engagement). She particularly enjoys working with clients in regulated environments or with complex stakeholder sets and value chains.

Rosa has 15 years' experience in brand consultancy. She started out at The Value Engineers and developed a deep specialism in effecting business change at Dragon Rouge (where she led the London Corporate strategy team). She has extensive experience across B2B sectors including manufacturing, professional services and financial institutions, with clients such as ACCA, Allen & Overy, Barclays, Dentons, Givaudan, Grant Thornton, Hogan Lovells, ICAEW, Invesco and Tetra Pak.

Rosa Wilkinson

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# About tml Partners

With a team of highly experienced consultants, we provide specialist marketing expertise that is unrivalled by generalist headhunters and in-house resourcing teams. We network extensively in this community continually adding value with thought provoking events and publications to help facilitate the agenda for the marketing leaders of tomorrow.

Finding the right marketing talent is far from obvious and ineffective hiring is high risk. tml Partners mitigate this risk with a truly dynamic perspective on hiring the best marketing talent. We're trusted and connected networkers in the senior marketing community and spend a lot of time understanding the motivations and building meaningful relationships with the best, hard to find, passive talent.



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