



By Ann Pomeroy

Identity Crisis For CMOs

Chief marketing officers (CMOs) have an even shorter shelf life than CEOs today, according to a new study from the CMO Council, a nonprofit membership organization for senior marketing and brand decision-makers. To avoid an “identity crisis” among CMOs and reduce the high turnover rates, chief executives and their boards need to clarify the requirements of the role and clearly convey those requirements to executive search firms.

In addition, a CMO’s credibility is often undermined by “self-described ‘superstar marketers’ who leverage personal style to elevate and inflate their titles but whose narrowly focused marketing experience does not prepare them for the level of strategic thinking and breadth of business expertise required,” researchers found.

Other factors that contribute to a revolving door for CMOs include unrealistic expectations, flawed hiring practices, talent deficiencies, and lack of the necessary business and strategic leadership skills. Executive recruiters who fail to get clear directions from their clients also share part of the blame, notes the report.

“Conventional wisdom holds that the CMO is a strategic player in the C-suite, but this study shows a significant gap between perception and reality,” says Donovan Neale-May, executive director of the CMO Council. The council advocates a significant change, driven by the CEO, in the way the position is defined and structured.

The CMO should be a business leader as well as a marketing leader, concludes the report, which was sponsored by MarketBridge, a marketing consultancy headquartered in Bethesda, Md.