findingpotential

COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW GUIDE

# Marketing and advertising managers

Management & Leadership framework · Management & leadership level · 5 competencies · approx. 75 minutes

### How to use this guide

- Focus on these 5 competencies — the behaviours that matter most for this role — not a chronological career history.
- Ask every candidate the same core questions, then probe. Allow around 15 minutes per competency.
- Ask for real examples and use STAR — the Situation, the Task, the Action they took, and the Result.
- Stay neutral, capture what they say, and judge later. Gather evidence on one competency at a time.
- Rate each competency 1–5 against the positive and negative indicators, and note the evidence.

**5** Outstanding **4** Good **3** Acceptable **2** Marginal **1** Poor

## 1. Understanding the Commercial Context

Stays informed of trends and changes in the wider market place in which they operate. Identifies commercial business opportunities and takes action to realise these. Considers the longer-term implications of decisions

**Why this matters for Marketing and advertising managers:** CIM Professional Marketing Competencies area 1 (Marketing strategy) defines the role of marketing in delivering organisational strategy through customer/market insight. Marketing exists to drive commercial outcomes. Reading market trends, identifying opportunities, and weighing commercial implications is the core of the senior marketing role.

### What do you do to ensure that you have all of the information you require to perform effectively in your role?

- Where do you get the information from? How does this assist you?
- How do you keep up to date with developments in/outside the business?
- Why is it important to do this?
- What do you see as the key challenges/changes in the industry over the next 5 years?

### Describe a situation where you have had to balance strategic goals with short/medium term profit?

- How did you go about doing this? What was the outcome?
- Has there been a time where you have focused on a short term win to the detriment of the long term?

### Describe a situation where you have spotted and pursued an opportunity you knew could add value to the business.

- How did you spot the opportunity? What value would it add? Why?
- How did you get support for your plans? Who did you engage?
- How did you quantify the return on investment?
- How did your proposal differentiate your business from the competition?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|
| Limited understanding of the nature of the industry, the market and the competition | | Understands the industry, the market and the competition |
| Fails to keep self up to date with the necessary knowledge to perform in role | | Stays abreast of trends/changes in the market place and applies these to their role |

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|---|---|---|
| Cannot articulate the key challenges/changes facing the business/industry | | Demonstrates a sound appreciation of the medium/ long term challenges facing the business |
| No strong profile/network/reputation in their field or in the industry – has not capitalised on wider networking opportunities | | Has built a strong network and profile in the industry – seen as a thought leader |
| Takes a reactive approach to business issues. Fails to anticipate and take action to prevent these from occurring | | Able to spot issues before they arise and presents solutions |
| Reacts to rather than anticipates and takes action to exceed customer needs and expectations | | Able to anticipate and exceed customer expectations |
| Is overly focused on results at the expense of staff, customer at the expense of commercials etc. – fails to balance all aspects of organisational performance | | Considers the impact of their actions on employees, the organisation and its customers/clients |
| No evidence of spotting new opportunities – ideas are more evolutionary than revolutionary and may not differentiate but rather keep up with the competition | | Uses knowledge of the market/industry to spot new business opportunities |
| Focused on achieving results in the short term rather than longer-term sustainability/profitability | | Prepared to sacrifice short term gains for longer term sustainability/profitability |
| Lacks entrepreneurial spirit/courage to pursue opportunities as a result of the potential cost of failure | | Has the courage to pursue commercial opportunities where the potential benefits outweigh the cost of failure. |
| Narrow focus on improvement. This is limited to within own area, does not consider improvements across business units/areas | | Appreciates how all parts of the organisation fit together and ensures activity is aligned |
| Does not demonstrate an appreciation of costs and profit | | Is cost and profit conscious |

**Summary of evidence:** ______ **Rating (1–5):** ______

## 2. Embracing Change and Ambiguity

Challenges the status quo, producing new ideas and approaches to improve performance. Open to new ways of doing things and modifies their approach to meet changing demands. Comfortable working without clear guidelines and rules, taking the initiative rather than waiting for direction

> **Why this matters for Marketing and advertising managers:** CIM PMC treats continuous environmental change as a defining feature of the modern marketing role. Channels shift, audiences move, platforms evolve. Marketing leaders live in continuous change and must challenge existing approaches to stay effective.

### Tell me about a time when you have had to quickly adjust/ shuffle your priorities in response to an emerging issue?

- How did you go about doing this?
- What issues did you encounter? How did you tackle these?
- What was the benefit of changing to you/the team/the business?
- How did you stay positive and remained focused on performance?

### Describe a situation where you challenged the merit of a tried and tested method or process.

- How did you raise the challenge? What was the response?
- What did you do to ensure your solution was implemented?

- How do you ensure that you/others focus on continuous improvement?
- How did you ensure that business requirements continued to be met while the change was introduced?

**Describe the most significant change that you have driven in your business/area.**

- How did you personally view the change (risks and benefits)
- How (& when) did you communicate the change to others?
- What reactions/barriers did you anticipate to the proposed change?
- What resistance did you actually encounter? How did you manage this?
- What did you do to keep others positive and focused on the change?
- How did you manage to maintain business as usual/current performance?
- How might you manage change differently in the future?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|
| Shows limited ability/willingness to flex/deviate from plan in the light of new information/changing circumstances | | Able to flex and rethink plans/priorities in the light of new information or to meet changing demands |
| Fails to communicate changes to others in a timely manner. Leaves individuals without clarity on priorities | | Keeps others informed and involved with necessary changes to plans. Engages others in a timely manner |
| Personal reservations about change can negatively impact performance | | Maintains own performance and a positive outlook during periods of change |
| Provides little context/rationale to others about the change process and the need to change | | Provides a context for change for others – communicates the bigger picture |
| Likes to do things own way – is less open to interference or intervention from others | | Is open to new methods of working and new ways of doing things |
| No evidence of challenging existing practice (e.g. resource allocation, business processes, business plans) in an aim to improve or create increased value for the business | | Is prepared to question the tried and tested (e.g. use of resources, business processes, plans) in order to make improvements or add greater value to the business |
| No evidence of focusing on continuous improvement | | Brings in best practice from outside/other parts of the business to improve the efficiency of business processes |
| Does not encourage others to focus on continuous improvement and to challenge existing processes/be forthcoming with ideas for improvements | | Fosters a culture of change and continuous improvement in others |
| No evidence of using review processes to learn lessons to apply to the future | | Reviews situations and asks "what can we learn" when things do not go as expected |
| Works with change but loses day to day momentum needed for business as usual | | Drives change through others whilst minimising disruption to business as usual |
| Fails to anticipate and respond to resistance to change | | Anticipates responses to change, takes pre-emptive action to manage resistance |
| Struggles to operate in more fluid environments where there is ambiguity or little structure or rules/guidelines for operation | | Able to operate without clear rules or guidelines or in situations where there is ambiguous/incomplete information |
| Fails to recognise/respond to individual reactions to change/support individuals with ambiguity/uncertainty | | Supports others during periods of uncertainty/ambiguity |

**Summary of evidence:** ______ **Rating (1–5):** ______

## 3. Leading the Way for Others

Creates a clear and compelling vision of the future, devolving accountability for delivery to the right level whilst offering appropriate levels of support. Drives performance through regular, honest feedback and by building a climate of openness and trust

> **Why this matters for Marketing and advertising managers:** CIM PMC area 6 (Leadership and skills) covers leading creative, digital, brand and analytics teams; honest feedback; ethical practice; and professional development. Climate matters enormously to creative output.

### How have you ensured that your team feel equipped to deliver the business plans in your area?

- How do you keep the team focused on the business goals/ensure they understand the link between their work and the wider company goals?
- How do you ensure your team feel empowered but not overloaded?
- How do you keep the vision real so it resonates with the team?

### Give me an example of a time when you had to lead a de-motivated team or a team who were less enthusiastic/ committed to the task in hand.

- What did you do to keep spirits up and people focused on objectives?
- How were you sure that you had overcome the difficulties?
- What factors did you consider? What lessons did you learn?

### Can you give me an example where, with the power of hindsight, you feel you may have pushed an individual or team too hard?

- What feedback did you receive from the individual/team at the time?
- What was the outcome? What might you have done differently?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|
| Fails to engage others in the “why” or the longer term goal and get buy in and commitment | | Communicates a compelling vision/picture of the future to generate motivation/enthusiasm in others |
| No clear mechanisms for monitoring and reporting to track progress to goals | | Keeps the team focused on the goals through establishing clear mechanisms for monitoring and reporting |
| Keeps hold of too much themselves (fails to empower the team) and/or micromanages the process | | Devolves accountability to the right level and offers appropriate levels of support without micromanaging |
| Rewards and recognises others in the same way, irrespective of their personal performance/ contribution | | Provides differential recognition to others on the basis of objective measures of performance |
| No evidence of checking that the team see personal relevance of the change/direction and their contribution | | Ensures the team understand the need for change/ the direction and that this resonates personally with them |
| Fails to provide the right balance of support and challenge | | Provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge |
| No evidence of seeking feedback from the team re the suitability/effectiveness of their management/ leadership | | Checks with the team to ensure that they are feeling appropriately supported and challenged |

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| Provides only developmental feedback rather than praise and motivation to build confidence | | Recognises and rewards good behaviour and performance |
| Has less flexibility in leadership style (e.g. struggles to take a directive stance or to collaborate/facilitate) | | Adapts leadership style to suit the needs of the team and the circumstances |
| Fails to coach – does the job for others. As such may not get (sustainable) performance improvements from others | | Coaches others to help them perform. Raises awareness and generates responsibility for action in others |
| Creates a command/fear climate where teams are less comfortable expressing their views or trying new things | | Builds a climate of trust and openness where people are comfortable expressing their views and trying new things |

**Summary of evidence:** **Rating (1–5):**

## 4. Building Positive Working Alliances

Proactively builds a wide network of internal and external stakeholders. Encourages cooperation between different groups, whilst being comfortable expressing disagreement and handling conflict. Ensures the needs of key stakeholders are met

> **Why this matters for Marketing and advertising managers:** Marketing sits across the business — with sales, product, finance, agencies, and media partners. CIM PMC area 5 (Marketing operations) covers agency management and integrated working. Stakeholder management is half the job.

**Sometimes it is necessary to enlist the help of others in our network to solve an issue. Describe a time when it has been necessary for you to do this?**

- How did you establish who was best placed to help? How approach them?
- How do you go about building/maintaining your network?
- What feedback have you received on your networking skills?

**Sometimes stakeholders don’t really understand what they want, or present us with requests that will not meet their need. Describe a time when you had to ascertain the exact nature of a stakeholder’s need.**

- How did you help the stakeholder to articulate the real need?
- How did they respond?
- What would have been the impact of you not acting in this way?

**Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with conflict/frustrations working with a key stakeholder or another team/department?**

- What steps did you take to resolve the problem?
- What was the outcome?
- What feedback did you receive?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|
| Limited networks or reactive approach to networking -doesn’t commit time and effort to maintaining networks | | Proactively develops and maintains a network of relationships with key stakeholders |
| Networks on a needs basis. No evidence of having strong enough sustainable networks | | Draws on network when required and with minimum effort as relationships are strong/have been maintained |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Tends to withhold information from colleagues or share it widely enough or in an untimely manner | | Regularly/proactively shares knowledge and information with colleagues within their sphere of influence |
| Responds to wants rather than needs of stakeholders. Fails to question/challenge to establish needs and drivers | | Questions/challenges in order to really understand the needs of stakeholders. Is focused on needs not wants |
| Fails to respond to requests/feedback from stakeholders | | Responds promptly to stakeholder requests / feedback |
| Treats others as a resource rather than as a person (not as they would like to be treated themselves) | | Demonstrates a clear personal code of conduct with respect to how they engage with others |
| Fails to surface/deal with conflict and disagreement with different stakeholders. Pursues the task without paying attention to issues of climate/relationship | | Effectively manages conflict/disagreement between different stakeholders |
| Fails to establish a common goal or purpose to align differing stakeholder groups | | Encourages cooperation across different stakeholders – helps to establish/ascertain a common goal or purpose |
| Expresses disagreement in a less tactful way | | Expresses disagreement tactfully/assertively |
| No evidence of building lasting/sustainable relationships with key stakeholders/following up formally or informally | | Keeps communication channels open. Follows up to maintain relationships with stakeholders |
| No evidence of seeking feedback from/following up with stakeholders to ensure their needs are met | | Follows up to ensure that the needs of stakeholders (continue to be) met |

**Summary of evidence:** ______________________________ **Rating (1–5):** ________

## 5. Making Sound Business Judgements

Makes sound decisions and commits to action based on the evaluation of complex information and consideration of alternative scenarios. Quickly cuts through the detail to identify the real issues, develops contingencies to deal with unexpected issues as they arise

> **Why this matters for Marketing and advertising managers:** Budget allocation, campaign investment, agency selection, brand positioning — marketing leaders make significant calls on incomplete information routinely. Making Sound Business Judgements captures the cut-through-detail decision quality the role requires.

### Describe a decision you made recently for which there was no established protocol.

- How did you go about making the decision? What worked well? Less well?
- How did you know what data was relevant/less relevant?
- How comfortable were you making it? How confident in its quality?
- What would have been the consequence of an incorrect/poor decision?
- How did you manage the risk?

### Describe a situation where you had to choose between a number of alternative courses of action.

- Which did you choose? What criteria did you use to make the decision?
- What were the pros and cons of the other options?
- What was the outcome? What was the business impact of the decision?

### Tell me about a time when you have challenged the information that you have been presented with.

- What was the source of the information?

- Why did you feel it was necessary to challenge it?
- What were the implications (e.g. how did your challenge impact on the final decision made)?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|
| Limited thinking in novel situations. Fails to utilise all sources and/or effectively filter pertinent information | | Seeks relevant information from a variety of sources, recognises what is pertinent |
| Accepts information at face value | | Critically evaluates info. Probes/ challenges the facts |
| Fails to apply/adapt previous experience to new situations | | Applies and adapts previous experience to novel situations |
| Is reluctant to make decisions in the absence of clear procedures or protocols | | Makes and is prepared to stand by decisions in the absence of clear procedures and protocols |
| Uses the same style of decision making regardless of the situation | | Considers the type of problem and how the decision needs to be made (e.g. when to direct, collaborate etc.) |
| Fails to consider a range of angles or the implications of different courses of action | | Considers issues from a range of angles (e.g. cost, risk, impact, benefit, short and long term opportunities). |
| Approaches problems with interventions at the micro level | | Takes a systemic approach to problem solving |
| Fails to consider the full range of alternatives or to accept that there may be alternative options | | Considers a range of alternatives when making decisions |
| Lacks confidence in decision making when there is ambiguity or limited information | | Deals with ambiguity and makes sound decisions on the basis of limited information |
| Considers the immediate impact of decisions/actions rather than their fit to the wider business agenda | | Makes/monitors decisions against the wider organisational goals/strategy |
| No evidence of contingency/scenario planning in decision making | | Makes detailed contingency plans to accommodate changing circumstances and mitigate risk |
| Fails to appreciate/articulate the risk associated with different courses of action | | Understands the risk associated with different courses of action and builds plans to mitigate this |

**Summary of evidence:** ________ **Rating (1–5):** ________