

Marketing Interview Results

HARRIS
CMO PARTNERS

**HOW TO HIRE A
STANDOUT
TECH/SAAS
MARKETING
LEADER...**

INTERVIEW
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
FOR 2023

- A** CAN THEY DO THE JOB?
- B** WILL THEY DO THE JOB?
- C** WILL THEY FIT IN?

The requirements for being a high performing B2B marketing director, vice president or CMO have grown dramatically in the past few years.

Five interview writeups from real life candidates for marketing leader positions.

Sam H.

Date Interviewed: _____ Time Interviewed: _____ Method: _____

Recommendation:

Bring Sam in for an in-person round of interviews. He is a consummate marketing professional and well suited for the CMO position.

Sam's background:

Sam's past decade of experience has been spent in the software industry focused on data analytics. Prior to that he was with Microsoft for 13 years, ending as a senior marketing manager for a well-known brand. All his recent job titles have been Director of Marketing, according to his resume. He wishes to leave his current position because it's "not what I'd thought it would be", referencing difficulties with company funding.

Compensation expectations:

He is currently receiving a package that includes a base of \$135,000 plus benefits. He also received a sign-on bonus of \$5,000 when he joined the company.

Sam's strengths:

Sam is a true marketing leader. He gave good answers to every question asked during the interview. This is a short list of his strengths:

- He truly understands the linkages between corporate vision, strategy, marketing and execution.
- He knows the process for creating a sound strategy and enjoys it.
- He understands competitive dynamics well, including pricing.
- He knows the value of marketing due diligence, how to produce it and how to use it.
- He understands branding very well.
- He can create and run a marketing organization. He knows the controls and how to put them into place and use them.

He is an avid user and advocate of digital marketing including social media. He gave an excellent example of a campaign he created based only on the company president's vision. The campaign was successful, and he was able to talk fluently about what made it successful and how the results were measured.

He has made significant contributions to outstanding sales growth and can talk fluently about them.

Sam is well experienced with B2B marketing, which is an advantage when understanding and talking with large industry partners.

He understands sales and marketing automation well.

He has good international experience.

He understands the power of public relations for a company like ours and can manage outside providers. He talks enthusiastically about the power of PR and said he has friends at software industry media companies.

He presents as an excellent 'people person'. He is empathic, well organized and process oriented. He was delightful to talk with.

He demonstrated excellent initiative in the interview.

Concerns:

At the start of the interview Sam tended to over answer questions and ramble on. However, he responded well to my guidance and was giving shorter, better answers by the time we finished.

Tom B.

Date Interviewed: _____ Time Interviewed: _____ Method: _____

Recommendation:

Do not take next steps for the marketing director position. Tom has a pleasant personality, but he presented as highly bureaucratic and needing many people around him to accomplish even simple marketing tasks.

Tom's background:

Tom was hired directly out of college by Apple and spent the next 11 years in marketing positions with the company, largely in lateral moves beginning midway through his tenure there. He left Apple in 2020 and became an independent consultant. In 2021 Tom went to work for a green technology company in Atlanta, GA, implementing business and operating strategies.

Compensation expectations:

Tom said that he currently receives a package that includes a \$130,000 base plus bonus.

Tom's strengths:

Tom gets high marks as a 'people person'. He conversed easily, was personable and seemed to enjoy the interview.

Concerns:

1. Tom presented as someone who thinks like an engineer. Tom has no formal marketing training and generally answered strategy and marketing questions with product minutia.
2. Tom presents as a bureaucrat. When questioned about failed endeavors in his area of responsibility, he generally pointed at someone else. Tom presented as the antithesis of entrepreneurial, often referencing the large numbers of people surrounding him as a strong point.
3. In the interviewer's opinion Tom's answers were sometimes grandiose. For example, he talked enthusiastically about an "earth shattering" business plan he created to boost bottom line by a hundred million dollars. When questioned about the business plan format he stated

that it was a pro-forma spreadsheet. When asked whether this business plan had produced sales he replied, “in a way”, and then talked vaguely through the rest of his answer.

4. Tom appears to not get the big picture. The highlight of his career was “being tapped on the shoulder” to join a new Apple backed joint venture with another large company to develop and market a new line of devices. However, with a team of 100 people, including six direct reports to Tom, the joint venture still was unable to ship product at the end of three years. The partner pulled out and a new division president was brought in who immediately shut down the division. Tom presented as being resentful that the division was closed just prior to “shipping the first commercial sale”.

At that time in 2020, Tom’s career with Apple concluded.

5. Tom does not understand marketing automation, marketing sequences, and other aspects of modern marketing.

Bill L.

Date Interviewed: _____ Time Interviewed: _____ Method: _____

Recommendation:

Do not take next steps for the CMO position. While strong in some areas of product marketing and industry experience, Bill is not suited for the lead marketing role at our company. He might be well suited, however, as a direct report and backup to the CMO.

Bill's background:

Bill's career has been primarily in product marketing and marketing services. His career path in software began in 2011 developer level. He progressed to working in marketing for small software companies, always as an individual contributor. Recently he was given sales responsibilities along with his marketing responsibilities, which apparently does not sit well with him. Bill did not demonstrate any aptitude for, or interest in, understanding the 'big picture' and creating competitive strategies.

Compensation expectations:

Bill stated that his current base is \$165,000 and that he expects to earn a bonus of 10%.

Bill's strengths:

Bill communicates well and with clarity. He presented as well experienced in marketing support including programs for tradeshow, radio, PR, catalog, photography, events and similar. Bill appears to be drawn heavily to the creative side of marketing.

Concerns:

Bill is not a strategist or a 'numbers' guy. He was unable to answer even basic questions about market and competitor analysis.

An area of greater concern, however, is his lack of digital marketing knowledge and aptitude. Bill presented as basically unaware of the more advanced uses of marketing technology for reaching, engaging and converting sales prospects.

Sally P.

Date Interviewed: _____ Time Interviewed: _____ Method: _____

Recommendation:

Do not take next steps for the marketing VP position. Sally is quite good at selling herself, but the interview clearly showed she is not qualified as a VP. She also presented as someone who is overly demanding and could be disruptive in a team environment.

Sally's background:

Sally is currently unemployed as her most recent position ended in December 2022. She has worked in numerous jobs at many companies during a lengthy career. Sally has worked in wealth management as a licensed broker, banking, healthcare and information technology. The bulk of her recent experience has been in healthcare.

Compensation expectations:

Sally gave a very rambling answer to the question on compensation expectations. In the end she stated, "it's not at all about the money" but indicated a general range of \$150,000 to \$180,000 base is what she's thinking.

Sally's strengths:

Sally knows a fair amount about marketing. She gave good examples of companies that market themselves well. She was articulate about explaining her perception of our company's brand personality. She presented level, as understanding that too much complexity in marketing is counterproductive.

Concerns:

To summarize, there are just too many concerns with this candidate to indicate further engagement.

1. Sally presented as being quite unorganized in her thinking. She talked way too much and over answered every question. She tended to ramble, delving into areas that had no connection with the question.
2. In the interviewer's opinion Sally overstated her contributions on her resume and throughout the interview. While she talks marketing director lingo, her experience has been primarily at

a much lower level. For example, in her most recent job, where she worked for about 18 months, she mostly worked on collateral material and creating website content. She also had some project involvement in reducing complexity however did not initiate or lead the project.

3. In the interviewer's opinion Sally gives herself too much credit for her contributions to corporate success, to a surprising degree. For example, she stated that an employer landed "five huge accounts", including NASA, due to a proposal template she created. In addition, she stated that in a position as global marketing manager she "kept the company afloat".
4. She spoke in pejorative terms about her teammates on more than once occasion.
5. There is inaccurate information on her resume. When questioned about a "2.1% dollar increase" she became nervous and said that she had meant to call it a market share increase.
6. Sally stated that she currently has a side business in the search industry and does a "huge" amount of pro bono work. While some pro bono work is commendable, Sally may have too many outside interests to handle the responsibilities of a marketing director position.

Have questions?

Email me at mike@harriscmopartners.com.

Thanks!

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