

**Want to be VP of Marketing?  
The Career Paths May Surprise You**

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In writing Getting to the Top: Strategies for Career Success, I researched the career paths that executives take to reach the VP level for positions including VP Marketing, VP Sales, VP Product Management, VP Business Development, and CEO and am now researching VP Services for an upcoming workshop.

I spent hours looking at resumes and the backgrounds of executives to see what percent of executives come from various career path categories, whether rising through the functional area, specializing in a domain expertise, coming from analytical backgrounds, or having a cross-functional background.

I wrote an article on the career paths for VP of Marketing that Adrian Ott published in her Fast Company blog -- and then was picked up by CMO.com and CMOSite.com. I thought you might like to see these results.

Also check out the great searches we have for CEO's, VP Sales and Product Management.

Sincerely,

Kathy

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**Kathryn Ullrich Associates, Inc.**  
high technology executive search

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**Feature Article**

**Want to be VP of Marketing? The Career Paths May Surprise You**

By Kathryn Ullrich

According to a new study, one-third of VPs of marketing arrive at the top marketing post because of their experiences in marketing: marketing communications, PR and corporate communications, event marketing, lead generation, marketing strategy, branding, SEO marketing, and the like. But what backgrounds do the other two-

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thirds of marketing executives come from?

In my recently released book, *Getting to the Top: Strategies for Career Success*, I not only share groundbreaking research on career path categories to VP marketing and other functional disciplines in marketing and sales, but also share a ton of real-world executive examples to highlight career paths and leadership skills needed for advancement.

I studied the career paths of VPs of marketing, looking at resumes in my search database to categorize the backgrounds of executives reaching Chief Marketing Officer or VP Marketing titles. With an executive search practice based in Silicon Valley, my database takes a skew toward high technology companies though contains both marketing executives from major corporations as well as start-ups. According to the research, the career path categories to reach the role of VP Marketing are as follows:



Beyond the third of executives with marketing backgrounds, a quarter of VPs of marketing have deep domain expertise, whether in an industry or other specialization ranging from high tech, healthcare, consumer packaged goods, or financial services to small-medium business marketing, mobile applications, consumer products targeting teen boys, online payments, or many more. A marketing executive with deep domain expertise understands the target customer extremely well, including how best to market the company's solutions to that target market.

And while most people think that being a generalist opens more opportunities, as an executive recruiter I find that having a defined domain expertise can actually make an executive more attractive. Companies seek candidates with specific domain experience and therefore executives need to think about specific areas in which they excel.

The next category VPs of marketing includes former strategy consultants and investment bankers who bring strategy and analytical rigor to the role. Marketing done well includes analytic measures of fairly subjective marketing activities. With

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the prevalence of search engine marketing and social media, we're seeing marketing becoming even more analytical.

Cross functional and sales background categories involve working in other functions, whether at a different level or a lateral move. Imagine the marketing executive who sells an information technology product. A stint in the IT department, where you work with and go to lunch with your typical customers, provides incredible insight into the psyche of your customer. You're learning what their major concerns are as they approach their jobs, what products/solutions they admire, and messaging that will work with your customers outside the company. The background in the sales organization is obvious as a person gains first hand knowledge about selling to customers. What do you do as a marketing executive to gain knowledge about your customers?

As an added benefit, working outside your functional area builds your network and exposure within the company for future opportunities and promotion.

With this knowledge of paths to VP of marketing through various career categories, *Getting to the Top* points out that you can now understand how to position yourself during your career and possible experiences and skills needed during your own advancement.

## **Current Searches**

Kathryn Ullrich Associates, Inc. has completed searches for a strategy consultant/Spanish speaking to grow Latin America and a Director and Manager of Product Management for an E-commerce company.

We are currently working on CEO and Board Member searches(anti-counterfeiting, on-line media, polymers) as well as a VP Sales in a cloud computing company and high potential hires in Product Management, Marketing, Sales and Technology for a leading E-commerce company.

For more information, visit [www.ullrichassociates.com](http://www.ullrichassociates.com). Kathryn Ullrich Associates, Inc. focuses on C-Suite, VP and Director level hires across the functions of Product Management, Marketing, Sales and Consulting for technology and services companies.

## **Upcoming Events**

- October 13, 2011 - Orange County - Getting to the Top in Corporate Finance
- October 24, 2011 - Las Vegas, NV - Technology Services World Conference, Getting to the Top: Strategies for Career Success
- November 3, 2011 - San Francisco, CA - Charles Schwab IMPACT 2011 Conference, Finding Your Firm's Future Leaders: How to Recruit and Interview for the Best Talent

## **News**

Kathryn Ullrich and Getting to the Top have been quoted extensively in the news! Details at <http://www.gettingtothetop.com/MediaKit.aspx>

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- Where do CMOs come from? Chief Executive by John Kador; July 25, 2011; <http://bit.ly/qH4ggk>
- 7 Secrets for a Smarter Job Search; Career Builder's The Work Buzz Blog by Anthony Bladerrama; April 14, 2011; <http://cb.com/oS0goF>
- Career Watch: Honing Your Job-Hunting Skills; CIO.com by Jamie Eckle; April 4, 2011; <http://bit.ly/pVhCct>
- 10 Common Job-Hunting Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them); TechRepublic; March 3, 2011; <http://tek.io/pjL6Or>

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### **More Information**

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