



Team reset: how to build the healthcare marketing team of the future

Realign roles. Reskill functions.

Rethink the agency relationship.

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The reset moment

Healthcare marketing teams are facing a strategic reckoning. As systems restructure, AI begins reshaping workflows, and growth pressures intensify, the days of passive support are over. Budgets are tighter. Volume demands are rising. And marketing is expected to perform and prove it.

This requires more than just changing tactics. We need to rethink the team itself: how it works, who it includes, what it owns, and how it shows up across the enterprise.

In this guide, we examine **five fundamental shifts** that are reshaping how high-performing healthcare marketing teams operate. Each shift represents a mindset, structural, or operational change that helps marketing move from reactive to strategic, from cost center to growth driver.

Shift 1: from service line support to enterprise strategy

Why this shift matters

Marketing has long been seen as a support function for service lines. But the highest-performing teams now operate at the enterprise level — shaping strategy, not just executing on demand.

Marketing leaders are reorienting their teams around volume, revenue, retention, and experience. They're not just asking, "How do we support X line?" but "How do we drive enterprise growth and prove our impact on outcomes?"

What to rewire

- Link marketing objectives directly to strategic growth targets.
- Build reporting frameworks that show marketing's business impact.
- Replace helpdesk-style intake models with proactive planning that aligns to strategic priorities.
- Elevate marketing's role in system-wide planning conversations.

Shift 1: from service line support to enterprise strategy

Quick team check

- Are we structured to support service lines or to lead system growth?

- Do we track marketing performance in enterprise terms (volume, access, revenue)?

- Are we waiting to be told what to do, or proactively setting the agenda?

Unlock's POV

Marketing doesn't just amplify business strategy. Done right, it is business strategy. It connects brand, demand, and access in ways no other function can.

Shift 2: from brand and digital silos to full-stack engagement

Why this shift matters

Too many health systems still separate brand from digital, digital from content, content from SEO, SEO from media. In today's landscape, that's a recipe for confusion and waste.

High-functioning teams build for integration. They blend brand, digital, data, and creative into cohesive go-to-market squads. Because your patient doesn't experience your org in silos — and your marketing shouldn't be siloed either.

What to rewire

- Merge brand and performance thinking under a unified strategy.
- Cross train team members across content, media, UX, and analytics.
- Build pods that bring together creative, data, and demand gen expertise.
- Consolidate reporting to show full-funnel impact, not channel-specific metrics.

Shift 2: from brand and digital silos to full-stack engagement

Quick team check

- Are brand, content, media, and digital led together or in isolation?

- Do we have a shared editorial calendar across campaigns?

- Can we map content to conversion — and do we know which pieces drive value?

Unlock's POV

There is no brand without performance. And no performance without brand. The future is full-stack: integrated, iterative, and impact-driven.

Shift 3: from flat org charts to agile, pod-based teams

Why this shift matters

Health systems are done waiting for unicorn hires. Instead of building teams around rigid job descriptions, future-ready orgs are creating agile pods that flex with need.

Think fewer generalists, more purpose-built squads. These pods integrate creative, strategy, media, data, and tech. And they align to growth goals, not org charts.

What to rewire

- Map team structure to strategic priorities, not legacy departments.
- Hire for capability clusters (e.g., demand gen, content ops, analytics).
- Establish pods around key audiences or service lines.
- Empower pods to run campaigns start to finish with accountability.
- Build multi-platform MarTech expertise and integrate the tech stack to connect data, content, and performance.

Shift 3: from flat org charts to agile, pod-based teams

Quick team check

- Are we organized around how people work or how we've always done it?

- Do our teams move fast enough to compete with consumer brands?

- Can we run multi-channel campaigns without relying on outside resources?

Unlock's POV

Pod-based teams outperform traditional org charts because they mirror how modern marketing actually works: fast, integrated, and close to the consumer.

Shift 4: from vague “partner” language to clear agency operating models

Why this shift matters

The word “partner” gets thrown around too often without a shared definition. In reality, most health systems need different kinds of partnership from agencies at different times. Sometimes you need a strategic coach. Sometimes you need a collaborative extension. Sometimes you need clear executional ownership.

Future-ready teams define the model, set the rules of engagement, and hold both sides accountable.

This is where clarity around internal maturity and external support needs becomes essential.

Unlock’s POV

This model isn’t about size. It’s about understanding what stage you’re in and what your team needs next. Knowing this helps you make better internal resourcing decisions and build smarter agency relationships.

Shift 4: from vague “partner” language to clear agency operating models

Digital marketing team maturity model

This model outlines three common team archetypes — Starter, Mid-Phase, and Enterprise — across structure, capabilities, tech stack, vendor relationships, and challenges. Use it to evaluate where you are today, and what evolution looks like as your team scales.

Team Stage	Starter	Mid-Phase	Enterprise
Profile	Lean, centralized, focused on top-line service line growth	Growth-stage, expanding into performance and retention	Cross-functional, scaled for speed, performance, and innovation
Focus	Patient acquisition for high-priority service lines	Full-funnel marketing — acquisition to retention	Coordinated brand + performance strategy for system growth
Structure	One digital lead + generalists, minimal layers	Specialists across SEO, paid, lifecycle, analytics	Center of Excellence or matrixed, embedded across system
In-House Roles	Digital marketing manager, hybrid SEO/paid, content creator	Digital marketing manager, SEO + paid media, content creator, shared analytics support	Full-stack squads with content, CRO, UX, media, AI/automation

Shift 4: from vague “partner” language to clear agency operating models

Digital marketing team maturity model (continued)

This model outlines three common team archetypes — Starter, Mid-Phase, and Enterprise — across structure, capabilities, tech stack, vendor relationships, and challenges. Use it to evaluate where you are today, and what evolution looks like as your team scales.

Team Stage	Starter	Mid-Phase	Enterprise
Vendor Use	Heavy reliance on agency for strategy + execution	Strategic overflow or channel-specific expertise	External partners for innovation, overflow, and specialty work
Tech Stack	Basic CMS, GA4, Google Ads, Meta	Marketing automation, CRO tools, dashboards	Adobe/Sitecore, CDPs, personalization, AI-driven journeys
Next Best Hire	Paid media or content strategist	Analytics lead or operations owner	AI/automation lead or CRO strategist

Shift 4: from vague “partner” language to clear agency operating models

Agency implications

Each stage of maturity requires a different kind of partner engagement.

Starter

Agencies often act as both strategic and executional leads, helping establish foundational marketing infrastructure and proof-of-performance reporting.

Mid-phase

Partnerships shift toward specialization and acceleration — augmenting in-house capabilities with expertise in analytics, media, and content operations.

Enterprise

Agencies evolve into innovation partners, extending in-house teams through advanced tech integration, testing, and emerging-channel pilots.

The right partner model should evolve as internal capabilities mature — balancing support, speed, and innovation.

Shift 5: from reporting outputs to owning outcomes

Why this shift matters

Marketing can't get by on vanity metrics anymore. The C-suite wants to know: Are we driving volume? Driving retention and loyalty? Building trust? Growing revenue?

Top teams are ditching the dashboards that track impressions, clicks, and open rates in favor of reporting that ties effort to enterprise impact.

What to rewire

- Align reporting frameworks to business goals (volume, revenue, retention).
- Connect campaign performance to access and scheduling systems.
- Build storytelling into reporting to create narrative around results.
- Standardize KPI definitions across departments.

Shift 5: from reporting outputs to owning outcomes

Quick team check

- Do our dashboards reflect what the C-suite actually cares about?

- Can we show ROI on our biggest initiatives?

- Are we telling a clear story about what's working, what's not, and why?

Unlock's POV

Performance is more than a report. It's a narrative. And high-functioning marketing teams own that story from start to finish.

What future-ready teams do differently

They aren't faster by accident.

They're structured for speed.

They aren't more creative by talent alone.

They're built to collaborate.

They aren't trusted because of title.

They're trusted because of impact.

High-functioning marketing teams:

- Operate with strategic clarity
- Report to the business, not just the brand
- Bridge access, brand, and demand
- Collaborate in agile pods
- Activate data across the full funnel

Team audit worksheet: where are you today?

1. Current structure

What is your current org structure? Where do you have single points of failure?

Which roles are in-house vs. vendor-supported?

Team audit worksheet: where are you today?

2. Capabilities check

Where do you have strength in-house? (e.g., content, paid media, analytics)

Where are you relying on external partners — and is it working?

Team audit worksheet: where are you today?

3. Next capability need

What do you know you need to build next?

What's preventing you from filling that gap internally?

Team audit worksheet: where are you today?

4. Integration gaps

Which departments or vendor teams need deeper integration with marketing?

Where are bottlenecks most common?

Team audit worksheet: where are you today?

5. Agency model fit

What do you expect from your agency partners?

Do you need a coach, a collaborator, or a command center?

How Unlock supports team transformation

We don't just "do the marketing." We work with teams to:

Whether you're rebuilding your team, redefining roles, or just trying to get more from what you have, we're here to help you work differently.

Let's talk

If you're rethinking your team, we'd love to show you how others are doing it and what it could look like for you.

Contact us at
contact@unlockhealthnow.com

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