

*Career Path:*

## Marketing

### **Introduction**

Career Services (CS) created the *Career Path* series to assist students with the career search process. Each *Career Path* handout examines a common business functional area in which Stephen M. Ross School of Business graduates pursue jobs each year. The first four steps of CS's recommended career search process are detailed for each specific business field.

### **Marketing Overview**

The Ross School of Business is considered a strong “brand management” school, with most top marketing firms recruiting on-campus. The marketing curriculum and faculty are continuously top-ranked.

Students interested in pursuing an entrepreneurial venture, general management, or just running his/her own business may want to consider marketing. A marketing career, which requires many of the same skills as a general manager, may prepare an individual for a future entrepreneurial experience. Understanding your long-term career objectives (through research and self-assessment) may help clarify the advantages of each of these paths.

### **Job Descriptions**

Product and Brand Management in all industries use general management and marketing skills to oversee the development of a product or service throughout various stages of its life cycle. Marketers develop strategic marketing plans that set positioning, pricing and strategic direction for products/services. They also develop programs to improve brand equity and increase profitability. In addition, marketers are responsible for developing communication with partners and customers along the distribution channel. Finally, marketers manage through cross-functional relationships various internal and external departments, driving all in the process toward common marketing goals and objectives. All of these responsibilities contribute to the general management experience gained from a marketing career.

### **Steps for Developing a Career in Marketing**

#### **Step #1: Conduct a Self-Assessment**

Regardless of the specific marketing position, there are some basic skills and interests that marketing professionals should possess. Based upon the product management profile outlined in the CareerLeader program, marketers enjoy leading a process from start to finish. Marketing managers ‘own’ their product or service and essentially run a small business, so entrepreneurial interest is a positive trait. Marketing professionals have higher creative interests than most operating managers, and are effective at communicating with various stakeholders in an organization. They equally enjoy the financials of the business as well as the creative aspects. In addition, marketing careers call for a strong interest in management of people, as many marketing efforts are organized around teams.

Marketing professionals can expect a diverse, dynamic work experience, with new challenges emerging each day. Very few marketers describe their work as “boring” or “routine”. Marketers should also expect a fast-paced, often challenging environment, with numerous internal and external pressures.

While there may be seasonal fluctuations in workload, e.g. during marketing plan development, workweeks typically range from 50-70 hours. Travel is a job requirement, whether to a field sales office, manufacturing facility, customer account, advertising agency or to supervise local market research. The level of travel varies, but expect a few days of travel a month.

To assess whether or not marketing is right for you, ask yourself if you have and enjoy using the following skills:

- **Initiative:** Ability to accomplish complex projects and tasks with minimal assistance.
- **Leadership/Management:** Lead and motivate people from different departments, and provide visionary creative leadership.
- **Analytical and Strategic-thinking:** Sort through and identify critical data, understand and correctly interpret it, and apply it effectively to drive business growth.
- **Teamwork:** Work effectively in teams.
- **Creativity/Innovation:** Approach a problem from a different angle, find a better way of doing things, and generate unique ideas.
- **Communication:** Support or defend a position in a clear, concise, and persuasive manner.
- **Organizational/Time Management:** Balance numerous projects and issues at one time, and properly prioritize projects.
- **Additional Skills:** Interpersonal, Enthusiasm, Passion for consumers, Interest in Marketing

Although these are the basic skills needed by all marketers, the importance of each of these skills will vary depending on the industry and sector of marketing. High-tech and industrial firms may also look for candidates with either a technical background, or demonstrated ability to understand technical concepts. In addition, individuals interested in Market Research may need stronger analytical skills. They also work more independently than other marketers do since there is generally less managerial responsibility.

### Resume Tips

Five crucial areas recruiters look for in Brand Management resumes include:

#### Leadership/Management Skills

- |                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Led cross-functional team    | Coordinated groups     |
| Managed installation project | Set vision for project |

#### Teamwork Skills

- |                                  |                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Engaged in cross-functional team | Maintained new hires |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|

#### Analytical Skills

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Analyzed pricing patterns     | Investigated variances     |
| Assessed market opportunities | Synthesized market reports |

#### Creativity/Innovation

- |                                 |                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Designed training packet        | Devised solution for |
| Developed innovative strategies |                      |

## Communication/Persuasion

Communicated new product idea

Negotiated settlement

Persuaded management

Ensure your resume reflects the four skill areas listed above. These four skill areas are the standard for a brand management resume. Try to go beyond these and list relevant work experience that would attract a brand management recruiter.

If your past work experience warrants it, tie in any marketing-specific terms:

Determined consumer needs

Managed cross-functional

Researched market trends

Led focus groups

teams

Analyzed pricing

It is important to show yourself as a well-rounded, customer/client focused (internal or external), interesting person. Include interesting additional information or unique honors you may have received. Refer to CS's handouts on preparing resumes for additional resume tips.

Understand which skills may not look as strong on your resume (based on your background) and be prepared to emphasize those skills in your interview.

## Step #2: Investigate Possible Career Opportunities

There are **numerous** career paths available for individuals interested in marketing. Typical career paths include:

- Brand Management – Products or Services (BBAs typically start as analysts)
- Sales (especially entry level undergraduate positions)
- Market Research
- Advertising (separate *Career Path* handout available)
- Pharmaceutical Marketing
- High-Technology Marketing (separate *Career Path* handout available)
- Retail Marketing
- Marketing Consulting (see also *Career Path* handout on Consulting)
- Conduct analysis, such as sales forecasts, business trends/share, competitive reporting, pricing, budgets and promotion effectiveness evaluation.
- Execute projects, such as new product development, promotional programs and package/design change. May provide creative input on projects.
- Interact and provide service to other departments (especially Field Sales and R&D).
- Understand key issues and marketing opportunities for the product or service, including thorough knowledge of marketing plan and objectives.
- Entry level jobs may focus on market research, with analysis of consumer needs and behavior, competitive activity and advertising effectiveness/spend levels.

More senior brand management jobs include management of multiple products and brand groups. Work at this level becomes more strategic and long-term in scope, with less day to day execution of plans. Relationship building is crucial at both junior and senior levels, including relationships with advertising agency partners, key customer account executives and other operating units (e.g. Operations). The typical job progression for an individual who remains in marketing follows:



**Market Research:** The market research function typically performs the analysis work that goes into successfully marketing a product or service. Market researchers are responsible for identifying consumer insights and behaviors, studying competitors, segmenting target markets, and calculating the optimal price and level of advertising and promotions. A strong analytical focus is required as much of the work involves utilizing marketing models and frameworks. Market research opportunities exist across all industries, as well as in service agencies.

**Sales:** Opportunities in Sales are extremely varied and plentiful. Virtually all industries and companies need people to fulfill the sales function. In many companies, a sales career provides an entry into the corporation, and provides a possible path into product management. Many BBAs who pursue a career in brand management start in a sales position.

Modern sales techniques have come a long way, and often include implementation of marketing tools such as analysis of local markets, customer asset management, and regional programming and pricing. Many larger firms have specific training programs in place to develop sales professionals to move into greater roles managing larger territories and other sales people. Sales careers often provide a route into general or business unit management.

**High-Tech:** While particularly attractive to MBAs with previous technical experience, those interested in this field can supplement previous experience with strong technical aptitude and coursework. Opportunities in this area are varied, but include product management and sales of technical products such as computers, software, system services, etc. There is a separate Career Path handout available for individuals interested in pursuing careers in the high-tech industry.

### **Step #3: Research Employers**

Numerous companies recruit at the Ross School of Business for marketing positions; including the following organizations that are well recognized for marketing and sales careers:

<i>3M</i>	<i>Eli Lilly &amp; Co.</i>	<i>L'Oreal USA</i>
<i>Amazon.com</i>	<i>Ford Motor Company</i>	<i>Medtronic</i>
<i>American Express</i>	<i>Frito-Lay</i>	<i>Merck &amp; Co.</i>
<i>Apple Computer Corp.</i>	<i>General Mills</i>	<i>Microsoft Corporation</i>
<i>Campbell Soup</i>	<i>General Motors</i>	<i>Procter &amp; Gamble</i>
<i>The Clorox Company</i>	<i>Guidant</i>	<i>SC Johnson &amp; Son</i>
<i>PepsiCo QTG</i>	<i>Intel</i>	<i>Whirlpool</i>
<i>Dell Computer Corporation</i>	<i>International Business Machines Corp</i>	<i>Wyeth Consumer Healthcare</i>
<i>Del Monte</i>	<i>Johnson &amp; Johnson Companies</i>	
<i>E&amp;J Gallo Winery</i>	<i>Kraft Foods</i>	

Information on firms recruiting at the Ross School of Business is available online through the Kresge Library website. The Employment Profile also has a complete list of companies that recruit at Ross. This report is online through iMPact or can be obtained from CS.

While on-campus recruiting opportunities are numerous, consider an off-campus effort if your interests are in a particular industry or geographic location. Since most product and service firms need some level of marketing activity, opportunities are virtually limitless. The Marketing Club can offer numerous resources to aid your on- and off-campus search. Some additional examples of industries to target for specific types of marketing include:

### **Service Marketing**

- Financial - Banks, Investment Firms, Credit Card Companies
- Health Care - HMOs, Hospitals, Group Medical Practices

- Public Utilities
- Entertainment - Sports, Radio, Television, Movie
- Travel
- Real Estate
- Non-profit Organizations

### **Retail Marketing**

- Warehouse Clubs - Sam's Club, Costco
- Department Stores – Marshall Field's, Nordstrom's, The May Department Stores Company, Federated Department Stores, Inc. (Macy's)
- Discount Stores - Wal-Mart, Target
- Gas Chains - BP Amoco
- Clothing Stores - The Limited, The Gap
- Restaurant Chains - McDonald's, Pizza Hut

### **High Tech**

Several high-tech firms, including Amazon and Microsoft, recruit at Ross for marketing positions. However, the majority of the search in this arena will be off-campus. Many West Coast firms do not come to the Midwest to recruit, and the nature of this industry is such that hiring decisions are made on a cycle much different (later) than the traditional recruiting cycle at Ross. CS has resources at the Career Center available to assist in the off-campus effort. In addition, a West Coast Recruiting Forum is held in the fall in Northern California to facilitate interaction between students and firms. The High-Tech Club can offer further assistance in pursuing a career in a high tech industry.

### **Entertainment and Sports**

There are many marketing opportunities available in the entertainment and sports industries, but these firms typically do not recruit at Ross. Therefore, students interested in these fields will have to conduct an off-campus search. The Entertainment Sports Media Club sponsors a Forum in New York City and Los Angeles to facilitate interaction between students and industry contacts.

### **Pharmaceutical Marketing**

Several large pharmaceutical and medical device companies, such as Eli Lilly, Merck & Co., J&J, Abbott, Bristol Myer Squibb and Medtronic actively recruit at Ross. Students interested in this field should also join the Healthcare & Life Sciences Club, which sponsors the Health Care Forum each year.

### **Step #4: Develop a Career Search Strategy**

There are many things you should do now that you've decided that a career in marketing is right for you.

- **Understand which skills and interests are important for a marketing career track.** Attend a wide variety of company presentations for differing marketing opportunities in order to determine which kind of marketing career would most interest you. Most company presentations occur from September until November. Identify what differentiates companies and the positions. Also, faculty and marketing courses can provide the opportunity to learn and apply skills in various disciplines (market research, sales, and advertising) and can be helpful in narrowing your career choices.

- **Prepare to market yourself.**CS and the Marketing Club sponsor a number of workshops that will help you market yourself to target firms. Workshops include resume and cover letter preparation and interview skills. Office hours are available for counseling for all aspects of the career search and skills development process. Career consultants and staff members with marketing experience may be available to provide specific functional perspective. Some marketing specific resume and interview guidelines are listed at the end of this section. In addition, the Marketing Club, Healthcare Club and High Tech Club have numerous educational events to help you prepare.
- **Network, network and network!** There are many opportunities to network with marketing professionals at Ross. The Marketing Club sponsors different events (e.g. the Marketing Symposium, interview workshops, etc.) involving marketing professionals. These events provide the opportunity to learn more about marketing careers from someone working in the field. The West Coast Forum, Entertainment, Sports and Media NYC & LA Forums, Health Care Forum, conferences and other club events are also great opportunities to network with marketing professionals. Most importantly, after attending company presentations, use the reception hour as an opportunity to network, make contacts and get to know companies more intimately. Also pursue off-campus contacts with alumni (using the alumni database on iMpact), and discuss internships with second year students to learn more about what is happening inside brand organizations. Kresge Library also has a number of sources, including on-line databases to aid in the search.

### Timeline of Marketing Career Search

The following is a general timeline to keep in mind as you search for a marketing internship **on campus**. Note that the time line for individuals conducting off-campus searches for internships varies significantly and depends on the companies being pursued.

September	Self-Assessment Take Career Leader Talk to CS Consultants Investigate Career Opportunities Talk to CS Consultants Research opportunities in Kresge Library Research Employers Attend company Presentations and make contacts Research companies in Kresge Library Network with alumni Career Search Strategy Attend CS resume writing workshops Begin resume writing Clubs Get involved with marketing and other clubs Begin researching and networking with off-campus employers in case on-campus efforts are unsuccessful
October	Research Employers Attend company presentations Career Search Strategy Complete resume for CS resume book Attend Marketing Symposium (MBAs)

November	<p>Career Search Strategy</p> <p>Practice interviews with CS and various companies (do mock interview with CS before mocks with companies)</p> <p>Network with industry contacts at various symposia and conferences</p> <p>Write Cover Letters to request closed list interview</p> <p>Participate in mock interviews</p>
December	<p>Career Search Strategy</p> <p>Send Cover Letters to request closed lists for interviews</p> <p>Begin to bid for on-campus interviews</p> <p>Participate in mock interviews (practice, practice, practice)</p>
January	<p>Career Search Strategy</p> <p>On-Campus Internship Interviews</p> <p>Continue bidding for on-campus interviews</p>
February/March	<p>Career Search Strategy</p> <p>On-campus internship interviews</p> <p>Evaluate offers</p>

Securing a marketing position requires a focused strategy on the part of the candidate. You not only need to ensure that your skills and interests match those required by recruiting companies, but you must communicate these strengths in an effective way. Utilizing the resources listed in this guide and provided by CS will help you accomplish your goal.

### **Frequently Asked Interview Questions**

Marketing interview questions typically fall into two broad categories:

- "Fit" questions assess your interest in marketing, how well you would fit at the company interviewing you and how well you have demonstrated the skills crucial for marketers. Before the interview, talk to people familiar with the company to identify what characteristics are specifically key to this position and how you have utilized those skills in your past experiences.
- "Case" questions assess your general knowledge of marketing, frameworks and your quick critical thinking abilities. Before the interview, make yourself aware of current products and strategies, and have new ideas in mind. Utilize company provided handouts available in the Career Center to develop thoughtful answers to case questions.

### **Fit Questions**

#### General

1. Walk me through your resume/Tell me about yourself.
2. Why are you interested in Brand Management?
3. Why do you want to work for our company?
4. Why did you select Michigan?
5. How would your peers describe you? / Describe yourself in one word.
6. What do you think are the most important characteristics for a marketer?
7. Is there anything you would change about your summer experience?
8. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

A question could be a spin on a previous answer that was given. For example, you may be asked to describe your most interesting project this summer and how you went about solving the problem. However, the interviewer may then ask you, "What would you have done if XYZ has happened?" They are testing your knowledge of the situation and your ability to think quickly through scenarios to come up with a recommendation. An interviewer could ask you about a controversial situation facing the company.

#### Leadership/Management

1. Describe a situation where your efforts really made a difference.
2. What was the hardest decision you ever had to make at work?
3. Give an example of how you work without direction.
4. Give me an example of a time when you've led a group.
5. What is the difference between a manager and a leader?
6. Give me an example of a time you took a risk.
7. How do you deal with stress?
8. If you were the CEO, what would be your three goals with our company for the upcoming year?

#### Motivation/Enthusiasm/Communication

1. What goals have you set for yourself and how will you reach them?
2. What's the biggest risk you've ever taken?
3. What was your biggest failure and how did you learn from it?
4. Tell me about a situation where you had to persuade someone.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to simply present complex information.
6. What is your professional self development plan for the next 3-5 years?

#### Teamwork

1. What type of a team player are you? / How would your teammates describe you?
2. Give me an example of when your team had a conflict and how you resolved it.
3. Tell me about a time you had an issue with a particular individual and what happened.

#### Creativity

1. Give me an example of a time when you had to find a better way of doing things.
2. If you were a consumer product, what would you be and why?
3. What new product would you like to see?
4. What's the most creative thing you've ever done?

#### Analytical

1. Give me an example of when you had to use data during your last job.
2. How do you decide which data is useful to solve your problem?
3. How do you prioritize?
4. Tell me about a time when you had to set a long term goal and how you broke it down into smaller more short-term steps.

With any fit or behavioral question, never miss the opportunity to relate your answers to a specific experience you have had. Sharing your ideas on leadership, motivation, or creativity is good, but sharing



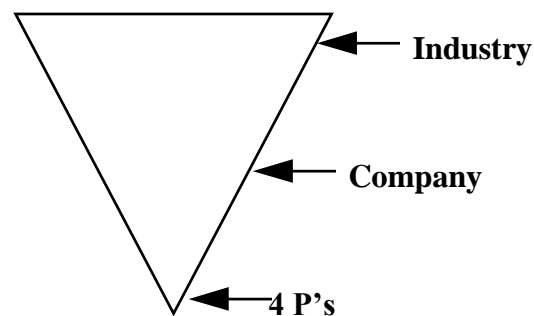
those ideas in the context of a professional experience makes your answer much more relevant to the interviewer.

### Brand Management Case Interviews

Quite a few recruiters will ask case questions during an interview. These are typically "mini-cases" that don't require in-depth analysis and number crunching. The most important thing to do with cases is to take your time and clearly think through your response. In most situations, the recruiter is not looking for the "right" answer. They are focusing on your thought process, how you approach a problem and your general marketing knowledge.

When approaching a Marketing Case question it is important to consider the 3 C's: Clear, Concise, and Complete. This is an opportunity to show strategic thinking and your ability to work under pressure. Try to think outside of the box, as this is a perfect opportunity to display creativity. Before beginning your analysis, repeat the question to the interviewer to be sure you understand exactly what is being asked.

Many people find it very helpful to use a framework when answering a case. One method that works well for marketing cases is an inverted triangle framework.



Start broad by taking a look at the industry. For example, what is the level of competition, what the demand is for the product, what consumer trends are, etc.

Narrow your discussion to the company in question. For example, how well known is the company's product, what is its market share, is the company cash-rich and can they support an intensive marketing campaign, what is the organizational structure like, can they react quickly to a volatile marketplace, what sets it apart from other competitors, what are its advantages, etc.

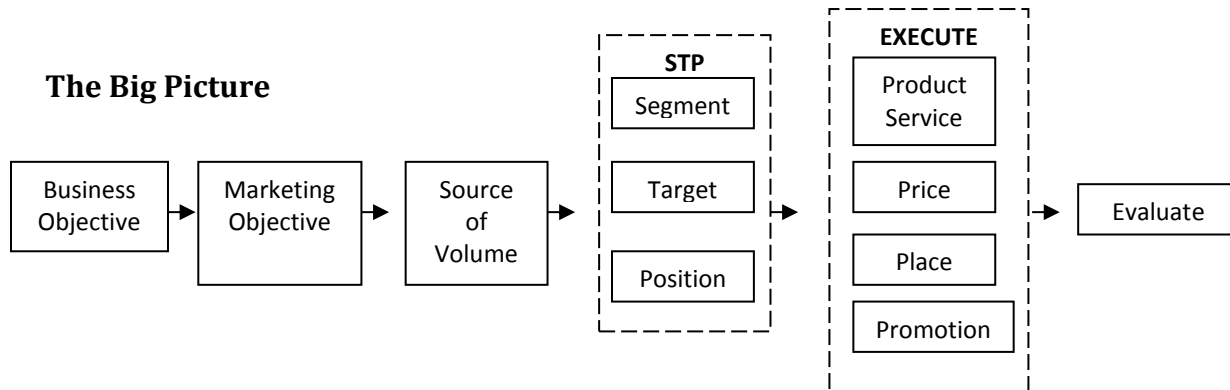
Set up the 4 P's with a discussion of the Customer – this is critical and should come first. Who is the customer? How will you segment customers? Which segments will you target? What will your product positioning be [target, frame of reference (i.e., what product competes against, point of difference from competition)]? *If you don't focus on the customer, it is unlikely your case interview will be successful!* Next go through the 4 P's in discussing the specific situation, mention what the product is or should be (extensions?), where you think the product should be priced, how is it going to be distributed, how to advertise/promote, etc. You do not necessarily need to mention that you are going through the 4 P's, but you can if it makes you feel more comfortable.

State what you want to find out and then ask the interviewer a question to get the necessary information. (e.g. I'd want to know if our product has changed. Can you tell me about that?)

Try to tie in an angle of creativity in your answer. Think of an innovative new way to market the product, mention an interesting brand extension, packaging, shelf placement, etc.

Don't forget strategies used to get the products in the stores, not just into the consumer's hands (e.g. bundling, discounts to retailers).

Another way framework that is often used and appreciated by marketing firms is "The Big Picture" that is learned in introductory marketing class. Utilizing The Big Picture will help cover all bases and also demonstrate marketing terms and knowledge.



When approaching a case, ask the interviewer some questions to help reach your solution. These questions should be somewhat conversational in order to demonstrate your flow of thoughts. Most marketing case questions fall into one of four categories: New Product Launch, Declining Sales, Pricing, and New Competitor. In conducting a case question here are key points and questions to ask yourself or the interviewer during your analysis.

- *Always begin by considering the consumer.* Is this a product the consumer needs or wants? Does this new competitor meet consumer needs? Are consumers in this segment willing or able to meet this price point?
- *Be sure to consider the market as a whole.* Can the costs or barriers to entry be overcome? Is there room for another competitor in this market? How large is the consumer need in this market? Are sales declining for the category as a whole?
- *Examine the competition.* How many competitors are there? Is the company competing with mature brands or new entrants? Are new competitors a viable threat? How are the competition's sales in comparison to your company? Is the competition providing a new benefit or alternative?
- *Evaluate the 4 P's: Product, Price, Place, Promotion.* Is your product meeting consumer needs and expectations? Is the product a durable good or luxury item? Is this item at a premium or generic price point? Where will customers buy this product? How widely distributed will the product be? Through which medium will advertisements be most effective? Should other incentives like coupons be offered?

#### Sample Case Questions

1. What is the most innovative recent new product introduction? Why was it innovative? If you were the brand manager on this product, what would you have done differently?  
\*Tip: Do not use the company's products since the interviewers know them too well.
2. Assume you are the brand manager on Brand X. Sales have been declining recently. What kinds of things may be causing the decline? Given your hypotheses what would you do?
3. What is the best commercial that you have seen lately? Why was it a good commercial?

4. Be prepared to evaluate print advertisements that the interviewer brings to the interview.
5. Pick any consumer products (or high tech, healthcare, etc.) category, what are the strategic issues facing this category? What would you do if you were a brand manager in this category to address these issues?
6. Market this paper clip (or any object).
7. What is the best new product you've seen lately?
8. You are considering launching a cereal that has been very successful overseas. What questions should you ask before the launch?
9. What is a current good/bad advertisement? What is a current good/bad product?  
\*Tip: Do not use the company's products since the interviewers know them too well.
10. You are the brand manager for a popular salad dressing brand and have realized a decline in sales. What questions should you ask to determine what is happening? How should you react?
11. Name an innovative new product and explain its success? How would you improve it?
12. How will you decide the pricing strategy of a new product your company is launching?
13. You are the brand manager for Brand X all-purpose bathroom cleaner. Brand Z focuses on producing hand soaps, but has recently introduced a new type of bathroom cleaner. How should you react?
14. Give an example of a product/brand that you feel is poorly marketed and how would you improve this campaign?
15. If you were a brand manager for a line of BBQ sauce, how would you determine the number of people that grill in the U.S.?
16. Name 5 possible line extensions for Brand Y.
17. You work for Brand W, one of the top charcoal brands, and the company is considering launching a new type of charcoal. Should you lend the Brand W name to this new charcoal?

### **Bibliography of Information Resources**

- “Careers in Brand Management” Career packet in Kresge Library
- Periodicals including BrandWeek, AdWeek and Advertising Age
- “Careers in Sales Management” Career packet in Kresge Library
- “Careers in Marketing Research” Career packet in Kresge Library
- CareerLeader™ profiles
- Wet Feet Press™ “So You Want to be a Brand Manager”; Company specific reviews.

#### CS's available resources:

- Clorox case interview guide
- SCJ interview handbook
- Kraft call back deck

#### *Other Helpful Marketing Resources*

- Wall Street Journal, Market Place Section
- Brandweek
- AdWeek
- Ad Age Magazine
- Individual Company Websites
- Super Market Guru website and e-newsletters