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## **Integration: The Multichannel Marketer's Byword**

*By Sherry Chiger*

"No man is an island," as the saying goes--and for marketing professionals it goes double. Such was the underlying theme of Monday's Multichannel Marketing Day event, sponsored by MULTICHANNEL MERCHANT, sister publication "Direct," and marketing services provider Experian.

"Integrating the Internet marketers and the traditional marketers is difficult enough," said panelist Alyce Goodman, merchandise consultant with Goodman Marketing. "Then there's the added challenge of communicating with the merchants."

Yet if a company lacks what Goodman called "intimacy" between the marketing and merchandising departments, the result can be a disconnect among the varied sales and marketing channels that can confuse the consumer. **And as another speaker, Winterberry Group managing director Christopher French, said, the goal of a multichannel marketer is to "create a unified customer experience across all the channels"--in addition to offering multiple media channels, order options, and returns and customer service vehicles.**

Another potential problem that can result from a lack of integration with marketers and other departments is that the diverse teams end up working at cross-purposes. "You need to make sure that the overall goal of the company isn't in conflict with the goals of an individual department," Goodman said. For instance, online marketers generally want as broad and as deep of a product offering as possible, while the corporate goal may be one of SKU control.

Homing in on the overarching company goals can help you determine which data elements to track and analyze, rather than falling prey to what Caryn Gray, business and strategy consultant for Experian, dubbed "information paralysis." As Tony Chivari, vice president of marketing for Spiegel, put it, "You have to be disciplined to go after what is actionable." For instance, Spiegel conducts clickstream analysis for online shopping cart abandonment on the product category level rather than on the item level.

Working with other departments can help marketers edit the morass of data available to them to determine exactly what is and isn't actionable. Such interdepartmental integration, Goodman added, serves to remind the marketers of the importance of the products or services that they are marketing: "You can get so involved in the channel and the marketing that the product becomes the least important element, and that's not good."