



**ONE-ON-ONE  
WITH DEAN ARAGON**  
CEO Shell Brands International AG  
Global VP Brand



**IN-DEPTH LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW SERIES**

With over 80,000 employees in more than 70 countries, Shell is the most recognizable and valuable global brand in the energy business. The company is addressing the challenges of COVID-19 on both a business-to-business and a business-to-consumer level. Recently, Dean Aragon, the CEO of Shell Brands International and global VP of brand for the Shell group, as well as a member of the CMO Leadership Coalition on COVID-19, spoke with the ANA.

**1. What is the most pressing issue to you and your organization right now?**

It's fair to say that we are facing, as a generation, our biggest threat to our lives and livelihood. There is the real risk of contracting COVID-19, and hence the focus on helping where we can whilst protecting the health and safety of our staff and customers. But far more people will be suffering socio-economically. As a parent and citizen, I am deeply worried. There seems to be an odd dichotomy of people either under-reacting or over-reacting.

Understandably, companies are confronting the short-term challenges. But we must not lose sight of the bigger picture and the longer term. If anything, this should compel us to live up to our purpose of enabling progress through the provision of more and cleaner energy solutions. Recently, Shell announced our ambition to be a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050 or sooner.

**2. What is the role of marketing today vs. pre-coronavirus, internally and externally at Shell?**

When we come out of this, consumers will judge us. How did you behave? Were you an opportunist? Or were you a living showcase of your values and purpose?

- *Serve more than sell:* Corporate or brand "chest-thumping" is not what we need now. Our actions should demonstrate how we are serving the most important people in our business: our customers. No one is interested in brands attempting to score brownie points vs. competitors.
- *It's not a sprint:* As marketers, we must avoid rushing to some imagined "first-mover advantage." This will be a lengthy crisis before recovery, and we will face a post-crisis reality that we cannot currently imagine. Our response in civic assistance, necessary products, or useful content must not look ephemeral.
- *Fulfill the base needs:* A refresher on Maslow's hierarchy of needs will be valuable. Everything we do must be prioritizing the fundamental needs at the base of the pyramid: nourishment, health, safety, and security. Anything else will, at best, come across as tone-deaf and irrelevant.

**3. What is the most important thing you have learned and will do differently moving forward?**

- There is no playbook for a crisis like this, of this magnitude. Therefore, you must truly trust and rely on the capabilities of your people and teams to produce solutions, while learning and constantly pivoting in response to the emerging situation.
- Global marketers must unleash and empower local counterparts, because they are in the front lines facing realities on the ground. It's a stark reminder that there is no such thing as a global customer, only local.
- It's also a reminder to find and fight for the right people and constantly invest in their development.

**LEADERSHIP TEAM**

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|---|---|
| <b>ZAID AL-QASSAB</b><br>CMO at Channel 4   | <b>CHRIS MOLONEY</b><br>CMO and SVP at Brinks Home Security   |
| <b>DEAN ARAGON</b><br>CEO Shell Brands International and Global VP at Shell           | <b>MICHELLE PELUSO</b><br>SVP, Digital Sales and CMO at IBM   |
| <b>ALYSIA BORSA</b><br>EVP, Chief Marketing and Data Officer at Meredith              | <b>RAJA RAJAMANNAR</b><br>Chief Marketing and Communications Officer and President, Healthcare Business at Mastercard |
| <b>FIONA CARTER</b><br>Chief Brand Officer at AT&T                                    | <b>TAMARA ROGERS</b><br>Global CMO at GSK   |
| <b>DAVID DANCER</b><br>CMO at Inspire   | <b>PEGGY FANG ROWE</b><br>Global Officer, Customer Experience at Marriott   |
| <b>NORMAN DEGREVE</b><br>CMO at CVS Health  | <b>MEREDITH VERDONE</b><br>CMO at Bank of America   |
| <b>MATHILDE DELHOUME</b><br>Global Brand Officer at LVMH                              | <b>DEBORAH WAHL</b><br>Global CMO at General Motors   |
| <b>MORGAN FLATLEY</b><br>U.S. CMO at McDonald's                                       | <b>HUNTER ZHANG</b><br>Director, Corporate Marketing and Public Relations at Tencent                                  |
| <b>RICK GOMEZ</b><br>EVP and CMO at Target  | <b>ANA EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT</b>   |
| <b>GEORGE HAMMER</b><br>Chief Content Officer at IBM                                  | <b>BOB LIODICE</b><br>CEO at ANA  |
| <b>RAND HARBERT</b><br>CMO at State Farm  | <b>NICK PRIMOLA</b><br>EVP at ANA   |
| <b>JODI HARRIS</b><br>Global VP, Marketing Culture and Capabilities at AB InBev       | <b>MEG WUBBENHORST</b><br>VP at ANA   |
| <b>ALICIA HATCH</b><br>Global CMO, Deloitte Digital                                   | <b>INDUSTRY PARTNERS</b>  |
| <b>MAURICE HERRERA</b><br>SVP, CMO, Americas at Avis Budget Group                     | <b>JEREMY KEES</b><br>Director, Center for Marketing and Consumer Insights at Villanova University                    |
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| <b>ADRIENNE INGOLDT</b><br>SVP, Chief Brand and Experience Officer at Jack in the Box | <b>CATHY TAYLOR</b><br>U.S. Commissioning Editor at WARC  |
| <b>AMARDEEP KHALON</b><br>CMO, US at GSK  | <b>INDUSTRY LEADERS</b>   |
| <b>SY LAU</b><br>SEVP, Chairman of Group Marketing and Global Branding at Tencent     | <b>RITA FERRO</b><br>President, Advertising Sales and Partnerships at The Walt Disney Company                         |
| <b>ALISON LEWIS</b><br>Chief Growth Officer at Kimberly-Clark                         | <b>JANN SCHWARZ</b><br>Global Director, The B2B Institute at LinkedIn   |
| <b>GREG LYONS</b><br>CMO Beverages, North America at PepsiCo                          | <b>GAYLE TROBERMAN</b><br>CMO, iHeartMedia  |
| <b>ANTONIO LUCIO</b><br>Global CMO at Facebook  | <b>LORRAINE TWHILL</b><br>CMO at Google   |
| <b>RAHUL MALHOTRA</b><br>Head of Brand Strategy and Stewardship at Shell              |   |
| <b>MARCEL MARCONDES</b><br>U.S. CMO at Anheuser-Busch                                 |   |
| <b>KIRK MCDONALD</b><br>Chief Business Officer at Xander                              |   |



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## 4. How have business-to-business brand experiences been different from business-to-consumer experiences?

There are brands which endeavor to humanize but fall short. Perhaps it's because you can't be a human brand if you haven't humanized your customer to begin with. A B2B environment allows this to be more fully manifested, contrary to perception of many FMCG folks like me. In many of our B2B companies, the number of customers who contribute the most to business results is manageable. It is physically possible to know each one as a multi-dimensional human being instead of assuming a 24/7 customer persona.

Ultimately, whether it's B2C or B2B or B2B2C (via distributors for example), it's all business-to-humans.

Moving forward, one can easily conclude that digital or virtual interfaces will accelerate and proliferate. To compensate for the cancellation of our annual and very popular Shell Eco-marathon global competition (~10,000 students design and prototype the most innovative, ultra-efficient concept vehicles), we have had to deploy meaningful digital experiences to keep the students engaged.

Whatever we produce in the digital or virtual world, we must strive to maximize technology to deepen human connections.

## 5. What does recovery look like?

I don't think there is such a thing as going back to what it used to be. And perhaps that's a good thing.

Growing up in Manila, my grandparents and parents taught me about their extreme suffering in the last world war. And when it was over, they were in a daze and utterly scarred physically and psychologically. There are lessons to be learned from how different countries and societies faced the years 1945 to 1949 (just before the boom years of the 1950s).

Responding to the new normal, marketers will surely produce fascinating new products and services, and inventive new content and channels, for engaging their customers or stakeholders. But above all this, as marketers we must champion the spirits of healing, rebuilding, and hopefully unity.

## 6. What can we do together to help the industry emerge stronger than before?

The marketing profession must always be about the obsession to understand, champion, and serve the humanity of our customers or stakeholders.

Personally, I worry about the notion that the 21<sup>st</sup>-century marketer is a data scientist. You cannot reduce humans to a series of data points. Instead, I would argue we should be more of "data alchemists," who leverage the insights from data and translates these into ideas, propositions, products, or content that is of genuine value to the humans we serve. A time like today should emphasize, more than ever before, the need for the "human touch" in all our marketers.

## LOOK FOR ADDITIONAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS FROM TOP CMOs

Stay tuned for more one-on-one interviews from leading CMOs representing global brands like AB InBev, CVS, General Motors, McDonald's, Shell, Bank of America, and Tencent as they respond to the health crisis.

To learn more about what the Global CMO Leadership Coalition on COVID-19 is doing to support chief marketers around the world, [click here](#).

