

**The Future of Marketing Education: Preparing Marketers for Hybrid Careers**

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### **Abstract**

Increasingly, marketing careers are being shaped by hybrid labour models. From freelancers to solopreneurs, marketing professionals are engaged in contingent and at times precarious models of employment – taking advantage of the independence, control, financial compensation and skill development opportunities made possible by hybrid labour models in marketing agencies and in client focused work. However, little is known about the specific competencies that contribute to success in a hybrid model marketing career, or about how these competencies can be fostered in a marketing education context. This study explored the growth of the hybrid labour model in marketing and examined the competencies that contribute to success in a hybrid marketing career through a series of 17 interviews with marketing professionals directly engaged in contingent or hybrid labour models. Findings indicate five key themes related to success in a hybrid marketing career: engaging with mentorship, maintaining currency, establishing flexibility within relationships, achieving a sense of balance and pursuing purpose driven careers. Suggestions for changes to marketing education, future research and considerations for practitioners are provided.

*Keywords:* Hybrid labour model, contingent employment, marketing career, marketing education, dynamic capabilities.

*Word count:* 6286 words (including references).

### **The Future of Marketing Education: Preparing Marketers for Hybrid Careers**

Over the past decade, many firms have pursued increased flexibility by transitioning their labor force from being composed of permanent full-time employees (FTE) to a hybrid labor model composed of both FTE and contingent labor (Finch, Hillenbrand, O'Reilly, Varella, 2015). Contingent labor is a broad term incorporating a diverse range of employer–worker models including temporary-agency workers, direct-hire seasonal workers, contractors, and independent contractors (Alacovska & Bissonnette, 2019; McLean Parks et al., 1998). These contingent labor categories vary based on the length of tenure, the level of expertise, proportion of employees, physical location of employee and the level of control they have over their work (DeCuyper et al., 2008). This hybrid labor model provides firms the capacity to expand or contract capacity rapidly without expanding FTE, while concurrently creating opportunities to stimulate innovation through fresh perspectives (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2007). Today, this hybrid model is widely adopted across sectors and professions from technology to carsharing to healthcare and accounting (Prassl, 2018).

From the perspective of the individual, there are several motivations to choose a hybrid career path. In their study of contractors, Kunda, Barley, and Evans (2002) identify that 32% originally sought contracting because of independence and control, while 69% identified these factors as a reason to stay as a contractor. Moreover, they found 44% identified financial compensation as a significant driver to be a contractor. Lastly, research suggests a hybrid model offers unique opportunities for increased skill development, entrepreneurship, and productivity (Carson, 2012). However, for many marketing professionals, a hybrid career path is not always by choice. Rather, it is the only path available for them due to either unemployment or underemployment. As a result, many contractors are in precarious labor situations, defined by

low wages and challenging labour practices (Myhill et al., 2021; Alberti et al, 2018). Contingent or hybrid career models are also characterized by the use of digital mediation tools to connect creative workers and their patrons, fluctuations in employment opportunities (and in the required surge capacity of the creative worker), irregular or unpredictable schedules, the requirement of the creative worker to provide in the infrastructure and equipment required for work, and deliverable or task-based payment structures (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018; Friedman, 2014).

In this study, we explore the growth of the hybrid labor model in marketing. Consistent with the trend across other sectors and professions, marketing has transitioned from a largely FTE model to a hybrid labor model (Aruda, 2020). For example, in Canada, contingent labor in the creative industries – such as marketing– is double that of non-marketing roles (Alacovska & Bissonnette, 2019; Conference Board of Canada, 2019). Indeed, pursuing a contingent labor career path, from term-certain contracts to freelance consulting, is now viewed as the dominant career path for a variety of marketing specializations (Schlee & Karns, 2017). As the marketing profession increasingly transitions to this hybrid labor model, understanding the strategies required for marketing professionals to thrive in hybrid careers becomes increasingly critical. Thus, this study is guided by two research questions (RQ):

**RQ 1:** What competencies will contribute to success in a hybrid career?

**RQ 2:** How can postsecondary marketing programs evolve to prepare students for a hybrid career?

To explore these questions, we interview 17 marketing professionals, including marketing professionals in contingent labor roles (referred herein as *contractors*), those who hire contractors (referred to herein as *clients*), and those who have had hybrid careers. These

interviews explore the dynamic nature of the marketing profession and factors that contribute to a professionals' success in this hybrid labor market. We conclude by reflecting on the implications of the findings of this study on marketing education.

### **A Dynamic Capabilities Perspective of Employability**

Following De Vos, De Hauw and Van der Heijden (2011), employability is “the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competencies” (p. 438). In today’s dynamic labor market, Finch et al. (2016) propose employability is best viewed through the lens of dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007). The dynamic capabilities perspective, first developed as an institutional-level construct, contends that competitive advantage is the “ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments” (Teece et al., 1997, p.517). Finch et al. (2016) argue that, like firms, individuals must possess dynamic capabilities to remain competitive in today’s turbulent labor market. In doing so, scholars (Finch & Levallett, 2020) argue that employability is rooted in integrated dynamic capabilities. Integrated dynamic capabilities is the systematic integration of an individual’s input resources (e.g., personality, intellect), development resources (e.g., education, experiences) and competency resources (e.g., meta-skills, task-specific skills). (Refer to Figure-1).

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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The dynamic capabilities perspective of employability offers an important framework to examine the emergence and preparation of individuals in hybrid careers. One of the challenges of

studying marketing as a discipline is its scope. Marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association (2021) as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.” The scope of the discipline is exceptionally broad and abstract, contributing to the challenge of defining the attributes of a “marketer”, and instilling those attributes in students (Di Gregorio, et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2009). As evidence of this, Finch, Nadeau, and O’Reilly (2013) in a study of marketing practitioners identified 46 discreet skills relevant to the employability, including 33 task-skills and 13 meta-skills.

Moreover, the dynamic and expansive nature of this field contributes to an increasing fragmentation of specializations and associated task-specific skills. For example, the marketing profession today incorporate roles ranging from digital artists and video editors to product managers and data scientists. As a result, at a firm-level, organizations must possess the capacity to efficiently acquire, release, and reconfigure their marketing resources to address dynamic market conditions. Consequently, ranging from agencies to global brands to start-ups, are increasingly adopting a hybrid labor model, as a mechanism to enable their dynamic capabilities essential to their competitiveness (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018). For example, a firm hiring a video editor or data scientist on a contract provides an efficient means to acquire (and then release) this task-specific skill without absorbing incremental overhead and limiting their adaptability (Olson et al., 2018).

In marketing, hybrid labour is anchored in three dominant forms of contingent labour:

1. *Freelancers*: Freelancers work for multiple clients and complete short-term specialized tasks (Fox, 2016; Kuhn, 2016). Freelancers incorporate a vast range of marketing specializations from visual design to editing to technical roles. Today, freelance work is often facilitated by

digital platforms, such as Fiverr or Upwork.

2. *Solopreneurs*: Solopreneurs are individuals who are contracted by clients to complete larger and more complex projects by acquiring, managing, and administering a team of freelancers with specialized skills (Kitching & Smallbone, 2012).
3. *Independent contractors*: Independent contractors work on a fixed-term and often reoccurring contract in a defined role (Stewart & Stanford, 2017). Independent contractors often work for a single organization at a time. For example, independent sales contractors are one of the fastest growing roles in marketing (Finch, Hillenbrand, O'Reilly, Varella, 2015).

The challenge of preparing marketing students to thrive in a hybrid labor model is a critical challenge facing educators (Ashford et al., 2018). Career preparedness in marketing education remains a priority (Finch et al, 2013; Liu, 2010; Kelley & Bridges, 2005); but it lacks a focus on the transitioning nature of profession from the traditional FTE to a hybrid model (Barley et al., 2017). For this reason, few post-secondary marketing programs fully prepare students for a hybrid career path incorporating both FTE and contractor roles (Caza, 2020). As the field of marketing education continues to integrate career preparedness into curriculum programming (Yeoh, 2019), and as researchers continue to examine effective practices for skill and competency development (Weathers & Aragon, 2019) we must continue to look to professional contexts for clarification on the types of new and emerging skills that the marketing industries demand of our graduates (Schlee & Karns, 2017).

## **Method**

To address the research questions identified above, we created a phenomenological study based on 17 in-depth interviews of marketing professionals directly engaged in contingent labor.

We adopted purposeful sampling based on three-criteria (Polkinghorne, 2007):

1. *Professional experiences*: Participants were recruited from three professional cohorts. The first cohort is professionals whose have hired contingent labor contractors, but who have never been contingent labor contractors themselves (n=4). The second cohort is professionals who have spent their entire career as only contingent labor contractors. The third cohort is professionals who have followed a hybrid career path (n=10).
2. *Career stage*: Participants were recruited from diverse career stages. The final sample includes professionals with between four and 30 years of experience, with a mean of 13.8 years.
3. *Gender*: During recruitment, we sought gender balance. The final sample included ten females and seven males.

Refer to Table 1 for each participant's profile:

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Insert Table 1 about here

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The interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes in duration. The interviews were audio recorded. A semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix 1) was designed to explore the subjects' interpretation of their experiences in a hybrid labor market, while allowing for spontaneous reflection on relevant issues (Kallio, et al., 2016).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed using the six-stage data analysis process adapted from phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) and focused on extracting an participants' subjective interpretation of the issue under study. The six stages allowed for the stepwise review



of the data and identification of clear themes. First, two researchers independently reviewed the transcripts in their entirety to provide a holistic sense of each interview (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Second, two researchers independently and manually coded each interview to identify the major emergent themes (Moustakas, 1994). Since phenomenology is an exploration of a person's subjective interpretation and perception, there is no a priori coding scheme. Thus, themes emerged from the content generated by each individual interview, where each researcher extracted textual examples of each participant's perceptions to provide context for each theme.

Following the guidance of previous researchers (e.g., Moustakas, 1994; Padilla-Díaz, 2015) we leveraged horizontalization to explore this data. Horizontalization is a process that involves extracting the relevant textual examples and reflect on what each individual participant was saying and identify the themes that emerged across the multiple interviews. To complete this, the two researchers independently and carefully consolidated the themes across all 17 interviews, noting the number of participants who supported each theme, and removing repetition and nonessential statements (Moustakas, 1994). Each maintained a separate document of all content removed to verify that no themes were lost (Moustakas, 1994). The researchers independently identified nine themes.

Next, two researchers met to reduce the data by isolating common themes. The researchers then followed a staged data reduction process to identify five composite themes without losing the integrity of each participant's contribution (Moustakas, 1994). Each researcher returned to their original horizontalization document to verify that the number of interviews supported each theme and to confirm that no themes were lost during the reduction process. In summary, there was an inter-coder reliability of 93%, providing additional validation of the coding theme (Belotto, 2018). The entire research team then collaborated to define and label the five composite

themes and identify textual examples that best represented the core of each. Finally, the resulting composite themes were linked back to the study's two research questions.

## Results

Based on the methodology defined above, five composite themes were identified:

### **Theme 1: The Importance of Mentorship**

A recurring theme in the interviews was the important role that mentorship plays for contractors. Ten of the 17 interviews coded positively for this theme. Participants expressed the importance of finding a mentor who has been a contractor to learn how to build the skills required to thrive:

“...you find a mentor and that's, that's kind of an aspect of education that I don't see as well it's valued but it's really hard to latch on to someone because people are very like I got my own stuff going like I'm going for me they don't want to offload a bunch of stuff but when you can find someone who heavily mentors you and teaches you about those things.”

(Participant 10)

They also commented on the importance of connecting through mentorship or advocate r:

“...whether it's either person that are going to advocate for you, on your behalf to get you to the different positions, like I've been fortunate to have different advocates, and mentors throughout my career that have both encouraged me” (Participant 6)

Finally, participants commented on the essential work of engaging in the wider marketing community through mentorship relationships.

“Having a mentor is someone that you can go to those questions...because everyone's got a passion, they know what they want to do in life ....” (Participant 2)

**Theme 2: Maintaining Currency**

Given the diverse competency requirements introduced by the hybrid model, many participants shared their strategies for acquiring new professional designations, experiences, and competency development opportunities as part of the interviews. For many, flexible learning opportunities were essential to maintain professional currency in a highly dynamic field:

“Yeah, ‘You to Me’ is awesome. It's an online school. And it's just basically almost like YouTube videos, followed by quizzes and questions and stuff like that. And there's usually someone that has made it their job to just make courses for the latest technology... I'm one of those people ...I'll buy it every time. I was like, this is awesome. And now I do that. And I'm like, I'm completely back up to speed” (Participant 5)

Others contended it was important for clients or organizational leadership to also play a role in the professional development of contractors.

“I've owned a number of agencies in PR, content marketing, digital marketing, and now I've got to a place where we are empowering and teaching people to do it themselves”. (Participant 8)

According to participants, success as a contractor requires a generalist approach to a wide range of skill acquisition and use. Acquiring marketing skills felt more accessible than ever thanks to digital and remote forms of professional development, online mentorship, and skill demonstrations. However, establishing these second order marketing skills was at times detrimental to marketing work in a traditional FTE workplace, as investing in their development stole billable time and impeded workflow and productivity. The need to master one's marketing capabilities in an FTE role left little time to develop the experiences and skill sets required for a

successful transition to a contractor.

### **Theme 3: Changing Relationships and Positions**

The nature of working relationships (between colleagues, between employees and employers, and within a network of peers) appear to have changed with the introduction of the hybrid labor model. Participants expressed how the transition from FTE to contractor impacted their connections to (and relationships with) their professional community:

“It's always competitive but it's the communities that are being created and you can walk into a We work or, or any place like that and it's like you have all these designers who are technically competing against each other, supporting each other and learning and growing off of each other so you know for someone coming out of school, you could find yourself in the freelance space, and still find the mentors and the people to help you grow”

(Participant 2)

Several participants were very direct about how engagement in hybrid labour models created a tense or toxic employment culture:

“I find that they (management) try and pawn off a lot of the creativity on to you where you're brought in as the freelancer in here this expert in the field or you know what's what. And you'll ask them like how you picture this being conveyed or like how do you want this to go out there and I've met a lot with what you're the experts you figure it out and that's difficult” (Participant 10)

Others described the surge capacity requirements of being a contractor, explaining the impact that a precarious and variable employment situation had on their need to establish a strong network.

“I would bid on like 50 things in a month and about 20 would come in small to medium sometimes you get insane ones are like everybody says yes to everything. And you got to pick and choose, and you just feel like a king. And then there's other times where because you're so busy with the clients, you're always working and you're not looking for beds and working on your own business. And then you feel like you're in the money and then it goes dry for a couple of months. And it's a rollercoaster ride. I'd have to say, that is how I built up my network.” (Participant 2)

#### **Theme 4: Prioritizing Flexibility and Balance**

Overall, we heard a common theme from nearly all (15 of 17) participants focused on the motivating importance of flexibility and balance in their decision to become a contractor. More specifically, participants expressed how changes to their lifestyle or life stages propelled them to transition from FTE to a contractor:

“My wife and I have made an active decision that right now one of us wants some flexibility. And from work hours, we have two small kids, they are three and one, having someone with the flexibility to stay home with them when they're sick, take them to their doctor's appointments, take them to the vaccinations, take them to the dentist, all that kind of stuff...is really useful for us right now. So that sort of flexibility in terms of setting my own hours, being able to say no to new client projects that I'm like, I actually just don't have time for this. And here's three other people who can help you. That is super helpful. You know, agency for this isn't universal, but my experience of agency was that my work life balance was really, really bad, right. And now my work life balance is very, very good. So, I think the flexibility to set your own hours is a major plus.” (Participant 12)

Being a contractor can both enable this flexibility and disrupt it. However, being a

contractor can disrupt this balance: contractors describe the difficulties of balancing a fluctuating income, shifting surge capacity requirements, changing client focused workloads and challenging infrastructure requirements. However, contractors also described how it enables the flexibility they required to achieve this balance. Several participants reflected on the value of flexibility and balance in comparison with what they described as the restricted nature of FTE roles:

“I personally like freedom. So freelancing is a lot more fun, flexible in that way, versus like sitting at a job nine to five, Monday to Friday. And it often in the agency world, there's like spots where you're not sleeping, like you're working early, early mornings, and late, late nights until you get this campaign out for the client, and it's required of you.”

(Participant 8)

“Um, yeah, definitely want to be working in the woods in my office. remotely, and freelancing, the beauty is that you can travel and work. I can be in Vancouver for the week, working and getting client work done. So freelance is the ideal situation for me.”

(Participant 14)

### **Theme 5: Seeking Purpose Driven Careers**

Participants prioritized meaningful, purpose driven or entrepreneurial career models within their descriptions of the value of becoming a contractor. However, they also expressed the challenges of aligning their daily work with existing organizational cultures or of managing an existing organizational culture that depended on contractors:

“Yeah, you're coming in as an employee, does that create a process change a lot for you and like how do you navigate that opposed to freelance work a little bit because like you kind of lose that that barrier professionalism in a sense like you're more a part of the team,

you don't have to upkeep those relationships...it's a lot more stress, I would say as a freelancer kind of meeting those expectations versus being a part of the company because you would probably have onboarding through brand values and techniques and proper language whereas if I'm just brought in for one project I have to educate myself on that lickety split.” (Participant 6)

“I think we've just built a really good culture of respect and transparency and bringing them in at the right time and then making them feel as though they are part of the team because they are and that's our success, so much of it hinges on their ability to execute and once they've executed especially well it's, you want to keep these people in your realm and. I think the thing we've done really well is gone in with the mindset that there, they are employees they're not freelancers.” (Participant 4)

We heard that contractors are both disposable and indispensable but are seldom effectively integrated into organizational cultures. This stunted their effectiveness in marketing work, shrank their marketing productivity and fed a high “turn and burn” rate on new contractors. Contractors are not just temporary employees, nor are they integrated into the marketing process in the same way as traditionally employed marketing team members. Being a contractor changes how you are briefed, how you are credited, how you are integrated into the decision-making process, and how much background or context you are given for the marketing decisions you are asked to take. This can impede a marketing process, increase billable hours required for marketing work, or result in less desirable contributions to the larger client focused project. Overall, participants who shared experiences related to this theme focused on the entrepreneurial nature of being a contractor, and the personality or orientation required to engage in this model of employment:

“My resume is pretty much like chunks of two years, for various reasons, mostly because I

get bored pretty quickly. I don't really love just keeping a boat afloat. It's not really of interest to me. So, I'm a start-up person by nature. If I could be in a dynamic work environment that had big ambitions and was really trying to achieve something at rapid pace all the time, I think I would love to be in a nine to five environment". (Participant 7)

## **Discussion**

This study was guided by two research questions (RQ):

**RQ 1:** What competencies will contribute to success in a hybrid career?

**RQ 2:** How can postsecondary marketing programs evolve to prepare students for a hybrid career?

After analyzing the thematic insights generated from participant interviews, we found that the factors which permit or prevent a thriving in a hybrid labor market were remarkably similar across career stages and types of marketing work, supporting a contention that the continued transformation from a FTE to a hybrid model will demand new competencies.<sup>1</sup> Participants shared insights into the key factors that catalyzed their transition from traditional FTE to contractor, the conditions that enabled them to thrive as contractors, and the dynamics that could (or had) incentivized them to return to FTE. Participants also described the skills or learning opportunities that helped them navigate their hybrid careers and the skill development they had been forced to pursue outside of their post-secondary education.

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<sup>1</sup> These five factors were remarkably similar across career stages and types of marketing work and were vital to a flourishing marketing practice to initiate this transition to contractors as students or as traditional FTE, and workers re-entering traditional organizational contexts.



This study identifies four pedagogical initiatives which might be integrated into marketing education to encourage and enable students to thrive in a hybrid model:

1. Seed contingent labor mentorships
2. Integrate purpose-driven learning
3. Develop competencies essential to thrive in a hybrid model
4. Integrate contingent labor into work integrated and community service-learning models.

Our findings indicate that supporting these four strategies is essential to preparing students to enter the hybrid labor market.

### **Seed contingent labor mentorship**

There is a durable and vital relationship between success in hybrid labor and strong mentorship relationships. Mentors contributed to success in three ways:

1. Mentors provided guidance on the optimal time to transition between FTE and contractor roles.
2. Mentors assisted in securing hybrid experiences, such as apprenticeships and job shadowing, to develop the competencies required to move between FTE and contractor roles.
3. Mentors support the development of the EQ - emotional intelligence (stress management, goal setting, emotional stability) and SQ - social intelligence (networking, personal branding, self-promotion) skills required to thrive in hybrid careers.

To establish the important mentorship connections that graduating students require to thrive in a hybrid career, we found that seeding mentorship opportunities as part of classroom learning was critically important. To do so, postsecondary institutions must work with

professional bodies to embed meaningful mentorship in their programs. These mentorship connections will enable students to explore the competencies and experiences essential for a hybrid career.

### **Integrate Purpose Driven-Learning**

This study found that the decision to transition to a contractor had more to do with the expectations and experiences of individuals than a lack of FTE opportunities. Rather, professionals became contractors to provide them opportunities for professional growth, increased flexibility, and to focus on projects and initiatives aligned to their personal values and passions. However, we found that contractors were more likely to transition to FTE due to lack of professional opportunities.

To prepare students for their role in crafting a hybrid career path, post-secondary programs must integrate purpose driven work into course and assignment structures. For many programs, this may involve introducing, or increasing the variability of client-oriented project work. For others, this may involve providing greater flexibility for students to pursue external project work within more traditional curriculum.

### **Develop Competencies Essential to Thrive in a Hybrid Model**

This study found that those who succeed in hybrid careers possess the capacity to transition from being a jack of all trades and being the master of one, and that this strength could be cultivated in students through new forms of skill development opportunities. This includes developing three distinct competencies. Firstly, hybrid professionals possess a high-level of meta-skills including communication and organization. Secondly, they must possess a breadth of generalist marketing skills, including visual literacy, project management, market research and

creative problem solving skills. This provides the ability to add value to diverse organizations regardless of industry or size. Thirdly, they must develop a deep and impactful expertise in one area of marketing. This will define their unique value proposition.

However, currently, few programs provide support in developing the fundamental competencies required to succeed in a hybrid career path. These competencies include relationship development, business development, financial management, and contracting. Those who succeed in hybrid career paths must be intentional in developing their professional network. This professional network not only provide potential career and mentoring opportunities, but also provided access to freelancers to support surge capacity.

To empower students to develop their professional networks, marketing programs must incorporate hybrid models into their curriculum. This can take the form of establishing strong ties with professional bodies in specific sectors, with a marketing collective or work brokering services (e.g., Communno, Upwork, Freelancer, Guru, Mechanical Turk, Aquent or PeoplePerHour) or even with sector specific promotional community platforms (e.g., Behance, 99designs, dribbble, Portfolio, Coroflot or Potfoliobox). By recognizing a hybrid career path, post-secondary institutions will open career options.

### **Integrate Contingent Labor into Work Integrated and Community Service-Learning Models**

This study found an incongruence between current marketing program curriculum and the future career hybrid career path. An example of this incongruence is the structure of internships, co-operative education placements and case studies. Programs which embed work integrated learning should provide a path for students to pursue placement opportunities in a diverse range of professional contexts to provide experience in navigating different

organizational cultures. For example, this may include reimagining work placement programs to provide the opportunity to support solopreneurs and freelancers.

### **Limitations**

In considering future directions for this research work, we recommend additional examinations of the shaping effect of specific educational pathways in preparing students to thrive in a hybrid career. Additionally, we recommend further investigations into the social and economic impacts of hybrid careers. Moreover, recent studies (Kaine & Josserand, 2019; Scully-Russ & Torraco, 2020) indicate that the integration of contractors into established organizational cultures may serve to initiate or sustain innovation and strategic planning. However, this issue was not explicitly addressed by our study and may provide be an area of future study. As our last recommendation from this study, we call for more research into the impact, scope, and role of hybrid careers in the broader marketing profession: what does this shift to a hybrid model mean for the marketing profession, and what policies contribute to the success of both contractors and clients.

### **Conclusion**

The diverse marketing professionals that participated in this study shared valuable insights into the key factors that catalyzed their transition from FTE to contractors, the conditions that enabled them to thrive, and the dynamics that could (or had) incentivized them to return to employment in a traditional marketing profession organization model. Our study suggests that marketing careers exist on a continuum beyond that described by solopreneurship, entrepreneurship and workplace models. Rather, contractors were more likely to describe their career journey as being cyclical or fluid than monodirectional. The decision to adopt a hybrid career path was seldom rooted in a lifelong plan. Instead, participants described an organic career

continuum incorporating both FTE and contingent labor.

Our interviews with 17 marketing professionals revealed that to prepare students effectively for a hybrid career pathway, marketing programs should adopt four distinct strategies. By doing so, programs will prepare emerging marketing professionals with the skills and experiences they need to thrive in this dynamic profession. By adapting marketing education to the shifting realities of a hybrid career path, students will be positioned to not only survive, but thrive.

## Tables

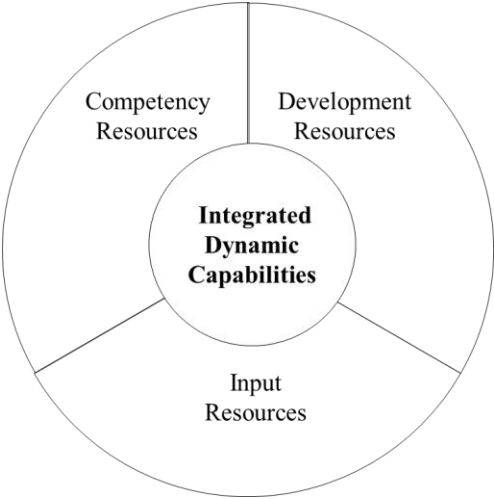
**Table 1: Participant profile**

Participant Number	Gender	Current Role	Career Stage (years)	Role	
				Client (years)	Contractor (years)
1	F	Marketing Contractor	20	15	5
2	M	Chief Executive Officer	20	20	
3	F	Designer	5		5
4	M	Photographer	4		4
5	M	Digital Marketing Strategist	12	7	5
6	M	President	16	16	
7	F	Marketing Contractor	24	17	7
8	F	Chief Executive Officer	19	12	7
9	F	Communication contractor	30	27	3
10	M	Content developer	4		4
11	F	Communications Manager	10	6	4
12	M	Digital Marketing Strategist	16	15	1
13	F	General Manager	15	15	
14	M	Chief Engagement Officer	9	6	3
15	F	Digital Marketing	9	9	

Strategist					
16	F	Editor	11	7	4
17	F	Graphic Designer	10	4	10

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**Figure 1. A Dynamic Capabilities Perspective of Employability**





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