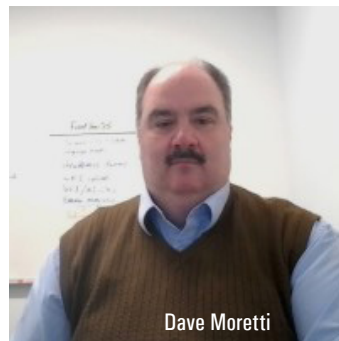


LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION, AND ENGAGEMENT IN MARKETING

By **Dave Moretti**, Senior Director of Digital Marketing and Technology, Columbia Business School

As the Senior Director of Digital Marketing and Technology at Columbia Business School, Dave Moretti, leveraging over a decade of educational technology leadership, delivers data-driven marketing solutions. He combines technical expertise with strategic marketing to drive enrollment, engagement, and brand growth, leading major platform migrations, SEO strategies, and over 130 digital initiatives with measurable impact.



Dave Moretti

In an exclusive interview with CIOReview, Moretti shared his insights on how digital marketing in higher education is evolving with the aid of AI.

THE JOURNEY TO DIGITAL MARKETING

My journey into this field actually started more from an IT and technology perspective rather than traditional marketing. I began at Queensborough Community College, where I was the webmaster. In the early to mid-2000s, we were building the site and focusing on transforming engagement to get people to visit the site. That’s where I first started working on the foundations of digital marketing.

Fast forward to 2014, when my team transitioned from academic computing to marketing communications, and I became more deeply involved in digital marketing, managing the website, social media, email campaigns, digital signage, and other channels to drive engagement.

In higher education, you deliver information to a variety of audiences, including prospective and current students, faculty, staff, donors, and anyone interested in events such

as the performing arts, athletics, or other campus offerings.

This requires tailoring content for multiple audiences, each with distinct needs. My journey began at CUNY and continued at Columbia Business School, where I integrated social media, email campaigns, and other digital channels to drive thought leadership, support admissions, and communicate the school’s academic and research initiatives.

ROADBLOCKS IN TODAY’S MARKETING LANDSCAPE

One of the significant challenges now is the rise of “no-click” search results. AI platforms enable users to extract information from a website without visiting the actual website, reducing web traffic, which has been a traditional metric for engagement.

This is where generative engine optimization (GEO), in conjunction with traditional search engine optimization (SEO), comes into play. The objective is to create content for humans and AI, which requires teams to rethink how they produce content. Pages need to answer primary and secondary questions for a broad audience while remaining accessible and engaging.

Another challenge is dealing with leadership or administration that doesn’t fully understand how these digital platforms operate. There is sometimes an expectation to focus solely on self-promotion, essentially “beating your chest,” rather than providing content that truly serves the audience. In higher education, people want information that empowers them, not just messages about how great the institution is.



To address these challenges, we have been incorporating short-form video across social media and our website. At the same time, we are utilizing AI-driven personalization to tailor content to specific audiences, while maintaining human oversight.

Data plays a key role here. KPIs like click-through rates, engagement, and subscription metrics inform our strategy. AI further enables faster and more efficient analysis of this data, helping us make informed adjustments.

TRENDS TO WATCH IN THE NEAR FUTURE

We are returning to human storytelling in the years to come, enhanced by generative AI. Determining how to integrate technology without losing the authentic narrative is critical. We are also exploring augmented and virtual reality, particularly for campus tours, which will allow prospective students worldwide to create an immersive experience and differentiate our campus.

Full-funnel, data-driven marketing is also becoming crucial. Many of our prospective audiences arrive at various points in the funnel, such as the top, middle, or bottom. We need strategies to capture and engage them at every stage of the process. With a new chief communications officer, we are also reorienting our strategy and examining how to make a responsible leap forward.

LESSONS FOR LEADERS AND ASPIRING PROFESSIONALS

My advice for aspiring and experienced professionals in the industry is not to be afraid to ask questions and collaborate with peers. Experiment thoughtfully and start in areas where risks are manageable. Engage in forums, roundtables, and conferences to exchange ideas. Education is also essential. Enroll in online courses or executive education programs to continually build your knowledge.

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It is essential to set realistic goals, leverage your network, and remain adaptable. The industry evolves rapidly, especially with the advent of AI and new platforms, so be prepared to experiment, analyze results, and iterate. Build your expertise, expand your network, and remember that success comes from continuous learning and collaboration. [CR](#)