

Optimal Effect

Tips and tools to make the most of your valuable marketing data

Marketers have a lot of data. But having a lot of data and making the most of that data are two entirely different things. Organizations that truly understand how to optimize their valuable customer information are the companies that will get the best ROI from their marketing efforts.

"The real purpose of marketing data is to give us insights not into *who* buyers are but *when* they are ready to buy," says Amanda Kahlow, CEO, 6Sense. "If you can focus on that, you can deliver leads to sales that they can trust."

Collecting engagement data throughout your customers' buying journey can help you get a better picture of who your customers are and how to best target them, notes Michelle Huff, CMO, Act-On.

"There's much more data out there today for marketers than ever before," says Huff.

"Now, you can know more about your market and better apply the data that is captured to slice and dice and know your customer."

Using data to understand the likely behaviors and attitudes of shoppers is the first step in driving actions, says Curtis Thornhill, CEO, Apt Marketing Solutions.

"Using the data to create an easy path to purchase and to properly time the marketing message is key," he says. Particularly in a digital context, this often mimics the feel of native advertising."

TIMING IS KEY

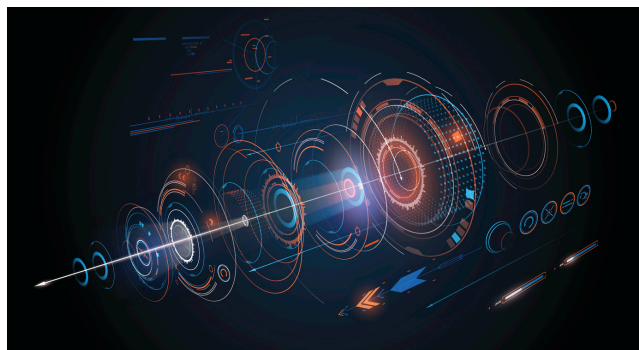
Knowing when a customer is really interested in talking with you is essential, particularly in B2B, says Kahlow, who spoke at B2B LeadsCon. If you can tie together search data with what is happening on your forums and website, you'll start to see trails of activity, and be able to identify when the timing is right.

"That will make everything you do from a sales and marketing perspective smarter," she says, noting it pays to be able to identify not only when someone is researching your company and products but your competition as well.

Marketers today have the luxury of tapping into customer behavior as they begin researching online, Huff says. Tracking IP addresses can help marketers know what company or geographic area a visitor is from—matching back this information can help companies connect with prospects via email and know what kind of information they are interested in down the road.

"Following this kind of trail can help marketers do a better job of connecting the pieces," she notes.

"The more you know about people and their behavior, the more you can do to tailor the conversation."



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CASE STUDY

HCL TECHNOLOGIES TESTS DATA-DRIVEN PERSONA-BASED CAMPAIGN

A couple of months back, HCL Technologies experimented with a new marketing automation tool to engage potential customers for a SAP S/4HANA suite of products in North America.

HCL had certain specific goals in mind. First, it wanted to customize messages for each member of the buyer persona. Each stakeholder has his or her own challenges and concerns and HCL wanted to focus on their specific pain points. For instance, target clients were divided into three segments: 'First To Adopt New Tech', 'Doesn't Prioritize Tech' and 'No Time for Downtime' and then messages were tailored for each of these client groups.

Next, messages were tailored based on their previous interactions with HCL, even as customers moved from email to the website to social media. The idea was to integrate all marketing channels and convert a series of one-off experiences into an ongoing dialog. Finally, some serious number crunching and analytics needed to happen to get real-time, actionable insights.

HCL ran integrated data-driven persona based campaign across all channels and customer touch points for North American SAP S/4HANA customers. It's early days yet, but the results are quite encouraging. Traffic to the website has doubled and the number of downloads have grown more than 10 times in the last two months. And the company is already in discussions with some of the targeted customers.

The Fifth P of Marketing

Anyone who attended marketing 101 classes knows about the four P's of marketing—Product, Price, Promotion and Place. But there is also a fifth component, data analytics. According to Forbes Insights latest survey, a whopping 64% of executives surveyed "strongly agree" that data-driven marketing is crucial to success in a hyper-competitive global economy.

And no data-driven marketing operation would be possible without advanced marketing automation tools, and new processes and approaches to data and decision-making. We need marketing and analytics software to get a full



360-degree understanding of each prospect on an ongoing basis. That's the only way to send the right message to the right people at the right time. And then measure results to check if we are getting the desired results.

Why Do We Need Tech Budgets?

And it's not such a big deal. We, in marketing, are getting what finance, HR and procurement received a long time ago — a tech budget. We absolutely need the tools for predictive analytics, machine learning and behavioral insights to effectively engage the right customers at the right time via the right channel.

Consider HCL's data-driven persona based campaign for SAP HANA customers, for instance. Could it have been done properly without the right tech and tools to integrate all our marketing channels, from web to email to social media? Would it be possible without a tech-savvy team of marketers, who understood how to use the tools, crunch numbers and data? Clearly, a modern marketer can't do much without investing in tech and tools.

These investments are already paying off, according to the latest survey of the Association of National Advertisers. Top performers in the survey valued automation as a critical tool to deliver consistent and personalized customer experiences. They also understood the customer journey better than their peers and had better processes for capturing customer data and providing insights to their marketing programs. — *Matt Preschern, CMO, HCL Technologies*

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TOOLS AND FUNCTIONALITY

There's an accelerated rate of availability of new tools and applications for using data in marketing—and keeping up with this trend is one of the biggest limitations for marketers today, says Thornhill. From increased functionality from email service providers or CRM systems to tools that activate data insights in real time like BlueCore or IBM Watson, there's a seem-

ingly endless opportunity to expand the use of data.

But tools aren't everything; you need the right team to fully unlock the potential of those tools.

"Many marketers seem to be doing the best they can with the team that they have available," says Thornhill. "My sense is that new technology and data accessibility has increased the productivity of marketers—but that has been a double edged sword,

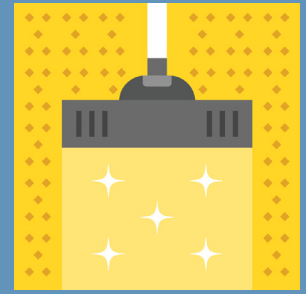
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DUMP DIRTY DATA

IS YOUR DATA TOXIC? HERE'S 6 STEPS TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR DATA QUALITY

- 1. Profile your data.** Data profiling determines if your data is accurate and complete. This involves generating and collecting statistics used to identify data patterns and formats, and evaluating the structure and quality of data. There are three levels of data analysis in profiling: general formatting, content and field analysis. General formatting determines if data (names, email addresses, postal codes, etc.) are input as expected; content analysis applies reference data to determine the consistency of expected content; and field analysis determines the presence of duplicate records.
- 2. Clean up your act.** Implement data verification tools into all your access points—call center, web forms, data entry, etc. These cleansing tools will verify, correct, standardize, and update your contact data in real-time to ensure only valid information enters your database.
- 3. Get it right at the start.** Address errors often lurk in your file because of data entry errors like typos, misspellings or missing ZIP codes. These errors can result in undeliverable mail, waste and duplicate records. Address verification is such a critical part of your data detox process.
- 4. Update stale contact data.** Experts say up to 2% of records in a customer file become obsolete in just one month, as customers die, divorce, marry or move. In fact, 17% of Americans (45 million people) change addresses each year, according to the USPS. If you aren't cleaning your contact data regularly, you are losing contact with some of your best customers, and compromising the accuracy and usefulness of contact information used

for communications, analytics, and compliance. NCOA-Link is one approved USPS updating method that will qualify your mail for postal discounts, and it's unique because it's the only process that will update your records before you mail – preventing wasted postage and production costs.



- 5. Eliminate duplicate records.** About 10% of names and addresses in an average database are duplicate records. This can be costly, and prevent you from having a single, clear view of your customers, which is necessary for accurate analytics, segmentation and targeting. For instance, you might have a list that contains 100,000 records and you want to mail postcards. With production and postage costs averaging 83 cents per piece, your total mailing costs would be \$83,000. If 10% of your list is made up of duplicates, you are wasting \$8,300 every time you mail.
- 6. Enhance your data.** Adding critical pieces of information to your database, such as email addresses and phone numbers, can help your omnichannel efforts. For instance, adding missing email addresses to your postal list for a combined email and direct mail campaign can improve response rates by almost 30%, recent studies have shown. Also, adding vital demographic, firmographic, lifestyle and geographic information—such as marital status, household income, occupation, latitude and longitude coordinates, company name, number of employees—helps you gain deeper insight into your customers. —Source: Melissa Data's "The Data Detox: From Dirty Data to Healthy Companies"

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creating more complex and sophisticated expectations without an increase in resources to manage those programs. The single most valuable investment an in-house marketer can make is creating a network of advisors."

Many organizations, especially in B2B, leverage marketing automation solutions to get more out of their data. The capabilities of marketing automation systems to do things like progressive profiling are undeniable, says Huff. But, she says, marketers need to make their all their systems—automation, CRM, sales and everything in between—communicate.

"For example, we commonly see requests to build interfaces for non-technical marketers to create advanced automation in email programs," says Thornhill. "To do this, there are commonly a series of

communications between the core CRM system, the email service provider, and the interface to simplify the customization process. Changes can affect all three of these implementations, creating additional risk for system failure or additional development to create enhancements."

DATA IN CONTEXT

Ultimately, marketers need to consider the structure of their marketing data. "The overall context of how data is formatted is critical," says Thornhill.

One of the more common examples of this is in lifecycle versus more complex messaging in email marketing programs, he says. When a lifecycle message, such as a "welcome" series, is created time and individual customer attributes are major fac-

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SPECIAL DELIVERY

HOW ARE YOU GETTING YOUR DATA?

A recent study shows that PowerPoint is still the dominant data report delivery method for marketers.

Despite their many misgivings about PowerPoint, respondents noted that it allows for written analysis and is their standard format since they've always done it that way. Still, more than half of agency clients want to use dashboards.

The report, "Data Delivery and Insights Reporting," was conducted for Dapresey by Cido Research and Voxco. The 320 respondents—corporate and agency directors and above—noted positive attitudes about dashboards, including the fact that they make distribution easier; provide visual and flexible reporting; enable improved efficiency and turnaround times; and allow for visual/flexible reporting.

Interestingly, although study participants said that a majority of clients are seeking alternatives to PowerPoint, converting to dashboard or digital delivery has barriers to overcome. These include the fact that many agencies feel dashboards are too expensive or require too much work, seeing them as limiting ad hoc needs, believing they may not allow them to provide insights through written analysis and do not see a need to change to something unknown when stakeholders aren't asking for them.

So, what are the barriers to adoption, and how can they be overcome?



Too expensive: According to a recent presentation by Lieberman Research, if you break down all costs, online dashboards are nearly 40% less expensive to produce and deliver than Pow-

erPoint. This includes one-third less cost for data management and about one-half the cost for project management analysis and reporting.

Initial training and implementation is required when using an online dashboard platform, which may increase the initial implementation cost. Once up and running it can deliver faster turnaround times, something that study participants acknowledged they wanted. Online dashboards automate tasks and increase quality. If an error is discovered or a weight has to be recalculated, dashboard options can fix it throughout the entire report by replacing the data or formula in seconds, not hours.

Ad hoc needs: While all types of tracking, syndicated and repetitive research (concept tests, for example) are seen as a fit for dashboards, researchers and their clients also use them for ad hoc, path to purchase, customer journey and customer experience management. Typically, reporting can be prepared during fieldwork, which significantly shortens delivery time.

Written analysis: Topline and detailed findings are easily incorporated into online dashboards, and those observations can be hyper-linked to specific findings within the report. For those delivering a comprehensive Word document, study participants were unaware that by simply cutting and pasting the findings from online dashboards, they could quickly and efficiently achieve the written analysis that they sought. With dynamic filters, insight professionals can drill down into the data to a level they need.

Inertia: This barrier is common to almost every new innovation. Think about the adoption curve for online research, communities or DIY tools. Why change when no one is asking for it? The answer, of course, is that change is always hard. I'm seeing a shift in thinking and it won't be long before digital reporting and dashboards are competing head-on with PPT. — *Rudy Nadilo, president, North America, Dapresey*

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tors. Conversely, when a complex message strategy leverages data to present a range of impacts and options in a single message it's often necessary to access sales data and internal information like pricing or product specifications, in addition to customer insight information.

"Compared to five or 10 years ago, marketing has made leaps and bounds in the amount of data it is

collecting," says Huff. "But, there's still a long way to go when it comes to optimizing that information." ❗



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