

It's time to act: Adopt new data strategies for better marketing

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Marketers have been collecting and talking about data for decades. But something new has happened in the last few years: the volume and variety of data has exploded. Data is no longer rare and hard to gather. It's everywhere and many brands can't keep up.

At the same time, customer expectations have gone through the roof. Today, people expect a deeply relevant and useful experience from brands at every micro-moment of their customer journeys.

This one-two punch has created a new urgency. Brands can't afford to sit on piles of data any longer. At best, they'll lose those impatient customers. (People who have a negative brand experience on mobile are 62% less likely to purchase from that brand in the future.)¹ At worst, they'll lose the race to survive in the ever-changing marketplace.



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Source: Econsultancy/Google, "Customer Experience is Written in Data", May 2017, U.S. (n=677 marketing and measurement executives at companies with over \$250M in revenues, primarily in North America; n=199 leading marketers who reported marketing significantly exceeded top business goal in 2016, n=478 mainstream marketers (remainder of the sample).

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To use your data, you have to master your data. “We believe data is our oil, our gold,” said Rob Roy, chief digital officer at Sprint. “But having hundreds of millions of terabytes of data that isn’t actionable really does nothing for me.”

That's where [building a strong data strategy](#) comes in. Leaders are using this new kind of blueprint for success to effectively gather and manage the right data, [enable everyone to access and analyze the information](#), and integrate the right technologies to put audience insights into action.

Respect the data

At Sprint, [Roy's digital team](#) works closely with the customer relationship team as well as people in their network and prepaid businesses. “Once we showed those teams some very interesting and actionable data, those teams’ leaders took it to the CEO, unbeknownst to us. It was very well-received, and once he saw it—then the floodgates opened,” Roy said. More support and interest in using data insights to support decisions followed.

Respect for data is a hallmark of leading marketers. In fact, these leaders—those who exceeded their business goals last year—are 56% more likely to strongly agree that decisions backed by data are superior to those based on gut instinct and experience.²



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For marketers still [dealing with data challenges](#) like lack of integration and organizational silos, extracting value from vast stores of information may seem like a daunting task. But it only takes one insight to strike gold. Of course, there will be missteps and [failure along the way](#). But look at it as a learning experience and take a page from Roy's book: "If we're not failing [some of the time], we're not pushing the envelope hard enough," he said.

Build your own strategy

How does your business develop its own data strategy? It's an evolving process, not a one-time sprint to the finish line, but a long-distance race dotted with technical and human hurdles.

But businesses that start investing in a robust strategy and proprietary infrastructure now can set themselves up for a win in the long run. Here are a few keys to success.

Prepare for the human hurdles

When you set out to [train employees in data analysis](#) and action, you'll probably do all the logical things: set up classes, post docs and videos, provide training on your data and marketing platforms. All of that's good—keep it up. But it's also important to address the "three lacks":

- **Lack of confidence.** Data storytelling is an art; it's hard to learn and hard to do. Your team may hesitate to even attempt it. But if technology can begin to find and surface insights automatically, you're halfway to a good result.
- **Lack of trust.** "Why should I stick my neck out?" That's the eternal human question. Emphasize to your team that you'll back them up, and encourage them to keep a clear trail of the data that led them to a particular decision or hypothesis for an experiment. Succeed or fail, that data trail will be a valuable learning tool for the next go-round.

- **Lack of time.** Making the most of data takes daily time and commitment. Yes, finding free time is always a problem in business. But people who have zero time are guaranteed to ignore valuable data.

Plan for action

Though the data journey is long, the start can be simple and brisk: Articulate a vision. That's how Jeff Rasp kicked off a data-driven transformation at Bayer.

As director of digital strategy for the U.S. consumer health division, Rasp had a vision of what Bayer needed to build. He wanted to measure across channels and see the full customer journey. That vision and strategy were set first, then it was followed by an audit and assessment of platforms to see if they could in fact help teams meet their goals and objectives.

Not only do leaders have a data and analytics strategy, but leading marketers are 33% more likely than the mainstream to say that strategy defines how they integrate data and related technologies.³



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Now, a couple of years later in its journey, Bayer is seeing the value of its connected system. “We’re just getting our arms around what we’ve built and leaning into it,” said Rasp.

With a technology platform that allows them to see end-to-end across consumer engagement, Bayer sees better performance of media because it can deliver more relevant messages to consumers based on their behaviors.

In a world where consumer behaviors can change on a dime, an integrated data strategy provides marketers with a steady foundation to weather those sometimes seismic shifts. Once your data house is in order, you can more easily uncover audience insights and adapt your plan of action so you continue to meet their expectations.

Download [The Data-Driven Marketer’s Strategic Playbook](#) for more best practices and tips on building your integrated data and analytics strategy.

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Sources

- 1-3** Econsultancy/Google, "Customer Experience is Written in Data", May 2017, U.S. (n=677 marketing and measurement executives at companies with over \$250M in revenues, primarily in North America; n=199 leading marketers who reported marketing significantly exceeded top business goal in 2016, n=478 mainstream marketers (remainder of the sample)).