

A man with glasses and a white shirt, wearing an orange Home Depot apron, stands in a hardware store aisle. The apron has several patches, including a '10 Years' anniversary patch, a 'CUSTOMERS FIRST' patch, and a name tag that says 'Hi, my name is MIKE'. The background shows shelves stocked with various hardware items like tools and paint cans.

The Home Depot Canada's VP of Marketing and e-Commerce on curiosity and building a data-driven culture

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The Home Depot didn't become one of Canada's most successful DIY and contractor destinations overnight. Here, Michael Rowe, VP of Marketing and e-Commerce, offers his advice on fostering a data-driven culture and shifting measurement mind-sets within your organization.

think with **Google**





joined [The Home Depot](#) Canada as VP of Finance in 2006 and have since moved to marketing. I'm a numbers guy, so applying data-driven principles to my current role as VP of Marketing and e-Commerce comes naturally. These are both very analytical fields, so they play well to my background as a problem-solving and opportunity-finding leader.

At The Home Depot, we focus on delivering the best customer experience possible. Our ability to provide our customers with the crucial product or project information they need is tied to our ability to interact with them as marketers.

A balanced approach to measurement

We measure a lot at The Home Depot, and we've found that it's important to strike the right balance between the metric and the insight. Our ability to access vast amounts of data today is exciting, but we still have to filter out the noise and home in on what's actionable. Below are a few tips that can help you do just that:

The Home Depot's data sources

-  Internal reporting
-  Test & control methods
-  Customer insights
-  Vendor information

Don't rely on one source. We often uncover our best insights when we triangulate our data—whether it pertains to internal reporting, test and control methods, customer insights, or vendor information. Try multiple sources and tie that together with the different data sets you have. Make sure you take metrics down to root causes (i.e., the x [cause] that leads to the y [result]). Understand not only the result, but also what brings you there, and then find a way to visually represent it so that it's simple and easy to understand.

Work cross-functionally. With everyone working towards common objectives, we can glean valuable insights from our teams cross-functionally. We're pleased to have a small but growing central analytics team that uses machine learning and visualization software to quickly communicate media recommendations to our business partners. At my level, I look for associates and our partners to come in with a sense of expertise or to make recommendations with their data. I always ask what they'd like to do and encourage proposals. It's a culture of empowerment.

Testing leads to learnings and growth

Working with partners like Google can help you better understand the role digital plays in empowering customers to make offline purchases. Today's consumers browse in both digital and physical spaces before becoming customers, so their experiences need to be positive at every touchpoint. Our test and control methods helped us further analyze this trend and draw stronger links between searches and in-store sales.

Because of online browse and purchase histories, in-store e-receipts, tool rentals, and special order histories, we can better understand the needs of our customers and eventually deliver more personalized messages to them. Scaling learnings from our tests will allow us to more often meet our customers' needs at the speed of thought—right after they search for a product. These insights contribute to our positive results and growth as well as help inform our future investments.

Leading a data-driven marketing culture

We have a nimble team that has embraced the organization's culture—which calls for our associates to think entrepreneurially, outside the box, and of new ways to propel our sales growth. By leveraging data from different departments and channels and even third parties, we've enabled new tools for our organization across merchandising, supply

chain, e-commerce, and marketing. This data allows us to get further into the decimal places than we could in the past, enabling us to make much more informed decisions.

My advice? Be curious. Don't accept the way things have always been done. Be open to change—and make change itself a competency. Successful marketers have the desire to ask why, and they don't get stuck in the traditional means of selling and attracting customers. Be a lifelong learner, and recognize that both the path to purchase and the customer experience are ever changing.



Michael Rowe

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