

For brands that earn consumers' trust - and hence their customers' approval for their data to be used for enhanced

engagement - this is a great opportunity to create value. Equipped with rich, real-time context-bound information about what their customers are doing, brands will be able to understand customers at a deep level and respond to their needs.

But to take advantage of this opportunity, businesses will need to give a lot of thought to how they gather, use and manage customer data. Critical will be providing customers with incentive to share contextual data. That means companies must show they can be trusted with consumer information and that they will use the data in a way that benefits their customers.

## Personalised engagements

Furthermore, there are many process and systems challenges that the average brand will face in collecting and making the most of this consumer data. They will need to put in place solutions that will enable them to gather and make sense of unprecedented amounts of customer data being generated, in an integrated fashion.

That means going beyond using data collected from digital channels and tools to leveraging this information to deliver truly personalised and relevant engagements with customers. Each customer interaction is context-sensitive and seen as an opportunity to deliver more meaningful engagements and influence with the audience.

Owning and understanding data is really about ownership of the audience, which is why companies who collect the cleanest, most relevant and most up to date audience data they can, plus show why consumers should be willing to share their information. Those that get it right will build a strong competitive advantage for themselves.

## ABOUT RICHARD MULLINS

Richard Mullins is the director at Acceleration. He opened Acceleration's Johannesburg office in 2000 and has played an instrumental role in the growth of Acceleration in South Africa.

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