

Marketing teams must activate data insight in 2020 or be left behind



By [Roan Mackintosh](#)

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Companies are tripping up in their attempts to embrace the opportunities of digital transformation. Creating great customer journeys relies on the smart use of available data. But this can only take place when you have transformed your organisation in order to produce, analyse and activate your data insights.



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Previously, when everything was about products, marketing was just a function to get the product information out there. Now, as brands focus on understanding their consumers and what they actually want, it's more about creating an enticing customer journey and so it's less about marketing and more about creating and fostering customer relationships.

Fortunately, the old idea that the marketing department is just another cost centre is being revised. As business leaders begin to realise that the customer needs to be brought closer to the company, they are also understanding that the marketing department must be brought closer to the operational centre of the organisation.

The function of getting the message to the customer, of course, still requires some traditional outbound marketing. But we now also need to get feedback in order to have a proper conversational relationship with our customers.

Digital transformation requires a revolution, of thought and structure

By necessity, marketing has also become more reactive. Gone are the days of setting up a media plan and leaving it unrevised for the next 6 to 12 months. We need to be adaptive and reactive with data informing us how to activate our strategy. To meet this need, we have to shift the way our organisations are structured and, unfortunately, not a lot of people are doing this well.

This is largely due to the fact that the siloed organisational structure still dominates. The business intelligence and the IT teams remain on the outskirts of marketing operations, often with little meaningful interaction with the marketing department at all. And even within marketing, product silos mean that customer insight isn't shared enough.

We believe these departments need to be much closer together and, during 2020 and beyond, we see the role of chief data officer playing an important bridge between departments in companies that understand the importance of data-informed digital transformation.

The challenge is that this is a completely different operating model. Leaders looking to structure their teams for success going forward require the elimination of the silo mentality. When once we had brand managers responsible for individual products or brands working independently from the rest of the organisation, with little or no sharing and the only contact with the IT team being when a new product landing page is required; now we need teams working together regularly towards an enterprise-level goal and adapting based on feedback across the departments.

The same type of thinking is seen when you look at how companies work with their agencies. We still have a fairly regimented approach - i.e. two or three major campaigns a year, each with a single big concept, a single-brief engagement with agency and then straight on to developing a linear strategy in January that is then systematically rolled out over the year and never questioned again.

What is really needed is a far more iterative, granular and responsive environment where CMO and agency are able to react to real-time data. What's more, with many companies wanting to take functions inhouse, they will often look for one person to handle all things digital. They may turn to a person who handles social media, for example and expect them to now manage all digital aspects, including search and display which are fundamentally different channels, each with their own nuances.

This linear thinking is setting the organisation up for failure.

CDO and CMO the new power couple

As the decade progresses, the role of the chief data officer will become more integral to the organisation. They will articulate the business value of data. By setting up formats and governance about how data is processed the CDO can ensure the data is used more effectively.

However, the real challenge is to ensure that the CDO is well integrated into the marketing department, that they understand the requirements and needs of the advertising and marketing campaigns and, most importantly, how data can improve the customer journey.

To achieve this, organisations will need to change their culture. Digital and marketing leaders will need to drive this new data-driven approach, working with stakeholders in the company to reframe the business problems and show how data can be used to solve them. It is a data-led revolution that needs a champion.

During the next decade, expect the CDO and CMO to dramatically increase in importance as, together, they activate data insights and ultimately bring brands closer to their consumers.

ABOUT ROAN MACKINTOSH

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