

Marketers, turn your data literacy into a data superpower

By [Denise Persson](#)

22 Jul 2021

The concept of data literacy didn't exist when I started my career in marketing in the mid-1990s. We had few marketing channels, all of which were offline, and we had to track them manually in spreadsheets. We distributed leads to our sales team on a floppy disk. We sent coupons to prospects, and every day I had to go to the mailbox to see which coupons came back filled out. As scarce as it was, data was still extremely important back then.



Denise Persson, chief marketing officer at Snowflake

Today, marketers have access to a massive amount of data through multiple channels, both offline and online. New channels are constantly emerging, and each becomes its own data track. However, all of that data goes into different applications and systems, making it very difficult to get a complete picture of what is really going on.

We are all striving to reach a real-time, 360-degree view of customers. This is the foundation for personalisation, timing and relevance: how do you send the right offer to the right prospect at the right time?

The more you can master the timing and the relevance, the greater impact you're going to have with your marketing investments. With inaccurate or incomplete data, you get a skewed picture of potential consumers. If you create the wrong offers at the wrong time, all of your marketing will go to waste. Researchers Rex Briggs and Greg Stuart looked at more than \$1bn of marketing spend by 30 major corporations, and found that 47% of the advertising campaigns didn't work. That's 53% of marketing spend wasted.



Why personalisation in digital marketing matters

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So how do you reduce the waste and increase the return? It comes down to data literacy — how well you can read, work

with, scrutinise and communicate with data. If you have access to all of the data, and the ability to analyse and make smart decisions based on it, then your marketing efforts will likely succeed.

The challenge of fragmented data

In a recent [survey](#), 36% of company leaders said that of all of their departments, sales/marketing showed the best performance in utilising data-driven insights for strategic purposes.

But over the past two decades, marketers have faced an uphill battle in trying to be data-driven. A proliferation of marketing tools are now used to engage customers over complex customer journeys. Customers expect to have a seamless experience across an ever-expanding set of channels. And organisations face an explosion of data, all stored in silos, that need to be integrated in order to derive insight and smart decisions.

All of these trends have created fragmented data, which is a major barrier to data-driven insights. In a [2020 report](#), 47% of executives surveyed said their top digital customer experience challenge was “siloes systems and/or fragmented customer data.”

Thanks to recent developments in cloud and advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), we're finally entering an age of integrated data. We can now access and analyse all the relevant data available to gain a complete view of customers and tie our marketing investments to business outcomes. This represents the biggest transformational moment for marketers since the birth of digital marketing in the 1990s. It's a bigger step-change than social media.

While technology tools in 2021 allow marketers to connect with customers and prospects with 10 times the precision and business impact, the art of applying these new tools is what separates good companies from great companies. Over the past five years, I've been able to use data to do things I couldn't previously imagine. I've also had the opportunity to advise CMOs at customer organisations about how to use data to transform their marketing organisations and businesses.

Here's my advice to others:

- **Establish clear marketing objectives and metrics**

It's important to create a strong foundation for all stakeholders to build upon. In marketing, that entails setting goals and tracking progress. One of our key objectives at Snowflake is to become the industry's most insights-driven marketing team. We developed two key metrics to measure our results: predictable pipeline generation and growth efficiency. Our goal is to build scalable tools and models to drive efficient growth and proactive actions. To support this, we put a lot of work into predicting real-time return on investment to optimise our marketing programmes and disrupt aged B2B marketing analytics practices.

- **Develop a complete picture of your customer**

Tear down your data silos to understand your full range of customer data. Take DoorDash, which broke down data silos to generate a 360-degree view of all of their customers, powering their marketing analytics and allowing them to provide a more personalised experience.



Don't become obsolete. Look to your CMO to remain relevant

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Prioritise access to the most strategic data sets available for your business. With real-time, granular insights into product sales and customer demographics, marketers can graduate from stale, weeks-old reports to instant intelligence on customers.

- **Turn your love/hate relationship with IT into a winning partnership**

To align objectives and priorities around being data-driven, marketing needs to establish close relationships with IT and business stakeholders. This needs to be a strategic objective, very much like a mandate. Otherwise, it's not going to work. All teams need to follow a clear roadmap to drive the execution, and communicate regularly. At PepsiCo, IT took time to understand the objectives of marketing, then created an advertising ROI Engine which turned 60-plus data across marketing, sales and third-party entities into market insights and predictive models that could be shared frequently, internally and externally.

- **Become a master of the data**

Marketers also need to know how to gain control of the data to amplify their own efforts. Marketing is a big investment, and marketers need to be able to demonstrate how that investment is turning into profit for the company. Success is based on how effectively you support the growth of your company, and the only way you can prove that is through data. So having the mastery of data in your skill set is vital for marketers.



Make flexibility key to every successful marketing strategy

James Bayhack 21 Jul 2021



Once you establish and track your objectives, eliminate data silos, bring all of your data together and develop the competencies needed to access it, analyse it and achieve insights, you can reach a holistic view of customers and deliver a tailored 360-degree customer experience. You can develop a clear picture of attribution and marketing-spend ROI. You can activate data in real time to create highly targeted, effective campaigns. And, eventually, you can unleash the power of data science products using machine learning and AI to optimise your campaigns. At that point, your data literacy will become a data superpower.

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