

#UJMarketingFit EXPERIENCE WHITE PAPER

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The Future
Reimagined

DATA IN MARKETING

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#UJMarketingFit Experience

White Paper

DATA IN MARKETING

"In God we trust; all others bring data. No one should trust anything that is not backed by data" - William Edwards Deming

"It is not how you look at the data- it is what you see" - Anonymous

Data needs buy-in from the top

We all talk data- it is a huge buzz word. But are C-suites truly investing in data empowerment, or are they just paying it lip service? The sentiment from marketers is the latter. There is a lot of talk about data and lots of claims to be using it; but without the proper investment in the people, teams, and infrastructure to analyse data successfully, very few proper analyses can be done. Marketers need the buy-in and commitment from the C-suites to invest in the resources needed to effective data analyses. Sell the true value of data, and explain how this can inform the marketing discipline and help to move the bottom-line to get the C-suites on your side.

Data consolidation and integration

In most cases with large corporates, data lies in different places or departments. So a strategy to integrate and consolidate the data from across departments is essential. Cleaning data and marrying different systems that host different data sets takes time. It is therefore imperative to manage management's expectations. It can easily take from three weeks to three months-or even longer - to combine the large data sets, depending on the volume, complexity, and different systems on which the data is hosted. Working closely and building good relationships with your IT department is therefore also essential.

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Back your assumptions with

Marketing is not an exact science. So marketers often follow their gut and have to make assumptions about the market based on their experience, and come up with hypotheses. However, in a world filled with endless data, these assumptions should always be tested and backed with data; and marketers should be open to learn and accept when conflicting results and new insights appear.

It's not the data - it's the insights

From a marketing point of view, your average marketer profile ranges between the extremely creative and left brainer. The idea, therefore, is not to turn marketers into data scientists- for that there are data scientists. Rather, marketers need to develop skills of visualisation and interpretation, and to understand the analysed data.

While every marketer will benefit from an advanced Excel course, coding skills or knowing Hadoop or R are all a "good to have", but not a must. Every marketer should rather be able to take data and come up with an insight. Data analysis can be done by the specialists; but to obtain the insights and to then develop the right strategy to make an impact is where the true challenge and skills shortage lies.

Marketers, upskill!

Data paralyses

In interpreting data, a first step is to ask the right questions. Large data sets can be overwhelming, and so a gradual introduction from the findings is recommended. Be careful of data paralysis. In many cases with large data sets, one often only needs 10 per cent of the data. The key is to know where the sweet spot is, and to identify when your sample is robust enough. If you don't have a cut off, big data can literally cause you to spend days on analysis and interpretation. Life moves on, and you need to as well. Reach saturation and rather get insights from it, make a call and contribution, and move on, rather than fixating on more and more and more.

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Similarly, the C-suites that supported the data initiative will likely want to know everything that you could possibly find out. This can be just as overwhelming to them. Manage what you communicate and share with them. Even the marketer cannot react to every single data finding, so rather stick to the questions developed in terms of what you want to find out. Search for a few key nuggets, and work with these, introduce them to management, and explain how this will move the bottom line - and continue this process into the future.

Sometimes a good old focus group is all that is needed

It can happen - and has happened - to companies that the data reveals insights that marketers just cannot explain. When this happens, don't hesitate to use traditional marketing research tools. Invite respondents for a focus group or do in-depth interviews to clarify your insights. Using a combination of marketing tools, and particularly applying mixed methods research (qualitative and quantitative), will always add the most value to any research project.

Data governance

Once data integration processes have been developed, it is imperative to develop policies on data access, sharing, and protection. The South African market seems to handle data carelessly - and this needs to stop. Respect and protect your data. Customer data is an essential element of 21st century business, but the process of keeping it safe and private is becoming increasingly difficult; and laws like the Protection of personal Information Act (POPIA) are becoming a stark reality to face. POPIA is regarded as a new stage in the evolution of data protection, demanding significantly more accountability and transparency in the processing of personal data. This is no longer just an issue for the CMO or the CIO, but indeed the responsibility of the entire C-suite. Three key elements influence an individual's propensity to share their data: trust in the brand, the "value exchange", and the customer experience. The rule is clear: don't be creepy, and don't disrespect the privacy of your customers' information. Be sure to develop and adhere to strict data policies in your organisation that are POPIA-compliant.

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Get data MarketingFIT

In summary: get the C-suite buy in and the right resources. Develop your ability to interpret the data and discover insight from it. Stick to your research question, and rather obtain a few key nuggets of information that can immediately move the bottom line than fall into the trap of data paralysis.

Don't hesitate to use other marketing research tools to expand your big data insights: the best research uses a mixed methods approach - qualitative and quantitative input. Respect your data and your customers' privacy, keep it safe, and adhere to POPIA.



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