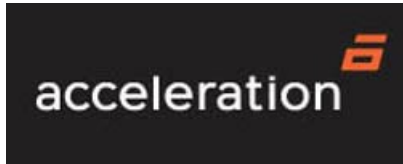


# Managing big data key to understanding value chain

Top line finding from the Acceleration's Digital Ignition Symposium 2013, held from 4-5 June 2103, is that data is the marketer's most important commodity, in a world where companies are managing customer relationships across multiple channels, screens and touch points.



Speakers at the event stressed that it is becoming increasingly important in a fragmented and complex consumer landscape to leverage data from multiple touch points to understand the value chain and customer journey. By analysing and acting on this data, organisations can exponentially improve their customer experience and sustain a competitive advantage.

Sketching the scene, [Acceleration](#) MEA director Richard Mullins said that the industry is seeing a massive shift in media consumption patterns and devices in the consumer market, along with disruption of distribution and revenue value chains by new competitors. In this environment, the organisations that master data management and analysis are the ones who will maintain a competitive advantage.

## No customer journey is alike

Axel Schaefer, responsible for EMEA product marketing at Adobe, told delegates that in a world where customers access multiple channels (voice, TV, digital, stores) across multiple screens (TV, mobile, PC), no two customer journeys are alike.

Organisations therefore should use multichannel analytics to combine data from diverse channels into a single customer-centric view that empowers analysts and marketers to find answers quickly to critical enterprise business questions. This will enable organisations to optimise marketing programmes against budget, goals, and business metrics.

Empowered with the right data, organisations can tie objectives for digital channels to business outcomes. For example, social media can be measured against the business objective of reducing costs through lower call centre volumes by using percentage of queries resolved via social media as a KPI.

## Creating unified customer profiles

The ultimate goal for organisations should be to work towards creating a unified consumer profile, said Steven Plimsoll, chief technology officer at the WPP Data Alliance and Mindshare Worldwide.

Companies have the opportunity to feed this profile with data collected at every point of interaction with the customer, be it online or offline. This understanding of the consumer forms the foundation of an engaged value exchange-based relationship.

The trend of leveraging customer data will demand significant investment in marketing technology. He cites statistics from Gartner predicting that by 2017 the CMO will spend more on IT than the CIO. He warned, however, that companies should start their strategies with the business and users in mind rather than seeing data as an end in itself.

## Future needs increased data skills

Mullins said that CMOs and CIOs would need to work closely together to ensure the organisation is positioned to drive the maximum value from its customer data. One of the most important aspects will be to put a data management platform in place that brings real-time data to one location for a single view of the customer, he added. The data does not come only from online sources, but also from point of sale, contact centres, and so on.

This data should be analysed, segmented and modelled in real-time to enable real-time targeting across channels such as ad-servers and email. It must also be leveraged to make forecasts of the future and report on historical success.

Looking to the future, Mullins believes that growing awareness of data will increase value and that data usage will drive strategy and new skills requirements. But consolidation of data platforms and an increase in data skills will help companies to manage the challenges of data-driven marketing in the years to come.

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