

How Marketers Can Manage Data Better for a Single Customer View

Author : Kevin Dean

Date : April 6, 2016



Seven Data Questions Execs Should Ask Their Digital Marketing Teams

Today, with **digital marketing** at the forefront of many company **marketing** strategies, the deceptively simple concept of the "single customer view" has taken the **marketing** and sales world by storm. Driven in part by a need to ensure maximum ROI from **digital marketing** programs, the single customer view (essentially an aggregation of all data about the customer) is also credited with enhancing customer service, creating new sales and cross-selling opportunities, finding new customers and of course driving sales.

Companies are collecting such a high volume of data, executives might be lulled into thinking that they already have what they need to create a single customer view, and further, that their customer data is helping to move the **marketing** needle. Eighty-one percent of marketers say that they have trouble achieving a single customer view, and over half of marketers from enterprise **brands** see effective linkage as the main barrier to creating a truly cross-channel **marketing** strategy, according to [new research from Experian](#).

So before signing off on that next big **digital marketing** program, here are seven data questions executives should be asking their **digital marketing** teams to ensure that they are moving closer to the goal of the single customer view:

1. **How good is the data for this campaign?** The data part of any campaign deserves just as much attention as the strategy and ideas behind it. Bad data can lead to an inability to communicate and even impact revenue with lost productivity and communications spend. The good news is that if marketers use successful tactics for generating accurate first-party **marketing** data, this valuable data set can provide a great deal of consumer insight on its own.
2. **How much time are we spending on validating the data?** Many organizations are so focused on data collection and management that the quality of that database gets put on the back burner. The irony is that without prioritizing quality, activating on all that data you're collecting becomes impossible. In short, companies need to slow down to ensure that they have the time to validate and cleanse the data.

3. **How close are we to the single customer view?** Ideally, the single customer view is a complete picture of the customer and their interactions with the company. This includes all relevant data pertaining to that customer, including contact information, preferences, as well as a deep understanding of the behaviors and buying preferences of any customer's particular cohort. So for example, if a company wanted to launch a promotion that rewards its most valuable customers, it would be critical to have an understanding of what the customer has bought, as well as any subsequent interactions regarding the product or service, such as comments via Twitter or online chats with a support representative.
4. **How do we deal with data we collect about our customers?** First-party data is what is provided to companies from their customers through a variety of systems and channels, such as CRM, **social** media, online sales, customer inquiries, etc. Yet data collection methods and responsibility for data accuracy is not shared across silos, leading to a lot of disparities. Companies need to work on developing consistent strategies for dealing with data, regardless of its source.
5. **Is our data "fit for use?"** Essentially, this question is about whether or not the data is appropriate for the campaign. So if the campaign is directed at soccer moms, the source of that data needs to be a place where this target really spends time, say in a department store website, not on an online-gaming platform. Often data is sourced inappropriately, and through the wrong channels, thus creating bad results when the program is launched.
6. **Are we using third-party data correctly?** Often, companies believe that they can "fix" all of their data problems with third-party data. Yet to be really effective, third party data has a different function. If first-party data is collected correctly and accurately, the need for third-party data shifts. It acts as a supplement, helping organizations to better understand and target their audiences. Third-party information gives marketers intelligence related to the motivations, beliefs, interests and preferences of consumers, including their own customer base. These data points can include things such as lifestyle characteristics, purchase influences, media habits and more. Third party data should be used to enrich in the right places.
7. **Validate, validate validate.** Especially when it comes to third-party data, companies must insist that the data they get is validated and tested. They should ask for performance metrics on the data, and ensure that it is on target and connected with their key audiences.

Marketing teams are under pressure to show that their campaigns are connected to real, actionable data. Activating campaigns on inaccurate data is costly and can be damaging. It is crucial that companies target their efforts in a way that does not alienate their customers or prospects. More marketers today have the means to extract actionable business intelligence from their data but realize that they need a complete customer view in order to do that effectively.

//