

Leveraging big data for better business decisions in marketing

 By Gary Allemann

5 Nov 2015

Big data and the benefits it can deliver for business is a hot topic, particularly for marketing departments where big data promises to deliver deeper customer insights, better business decision-making and improved return on investment. While the advantages of leveraging big data are multiple, many organisations struggle to come to grip with the added complexity it brings.



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The myth that poor quality data does not impact big data analytics has been debunked

Missing, inaccurate and disconnected data remain significant challenges that result in missed opportunities, even when using the more comprehensive data sets available with big data. This was one of the findings highlighted by a [recent survey](#) of senior marketing professionals sponsored by Trillium Software.

This issue is only exacerbated by the often-confusing combination of on-premise and cloud-based storage and back-end solutions. Addressing the data quality challenge is critical to enabling organisations to leverage the value of big data for enhanced marketing and business decisions.

Marketing can become more scientific by using quality big data to remove the guess work from questions such as "Where to focus my marketing spend?", "Which channels drive the optimal spend habits?", or "How often should I contact my customer?"

Linking insight into effective channels, interaction methods, timing and frequency to aspects such as advertising spend and customer buying behaviour can, for example, allow you to focus spending where it is proven to deliver desired results. New opportunities, new customers and new behaviour patterns can be identified, all of which can be used to enhance the return on your marketing investment.

Can this value be delivered without consolidating and grouping related data from multiple sources?

Accurate information is critical to assist marketers to answer the questions essential to driving improved business decision-making. With accurate data comes accurate insight into customers, their behaviours and the entire customer journey, helping marketers gain a better understanding of the big picture by providing fine detail. These details however need to be true, and data therefore must be trustworthy and accurate.

According to the survey, opportunities are being missed as a direct result of poor-quality data. The big data mixture of in-house and cloud systems, solutions, storage and applications only exacerbates the problem. Big data analytics increases the number of sources for mining customer data, adding further complexity.

Big data, if not harnessed effectively, offers greater volumes of data from more sources, changing quicker than ever, from which to make bigger, more significant mistakes. By its nature, big data brings added complexity to data management by exposing more data, and if the quality is poor or the source cannot be verified, the answers and insights provided cannot be trusted. Marketers today have access to more data than ever before, but this information is often scattered through multiple data siloes, making it difficult to unify. Without governance and a solid understanding of what data there is and why it is being used for analysis, as well as an assurance of the quality of the information, big data has limited value.

The all-important 'single view'

In an age where customers demand an unprecedented level of personalisation and competitiveness lies in an organisation's ability to deliver tailored offers at the right time in the right format through the right channel. Many marketers remain unable to access the all-important 'single view' of the customer, and need a way to access, understand and utilise all of the available insight that big data potentially holds.

ABOUT GARY ALLEMANN

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