



Mastering

TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES TO ALTER BOTH THE MARKETING LANDSCAPE AND THE DYNAMICS OF CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION. MARKETERS MUST MANAGE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY ACROSS MULTIPLE CHANNELS AND ADOPT APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS TO REACH CUSTOMERS VIA EACH CUSTOMER'S PREFERRED METHOD, SAYS ACXION'S JOANNE DOUGLAS.

and TNS Media Intelligence, many senior marketers confirm that their multichannel strategies are not working. Why? Respondents cite a lack of data integration, suitable metrics, case studies and technology.

The survey, taken in March, reported that 67 per cent of senior marketers are now running cross-channel campaigns. However, the growth of multichannel marketing is hampered by a serious concern; gaining access to all of the relevant data that exists in companies' systems.

There is also concern over a lack of suitable metrics to measure marketing campaign and strategy impact, and a lack of case studies highlighting the power of cross-channel marketing.

On top of this is the reality that companies are holding back from increasing their spend on digital marketing, largely due to a lack of awareness as to the true effects of digital applications in the multichannel marketing arena.

Streamline your strategies

Many companies have a strategy relating to television brand advertising. They also have a strategy for direct mail, one for e-mail, and another for other online activities, such as banners, search engine marketing and optimisation, and social media.

The extent of corporate coordination of these strategies is generally limited to allocating budgets to support each. This means that, rather than viewing the consumer as the central point and framing marketing budgets and strategies around the consumer, budgets and strategies are framed on a by-channel basis.

The problem with this method is that it treats all channels individually, negating the value of their potential combined effectiveness. The cause, and ongoing result, is a lack of understanding as to which channels work most effectively with which consumers. When the real power of multichannel marketing lies in knowing



Multichannel marketing makes us more effective and profitable.

The real power of multichannel marketing lies in knowing the right combination of channels needed to elicit the right response from the right consumer.

Cross-channel and multichannel marketing are more than buzzwords—they are a reality. Technology has evolved to make the potential customer more contactable than ever and far more responsive to persuasion. As marketers, we are called upon to manage and market to customers who are inundated with messages and offers from more directions than they can count.

If we are to vie for the customer's

attention and ensure our marketing does more than simply add to consumer clutter, we require communication strategies that are effective, yet simple. We need to not only consider how customers want us to reach them, but also allow customers to respond via their preferred channel, whether online, mobile, reply paid envelope or some other means. Furthermore, we must optimise the valuable customer information that we gather during this process to support our future efforts.

Multichannel marketing is undoubtedly a hot topic. Everyone is talking about it. I am inundated by emails on a daily basis inviting me to attend webinars, conferences, or download whitepapers on the subject. Unfortunately, discussing it and actually doing it—successfully, anyway—are two very different things. While many companies are trying to implement multichannel marketing strategies, in a recent study by US-based firms Eyeblaster

the multichannel

the right combination of channels needed to elicit the right response from the right consumer, this seems rather pointless.

When organisations structure their business around products or channels there is a lack of cohesive, enterprise-wide understanding of an individual customer's value, and his or her relationship to the business as a whole. The resulting communications strategies are also disjointed. The challenges for multiple departments working together for cross-channel marketing may include internal competition, coordinating with multiple service providers, and working with data from different sources or systems. In addition, online or digital marketing groups may operate using a different philosophy or approach to marketing than the more traditional groups.

Most organisations have bought into the notion that better information drives better decisions. This explains the growth of business intelligence software companies, web analytics firms, consumer data providers, behavioural targeting firms, and a host of others, each providing pieces of an overall solution. However, what has been generally lacking is a way to apply the lessons from one marketing channel to other channels, other individual consumers and businesses, other marketing applications, and pricing decisions. The data is likely to be available, but being held in separate databases or data sets, making such application impracticable.

In addition, the sheer variety of data by individual channel—IP addresses, household makeup, transactional information, campaign history, demographics, click patterns and much more—makes it difficult for companies to focus on optimising efforts towards a given consumer across multiple channels.

Data tells a story

Marketers are indeed challenged when delivering integrated messages across channels, most likely due to the growing number and complexity of those channels. Amid increased pressure to justify marketing expenditure it can be difficult to tell just how marketing activities impact on sales when data resides in a number of locations. Accessing and interpreting those large volumes of information can be an

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overwhelming task. As a result, customer and prospect information that is readily available for use is often actually sparse.

Let's say a current customer was sent an e-mail with a special pricing offer and responded by buying a cute skirt and matching top for their two year old daughter. For most organisations, the learning is limited to e-mail deliverability, click-through, conversion, and discount information. But if we let the data tell a story, what does it imply for other channels or cross-sells? For future pricing decisions? For others who "look like" that customer? People with similar patterns, behaviours or circumstances often respond to similar marketing offers.

In order to answer these questions the data needs to be readily accessible.

Many companies are striving to put it all together, but few are succeeding, mainly due to the relevant information residing in different databases. Until companies can make connections across customer behaviour, marketing channels, applications, pricing and more, they will remain stuck.

Centralise your solution

The technology does exist that can help to both integrate data held across multiple, diverse channels and clarify multichannel marketing strategies. So what are the key requirements of a multichannel marketing solution?

Any offering should be affordable, provide rapid customer insight and the visibility to drive the right business decisions. It should act to centralise customer and prospect data, manage channel proliferation and provide the ability to leverage new customer understanding.

Furthermore, the solution should provide accurate and timely results, and

enable you to clearly measure the success of your marketing campaign.

An effective cross-channel marketing solution combines customer and prospect data from multiple departments in a single repository for greater insight and contact strategies. All necessary tools and processes are available in one automated solution that works across all channels to provide a single view of each customer, including contact information and transactional history. Using a solution that combines previously piecemeal information, such as e-mail, online, direct mail, call centre and point of sale, makes it a simple matter to segment customers into groups based on actual knowledge of their behaviour. For example, high-value customers can easily be located and offered special incentives, while customers exhibiting similar behaviour can be nurtured into more valuable relationships.


With such a centralised view of customers it becomes simple for marketers to analyse customer data, perform segmentations for

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targeting purposes, and execute and manage automated campaigns.

Multichannel marketing makes us more effective, efficient and profitable. We're not there yet, but the bold future of multichannel marketing is on its way. There is no derailing the business drivers that push marketers to find the best ways to both reach potential buyers of their products and allow them to respond appropriately.

And there's no denying that consumers desire to be marketed to in a way that is relevant, meaningful and respectful of their preferences—which, for some, means no marketing at all. Included in those preferences are expressions of how, when and why individuals wish to be reached, and with what information or offer.

And here's another consideration: as consumers, the less targeted our marketing messages are, the more junk we will receive. Through *all* channels. 

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