

How brands can unlock the power of first-party customer data

By [Richard Mullins](#)

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Most companies are not driving as much value from the customer data in their customer relationship management (CRM) systems and other platforms as they could be, because of siloed technology architectures and organisational structures.



Richard Mullins

There is usually a gulf between the analytics teams that manage the data and activate the campaigns and the marketing team that focuses on customer acquisition. Often, the analytics team will create a segment, identify an opportunity, and trigger an activation such as an email, text message or alert on the app without consulting the marketing function.

The result is a transactional, tech-driven approach to engagement, with little focus on the customer experience – one where the process design focuses on customer acquisition to the exclusion of retention. Because it's missing the insights into customer behaviour from marketing, the engagement doesn't reach its full potential.

To change this picture, marketing and analytics teams need to work together far more closely. When they do, they quickly discover that they are working for the same cause. The behavioural insight from marketing and the data and technology capability of the analytics team enables the brand to deliver far richer interactions to its customers.



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By mapping customer behaviour back to user actions, the brand can get a better insight and optimise its engagements. Rather than relying on the traditional customer segmentation models used in mass media engagements, marketers can build lookalike customer profiles based on user behaviour and use that for more relevant and personalised customer

interactions.

This clears the way for the brand to minimise the wastage associated with targeting the wrong users or targeting customers with the wrong message, and to maximise the opportunity to deliver an experience that further the goals of customer acquisition or retention. This level of insight can help marketers to deliver the right engagement at every step of the customer journey

The challenge of exploiting customer data

Getting to this state is far from easy and many brands fail to appreciate the commitment and strategic focus it takes to tear down the siloes and engage with customers in a more holistic manner. There is the challenge of exploiting customer data while ensuring that the brand is sensitive to privacy concerns.

The organisation also needs to have the ability to track user behaviour across multiple channels and to pull data from multiple systems into a comprehensive view of the audience for granular segmentation. There are difficult debates to settle about data governance, data ownership and customer ownership.

It starts with getting the right stakeholders around the table to discuss what the organisation's systems, technical architecture and processes should look like in the future. Together, they can look at ways to move beyond silos, products and channels to focus on delivering relevant experiences to customers at scale.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Mullins is director for Europe, Middle East and Africa at Acceleration.

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