

Marketers Struggle To Link Digital Data To 'Big Data' Picture

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Lack of digital insight and internal data-sharing challenge companies

Marketers are abuzz over "Big Data" for its promise to deliver a more complete understanding of each customer, who can then be targeted with advertising tailored exactly to the individual.

But according to February 2012 research from Columbia Business School's Center on Global Brand Leadership and the New York American Marketing Association (NYAMA), organizational hurdles and barriers to data implementation were some of the biggest challenges to Big Data integration.

More than half (51%) of US marketers said their biggest "Big Data" challenge was the lack of sharing of data among company departments. In addition, despite the large quantity of data that marketers may acquire, 42% of respondents said it was still too difficult to tie that data back to individual customers, and 45% said personalizing marketing communications "closely related to linking data to customers" was a major challenge.

A good portion (39%) of marketers also reported difficulty collecting customer data fast enough "a mandatory requirement for brands hoping to achieve immediate message personalization. Similarly, September 2011 findings from web data monitoring firm Connotate stressed the importance of real-time data collection: 83% of US data-aggregation managers said timeliness and freshness of the marketing message were important web data characteristics.

Connotate found about a third (31%) of companies aimed to be able to collect customer data on a daily basis, and 12% expected to do so on an hourly basis. About a quarter (24%) said they would be satisfied with weekly data collection.

Columbia Business School and NYAMA also found the most popular data types collected by US marketers were demographic info (74%), customer transaction data (64%) and customer usage data (60%). Though digital channels are typically more robust sources of data, just 35% of marketers monitored social media content, 33% social network influencers and 19% customer mobile data. Difficulties implementing digital tracking or challenges tying digital data back to traditional ad channels could be causes of lower data collection activity.

Without the ability to integrate Big Data collection and usage processes, companies are certain to fall short in delivering a truly personalized customer experience integrated across ad formats and channels.

Such a mandate is of significant importance as consumers increasingly interact with brands across multiple channels and screens. Those who succeed first in using Big Data will have an edge over brands and marketers who are unable to tie information to action.

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