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ENGAGING MARKETING MINDS

JULY / AUGUST 2024

HARNESSING BIG DATA

ANALYTICAL ADVICE FOR MARKETERS

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EMBRACE THE GRIND

As the capabilities of large language models rapidly evolve, doubling every five to 14 months, it's natural to feel pretty overwhelmed. Yet it's crucial to remember that our fundamental role as marketers is to be exceptional listeners and empathetic to the needs of our markets. True innovation in marketing doesn't stem from the dizzying pace of technology but from a deep understanding of your clients' needs and ambitions.

Winston Churchill said, "It is no use saying, 'We are doing our best.' You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary." As we find ourselves in a world that is addicted to speed and self-interest, we must not lose sight of what marketing truly stands for. It's not about the relentless pursuit of profit; it's about service, about "embracing the grind," and doing what is necessary to forge genuine connections.

Remember, no matter how advanced our tools become, people still prefer to buy from brands they trust. This mission must drive our efforts, even as we navigate the buzz of AI and the launch of new models. It's easy to get caught up in the latest and greatest, but our primary focus should always be on engaging meaningfully with our audience. Listening, understanding, and building real relationships are at the heart of all successful marketing strategies.

We need discipline, patience, and a strong work ethic to thrive in this environment. More importantly, we must stay anchored to our higher purpose: engaging and supporting our communities. This connection is timeless and remains the essence of what marketing is all about.

Stay focused and enjoy our latest issue. Our cover story, "Harnessing Big Data," delves into how marketers can leverage big data to enhance relationships. And in our second feature, "Centricity," we emphasize the importance of customer-centric strategies in increasing brand loyalty and engagement. With a wonderful Q&A with Dr. Rajeev Papneja, this issue aims to stimulate new ideas while reminding us of why marketing minds are the cornerstone of doing business.

Warmest regards,



Gina Danner
CEO



09 *Collect. Analyze. Repeat.*

02 Feature	Centricity
06 Cover Story	Harnessing Big Data
10 Tactics	Strategies You Can Use
12 Q&A	Dr. Rajeev Papneja

connect

Publisher

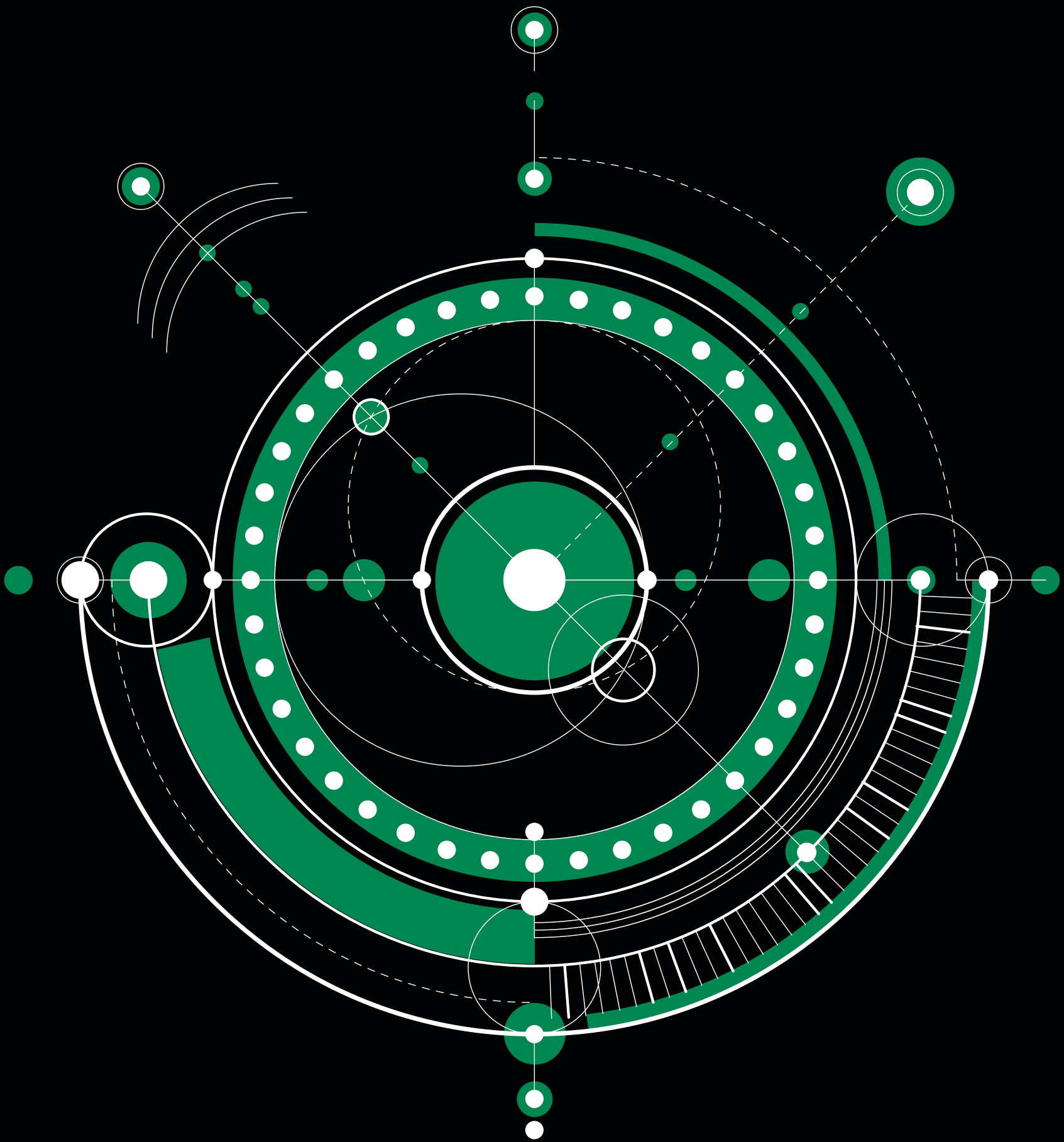
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Building a brand
around the customer

CENTRICITY

rik Huberman is the go-to guy. When the scores of high-profile brands (and celebrities) turn to him to turn heads, Huberman delivers the kind of results marketing aficionados can only dream of. Take his agency's work with a recent K-Swiss campaign. Hawke Media was tasked with turning the footwear and sportswear's electric social media engagement into ecommerce success.

When Huberman, CEO of Hawke Media, and his team sat down with K-Swiss executives, they discovered the brand was unsure of how to capture a new audience that would provide consistent, day-over-day sales. What the Hawke Media team identified was new potential customer audiences using a unique set of interests, focusing on customers seeking casual, comfortable shoes. Based on those audiences, Hawke

“WHEN THINGS GET HECTIC, EVERYONE KNOWS THE TOP PRIORITY IS STILL THE CUSTOMERS. THAT HELPS SOLIDIFY THE TEAM.” — JULIE BEE, FOUNDER AND AUTHOR, TJB MEDIA

Media curated product sets by gender and style (men's tennis, women's best-sellers, etc.) and matched them to a variety of audiences for prospecting ads.

By connecting the dots between what its customers (potential or existing) wanted and what they were actually buying worked. Sales on classic, core sizes immediately began to boom, helping K-Swiss boost its Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) by 485% in 40 days of its 90-day plan. "Securing deep insights into customer preferences and behaviors led to a tailored campaign that could achieve these numbers. The key is to use deep learning algorithms to analyze customer data and identify underlying patterns. You have to develop predictive models that inform content personalization and timing to maximize engagement and conversion rates."

A peek into Hawke Media's strategy shows that its customer-centric approach evolves from the need to offer more than generic marketing solutions. The philosophy hinges on crafting data-driven, bespoke strategies that align with each client's specific goals and market nuances.

Huberman says the shift is rooted in a deep understanding of its clients' industries and customer bases, supported by sophisticated analytical tools and agile response systems. "Implement advanced segmentation and predictive analytics to dynamically tailor your offerings. You have to learn how to utilize AI-driven customer behavior insights to anticipate needs and customize interactions at every touchpoint."

In a time when conversations are dominated by AI and non-AI strategies, the role of technology in enhancing customer-centric practices is set to become even more crucial. As a tech-integrated, AI-enabled marketing agency, Hawke Media is particularly focused on the advanced capabilities of AI and data analytics. For example, its Hawke AI platform, nearly a decade in the making, is central to its strategy.

"The platform provides deep audience insights and competitive analysis, enabling us to create highly targeted and effective marketing campaigns that anticipate customer needs and adapt to industry shifts," Huberman says. "It not only automates tasks and streamlines decision-making,

but also analyzes marketing and revenue data from more than 7,000 brands and \$500 million in ad spend. It operates in real time, adjusting to market movements and maintaining transparency across all major channels, thereby enhancing our customer-centric initiatives."

WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS SAY MATTERS

Through her coaching of business owners and entrepreneurs, Julie Bee has utilized the power of customer-centric approaches in a number of ways. For starters, her customers often are involved in the development of services and products. She does not hesitate to seek their input on new ideas, often asking them to try out new offers before anyone else does. They also get top priority in her inbox, which means she returns their emails, calls and texts first.

"I'm always looking for ways to help them, whether it's an article, a book or an introduction," says Bee, whose thought leadership insights have appeared in *Fast Company*, *Forbes*, among others. "In marketing, there's a lot of talk about staying top of mind. But for me, my clients are on the top of my mind most of the time. I think that's the main way the customer-centric strategy has evolved over time for me. I used to put my company's sales and operations before the customer, but now, the customer comes first."

The customer-centric approach, when initiated properly, offers a trickle-down effect in a variety of ways for your company by giving everyone on your team a singular priority—your customers. "When things get hectic, everyone knows the top priority is still the customers," says Bee, founder of TJB Media and author of "Burned," which discusses overcoming entrepreneurial burnout. "That helps solidify the team. We also celebrate our customers' wins. When they win, we win. That also improves employee engagement."

At Ecosense, a leading global provider of radon detection and





monitoring solutions, its customer-centric strategy begins with a simple question: “How can we make their lives easier?” Senior Marketing Manager Ksenia Kolyeva says the answer comes when you recognize that your customers span diverse segments. The key is to maintain a constant pulse on their requirements to stay abreast of their ever-evolving needs.

“To gauge the success of our customer-centric initiatives, we rely on several key indicators,” Kolyeva says. “First, we closely monitor our product reviews, as they provide valuable insights into customer satisfaction. But the ultimate affirmation comes when we receive referrals from satisfied customers, indicating their trust and endorsement of our service. Furthermore, our most gratifying rewards stem from direct engagement with our customers. Whether they’re sharing their experiences or actively participating in our initiatives—such

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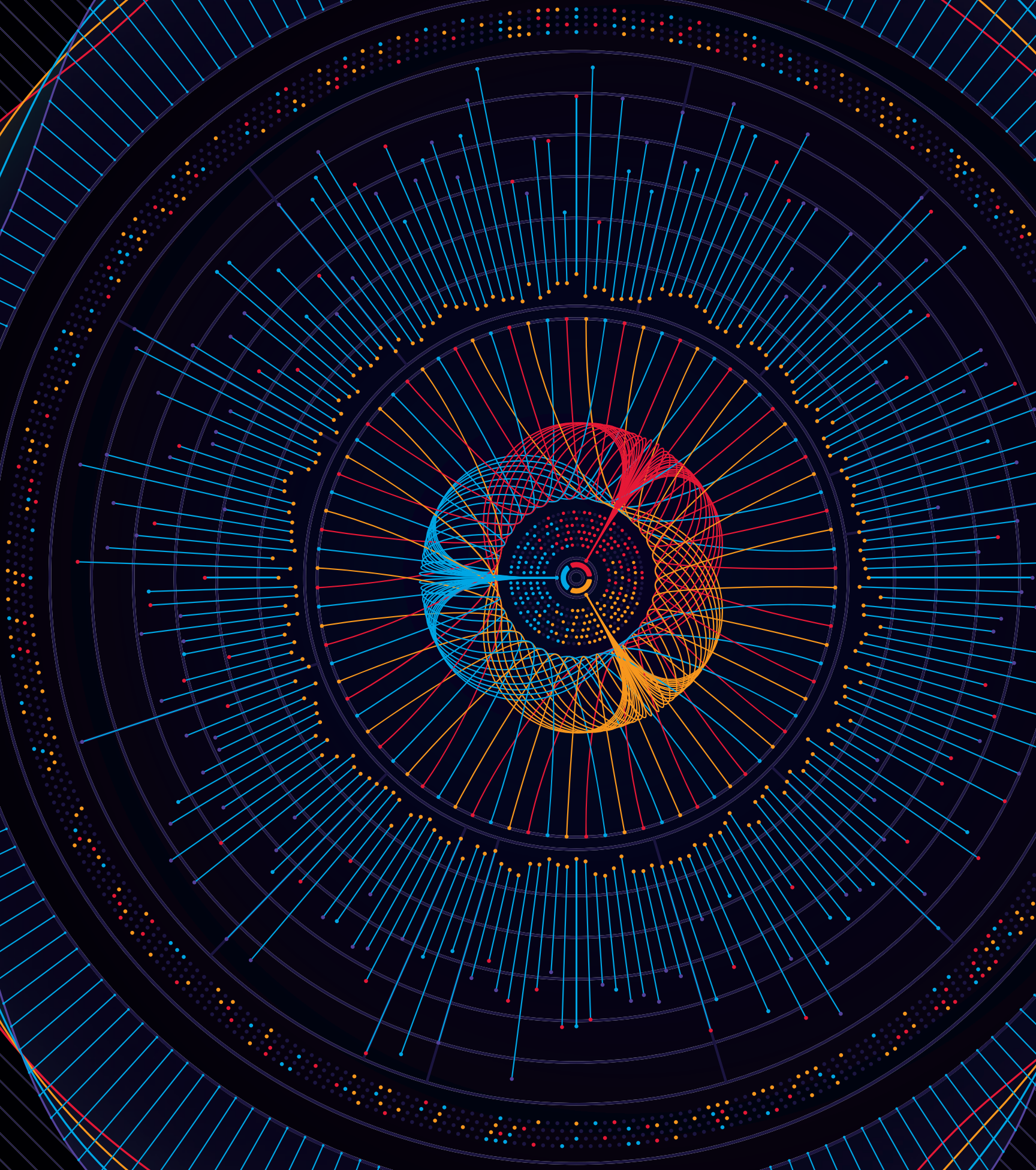
— KSENIA KOLYEVA,
SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER, ECOSENSE

as our Referral Club for professional users or our Radon-Free Campaign for consumers. Both programs are created to empower our customers.”

Like many companies that employ a customer-centric strategy, the “customer-first” values are the cornerstone of Ecosense’s approach across all departments, spanning from mobile app development and selecting new product colors, to website updates

and social media content. “We actively solicit feedback from our customers through support interactions and surveys, ensuring that our decisions are thoroughly scrutinized and updates are tailored to meet their needs,” Kolyeva says. “This engagement safeguards the company against the potential waste of valuable resources such as time, money and workforce, underscoring our commitment to delivering exceptional experiences.”

Looking ahead, the pivotal role of technology in customer-centric practices cannot be overstated. By harnessing new technologies and embracing new approaches, brands will be able to develop more interactive tools aimed at helping customers comprehend the risks associated with radon gas exposure. Through these advancements and the mindset to think out of the box, you can empower your customers with the knowledge and tools necessary to make informed decisions.. ■





HAR NESS ING BIG DATA

Analytical
advice for
marketers

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES.

If you ask Saul Marquez what his global digital marketing agency relies on to collect and analyze big data effectively, there's your answer. Marquez is the CEO of Outcomes Rocket, which focuses on helping healthcare business owners and leaders get in front of their ideal clients. For data processing and visualization, Outcomes Rocket utilizes advanced analytics platforms such as Google Analytics, Apple/Spotify analytics for podcasts, Hotjar for on-site user experience data and on-platform analytics from LinkedIn, Meta, Tiktok, etc. The platforms enable Marquez and his team to derive insights from large datasets and present them in a comprehensible manner.

In addition, customer relationship management (CRM) systems like Salesforce and HubSpot help gather and organize customer data, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences.

The new player on the block, to nobody's surprise, is artificial intelligence (AI). "We love AI and use it anywhere and everywhere we can," Marquez says. "Machine learning algorithms and AI-driven tools have become indispensable for predictive analytics and personalized marketing, enabling us to extract actionable insights from complex datasets."

Amid the dynamic realm of digital marketing, embracing the boundless potential of big data has evolved from a mere strategy to a critical necessity for brands seeking a competitive edge. In today's fiercely competitive landscape, where data serves as the lifeblood for marketers navigating the way forward, the fusion of technological advancements and data analytics heralds unprecedented opportunities for crafting tailored campaigns. In turn, big data, with its ever-sprawling expanse, rapid pace and diverse nature, continues to help marketers fine-tune their strategies for connecting with consumers.

Marquez believes the key differentiator between merely collecting data and extracting actionable insights lies in the depth of analysis and interpretation, as well as the quality of the data. While data collection involves gathering information, actionable insights require thorough analysis to understand the significance of the data in the context of marketing strategies. "We differentiate ourselves by employing advanced data analysis techniques, including AI and machine learning algorithms, to uncover meaningful patterns and trends within the data. We also get a qualitative angle by interviewing key audiences and actually checking out products in use."

The Outcomes Rocket team focuses on translating these insights into specific marketing strategies and tactics that

drive measurable results for clients. By leveraging AI-driven tools and predictive analytics, they can identify opportunities for optimization and personalization, ensuring that their marketing efforts are informed by data-driven decisions.

While working with one of its global healthcare clients, Marquez remembers how using big data analytics played a pivotal role in optimizing marketing ROI. By being able to analyze vast amounts of customer behavior data, Outcomes Rocket identified key purchase patterns and preferences among their target audience. "Based on these insights, we

**"MACHINE LEARNING ALGORITHMS
AND AI-DRIVEN TOOLS HAVE
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PERSONALIZED MARKETING."**

— SAUL MARQUEZ, CEO, OUTCOMES ROCKET

implemented highly targeted social media campaigns and personalized product recommendations tailored to individual customer interests and past interactions. This hyper-personalized approach significantly increased conversion rates and a notable uplift in ROI for the client."

By leveraging big data analytics to inform its marketing strategies, the Outcomes Rocket team was able to achieve tangible business outcomes and deliver substantial value to their clients. ■



COLLECT. ANALYZE. REPEAT.

W

hen it comes to differentiating between collecting data and extracting truly actionable insights, long-time marketing operations leader John Leonti views it this way. The collection part of data is easy and based on having a unified data set. While there is a significant amount of work to get to the unified data set, once you have data objects

connected with common attributes, the data set is unified.

Leonti, who consults on marketing operations like complete funnel analysis and optimizations, and technology analysis, says actionable insights should be based on the KPI's aligned to company goals and the historical attributes that align with customer success. "Understanding what you are looking for, based on the aforementioned, will drive the actionable insights needed to drive success."

While working in the SaaS security world, Leonti recalls working with a company operating under the premise that its customer base was primarily a B2C customer with a large web presence with high volumes of web traffic. Leonti and his team pulled together an analysis utilizing big data from the CDP. The historical win-rate data from their CRM showed that only about half of their customers fell into the B2C large web presence/volume customer, while the other half was

"UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR, BASED ON THE AFOREMENTIONED, WILL DRIVE THE ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS NEEDED TO DRIVE SUCCESS."

— JOHN LEONTI, FOUNDER,
JOHN LEONTI CONSULTANT

a B2B segment customer with high propensity for website security.

"This allowed for expanding our target audience and looking at our marketing mix from a different point of view," Leonti says. "Our demand gen was also different and the result was an increase of sales-ready leads and a higher opportunity conversion rate."

It is no secret that working with big data has its pitfalls, everything from a lack of security (data theft, fraud and identity theft); unclear ownership (dealing with multiple stakeholders can sometimes cause challenges determining who's responsible for what); failing to test (making sure to have a comprehensive testing plan in place); and a lack of documentation (making sure your stakeholders understand the plan so you can make changes later).

Leonti says the rule of thumb to follow when working with big data is to not overthink it. "Keep everything as simple as possible and focus on the 80% solution." The concept, derived from the Pareto Principle, submits that roughly 80% of effects come from 20% of causes, i.e., identify the core actions or features that will yield the majority of desired results.

When dealing in the realm of big data, one of the most sound pieces of advice is to never rely solely on data without considering the broader marketing context or understanding the customer journey comprehensively. To avoid this,



Marquez says marketers should adopt a holistic approach to data analysis, incorporating qualitative insights and market research into their strategic planning process. Nothing beats speaking to the right niche of people about a data set to validate and get additional insights. And never neglect data quality and integrity, which can lead to inaccurate conclusions and misguided strategies.

"To mitigate this risk, marketers should prioritize data validation and cleansing processes to ensure accuracy and reliability," Marquez says. "Additionally, over-reliance on historical data without adapting to changing market dynamics can hinder effectiveness. Marketers should continuously update their models and strategies based on real-time insights and feedback to stay agile and responsive to evolving consumer needs."

Mastering the art of harnessing big data provides the strategic edge needed to navigate complexities and unlock unparalleled insights, shaping a future where analytics can help pave the way for informed decision-making and impactful campaigns. ■

TACTICS

LAWYER UP

BRANDS WANT PROTECTION

Brands are increasingly imposing restrictions on AI use by advertising agencies, demanding prior approval for its application. This stems from concerns about data security, misuse of AI, and its impact on creative professionals. A notable incident involved Under Armour facing backlash for employing generative AI

in its advertising without creating new content. The complexity of using AI in advertising has led to calls for clearer contractual guidelines and stronger safeguards, addressing issues like data confidentiality, copyright, and liability for misuse. Agencies now face the challenge of navigating these restrictions while maintaining innovation and compliance, highlighting the need for legal expertise in shaping responsible AI usage.

SOURCE: AD AGE



B2B ALL YOU CAN B

There are a never-ending set of challenges and strategic considerations in B2B marketing. In a Considered Content survey, understanding customers, differentiating effectively, aligning marketing strategies with business goals, and choosing the right tactics all can significantly impact marketing success.

UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMERS

- Only 36% of marketers research the buying committees of their products.
- A mere 18% research buyers to create ideal customer profiles or customer personas.

IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENTIATION

- Marketers with a clear differentiated position are twice as likely to be in the most effective group across lead generation, demand generation, and brand-building in the tech sector.
- In professional services, those with clear differentiation see even more extreme results, significantly outperforming the norm.

STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

- Marketers in professional services with a marketing strategy derived from their business strategy are 84% more likely to be top performers in lead generation, 73% more likely in demand generation, and over one-fifth more likely to lead in brand-building.

TACTICAL EFFECTIVENESS

- The most popular demand generation tactic used by marketers ranks 31st out of 39 in terms of effectiveness.
- The most effective tactic is only 13th on the list of the most popular.

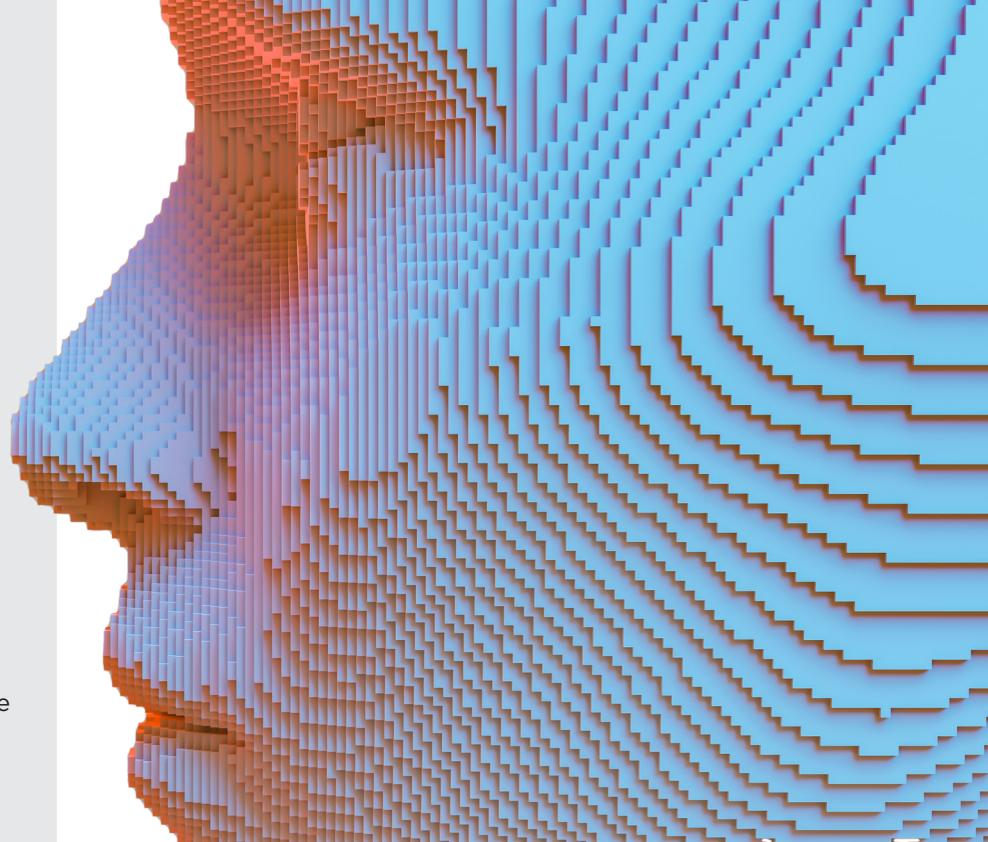
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN TACTICS

- Women in technology marketing are more likely to prefer top-of-the-funnel content and use account-based marketing and influencer marketing.
- Men are more likely to use nurture programs, PPC, and programmatic advertising, and are one-fifth more likely to rank themselves as marketing top performers.

FOCUS ON DEMAND VS. LEADS

- Marketers focused on increasing demand are more effective at lead generation than those who are solely focused on leads.

SOURCE: WWW.CONSIDEREDCONTENT.COM/B2B-EFFECTIVENESS-SCORECARD



A BOOST

AI AIDS CONTENT MARKETING

Everyone who has ever reached for the “AI boost” probably asked themselves the same question—do others do it too? Studies show that many marketers are using AI features to support their efforts.

- 80% of respondents adopted AI tools in their content marketing strategies. (Ahrefs.com)
- Most marketers use AI tools for text-based content. The top three use cases are: brainstorming new topics (51%), researching headlines and keywords (45%), and writing drafts (45%). (CMI)
- 50% of marketers believe inadequate AI adoption is holding them back from achieving their goals. (Mailchimp)
- 58% of U.S. marketers said they have increased their content creation performance thanks to generative AI. (eMarketer)
- 75% of consumers trust content written by generative AI. (Capgemini)

SOURCE: [AHREFS.COM/BLOG/CONTENT-MARKETING-STATISTICS](https://ahrefs.com/blog/content-marketing-statistics)

“Authentic marketing is not the art of selling what you make but knowing what to make. It is the art of identifying and understanding customer needs and creating solutions that deliver satisfaction to the customers, profits to the producers and benefits for the stakeholders.

- Philip Kotler, The Father of Modern Marketing

QA

How do you see AI technologies transforming strategic decision-making in large enterprises over the next decade?

Strategic decision-making has relied on data and models for more than half a century. The advent of DSS (Decision Support System) in the 60's used the data and models to assist in making strategic decisions. Fast forward 40 years, in the early 2000s with a limited amount of data, we saw the advent of Descriptive Analytics that used historical data to understand past trends. Over the next decade, with a good amount of data and reduction in cost of technology, organizations shifted to the use of Predictive Analysis, where ML (Machine Learning) algorithms were used to predict future trends based on historical data. The end of the last decade saw the progression to Prescriptive Analytics that not only predicted but also provided recommendations to assist in decision-making.

Today we see the integration of AI and ML technologies across the organization, yet it exists in silos, giving departments a competitive edge over others in an enterprise. Over the next decade, with the amount of data at our disposal and the use of disruptive Generative AI technology, we will see enterprises defining their strategy to deliver personalized products and experiences to their customers. This will be made possible by the integration of data-driven insights from initiatives across the enterprise to understand the customer's needs and preferences at a more holistic

DR. RAJEEV PAPNEJA

BUSINESS TECH EXPERT SHARES IMPACT OF AI

Dr. Rajeev Papneja, a titan in the field of Business Technology with over 28 years of expansive experience, has carved a niche as a thought leader and expert in areas including Datacenter, Cloud Computing, AI/ML, Cybersecurity, IT Compliance & Governance, and digital transformation projects. An internationally recognized keynote speaker, academician, and professor, he has dedicated his career to the advancement of both legacy and emerging technologies. Dr. Papneja has been honored multiple times as the Eminent CIO and has received numerous international lifetime achievement awards. His vision extends beyond technology, aiming to cultivate moral and ethical leaders who champion sustainability and co-existence. Rajeev shared some insights on the latest technological innovations and the impact of disruptive business models on global industries.



and granular level. Using more efficient well-informed AI-driven simulation models assisting in opportunity versus risk assessment, enterprises would be able to make much more robust strategic decisions. Supply chain would become more optimized with better resiliency to disruptions assisting in more agile decision-making. I envision the future of enterprises will be AI/ML driven, similar to how we are experiencing Tesla as an AI/ML based self-driving car.

As AI continues to integrate into core business functions, what ethical considerations should companies prioritize to ensure they maintain trust and transparency with their consumers?

Just yesterday I was speaking to a freshman and he asked me if Generative AI can be trusted. I replied that it is no different than trusting a human for answers. At that moment I realized that the boy had brought up a very interesting

point. Computer programs were always deterministic and now we are entering this era where the information is being generated. How do you trust the generated information?

Transparency is a precursor for building trust and therefore it is one of the main principles of ethical AI. Trust can only exist where one feels secure and hence, protecting the consumer data should be the number one priority of any organization. While on one hand data is being protected, on the other hand it needs to be clearly explained to the consumer as to what data is being collected, how it is being protected at all levels, how it is being used and to what extent.

Secondly, we must stick to XAI (Explainable AI) to make the customer understand in a simple way how the algorithm arrived at a certain decision. Next, there must be a clear demarcation of the accountabilities—who is accountable and/or responsible for decisions made by AI. For example, if a self-

driving vehicle hits a pedestrian, who is responsible for it—the car, the company or the person sitting in the driver seat?

Last but not the least, companies should keep their consumers informed about how they are using AI to provide more personalized services, what risks are involved, what are some of the limitations.

What are the challenges for businesses in adopting AI, and what opportunities could they be overlooking if they delay embracing the technology?

The biggest challenges will revolve around managing the quantity, quality and security of data. AI models are only as good as the data they are fed and follow the 'Garbage In Garbage Out' (GIGO) concept. Clearly, businesses are generating data with 10x speed compared to the past. However, is the volume of data being generated good enough?

Data privacy and protection laws limit the wealth of data that could be collected and used. While the volume of data remains a concern, the quality of data that is available is of equal importance. Collecting inaccurate data or data from disparate sources in different volumes may lead to biased views and could be a pathway to legal issues. As the volume of data grows (which is needed for developing better models), the challenge of handling data security and privacy also gets magnified. With various nations having their own data privacy laws, another dimension of complexity gets added to the equation, specifically for multinational companies.

Every new technology brings with it a set of challenges till it matures, but the cost of not embracing them usually turns out to be far more than investment. Businesses may lose by falling behind on operational efficiencies, and missing out on the advantages from disruptive AI models. It may not be long before

good employees leave businesses to work on the latest technologies with growing organizations.

How should businesses leverage AI to enhance customer engagement without compromising privacy?

Customers expect a more proactive and personalized approach in their engagement with any business. With the use of real-time contextual data at their disposal, businesses can use virtual assistant conversations adapted to the changing dynamics of customer responses providing them with more context-aware interaction, delivering better experience.

“MARKETING PROFESSIONALS ARE AWARE OF MAPPING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY, BUT WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE FUNDAMENTALS OF AI THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO PERSONALIZE THOSE EXPERIENCES.”

Combining the data gathered at every touchpoint for the customer and of customers with similar behavioral patterns can allow AI models to deliver a more personalized experience, whether it is to suggest new offerings that are relevant to them or with something as simple as greeting them in a way they would love to be greeted. The catch is that without using personal data, it is not possible to provide personalized experiences and that calls for making the customer feel comfortable to share the data.

Businesses should strengthen their data privacy initiatives starting with getting themselves compliant with laws such as GDPR, PCI-DD, CPAR etc. and classifying sensitive data across the customer experience lifecycle. From the technology point

of view, it should be made sure that no information about an individual can be extracted from the AI model's output. Use of homomorphic encryption on sensitive data, regular audit of models, use of minimal data to achieve desired result, and minimizing the data retention can also help to a large extent in safeguarding privacy of personal data.

What skills do you recommend marketing and business professionals focus on acquiring to stay relevant and competitive?

While there is no need for a marketing or business professional to be a hardcore AI expert, a basic understanding of the way Machine Learning models work will always work out to be a competitive advantage as it would enable the professionals to collaborate with the technical teams including data scientists, put forth their requirements clearly, and understand the limitations of the technology.

They will need to be aware of the potential biases which can help them to use customer data responsibly. Marketing professionals are aware of mapping the customer journey, but without understanding the fundamentals of AI they won't be able to personalize those experiences.

As technology is advancing exponentially, marketing professionals will need to embrace continuous learning and understand how the advancements can be used for their benefit. They need to be abreast of the AI tools and technologies that can assist them. As AI takes over trivial tasks, human creativity and strategic thinking will remain irreplaceable. Skills to foster emotional connection, trust and empathy will become more valuable and highly sought. In other words, AI can provide the analysis, but professionals will need to apply their creativity in order to connect with their customers.

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