

DATA SKILLS

I

BENCHMARKING REPORT 2016–17

B2B Marketing

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Circleresearch
The B2B experts

Contents

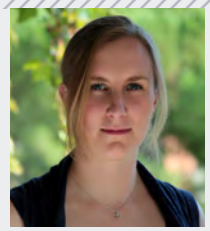
Introduction 3

01. Analysis 5

02. Agency comment 16

03. Agencies in detail 21

About 24



Danielle Howe
Reports editor
B2B Marketing

Introduction

Data and marketing. Marketing and data. They go together like things and stuff. Marketers know they need data to get results. But does that mean they are comfortable using it?

This is what we wanted to find out with this research project. By looking closely at B2B marketers' use of data, and specifically their data-related skills, we wanted to uncover their weaknesses – and strengths – to pinpoint where, and how, progress can be made when it comes to the use of data in B2B marketing.

The research has been divided into two sections. The first looks at questions such as the importance of data for marketers and their teams, as well as the levels of sophistication and effectiveness when it comes to the use of data in B2B organisations. The second half is the real heart of the project. We look at 10 data skills, ranging from data management to performance reporting and data-driven decision-making. We then asked marketers to rate their own skills in each of the 10 areas, then their team's skills, and finally the skills of their company as a whole.

As you will find in the following pages, the results have yielded some compelling insights, in particular into how marketers see themselves compared to their teams and their companies. For example, nine out of 10 marketers personally see data as 'very important', while only 53 per cent think their team sees it in the same light. The results have also allowed us to reflect on the progress B2B marketing has made in recent years – most marketers are comfortable with data segmentation, for instance – while areas that are still in their relative infancy, such as predictive analytics, remain a struggle for most.

The report is structured so you can go into as much depth as you want. Our infographic sums up the key stats from the first half of the research, and

The results have also allowed us to reflect on the progress B2B marketing has made in recent years

is followed by a list of all 10 skills, ranked from weakest to strongest. We then provide some of the most significant stats from the second part of the research, alongside key considerations for marketers, their teams and their organisations. Finally, the conclusion looks at the whole picture in detail, and is followed with a guide to successfully using data.

The research phase for this report was carried out in November/ December 2015, with a total of 209 B2B marketers completing our online survey.



Andrew Dalglish
Director
Circle Research

Circleresearch
The B2B experts

B2B is still unprepared for the data age

They say an asteroid impact wiped dinosaurs off the face of the earth. Could data be the B2B marketer's asteroid?

At a basic level, data can reveal the effectiveness of marketing investments and demonstrate ROI. What was the click-through rate? How many leads were generated? Which executions generated the most engagement? But this 'what happened' data is just scratching the surface. Data can be used not just to observe what happened, but to shape what happens. With the right approach to data capture and analysis, insights with the potential to turbo-charge marketing activity can be brought to the surface. Data mining can reveal hidden opportunities, predictive analytics can put you one step ahead, micro-segmentation can personalise your marketing, and so on.

While the fundamentals of good marketing may remain timeless, the data age is transforming how these principles are applied. This requires a new skillset and it seems as though, as a profession, we have a lot of evolving to do.

While the fundamentals of good marketing may remain timeless, the data age is transforming how these principles are applied

This report reveals virtually all marketers see the asteroid coming – 89 per cent of those B2B marketers surveyed acknowledge data is very important to the marketing function. However, only a handful are prepared for the new world the data asteroid's impact will bring.

Two thirds (66 per cent) don't feel their organisation is sophisticated in its use of data. A similar number (58 per cent) report their use of data is ineffective, and only one in five (19 per cent) describes their marketing team's data skills as 'good' or 'excellent'.

As the data age takes hold in B2B, it will become essential for marketers to have strong data skills. Without them, it will be hard to compete in a world where data has become a critical component of day-to-day marketing practice. Perhaps it's time to evolve; history has taught us what happens to those who do not.

Analysis

01



DATA SKILLS

Despite widespread appreciation of data's vital importance, marketing teams are still struggling with sophistication

Importance of data

99% of marketers think data is 'very important' or 'important'

90%

9%

Very important (marketers)

Important (marketers)

But just 53% think their marketing teams consider data to be 'very important'

53%

Very important (marketing teams)

Effectiveness and sophistication

Marketing teams' use of data:

54% Not sophisticated

51% Not effective

Reasons for lack of effectiveness and sophistication

90% of marketers think team skills need to improve

73% of marketers don't feel their companies make the most of data

Weakest skills

1. Predictive analytics
2. Data storytelling
3. Data management

Strongest skills

1. Data segmentation
2. Performance reporting
3. Transforming data into business insight

Strengths and weaknesses

The core of this research project focuses on 10 key data-related skills and how marketers evaluate themselves, their teams and their organisations against each skill.

The results also allow us to produce a general ranking of the 10 skills. As you can see below, 'predictive analytics' is clearly seen as the discipline in which marketers are weakest, while 'transforming data into business insight', 'performance reporting' and 'data segmentation' are all areas in which marketers feel significantly more confident.

All skills from weakest to strongest

10  Predictive analytics

9  Data storytelling (sharing the stories hidden in data)

8  Data management (maintaining data quality and integrity)

7  Data visualisation (presentation and design)

6  Data collection

5  Making data-driven decisions

4  Campaign analysis (data interpretation)

3  Transforming data into business insight

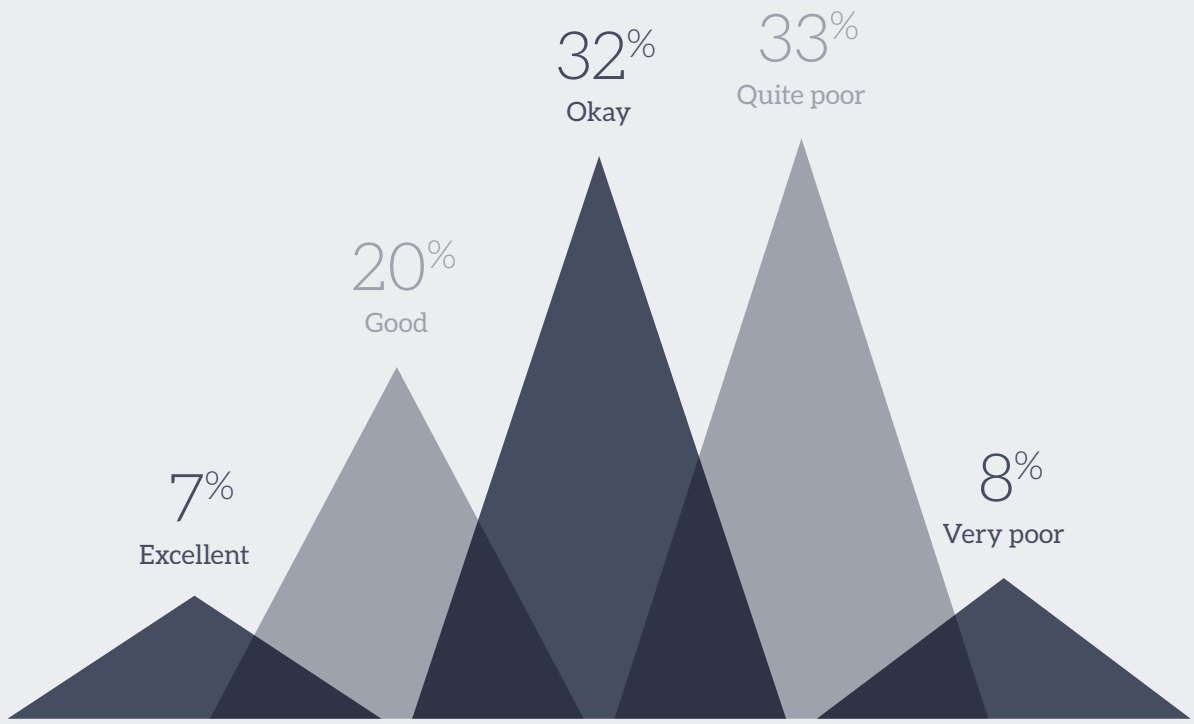
2  Performance reporting (KPIs)

1  Data segmentation (identifying different groupings in data)

Marketers: Confident but room for improvement

Plan for the future

It's perhaps no surprise that predictive analytics is rated as a far weaker individual skill than any other. It's a relatively new discipline, and not necessarily a core 'traditional' marketing skill. However, the doors it opens cannot be ignored. And marketers upskilling in this area will be increasing their contribution to their teams, and doing their future employability no harm either.



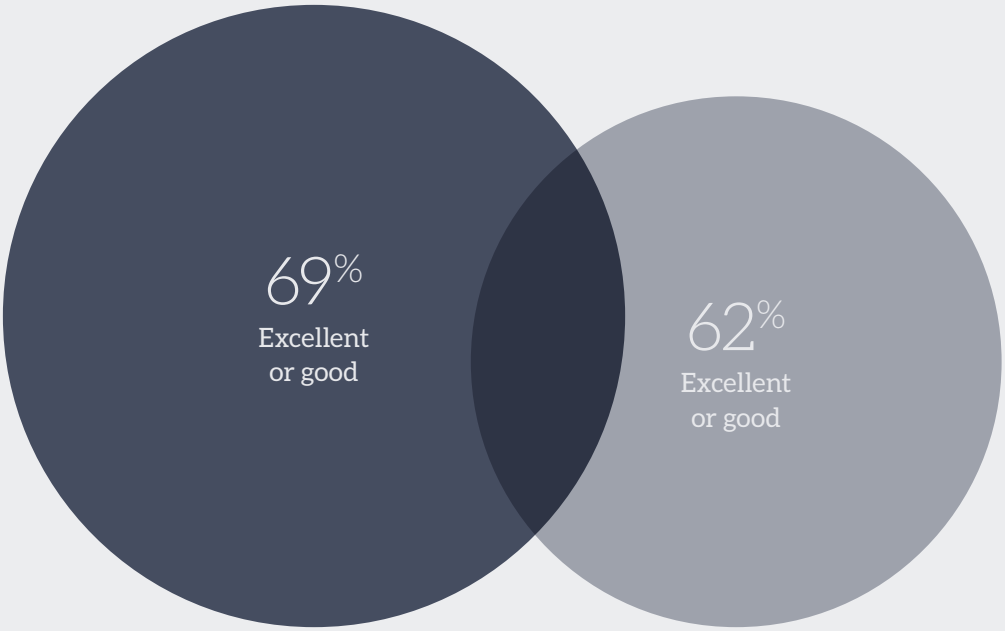
How would you rate your predictive analytics skills?

Marketers need to work on:

- Being prepared to accept their weaknesses, and taking responsibility for driving the improvement of data skills within their teams and companies.
- Ensuring they have a good understanding of their company's data collection and management practices, in order to boost overall data sophistication.
- Driving creativity within their marketing teams, and learning how to view data in new ways in order to improve data storytelling and visualisation skills.

A time to reflect

As we can see from the responses below, marketers are more content to pat themselves on the back than they are to praise the teams and organisations they work for. But perhaps there is a need for more reflexive thinking.



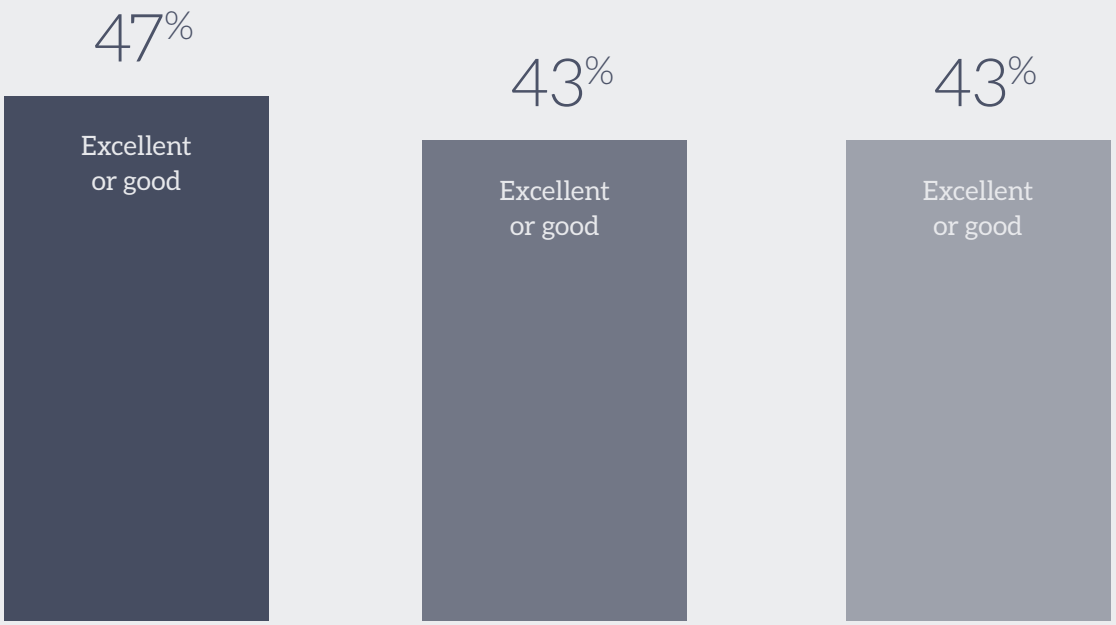
Data-driven decision-making **Campaign analysis**

How would you rate your skills in these areas?

Marketing teams: Need to connect data and creativity

Strong basic skills

Marketing teams are most comfortable with fundamental marketing skills such as data segmentation and campaign analysis. But we're at a stage when effective data and campaign strategies have to be seen as 'business as usual'. Marketing teams need to strive to use data in more complex and original ways.



How would you rate your marketing team's skills across these areas?

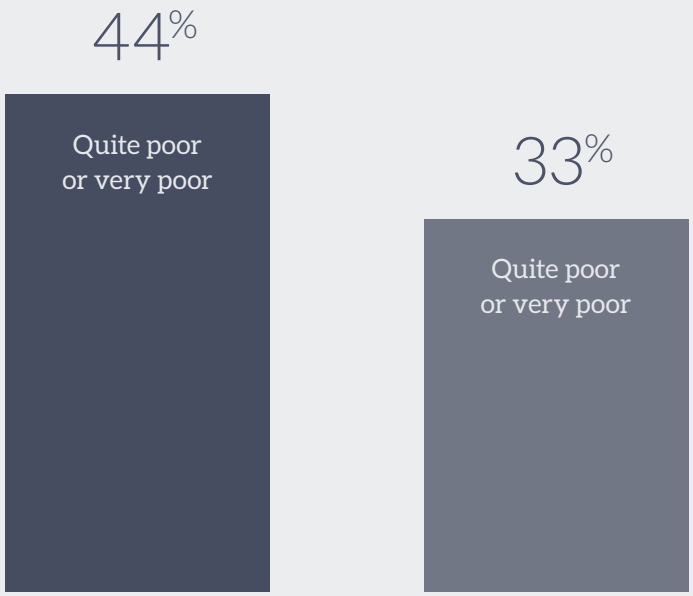
Data Skills Benchmarking Report © **B2B Marketing 2016**

Marketing teams need to work on:

- Ensuring their good work in data segmentation, campaign analysis and performance reporting continues; these are key to building on marketing's success within the business.
- Sharing the stories hidden in data: basic campaign analysis is all very well, but the hidden stories in data could provide a new source of ideas and boost creativity within the team. It's time to delve a bit deeper.
- Making data visual: not always easy, but using visual aids to make data clearer and more easily understood is a key skill when working with clients, other departments and when attempting to quantify marketing's contributions.

Data and creativity need to go hand-in-hand

When it comes to using data creatively, marketing teams have work to do. They need to learn how to implement what marketing is known for – using stories to engage an audience – and apply this to their data.

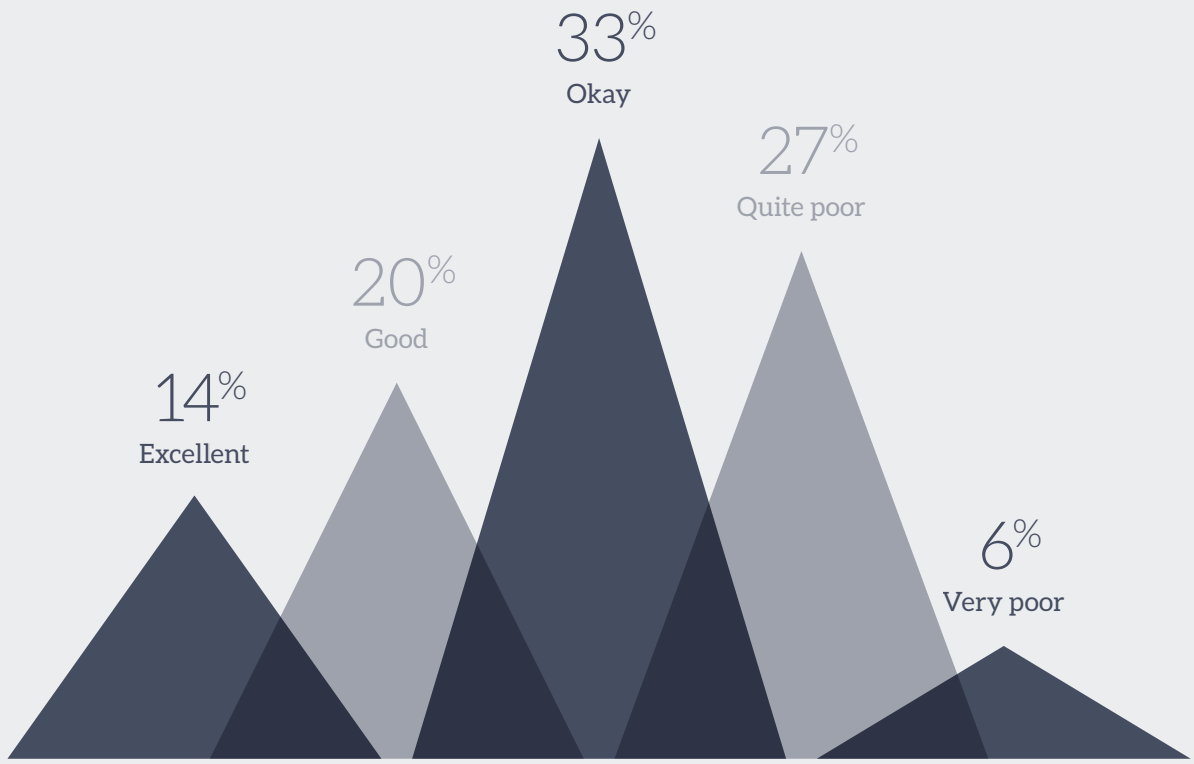


How would you rate your marketing team's skills in these areas?

Organisations: Failing on data management

Essential skills are lacking

Our research reveals B2B businesses are struggling with the data basics. Only a third of marketers are positive about their company's ability to manage its data sets effectively.



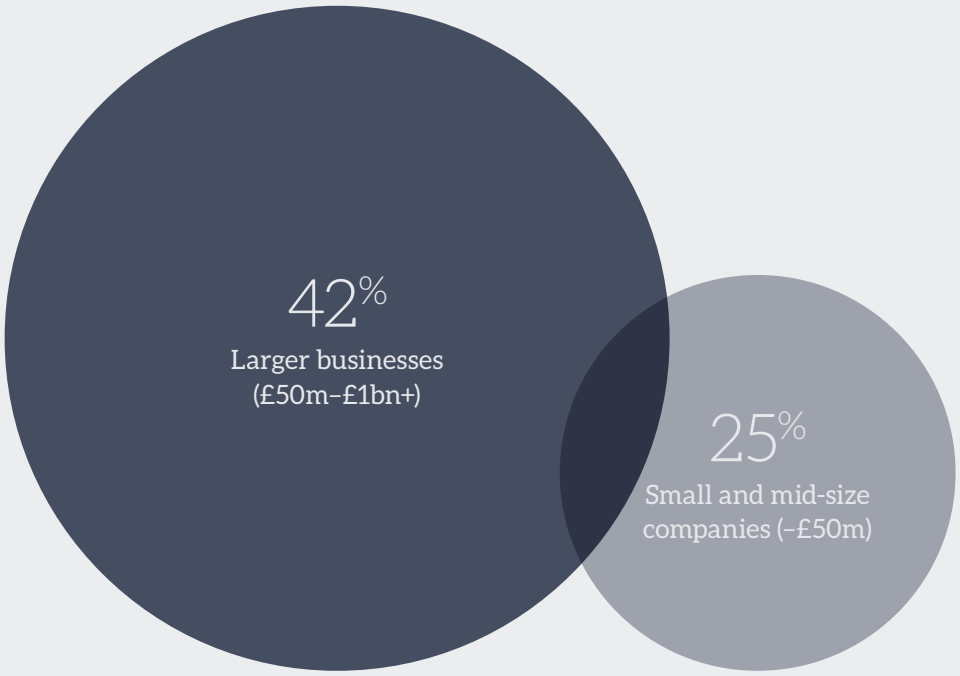
How would you rate your company's data management skills?

Companies need to work on:

- Data management across the business: if data isn't managed correctly, it can't be used to its full potential by the marketing team or any other departments. Marketers may have to drive change here; clear rules that apply across the business need to be put in place and adhered to.

Big businesses falling behind

The data management challenge is being felt most acutely in larger organisations. While this stands to reason in terms of complexity, the scale of the challenge does not excuse poor performance.



Percentage of companies with 'poor' or 'very poor' data management skills



Conclusion

Don't be afraid

Ninety per cent of individual marketers see data as 'very important', whereas only 53 per cent think their team feels the same way. So if you have concerns that data is being neglected – you're not alone.

You shouldn't be afraid to lead the conversation and be 'the voice' of data within your team, and even organisation. A lack of communication could result in marketing teams and their companies being left behind.

Break down silos

Around half of respondents (54 per cent) believe their team's use of data is 'not sophisticated', while 51 per cent feel it's 'not effective'. It would appear the core reasons for this are a lack of skills across marketing teams as well as organisations' inability to make the most of data sets.

The message here is quite clear – companies need to clean data sets and make sure all their employees are data-savvy. It's time for marketing to lead the way and break down silos, encouraging a company-wide approach to data that will benefit their own department as a consequence. Data is everyone's problem, and marketing should be the first to say so.

Data is everyone's problem, and marketing should be the first to say so

Start leading the way

We've revealed that marketers see their companies as weak, their teams as better and themselves as good. But the reality is that no marketer has perfect data skills. Marketers should be prepared to be more self-critical. If marketers think their team's skills are lacking, and their company's aren't up to scratch, they should be ready to say so and suggest a path for change.

Imagine success

While marketers are comfortable with using data internally for areas such as performance reporting (for which 43 per cent of marketing teams are rated as 'good' or 'excellent'), we're a long way from marketing systematically using data to support all departmental efforts.

We've identified the weakest skills as predictive analytics and data storytelling – and in order to improve these areas, marketing teams need to adopt a change in mindset. Advancement here doesn't necessarily mean high levels of technological investment, but rather lateral thinking when it comes to data and what it can do.

Marketing teams need to adopt a change in mindset

Predictive analytics and storytelling represent the leading edge of data – where the best of marketing meets hard fact – and it's a very exciting place to be. Marketers need to use data to get ahead of the market and determine where the company will get the best results in the future – not just report on things that have already happened.



How to achieve data success

Communicate and voice your concerns if you feel important skills are lacking across the team.

You and your team need to champion the effective use of data within your company.

Investigate how other departments are using data to ensure it's approached in the same, systematic way across the business.

Work on new skills such as predictive analytics, but not before fundamental skills are in place.

Start to be creative with data, and aim to locate the hidden stories in order to inspire the rest of your marketing efforts.

Reflect on where you think your strengths lie, as progress can almost always be made.

Aim to capitalise on your strengths to drive knowledge across the team, and the organisation.

If you're a marketing leader, make sure you're the voice of data innovation across the business.

Agency comment

02


Better information.
Better marketing.
Centralise and visualise your customer data to identify key segments and grow relationships. Uncover target companies and segments to grow revenue and market share.
All in one easy-to-use interface.
OneSource® DataVision
AVENTION
ONESOURCE SOLUTIONS
www.avention.com/datavision



Vicki Godfrey
CMO
Avention OneSource Solutions

Shake off data paralysis and free your strategic marketing potential

Perfect data-driven marketing promises so much – precision engagement with the right audiences at the right time, and accurate, actionable insight to shape strategic decision-making and drive growth.

Today's marketers recognise putting data-driven insight at the heart of their business strategy is the best way to seize new opportunities. So why is data so often seen as a handicap to marketing rather than an enabler?

Data paralysis

The barriers to effective data use are numerous, but typically reside in the diversity of data sources across the business, doubts about accuracy, and uncertainty about how to translate time and effort into business benefit.

If you feel your organisation is the only one experiencing this, think again. Many companies suffer from what I call data paralysis – knowing they have to do something but feeling overwhelmed by the scale of the task.

Typically, marketers are dealing with six or seven internal data sources spread across disparate, disconnected and incompatible systems. Over the course of a year, that's weeks of Excel work that marketers are having to deal with, even before incorporating external data sources for a complete view of customers and markets.

Efforts to conquer this data paralysis are complicated by the ownership question. Is it sales, marketing, IT – or none of the above – that owns customer data? Harnessing data to achieve organisational objectives is just too complicated, so why bother?

Recent precedent suggests that it's no longer a choice. It's easy to forget that less than a decade ago, digital was a distinct element of the marketing mix; a specialist, technical capability sitting alongside traditional channels.

And yet today, marketing *is* digital. Modern marketers are, by definition and necessity, 'digital marketers'. It has become so quickly ingrained that we don't even differentiate anymore. This evolution occurred because the tools arrived to release digital's significant benefits, and the resulting measurement enabled them to better demonstrate the value they deliver to the business.

Free your potential

Now is the time to see data as the new digital. The successful marketer of tomorrow will be data-driven by default. So, stop fearing the complexity and start realising the value.

Today, online tools are doing the same for data-driven marketers as they did for digital marketers, putting the power of data into the marketer's hands without requiring specialist skills or support functions. The barriers to centralising, analysing and visualising internal and external data sources within a single view, if not gone, are now significantly reduced. This means marketers can finally use their data to perform better business analysis, efficient customer segmentation and highly targeted campaigns.

Realising this insight empowers marketers to deliver significant value back to the business too – well beyond their typical operational and communications remit. Now marketing departments can also be the drivers of strategic activities such as market sizing, opportunity identification and territory planning; indeed, the list goes on. Using data to drive relevant insight in this way elevates the role of marketing and will foster far greater alignment with sales and other functions.

Make no mistake, data is complex, but it's as transformative as web and digital revolutions. Shaking off data paralysis may be daunting, but its benefits are profound. New and simple technology solutions enable marketers to see their customers and markets holistically, with deep insights into where existing customers are and how to maximise opportunities, while accurately targeting untapped prospect potential. Data has the power to not only enhance your effectiveness as a marketer, but also confer real strategic influence on your marketing department. So use it.

WE



GEEKS

Geeks are cool. If your company is driven by innovation, we're your **perfect agency**.
We love working with those geeks! If you're a PR geek, why not work for us?

To learn more, email our Managing Director, Mike Maynard:
mike@napierb2b.com or give us a call on **01243 531123.**

napierb2b.com

Napier



Mike Maynard
MD
Napier Partnership

Without insight, data is worthless

Data-driven marketing is clearly no fad: it represents the future for marketers. Simply collecting and processing data, however, is not going to solve the challenges we face today. Insight is essential if data is to deliver the increase in marketing performance we all expect.

Now, information is readily available to marketers, particularly due to the growing sophistication of digital tools and platforms. Previously, actually collecting relevant data was a major challenge. Today, building large data sets that profile our customers and prospects is almost a side effect of the use of tools and techniques that are in widespread use.

To be successful, however, marketers must adopt a three-step approach to the use of data: collect, analyse and develop insight. Without this approach, it's too easy to gravitate to the trivial numbers (how many clicks did we generate this month?) or to rely on results from statistical tools that have no knowledge of context.

The first approach can drive marketers to chase vanity metrics: numbers that make you feel good when they grow, but may not be contributing to the achievement of the company's business goals. Although the second will usually improve campaigns, a lack of insight makes progress slow. Running A/B testing on tactic after tactic will usually drive a steady improvement in the effectiveness of a marketing operation, but understanding the why behind the results means marketers can drive large increases in the performance in far less time.

What should marketers do to address this situation? They should certainly continue to collect as much data as possible. B2B clients need to take advantage of the many new sources, from enhanced reporting from social media and advertising platforms to marketing automation tools such as HubSpot analysing activity on their own website, to gather as much information as possible.

The next stage is analysis. Large tables of data are not much help to anyone. Data scientists are able to take disparate numbers and present them in a way that allows marketing professionals to visualise the information. This requires a dramatic shift in the skills that are valued by our industry. The ability to understand data and statistics is an essential skill for every marketing professional, and all departments and agencies need specialists who can use complex tools to uncover what these huge databases are trying to tell us.

The most important step is to take the results of this analysis and understand the 'why' behind the charts and tables that have been produced. This is particularly important for B2B companies, who typically have a much smaller number of major customers than those selling to consumers. Continually iterating and A/B testing creative, for example, can be frustratingly slow when you don't have an unlimited volume of activities. If you can build insight that explains the reasons behind the results, it's often possible to skip several rounds of testing and to navigate towards a more optimal approach in less time (and with less budget).

The brands able to use data to build insight will have a tangible competitive advantage

Building insight is a creative process. It requires a demanding mix of skills from both marketing and data disciplines.

Data is a vital part of our marketing future, and is available to almost everyone. But it's not a level playing field. The brands who are able to use this data to build insight, rather than simply 'crunching the numbers', will have a tangible competitive advantage.

Agencies in detail

03

Avention

Date founded	1986
HQ address	3rd Floor, Broad Street House, 55 Old Broad Street, London, EC2M 1RX
Website	avention.com
Telephone	+44 (0)2073 828800
Email	info@avention.com

About Avention

Avention knows sourcing the best data (not the most) is key to providing you with the highest value content to match the information needs of your key applications and initiatives.

We consolidate and analyse data from more than 60 of the industry's best vendors to provide you with the leading repository of the industry's most valuable global business information.

The application of sophisticated filtering, matching techniques and vendor scoring algorithms means our system delivers data that is consistent and reliable to a previously unachievable degree.

And unlike traditional data providers whose databases provide only a little data on a lot of records, Avention provides you with the company, industry and contact data that is most important to you and the success of your business.

Focusing on the most relevant information allows us to be nimble, agile and gives us the flexibility to quickly respond to your individual needs. It also means we can provide you with the data you need to fuel your critical teams and align with your organisational goals.

Services offered

- ★ Clean and enrich your data for better efficiency and results.
- ★ Expand your internal company data with new companies and contacts.
- ★ Incorporate accurate third-party data into your CRM.
- ★ Understand your customer segments to reveal strengths, weaknesses and growth opportunities.
- ★ Uncover companies most relevant to increasing sales and improving marketing ROI.
- ★ Access rich company profiles and real-time alerts.
- ★ Collect rich insights on company trends, initiatives and behaviours right in your CRM.
- ★ Conceptual searching on terms (no SIC code needed) to identify relevant companies.

Sectors



Professional services



IT and telecomms



Financial services

Key clients

- ❖ **Eversheds**
- ❖ **Spectrum Corporate Finance**
- ❖ **Applied Executive Selection**
- ❖ **Savills**
- ❖ **ADP**
- ❖ **Ashridge Business School**
- ❖ **Access Self Storage**
- ❖ **AON Risk Solutions**

Napier Partnership

Date founded	1984
HQ address	Donnington Park House, Birdham Road, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 7DU
Website	napierb2b.com
Telephone	+44 (0)1243 531123
Email	mike@napierb2b.com

About Napier Partnership

We are a B2B technology PR and marketing agency that uses deep market insight to design and implement creative campaigns, which drive our clients' commercial success.

We specialise in B2B technology, allowing us to understand the customer, market and industry trends as well as building extensive knowledge of our clients and their products or services. This deep insight enables us to develop campaigns that resonate with your target audience.

We have an extensive portfolio of resources and skills, and have invested in an analytical team of PR and marketing specialists, who offer impartial advice and deliver results that generate measurable improvements to our clients' businesses. Our integrated approach means we help clients navigate the many potential marketing channels and determine the best marketing tactics for each of their campaigns.

We offer a true pan-European reach, are active across 34 European countries and have delivered campaigns in 27 different languages. By embracing payment-by-results, we also ensure accountability and tie our success to that of our clients.

Services offered

- ★ Advertising
- ★ Analyst relations
- ★ Content development
- ★ Design
- ★ Direct marketing
- ★ Email marketing
- ★ Marketing automation
- ★ PR
- ★ Video production

Sectors

- Electronics
- IT and telecomms
- Industrial, manufacturing, engineering

Key clients

- ❖ Anritsu
- ❖ Imagination Technologies
- ❖ Microchip
- ❖ Panasas

Awards 2015

UK Digital Experience Awards Finalist	Best B2B application or solution
BestFor PR Awards	Gold: Technology Silver: Corporate, National, Internet

About

B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research and reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0)20 7014 4920



B2B Marketing

Circle Research

Circle Research uses market research to help clients solve business issues, grasp opportunities and develop competitive advantage. The average client engages Circle Research on more than four projects, and counting.

Here's why:

- The B2B market research experts – understanding your sector and seeing things others miss.
- Multi-award winning – benefit from extensive experience and best-in-class approach.
- Commercial acumen – receive commercially sound, engagingly presented recommendations that drive action.
- International – seamlessly covering your entire footprint.
- Delighted clients – you'll love the Circle experience.

Get in touch and let's talk about uncovering those Eureka! moments – insights that transform your view of the situation.

Call Andrew Dalglish, director at Circle on +44 (0)20 7960 3802 or email him at andrew.dalglish@circle-research.com

Circleresearch
The B2B experts



B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing
Clover House
147–149 Farringdon Road
London
EC1R 3HN

Tel: +44 (0)20 7014 4920
info@b2bmarketing.net

b2bmarketing.net