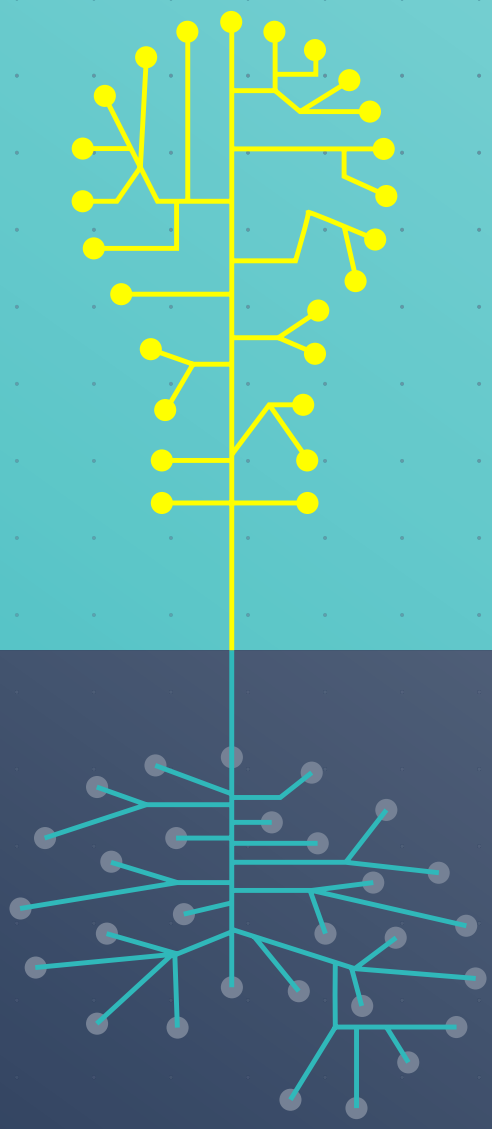
# How to:
# Build a data-driven content experience



TOMORROW PEOPLE
INBOUND MARKETING AGENCY

B2B Marketing

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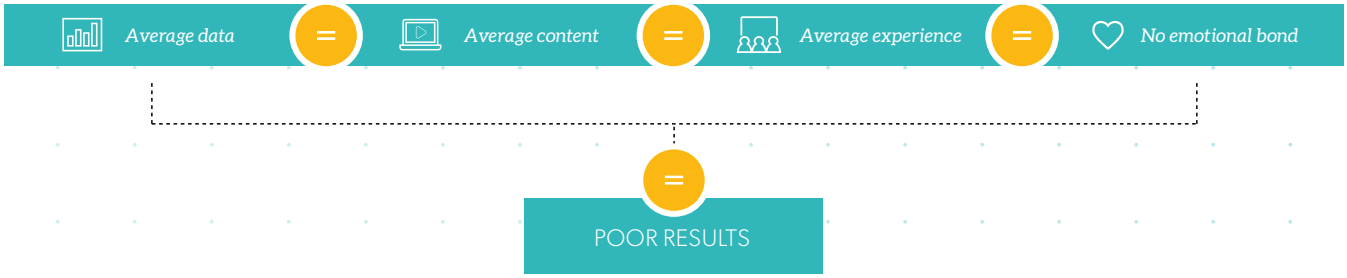
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# Introduction

## The core problem of data-driven marketing today:




To stand out, you need **exceptional ideas** and **compelling content** in **fascinating formats.** All three can be enabled by one factor: **data,** connected and informing decisions at **three levels of your business.**

On top is the customer's **content experience,** using penetrating insights and fresh knowledge that stick in your audience's mind. At the base is the **data management level,** where your own information systems are kept accurate and ready for action. Connecting them is the **engagement level,** where your relationship with the customer is nurtured and nourished.

If you focus on these three areas, each with data at the core, you will succeed in building a successful content strategy and with it that essential bond with your target audience.

This article takes you through all three from the bottom up.

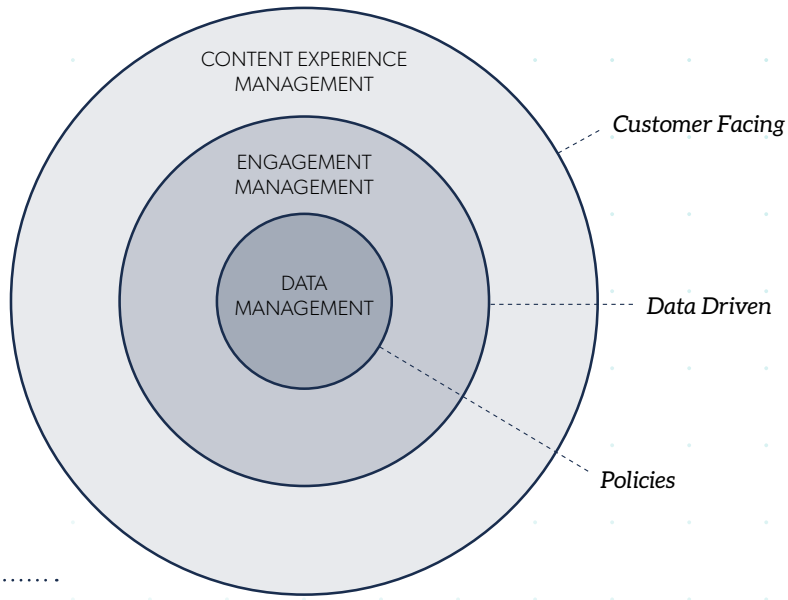



Fig. 1:
Three areas of content marketing

# 1. The foundations: 360° data management

» Only 14 per cent of responding organisations described having a single view of the customer as a "strong capability". «

Let's start with the foundation: your in-house **data management.** What enables effective results across every area of your business is a **rich and meaningful picture of your customer.** But most organisations aren't there yet.

*Only 14 per cent of responding organisations described having a single view of the customer as a "strong capability". Yet more than three times as many (47 per cent) saw **developing** such a single customer view as vital to their organisation's long-term success.*

The best picture of your customer comes not from different databases, but from connecting all data into *one* view of the customer, whether in a single database or a connected ecosystem. Statistics geeks call it SVOTT, or 'single version of the truth'.

When brought together, customer data lets you explore the story you told, what happened at key touchpoints and the channels you engaged on. In other words, a complete view of your customer's content experience. Many companies have made a start but there's still a mountain to climb.

## Data accuracy: Creating a single customer view

The business intelligence required to *really* understand the customer is summarised in Fig. 2. It can be broken down into **where they reside, who they are, why they buy, how they buy, what behaviors demonstrate intent,** and **when they will take action.** It's no less true for smaller companies than large-scale enterprises – and they're starting to take action.

## Survey finding:

Roughly 38 per cent of smaller organisations (less than £50m in revenues) and 46 per cent of those with more than £50m in revenues have tied together their suite of applications and some data sources, or at least those that are primary to their marketing.

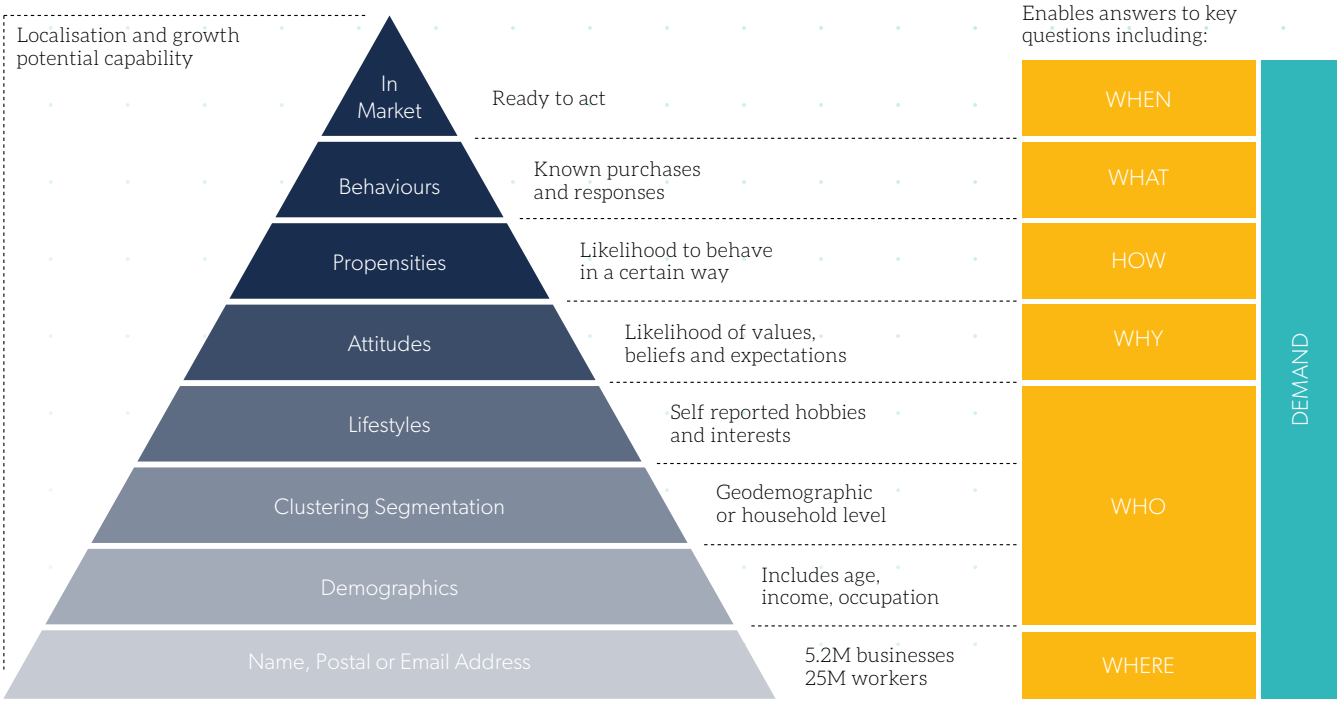



Fig. 2: Data requirements for SCV

Why is having a consolidated view of data so important? Because a complete picture of a customer **today** makes it far easier to predict what he or she will do **tomorrow.** Seeing their responses and reactions in context – as in Fig. 3 – lets you infer which issues they consider important and what factors most strongly in the buying decision.

A partial picture – or one based on inaccurate information – leads to false conclusions. And false conclusions are **bad data.** Garbage in, garbage out.

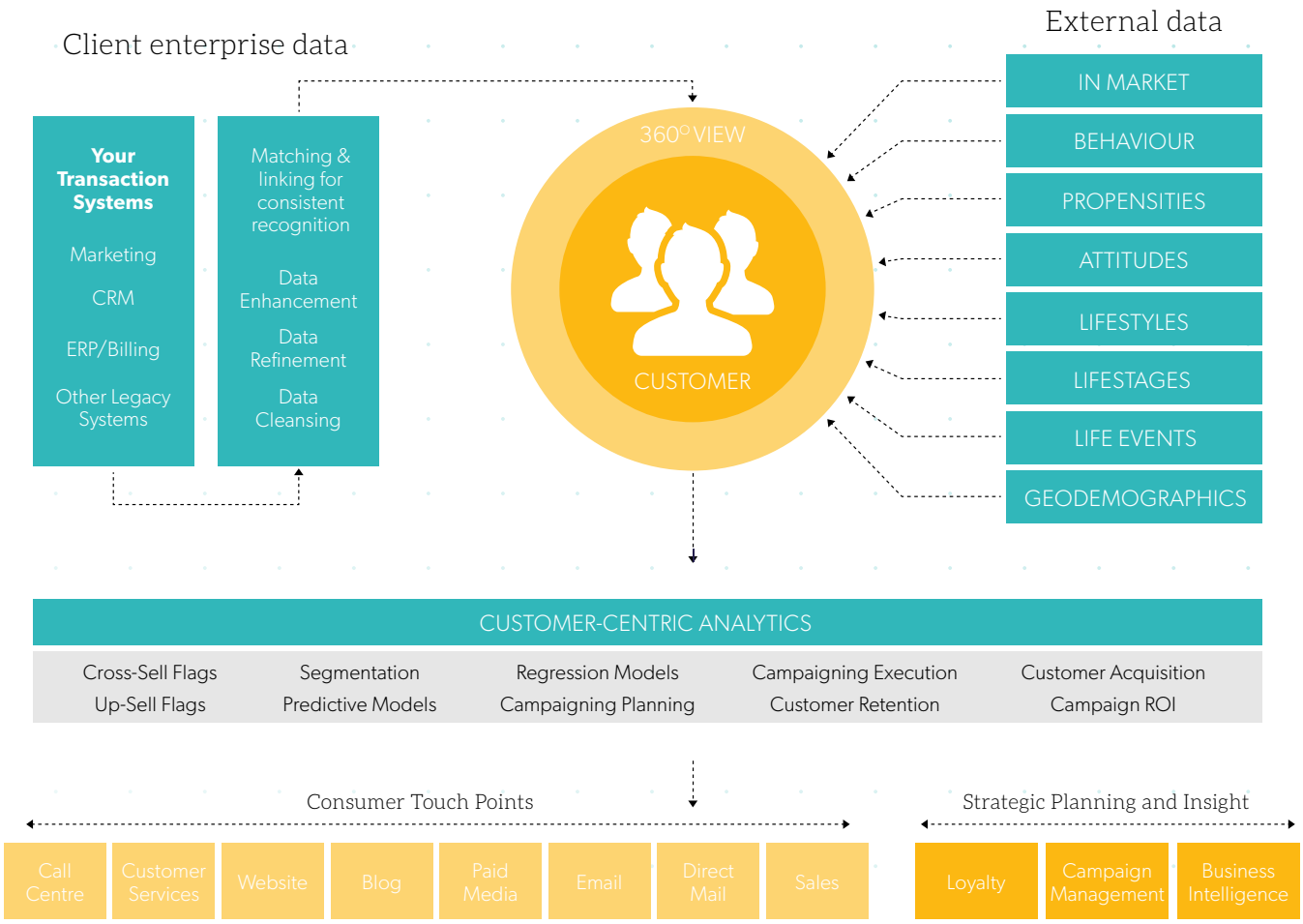



Fig. 3: Data requirements for a single customer view

## Survey finding:

On average, respondents think 26 per cent of their total data might be inaccurate.
This has risen from 17 per cent in 2013 and 22 per cent in 2014.
US organisations believe they have the highest percentage of inaccurate data, citing 32 per cent of their data is inaccurate on average, up from 25 per cent just a year ago.

Poor data quality is a board-level issue, with 83 per cent of respondents in commercial companies believing revenue is affected by inaccurate and incomplete customer or prospect data in terms of wasted resources, lost productivity and communications spend. Only 10 per cent said *none* of their revenue is wasted by poor data quality. (And to be blunt, that 10 per cent was probably being optimistic.)

From these figures, there's little question: understanding your customer as an individual is massively bolstered by having timely, accurate, and complete data on his or her hopes and dreams, and your interactions with same. Because when you understand a customer in depth, you build that emotional bond.

Yet even at the £1bn+ revenue level, only about one in three organisations have built what they consider to be a *satisfactory* single customer view. Nearly 60 per cent of companies report a strong or average ability to see across their channel and operational data (with a similar figure seeing it as vital) but that still leaves **four in ten companies flying blind.**

**So being truly data-driven starts with sound data management within your customer database.**
**A single version of the truth, maintaining knowledge of all interactions across the customer lifetime, is your fast track to developing true *insight*.**

# 2. Engagement management and optimisation

One level up from the foundations comes **engagement management.** It's where you use that fundamental SVOTT database *in real time* to decide, quantify, and *improve* your marketing performance. If the foundations are the *landscape,* engagement management is the *route planner.* It has four stages, as in Fig. 4.

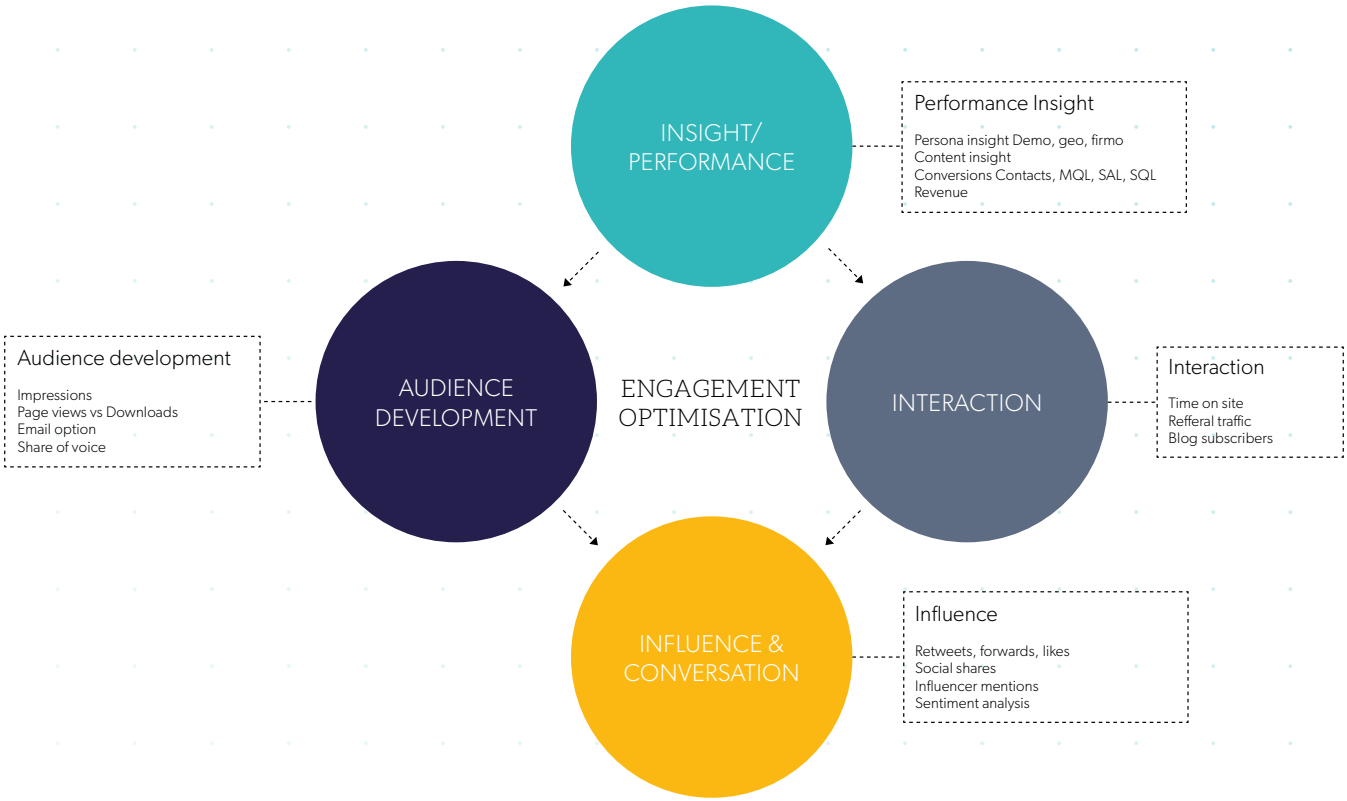



Fig. 4: Engagement metrics to measure

### Insight/performance

The data to start with comes out of your SVOTT, but needs a critical eye to turn into actions.

If your data shows that many cold leads were reignited when they visited an event, there's a case for getting intriguing content on their reading list the day before. If their sales cycle starts with a web search, it's a reason to allocate greater resources to SEO-friendly content that answers long-tail search queries. These **behavioural triggers** are your insights.

## Survey finding:

61 per cent of marketers believe they should be personalising customer experiences.

Use of behavioral triggered communications gives you an opportunity to boost engagement rates, since once set, the communication happens automatically every time a customer shows they're ready for it.

Exceptionally useful are **marketing automation** platforms like Hubspot, Pardot and Eloqua.

### Customer interaction

What happens during each exchange is the next area to look at. Customers react in different ways to the same content, and that means they're having a different experience. Don't ignore these differences.

## Survey finding:

» Eighty-six per cent of senior-level marketers agree that it's important to create a cohesive customer journey across all touchpoints and channels. «

**The State of Marketing Leadership**

One customer may download every paper you publish. Another may need a dozen opportunities before taking the plunge. On the metric above, the former customer is ready to move a lot faster; perhaps your engagement plan should let him leapfrog some of the nurturing. The latter wants to take his time; perhaps you should step back rather than make him feel pushed.

### Audience development

Third is how customers help you find *more* customers. If a significant fraction of respondents behaved in a particular way, it's likely there are a lot *more* customers off your database ready to react positively too.

Would taking the same experience out onto social media find this broader audience?

## Survey finding:

> With almost 60 per cent of respondents stating lead generation was their primary goal, the format in which you approach them with relevant content is critical.
> A lead isn't a lead if you're sending Tweets while your customer uses Instagram.

Engagement management is about personalising not just *content,* but **the way you *use* that content.** When to place it in front of the customer and when to lie in wait. Even the time of day, or how close they are to the end of their quarter, may be triggers that let you customise your activity for each individual prospect.

### Influencing the conversation

In the social sphere, your insights can guide to where the buzz is. SEO keywords become hashtags. Content ideas become trending topics. And a small number of your audience may be "influencers", cheerleading your brand to others.

## Survey finding:

> According to Accenture, 78 per cent of customers receive a fragmented experience as they move channel-by-channel.

Approaching these influencers in their natural habitat can make you part of the conversation. **Engagement management does not stop at your in-house database.**

This quartet is your engagement layer. Find these metrics, and use them. **If your foundations are sound, the data is likely to be in there already.**

### Personalisation: the key to maximising opportunities

The right metrics and measures can help you discover where these decision points are. But the greater part of engagement management is *personalisation.*

In today's complex business ecosystem, every customer's preferred way of being engaged with is different. But those differences aren't a vast, unmanageable ocean. They are a finite set of metrics, each with a *range.* Where each customer sits on that range can be measured and used in your engagement plan.

### Customers are like bumblebees – not everyone follows the same route to their destination

If you can successfully engage with each customer on a one-to-one basis, you're making the most of every opportunity your content experience opens up. Instead of one-size-fits-all, you're tailoring the conversation to each individual.

### How the customer reacts is part of customising their experience

All those responses you *nearly* got, that one extra customer who *would* have responded if you'd just engaged slightly differently – active engagement management can deliver. Raising your response rates to the maximum, for every campaign and programme.

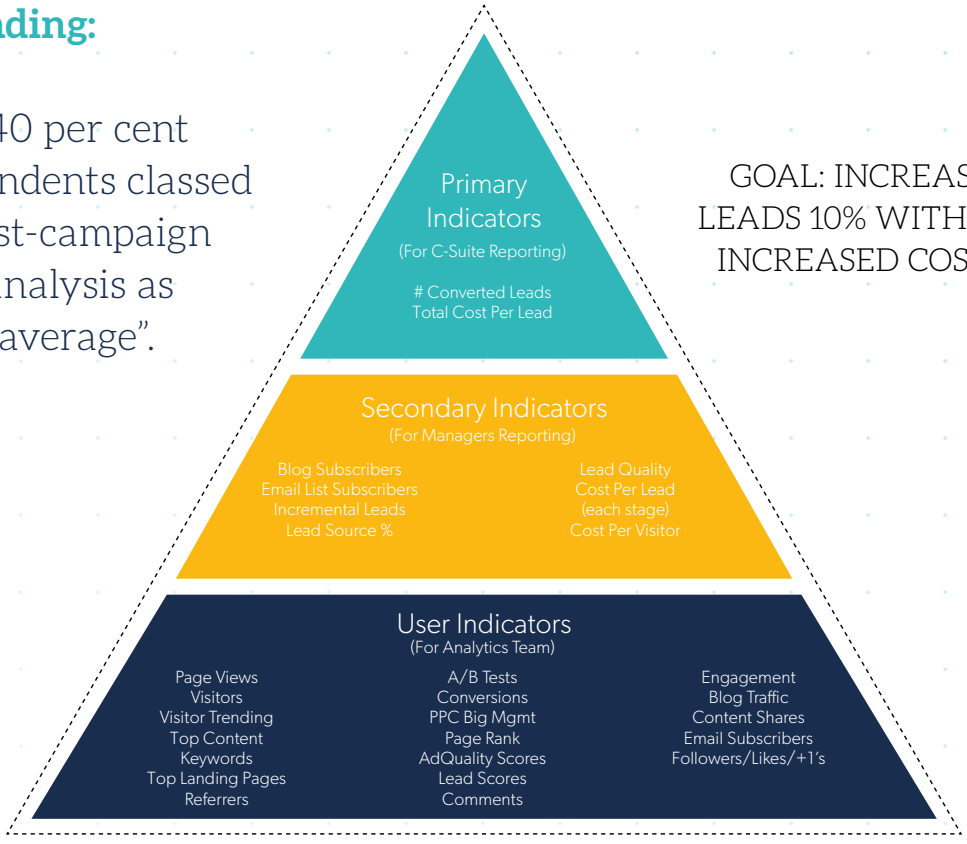
A relatively small number of metrics, with a relatively short list of response options for each, gives each customer a highly personalised experience without you needing to create or measure an infinite variety of actions. This again can be predefined within marketing automation platforms to use the behavior of your customer, which will essentially serve the experience.

The right performance measurement framework aligns content marketing objectives to actual business performance. So take the time to decide which measures *really* matter.

**Once the metrics are clear, you'll find they can often be reused across campaigns from quarter to quarter and year to year. Making every customer feel like they're your only customer, for little additional effort.**

## Survey finding:

Nearly 40 per cent of respondents classed their post-campaign results analysis as merely "average".




GOAL: INCREASE LEADS 10% WITH NO INCREASED COSTS

Fig. 5: A recommended set of metrics to manage performance

# 3. Experience creation and management

Many marketers start with the content, then attempt to find an audience. That can work, but it wastes resources. With personalised **engagement management** enabled by a solid core of **data management,** the next stage is to use data to *decide what content to create* – increasing your chances of engagement and strengthening the emotional bond with experience management.

## Survey finding:

> Understanding customer needs and finding new customers are key drivers for companies from selected global markets to turn data into insight.

And if your engagement management is working well, you already have a key advantage. You know what your ideal customer looks like.

> It's easier to create content for an audience, than to create an audience for content.

From your data, you already know what factors your typical customer considers important; what benefits they are interested in; the questions they want answered. These factors help you plan content that syncs precisely with your prospect's needs and desires. But they can change frequently. So while you're already listening to your *customer,* it's equally important to listen to the *market.*

**A documented content strategy with activities defined to create the required insight and real-time metrics alongside performance data to measure the engagement and experience.**

That's why **experience management** doesn't stop at your database. It may also include competitor conversations, media commentators, trending topics in the social space and so on.




Fig. 6: Documented content framework with highlighted insight and data points

## Survey finding:

In the survey, just three in 10 believed their content performance data was driving real business improvements in areas like brand awareness and lead generation.

### Ideas can be based on anything, but the best ones are driven by data

Developing content may be a creative process, but the best creativity is guided by hard facts and figures on **what will be relevant to your audience.**

So use your data to sensor-check every idea and critically assess every concept based on what business pain your content proposes to solve, and who that solution is relevant to.

This is why you need a documented content **strategy,** not just **content.** Your strategy is a framework for discovery, letting you identify areas of **customer need,** provide **structure to stakeholders** in your business, and track the **data points** required to be successful and improve.

Of course, what unites these real objectives is that they're all **data-driven.** Great objectives require accurate data to answer, which makes your organisation think more *about* data, which in turn forces people to improve data *quality.* It's a virtuous circle, all driven by data.

» If you do not see data as exciting, valuable, and empowering, then you are not a modern marketer. «

**eConsultancy**



# Summary: the virtuous circle

## These are the three layers of today's data-driven B2B marketing: foundation, engagement, and experience.

Each needs creativity and discipline. But the metrics that emerge when you make them work together will be ones *any* marketer will recognise.

They're **financial** metrics, like revenue growth and contribution to costs. They're useful ratios for **customer engagement,** like volume of leads versus customer acquisition cost. And they're the hard numbers of **awareness and reach,** and the performance of each channel.

Some believe the emotional warmth of personalised content has nothing in common with the hard numbers of quantitative data. As this article has demonstrated, they couldn't be more wrong.

# 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

## Tomorrow People

Birmingham-based inbound marketing agency Tomorrow People exists at the cutting edge of modern inbound marketing. They are a privately funded and leading player in the sphere of current marketing practice and thinking; creating strategies that build brands, generate sales-ready leads and increase revenue.

Tomorrow People brings together a team of experienced marketing strategists, innovators and creatives; each member a specialist in their own field. Its track record within the marketing industry is second to none.

It is the high calibre and expertise of this carefully assembled collective of marketing professionals that has seen the organisation, over the years, develop into a leading UK inbound marketing agency.

Situated in Birmingham, at the heart of the UK, Tomorrow People builds powerful online presences for businesses and organisations across all industries. Companies of all sizes are currently benefiting from its inbound marketing expertise.

**For more information visit: tomorrow-people.com**

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