

How to fuel better business outcomes with a clear data strategy



A Digital Marketing Depot Whitepaper



Sponsored by



Introduction

The data revolution

At one time, much of the world's recorded knowledge was stored in a single location -- the Great Library of Alexandria in Egypt.



Fig. 1. Reconstructed visual of The Library of Alexandria, THE GREAT LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA from the Readers Affair, Jan. 2017

Every culture and empire of that era recognized a single centralized location as the source of data and insights -- there was no internet, no data centers, no e-commerce and no cloud, just the above-pictured stone facility.

Fast forward to today, where information is completely decentralized. The vast repositories of the papyrus scrolls of Alexandria's library could now fit onto a single flash drive. The amount of data that now exists, and is being created daily, is truly staggering.

Consider the following figures:

- 90% of all data has been created in the last two years. (Source: IBM)
- Poor data quality costs the U.S. economy up to \$3.1 trillion yearly. (Source: IBM)
- In 2020, every person will generate 1.7 megabytes in just a second. (Source: Domo)
- Internet users generate about 2.5 quintillion bytes of data each day. (Source: Data Never Sleeps 5.0)
- 95% of businesses cite the need to manage unstructured data as a problem for their business. (Source: Forbes)
- Using big data, Netflix saves \$1 billion per year on customer retention. (Source: Statista, Inside Big Data)
- 80-90% of the data we generate today is unstructured. (Source: CIO)
- These statistics illustrate the challenge and the importance of data for businesses in these modern times. To get a handle on it and best take advantage of the opportunities it presents require solid, intentional strategic planning.

In this whitepaper, we'll look at the benefits of adopting a data-driven strategy for your business, as well as the dangers of falling behind your competition in this area. We'll also cover important considerations as you begin to develop a strategy -- things you need to get in place and pitfalls you must avoid.

Note: This whitepaper was based on a recent webinar sponsored by Televerde. Thanks to the original speakers: **Meetul Shah, founder and CEO of DemandMatrix**, and **Deanna Ransom, Global Head of Marketing, Marketing Service and the Chairman of Diversity and Inclusion at Televerde**. The webinar is available for viewing [on demand](#).

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Table of Contents	2
Data is one of your business' biggest strategic assets and the failure to develop a strategy puts you in a precarious position	3
Common pitfalls and misconceptions about data strategy	4
Steps in the data maturity model	6
6 data strategy foundation best practices	6
Conclusion	8

Data is one of your business' biggest strategic assets and the failure to develop a strategy puts you in a precarious position

The events of 2020 -- from COVID-19 to wildfires to civil rights protests -- have shown how quickly the world can change. We've seen a tremendous shift to a large number of people working from home, creating an unprecedented level of digital dependency. This immediately changed how businesses had to think and execute in terms of staying connected with and understanding the needs of their audiences. 57% of the purchase decision is complete before a customer even calls a supplier, according to CEB. And 67% of the buyer's journey is now done digitally, notes SiriusDecisions.

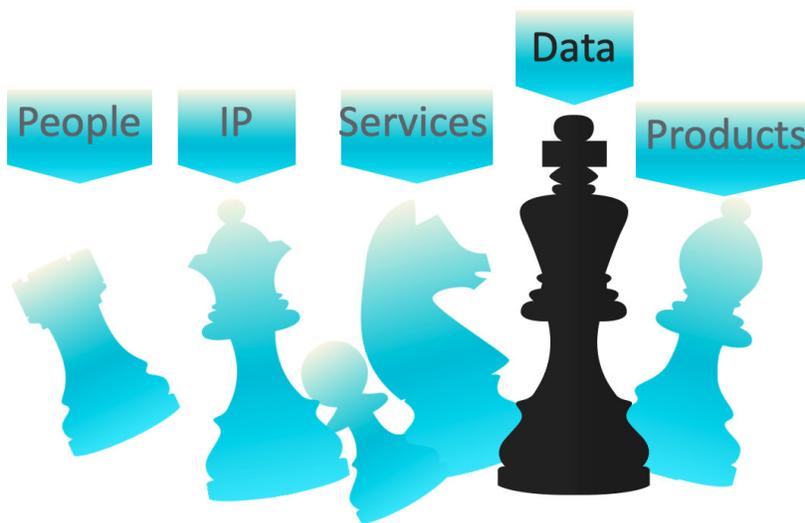
"Now, more than ever, it becomes clear that business success in our now even more digitally-dependent world hinges on modern and effective data and analytics," said Deanna Ransom, Global Head of Marketing and Marketing Services at Televerde.

But marketers aren't the only ones impacted. The changes have affected every facet of doing business today and they've made data more important than ever.

"That really should speak to the urgency [of having a clear data strategy], because if you didn't have a defined use case and a data strategy immediately, your business was put into a bit of a precarious situation," said Ransom. "Primarily because data is one of your biggest business assets, right alongside your products, your services, your intellectual property and your people."

Why a Data Strategy is so Important, Especially now

- High digital dependence
- Rapid technological advancement
- Imperative to attaining business goals
- Insights for driving decision making



Business assets that provide competitive advantage and clear strategic operational support.

Data was once considered as something of a byproduct of a business activity or process, but increased digital dependency, explosive technology growth and evolving audience needs, businesses need data to be able to adapt. Business leaders who are able to tap into its many benefits will have a significant competitive advantage.

Companies Using Anecdotal, Gut-Based Decision Making	Companies Using Strategic Data-Driven Decision Making
Losing \$1.8 trillion annually to their competitors.	Growing at an average of 30% per year and taking \$1.8 trillion annually from their less-informed industry competitors. (Source: Forrester Research)
Losing customers in all stages of the pipeline. Struggling to achieve profitability.	23X more likely to acquire customers, 6X more likely to retain customers and 9X more likely to be profitable. (Source: McKinsey Global Institute)
Failing to achieve profit increases and cost reductions.	Increased profit by 8% and experienced a 10% reduction in costs. (Source: Bark Research)

Common pitfalls and misconceptions about data strategy

Data strategy is not a “one-and-done” project

Some business leaders have addressed the data problem by bringing in a “data person” or hiring a consultant to collect data and derive insights. Then, once the data project is complete, they make all of their business decisions based on that data set.

The problem is that, given the velocity of change, any data set quickly grows stagnant and, with time, becomes increasingly irrelevant. In short, data decays. The rapid changes in the consumer and business environment in 2020 is a perfect example of this problem. Companies currently relying on 2019 data to make decisions about addressing their audiences are handicapped from the start.

So, a business’ data strategy must be an ongoing process that is tuned into the needs and information-seeking habits of their customers.

Get executive buy-in

To successfully run such an operation within your organization, it’s critical to gain support at the top levels of management. Begin by providing your corporate sponsor with statistics that touch upon the bottom-line impact of adopting such a data strategy. Over time, your results will reinforce the wisdom of the decision, but you have to start somewhere.

Data isn’t just a B2C thing

The lines between B2C and B2B are blurring all the time. Marketers may not think they can take advantage of the data generated by 40,000 searches per second on Google, one billion hours of video viewed on YouTube daily and a hundred terabytes of data generated on Facebook yearly. But the majority of your prospects use Google as their first method of learning about your company, even if they’re researching on behalf of their own enterprise.

The challenges of agreeing on data frameworks

The differences between “XYZ,” “XYZ Inc.” and “XYZ-Inc” may not seem very significant, but when you’re a giant organization trying to unify the data you have about your customers -- and you find the records aren’t consistent between marketing, sales and customer service -- you’ve got a serious problem.

It's also important to agree on the definitions of data points within your systems. For example, deciding collectively what it means when a lead is a marketing-qualified lead (MQL) will save you headaches down the line.

"I've yet to come across an organization that has the data piece fully figured out, maybe there are a few of them," said Meetul Shah, founder and CEO of DemandMatrix. "In general, this anomaly exists in pretty much every organization -- small, midsize, enterprise. The larger the organization, the more chaos they're going to have."

Don't rest on your data laurels

Businesses sometimes come up with a way to define or find their target customers and stick with that persona for all of their marketing efforts. Perhaps they're a B2B software company that looks at firmographics like the size or category or geography of the prospect business.

While that approach may work, it's important to stay familiar with the new types of data coming onto the market. For example, that B2B software company might bring in technographical information about the current tech stacks of the prospect businesses. They might also look at what kind of content people at the prospect business are consuming, what industry forums they're participating in, what kind of people they've hired in the past few years.

"I call this intent intelligence," said Shah. "It's a directional signal which is giving you an insight as to what companies are potentially looking for these types of products and services."

Steps in the data maturity model

Shah describes three steps that businesses must follow to strategically employ data.

1. Discovery
2. Action
3. Rinse and repeat

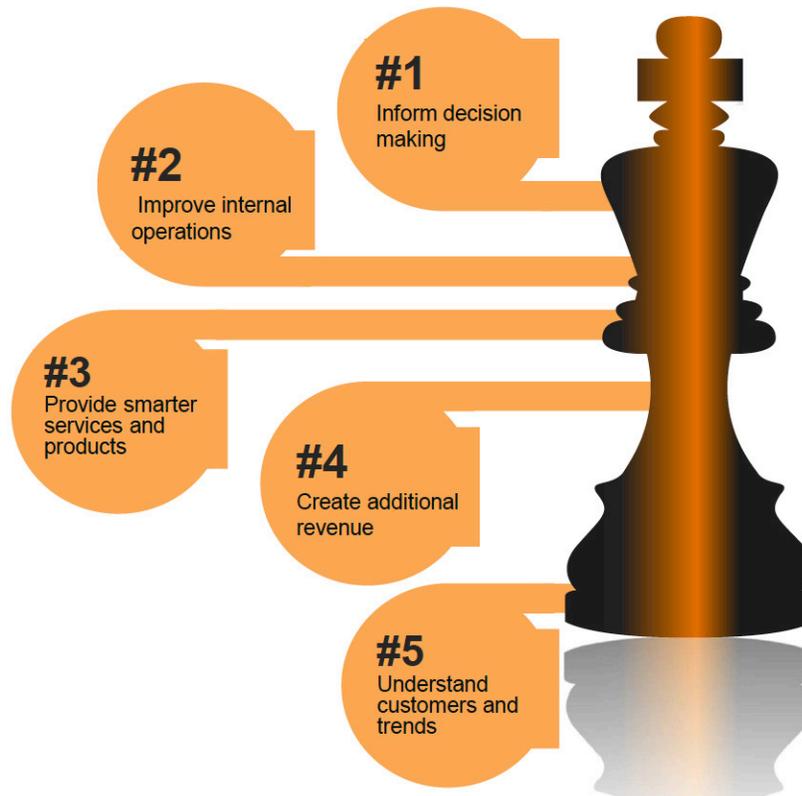
The Discovery phase is about determining who you want to target with your marketing and sales. To do that, employ various types of data to pare down the group of prospects that you're targeting, using the techniques described above.

Action involves deciding how to go after those prospects. Here you need to consider what channels to use to reach these target audiences, what the cadence of communications should be and what the content of messages should be. You'll also look at the signals that will help you move these prospects through the pipeline.

Rinse and repeat can refer to iterating on the channels and messages to coax prospects toward a sale, or it can mean going back to the beginning and gathering new data and insights.

"This is an evolving journey, right? It is not a one-time thing, it is a continuous process that you need to implement and invest in, at leadership level," notes Shah. "And this process is refined and continuously improved upon."

5 Key business use cases for data



6 data strategy foundation best practices

1. Don't start with the data. Identify the problem.

Think about the strategic priorities that you've laid out and what you want to achieve. Then think about how data can help you to achieve the goal. Too many times people start with the data rather than using it as a tool to solve the strategic problem that needs to be solved.

2. Start small. Think in bite sized increments.

You don't necessarily need big data to solve your problems. What's most important is having the right data to solve your problems.

6 Data strategy foundation best practices



3. Define your analytics requirements. Structured and unstructured data.

You'll need a plan and the right tools for analyzing your data and you need the ability to marry the traditional data sets with the more complex and unstructured data sets to really unlock the power and the insights.

4. Establish reporting needs. Format, access and presentation.

You need to think about who will need to have access to the insights, and how they're going to view them. This ties into getting and keeping executive buy-in for a strategic data program. If you think about not just the data, but how it's presented to the right people, it will fuel decision making, and it will cause them to be more willing to adopt and advance with this data driven approach.

5. Get the right tools. Software and Hardware.

Having the right tools will enable you to turn the data into something really useful and valuable.

6. Plan your action. Set the tone, team and measurement.

Get your business case together. Define your key milestones. It can be very difficult to build consensus and alignment about milestones but this will go a long way toward getting more departments in your company to adopt this data-driven approach. However, you shouldn't try to solve all of your business cases at once. Get one solid business case, demonstrate the value and then expand and grow from there.

Conclusion

There are three important things to remember as you work to adopt a data-driven strategy in your organization. First you must understand the value of your data and treat it as the strategic business asset that it is, to be able to realize the tremendous benefits of this approach. Second, you should consider working with a partner with experience implementing programs like this, so you can avoid potential pitfalls and accelerate the transition. Third, take action now. Seize this moment to begin your journey because, as 2020 has proven, the environment changes rapidly and you need a data strategy to understand and communicate effectively with your customers and prospects. ■

About Televerde

Televerde is the preferred global revenue creation partner driving marketing, sales and customer success excellence for B2B businesses around the world.

Powered by a cutting-edge customer journey platform and the delivery of a highly personalized experience we deliver end to end on the full life-cycle of revenue generation from Marketing, through Sales to Customer Success with scalability, repeatability and predictability. Our uniquely evolved approach, business model, best practices and integrated solution has enabled us to deliver \$65B+ in pipeline and to close \$10B+ in revenue for our customers including, Epson, Adobe Marketo, Pulse Secure ,Sage and counting. televerde.com

About DemandMatrix

DemandMatrix increases your go-to-market efficiency with a foundation of better market intelligence. Researching millions of publicly available sources and over a billion documents per month, DemandMatrix uses machine learning and narrow-AI to find, catalog and score 12,473 hardware and software products that 13,716,365 companies in 236 countries are using or considering. Find out more at demandmatrix.com.

About Digital Marketing Depot

Digital Marketing Depot is a resource center for digital marketers. We feature hosted white papers and e-books, original research, and webinars on everything from advertising to analytics, SEO and PPC campaign management tools to social media management software, email marketing, and more. Digital Marketing Depot is a division of Third Door Media, publisher of Search Engine Land, Marketing Land, and MarTech Today and producer of the conference series MarTech and Search Marketing Expo. Visit us at digitalmarketingdepot.com.