



Why your next recruit should be a data specialist

Article by Shaune Jordaan, Hoorah Digital

Gone are the days when businesses could get away with gut instinct à la Mad Men and a one-size-fits-all approach. Going into 2021, implementing marketing and advertising campaigns without drawing on data is akin to entering a war without a weapon – with your bottom line as the casualty. These days, data isn't just a modern marketing panacea, data *is* digital marketing.

Today's consumers are more discerning and demanding than ever before. That means if you want to increase your marketing ROI, and keep customers engaged and satisfied, you need to tailor your campaigns, and personalise and enhance your customers' experience at every touchpoint - both physical and digital. To achieve this, you need to understand your audience better than they understand themselves.

With the right tools, you can approach your marketing far more effectively. Segmenting customers according to demographics, psychographics, locations, social networks and behaviour, for example, is a good place to start. Then you can use this data to create targeted creative campaigns, choose the right delivery channels, and assess impact in order to optimise them further. You can also use past and present data to highlight patterns, spot trends and predict the future. All of this helps ensure you are investing your time, effort and marketing budget as effectively as possible.

Data also underlies your capability of personalising customer experience. This is no longer just a competitive advantage - it's a prerequisite for success. Personalisation is most effective at the micro level, but today's customers expect far more than just their name on a mailer. Artificial intelligence and machine learning make it possible to analyse vast quantities of data, enabling businesses to deliver relevant, creative content personalised to a customer's needs, and at the moment when they need it. This has a massive impact on results at every level, including customer satisfaction, conversion rates, average order value and, of course, your bottom line.

With all the inexpensive technology on the market expressly designed for the purpose, it's easy to gather, store and analyse an abundance of data. That's only one part of the equation, however. Raw data, on its own, is close to useless and quickly becomes irrelevant. The far more difficult, and more critical part, is interpreting that data, contextualising it, and then translating the results into actionable insights and usable recommendations. For that you need a skilled data specialist.

Good data specialists need to be part analyst-part statistician, and often part programmer too, depending on your business - and they also need to understand your industry. Add to this scarce combination of skills the ability to communicate effectively, which is essential as they need to collaborate with teams across your business, and you have an extremely valuable resource. Not surprisingly, data specialists are very much in demand, and will become even more so in the next few years, commanding ever higher salaries.

For those businesses without the budget to hire full-time data specialists, not to mention the creative expertise required to translate those insights into marketing and digital campaigns, an alternative is to work with a company that specialises in this field. They can provide a team of experts across the various disciplines as and when you need them.

It's worth bearing in mind that data and even insights are only useful up to a point. As Elea Feit, assistant professor of marketing at Drexel University, [says](#): "In the end, analytics won't tell you the next big creative idea. But it will tell you *when* the next big creative idea is *working*."

At Hoorah, we take this concept to heart by connecting the dots. We use technology and data-driven insights to understand people. Then we put those insights to work by creating innovative, customised solutions, including personalised experiences at scale, and creative visual and communication strategies with customers at their heart. This is how we help realise results that really impact the bottom line.

Let's be clear, data will never replace real connection, which has been the underlying driver of sales since time immemorial. But using data-driven insights creatively can certainly help you strengthen that connection with your customers and build your business in an efficient and cost-effective way. That's the true power of data.



*Shaune Jordaan is CEO of **Hoorah Digital**, an advanced digital media and marketing performance consultancy. The agency works with in-house teams using its technology and expertise to optimise clients' media mix, to bring down overheads and to maximise the profitability of their digital channels.*



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