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Decode the data landscape
Reboot your sales and marketing
Prepare for the era of AI

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Marc Bresseel & Renout van Hove

DECODE

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OBSI

adjective UK /əb'sest/

unable to stop thinking about something; too interested in or worried about something:

Why are people so obsessed with money?

Why, as a society, does sex obsess us?

Why has Mankind always been obsessed with power?

Why are some people so obsessed with personal hygiene?

They say he's obsessed with Barbra Streisand and collects anything and everything connected with her.

ESSED

Being obsessed in a business context can be an extraordinary positive driver of change. Whatever customer interfacing role you have – today, we cannot go about without being obsessed with the customer experience. We cannot neglect to be obsessed with extraordinary customer service. We need to be obsessed with metrics. We must be obsessed with technology, making the right choices, making it work.

However, most of all, today it is all about reformatting your mental hard drive and think customer data as a fundamental first principle. Being obsessed with an understanding of customer data can provide a broader thinking framework, and can be the cure to ad hoc tactical initiatives that have created the many data silos many of us face in our organizations.

Being positively obsessed with your clients, your clients' data, and the added value you can bring to them based on that data, will bring a stronger emotional connection to those data.

So when that magic happens in your organization, you will be able to reboot your sales and marketing.

Introduction

It's a complicated relationship between consumers and brands

Customers demand great experiences from brands and companies: positive, relevant, useful, efficient, surprising, predictive, and proactive. They have been educated and conditioned by big disruptors who exploit and optimize the power of the available technology to improve their business model, their customer experience, their product experience. New media companies like Netflix and Spotify provide viewers with relevant selections of potential favorite programming after they sign on. Retailers understand shoppers' requirements when they log in and can display personal messages or offer personalized coupons based on in-store sensors and as such, provide an engaging customer experience that positively impacts revenue performance. At the core of this disruption – being driven by start-ups and incumbent players alike – is the ability to harness data generated through customer transactions, engagements and, increasingly, connected smart devices. Brands and clients have an obligation to provide relevant experiences for these irrationally impatient and demanding clients.

Ride the technology waves that drive change

Technology has enabled the relationship between consumers and brands for many years in an acceleration of waves of different hypes from 'simple' data warehousing to Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems to marketing automation to the next hype. Today's marketing, advertising, and technology landscape has evolved into a jungle of over 7,000 marketing software companies fighting for your attention. The degree of software innovation in marketing is gigantic. Marketing technology is now the most considerable portion of the total marketing budget (29% on average, according to Gartner).

With marketing and technology becoming intertwined, marketers have to become even more intentional about the software they choose. Understanding the marketing technology stack landscape is vital. Knowing the group of technologies that marketers use to execute, analyze, and improve their marketing across the customer lifecycle is crucial. In Chapter 2, we will discuss how your business can navigate the martech landscape to build a lean, productive marketing tech stack that drives your business built on data. We'll show examples of companies that are leading the way and are building their data-driven marketing tech stack.

We will also clarify it is important to think strategy first, marketing process second, technology last. Martech is about building a strategy and then finding technology that enables it. Not the other way around.

We will briefly touch upon what is the basic anatomy of a marketing tech stack's core data technologies. And how do you make the right and relevant choice? All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others. A one-size-fits-all marketing stack that works for any business does not exist.

It's not surprising that most marketing executives say lead generation is one of their biggest challenges. But sometimes filling the top of the bucket just isn't the right way, especially if it's leaking or has a big hole at the bottom. Marketing is more than demand generation. Before spending a fortune to attract businesses to the website, we need to ask the question: what's happening when they get there, knowing that buyers today have all the power? They don't want to have to fill out forms and wait for lengthy follow-ups. How do you engage your website visitors in a modern conversational way? After generating and nurturing leads, how do you hand those leads over to sales and make sure they're acted upon?

How do you analyze and optimize? Don't consider analytics as an afterthought or a method of justifying the outcomes of a marketing system, but as a tool to fine-tune the contributing and attributing aspects of that system. According to Gartner, marketing analytics spend has moved from #4 to the #1 marketing budget priority. Marketers are embracing the validation capabilities of analytics at every layer of the stack.

Customer data as the fundament for customer-obsessed organizations

Customer data reigns as the competitive differentiator of market success and should drive every single decision and make every customer interaction smoother or more relevant. Customer data reflect the customer's heartbeat and what makes him or her 'tick'. Deep insights turned into positive marketing lead to excellent customer delight and loyalty. In more traditional companies, there is a direct correlation between the adoption of a digital transformation strategy and the degree of connected consumer experiences. A data strategy and a data-driven culture are drivers for success.

While data is critical, many organizations are still entangled in 20th century methods, processes, and technology. Companies that are not adapting are

finding their customer bases steeply eroding as data-savvy competitors offer cheaper, faster products, more personalized experiences and are stronger aligned with customers' expectations. While some business leaders recognize that they must move fast to become customer-data-driven enterprises, most are only starting to grasp the power of customer data. And no, it's not only about speed: we're moving away from the "move fast and break things". We should move speedily, with haste, yet build steadily.

Half the challenge for marketers today is choosing which of the thousands of data sources to integrate into their marketing system. How do you build a customer data infrastructure? How do you marry data from all various silos within which it sits, and transform it in such a way that it can be rendered useful? This is where Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) come in. What is a CDP? How do you identify all the different data sources? How do you build a CDP? How does it differ from a Data Management Platform (DMP)?

New kinds of metrics that focus on value rather than performance. If the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) is the Chief Electrocardiograph Officer measuring the customer's heartbeat, how do they effectively measure the stages of the customer funnel? And even more importantly – how do you measure the value you create for your customers, away from vanity metrics that reduce your marketing department to a cost center? Additionally, while the value can be a competitive differentiator still today – more and more, you'll see your competitive playground is not your current direct competitor – but that your competitive benchmark is based on the best experience your customer has ever had. Frictionless and effortless non-intrusive predictive experiences are swiftly becoming the new normal, and it can take a great deal of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to come to that state of experience building.

The power of an AI-wired world

Thus, enter AI: the next evolution of our marketing tech stack is about applying machine learning and AI wherever possible. At the moment of writing, May 2019, there are 810 AI start-ups in Europe alone in the seed capital phase (VentureBeat). Today, pragmatic AI can already unleash you from many of the daily tasks as a marketer. But more importantly, AI can and will help you get even with the catch 22 you are in. We live in the age of the AI wired customer. We – all of us – are being conditioned multiple times daily by touchpoints that are enabled by AI. 80% of mobile users look at their social the moment they wake up. Before letting out the dog, brushing teeth or taking a shower. The moment we do that – we trust the AI of Facebook to have digested and spit out what we would like to see. We don't need and don't want to start looking for what's interesting. If you have enough of Facebook, you turn to Tinder. Tinder uses AI to op-

timize matchmaking. But what Tinder especially does is create procrastination. Procrastination is the disease of our times. You never know that next swipe might be someone just a little better looking, right? So, we're still in bed Tinder-ing away – you get a notification from Waze it's time to leave or you will be late for work. Waze puts context on steroids. Context is no longer about what we do, it's about where we are, what we are going to do or where we are heading. Waze uses real-time predictive traffic data, historical data, location data, calendar data and mingles it all together in something that is called convenience. So, we got to work in time – we see someone in the street with great shoes. What do you do? You take your iPhone, open up the Google Search application and lens it. Yes, open up your phone. It's there. When you open up Google Search on your iPhone you'll see that little camera. Point it at something, and Google will tell you what it is. Not tomorrow. Today. Now. On your phone. But more importantly – it will tell you where to buy the shoes. Amazon is not the biggest retailer in the world. Google is. They have agreements with 241 big retailers that already vertically integrate. From picture to buying in two clicks. This is visual AI at work. The AI wired customer is there because AI plays a dominant role already in our everyday lives. And you need to use AI yourself as a lever in order to remain relevant in that AI wired world.

Digesting General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The post-GDPR-era: we have just entered the GDPR era that represents significant changes to the way businesses addressing the European/EEA market can process a customer's data. Many businesses have found it a daunting change. How do we see GDPR as an opportunity to get data management in line, or drive data management throughout an organization more diligently, at least compliantly if not ethically? How can a unified and integrated Customer Data Platform benefit your business and long-term growth strategy?

Competition is grounded in fundamental rights, also in digital. We are moving from an era of competing on analytics towards one of competing on trust. As the data ecosystem is increasingly becoming intertwined, while the rule of law advances globally in drafting (and hopefully enforcing) the broad brushstrokes of players' obligations, the backbones of our economies and lives will inevitably take advantage of data as a lubricant. The GDPR broadens the commitments of our industry with respect to personal data, supported by the ePrivacy (to be) Regulation and other Directives such as Payment Service Directive (PSD2) and Network and Information System (NIS), while on the other side of the pond, the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) also introduces a stepping up of consumer rights with respect to how their data is going to be used and passed along. While the rule will never intend to become a technical requirement, how can such advances in legislation move from being perceived as a compliance

cost center towards an opportunity to compete on data protection and trust, supporting your customer's lifetime value? We will explore the challenges faced by actors within the digital data ecosystem and propose some paths forward to further support collaboration between legal professionals, ideally policymakers, and data-driven companies.

The changing role of the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) – in need of a paradigm shift

Marketing and the CMO have the immense opportunity to control this renewed customer experience and be the eye in the storm. They can be an agent of change in driving a customer-obsessed company in holding the pulse of the customers' heartbeat. And yet, CMOs struggle and have the shortest average tenure among all C-suite roles – 18 months on average to be exactly. Their role is evolving dramatically, and new skills and approaches are required. More than ever, CMOs must understand their consumers' behavior online and offline, and that requires new skill sets and technology to achieve goals.

Marketing technologies provide more in-depth insight into how and where consumers are and what pushes them to purchase. The use of data and marketing technology drives decision making and customer understanding across all channels. The CMO's skills set demands a broad range of skills and in-depth knowledge of consumer behavior, and of how technology and e-commerce drive growth. The most successful CMOs in today's digital age will understand where (and why) their consumers shop and direct their team to continually improve product experiences to keep customers loyal, engaged and ready to buy more.

Our sector needs a cultural paradigm shift in dealing with marketing technology and applying it to marketing scenarios. An obsession with long-term thinking and customer relationships based on value rather than short-term gains. An obsession with inspirational brand experiences rather than intrusive, nagging, overdemanding ones. Maybe marketers need a charter of common sense. We have written this down in our 10 rules of Obsessed. Ten simple rules to commit to.

OBSESSED

The **10** rules of the principle abiding marketer

A maturity model is one thing. Without a framework, or a set of guidelines or rules to follow as 'principle abiding marketers' it's pretty inadequate. Moreover, while GDPR has been a blessing for some, it remains a regulatory vehicle. Nothing more, nothing less. We need ten commonsense rules in plain English that - when followed - drive organizations to do what's right in the eyes of the customer.

With these 10 rules, we humbly strive to trigger creating a valiant movement that uses these rules as a beacon of common sense.

The 10 rules are categorized according to Strategy, Organization, Operations, Culture, Customers.

Strategy: Move beyond insight into foresight using relationships

- 1 Aspire to build a relationship with a person that has feelings, hopes, fears, and dreams, not only market to a persona or a segment.
- 2 Martech is about helping your customers help you by helping themselves in the easiest way possible.

Organization: Customers can contribute to the success of the organization

- 3 Recognize that your customers do not always fit in your magically and beautifully crafted (but sometimes theoretical) customer journeys.
- 4 Think beyond departments silos, and its dysfunctionalities and strive for a martech stack that puts the customer effort in the middle of every initiative you take.

Operations: Customers don't expect perfection, they appreciate the openness

- 5 When deploying martech, as a fundamental principle, focus on your customer's problem. Do not make your broken martech stack your customers' problem.
- 6 Acknowledge that your customers don't care about departments and their correlative dysfunctionalities. Strive to create seamless experiences that do not stop at the sale.

Culture: Create a culture and educate the organization to use technology for the benefit of the customer

- 7 Use the power of technology primarily to create more relevant and frictionless customer experiences.
- 8 Use AI mainly to be more relevant and less intrusive to your customers and serve them better and more effectively.

Consumers: Give consumers a sense of control of the relationship

- 9 Disengage proactively when your customer does not engage with your messages, do not block the exit and make it as easy and smooth as the entrance.
- 10 Primarily use data to create contextually relevant, smooth, and helpful experiences and never ask for data that you will not use.

Concluding thought – On a more philosophical note

As the technology matures, we turn to uniformity. Uniformity in what we do and in how we do it. Uniformity in what we create. Uniformity in what we buy and in the media we digest.

Technology puts us in a tunnel of a continued equivalence of what we once knew we wanted. Recommendations are giving us more of what we have had already. The more marketing turns into this science of predicting, the more critical authenticity becomes. The more important it will become to provide customers with the sense of the unexpected. Brands need to start surprising again to delight and differentiate.

Technology is incredibly empowering. Today, anybody can become anything to a certain extent and have technology augment their skill sets. Everyone can become a better writer, thanks to AI and platforms such as Grammarly. Everybody can be a DJ since software flattens out the errors while mixing your favorite tunes. Anyone can become a better marketer as AI augments our knowledge of what resonates and what doesn't. Everybody can be a musician, a truck driver, or a data scientist, as AI will start to do the trick for us. Everybody can be great call center agents since AI-driven scripts become more cognitively empathic. Everybody can excel in internal sales as CRMs will tell us what to do next with a very high certainty of success.

The more technology augments and pimps our competences and skills, job and role descriptions will flatten out, start eroding, and lose meaning. The more important it will be to assess and hire people based on their value creation in the value chain of your organization. The more important it will also become to look even more at EQ as an important factor for success.

Value creation and EQ. Also, obsession. Google hires only individuals that have an absolute obsession outside of their professional life – playing the violin, excelling at cycling. You name it. No obsession means no role at Google. At Amazon, everyone, independent of what job they're going after – including any non-customer-facing job – needs to prepare answers for the multiple customer obsession questions because it's the company's favorite principle.

This is how Jeff Bezos explains the principle: leaders start with the customer and work backward. They work vigorously to earn and keep customer trust. Although leaders pay attention to competitors, they should obsess over customers.

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Being obsessed with positive change and ideas can propel us to extraordinary achievements and can be a fantastic positive driver of change.

In the age of AI wired consumers with irrationally high demands, we need to be obsessed with creating smooth, differentiated, relevant, exciting customer experiences, and frictionless customer services. Any of those interactions should be driven by customer data – the pulse of every customer's unique heartbeat, and an organization that has adopted new methodologies, processes, and technology platforms.

In *Obsessed*, we **demystify the complex world of data and sales and marketing technology**. We answer questions like: How do you build a data culture and strategy? How can you be more intentional about the technology foundation you choose to improve your marketing and sales engine across the customer lifecycle? How do you create an obsession for the right metrics that focus on value? How do you infuse Artificial Intelligence capabilities into your organization? Can you see GDPR as an enabler?

Finally, we need a cultural paradigm shift in dealing with marketing technology and applying it to marketing and sales scenarios. An obsession with long-term thinking and customer relationships based on value rather than short-term. And that's when you truly start rebooting your revenue engine.

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