

How to innovate faster in marketing

 By [Mike Saunders](#)

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It was Steve Jobs who coined the phrase, "Computers are like a bicycle for our minds"; suggesting that much like a bicycle, computers would help people move quicker to the destination once you apply effort. Jobs saw the computer as an enhancer to human capacity instead of a replacement.

I have a similar belief that digital technology helps us enhance human potential in business instead of replacing it. In marketing, especially, we see that strong digital foundations and understanding helps marketers improve quicker, innovate smarter and understand customers deeper.

When we look at digital, we segment it into pieces from primary technologies, social, mobile, data and The Internet of Things. In this article, I want to explore a simple question: how will data infrastructures help marketers become more innovative and agile?



Mike Saunders

Almost every single marketer would agree that being able to innovate faster is an incredible competitive advantage in business. The trick is learning how to do this, and how to gear our marketing team correctly to achieve it. When it comes to data, we can learn from the IT industry and see how innovative businesses use IT infrastructures as a means to innovate.

According to [McKinsey](#), a two-speed system architecture is valuable in becoming more innovative and agile.

"This implies a fast-speed, customer-centric front end (speed of innovation) running alongside a slow-speed, transaction-focused legacy back end (speed of operation). For software-release cycles and deployment mechanisms, the customer-facing part should be modular, to enable quick deployment of new software by avoiding time-consuming integration work. In contrast, the transactional core systems of record must be designed for stability and high-quality data management, which leads to longer release cycles."

If we go back to the bicycle analogy, we could theorize that each of these speeds is a cog on the bicycle chain. The small one being the customer centric fast speed cog (innovation) and the bigger cog being the core mission critical aspects of the business (operation). In this case, data becomes the bicycle chain. It's the aspect of business, that when accessed by the cog, allows the business to get in gear and draw speed. Both cogs use the same data in the same way, but for different purposes and outcomes. Both are important and both need to be considered.

Data infrastructure should support your speed of operation and your speed of innovation, and this is possible with the right data systems in place. It's important to understand that access to the right data will help both operations be sound and innovation be fast.

Keeping this in mind, data infrastructure should be solving the following mission critical concerns:

1. Collecting consumer information

Consumer information is vast and comes in various different forms. [Market research companies](#) present deep insight into consumers through reports, catalogues and online systems. This information is a combination of data driven insight and qualitative assessment. While it may be difficult to drive this into our data infrastructure, marketers will benefit from being able to make this information available to their wider stakeholder network.

In addition, technology has meant that we can track real-time consumer data online through social network conversations, app usage information and even product usage information. As technology becomes more integrated into people's lives, we will see the number of consumer data points we can collect grow rapidly. This will put pressure on our systems to collect data in real-time and manage a variety of data sets.

Top retailers like Marks & Spencer has already deployed an open source [Hadoop-based data analytics engine](#) to better understand customer behaviour.

2. Aggregating siloed data

Every marketer is measuring every aspect of the marketing plan they possibly can, but very rarely are they able to break these reporting techniques out of their respective silos and see the data together. New start up technologies are starting to answer these questions and we are seeing some products become available that help marketers see all marketing data from social media to TV and radio campaigns, in the same place.

In our experience with this, we are already seeing big value as marketers can start understanding cause and effect between marketing channels, correlation between channels, wasted resources and better investment into valuable channel combination.

Accessibility

This is the most important part to building the speed of innovation in your marketing – making the data available. Whether you choose to do this through closed systems you can manage and invite stakeholders to, or like [IBM](#) you decide to make information available to support an open source community, you need to prioritise making your data easily accessible to partners and stakeholders.

In a world where everything has an API, so should your marketing team.

ABOUT MIKE SAUNDERS

Mike Saunders, CEO of Digitlab, is a renowned Digital Business and CRM Consulting expert acclaimed for his unique ability to blend technological expertise with insightful business strategy. His leadership in digital consulting, combined with his roles as an international keynote speaker and author, has solidified his reputation as a visionary in the digital realm.

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