

## Skills and tech impacting SA's digital marketing performance

A lack of digital skills, technology wherewithal and data-driven marketing is holding South Africa back from meaningful transformation into a globally competitive digital economy.



Johan Walters, managing consultant at DQ&A

Speaking at the IAB Insight Series Episode 4, covering customer centricity, Johan Walters, managing consultant at DQ&A, drew on the company's global experience to see how local brands could fast track their digital performance.

### SA lagging on Google's Digital Maturity Framework, despite some forward-thinking brands

In 2017, Google, (in partnership with the Boston Consulting Group) conducted a study to determine a digital marketing framework. The study showed that companies fell in one of four maturity levels:

- **Nascent** – companies focused on silo, campaign-based execution, relying mostly on external data with little or no link through to sales
- **Emerging** – Companies begin to use some collected data in their automated buying, but focus on single channel optimisation
- **Connected** – Data is integrated and activated across channels with a clear link to ROI and sales
- **Multi-moment** – Companies are able to employ dynamic execution that is clearly optimised to

individual customer outcomes across all channels

The results of the study showed that 7% of the European brands fell in the Nascent level, 47% in Emerging, 49% in Connected and just 2% in the most advanced Multi-moment level.



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Danette Breitenbach 14 May 2019



By comparison, our work with South African brands has shown us that most brands still fall in the Emerging level, with many stuck in the Nascent and just a few teetering on the verge of entering the Connected level.

## Owning the tech, boosting skills and using data to move up the framework

While the majority of South African brands are still playing catchup when it comes to both skills and technology in digital marketing, there is a growing awareness that advancing a company's digital maturity can be fast tracked.

Over the last year, using the Maturity Framework, we have seen a number of companies move from the Nascent phase towards the next Emerging phase. The improvement depends largely on how they make use of data. This often requires a critical look at the company's existing technology stack.

In all fairness, many of the shortcomings cannot be blamed on the marketing leadership. In many cases, companies are not in a position to extract data from their systems. Or, have not implemented digital marketing strategies which moves them closer to personalisation of the customer and are still in the early stages of their own digital maturity. They will often not have an ecommerce offering, or have not thought about loyalty offerings and may not even have connected CRM.

The aspiration to push towards genuine personalisation and to graduate to the Multi-moment level should be high on the agenda of companies. Research earlier this year shows that brands risk losing more than a third of their customers due to poor marketing personalisation. That said, being in a position to implement meaningful personalisation requires genuine control and transparency of your data.

Companies that have most benefited from the Multi-moment level are the ones that are mastering the cloud services on the Google Marketing Platform. They would connect both external signals (such as weather, traffic and other feeds), internal signals from their own campaign, signals from Google Analytics 360 as well as their CRM, all combined on the fly using AI engines, to deliver automated, realtime personalisation to customers. The beauty of the Multi-moment level is that it has the full scope of all possible signals, rather than just those coming from the technology stack.

While reaching the Multi-moment level may be a two to three year roadmap, work we have done with clients of all sizes and across thirteen global regions has shown us two things: Understanding the power of technology and then owning it puts you in control of your data – and ultimately your future; and if your company can't find the correct digital skills, you should invest in training your teams as soon as possible. Moreover, partnering with an independent marketing specialist is the fastest way to progress your digital journey.

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