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Lead the Charge

How CMOs can Champion
AI Innovation in their Organizations



plus
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Key Findings



Artificial Intelligence will have the greatest impact on marketing and sales, creating efficiencies, enabling personalized campaigns, and increasing business impact



Using a data-centric AI approach, Marketers can identify the most effective channels for different customer segments, enabling them to optimize strategies and maximize sales



Your AI marketing strategy is only as strong as the people who drive it, upskilling is imperative for marketers

01: We're Crossing the Chasm with Artificial Intelligence

To ignore the use of artificial intelligence in marketing is to fall behind.

The introduction of ChatGPT in late 2022 meant that many could interact simply with a tool that allows users to consider the art of the possible. Since then, the race is on for brands and agencies to include AI in their content creation and processes, but more thoughtfulness needs to be placed on how AI is used.

In McKinsey's most recent report [Economic Potential of Generative AI: The Next Productivity Frontier](#), the think tank's latest research estimates that generative AI could add up to \$4.4 trillion annually in value across all industries. Four business functions account for 75 percent of the total annual value of AI: Customer operations, marketing and sales, software and engineering, and R&D.

Artificial Intelligence is crossing the chasm - the technology is becoming more adopted and mainstream. Now is the time for marketers to jump in and take hold of this incredible opportunity to leverage AI to create competitive advantage. Trailblazing marketers who integrate AI with high-quality data will realize true business value and drive superior customer outcomes.

Generative AI use cases will have different impacts on business functions across industries.

Generative AI productivity impact by business functions¹

Low impact  High impact



Source: McKinsey, 2023

A Time to Champion AI

By now most marketers have dabbled in AI and introduced AI-fuelled creative tools to their organizations.

However, looking at the data, marketing organizations have a tremendous opportunity to make a significant contribution to the business and the bottom line, as well as build a competitive advantage for the company with AI.

The potential is palpable across all industries - now is the time for CMOs to dive in, lead the way and champion AI within the organization.

Artificial intelligence has highlighted a need for quality data. While 'garbage in, garbage out' has become an adage borne out of years of poor data and results, AI has highlighted the need for strong data health, data management and data governance to enable more efficient customer predictive analytics and more effective marketing campaigns.

For marketing and creative services agencies, like those in the Plus Company network, the possibilities are endless. In the next 3-5 years, we see the creative industry making dramatic shifts in these areas thanks to artificial intelligence:

- Efficiencies in workflow and delivery times
- Responding and engaging with target audiences more quickly
- Personalizing content to the human level, not cohort
- Audience analysis and predictive models

Experimenting with AI

At Plus Company, we've incorporated AI into our processes and creative philosophies to drive efficiencies for our clients such as augmenting creativity and what we offer, allowing for faster time to market, decreasing production costs, and more. Some examples of innovative ways we're using AI are:

- **Citizen Relations** is using AI to gather conversational intelligence, mining huge data sources to identify trends and create suggested content and reports. This has created efficiencies in a process that used to take 24 hours.
- **We are Social** is using an AI-powered measurement and attribution tool to automate reporting, getting reports back to clients faster and fuelling strategic planning.
- **Mekanism** is using AI to help prepare pitches for potential clients with creative ideas and visuals. AI also helps the agency predict the questions they might be asked about a proposal, and responses a competitor might give.
- **Kobe** created an AI-driven influencer management system that creates more efficient influencer plans for brands using a wide range of data including historical pricing, followership size, engagement rates and more to increase campaign effectiveness.

02:

High Data Quality is Essential to help Marketers Unleash AI's Potential

AI-generated creative and content is being produced at a fever pitch, and with extraordinary results. However, AI also offers an additional business opportunity when implemented within the enterprise. The key to unlocking this value is understanding that data health and management when combined with AI will lead to stronger ROI and business outcomes.

Brands focused on hyper-personalization and customer lifetime value see the promise behind integrating AI into their processes: in the next two-to-three years, brands will be able build stronger connections with customers by customizing marketing campaigns at the human level as opposed to a segment or persona level.

Through customer insights and data, AI enhances ad relevance and creates better customer experiences. Machine learning helps analyze audience behavior and message resonance for effective targeting. AI-generated ads leverage past performance data, resulting in higher conversion rates. By analyzing large amounts of data, AI provides accurate forecasts and insights, helping businesses make impactful advertising decisions. Additionally, AI optimizes ad performance across platforms, offering recommendations for better results.

In the dynamic marketing landscape, AI allows marketers to predict audience behaviors and generate targeted, one-to-one messages towards them. In order to realize this vision, brands need to establish a strong data strategy with a data-centric AI lens, a modern marketing technology stack, and robust data models.

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LEAD THE CHARGE - AI & DATA REPORT

Answering business questions through data-centric AI

Data-centric AI is about more than just collecting data—it prioritizes data quality and organization to answer specific business questions. Consider this example: imagine an online retailer wants to understand which marketing channels are most effective in driving sales.

By implementing a data-centric AI approach, Marketers can organize their data to connect customer purchase information with various marketing campaigns, such as email promotions, social media ads, and search engine marketing. With traditional data analysis, they could determine correlations between specific campaigns and sales.

Data-centric AI takes this one step further by augmenting the existing data set through predictive analytics, creating models that predict how different customer segments are likely to respond to specific marketing channels or campaigns.

These models can now identify the most effective marketing channels for different customer segments, allocate their resources more efficiently, and personalize their marketing efforts to maximize sales. This approach enables them to understand customer behavior and optimize their marketing strategies using the power of AI and data.

A data-centric approach doesn't mean having all the data, but the right data - collected, organized, cleaned, and available to be leveraged. Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) are one collection of tools that enable these processes.

As they exist today, CDPs focus on customer data and generally don't include "potential customers" aka the total market or total audience.

The modern marketing technology stack

Early adopters of CDPs have come to discover the limitations of standalone, or integrated, CDPs, having implemented certain ones only to find them limited to a set of use cases or encountering challenges when scaling to new data sources as the business' tech stack grows.

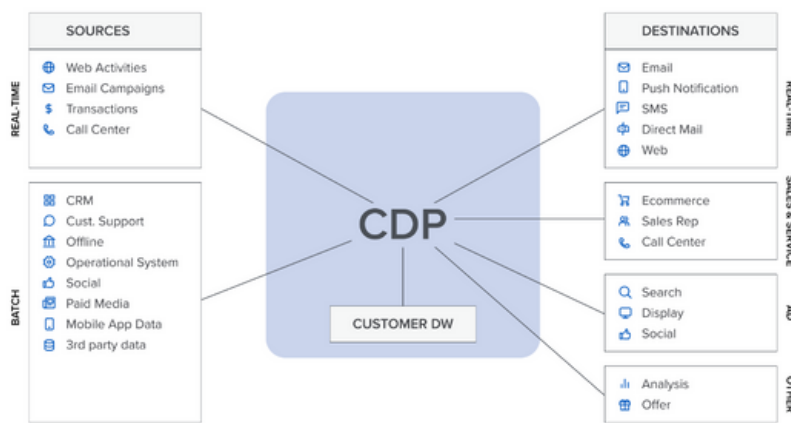
This has given way to the concept of the composable customer data platform. A composable CDP is one that deploys best-of-breed products and applications as they are required in order to maintain flexibility and scalability according to the needs of the organization.

A CDP shines when there's a complex marketing ecosystem, a desire for tailored functionalities and integrations, and a need to adapt to changing marketing strategies and technologies.

Most importantly, they allow marketers to evolve in an agile way as their use cases move up the personalization maturity curve and ensure ROI on the data investment along the way, keeping both costs and technical debt in check.

CDPs are the supporting structure of your data strategy, their foundation and strength lies in your data model. More generally, a CDP is a use-case centric data warehouse (or lakehouse).

The Customer Data Platform



Source: [a16z](#)



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LEAD THE CHARGE - AI & DATA REPORT

A data model to power marketing workflows

Being a customer-centric marketer means being data-centric and it's easy to get overwhelmed by the vast amounts of data flowing into the company from various sources such as websites, mobile apps, CRM systems, email platforms, social media, point-of-sale systems, and more.

That's why it's critical to have a thoughtful data model and schema to serve as a blueprint to the data entities, their attributes, and the relationships between them. That responsibility typically falls to IT who may not have a deep understanding of marketing's needs and use cases. Having a counterpart who understands end-to-end marketing workflows is critical to the successful design and execution of a marketing-centric data strategy.

A data partner to CMOs

With the creation of our new Plus Intelligence team, Plus Company now offers a Data Team as a Service (DTaaS) to support CMOs and their marketing-centric needs, which are often underserved by CIOs and IT.

DTaaS is a full-stack data and intelligence team that can design, build and operate scaled data tools and processes to enable businesses to succeed with their data strategy.

The DTaaS approach includes the development of a data strategy and vision, a plan to transition out of legacy business intelligence systems, the creation of a data infrastructure roadmap, and an implementation plan.

Additionally, the team integrates machine learning and AI to optimize marketing operations focussed on the customer journey.

Case Study: Unlocking growth with Data & AI

In collaboration with our new partner, Brooklyn Data Company, DTaaS was recently deployed in an American multi-brand hospitality and gaming corporation that wanted to unlock growth through improved acquisition, retention and loyalty program usage.

With different systems designed to support each channel, the company had 85+ IT systems that needed to be integrated in order to achieve a 360-degree customer view.

With guidance from the executive team using a data-centric lens, DTaaS' mandate was to gain a clearer understanding of the platforms, people, and capabilities required to set the foundation for the company's future state digital ecosystem.

Through a series of workshops and hands-on assessment, the DTaaS team prioritized the company's marketing use cases across segmentation, personalization and orchestration that would quickly yield a positive ROI. They further identified data infrastructure improvements to centralize and normalize the data, and built a Martech roadmap that addressed how to leverage existing, underutilized technologies in addition to making a CDP vendor recommendation.

The multi-year roadmap includes data augmentation tactics that will lean on new tools and AI in service of more advanced marketing use cases.

Finally, recognizing the role of people, the recommendations included the addition of key Marketing Operations and Data roles to the organization as well as data-literacy training across teams focused on data skills, tool usage, analysis, and decisioning.

03:

Upskilling and How AI Will Change How We Work

AI and data will revolutionize the advertising and marketing industry - and at the same time lead us to value humanness more than ever. While AI has the potential to augment and transform the way we work, it is our view that these efficiencies are not a replacement for human judgment. Call it Human+ thinking.

Artificial Intelligence can help marketers speed through more mundane office tasks. To ignore it is to lose a competitive edge.

Those working in Advertising and Marketing might not be displaced by AI, but they will be displaced by someone who is working closely with AI.

The AI tool may have been trained on biased information. Platforms are prone to make up facts based on false information, so human verification is necessary. Agencies must also be cautious about inputting confidential client information, since it can become public domain.

Using AI and newer ways of working means a skills shift. At Plus Company, we see roles evolving with AI and shifting to higher value work. For instance, designers can shift to become systems designers, from strategists to UX professionals, and from junior communications specialists to trend analysts.

Human-Powered Creative and Strategic Thought are Key

Artificial intelligence may be faster, but human-powered creative and strategic thought is as much in demand as a quality data set.

Process-heavy analytical tasks will become automated by AI, allowing employees to focus on higher-value thinking at the strategic level.

We must stimulate people and organizations to come up with innovative ways to transform businesses with AI. Without this, its real potential will not be reached - and others will reach it and pass marketers by.

There is a wonderful opportunity that AI will replace or disintermediate humans and other technologies and processes, which has a much bigger and competitively critical impact.

As humans build structure around prediction to solve specific problems, it is human judgment that builds that capital iteratively (test, learn and encode).

Once this is there for the machines, or to be eliminated completely because an AI enables process re-engineering to do, humans are free to move on to solve the next problem that requires their judgment.

A Willingness to Experiment

The organizations that will be the most successful with AI are those that have a growth mindset and the curiosity to embrace new technology, and see how it can benefit their roles and their responsibilities.

There must be a willingness to experiment, iterate and evaluate risks.

There is a need for employees to add governance in how AI is used. Policies can guide teams on when and how to use AI, particularly with sensitive client data.

Plus Company has established an AI Community of Practice, which would allow employees in agencies across our global network to share best practices and learnings, establish a governance model, create thought leadership and more.

Privacy, Ethics, and the ability of Human judgment to engineer AI solutions will ameliorate bias. This is an important opportunity for marketers moving into the AI space.

Recommendations

1. Embrace AI in your Marketing Plans

Adopt a curious mindset and dive in. Test and learn with the AI.

2. Create a marketing AI strategy

Be an AI champion in your business and build a plan with your team. Prioritize AI use cases within marketing and socialize your plan.

3. Prepare your data

Using a data-centric AI approach, analyze your data maturity, identify gaps and create and execute the roadmap.

4. Activate your data

Focus on your priority use cases. Start small, test, iterate and scale

5. Create a Community of Practice

Establish a community so teams adopt the technology in new and different ways, encourage experimentation across the organization and share best practices for use, security and ethical approaches.

6. Provide Guardrails

Establish policies and AI governance to offer guidance to employees to measure risks within the organization.

Conclusion

AI will enable businesses to be more productive, work more efficiently and at lower cost. AI will shift the way organizations work, and will be enabled to make a greater business impact, more quickly.

CMO's and marketing organizations that adopt AI strategies faster will have a significant competitive advantage. To ignore AI is to miss a major business opportunity.

Companies are looking for people who can guide their artificial intelligence journey - and this is an opportunity for the marketing organization to lead the way with innovation by rapidly adopting AI and showing the value it can provide to the bottom line.



**Now is the moment to
lead the charge.
CMO's who dive in, curate
expertise, and adopt AI
will create a significant
competitive advantage.**

About Plus Company

Plus Company, founded in 2021, is an entrepreneurial network of forward-thinking creative agencies, each bringing its own expertise and empowered by the collective capabilities of the network.

Brought together by the unabashed belief that anything is possible, the unique partnership of and limitless drive of the over 24 agencies deliver creative magic fuelled by an innate understanding of culture, technology, and data.

Plus Company agency brands include: We Are Social and its partner practices Socialize, Hello, Kobe and Metta; fuseproject; All Inclusive Marketing (AIM), Aperture1, Camp Jefferson, Citizen Relations, Cossette, Cossette Media, Impact Research, Jungle Media, K72, Level Eleven, Magic Circle Workshop, Magnet, Mekanism, Middle Child, PathIQ, Septième and The Narrative Group (TNG).

Plus Company has more than 3,000 employees, across 12 countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia Pacific. We are built on collaboration, not competition.

We are Partners In Possibility.

