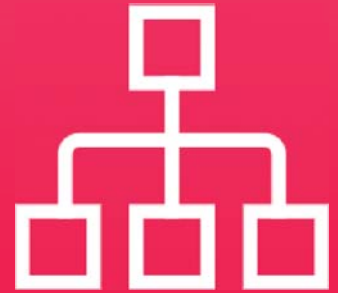## CHAPTER 4

How using relevant data makes you a winner

Jon Hughes

What is truly disruptive is that the science of data has now become far easier to access. No longer the realm of nerds, the world of insight has become available to all. For too long, I fear that we have over-indexed on creativity and that we need to bring to the front the value of data-driven intelligence. When art is combined with science and decisions based based on instinct are rejected, then we will create winning programmes.
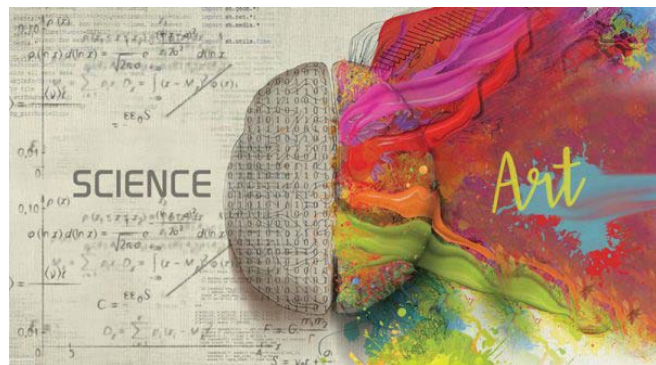
The leaders in the industry concur. This year at Cannes everyone was talking about data. It is clear that a winning formula has to take insight just as strongly as creativity.

It may not be glamourous, but data is the new currency. If we were to look back 10 years from now and identify the biggest disruptor to business then it's not going to be bitcoin. It's data. Lots of it.

The term big data has been thrown around so much that people are avoiding saying it. Speech writers have mined every synonym for the term as they don't want to be associated with a phrase that has not lived up to the hype. However, if you look at what all the big players in communications are doing – there is one consistent truth. Data is now a strategic pillar as important as any other central tenet and using it well is critical to winning.

According to an ExchangeWire and Weborama study, more than two-thirds of European brands, agencies and publishers now use a data management platform (DMP) to look after their data, and this is set to increase to 92% in 2018. Gartner believe that 90% of large organisations will have a Chief Data Officer role by 2019.

Technology has finally caught up and can enable us to provide the intelligence that counts. Rocket science is now available to the masses but without knowing what to do with it, it can be an expensive mess. Data without relevance is as useful as a chocolate teapot. Context is critical as without it, accurate analysis cannot be datstarted and the wrong decisions will be made costing brands vast amounts.

There are six key reasons why a compelling relevant data strategy will provide winning results.

Understand the most profitable customers and their journey

How much time and money is wasted focussing campaigns on the wrong people or at the wrong time? Accurately understanding the wealth of customer data helps brands understand who to target now and in the future, what to say and when to say it and critically develop bespoke strategies to make them loyal.

If brands don't listen to their customers, then it will hurt them where it counts – the bottom line

It is easy for customers to provide feedback to brands on their experience. Whether it's ranting on Facebook, commenting on TripAdvisor or reviewing on Amazon – the feedback loop is direct and customers now expect the brands they purchase from to listen, understand and react quickly.

For example, if an airline sees on Twitter that there is a flight delay and they offer to help with a free drink, it shows that they are listening and they care. Failing to respond has made our fickle consumers move on but fortunately, adherence has made them more loyal than ever, directly impacting sales.

Real time is clichéd, too slow and expensive – value is being predictive

Using data to react to an issue is great but costly. The approach should be identifying the crisis before it happens and averting it, or being aware of the story to newsjack before it goes viral. Value comes from predicting the relevant issues and stories in advance of the mainstream and acting upon it.

Business transformation is not thinking in terms of 'mobile' but being data-driven

Mobility is expected. Devices are ubiquitous. Brands instead should think about the different scenarios in which people operate and tailor their interactions via data insights to complement it.

Customers don't care how difficult it is to be data-driven, they just want relevant information fed to them

Getting and acting on data isn't as simple as it sounds. Those companies using cloud-based software are able to get much richer data and understanding of customers than their larger counterparts whose legacy systems may not talk to each other. Consumers don't care; they don't want to know about the planned IT overhaul in the siloed systems that can't communicate with each other – they simply expect brands to communicate directly to them in a way that is relevant.

Data brings agility in communications and makes people accountable

Data enables measurement to come to every stage of a brands campaign. Being data-driven will allow agility in communications and bring measurement to every stage of the process from goal setting, campaign adjustments to evaluation. Data forces teams to focus their approach on actions that will deliver a strong measureable impact.

THE PR PROFESSIONAL'S
Definitive Guide to Measurement

The summary is simple. If you want to be competitive – invest in data and do it now. And if this is something you're keen to do, then here are my **Three Top Recommendations** to help you get started:

Jon's Top 3 Measurement Tips

1. Make data accessible and not limited to the analyists by investigating in easy-to-use technology that is capable of providing immediate insight

2. Ensure data is an enabler, not an end in itself. Use it to measure, use it to identify the right targets, use it to determine what story to tell, and then marry this with creativity. The two must work together if you are to win

3. Work with a technology partner and do not try to build it yourself as your focus is on using the information. Otherwise you will forever be chasing technology instead of doing what you specialise in – which is brand communications

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