How to Navigate through the Noise of Decisioning data

DCS addresses the disciplines required to mature data from noise to value

**AN OPINIONATED PERSPECTIVE
BORNE OUT OF OUR EXPERIENCE**

**Stephen Montgomery
VP Decisioning**

September 2024

DCS
PEOPLE · BUSINESS · TECHNOLOGY

The Shift in Data Availability

Traditional Marketing has evolved off constrained data. The tide has turned, and now companies face a surge of 24/7 noise deafening their traditional approaches.

We want to serve our Customers as best as we can. We'd love to take the magic that keeps us bonded with good friends and apply at least some of it to the millions of Customers that we serve daily in our businesses.
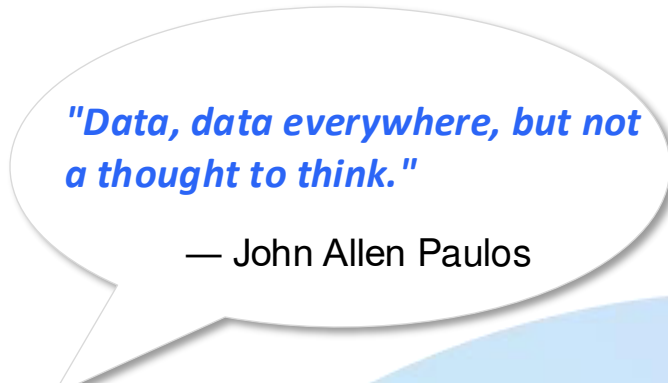
Underpinning successful 1:1 engagements across millions of customers is a collaborative decisioning tool and operating model, as addressed in our "Simplifying Millions of Decisions" article.

Within that article, we talk about having the right information at the right time. That's not a new statement as it's a pretty logical conclusion. However, over the years, marketers have been faced with constraints – the constraints of not having enough timely data, in turn leading to constrained forms of marketing. This practice has gone on for decades, leading to distinct practices such as scheduled outbound marketing campaigns, inbound channel personalisation, and paid media advertising.

With a plethora of new data tools emerging from various angles across marketing, advertising and data sciences, the data footprint, and opportunity associated with it, has exploded in recent years.

It's easy to sit back and let vendors merge these various disciplines together through increased interfacing and data movement. If the shackles of constrained, late data are removed, are we now free to proceed more optimally?

In theory, we can now stream data more rapidly, we have many coupled API links to join disparate practices together, and we have monolithic vendor convergences to offer 360-degree solutions. Surely our marketing problems are solved?

"Data, data everywhere, but not a thought to think."

— John Allen Paulos

Why too much Data is a Problem

As per the story of Buriden's Ass, where said ass dies of starvation when confronted with two equal piles of hay, as decision makers, we're often confronted with a multitude of data opportunities and are inhibited by choice.

The pendulum has now rapidly swung from 'constrained data' to 'too much data'. This presents two key problems:

Automated Decisions are too slow

Consuming all data in raw form invariably breaks the non-functionals - specifically the time taken to make automated decisions.

Using risk-averse mentalities ("I may need all data") creates huge data pipes that are plumbed into vendor platforms with no real consideration of the worth (or non-worth) of the candidate data. Often the weight of data stifles business agility, and when systems do go live, the weight of handling excess data compromises the '...at the right time' customer experience expectations, failing to recommend in those golden milliseconds.

This can be a huge problem that's difficult to back out of, given that there is no clear priority on the importance of data, and hence no clear place to rewind.

Understanding the 'maturity' of data, and those tasked with raising its potential value through the chain of decisioning, is key to refining what is kept and what is thrown away.

Marketers are not changing habits

Unless marketers take on the accountability of thinking differently now that the data shackles are off, and more importantly, framing how they make better decisions to lead to more optimised customer experiences, then the existing multiple disciplines will only make small improvement gains, still falling back on tried-and-sometimes-tested traditional marketing practices, and not achieve the Return-On-Investment (ROI) accompanying the initial vision and high-level business cases.

But it's a daunting prospect to change behaviour, especially when traditionally thinking about promotion calendars and some regular and one-off campaigns. Pivoting to a customer-centric 'approach' helps, but it's much more than that. It's understanding how and when to be both proactive and reactive in communications. It's about listening to customers' direct and inferred needs, as well as predicting outcomes and triggering communications in line with data signals that may decay rapidly, especially when considering self-service.

In effect, marketers must revise how they brief their communications, embracing the key contributors to always-on, omni-channel customer engagements. Yes, it's more scientific, but creativity and science are interwoven. Creativity is now enhanced with tighter context.

"Data is what turns marketing from an art to a science."

— Dan Zarrella

Efficient Use of Data in Decisioning

At DCS, we live and breathe decisioning. We know how to efficiently mature data in your business to optimise your decisioning as well as turning this into effective 1:1 communications and experiences. Here are some enablers the DCS can help you with:

A Decisioning Framework

We help you understand the key drivers for successful automated decisioning at scale and apply that to a framework and roadmap of success; this covers macro aspects such as converting data signals into clear predictors, to micro aspects such as combining zero party data (what a customer tells you) into your decisioning process to ensure seamless balanced conversations in-the-moment, and across time and channel.

An Explore / Exploit Balance

We help you build agility and skills into your operating model such that you exploit tried-and-tested data yet explore new data opportunities efficiently (within the business, via the customer, and through external partnerships).

Getting the balance right is essential in these dynamic times as consumers are more empowered through self-serve digital experiences, leading to more uncertainty and the need to adapt.

There is a science to exploring and exploiting in balance; business cases often over-hype the assumed benefits, where alternatively a lower cost Proof of Concept/Value may be the right starting point to confirm hypotheses.

In your automated decisioning systems, baking in methods for exploration (cold starts) is important to continually evolve, especially when in areas where there is a lot of customer flux. This can be very powerful as you're then armed with clear strategies bolstered by self-learning tactics in those grey areas of uncertainty.

Ultimately, you'll be more efficient in how you mature your data.

A Chain of Data to Communication

We help build a chain of opportunity-action-experience that aligns against common strategies yet has the agility to refine and improve through local skillsets and distinct, sometimes competing, KPIs. It's not just about deciding what to do, but how to deliver it effectively, and continually learn.

Getting this right involves both local practices and over-arching common standards.

Expert Resource at hand

We can embed roles alongside your existing teams to deliver decisioning excellence, from data maturity and integration through to data logic/calculations and on to personalised digital experiences.

"To achieve mastery, one must explore with curiosity and exploit with confidence."
— Daniel Kahneman

The Effects of Data Efficiencies

With mechanisms in place – both online and offline – you'll be able to more confidently nurture the potential value of data through your business, resulting in kinetic value realisation courtesy of smarter Customer interactions

What will these enablers give you?

A Team of Decision Makers

Your decision makers will blossom in their given disciplines, safe in the knowledge that they have a strategic framework to work both in isolation and in collaboration with their business peers. Navigation through new data opportunities will be more efficient, more likely to contribute to existing and newly defined goals, including merging into established BAU practices. Your data science, engineering and digital resources will be intertwined with the commercial business objectives and customer experience expectations, so that you are efficient in turning noise into customer success.

An Automated Decisioning System

Coupled with your day-to-day offline decisions will be an online automated decisioning system, processing data from various sources to explore or exploit its worth for use in AI, business rules, message content and activations.

A well-oiled decisioning machine will schedule proactive outbound marketing and service activity in line with promo calendars and one-off campaigns, but this will be combined and arbitrated against triggered events off informed listening agents, as well as mature API calls where a 2-way handshake is essential to execute interactions.

Successful Customer Engagements

Effective decisioning can only function with a combination of evidenced data that optimises outcomes, and an efficient means of learning.

With these in place, and an aligned offline and online decisioning methodology, aligned objectives will be achieved more efficiently.

When including branding and products & services in the feedback loops, the glass ceiling of product constraints can be lifted to not only re-imagine communications, but to re-shape the products and services at the very heart of your business.

Talk to DCS

DCS is a 1:1 Customer Engagement specialist that partners with some of the world's leading brands. We help businesses leverage the power of AI, GenAI and Decisioning to deliver compelling customer experiences, at scale.

We provide clients with advisory and consultancy expertise across the end-to-end decisioning value chain, and at every stage of your transformation life cycle.

For more information on this article, please contact Stephen on smontgomery@wearedcs.com , or simply visit us at www.wearedcs.com

"The real power of automation is not in replacing human decision-making, but in amplifying human potential at scale, creating more personalized and effective customer experiences."

— Satya Nadella