

# 5 Ways To Win With Data-Driven Marketing

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By the time your next marketing campaign goes live, it may already be outdated. New trends and tactics are emerging so quickly, it's difficult to keep track of what's in now, much less predict what will be next.

One thing that's not likely to change anytime soon, however, is the importance of integrating data into every aspect of your marketing strategy. For Rent the Runway founders Jennifer Hyman and Jennifer Fleiss, using data elevated their online designer dress rental business to a new level.

The two women struggled to engage Millennials, their target audience, in their early years. They realized that to fix engagement, they needed to focus their efforts on data science, pricing models and their mobile platform. Their approach has certainly paid off—the company now ships more than 90,000 items a day to 5 million members.

“Data's a big part of our business, encompassing everything from the whole fashion component to metrics around utilization of a given dress,” Jennifer Fleiss said in an [interview with Forbes](#). “We have an analytics team of six people internally, who look at rental statistics, such as how many long dresses get rented, how many short, how many red, black, orange and so on. What trends worked last season, what fabrics last the longest, which dresses are being turned and utilized the most?”

For chief marketing officers and marketing directors, the success of Rent the Runway shows the central role data must play for any company that stands a chance to reach today's increasingly distracted customers. Here are five practical ways CMOs can succeed with data-driven marketing.

## **Be Good Stewards of Data**

Your data is a financial asset that should be treated with respect. Bad data directly impacts sales, and three out of four companies lose about 14 percent of their revenue due to bad data quality, according to a [2014 study](#) by data quality company Experian.

As companies deal with more customer information than ever before, it's imperative they have an effective process for managing data. That includes identifying inaccurate or incomplete information, ensuring your data is only used for purposes that were clearly stated when it was collected and removing data that's gone bad.

So who's responsible for overseeing that process? Data management isn't just a job for your IT folks or sales staff; it's a responsibility that should be shared by anyone who's touching the data in some way.

Take the time to determine each department's role in collecting and maintaining data. Consider these questions:

- What information does your sales staff need to be successful?
- How will you ensure your marketing department is collecting the right data and passing it along to sales?
- What [marketing metrics](#) do you need to measure to prove results?
- How can you [close the loop](#) between your marketing and sales so there's no loss of leads and both departments get credit for doing their part?

## Automate to Elevate

How did Target figure out a teenage girl was pregnant before her parents did? How does Amazon know exactly what book you're most interested in reading next? The answer, of course, is automation.

If you want to make your efforts scalable and reach potential customers with a more strategic approach, a marketing automation platform is essential.

Not long ago, companies adopted these platforms primarily for managing websites, publishing blogs and sending emails, but in recent years, they've evolved to become useful data management tools.

The best platforms now allow you to drill down even further into the behaviors and motivations of anyone who interacts with your company, even through social media.

It now allows marketers to more easily see exactly who has been referred to their website from social media sites and other [sources](#), and who ultimately became a customer. It even recommends the best days and times to post based on when your target audience appears to be most active.

## Use Data to Qualify Leads

Even the best marketing automation system is only as effective as your team's ability to use it to qualify leads. Before a lead enters your pipeline, your marketing and sales team need to agree on how to classify it. There are a number of factors to keep in mind as you use data to score your leads. Here are three primary criteria to consider as you qualify leads:

- **Engagement**— Marketing automation software makes it easy to look at page views, website visits, and email open or click-through rates. Social media interactions can also indicate engagement, but keep in mind they don't always translate into sales-readiness.
- **Behavior**— This goes beyond the *number* of interactions your customers have with your website and content and focuses more on the type of interaction. Think about where you would look if you were considering a purchase of your own

product or service. If someone clicks on an ROI calculator, fills out a needs assessment or lands on a pricing sheet, you should assign an appropriate score to that action.

- **Persona**— The information a lead provides about himself or herself can make a marketing automation system do much of the time-consuming qualifying before a lead even hits a salesperson's queue. It also makes it easy to disqualify those who don't fit your target. Perhaps they're not in a position to make a decision, or their company size makes your product or service cost-prohibitive.

## Test Everything

This principle isn't new to most marketers; they've been testing their products, commercials and even messaging out for years. They're used to the kind of testing that requires extensive research, focus groups and a lot of time. Now, with the ability to test everything from subject lines to calls to action and get nearly instantaneous results, there's no excuse not to experiment. Take a cue from Amazon, which is known for [testing everything](#), right down to the colors on its calls to action. As CEO Jeff Bezos has said, "If you double the number of experiments you do per year, you're going to double your inventiveness."

Some A/B tests we've conducted at Kuno Creative have revealed that—depending on the audience and context—plain-text emails often perform better than those with more formatting. This makes sense, especially if we're targeting someone who already knows us. If they receive something that "looks" like a marketing email, they might be more likely to ignore it.

We discovered that also applied when it came to [designing landing pages](#), although that, too, depended on the audience.

We tested a landing page for a guide for futurist speaker Mike Walsh and found the heavily formatted page performed better than the simpler page among new visitors to the website. *However, those who already knew Mike and were directed to the guide by email responded better to the plainer version.* Marketers need this kind of data to use this more nuanced, context-driven approach that is the wave of the future.

## Uncover The Quick Wins

Using data well allows your organization to develop specific, measurable and realistic goals and can even allow you to prioritize them. Through analyzing its sales and marketing data, [Parata](#), a company that sells automation tools to pharmacies, realized its typical sales cycle was as long as 120 days. The sales team works with busy pharmacists, so it can be time-consuming and costly to close deals with them. The company's marketing department developed an accelerated program specifically designed to nurture likely buyers by putting them in contact with current customers. Since implementing this, Parata says it has shortened its sales cycle by about 30 percent.

These “quick wins” exist at every company—you just have to identify them and develop a strategy. Yours could be adding a series of case studies that helps convince likely buyers who would otherwise need to talk to references. It could be a workflow that prompts them to contact someone more quickly, or it could be a social email strategy that attracts new visitors to your site.

Whatever your “quick win” is, you’ll need data to get you there. That means having a plan to efficiently collect the right information, an understanding of how to use it properly across your company and a way to automate and test it.

When all these elements are in place, your organization is a quadruple threat—a data collecting, analyzing, automating and personalizing machine. *(And, of course, one that’s still more ‘human’ than ‘machine.’)*

[http://www.business2community.com/big-data/5-ways-win-data-driven-marketing-01185536?es\\_p=459683](http://www.business2community.com/big-data/5-ways-win-data-driven-marketing-01185536?es_p=459683)