

The Analytical Marketer

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OVERVIEW

Marketing is facing major challenges in this digital age, as customers change how they gather information, evaluate products, and make purchase decisions. In this environment, marketers must shift from blasting out a high volume of uncoordinated activities through disparate channels to creating an ongoing customer-focused conversation that provides just the right information at the right time to each individual buyer. In the new analytical marketing organization, marketing is not just an art; it combines art and science. All marketing activities are coordinated, the organization is proactive, agile, and engages in frequent experiments, and everyone is analytical.

This shift, empowered by technology, analytics, and a commitment to data-driven decision making, will demand changes in the marketing organization's mindset, structure, talent, and leadership.

CONTEXT

SAS's Head of Global Marketing, Adele Sweetwood, shared insights from her book *The Analytical Marketer* on her experience reinventing the marketing function at SAS to become more analytical.

KEY LEARNINGS

In the digital age marketing must become more customer focused.

Customer expectations and behaviors in making purchasing decisions have changed dramatically in just the past few years. Today, with access to vast amounts of information, many customers are already far along in their purchasing decision before ever interacting with a company. They have been online, gathered information, read research and reviews, seen the opinions of influencers, and begun developing their own opinions.

But as customers go through this information-gathering process, they produce huge amounts of information—about the sites they have visited, the information they have downloaded, the videos they have watched, the events they have attended, and more.

In light of the way that customers are now going about purchasing decisions and the data they are producing along the way, marketers must market differently. In recent years, most marketers have operated in silos, focused on marketing through a wide variety of channels, including email, direct mail, mobile, and social. Yet channel-focused marketing activities were often uncoordinated, with different strategies and messaging. One potential customer might be

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“The decision process today is highly self-directed and is probably 75% of the way along before a potential customer ever speaks with a person from the company.”

— ADELE SWEETWOOD

bombarded with dozens of different contacts from the same company. These messages might be redundant and conflicting, and would present the customer a view of an uncoordinated company. Such activities often failed to produce the desired results.

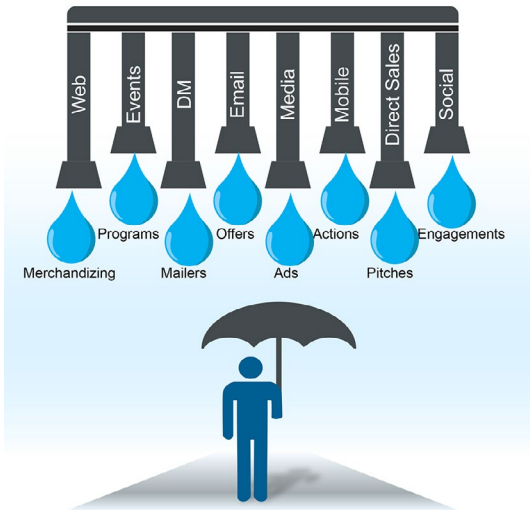


Figure 1
Marketing with a Channel Focus

A change that SAS and many other companies have made is to make all marketing activities customer focused. This involves coordinating all marketing and precisely targeting marketing based on each customer’s specific situation. It means providing messaging that is relevant and engaging to a customer based on where they are in their particular customer journey.



Figure 2
Marketing that is Customer Focused

Engaging in customer-focused marketing starts with mapping out all of the points in the customer journey, including both the acquisition journey (for a customer considering purchasing) and the retention journey (for customers after they have purchased). The key is to define the journey from the customer’s perspective, understand all stages in this journey, and achieve broad organizational understanding of this journey. Understanding this journey is best done by using data.

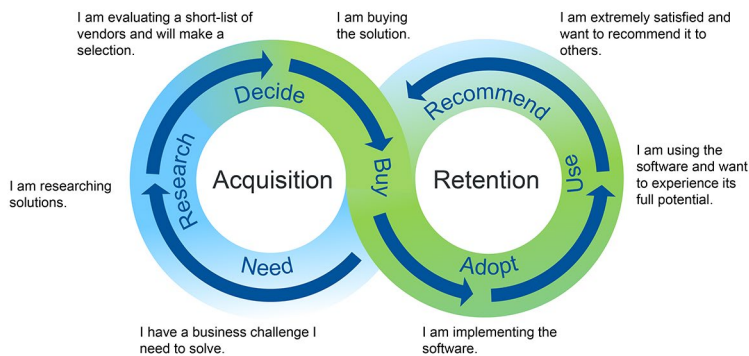


Figure 3
The Customer Journey at SAS

“Art is the creative side of marketing. Science empowers the creative side.”

– ADELE SWEETWOOD

Once the customer journey is understood, an assessment can take place identifying when and how marketing is taking place, how effective marketing is at each stage, where gaps exist, and what changes can and should be made to improve marketing.

Becoming an analytical marketer requires changes in culture, mindset, structure, talent, and leadership.

At SAS, marketing has evolved from an art to an art and science.

While using data and technology is critical in becoming more scientific in marketing, this evolution is more about culture and practices. SAS has found that the keys to transforming the marketing function are mindset, talent, structure, and leadership.

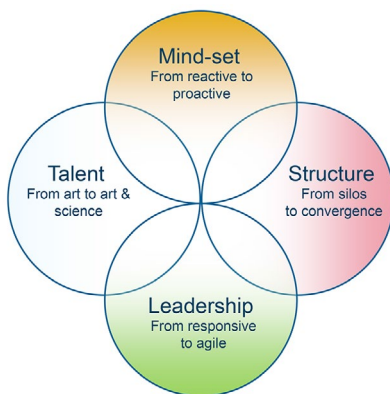


Figure 4
Key Characteristics of an Analytical Marketing Organization

These characteristics are:

- **Mindset.** This is changing from a mindset of pushing out a high volume of messages to customers to using data to deliver precise, targeted messages with a goal of engaging customers in conversations and building relationships. Becoming data driven and focused on conversations is a major shift in mindset.
- **Structure.** The organizational structure must shift from disparate silos to an aligned, synchronized group that is extremely data driven. A new role may be an “orchestrator” position that helps bring everything together and present a unified view to customers. SAS created an analytical marketing functional framework where marketing was a set of shared services, focused on specific areas like content marketing or digital marketing and social media. Activities are then coordinated in a single go-to-market strategy.

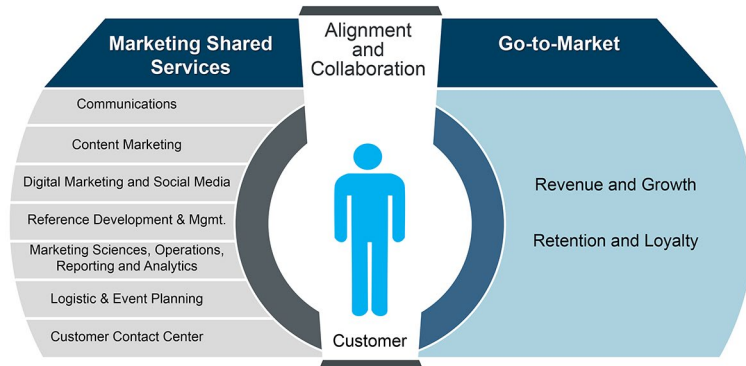


Figure 5
SAS's Analytical Marketing Functional Framework

- **Talent.** SAS looked at new roles needed in the organization to become more analytical, such as a marketing data scientist, and looked at existing roles that needed to modernize through training or additional tools and technology. But most important was for everyone in marketing to have an analytical mindset, with the ability to be analytical. This has impacted who SAS has hired and the types of tools and training provided to everyone in marketing.
- **Leadership.** Marketing leaders have to walk the talk by making decisions based on data. As an analytical marketer, leaders have to be agile, encourage experimentation and risk taking, and build relationships with leaders in other functional areas. As an analytical marketing leader the types of conversations are elevated because marketing is now doing things with even greater strategic value.

“We still have sophisticated analytical people in some roles, like data scientists. But there is analytical information delivered to every marketer and everyone needs to be able to be an analytical marketer.”

– ADELE SWEETWOOD

After this assessment, it is important to build a broad coalition that is aligned around the same vision and to pick specific projects that will have significant impact.

OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS

- **Focus on conversations.** Five years ago most business and marketing leaders viewed social media as an outbound activity. Now, savvy marketers like SAS see social media as a vehicle to engage in conversations with customers, to hear from them and to respond to them.
- **Take risks.** Even though analytical marketers have massive amounts of data, they don't know everything. They create an environment that encourages experimentation and risk taking. The risks taken are low but the learning can be significant, as is the impact of empowering everyone to take risks.

BIOGRAPHIES

**Adele Sweetwood**

Head of Global Marketing and Shared Services, SAS

Adele Sweetwood is Senior Vice President of Global Marketing and Shared Services for SAS, the world's largest independent analytics company. She has held a variety of sales, services, and marketing positions at SAS for 26 years and, most recently, led the transformation of the marketing organization to meet the challenges and opportunities of data and analytics in a globalized market. Find her on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/in/aksweetwood](https://www.linkedin.com/in/aksweetwood) and on Twitter at [@asweetwood](https://twitter.com/asweetwood).

**Angelia Herrin (Moderator)**

Editor, Special Projects and Research, Harvard Business Review

Angelia Herrin is the editor for special projects and research at HBR. Her journalism experience spans 25 years, primarily with Knight-Ridder newspapers and *USA TODAY*, where she was the Washington editor. She won the Knight Fellowship in Professional Journalism at Stanford University in 1990. She has taught journalism at the University of Maryland and Harvard University.

Prior to coming to HBR, Angelia was the vice president for content at [womenConnect.com](https://www.womenconnect.com), a website focused on women business owners and executives.

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