DATA UNIFICATION & MANAGEMENT
A RESEARCH-BASED GUIDE FOR MARKETERS
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Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of marketing strategies, tactics and the technology that drives them with a standardized online questionnaire and a proprietary 3-Minute Survey format.

This survey was fielded to a panel of marketing professionals and marketing research subscribers.

**Primary Marketing Channel**
- B2B (Business-to-Business) 33%
- B2C (Business-to-Consumer) 51%
- B2B and B2C Equally 16%

**Number of Employees**
- More than 500 23%
- 50 to 500 27%
- Fewer than 50 50%

**Primary role in company**
- Owner / Partner / C-Level 38%
- Vice President / Director / Manager 30%
- Non-Management Professional 32%
DATA UNIFICATION & MANAGEMENT

As an organization grows, disconnected data can impact everything from internal communication and decision-making to the entire customer experience.

How are marketers unifying and managing data to improve campaign effectiveness?

To help answer this question, Ascend2 and our Research Partners fielded The Outlook on Performance Marketing survey. We thank the 297 marketers who responded to this survey between August 16, 2021 and August 26, 2021.

This Survey Summary Report, titled Data Unification and Management, represents the opinions of all the market segments responding to the survey. Specific market segments from the survey are reported on separately and exclusively by our participating Research Partners.

This research has been produced for your use. Put it to work in your own marketing strategy. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or post them on social media. Please share this research credited as published.

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Disjointed and poorly managed data can cause ripple effects throughout an organization and can be a driving factor in how a customer interacts with and experiences a brand. That is why marketers are focused on **improving customer engagement** and the overall **customer experience** by unifying and properly managing data, according to 46% and 43% of those surveyed, respectively.

### MOST IMPORTANT GOALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving Customer Engagement</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Customer Experience</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamlining Marketing and Sales Efforts</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Lead Quality</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving ROI</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Internal Communication</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Number of Leads Captured</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Marketing Attribution</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Single View of the Customer</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Multi-Channel Touch</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STRATEGIC SUCCESS

A 60% majority of marketing professionals have experienced some success at unifying and managing data in order to achieve their strategic goals like improving the customer experience. Just over one-third (35%) of those surveyed would classify their success as “best-in-class” compared to the competition, while only 5% say their data unification efforts have been unsuccessful.

Which best describes your (or your typical client’s) success at unifying and managing data to achieve your strategic goals?
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Maintaining consistently accurate and relevant data is considered a most essential element to implementing a data unification and management strategy according to 36% of marketers. Factors concerning how data is handled are also considered critical to success for the 28% of marketers who listed making unified data actionable and storing and managing data as top essential elements.

WHAT ARE THE MOST ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY TO UNIFY AND MANAGE DATA?

- Maintaining data quality: 36%
- Making unified data actionable: 28%
- Storing and managing data: 28%
- Finding appropriate data management solution: 27%
- Standardizing existing data: 27%
- Cross-department cooperation: 26%
- Allocating resources to manage project: 22%
- Identifying data sources: 22%
- Proving ROI: 19%
- Prioritizing data unification above other projects: 18%
- Executive buy-in: 13%
COMPLEXITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

Organizations large and small now have access to increasingly large amounts of data across many sources, and the strategic application of this data to effectively improve marketing efforts can be complex. 71% of marketers agree, reporting that implementing a strategy to unify and manage data is **complicated**, with 17% of those surveyed listing the task as **extremely complicated**.

**HOW COMPLICATED IS IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY TO UNIFY AND MANAGE DATA?**

- **Extremely Complicated**: 17%
- **Somewhat Complicated**: 54%
- **Somewhat Uncomplicated**: 25%
- **Extremely Uncomplicated**: 4%
GREATEST CHALLENGES

With a majority of marketers reporting that implementing a data unification strategy is complex, which aspects of the process do they find the most challenging? Over one-third (35%) of marketers are challenged by maintaining data quality, and 32% of marketers report that cross-department cooperation creates difficulties during this process.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES FACED WITH IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY TO UNIFY AND MANAGE DATA?

- Maintaining data quality: 35%
- Cross-department cooperation: 32%
- Finding appropriate data management solution: 27%
- Storing and managing data: 26%
- Standardizing existing data: 26%
- Making unified data actionable: 21%
- Identifying data sources: 21%
- Allocating resources to manage project: 20%
- Prioritizing data unification above other projects: 19%
- Proving ROI: 16%
- Executive buy-in: 13%
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS VS CHALLENGES

Comparing the most challenging aspects of implementing a strategy for data unification and management with the most essential elements to the success of a strategy can produce helpful insights into what marketers can expect from the process and possibly which efforts to prioritize.

COMPARING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS AND GREATEST CHALLENGES

- **Essential Elements**
  - Maintaining Data Quality: 36%
  - Making Unified Data Actionable: 28%
  - Storing and Managing Data: 28%
  - Finding Appropriate Solution: 27%
  - Standardizing Existing Data: 27%
  - Cross-Department Cooperation: 26%
  - Allocating Resources to Manage Project: 22%
  - Identifying Data Sources: 22%
  - Proving ROI: 19%
  - Prioritizing Data Unification: 18%
  - Executive Buy-In: 13%

- **Greatest Challenges**
  - Maintaining Data Quality: 35%
  - Making Unified Data Actionable: 21%
  - Storing and Managing Data: 26%
  - Finding Appropriate Solution: 27%
  - Standardizing Existing Data: 26%
  - Cross-Department Cooperation: 32%
  - Allocating Resources to Manage Project: 20%
  - Identifying Data Sources: 21%
  - Proving ROI: 16%
  - Prioritizing Data Unification: 19%
  - Executive Buy-In: 13%
Solutions for organizing data and creating a unified view of the customer are rapidly improving, and marketers are experiencing the benefits of this with 84% of those surveyed reporting an increase in the effectiveness of unified and strategically managed data over the past year. Nearly one-quarter (22%) of those surveyed describe this increase as significant.

**How has the effectiveness of data unification and management changed in the past 12 months?**

- Increased significantly: 22%
- Increased moderately: 62%
- Decreased moderately: 14%
- Decreased significantly: 2%
CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF A SOLUTION

Over one-quarter (27%) of marketers report that finding an appropriate data unification and management solution is essential to the successful execution of a strategy, but what are the key components they are looking for in a solution? Ease of use, integration with existing technology, and overall cost to manage are critical factors to consider according to 49%, 44%, and 43% of marketers surveyed, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usability / Ease of Use</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration with Existing Technology</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Cost to Manage</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Security Management</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Visualization and Reporting</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Privacy Management</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Source Connectivity</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Hygiene</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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