

A little less conversation, a little more action

 By [Michael Bornheim](#)

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Why an integrated data platform is the key to aligning marketing, sales and service.

Over the past decade, brands have seen digital and mobile technologies transform the way customers engage with them. Today, new technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), chatbots and Virtual Reality (VR) are further blurring the boundaries between “human” and digital interaction, and brands are once-again playing catch-up.

From [Jaguar Land Rover](#) building VR into the showroom experience to [Pizza Hut](#) allowing customers to make orders via a chatbot, companies are already experimenting. Our own research found that [78% of brands](#) will have implemented VR or AI to better serve customers by 2020.

And yet, many are still falling short when it comes to delivering a personalised experience. Even the most cutting-edge technologies will bore customers if there isn't a clear link to their specific needs or interests.

Whether they're watching an advert, engaging with a social community manager or trying to resolve a service issue, customers expect brands to know their history and preferences. The same goes for automated channels like chatbots that draw on customer profiles to deliver a relevant service.

A platform for change

Personalisation requires greater alignment between marketing, sales and services teams and more fluidity in the way they share data. Consistency is also key. Customers have no patience for the breakdowns between a brand's internal departments, nor should they.



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To gain this single vision of their customers, marketing, sales and service teams need to work off the same integrated platform. A single platform approach ensures that any updates made to a customer profile by one team are reflected across the business. Equally, any AI-enabled services that are fed directly by customer data will always draw on the latest information.

This free flow of data is crucial, but so is making sure that marketing, sales and service teams have access to the right information to build robust customer profiles. Tellingly, our research found that although brands say customer satisfaction data is most important when building a profile it is also the source they most struggle to include in their analyses.

CRM data, information on peoples' mobile purchasing journey, insights on how market trends affect sales – all these data sources are mined in different formats and measured in different ways (if at all). Unless brands can analyse them as a cohesive whole they will never gain a complete picture of their customers, and this once again requires them consolidate their analysis on a single platform.

[PSA group](#), the car manufacturer behind Peugeot and Citroën, wanted to make the transition from its website to its showrooms to its service centres as seamless and convenient as possible for customers. This required that its marketing, sales and service teams can all access the latest data on each customer's needs and history. With an integrated platform based on Oracle CX (Customer Experience) Cloud, the company gained the ability to deliver 360-degree experiences to people in 18 countries and reduce customer response times by half.

Divided we fall

Brands have been talking about the need to eliminate silos between marketing sales, marketing and service for [years](#) but have done little to act. While 44% admit lead conversion is more successful when their customer-facing functions are aligned, more than one-third say each team works independently of the others.

Aligning the business may require major organisational changes, but integrated platforms built on cloud-based systems give brands the flexibility to transform at their own pace. They allow marketing, sales and service teams to quickly test new tactics, monitor their performance and keep refining their approach.

This is the direction in which modern sales is headed. The relationship between businesses and customers will be built on a continuous feedback loop, resulting in more tailored campaigns and sales strategies.

The demand from customers has never been greater, and sales technologies never more suited to the task. The time has come for brands to turn years of words into action and deliver on the promise of a more aligned approach.

ABOUT MICHAEL BORNHEIM

Michael has a broad knowledge of IT, having worked in the industry for over 35 years and has seen amazing and exciting changes taking place in this time...
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