

Breaking Down the Silos: Unleashing the Power of Data



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ABOUT IAB SINGAPORE

A bulletproof digital strategy isn't just about marketing anymore. Online advertising is fast becoming a major business focus of SEA's agencies, brands, publishers, platforms and government bodies. Since 2010, the Interactive Advertising Bureau Singapore (IAB SG) has been actively boosting the profile, positive perception, and growth of the digital advertising throughout the region.

The IAB Singapore is a not for profit association that represents the online advertising industry in SEA. IAB Members and The Board comprise of publishers, platforms, ad tech vendors and media agencies operating in the region.

As a connected network, we truly represent the evolving online ecosystem in this region and offer world-class expertise to position Singapore as the digital business hub of SEA. Our vision is to be the primary resource to grow investment in digital advertising.

ROUND TABLE ATTENDEES

FACILITATORS

Name	Title	Company
Kerry Chapman Brown	Vice President, SEA	comScore, Inc
Stephen Tracy	Data & Insight Lead	SapientNitro

PARTICIPANTS

Name	Title	Company
Pavel Bulowski	Partnerships & New Business Lead	Keboola
Damien Crittenden	Director, Analytics & Insights	Xaxis
Arnaud Frade	Chief Executive Officer, APAC	Ipsos Interactive Services (IIS)
Ervin Ha	Head of Brand Index and Profiles, APAC	YouGov
Deepak Jethwani	Head of Insights, APAC	MEC
Himanshu Jha	Head of Data Solutions, APAC	Yahoo
Tim Kelsall	Chief Client Officer, Asia	Kantar
Emily Ketchen	Vice President, Marketing	Hewlett Packard
Steve Pardue	Vice President Asia Pacific Japan	Tealium
Kevin Tan	Chief Executive Officer	Eyeota

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The IAB SG Measurement & Standards (M&S) Committee is a group of individuals who have a passion for measurement and data. The committee is obsessed with navigating how data is influencing and changing the industry with the goal of helping organisations and their people successfully leverage it through knowledge sharing and education.

For this IAB SG Studio Session the M&S committee wanted to explore how two very specific domains, primary research and platform analytics, have evolved in recent years as unleashing them from their silos to inform business decisions is proving critical for success in today's fast moving world.

This is evidenced in [Insight 2020](#)¹ whereby 77% of companies that over-perform on revenue growth create customer experiences based on data-driven insights. Unfortunately, for all those businesses practicing data-driven thinking, many more fail to democratise their data or educate their teams outside of the research and analytics domains on how to derive insight.

To investigate why companies are not harnessing the power of data and remain stuck in traditional organisational structures that reinforce the lines between primary research and platform analytics domains, the M&S committee assembled a group of industry experts for a roundtable discussion.

We defined these 2 fields as the following:

Domain	Definition	Example
Primary Research	Primary research is new research (creation of new data), carried out to answer specific issues or questions. It can involve questionnaires, surveys or interviews with individuals or small groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Survey (Quantitative)• Interview (Qualitative)• Focus Group (Qualitative)
Platform Analytics	Platform analytics is the collection, processing and analysis of 1st party data created on a digital platform, such as a website, eDM, CRM platform or owned social media profile (e.g. Facebook Page).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website analytics• Mobile app analytics

This whitepaper offers a summary of the round table with key discussion points and quotes from our group of experts. The whitepaper also offers takeaways and recommendations for how you can be more successful when it comes to leveraging your data.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

1. ORGANISATIONS DESIGNED FOR THE INDUSTRIAL AGE, NOT THE TECHNOLOGICAL AGE

For many companies today, data assets are stuck in silos of traditional research and analytics/IT departments. These silos are reinforced by a range of factors, including but not limited to existing talent, roles and responsibilities, hiring plans, P&L's, vernacular, jargon and office culture.

Of course the narrative around smashing business silos is nothing new and we'll never do away with them completely as they are a necessary division of people and skills required for a business to run. The challenge is that the silos established around functions that operate on data do little to create efficiency or productivity often moving towards separate business objectives and success metrics.

Kevin Tan of Eyeota believes that "There's a structural problem, as we view the world in a traditional way in that we have research and insights on one side and analytics on the other."

Pavel Bulowski of Keboola took this further by stating that he often hears client's say "We have the data somewhere but we don't have access to it". This speaks to a specific problem around functional silos that restrict the flow of data throughout the business.

Overall, traditional organisational structures are preventing many businesses from getting the most out of their data. Overcoming this will involve breaking out of comfort zones and rethinking the ways in which we collect, store, manage, share and communicate data across the business.

2. OVERINVESTMENT IN TECHNOLOGY/ UNDERINVESTMENT IN PEOPLE

When it comes to domains like primary research and platform analytics there is a perception that research provides one type of data (i.e. attitudinal data, what they think or will do) while analytics provides another type of data (i.e. behavioural data or what they did).

Interestingly the perceptions that reinforce divisions may actually be more of a generational phenomenon. Bulowski (Keboola) stated that most "Millennials don't natively understand the distinction between analytics and research, it all blends into one".

This could be due to a combination of factors such as new college and university programs that teach research and analytics skills as part of other courses (which is becoming more common in business and marketing programs); and the rise of new marketing and advertising roles that seek a blend of skillsets and experience.

Another issue discussed was the challenge of breaking the hype around data while finding effective ways to train a workforce on how to use it. At the core was the importance of focusing on people instead of technology.

Indeed the technology and vendor landscape that enables the collection, storage, analysis and visualisation of data has evolved significantly outpacing the rate at which we have evolved how we think about people, skills and hiring.

Ervin Ha of YouGov put it succinctly saying that "You can have a Tesla but if you don't have a license you can't drive it". In other words, it's not enough to have a shiny new tool. You need the right people with the right skills in place to make a tool useful.

Arnaud Frade (IIS) also touched on this point when he said "Data does not give the answers, data allows you, through the right mix of resources and capabilities, to find the true insights which lead to making the right decisions." That is to say that beyond gathering a lot of data, companies should look at building or buying both the skills needed to analyse this data and the capabilities to digest multiple sources of information into a clear stream of actionable insights.

3. CREATING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

Today there is a great deal of discussion about [creating data driven culture](#) but many businesses still struggle to find practical ways to put this into practice. There's no one-size-fits-all approach to building a data-driven culture as this needs to be tailored to your environment and people.

Himanshu Jha of Yahoo believes "Blending is what matters. We experimented with trying to train the Data Engineers to write a report and, similarly, the market researchers in writing the queries". The message is that you need to find opportunities to break away from the established ways of working, to be curious, and to experiment.

Deepak Jethwani of MEC added to this "Organisations should think about getting their research and IT teams involved in the business as much as possible". This isn't just limited to research and IT, it involves pulling team members out of different domains and exposing them to other facets of the business.

This is easier said than done. Emily Ketchen of Hewlett Packard offered some valuable insight into the challenges. She said that "[At HP] we are further refining our scorecards so we are focused on the most meaningful data...(but) getting the right level of collaboration is important or you can be overwhelmed trying to thread the needle with many different points of view".

Creating a culture of data-driven thinking needs to start with openness and collaboration, and it won't be easy. As you pull a team together and define new processes you will take people out of their comfort zones. This can be a difficult process and can cause conflict and heartache, but if done right the benefits will pay off in the long term.

4. MARKETERS NOT ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Avinash Kaushik, author and early pioneer in the field of analytics, once [stated](#)² that "The single biggest mistake web analysts make is working without purpose". He was speaking about website analytics, but this message applies to any marketing practitioner who is using data to make better business decisions.

The biggest problem facing marketing professionals is that they don't ask the right questions. Tim Kelsall of Kantar said "The real issue is people understanding the fundamental business questions they're trying to solve. It's often the case that you've got the technology and data but it's not intelligently applied back to solve the actual business issue".

A good starting point is getting team members from different functions to tackle the same problem. Pardue (Tealium) cited that "The Data Analyst can be so separated from the business that they don't have the insights to even help the business understand the questions it should be asking".

Unfortunately, asking the right questions isn't the only challenge. Knowing how to effectively apply the insight you've gained is another. Ervin (YouGov) says it's common for marketers to not "actually know what they want to do with their data". Indeed choosing the right course of action based on what you've learned from your data is yet another problem to solve.

For example, let's say you've mined your data and identified new customer segments that you want to target. This is only half of the problem as you need to work out how to actually connect with them in a timely and relevant way. The channels you should use, the messaging and the creative are all elements that can be informed by data, but actually piecing it together to craft a winning strategy and execution isn't something your data will tell you.

5. FAST-MOVING TECHNOLOGY FOSTERING LAZINESS

Success with data depends on having a strong foundation and building this requires time and commitment: it involves putting a vision and roadmap in place, understanding where you are and what you're capable of today, and knowing what you want to be able to do with data in the long run.

An important part of building a foundation is identifying meaningful metrics that are geared to your business objectives and existing assets. Unfortunately it seems that many marketers today struggle to identify meaningful metrics that demonstrate real business value.

Damien Crittenden of Xaxis said "It's common for marketers, working in newer disciplines such as social media to talk in vague terms about metrics like likes, interactions and engagements" In contrast, he continued, "if you ask a CRM person to talk about the same thing, they'll talk about it in an entirely different way with a much stronger strategic foundation. Much more grounded in business value".

This is notable as it highlights two important points. First that people from different disciplines will approach measurement in different ways, reinforcing the need for collaboration across the business to solve the same problem. Second, it highlights how newer marketing disciplines are pushing brands to respond faster without the theoretical foundation necessary to measure in a sophisticated and meaningful way.

Steve Pardue of Tealium added, "The problem is sometimes rooted in laziness of developing a taxonomy and foundation for understanding the data. If you don't do your homework and lay that foundation, then you have no chance of finding answers".

Indeed laying a foundation for unleashing research and analytics from their silos requires more than investment in expensive shiny tools. It requires investing in the right people who can build the organizational knowledge required to successfully leverage those tools.

TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DON'T LET TRADITIONAL SILOS CONSTRAIN THE WAY YOU ARTICULATE AND SOLVE PROBLEMS

Traditional ways of defining domains like primary research and platform analytics don't work in today's world.

Recommendation

Smashing silos may not be something you can do overnight, but a good place to start is rethinking the ways in which you solve problems. Step out of your comfort zone, go against the grain and find new and innovative ways to solve business problems through data.

2. MAKE PEOPLE YOUR #1 PRIORITY

The technology and vendor landscape that supports the data industry has evolved a great deal in recent years, but the way we think about and invest in analytics talent, skills and capabilities hasn't moved at the same pace.

Recommendation

Take stock of the people in your organization who currently support data and insights. Ask questions like, do you outsource these functions to an agency or should you have an in-house team? Should this team be centralized or decentralized? Do you need to hire new people, and/or potentially create new roles?

3. NURTURE DATA-DRIVEN CULTURE THROUGH OPENNESS, CURIOSITY AND COLLABORATION

Creating a culture around data driven thinking is no simple task. But succeeding with data isn't just about breaking silos and hiring the brightest minds. You need to create and nurture a culture that makes your business want to be data driven.

Recommendation

Don't constrain your research and analytics teams to investigating data and churning out insight for other parts of the business to action on. Bring people of different business functions together, from IT, creative, brand planning, etc. so they have the opportunity to contribute and that they have a stake in the actions being taken.

4. ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

The biggest mistake a business can make when it comes to leveraging data is working without purpose. Today, many business leaders are stymied by the fact that they don't start by asking the right business questions.

Recommendation

Similar to driving data driven culture, you can become more effective at asking the right business questions collaboration. Bring different business functions together to examine the issue. Once you have asked the right business questions and obtained insights, you need to ensure you have the right people in place to craft the strategy and execution.

5. BUILD YOUR FOUNDATION

Laying a sturdy foundation for data and analytics involves more than fancy tools and technology. It requires an investment in the right people who can build the organizational knowledge required to leverage those tools.

Recommendation

Make sure that you have the right people in place and that you're not over invested in technology. Next, make sure that you have built a foundation that defines how and what you're measuring in a meaningful way.

NEXT STEPS

The IAB Measurement and Standards Committee found the roundtable discussion incredibly informative and have used the insights as a springboard for what we want to do next to unleash the power of data in 2016:

As part of our commitment to data we have two big initiatives for 2016:

1. Working with marketers to create a “Data Taxonomy” around what metrics can be used to answer which business questions. We will use case studies from different industry verticals to deliver a go to playbook for all levels.
2. Establish “Talent Standards” by defining a common language for key domains, functions, roles and skills required for digital marketing success. This will help organisations understand and identify the right digital talent for their business.

GLOSSARY

1. <http://www.millwardbrown.com/global-navigation/news/press-releases/full-release/2015/05/05/insights2020-launches-leadership-initiative-to-help-business-leaders-decode-how-insights-and-analytics-drive-change-and-growth>
2. <http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/biggest-web-analysts-mistake-how-to-avoid/>

