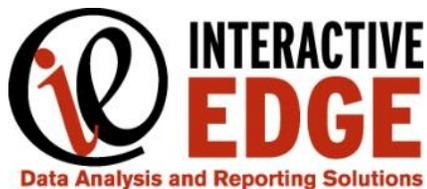


Don't Stress Over Big Data; Master What You've Got

By Zel Bianco
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Contact us for more information:

zbianco@interactiveedge.com

212-462-4900

www.interactiveedge.com

With all the current obsessions over massive amounts of social, mobile, local and search data coming over the horizon, it's not unusual for brand marketers to lose focus on the present analytic opportunities already emerging from more conventional data sources.

Yes, Big Data is coming, but there are a great many opportunities here now.

Your customer-facing organization already has access to more complex and varied data sources than ever before. Mastering syndicated data and item movement was just the start. Today your category experts must fold in shopper insights from loyalty, baskets, demand, and activation.

More retailers are beginning to widen their sights to capture shopper movement, dwell times and conversions. All can be tremendously valuable for category and promotion planning and performance evaluation.

Depending upon the category and the retail account, today's practitioners may look well beyond traditional sources such as syndicated sales data, household panel data, and competitive data available from Nielsen and IRI. In addition, they are trying to master:

- Shopper leakage data, both cross-outlet and cross-channel, now coming into common use.
- Item movement data flowing from sources such as RetailLink.
- Shopper behavioral data from a variety of sources like dunnhumby, CVS, and various other frequent shopper programs.
- Shopper tracking and activation data now coming on line from a variety of new sources.

With so much more to analyze and understand, leading brand marketers are responding by expanding organizational expertise and establishing centers of excellence. The opportunity lies in putting this knowhow to work at the account level – and not only in front of the top 10 or 15 retailers. How do you turn so much complexity into persuasive support for your brand?

Speed to Insights

Mastering these wide ranging data sources and extracting the valuable insights that they carry requires a combination of expertise among groups such as category management and shopper insights and a process that eliminates redundancy. Ad hoc analytics are insufficient – even for talented analysts in the largest and best equipped account teams. Today the facts define the deal, and getting to the relevant, actionable facts first can make the difference in category leadership.

Leaders in the CPG industry are taking a three-part discipline that uses intuitive analytic tools to bring clarity and speed to the data analytics used every day at all account levels. The best are learning to:

- **Elevate** the caliber and sophistication of data analyses. They work faster and with more data types to reveal powerful, persuasive insights.
- **Automate** routine fact-gathering and analytics to save time and improve consistency. Their precious intellectual resources are freed to focus on breakthrough insights.
- **Propagate** best practice analytics that originate with the data experts. They communicate them across the customer-facing organization with a few intuitive clicks.

What do we mean by “elevate”? These are fact-hungry times in the fast-moving consumer goods business. The performance differences between winners and losers within a category can be quite subtle. Category planning rules of thumb are giving way to superior insights drawn from more data sources on a more rapid time scale.

In the present Shopper Marketing era, retailers expect their manufacturer partners to focus harder on shopper insights. They want greater granularity and segmentation in analytics and planning. Where consumer segmentation was traditionally product centered, now the demand comes for analytics that are relevant to retailer’s view of their shopper segments.

This degree of sophistication can be harder to deliver on a continuous basis. Not all account team analysts possess the necessary skill level, and relying solely upon the data experts at headquarters can create a bottleneck that puts account-facing teams at a disadvantage.

That’s why it’s desirable to “automate” to the extent possible the reports, scorecards and presentation formats for key data sources – both traditional and cutting edge. This makes routine analytics and insights accessible to your business development pros. They identify a format that tells the story, select the data sources and parameters, and produce presentations at a consistent level of quality.

Automated presentation development shortens preparation time and saves hours from your key analysts. It lets your account-facing teams negotiate with confidence, because the facts are known, and what-if questions are easily answered on the fly.

Count on your most talented data experts to develop new, more sophisticated ways to parse, combine and interpret multiple data sources. The organization can “propagate” their knowhow by embedding formats for various analyses in the presentation tool kit used by the account teams. New analytics don’t need to be reinvented each time a new data source is tapped, but each visual is still dynamic and customizable. Parameters are selected by the user with a few intuitive clicks and the story is built in minutes – in charts and descriptive text.

Deep, Fast, Wide

Elevate – automate – propagate is a framework for superior fact-based category planning and negotiation.

As data analytics keep surpassing new high-water marks, well prepared CPG marketers must be prepared to navigate an ever-widening flow of data sources to gain the best possible grasp of the data that matter. They will tap more information types than their competition. They will automate fact-gathering, and make the findings rapidly actionable. They will empower their non-experts by propagating analytic expertise through systematic processes.

Today’s winning expertise goes beyond mastery of traditional category management data sources. Leaders understand it is a core competency to be able to access and interpret data from any source that is relevant to driving category growth and brand success.

Big Data will likely be part of the equation when it gets here. Right now, however, it’s smart business for brands to master what’s right at hand.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zel Bianco is President, CEO and founder of Interactive Edge www.interactiveedge.com, an industry leader in data analysis and presentation software for the Consumer Goods industry. Zel has maintained long term relationships with his clients including Dr Pepper Snapple Group, Georgia-Pacific, Hormel, Mars, Nestlé, Newell Rubbermaid and many more.

Zel has been a frequent speaker on topics of interest to the industry, including sales force automation, category management and business intelligence. Zel is a featured BrainTrust panelist on RetailWire, whose comments have been published in Forbes and other business and industry publications. Zel and Interactive Edge are Corporate members of the Category Management Association and the DePaul University Sales Leadership and Category Management Board of