

Marketing & Sales Tech: Demand Generation Engines that Drive Results

Amir Akhavan, Managing Director, JEGI (moderator): Our panel is focused on the importance of data combined with marketing technology in order to drive sales results.

Omer Artun, Founder & CEO, AgilOne: We offer predictive marketing solutions for marketers in a SaaS platform.

Neil Capel, Founder & CEO, Sailthru: We personalize websites and email, through to the mobile and app experience.

André Lejeune, Chairman & CEO, Selligent: We help brands engage with their clients, with an omnichannel audience engagement platform.

Dale Renner, Founder & CEO, RedPoint Global: We have two primary offerings, one is around campaign management and the other is around data management.

Akhavan: Please share your thoughts on personalization, data and strategy execution.

Capel: You have to tailor your communication to be relevant in today's environment. If you're competing with Amazon, you have to build an interest profile on every single user, communicating with them on a one-to-one basis across all channels.

Renner: We see the world as very data-driven. A lot of providers think first about content. We don't see any practical way to do true cross-channel campaign management, unless you control and manage your data. The explosion of data and the proliferation of channels has built latency, the enemy of relevance, into the process. Bringing this all together with immediacy comes from the data – the heart and soul of business.

Lejeune: Indeed, data is important. At Selligent, we believe execution is more important, and we try to make sure that we can, in real-time, orchestrate a relevant dialogue. We have been using data for years, but now we also try to create a personalized dialogue, starting with the first anonymous visit to a landing page.

Once we get the visitor to identify himself or herself, we can start aggregating all the available data, including social, demographic, psychographic and transactional, in a smart way. It's all about execution.

Artun: Marketers have been hearing about personalized, one-to-one marketing for 20 years. Now, they are using technology to move away from a marketing, merchandising and channel focus to a focus on each customer.

The execution and data have to come together in a coherent strategy. There are lots of tools out there with overlapping capabilities,

but personalized marketing strategy is still very nascent.

Capel: Marketers are beginning to understand what they need to be doing. Cutting edge marketers understand that they can give up the reins to an algorithm to conduct the decisioning, because a human can't make the same kind of decisions on a single user basis.



(from left) Amir Akhavan (JEGI); Dale Renner (RedPoint Global); André Lejeune (Selligent); Omer Artun (AgilOne); and Neil Capel (Sailthru)

Renner: One-to-one marketing has to be algorithm-driven, because it's not possible for any one human to derive the necessary insights.

Based on those insights, you take action; that's the execution, which gives us more data to feed back into the data engine, giving us better insights, better analytics, better algorithms. We're agreed on the need for personalization and understanding your data – the challenge is, how do you make it work?

Akhavan: You are all working with agencies and marketers. Over the long-term, are your businesses going to be good or bad for the agencies?

Artun: Good, but I haven't seen any agency that actually understands the concept of a customer, their journey and their life cycle, and then adopts this concept. The 10 or 15 agencies I have talked to are very advertising-focused and really don't understand this concept, but I think they'll get there.

Lejeune: The reality is that you need the agency that understands direct marketing and data. Medium-sized agencies who understand direct marketing can be very efficient in building programs using the marketing technology stack. That's our experience, at least.

Renner: Agencies can actually play a very important role here, helping companies craft and implement strategy and think about how you

measure performance and results. Someone has to provide the link between their strategy and what our software can do.

Akhavan: How are you thinking about executing in mobile and the solutions that you've got for clients in the market?

Artun: Marketers want to understand behavior on mobile, within the context of the full customer engagement, and then measure it in relation to what they do elsewhere.

Capel: Mobile is not about the device being mobile, it's about the fact that it's a smart screen. No easy navigation point, no mouse, no keyboard – so, it better be relevant to me and very fast. The mediums don't actually matter – it's about tailoring the experience to the consumer every single time, because that's how you win in this environment.

Renner: I couldn't agree more. You can't even generalize about mobile, because Fitbit and Auto Zone, for example, have totally different mobile strategies, based on the experience that each is trying to deliver. The mobile phone is nothing more than the Internet in your pocket. It's about being able to collect all of that and use the data to drive the best, most relevant offer.

Akhavan: How are you thinking about machine intelligence in your business, and how can people apply it to their platforms?

Renner: Companies are dumping primary data (their cleanest data) and third-party data (the dirtiest data) into a "data lake". And, because they're using the data to drive their analytics, marketing and communications, they have to figure out how to bring all that dark data together, cleanse it, and use it to optimize an interaction, whether locally (e.g., across a channel) or globally (i.e., across all touch points).

So, we're doing algorithmic analytics, because there's so much data and we're trying to get to a market of one and be the most relevant to that person, and we have to do it all at speed. ■



(from left) Ray Shu (GE Capital); Wilma Jordan (JEGI); Jennifer Morgan (SAP); Ken Wasch (SIIA); and Meredith Flynn-Ripley (HeyWire)