

FROM SILOS TO A SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

*Leveraging the real-time power of
a CDP to deliver more value through
your existing tech stack*

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THE CONTENT ADVISORY

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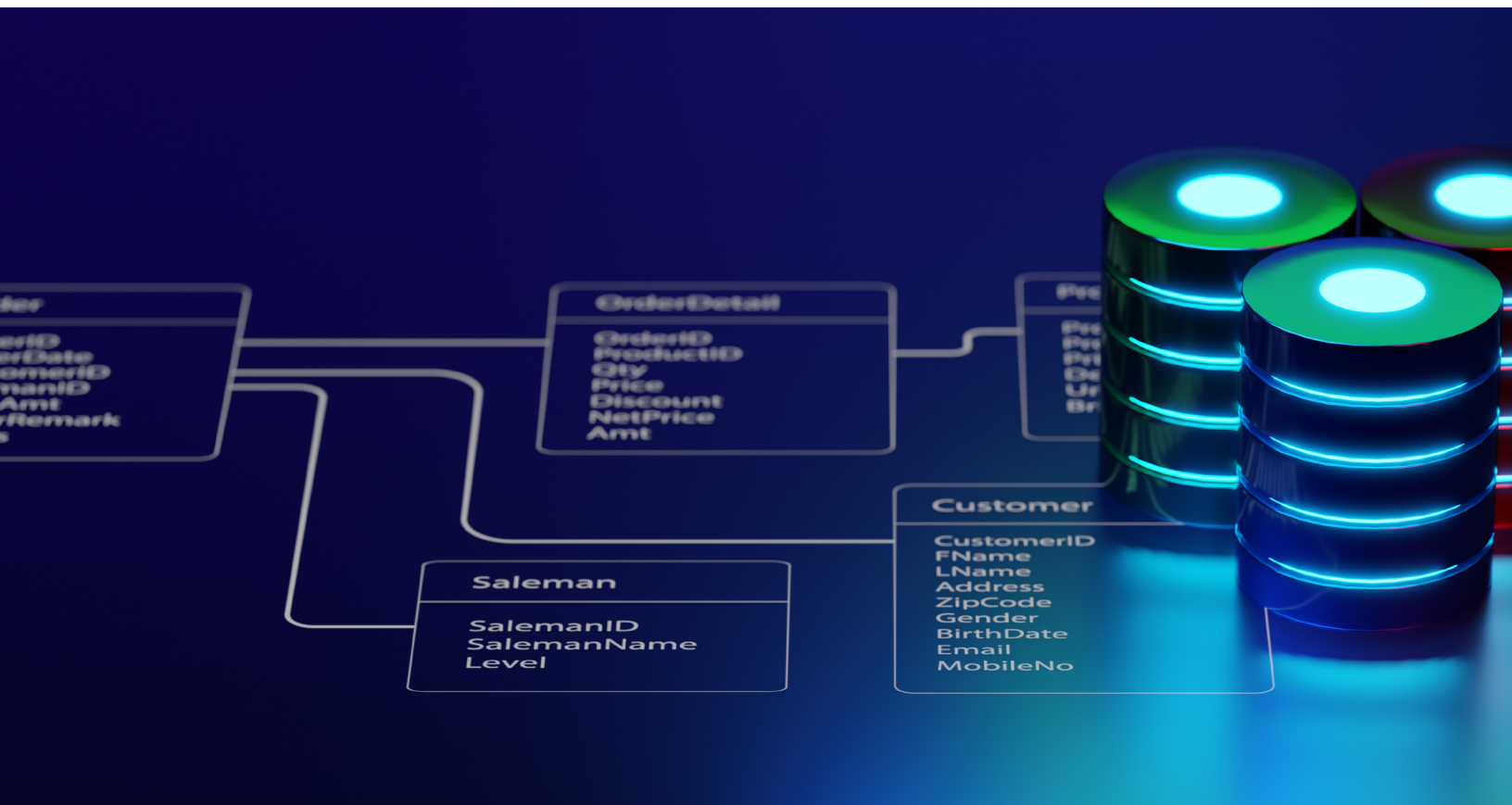
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer experience marketers are in a bind.

On one hand, the customers they must attract and retain are demanding increasingly hyper-personalized service.

On the other, the granular data required to provide such service is often siloed, incomplete, and/or hidden in mountains of uncategorized data.

Enter the customer data platform (CDP). This software solution can work within an organization's existing tech stack to aggregate and unify customer data, including real-time insights, and help the organization leverage all of its customer-impacting data to optimize every interaction a customer has with a brand.



INTRODUCTION

THE TIME TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMER IS NOW

For the last decade, brands have tried to pursue the vision of a 360-degree view of their customer.

Initiatives were plentiful. Results were few.

Ironically, in a post-pandemic world lacking in trust and fraught with economic uncertainty, there has never been a more pressing time for companies to understand their customers and have continuous access to real-time insight about them. It's another complexity to add to an already complex data-laden environment that virtually all companies, across all industries, find themselves in. It's another complexity to add to an already complex data-laden environment that virtually all companies, across all industries, find themselves in.

Every marketing organization wants to be data-driven.

Of course they do. Research shows that companies with mature data practices see more than double the success of those without such practices. Yet, the flooding of data lakes, the increasing complexity of evolving privacy regulations, the impending loss of third-party cookies, and shifting consumer trust make it difficult to create a cohesive data acquisition and application strategy. This is compounded by the inherent challenges of duplication, lack of integrity, and inaccuracies that siloed data can invite.

Simultaneously, a generational shift in technology is taking place, with more connected devices and the ability of data to connect essentially every experience a customer has. They now expect, and demand, personalized experiences that speaks to them. And this is the new bar for all brands. In fact, multiple research studies report anywhere from 30% to 86% of customers will now switch

from brands they love after just one bad experience or breach of trust.

The era of digital transformation has created amazing opportunities for institutions that are ready, and willing, to accept them. These opportunities are made possible by the customer data platform (CDP) – a software solution that provides a persistent, unified customer database that is accessible to other systems. They are new opportunities only in the sense that previously they were unresolved challenges. CDPs now provide the solution to those challenges, turning them into opportunities for organizations to meet the customer in real time during their moment of need, instead of missing the signal (sent through customer data) and thus missing the chance to capture customers' business and, more importantly, their trust.

Trust is built over a succession of interactions and exchanges, and the brand's ability to meet its audiences where they are with what they need each and every time. That requires data unification within an agile, up-to-the-minute current repository that has both the data and knowledge that enable the systems of engagement to thrive.

The time to better understand customers is now.

Enter the customer data platform. The CDP is the game-changing foundation of organizational success. The technology enables the connection of digital and physical experiences and leverages real-time insight from customers. It can optimize every interaction a customer has with a brand.

CDP –CONNECTING FRAGMENTED DATA

The internal challenges around data are real. The desire to be data-driven isn't enough. Becoming data-driven means committing as an organization to leverage the treasury of insights held by the massive amounts of data on hand, to move away from decision-making based on instincts, observations, or personal opinions, and to lean into what the data is saying.

CDPs enable the delivery of the best experience, information, data, and options, in real time across audience journeys, by aggregating and unifying customer data. Creating a unified customer profile requires aggregating all types of information: transactional, behavioral, individual user, and psychographic. (See Figure 1.)

Having this, and other, information at hand in real time leads to actionable insights that can provide the seamless experience customers expect.

Marketers have been anointed the owners of customer data. Thus, they have been put in charge of corralling all customer data sources into a single system of record, most often a customer relationship management (CRM) solution. These efforts often result in further data integrity breakdown. Far too often, different pieces of the customer record are owned and/or gathered by different, sometimes multiple, parts of the business that are unwilling or unable to share their data. (See Figure 2.) This makes it virtually impossible to connect the dots and create a cohesive, single, complete view of who a customer is.

Figure 1
Data Types for Unified Customer Profile

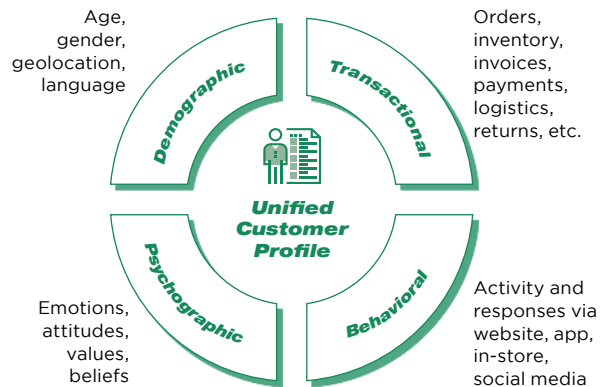


Figure 2
Data Source for Customer Data Platforms



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Without this single source of truth, other systems of engagement (marketing automation, AdTech, commerce, service, etc.) or systems of record (analytics, procurement, production, logistics, compliance, etc.) can't hit the mark with relevant, real-time, contextual, compliant information that audiences – both internal and external – need, want, and, more often now, demand.

This is not to say that marketers, and others, aren't doing their best to figure out how to capture this profile to create the necessary insights. They have all gone above and beyond in their creativity in this realm; from giant Excel spreadsheets to massive SQL databases to additional analytic tools beyond the sanctioned technology provided by the IT department. It just isn't enough to connect the multitude of data sources and funnel them into current, manageable, usable intelligence.

It's no wonder that marketers were quick to embrace CDPs.

Working as the connector within an existing tech stack, CDPs filter and bind the often siloed and fragmented customer data from across teams into leverageable insights, more profitable interactions, and a platform for customer value growth. And while there remains some debate 10 years in on what technical capabilities a customer data platform should include, at a minimum the solution should be able to do the following:

- Automatically connect data from across the enterprise technology stack, not just marketing and comms technology.
- Create and activate intelligent audience segmentation, faster and more reliably than other more disparate technologies.
- Enable multiple business teams from demand generation, brand marketing, sales, customer service, and even product marketing to create more agile marketing campaigns, resonant content-driven experiences, and targeted offers.



Pharmaceutical Customer Data Complicated by Compliance

As in other compliance- and regulatory-bound industries, data for healthcare organizations is complicated. From research to manufacturing to healthcare professionals (HCP), healthcare and related data needs to be managed and unified to meet the demands for a variety of audiences in a variety of ways.

Navigating the healthcare network can be extremely challenging. From simple wellness check-ups to receiving life-saving treatments, patients talk with so many people, keeping track of all those interactions is essential for them to receive the best, and most accurate care. Yet all these touch points and associated details – registration, care plans, medications, clinical data, contact information – are typically housed in separate, unconnected, specialised systems.

Customer data platforms can help deliver patients timely information and tools to help them along their healthcare journey by unifying patient data. By eradicating data siloes and providing healthcare organizations a secure foundation for orchestrating improved patient journeys CDPs can enable better outcomes for patients and HCPs.

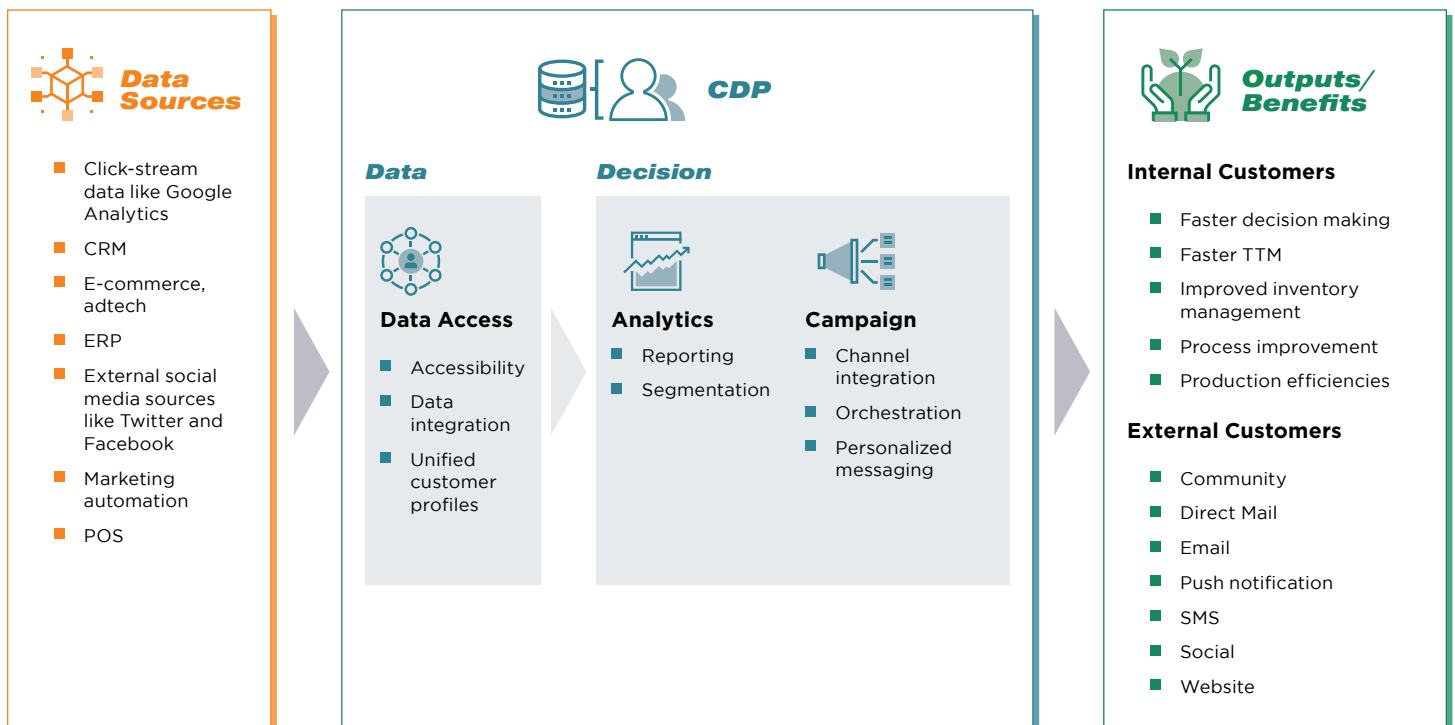
This power can be used across the organization to build a customer-centric approach to business and help solve success-inhibiting challenges that many organizations face today:

1. Overabundance of unconnected data that impedes companies from moving from a HiPPO (highest paid person's opinion) decision-making model to faster, informed, data-driven decision-making.
2. Non-optimized work efforts and overall operations that do not align with the customers' needs.
3. Inefficiencies and lagging productivity caused by data silos created by isolated working environments and decisions.
4. Encumbered and impeded time to market for products and services caused by lack of timely insights.

5. Non-optimized audience experiences leading to poor customer experience and attrition.

While powerful and enabling, a CDP is not the panacea for an organization's tech stack. For example, it doesn't replace a CRM solution, particularly for an enterprise organization with a massive customer base. Another critical consideration is that the CDP must be integrated with other crucial data-source systems - well beyond the martech stack - in order to extricate the hidden value in the data held within the organization's platforms. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3
Integrated CDP extricates hidden value in the data held within the organizations' platforms



To date, the CDP has mostly been the purview of marketers. They were first to recognize its power and potential more than 10 years ago, and since then marketers around the globe, in various disciplines, have embraced and leveraged the tool with sights set on improving the value of data, as well as creating better experiences for people and improving brand performance.

The value CDP insights can provide will continue to grow as the cookieless future matures and first-party data becomes the essential foundation for delivering the best possible experiences across audience journeys. For CDPs to live up to their potential of delivering on customers' expectations of a seamless brand experience across channels, adoption of this essential and strategic tool needs to be expanded beyond marketers.

CDPs must become the interconnected source of truth across all departments and interactions, physical and digital, functioning as a cohesive data aggregator with data inflows from other parts of the organization. Only then can the oceans of customer-impacting data and its insights be leveraged to deliver optimized, hyper-personalized, differentiating experiences.



Fierce Telecom Competition Demands Connected Customer Data

Globally, the telecom industry is one of the most highly competitive and customer experience dependent. Now a commodified service, the experiences providers deliver are essential for success and stability. With the exponential rise in internet users and ever-increasing competition, delivering enriching digital experiences is a survival necessity for this industry.

A connected CDP that collects, consolidates, and considers the massive amount of customer data, from satisfaction rating and social media to devices and digital service to commerce and customer service, making it understandable and usable, is the missing piece that can help telecom companies achieve competitive advantage. By aggregating the information and delivering insights, the tool can help cross-organizational teams improve audience engagement and customer satisfaction by delivering personalized, customer-centric, contextual, and tailored experiences that fit their needs.

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CDP – HARNESSING THE POWER OF DATA BEYOND MARKETING

No business today, regardless of size, can ignore the power of data. Gathering the right data is just the first step in transforming a company into a thriving, data-driven organization that puts the customer at the center of everything it does. Many organizations are stuck here – relying on basic data to try to gain market share. Accessing the intelligence and leveraging the insights the data holds are the keys that open the door to increasing audience engagement and that desired competitive advantage. CDPs can deliver those keys.

To do so, CDPs need to be elevated beyond marketing to an organizational business-critical service, so they can maximize their potential impact on customer experience and business success. And while marketers were at the front door of recognizing CDPs' value and potential, these platforms can do much more beyond their current limited use. Marketers, as continued super-users, can help the rest of the organization recognize and leverage that value.

For this adoption to take place will require a cultural transformation alongside the digital transformation, with a clear, shared data strategy in place to support it. With leadership setting the example, employees and teams must be encouraged to delve into and use the data available to them to improve performance and delivery.

Beyond marketing, a CDP can also enable innovation – unlocking new product and service ideas by connecting audience insights from across the organization. These insights on customer preferences and inclinations can also inform process improvements that can enhance audience experiences. Expanding a CDP's sphere of engagement can provide unbridled opportunities for sales, operations, and other departments. Engaging CDPs and extending their value to other departments transitions them from auxiliary systems to mission-critical platforms, enabling digital transformation for the whole organization.

The ways in which CDPs can help organizations move beyond data hunter-gatherer mode to become data wranglers are nearly endless.

But first, there are four core tenets that every organization must establish to get the most out of its people, processes, and investment in technology when it comes to customer data (see Figure 4).

Figure 4
Four Core Tenets Around Customer Data



1. IDENTIFY AND ALIGN CORE CUSTOMER DATA STAKEHOLDERS



The first step in any successful transformation is to get the right team in place. Making the shift to a more collaborative, data-driven operational model is no different. And while there is no one perfect way of doing this or ideal shape the team should take, there are some common essential elements:

- **Cross-department representation.**
This is often where organizations fail to look beyond the usual suspects of marketing and sales. By reaching out and incorporating input from operational teams impacting the customer journey – accounting, procurement, product management, the work done to establish the right data model will be inclusive and complete.
- **Cross-functionality capabilities.**
A data-driven operational model requires a shift in thinking as well as doing. New roles and responsibilities will evolve that require a different set of functional capabilities that may or may not already exist in the current employee base. Gathering expert representation for the data (developers, solution architects, business intelligence), channels (managers, experience architects, data analysts, operations specialists), and customer (data governance, marketing, sales, customer support) will provide a holistic view of where data is sourced and resides, how it is/can be managed and connected, and where it needs to get to in order to unleash its potential.

When working to band together these disparate resources, don't forget to look beyond the firewall to outside agencies and partners that may have knowledge, expertise, and insights on how to best curate the organization's customer-impacting data.

Getting stakeholders involved and aligned early in implementing a new CDP or expanding the breadth of an existing one will make the transition and associated changes easier to roll out and their adoption more successful.

2. SET A CUSTOMER DATA STRATEGY FOR THE ENTIRE ORGANIZATION TO EMBRACE



Having a customer data strategy that incorporates data and teams beyond marketing is essential to both the short- and long-term success of an organization. With a stakeholder team in place that includes all facets of the organization impacting the customer journey – technical, administration, operations, customer service, productions, logistics, etc. – a specific data strategy is necessary to accomplish these goals:

- a. Inform and define a data-driven decision-making framework.
- b. Identify milestones, priorities, and data management approaches.
- c. Clarify the financial implications and benefits for more inclusive and diverse use and management of customer-related and -impacting data.
- d. Outline how customer data will be identified, stored, shared, processed, and governed.

The strategy should be a short-term guide that brings about quick wins, as well as a long-term vision with measurable business and technology goals that reach into three or four fiscal years. This strategy should build on related strategies – digital, customer satisfaction, operations – as well as support and help achieve the organization's focal objectives. Departments, and even teams within departments, may elaborate and identify specific subsets of customer data goals of their own.

Unlocking the value and opening the door to customer data beyond marketing with a supporting customer-data strategy will increase the effectiveness of managing and extracting value from the vast volume of data available across the organization.

3. ESTABLISH A CUSTOMER DATA GOVERNANCE MODEL AND MANDATE



Galvanizing the team, strategy, and goals in place necessitates establishing the roles, responsibilities, and rubrics to make it work seamlessly.

This is often the most difficult tenet as it requires teams and individuals to relinquish some data autonomy in exchange for more robust and complete data sets – for which they may not immediately see the value. Start the process with leadership and department heads and a clear and transparent governance goal of removing gatekeeping that interferes with data usage. Implementing enablement measures to ensure that data is easy to access, use, and share throughout the organization can help with buy-in.

Multiple levels of governance are needed to make this shift happen:

- Executive Leadership for organizational alignment and funding.
- Customer Data Leadership Team functional level representatives (marketing, sales, operations, compliance, service, etc.) that help set, support, educate/communicate, evolve, and guide customer-data standards and guidelines.
- Execution teams/individuals that work within the rules and guidelines for optimizing how customer data is collected, stored, shared, and used within the organization.

4. CREATE A CUSTOMER DATA STRATEGY ROADMAP FOR THE ORGANIZATION TO FOLLOW



With the team, strategy, and governance in place, the next step is creating a roadmap for how these pieces will come together successfully.

The customer data roadmap should be an actionable plan for how each goal will be achieved. The plan should be specific and include these types of information:

- Goal ownership.
- Technology and processes in play.
- Cost of reaching the objectives.
- Timeline to achieve each goal.
- Expected outcomes of completing the objective.

The roadmap should be structured enough to follow but flexible enough to allow for agility and adaptation to keep up with the ever-changing customer experience and related data landscape.

By connecting the data-dots with stakeholder buy-in, a supporting strategy, a strong governance model, and a measurable roadmap, organizations regardless of size or industry will be set up and able to successfully deliver the streamlined experience across all touchpoints that consumers expect.

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Implementing a CDP is not a set-it-and-forget-it endeavor. Once connected, best-practice processes are rolled-out and adopted, and teams are leveraging the enhanced customer data flow, ongoing optimization of the CDP is required. Constantly ensuring feedback from the customer - data, behavior, attitudes, and changing business priorities are considered and reflected in the logic and insights provided by the tool will ensure customers are always getting their best experiences.

Like many industries, consumer banking was upheaved when the world was forced into the digital world of transactions. Digital engagement increased from 32% in 2020 to more than 50% of consumers now who regularly interact with their bank via a mobile app or website according to a recent [study by Accenture](#). At the same time, branch transactions continue to decline. This is a dramatic and abrupt change for any organization. Some, like many of the newer, neo banks, are successful in meeting those expectations thanks to a clear digital strategy and their ability to leverage data into actionable insights that deliver optimized customer experiences across all channels.

In their *Digital Banking Report 2021* research study, The Financial Brand found that the biggest challenge for 35% of financial firms was being unable to organize and leverage their abundance of customer data. Also, fewer than one in five financial institutions feel they are prepared to deliver personalized experiences at scale. With a CDP, these and all other financial institutions can create unified and accurate customer profiles, build better experiences across the customer journey, and drive real-time insights at the customer's moment of need that are personal, not just personalized.



Expectations for Personalized Banking Experiences

People make financial decisions during pivotal life moments – marriage, birth of a child, moving, divorce, graduation, and retirement. Customers have high expectations for personalized experiences in every interaction, particularly during these pivotal moments. Setting up your customer data profiles to catch these key moments will open the door to capturing your customer's business – and their trust. The era of familiar bank teller interactions at the local branch has extended to online experiences. In recent years, as consumers have been thrust into digital banking, they've become exponentially more accustomed to digital familiarity to the point where they expect contextual interaction whether in person, online, or on the phone.

A 2020 [Accenture report](#) found that **5% of banks' revenue is at risk** as millions of customers are persuaded by the transparent and tailored offerings of fintech entrants. Twenty million customers in the UK alone opened accounts with these new, digital-first, data-driven banks because they can offer customers hyper-personalized experiences.

FUTURE-PROOFING SUCCESS

The future is fluid. No one can predict exactly what will happen next. New channels, preferences, regulations, and restrictions crop up almost daily with little or, more often, no warning. The best preparation for the inevitable changes that will come is to be ready with open-ended digital transformation built into everything – operations, technology, data collection, and access – to provide the agility and adaptability required to thrive in changing times.

CDPs can provide that agility on multiple fronts through by enabling and facilitating:

- **Access** to combined data from multiple, cross-organizational sources (martech, ERP, Google).
- **Analysis** that translates the data sourced from across the organization into usable insights such as customer segmentation, predictive modeling, and revenue attribution.
- **Engagement** across channels delivering personal real-time interactions with customized messaging.

A CDP's power goes well beyond personalizing customer digital experiences. It allows for a customer to be truly identified as an individual, unique audience of one and for the organization to offer what the customer wants and needs in the moment they want or need it, in whatever form. CDP insights help both digital and human moments. From investigation, to conversion, to advocacy – by being able to identify what makes each potential or confirmed customer unique through their data journey across channels and devices, the entire organization can be ready to serve them what they need in the moment. CDPs can help make that vision a reality.

Evolving, improving – the customer experience looks different in different industries, but regardless of the industry, CDP data can help guide the necessary evolution and help businesses make smart choices in delivering the best contextual experiences.



Inventory Transparency and Demand Sensing for Retail Optimization

Millions of dollars are lost each year when there's a disconnect between what the customer wants, what the retailer has, and where in the supply chain that inventory is. Getting visibility into inventories requires the right data insight.

Exposing CDPs to broader teams in a consumer and retail environment can provide virtually endless opportunities for sales, operations, and other departments. Connecting inventory, purchasing, warehousing, distribution, and in-store retail solutions data with commerce, customer service, and CRM data can turn real-time customer data signals into significant improvements in supply chain efficiencies and customer satisfaction, as well as reducing inventory waste and improving sustainability.

CONCLUSION

There are many definitions of what a customer data platform is and much debate over what one should deliver. The Customer Data Platform Institute defines it as “packaged software that creates a persistent, unified customer database that is accessible to other systems.” Something to note is that the words “marketing” and “customer experience” are not included in this definition.

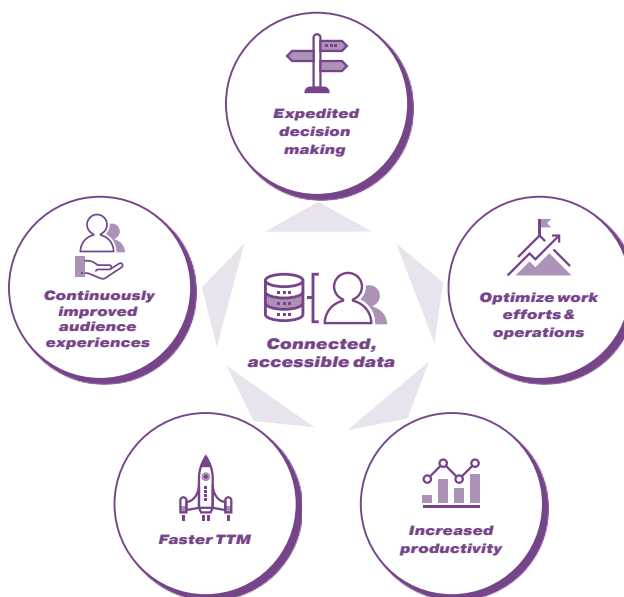
CDPs are more than marketing – these platforms deliver the most relevant information, data, experiences, options, and insight across journeys for both internal and external audiences.

With increased agility thanks to better data access, business growth can thrive. Having access to current insights, trends, and data can produce these benefits (see Figure 4):

1. Inform, provide context, and remove bias in operational and strategic decision-making.
2. Help direct goals-setting and coordination within teams and across departments and align them with organizational objectives.
3. Track key performance indicators in real time to be able to pivot and change by quickly leveraging successful efforts and mitigating failures and operational breakdowns.
4. Improve productivity and work effort alignment across the organization using shared and common data and insights to enable faster time to market for products and services.
5. Enable continuously improving audience experiences, thus building audience trust, loyalty, and engagement.

Many companies, particularly at the enterprise level, already have a central data management system such as a data lake or corporate data warehouse that contains its customer data. Where these exist, CDPs can source this data. But often data is housed only in marketing clouds or call centers and connecting other key customer information for non-marketing sources that could improve personalization is missed.

Figure 4
Benefits of CDP



This is where CDPs can take a well-defined and honed data strategy to the next level or start a more mature approach to digital and data-driven transformation. Customer data is typically sourced from marketing and call centers and can't on its own provide teams – be they marketers, sales, or product – the information they need to be in lockstep with customers. CDPs can consume and digest in-the-moment data and return contextual and germane insights for teams to act on. This bi-directional interaction results in measurable improvements in internal and external audience experiences.

ABOUT **THE CONTENT ADVISORY**

At The Content Advisory (TCA) we help companies devise intelligent content strategies. We help marketing leaders tell their stories better. We provide strategic consulting, education, and research to help these teams transform their business and build passionate audiences to their brand.

An audience is the most valuable asset any company will manage. For years, brands have had to rely on third-party media and measurement to reach audiences who can drive strategic business value. We know, instead, that marketers now have the disruptive power to create or acquire owned-media experiences and build these valuable audiences for themselves. The Content Advisory is committed to accelerating this shift and fundamentally transforming the practice of marketing. We are conspirators of business success.

As such, we provide:

- **CUSTOMIZED TRAINING & COACHING** programs to educate you and your teams.
- **RESEARCH & ADVISORY** based on real challenges with content marketing and customer experience.
- **STRATEGIC CONSULTING** and advisory services designed to provide relevant and actionable insights.
- **CUSTOM CONTENT** including keynotes, webinars, and session talks – thought leadership for your event.

Our focus is on the strategic use of content in the enterprise to create better customer experiences.

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