

The 5 Barriers To Overcome In Achieving Insights-Driven Communications

Data intelligence is the foundation that today's communication strategies are built upon. Since 2017, IDC (International Data Corporation) has already predicted the world's data will increase tenfold within the next seven years. The need to extract, visualize, and execute intelligence in near real-time is increasingly becoming a mission-critical objective to allow for evidence-based decision making. As such, building this hyper-relevant capability will be what allows communications leaders to retain a seat amongst the C-suites in the years to come. This is especially more crucial in post-COVID where we expect unforeseen and new emerging trends in media consumption and consumer behavioural habits.

However, in our pursuit to become more 'data-driven', most marketing and communications professionals fall into the trap of overlooking the extraction of 'actionable insights' – connections that could unlock powerful cultural discoveries for the brand and uncover 'truths', that can be leveraged upon, to create new value for customers and stakeholders.

Broadly speaking, here are 5 common barriers that PR and marketing professionals often face when attempting to harness data intelligence for smarter communications.

1. Gravitate towards rational in an irrational world

As channels, platforms, media and devices proliferate and fragment, there exist a myriad of ways for consumers and brands to interact more than ever. Practitioners often face the challenge of being so immersed and entrenched in analysing and navigating multiple data touchpoints and information sources, that they sometimes forget the 'human element' of the data literacy recipe. In a data-driven world, the human insight is more important than ever - if "data is the new oil" of the digital economy, human insight is its most valuable product. Human insight not only illuminates the customer journey and experience, it provides the deeper understanding – the "why" – that allows us to reimagine and create better ways to improve it.

Marketing & Comms

Daily Immersion in Data



People in Real Life

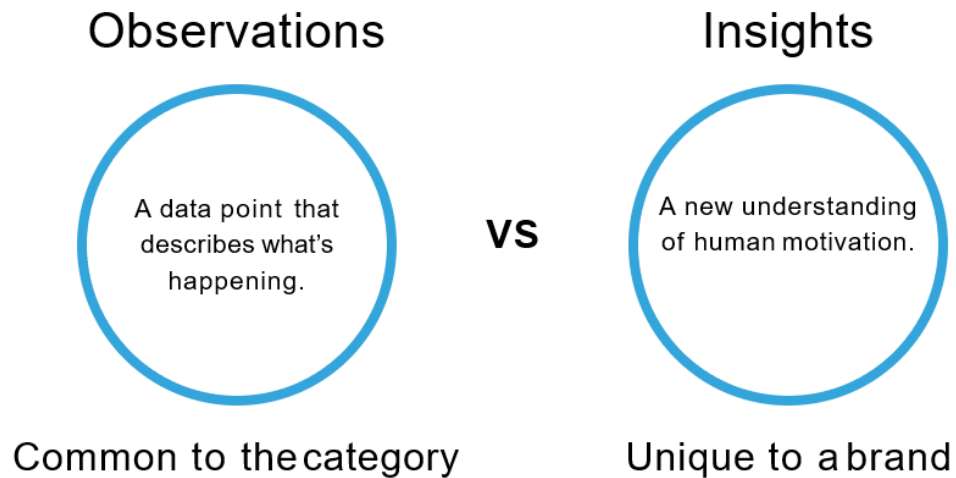
How We Make Decisions

Unconscious
Emotional
100's of times per day

2. Equate observations with insights

In a world where customer-centricity is everyone's goal, it seems like everyone is offering up "insight" at every turn. It is not uncommon to have a long tail of martech and ad tech providers labelling every correlation and data point as an "insight" – providing no further value or new discoveries for brands and organisations when that happens. True insights are usually unique to

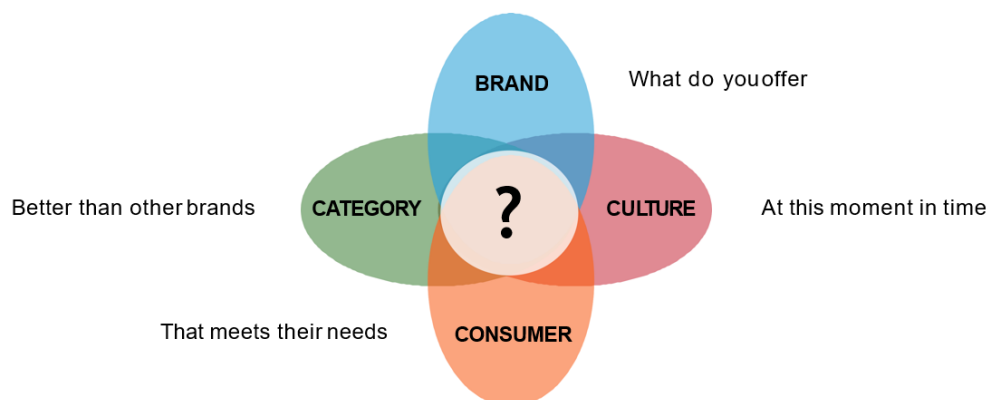
the brand and the intersection to forge more authentic connections.



3. Build reputation without authenticity

Too often today, companies are creating a collision between their brand and reputation. When they do, it destroys their credibility and creates a true authenticity gap in the minds of their stakeholders. Below is a snapshot to better understand the framework of how brands need to understand the intersection of how they operate - taking into account of cultural context, meeting a gap in the existing market and delivering on its brand promise. Too often, our data analysis focus on feedback and observations, without properly measuring and articulating the authenticity gap between what stakeholders expected from an organisation and what they were actually experiencing.

AUTHENTICITY: THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT



An example to illustrate would be [McDonald's efforts to promote social distancing in Brazil](#) by separating the brand's iconic Golden Arches in its logo. While seemingly witty and in line with global pandemic safety measures, [many have criticised it as insensitive and insincere](#), highlighting the true context and plight of its front-line employees.

4. Data silos that don't provide context

Many organisations invest heavily in data to grow their bottom line. However, data silos are a frequent problem especially in larger companies with many departments and complicated infrastructure – resulting in dashboards not easily comprehensible to C-Suites who cannot discern the ROI of your communications and marketing efforts.

One of the ways to present insights with better clarity is to organise and showcase how data intelligence is being harnessed to deliver C-Suite level impact and thereby directly contributing to defined business goals (see below).

DATA IN CONTEXT: THE BIG PICTURE, SIMPLE STORY



5. Treat milestones like destinations

Generating a great insights and analytics report is not the end of the journey. It is what comes after – the tangible actions that validate the value of the insights.

After all, what good are any of those if you can't put them to work?

But all too often, the promise falls short of reality. Analyses get filed and forgotten without having any real impact. We continually run into the same activation-killing problems. To realize the game-changing potential of data intelligence, consider a framework like **EVO** below to realise the clarity of how insights can power and impact activations right from the beginning.

CONSUMER JOURNEY			
BRAND LEVERS	AWARENESS	ENGAGEMENT	IMPACT
EXPERIENCE (Product, Brand, Customer)	At every stage of the consumer journey, EVO identifies:		
VALUES (Emotional, Reputation)			
OFFER (Features, Value, RTB)			

The key is to dive deeper than the typical category data that simply gets practitioners to parity. Tap on brand levers as defined above to uncover the brand, audience and cultural insights that uniquely drive business and communications agendas, while finding the right balance between data and brand storytelling.

This is what the next generation of data intelligence will look like for brands, organizations and government agencies – one that will help us to distil valuable and transformative insights for impact.