DMPs and data-informed decision making

Improving the efficiency of your media spend and the effectiveness of your marketing
1. Introduction
1.1 The landscape has changed......You've changed

The media and marketing landscape has changed dramatically over the past 10 years. The explosion of devices and the ever-expanding access to high speed internet, 3G and 4G means that individuals have multiple potential touch points and an extremely complicated and fluid customer journey.

Due to a huge amount of choice, and the ability to switch from one brand to another at the click of a button (or swipe of a finger), customer experience is now the key battleground. What’s more, customers know this and now, more than ever before, expect and demand a good experience.

How can brands deliver against these high expectations? This is one of the biggest challenges for marketers and advertisers. The Holy Grail. The ability to communicate with individuals in a relevant and timely manner - treating each person as an individual and interacting with them in a relevant manner at that point in their journey.

This is only possible by a) knowing lots about each person and b) having the technological capability to communicate that insight in real time and across channels.

Fortunately there is a lot of data available. Every consumer interaction has the capacity to be logged and tracked, creating a rich vapour trail of raw data. As individuals and consumers we are creating more data than ever before.

The brand’s challenge is to be able to differentiate what they need from what they don’t and also the difficulty of effectively using the insights they get to drive relevant interactions.

Equally, the technology – in the form of programmatic media trading and (more importantly) Data Management Platforms (DMPs) – is ready and available.

There is a myriad of new technology but the emergence of DMPs and programmatic media trading have helped drive the impact and effective use of data.

It seems the Holy Grail isn’t that far away after all.

1.2 Data-informed decision making vs real time execution

The ability to deliver messages and adverts in real time has been around for a while. ‘Programmatic’ is the buzzword that’s been on every marketer’s lips for the past two years, and rightly so: it’s a great piece of technology.

It is not, of course, the only piece of technology or execution channel that has a significant role to play in this debate. It is however, one of the most mature in regards to real time so we will be focusing on it in order to indicate the position of a DMP. Programmatic alone doesn’t provide the accuracy many marketers are striving for.

Programmatic is a great step forward and is revolutionising how digital display advertising is bought, sold and understood. It enables brands to react to events and triggers and enables them to pay a fee to advertise based on their interpretation of value. However, the interpretation has to come from data and the data can, and often is, be imperfect.

It’s when you consider combining this real time execution (i.e. programmatic) with the data-crunching power of a DMP that intelligent 1-2-1 interactions become plausible. We call this ‘data-informed decision making’ and it’s real-time execution and then some. Many organisations are using programmatic, but not nearly as many are using DMPs and that is a missed opportunity.

The birth of programmatic

Programmatic advertising evolved in the competitive world of media buying.

When online advertising was in its infancy the advertising models used for more traditional advertising (such as print and television) were simply transferred to the new environment. Advertisers bought space on websites based on the publishers’ understanding of their typical visitors and the nature of the content. In those early days adverts were paid per visit or view to a page where an advert was present.

With an ever-increasing demand for accuracy from advertisers driven by a need for clear ROIs, this model quickly became inadequate and what developed were more and more sophisticated methods of using what was known about browsers to tailor adverts to them.
Programmatic advertising was truly born when it became possible to deliver adverts in real time to browsers based on what the organisation knew about the individual browser, as opposed to the context. This advert for that person and that advert for that person.

Of course, accuracy is determined purely by the publisher’s ability to differentiate and classify individual browsers and the advertiser’s ability to identify the characteristics they most desire.

Data-informed decision making
This is where the power of data, and the DMP’s ability to transmit that data to these real time advertising channels to inform their decision-making processes, come in. “Data-informed decision making” is exactly what it sounds like: it’s the process of using data to inform smart decisions.

The process relies on data: it depends on the marketer having the right data and knowing what they want to do with it. The DMP is able to ingest and digest vast swathes of information and deliver relevant and actionable insights and decisions in real time. A marketer is able to be as accurate and specific as their data supports: if your data is robust enough to accurately identify the exact audience they wish to communicate with, the DMP can support it.

And these insights can be plugged into a wide variety of execution channels, campaigns and programmes, not just programmatic.

In a recent Experian survey of over 1,100 marketers worldwide, 69% of respondents said that they use automated, real-time execution as an active component of their current marketing. This may seem like a large number but as we have just discovered ‘real-time execution’ is not the same as ‘data-informed decision making’ and the brands that get it right soonest are going to be the ones that succeed quickest.

Click here for the 2016 Digital Marketer Report
2. Why data-informed decision making?
Data-informed decision making makes programmatic more accurate. As we have seen, programmatic evolved in the world of media buying, so it stands to reason that data-informed decision making will therefore improve the accuracy of media buying. With greater accuracy comes a greater conversion, less waste and a better ROI.

However, the media buying aspect is just the first benefit that data-informed decision making can deliver. The insights a DMP provides can be actioned across channels – driving efficiencies in not just display advertising but also in social media advertising, video on demand and - at some point in the near future - Addressable TV. And this isn’t restricted to just paid media – insights can as easily be used in other execution channels, opening the door to more accurate email, organic social, SMS campaigns and of course how you manage customer journeys on your own website.

Of course, this is only the beginning. Considering the number of touchpoints a DMP can influence, it’s possible to use data-informed decision making to make every aspect of your marketing more effective. This could be individual campaigns such as retention, reactivation or retargeting or it could be more accurate and measurable brand marketing.

What’s more, with a DMP gathering insight from every channel you use and spitting out real time decisions, marketers can take control of the customer journey like never before.

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<th>DEVICE</th>
<th>MARKETING DATA</th>
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<td>User ID</td>
<td>Cookie ID</td>
<td>Keyword used</td>
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<td>Pages viewed</td>
<td>Payment preference</td>
<td>IP address</td>
<td>Traffic source</td>
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<td>Age of account</td>
<td>Device ID</td>
<td>Campaign name</td>
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<td>Available promotions</td>
<td>Device type</td>
<td>Marketing costs</td>
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<th>OTHER DATA</th>
<th>EXPERIAN DATA &amp; INSIGHTS</th>
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<td>Location</td>
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<td>Behavioral insight</td>
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<th>Activation</th>
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| CMS Website Optimisation | Email | Programmatic & Display | Addressable TV | Mobile | Video | Search | Personalisation |

DMPs and data-informed decision making | Page 5
In the next few years marketing is going to switch emphasis from campaigns to on-going conversations or interactions.
2.1 The future of marketing

In the next few years marketing is going to switch emphasis from campaigns to on-going conversations or interactions. This is partly due to the technology available but also due to the increased expectations of customers. The focus is customer experience and it is almost impossible to get full control of the way you interact with an individual using traditional customer journeys and funnels.

The way organisations communicate with their customers has to change. No longer will campaigns be created with a finite time period and with objectives and timescales. Instead marketing will consist of building logic to treat certain customer types in particular ways according to what the business is trying to achieve at that point in time.

Marketing will be about relationship management and it is the DMP that will be able to influence what message a contact receives at each point of their experience with your brand. In this way marketing will be a case of continuously monitoring on-going interaction programmes.

It is data-informed decision making – the combination of data, a DMP and programmatic – that offers the optimum way for an increasing number of brands to manage these interactions. Making smart decisions based on data and delivering the right action in real time.

2.2 Making data-informed decision making work for your business

With the evolution of programmatic and the emergence of DMPs there has been a flood of providers offering a huge range of solutions to a multitude of problems. One of the biggest barriers (check out the ‘challenges’ section of this paper) is that many of these providers fail to provide the right level of support and guidance required to ensure you, the marketer, get the most out of it.

The potential is huge but the prospect of actually doing it is daunting. This is why in this next section we are going to break it down into more manageable chunks.

First we are going to focus on how to use data-informed decision making to drive efficiencies in media spend; and then we are going to look at how it can be used to increase the overall effectiveness of marketing. In each case we will pull out a few examples and drill down into the steps you need to take and how you will be able to measure success.

Every business is different. Your goals and objectives will vary depending on the industry you’re in, the nature of your organisation and where its priorities lie. It could be that it’s easier for you to justify investment if it delivers instant ROI in media spend or similarly it could be that the ability to vastly improve the customer experience is a higher priority for your business. Only you know but hopefully the remainder of this paper provides you with what you need to start your own journey.
3. Media efficiency

3.1 How to use data-informed decision making to drive media spend efficiency

Right person, right time, right offer. Advertising is all about accuracy. Every time a message is delivered to someone who is not interested in it means media budget wasted. What advertisers want is to show adverts only to those who are likely to be interested in that product. Interested and eligible – there’s no point in showing your advert to someone who is never going to either a) buy your product or b) be able to buy your product.

In data-informed decision making, audience creation drives efficiency. The more you know about the types of people you want to speak to the more defined your audience is going to be and the more accurate your advertising is going to be.

Step 1 - Input data into your DMP

DMPs love data and the more data you can provide from as wide a variety of sources as possible the more accurate your audience definition is going to be.

- **First party data** - start with your first party data. This is the data you have gathered on your customers, prospects and contacts and the interactions you have had with them. This can include:
  - Data from your CRM system
  - Any historical marketing data you have
  - Data captured on your website
  - Email subscriber lists
  - Any behavioural data you have on browsers
  - Social interaction data (interactions with your social profiles)
  - Cross-platform data from mobile web or apps

- **Second-party data** - look out for 2nd party data you might have access to. This can add great value in further understanding customers and prospects. This is basically ‘someone else’s’ first-party data that you gather from the source through a deal with a particular publisher or other entity.

- **Third party data** – third party data is where you purchase data from a third party to add it to your first party data to find trends and behavioural matches. This is particularly useful when your first-party data is insufficient or inaccurate. There are plenty of third party vendors out there of varying quality but it is essential that the third party data you use is high quality and from a trusted source. Here at Experian we offer third party data services alongside our DMP services so please feel free to ask us for support. Third party data is also an opportunity to add additional insights to get a more balanced view of your customers than that your first party data can deliver on its own. The most relevant example of this is using third party geo-demographic data to add an additional layer of non-digital insight on individuals such as where they live, their income or their profession.

- **Social data** – social media is an incredibly important aspect of people’s lives and there’s buckets of data on individuals in there. However, it’s not all accessible to marketers. There are several sources available and depending on the platform and the data you want it is possible to gather significant insight from your social platforms. For instance data regarding people who like a page or login with their social profiles can provide a valuable layer of insight.

- **Offline** – insight gathered offline should also be added to the mix. While this is in theory first party information it is important to call it out separately as so often it can fall by the wayside. This can include emails gathered at store front or during surveys. Likewise if your store card is separate from your CRM system this data should also be included as it can provide some really valuable insight into behaviour.

Step 2 - Choose your desired customers

Critical to the success of any media activity is knowing who you are trying to target and why. These are dictated purely by the goals of each campaign. The beauty of the DMP in this process is that once you have inputted all the different data types all you need to do is pull your best fit customers for that particular goal from your data and ask the DMP to create an audience type based on all the information and data it has at its disposal.

Step 3 – White listing and black listing

At this point it is sensible to decide which websites you want your ads to appear on. Depending on your business this will differ but there will be a number of website types
you don’t want to appear on – it may even vary depending on the activity. Black listing certain websites, or types of website, is an easy process. Once you have run a few campaigns you may wish to build up a white list of websites that work particularly well or you wish to focus on. It is best practice to maintain both your black lists and white lists continuously, monitoring who is on which and adding and taking away websites and publishers as you see fit.

**Step 4 - Removing people from the pool**

Now you need to tailor your audience type to remove anyone you don’t wish to send your message to. There are a wide range of reasons for doing this which all depend on the nature of the campaign and your business. Characteristics you can use to remove could include age, location and financial situation. For example, if you are a finance company selling credit cards, you don’t want your adverts to be seen by anyone who is under 18 or someone who is currently bankrupt or suffering money issues.

**Step 5 – Removing existing customers**

If you are running an acquisition campaign then you need to ensure your messages are not delivered to existing customers. By inputting your existing customer list, you can remove them from the audience, meaning they don’t receive any confusing messages or use your expensive acquisition campaigns just to navigate to your website. This is a good defence against inconsistent customer experiences – especially if you are offering new customers an incentive which existing customers may not have received.

You should also set up a rule so that the existing customer exclusion applies to customers who have just converted. This way they don’t continue to receive the adverts which they are likely to do if they fit the audience profile.

**Step 6 - Manage in real time**

It’s ‘now to hit go’ on your campaign but it is important to monitor it in real time. This way you can see how it is working and spot any issues as they develop. The beauty of real-time campaigns is you don’t have to wait until they are over in order to be able to gauge success. While it is sensible to not tinker overly to start with, there are significant changes you can make as you go along to affect performance. These include adding to your white and black lists and tinkering with your audience types: the data will show you the way.

**Step 7 – Optimise your channels**

After your campaign has been running for a significant period of time (or sufficient spend – time is immaterial really) it is possible to optimise the channels you are using to improve performance. This can include audience types for specific website partnerships which work better or worse or different creatives and landing pages.

**Step 8 – Measuring success**

The attraction of using a DMP in media buying is that success is instantly measurable. You should be able to measure the ROI using the same methods you did previously, but by looking at the goals of the campaign. Were you looking to increase sign ups? Were you looking at conversion? What’s your CPA and what’s your average sale value? Data-informed decision making guarantees more accurate media delivery and the results can be impressive.
4. Marketing effectiveness
How to use data-informed decision making to improve marketing effectiveness

Customer experience is the battleground of modern marketing. Customers expect and demand a great experience and often a brand’s success is determined on its ability to deliver relevant and seamless interactions.

In order to do this a brand needs to be able to tailor its communications to suit each individual based on the information it knows about that individual. A DMP ingests all the data it has on that individual from all of your sources and delivers insight and a recommended action based on all that it knows about them. These actions can be plugged into all your execution channels, meaning you can answer an email with a relevant SMS or tailor a website’s personalised content based on an email response.

This is customer centricity at its finest.

Before we get into any further detail it is worth pointing out that the key to this section is that it is not just about customer acquisition. ‘Marketing effectiveness’ in this instance caters for all aspects of the customer experience and a variety of other campaigns such as retention, loyalty and brand awareness.

Some of the steps are similar to those in the previous section on ‘Media Buying Efficiency’ but you will see that the output is very different.

Step 1 – Input your data into the DMP
Like in ‘media efficiency’ the first step is to input all the data you have at your disposal into your DMP. Click here to review this section

Step 2 - Define your parameters
Before you define an audience you need to have a clear goal for each trigger and interaction ‘group’ you are creating.

The possibilities are endless as you have the capability to control every touchpoint you could possibly have with every customer, or contact. But to do this, all your channels need a two-way data connection with the DMP: feeding raw data in, and accepting and actioning its output.

If for instance you are looking to retarget contacts who have visited your website this means deciding what message you’d like to show to them and what the CTA (Call To Action) will be. This way you can display that message to them through whichever channels you choose, and determine what the next action will be once they interact. This includes what content they will receive by email (if you have it), what adverts you show to them on display, and what content they are shown if and when they return to your website.

Clearly defined goals are critical in order for you to measure success. Equally, it’s important to ensure that conflicting messages aren’t shown to customers and a DMP can do this in the same way we removed existing customers from our acquisition campaigns.

Step 3 – Choose the best audience for your goals
Regardless of the objective of the campaign it is still necessary to build an audience segment. As in the case above, an audience can be defined using any combination of first, second, and third party data. You may also wish to define ‘lookalike’ audiences based on an existing audience segment, or even re-use an audience defined for another use-case.

Regardless of the audience definition, the delivery method through the DMP remains the same.

Example 1: Increase loyalty in high-spending customers with a free gift. In this example, you would define an audience featuring all the customers who matched the ‘high spending’ criteria based on insight the DMP has gleaned from your first party data, in particular your CRM system and historical purchase data. You could then implement a campaign to communicate the relevant message: for example, a creative with a free gift code targeted to only those people. The DMP can transmit that insight to all your execution channels so this message can be delivered via email, SMS, social or even website content, as well as programmatic display. During the course of the campaign, you can also exclude that audience from any other campaign you’re running so they won’t receive any conflicting messages from your brand – focusing the message, and making your relationship with them more relevant. That same audience segment can then be used in other campaigns – either as a model around which to generate lookalikes in third party data or through upselling activity after the loyalty campaign.
Example 2

Another example could be retargeting browsers who have visited your website but not converted. The DMP would be able to understand what they looked at on your website, what pages they visited and what they clicked on. It would then be able to inform actions and messages designed at putting relevant communications – perhaps about a product they seemed interested in – back in front of those individuals. This could then be deployed across whichever channels you choose or more realistically what data you have on those individuals from third party data. Again, like the previous example, this audience segment can be used in other campaigns or prevented from receiving other potentially confusing messages.

Step 4 – Measuring success

Measuring success is slightly more difficult in marketing effectiveness than it is in media efficiency. However, with clear goals in place for individual campaigns the benefits and impact your data-informed decision making is having should be clearly identifiable.

The overall goal is improving the customer experience but it is important that you take this approach in incremental steps with clearly designed campaigns with measurable performance. There are types of campaigns like upselling or retargeting which should provide a pretty immediate ROI in terms of conversion or revenue generation.

Step 5 - From campaigns to simply ‘what we do’

As we discussed earlier, data-informed decision making is the only way to deliver the customer-centric experiences which are the future of marketing. Campaigns won’t be created with finite time periods, instead, triggers and parameters will simply be in place, operating continuously. In this way marketing will be a case of continuously monitoring ongoing interaction programmes – all reliant on a DMP. Data-informed decision making will be able to run the following campaigns for you – as strings of interactions rather than overall campaigns.

• **Brand awareness** – Making your brand visible in the right people’s eyes
• **Seasonal** – Tailored seasonal communications based on behaviour and past purchases
• **Removing barriers to conversion** – Where are the drop off points? Where do people lose interest?
• **Reactivation** – Reaching and reengaging with inactive subscribers in relevant and interesting ways
• **Retargeting** – Getting your message in front of potential customers who have already shown interest
• **Loyalty** – Rewarding your most valuable customers
• **Welcome programmes** – Tailored comms to make a new customer feel special
• **Birthday messages** – Tailoring the message to suit the individual
5. Challenges and how to overcome them

Moving to data-informed decision making can be a daunting prospect. As with most major changes it can seem there are some fairly significant barriers to progress. In the following section we have highlighted some of the most significant and recurring issues we have encountered to date and how they can be overcome. If these resonate with you then don’t panic, you’re not the first person or organisation to have challenges. It’s not the challenges themselves but how you overcome them that will dictate how successful you are.

5.1 Expertise and skillsets

One of the biggest issues for organisations looking to invest in data-informed decision making is that they lack the in-house expertise required. This is exacerbated by the level of support and advice the majority of DMP providers offer. In many cases a DMP is treated like a SaaS (Software As A Service) platform, with access granted and marketers left to get on with it on their own.

What’s important here is that to get the most out of the capabilities you need to know what you’re doing. While it is possible to hire expertise it is also available to outsource it, and the payoff is worth the expense. Once you’re up and running you can look to bring expertise in-house but you may find it’s easier to continue to outsource. Likewise, don’t be put off by having to hire new heads – it’ll be worth it in the long run.

DMPs are in the process of revolutionising the media buying and marketing landscape so all that money you used to spend on media buying agencies and CRM can eventually be piled into your DMP capability.

Here at Experian we’re not like other DMP providers as a key component of our offering is access to our expertise and the level of support our clients receive. We want you to succeed and are here to make sure you do.

5.2 Silos in organisation

Silos are an issue across businesses, not just when it comes to implementing data-informed decision making. In the 2016 Digital Marketer Report, we reported that only 30% of marketers work in teams that are fully integrated. That leaves 70% of marketers operating either completely siloed by channel or in a partly integrated set up, which throws up some issues. This impacts the capability to utilise a DMP and undertake data-informed decision making because there is already a historic split between media buying, traditional marketing and ecommerce. In addition in many larger companies individual channels are broken out and managed by separate teams with different objectives and priorities.

A DMP can ingest data from any repository you have, and so can help break down any technological silos in the organisation. However, you can’t de-silo teams of people using a tool. The best approach is to ensure that different teams and channels have shared KPIs so all can benefit from what a DMP can deliver, and to identify a DMP and champion to manage the cross-functional challenges. That way you’ll all start working together and sharing success and moving forward as one entity with one customer experience.

5.3 Incomplete first party data

Many brands are concerned by the state of their first party data. In many instances this is quite justified as it’s based on ever evolving data collecting processes that have gone on for many years. As we know, first party data is critical and valuable but it doesn’t mean there’s no hope. There are plenty of data quality services available, and external data sets can be overlaid on top of patchy first party data to fill any gaps there may be. Similarly it may be worth considering a consortium approach like Experian’s very own Email Insights offering which enables you to share data with your peers. Here at Experian we’re not like other DMP providers as a key component of our offering is access to our expertise and the level of support our clients receive.

We want you to succeed and we’re here to make sure you do.
5.4 Data sharing anxiety

There is a lot of anxiety in the industry about sharing data. A brand’s first party data is often one of its most valuable assets and something it has traditionally held under lock and key. Overcoming that anxiety is incredibly important in order to allow brands to make their data work as hard as it can: the value of that data asset depends on being able to use the insights that can be extracted from it.

If you are unable to share your data it will never reach its full potential and you are missing out on some really valuable insights. The best solution is to ensure that you only share your data with trusted third parties. You are right to be concerned about sharing and therefore working with a trusted partner is the safest means of doing so.

5.5 Measurement

Measuring success is always a challenge – especially with anything new. As long as you have clear objectives in place from the start you are putting yourself in good stead for showing success. You need to decide what you are trying to achieve and put goals in place.

If you need to monetise interactions than you can do so as well – for instance you could put a value on a returning web visitor based on an understanding of conversion and acquisition rates.

It’s a different situation with Media Efficiency: the price of every impression is captured and the total costs of a campaign can be easily measured. If you are finding it difficult to build a viable business case it may be worth focusing on media efficiency and using that to prove the value of data-informed marketing – it’s not where the biggest benefits lie but it is a sure fire way to get your foot in the door.
7. Conclusion

7.1 Data-informed decision making is about making digital marketing work

Hopefully this paper has helped you to understand the difference between ‘data-informed decision making’ and programmatic and indeed what each can do for you – or ‘real-time execution’. Programmatic advertising is a useful tool but it’s nothing without the right data behind it and a DMP in place to create smart decisions in real time. Otherwise you’re just doing basic bidding but faster.

Data-informed decision making has evolved because marketers have to keep up with the customer. Multiple devices and channels and ever improving access to high speed internet means individuals jump across devices and channels at will. Such behaviour creates multiple touchpoints and multiple interactions.

Over the next few years the need to be able to communicate interaction by interaction will increase and the older mechanisms of campaigns, customer journeys and funnels will become more and more cumbersome. Consumers are flexible and they expect brands to be. They expect relevant messages – whether that’s in the ads served to them or the marketing communications they receive – and we have to keep up to speed.

This is a complicated subject – this much is evident from the level of confusion around the differences between programmatic and how to make it work. In essence it takes the right data, a DMP and then programmatic to be most effective. In reality it is more complicated than that but there is plenty of expertise available. DMP providers have not been particularly good at providing support on how to get the most out of the capability which is why you need to choose the providers that offer expertise as part of a managed service.

Once your DMP is in place it can be used to power two aspects of your marketing: 1) your media buying efficiency and 2) your marketing effectiveness. In time the DMP and data-informed decision making will be part and parcel with all your advertising and marketing efforts. Only that way will you be able to communicate effectively with your customers. Until that point you risk being unable to speak to your customers as they wish to be spoken to.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Now</strong></td>
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<td>Create a road map to data-informed decision making</td>
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<td>• What do you need?</td>
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<td>• Where is the expertise coming from?</td>
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<td>• What business objectives will it allow you to achieve?</td>
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<td><strong>Align your channels</strong></td>
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<td>• Work towards removing any silos</td>
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<td>• Align KPIs across channels</td>
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<td>• Get different channel teams working together</td>
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<td>• Work with an expert who knows data</td>
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<td><strong>Working towards</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Invest in DMP capability</strong></td>
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<td>• Look for the right provider that can deliver the right solution for you</td>
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<td>• Consider third party data, data quality services and DMP audience expertise</td>
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<td><strong>Make your data work harder</strong></td>
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<td>• Start with entering all data outputs including third party data into the DMP</td>
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<td>• Build the triggers and actions you want</td>
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<td>• Have clear objectives</td>
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<td>• Plug the DMP into your execution channels (including programmatic)</td>
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<td><strong>Then</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Continuously optimise</strong></td>
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About Experian Marketing Services

Experian Marketing Services is the leading global provider of consumer insights, targeting, data quality and cross-channel marketing. We help organisations intelligently interact with today’s empowered and hyper-connected consumers.

By helping marketers identify their best customers, find more, and then coordinate seamless and intelligent interactions across the most appropriate channels, Experian Marketing Services can deepen customer loyalty, strengthen brand advocacy and maximise profits.

Learn more at [www.experian.co.uk/marketingservices](http://www.experian.co.uk/marketing/)
White Paper
DMPs and data-informed decision making