

Introduction

Acquiring new customers is a crucial marketing task for any brand – from the smallest mom and pop shop to largest global powerhouse. In a recent survey of leading retailers and direct to consumer brands, Oracle and CommerceNext found that 81% of marketers say acquiring new consumers is one of their largest marketing priorities despite having higher costs than customer retention.¹

Yet, acquisition is a costly endeavor that can burn through marketing budgets in a flash. A recent Gartner survey revealed that CMOs spend nearly 40% of their budgets on acquiring new customers², making it incredibly important to have a focused acquisition strategy.

We developed this guide to help marketers build or improve their data-centric acquisition program – one that eliminates wasteful spending, attracts high-value customers, and is aligned with business priorities to drive growth.

The Four Phases of Program Development

Phase 1: Establish a Baseline and Define Objectives

Phase 2: Define Your Audience

Phase 3: Identify Your Audience's Needs, Motivations, and Preferences

Phase 4: Put Your Go-to-Market Plan into Action



Phase 1

Establish a Baseline and Define Objectives

To build a comprehensive customer acquisition program, companies should begin with a high-level approach to planning. This includes understanding where your organization is today, setting marketing objectives, establishing criteria for success, and engaging key stakeholders across the organization.



A successful acquisition strategy:

- · Supports business objectives
- · Is data-informed
- · Is people-vetted
- Represents a shared vision by all stakeholders and business leaders

The process begins with a deep analysis of past performance, current key performance indicators (KPIs), and acquisition needs across business units. This will ensure that the overarching acquisition strategy meets business goals and provides clear direction to all teams.

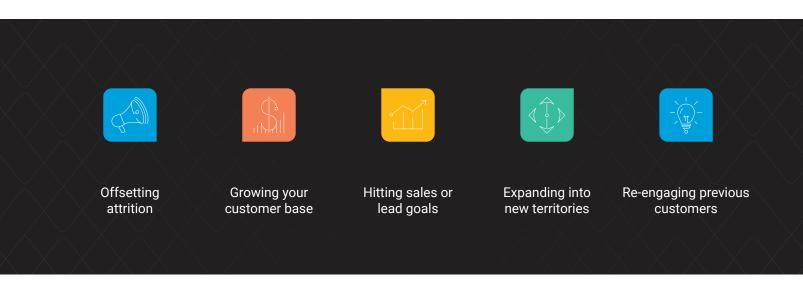
What key insights should guide you?

As a key first step, it's important to perform an analysis to understand the "why" behind your acquisition program and uncover insights to help you focus your efforts. For example, you may analyze your financials and find that your attrition levels are too high to meet revenue targets, or that you are not attracting enough high-value customers, or that your most profitable product line is used by fewer customers than a low-margin one. Insights like these will help you shift efforts toward the biggest potential revenue generators.



What are your goals?

After identifying insights about your organizational needs and the reasons why acquisition is important to your business, you can build a business case and seek buy-in from across the organization by tying estimated outcomes to specific goals. Common goals might include:



How will you measure success?

Next, you'll want to identify which KPIs and engagement metrics are important to every level of your business. For example, high-level acquisition KPIs could include cost per acquisition (CPA), return on advertising spend (ROAS), and the number of new customers acquired. Consider which KPIs matter most to your senior leadership, your finance team, and your marketing team. By identifying the KPIs that matter to key stakeholders now, you can ensure you're planning in advance for how to measure against them and report back on progress. In addition, you should establish which benchmarks will represent "success" for the acquisition program.



BRAND EXAMPLE Third Love

Women's undergarment brand, Third Love learned a valuable lesson when they evaluated how they were measuring their acquisition campaigns on Facebook. Initially, the brand was only attributing conversions to direct clicks on Facebook, but this method did not take incremental lifts from consumers who viewed the ad and later went on to make a purchase.

When the brand adopted a more sophisticated attribution model that accounted for incremental lift from views and connected first party data (like website traffic and purchase data) with campaign results, it gave them a more accurate picture of the impact of their marketing spend – and helped them realize that Facebook was driving 71.8% more incremental conversions and had a much lower cost per action than they initially thought.³



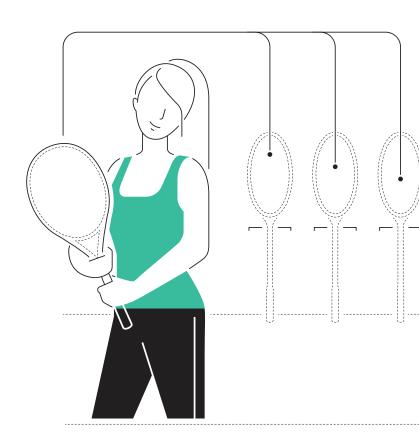


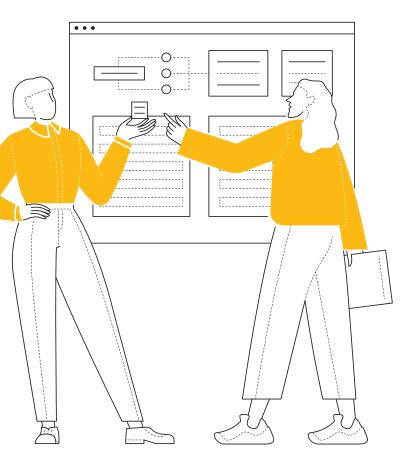




What can you learn from past performance?

Unless your business is a start-up, chances are you've done some acquisition campaigns already. Reviewing past performance is a key step often missed when laying the groundwork for an improved acquisition program. Companies should analyze previous efforts to understand what worked (and what did not) and leverage recent learnings to make informed decisions going forward. For example, an analysis of past campaign metrics and results can help identify reasonable KPI benchmarks, allowing you to set expectations and goals for performance before you begin. Likewise, a channel analysis can help you determine which platforms and channels were the most successful in previous efforts.





How can you build alignment across teams?

Executives should involve team members across all departments early in the process to ensure stakeholders agree on key insights and roles/responsibilities for their acquisition program. Negotiating disagreements before the plan is put into place can help avoid frustration and missed opportunities later. In addition, solidarity across teams will make it easier to get budget and resources allocated to the project.



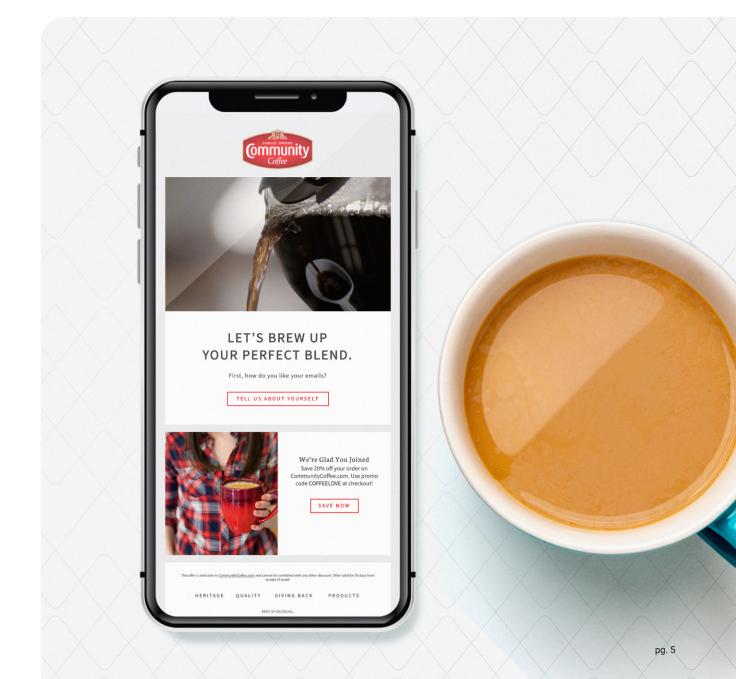
What is your plan for retention?

Once your company has acquired new customers, how will you drive long-term value? Given the high cost of customer acquisition, it's essential to have procedures in place (like <u>welcome and registration programs</u>) that will convert consumers from new buyers to repeat customers to loyal advocates. If your new customer onboarding or welcome program needs an update, make sure that it is part of your planning. To ensure your company is set up to realize the full value of new acquisitions, you should also review retention strategies.



BRAND EXAMPLE Community Coffee

Data Axle client, Community Coffee, redesigned their subscriber welcome series to provide a better customer experience. To reduce unsubscribes and give consumers more control over how they would like to be communicated, Community Coffee promoted the option to update preferences in the very first touchpoint. The welcome series has generated an incredible 47% average open rate and a 23% average click-to-open rate across all three touchpoints as well as a \$61 average order value to date.





Phase 2

Define Your Audience

Many marketers are familiar with Pareto's principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, which presumes that 80% of an organization's profits come from 20% of their customers. However, some companies lack the data to identify their high value customers. To identify who to target for acquisition campaigns, ask yourself these key questions:

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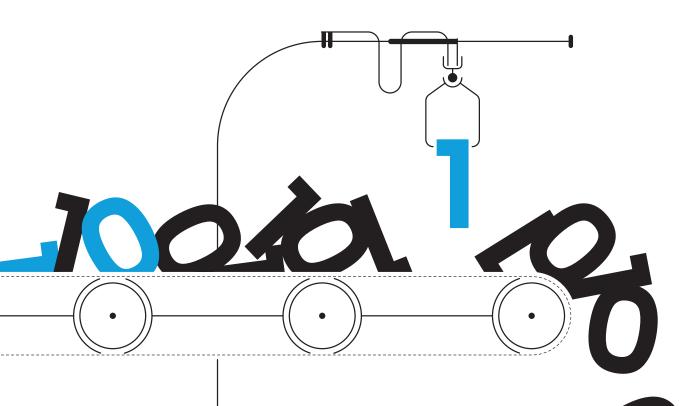
- · Who do you have today?
- · Who do you want?
- · How much are you willing to pay to acquire them?
- · How can you identify them?

Who do you have today?

Performing a comprehensive data analysis is key to helping companies understand their current customer base. Steps to take during this analysis include:

Take inventory of your data

Examine your first-party customer data to identify what intelligence you currently have and what you will need. Building a complete picture of your best customers often entails enhancing your existing database with third-party data. Working with a data provider like Data Axle allows you to understand key insights about consumers' lifestyles, values, and motivations. For example, you might layer on missing demographic information (e.g., age, ethnicity, etc.), psychographic data (e.g., values, interests, attitudes, etc.), or Iffe event data (e.g., marriage, a new baby, etc.) to help you identify and understand your best customers and find your best prospects.





Build customer profiles

Marketers should analyze their databases and segment existing customers into unique groups to better understand their needs and purchase behaviors. By combining multiple types of consumer data – from zero-party data such as surveys, to first-party data on customer interactions and purchasing behaviors, to third-party data on demographics and life events – marketers can segment their customers based on their goals and defining attributes.



One-timer description:

Buyers who have sold only one item in the last one year

Summary:

One timers are 6% of the total customer population.

Demographic Characteristics

Gender: Female 46% Age Range: 23-45 Marital Status: 54% married Home ownership: 48% Income average: \$64k/yr Ethnicity: 75% Caucasian Education: 69% college

Customer Value

Share of local population: 6% Share of total volume: 1% Total GMV value (\$8): \$0.1 Avg. GMV value per customer: \$208 Annual GMV + GMB value per customer: \$1.038

Top 5 Buyer Needs

- 1: It is a safe place to buy online
- 2: Ease of purchase
- 3: Likes free-shipping
- 4: Wants tailored product promotions
- 5: Will not buy without coupon

Buying Behavior

Avg. GMV per transaction: \$203
Time span of selling activity: 1 week
Avg. time between purchases: 360 days
Promotion-to-buy conversion rate: 58%
Percent mobile buy: 8%
Response to promotions: 3%

Technology Use



Use personas to paint a picture of your customers

Personas are fictional characters used to represent specific types of customers. Companies can use personas to understand their customers in a way that is rich in detail, actionable, and easily understood by all teams within the organization. Having well-defined personas can also help you develop more-effective personalized massaging and creative.





Assess customer engagement and satisfaction

By analyzing available data – such as Net Promoter Score (NPS), Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT), campaign interactions, site visits, and purchase frequency – companies can evaluate how loyal, engaged, and satisfied their customers are. This analysis can uncover which channels generate the most activity and conversions, allowing the company to understand customer perceptions and have a more complete view of what is important to them.



Understand why they chose your company

It's important to identify what matters most to your customers. Why do they choose you over competitors? Why did they become a customer in the first place? Was it your reputation for selling a quality product? Your competitive pricing? Reputation for excellent customer service? Understanding the answers to these questions can help you identify the aspects of your company that are most attractive to your prospective audience.

Appraise their value to your business

Most marketers know that 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your customers. Identify your highest value customer groups by analyzing how each segment aligns with overall sales. This can help you prioritize marketing budgets. Analysis of customer and sales data (using the RFM model built on recency, frequency, and monetary value) can help companies identify their most valuable customers based on their past purchasing habits.

Quantify your lapsed and lost customers

Performing an analysis of lost and lapsed customers can help you understand who you're trying to replace and ideally why they left. This step is particularly important if attrition is a challenge for your organization.

Who do you want?

A key part of defining your audience entails asking who you should target in order to attain the business goals your organization laid out in Phase 1.

Ask yourself:

- Do you want more of your highest-value customers?
- · Are you looking to reach a new customer segment?
- Do you need customers who purchase specific products or services?
- Are you hoping to attract consumers in a new geographic territory?

The more clearly a company identifies who they want to attract, the stronger their acquisition strategy will be.

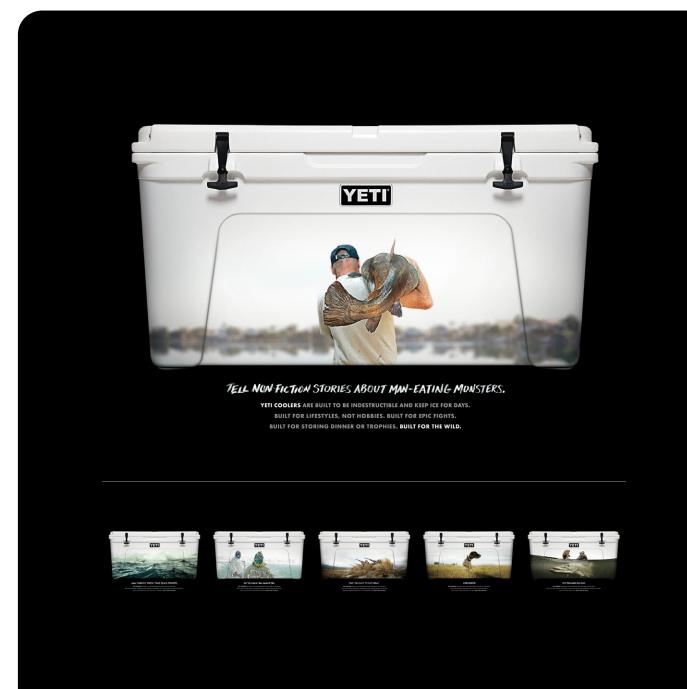




BRAND EXAMPLE Yeti

Yeti established itself as the "coolest" cooler brand through a creative targeting strategy that quickly grew the brand by building connections with outdoor enthusiasts. First, they reached the local hunting and fishing market through a brand ambassador program that enlisted the help of influential guides and local fishermen to spread the word about their product.

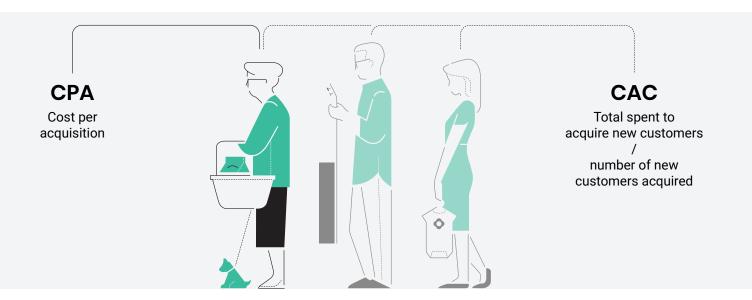
They then expanded their reach by targeting local feed-and-seed stores – reaching farmers and ranch hands who are likely to spend a lot of time outside. Finally, they expanded their strategy to include camping, mountain biking and other outdoor "tribes". By targeting groups with specific interests that drove a need for a high-performing cooler, the brand was able to quadruple sales within three years, even though their cooler was ten times the cost of competing products.⁴





How much are you willing to pay to acquire them?

Marketers often decide what to spend on acquiring new customers by performing an analysis of how much revenue the brand currently receives from newly acquired customers. They then determine an optimal budget by estimating the customer acquisition costs from previous efforts.



Certain industries have a higher average CAC than others. For example, retail has a CAC of \$7 and financial companies have a CAC of \$175.5 Companies can calculate longer-term metrics, like average customer lifetime value and revenue per customer, to help inform how much they're willing to spend on new acquisitions. In industries with high lifetime customer values and higher retention rates (like insurance, financial services, and technology), marketers may be willing to pay more for a new customer than, say, a retail brand, and may weigh decisions more heavily on lifetime value than initial revenue from an acquisition. Keep in mind that as you hone your acquisition strategy, results will improve, which means your acquisition costs should decrease over time.



BRAND EXAMPLE **A top 5 largest national insurer**

One of the 5 largest national insurance companies in the US was using direct mail to drive new enrollments for multiple product lines. Faced with a lower marketing budget, they worked with Data Axle to tighten their targeting and reduce acquisition costs by:

- · Analyzing their current customer data file
- · Creating personas for each product line
- Using Data Axle's <u>transactional database</u> to identify and target prospects with similar interests and buying patterns to their current best customers

With this data-driven method, the company reduced costs on acquisition campaigns and generated a **15% lift in responses** over the average prospecting effort.







How can you identify your prospects?

Having a clearly defined target is extremely important because identifying the **right** prospects (those who provide the highest value and are most likely to convert) can reduce customer acquisition costs and decrease wasted spend. They can do so by using a variety of acquisition tactics to identify which prospects to target. Some examples include:

Look alike models

Lookalike models use demographics (e.g., age, gender, income) and psychographic attributes (e.g., interests, hobbies, values) to identify prospects with characteristics that are similar to those of your best customers. Lookalike models are one of the most popular methods to identify acquisition audiences. In fact, according to Google, companies that use their Similar Audiences feature (Google's version of lookalikes) generate 60% more impressions, 48% more clicks, and 41% more conversions.

Response models

Response models help discover the prospects who are most likely to respond with actions that align to specific marketing objectives (making a purchase, clicking an ad, submitting a form, etc.).

Prospect valuation models

Prospect valuation models identify prospects with the highest predicted future value.

Custom audiences

<u>Custom audiences</u> involve a direct integration between digital advertising platforms and the advertiser's data management platform (DMP). For example, Microsoft Bing, Google, and Facebook all offer the ability to create custom audiences using your own first-party data.

Intent data

<u>Intent data</u> helps companies with B2B products identify targets exhibiting specific behaviors and signals that indicate they are in the market for a certain type of product.

Lost and lapsed customer data

Lost and lapsed customer data can help you identify valuable audience members to reacquire through win-back campaigns.



Phase 3

Identify Your Audience's Needs, Motivations, and Preferences

Once a company has completed an analysis to identify their target audience, they can focus on connecting with them. This process involves asking:

- · What problem are prospects trying to solve?
- When do they need your product/service?
- · Where can you reach them?
- · What messaging will motivate them?

What problem are they trying to solve?

Understanding your audience and focusing on their needs instead of simply pushing your products is the key to successful engagement. Most consumers aren't looking to buy a product; they are looking to fill a need. For each customer segment, marketers should:

- · Collect data (through surveys and other methods) about what problems their audience is trying to solve
- · Analyze how their company addresses the needs of each customer group
- Examine how their company answers the need in a way that their competitors do not: understanding
 why consumers choose your company instead of the competition allows you to develop informed
 marketing strategies that emphasize these differences.



BRAND EXAMPLE **Keurig**

Keurig cemented its place as the king of single-cup coffee products through a savvy recognition of some key consumer problems in the coffee-drinking world. Keurig recognized that their K-cup coffee pods allow consumers to have a fresh cup of coffee, tailored to their taste, instead of having to drink the stale, bitter coffee typically provided in their office, local car dealership, hospital, etc. By focusing on the consumer problems that their products fixed (old coffee, lack of choice), the brand developed a strategy for growth through selling to corporate accounts and office managers – getting their products into the hands of consumers who were most in need of having their coffee-woes addressed by K-cups.⁷





When do your customers need your product or service?

Successful acquisition programs depend on reaching consumers at the right time. Companies can perform an analysis based on what they know about their customers to uncover trends and pinpoint when consumers are looking for a certain product or service. Understanding what is driving the customer's need can help identify when they may be looking for information and how long their research and consideration phase may be.

"When" a consumer is receptive to your message can be influenced by a variety of factors. For example, consumers' needs for a product/service might be motivated by:

- The time of year (e.g., seasonality of a sport, weather events, or consumer needs for a specific holiday)
- Where a consumer is in their lifecycle journey (e.g., ready to buy, upgrade or just learn more about what you offer)
- · Life events (e.g., just moved, recently married, became a new homeowner, retired, had a baby)



BRAND EXAMPLE **Resideo**

Honeywell spinoff and smart home technology leader, Resideo was able to boost revenue when an analysis of their data revealed that their customers were ready to upgrade their existing thermostat much sooner than the brand previously thought. With this insight, Resideo created a campaign that more accurately targeted consumers who were ready to investigate new technology and were most likely to be ready for a change.

The campaign drove a 19% lift in new product activations by existing users, and successfully drove purchases from customers who might not have otherwise upgraded their thermostat.



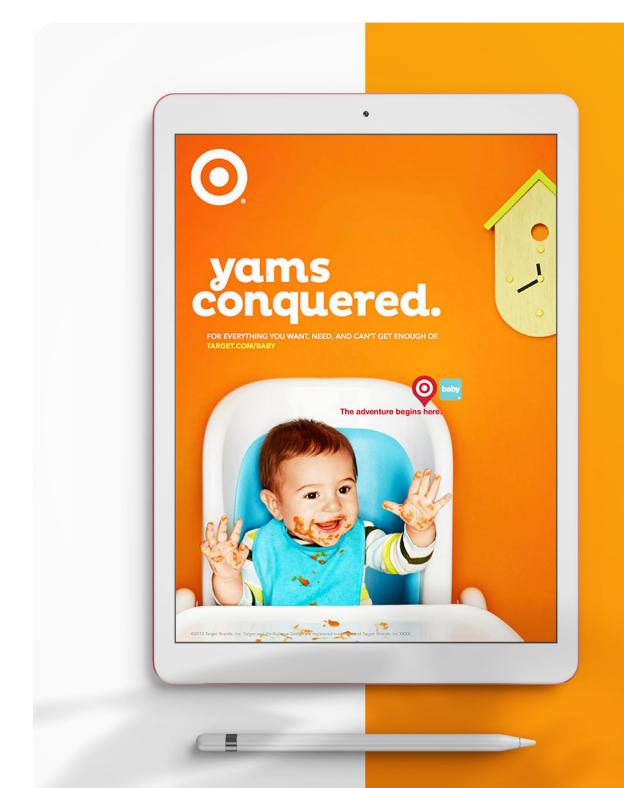




BRAND EXAMPLE

Target

Having a baby is a huge life event and one that requires a lot of spending. Big box retailer, Target, used machine learning to detect when customers were about to become new parents and entice them to choose Target as they stock up on essential items for the new addition to their family. Target hired a machine learning expert to create models that predicted when a woman was pregnant by analyzing common purchases made by customers shortly before they opened a baby registry. Target used this data to personalize messaging and create relevant offers, so prospective customers would be offered products before they even knew they needed them





Where can you reach them?

Through an analysis of past acquisition campaigns, cross-referenced with customer data, companies can predict which channels will be the most effective for new acquisition efforts. For example, if you are hoping to attract more customers who purchase specific products, an analysis of your campaign results might provide some insight into where to focus your marketing budget. Similarly, analyzing your current customers who purchased a specific product might reveal that the product is popular with young consumers, leading your company to choose marketing channels that appeal to a younger demographic.



BRAND EXAMPLE **NFL**

Faced with declining viewership from young consumers and understanding that only 41% of Gen Z watch sports on television, compared to 75% of Baby Boomers, the NFL decided to boost their strategy to engage younger consumers. The organization created a partnership with social media platform, Tik Tok – signing a two-year agreement to deliver content directly to fans on the platform. To generate excitement among young consumers, they also created the #WeReady kick off campaign and hashtag challenge which encouraged young fans to show their team spirit.⁸





What messaging resonates with them?

Powerful creative is vital to reaching and enticing consumers. Starting at the highest level and taking a data-driven approach ensures messaging, imagery, and final creative are aligned across all media and consumer touchpoints for a cohesive experience.

Tools to develop messaging that resonates with your audience include:

Consumer research

Companies can tap into existing research to help them understand the consumer challenge they are addressing. For example, your product marketing or market intelligence teams may have research that informed decision making when a product was first developed. Alternately, you can develop new research and surveys to help guide messaging development.

Creative ideation/brainstorming

Marketing teams can hold brainstorming and creative ideation sessions, either internally or with a <u>creative partner</u>, to explore how they might bring their message to life for the consumer.

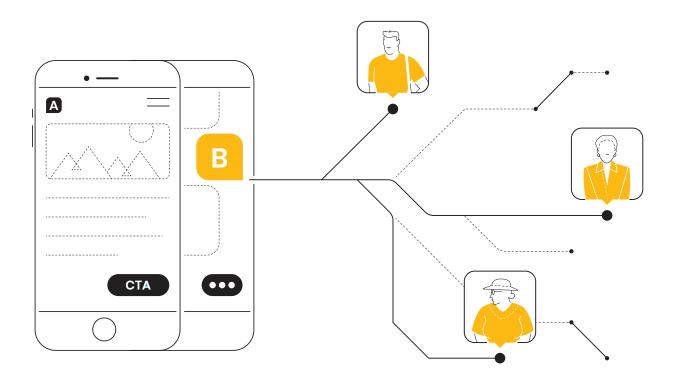
Concept testing

Conducting consumer focus groups or test panels can help evaluate creative concepts and ideas to understand consumer reactions. As an outcome of this process, you might want to look to identify one champion piece of creative and one challenger piece of creative to put into market.

A/B market testing

Companies can release <u>multiple creatives</u> to the market and conduct a champion/challenger(s) test to pinpoint the top-performing campaign messaging. When possible:

- Use testing tools to conduct a head-to-head matchup of both creatives to determine a winner. Companies should strive to understand which concept resonates best, both overall and by segment.
- Continue the A/B challenger approach to refine messaging to achieve optimal results. Testing should be an "always-on" process.

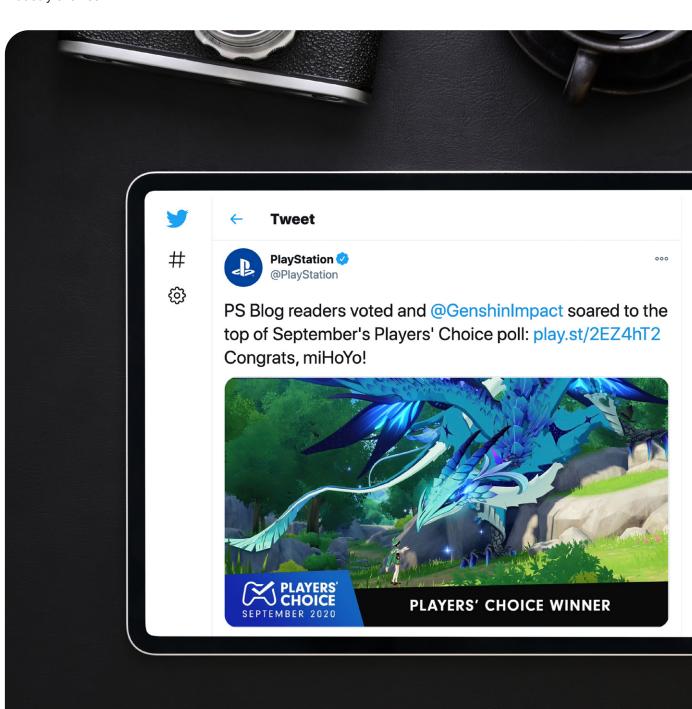






BRAND EXAMPLE Sony Playstation

Sony's Playstation video game console is the most followed brand on Twitter, boasting 19.7 million followers. Playstation managed to grow their following on this social media platform by over 370% in 5 years by posting a mix of content that appeals to their target audience. Playstation offers followers information on new games, opportunities to participate in contests and giveaways, and gives players a voice by letting them participate in polls that will help deliver their feedback directly to game producers. By having a growing, engaged audience, Playstation ensures they continue to stay relevant as the gaming industry evolves.





Phase 4

Put Your Go-to-Market Plan into Action

Phase 4 of enacting a customer acquisition program moves the strategy from concept to action by finalizing internal processes (i.e., how your team will work together), platforms needed to achieve your acquisition goals, and plans for performance optimization.

What process will work for your team and deliver results?

In a recent survey, 35% of Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) felt that new customer acquisition is a top expectation of the management team. ¹⁰ CMOs need to work closely with their product and sales teams to achieve the results they want to see. Brands can boost acquisition program results by focusing on tactical coordination when it is time to go-to-market.

Specifically:

Team alignment

Finalize which teams, both internal and external, will be involved. Clearly outline expectations and timing so teams can plan and resource appropriately.

Creative

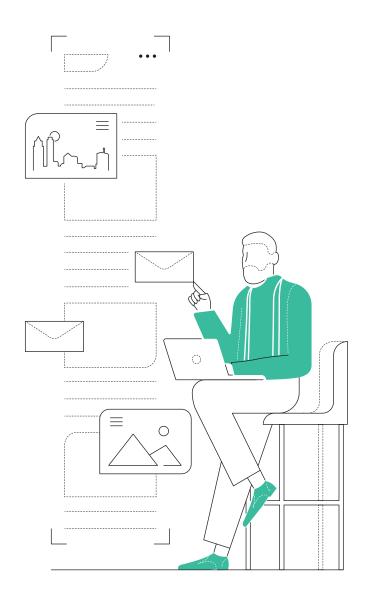
Ensure there is enough time for creative research, review, revisions, and testing before launch. Getting the message right is critical to the success of any acquisition campaign.

Media process

Identify which channels you are going to include in your marketing mix. Align all teams who manage these channels, including any external vendors, with an all-hands kick-off meeting to review the plan and confirm your ability to execute. Establish regular checkpoints and a central owner of the campaign to coordinate across parties.

Reporting and measurement definition

Clearly document all required KPIs and ensure the ability to track and report on them ahead of the campaign launch. Set expectations around frequency and granularity of reporting for each group/stakeholder to ensure there are no surprises when you deliver reporting as the campaign goes into market.







BRAND EXAMPLE PR Newswire

When PR Newswire re-invented their acquisition strategy, they took a holistic approach – engaging teams at all levels to ensure coordination across departments.

"We made sure our team was structured (so) we had members who were focused on each stage of the buying process. We would not be successful if we didn't continuously make sure we are aligned and have full support across the entire organization; from the CIO to the head of product to the head of sales to the head of services, all of us have to be aligned with this approach to be consistent in the way we're messaging our buyers."

Ken Wincko, Senior Vice President of Marketing

The brand's new acquisition strategy led to a 20% lift in engaged buyers, an 8% lift in qualified leads that are being given to sales, a 7% lift in closed deals, and a 30% shorter sales cycle.¹¹

What platforms are best suited to delivering on your goals?

A survey by Nimbus Ninety found that half of mature businesses say their legacy systems are holding them back from undergoing a digital transformation that would increase customer acquisition. To set your company up for successful acquisition program, you need to select the right technology platforms and partners to meet your business objectives. These could include:

- · Email service providers
- Data service providers
- Acquisition platforms
- · Walled gardens (e.g., Facebook)
- <u>Direct mail/media planning solutions</u>
- Partner-based marketing solutions (also known as <u>B2C lead generation</u>)
- Affiliate marketing platforms

Companies can engage platform partners to ensure support and ongoing success. For example, platform partners can advise which technical capabilities might help you reach your acquisition goals; they can also help you understand how to leverage connections between your systems and how to automate processes to maximize ROI. You can also work with providers to enact a plan for how to manage platforms and test new features, particularly if you plan to add new tech products or capabilities as part of the program launch. Enlisting the help of platform partners can help you discover innovative approaches that might not have otherwise been considered.





BRAND EXAMPLE Silver Star Brands

To reach their goals, Silver Star Brands (the parent company of brands like Miles Kimball, Walter Drake, Easy Comforts, and more) worked with long-time partner, Data Axle, to create a new approach to acquisition. Instead of starting from scratch with cold prospects, they enacted a plan to re-engage lapsed buyers and inactive subscribers.

With enhancements to their internal data in the form of online and offline data points, they created display ads that targeted highly qualified candidates - those who were already familiar with the products and had a history with the brand. The display ad campaign resulted in a 275% ROI and a 29% lift in online purchases.¹³



How will you measure performance for optimization purposes?

An essential task in your go-to-market strategy will be to finalize the process and tools needed to monitor your program's performance. Developing a reporting framework ahead of launch ensures that all stakeholders can see and approve the plan, making the process smoother in the long run. These steps include:

- For each platform involved in the acquisition program, establish regular reporting and finalize any
 platform integrations needed to allow you to roll up individual results into the overarching reporting
 and measurements required for the campaign.
- Automate and consolidate reporting wherever possible to allow more time for insights and optimization and avoid wasting time on manual work.
- Develop a comprehensive set of reporting dashboards that meet the stakeholder requirements outlined in Phase 1. Dashboards should account for KPIs and what is possible from each platform selected.
- Establish timing for delivery of reporting and how weeks are tracked (e.g., Sun-Sat, Mon-Sun).
- Establish a central owner to traffic all platform reporting and build reports in the dashboards.
- Establish responsibilities for data analysis and optimization recommendations.



Bring it all together with the right people

A stellar acquisition plan without the right people to make it happen isn't worth much. Once a company has defined all elements in their acquisition program, including campaigns and go-to-market strategy, they must also ensure they have the right resources to execute on their vision. In taking this step, be realistic and conservative in your estimate. Develop a plan for how your company will find additional resources if needed, whether through hiring, contracting, or outsourcing to partners.

Data Axle offers resources in the following areas to supplement your internal expertise:

Lead Generation	Data processing and hygiene	Database services
Creative	Data Science	Project management and campaign execution

Media Planning



Conclusion

By taking a collaborative and analytical approach to customer acquisition while using consumer insights to guide targeting and message development, companies can build an efficient path to growth while reducing costs and maximizing marketing budget.

Does your acquisition program need a lift?

Connect with one of our experts for advice.

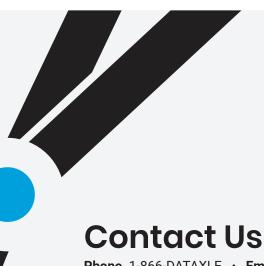
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