The Personality of Data

Zeros and ones and zeros and ones—that's what data is made of. On the surface, data can seem cold and impersonal, until you realize that first-party and zero-party data is actually a collection of individual experiences and preferences that can create a complex and interesting picture when pieced together properly.

Psychographic data is the term used for the information that can show a brand deeper insight into their consumer's mind. What makes them tick? What are their attitudes, values, and opinions? What are their interests and what drives their lifestyle? What is your customer's personality?

The Customership

In the human experience, we often remind businesses to remember the consumer is a human—and the complexity of human nature needs to be the foundation of any interactions. For instance, we discuss zero-party data and how it is imperative that your customers and prospects give you data willingly versus purchasing third-party data from a vendor.

The basis of zero-party, aka preference data, is to do exactly that—give your customer an opportunity to let you know what their preferences are. Think of this more as a friendship than a transactional partnership. Using tools like surveys, you being to collect psychographic data, as well as form bonds of trust and loyalty. There is no questioning where you got your data because your customer has entered into a value exchange with you.

Think of when you meet a new friend. You don't really know anything about them, perhaps you just know that you like them. Questions are the key to finding out about people. You wouldn't, or hopefully wouldn't, hack into their email and social media to see what they were like—that is what third-party data does. Instead, you take your friend out to coffee and learn more about who they really are—slowly but surely.

Are you an Owl or a Fox?

I am not actually going to tell you which one you are—but you have more than likely taken a personality quiz in your lifetime. Two people can seem identical on paper but when you get to know them one could score as an owl and the other fox. Jessica and Sue are both 31, are married and have two kids, and both live in Dayton, Ohio making $100,000 a year.

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Are you a One or a Zero?

More than likely, you have taken a personality quiz in your lifetime or at least know their purpose. Let's take a look at two fictions customers. Jessica and Sue are both 31, married, and have two kids; both also live in Dayton, Ohio making $100,000 a year and own a home. On the surface, their demographics would tell you to target Jessica and Sue the same way.

However, as we know, two people can seem identical on paper, but when you get to know them, they are quite different. Which means their consumer behavior will most likely be different. We might come to find out, Jessica is a marathon runner that travels the world frequently as part of an adventure group. On the other hand, Sue has only left Ohio twice and is active in the PTA and garden club.

Some marketers might say, well, both women would need shoes (if they sold shoes) so I'll just send them 15% off. This might work. But what if Jessica got an email that said, "Ready for your next adventure? We recommend the super-duper endurance shoe and it's 15% off." And on the flip side, Sue received, "Growing tired of wet feet? We recommend the water-proof garden shoe and it's 15% off."

Finding out more information about your customers is an excellent idea, but…where do you start? How can you really target each customer? As with anything in life, start with a plan, but know that you can't change everything in one day.

How to Win Friends and Influence Customers

A great way to begin is to start sending preference surveys to your customers. Surveys are an easy, budget-friendly way to interact with your audience. A small incentive, like a percentage off on their next purchase or a chance to win something, will often motivate an individual to offer preference information. This doesn't mean starting with, tell us your deepest darkest secret. It could be a product review, a customer experience review, or a simple survey around what kind of product you sell.

For instance, our shoe company could ask, when buying new shoes are you more interested in complete comfort, on-trend, or a mix of style and comfort? While this won't tell you if they ever cheated on a math test, it will start to build a profile of who they are.

As you capture more of this comprehensive data, you will being to build more complex profiles and personalities of your customers. Learning what motivates your different audiences can help you segment offers. The idea behind using psychographic data in your marketing is that it allows your company to understand better which marketing efforts will appeal to which customers. When you truly know someone, this not only begins to build trust, but it begins to build loyalty.