

Halmyre Thinking

MARKETING DATA INTELLIGENCE: GETTING THE INSIGHTS YOU NEED TO MAKE AN IMPACT

2025 Edition

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Data intelligence is a critical component in conducting just about any business in today’s world. Through interactions with our clients across industries and in various vertical markets, Halmyre’s team of consultants have found that organizations that have had long-term success are always focused on their numbers – monitoring, understanding, optimizing.

Whether your organization’s data is currently limited to a client list, or you’ve dabbled in Google Analytics, or you have a robust in-house data insights team and complex membership databases, this guide is designed to help you improve your data intelligence.

“When you can measure what you are speaking about and express it in numbers, you know something about it. When you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind...”

William Thomson, Lord Kelvin (1824–1907)

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Getting started: How to build your data strategy

To reshape the way your organization collects, analyzes and acts on data, begin by establishing a sound data strategy. Developing a data strategy is largely a reflective process but it is essential to inform, measure and advance foundational marketing strategies that support your corporate business strategies and connect them to your marketing tactics. Having a data strategy enables the flow of vital performance information from analyst to marketing manager to organization leader.

1. MAP YOUR ORGANIZATION'S KEY SUCCESS FACTORS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Start building your data strategy by drawing a simple table with two columns. In the first, list your organization's key success factors (KSFs) – these are the ways you measure how well you deliver on your value proposition. For examples of common KSFs, see Figure 1. Delivering on your KSFs enables you to accomplish your organization's objectives. KSFs are important in that they ensure you don't get lost in managing a single, specific metric at all cost; they provide the context and meaning that the individual numbers represent.

In the second column of your chart, list corresponding key performance indicators (KPIs) – the quantifiable metrics used to measure the organization's performance on each KSF. KPIs inform the development of your management dashboard, where you'll communicate critical performance insights to your team and decision-makers. Figure 2 is an example of how to organize your KSFs and KPIs.

KSF THOUGHT STARTERS

- Content relevance
- Responsiveness
- Member engagement
- Service quality
- Membership growth
- Member effort
- Service consistency
- Trustworthiness
- Sales volume
- Service information
- Member affinity
- Cost management

Figure 1. Sample key success factors. KSFs are key to translating organizational strategic objectives into measurable data.

	KEY SUCCESS FACTORS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
1		
2		
3		

Figure 2. Use a simple table to map and connect your key success factors and key performance indicators to ensure that you've identified key measurements in your management dashboards.

2. ESTABLISH YOUR SEGMENTATION STRATEGY

Once you've mapped out your organization's KSFs and KPIs, the next step is to develop or continue fine-tuning your segmentation strategy. Segmentation is a powerful tool that helps you understand your organization's performance in specific membership or audience pockets. This information is particularly important in service industries, where delivering value is not a one-size-fits-all game.

The classic approach to segmentation is to examine your audiences in specifically quantifiable measures:

- **Demographic** segmentation: Geography, age, gender, tenure
- **Behavioural** segmentation: Participation, interactions, purchases, channels

To help organize your segmentation strategy, see the table in Figure 3.

There is a third, more complex approach to segmentation that is driven by your audiences' "personas." Personas are powerful tools to describe your audience segments by their unique wants and needs; this is known as "**attitudinal**" segmentation, and it is the most expensive and complex to track and

	SEGMENTORS	TYPE (demo/behaviour/attitude)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Figure 3. What are the key segments for your organization?

measure. Attitudinal segmentation can include such metrics as net promoter score, member satisfaction, service delivery feedback and personas.

Segmentation: Avoiding the "flaw of averages"

Segmentation enables your organization to avoid the "flaw of averages" (a phrase coined by Stanford University professor Sam L. Savage) by discovering performance outliers – for example, out- or underperforming segments. Savage recognized that overall averages hide successes and failures by smoothing out results. Segmentation allows management to drill down KPI metrics to reveal subsegments with strong or weak results.

Let's look at an example of the flaw of averages, illustrated in Figure 4. If an organization is behind on its sales per call target by 5%, it would be flawed thinking to demand that all regions correct the shortfall by improving by 5%, if you also know that in the East the average sales per call is 10% above target and in the West it's 20% below target. Applying this flawed logic would result in frustration in the East – "they don't appreciate our hard work" – and possible lethargy in the West – "not to worry, the East will cover us."

A more informed strategy would be to identify why and how the East is over-achieving and share those best practices with the West. Identify whether there are significant problems in the West at the root of the underperformance and strategically address them.

Segmentation information allows you to evaluate and understand the reasons for success and to diagnose underperformance so you can share best practices and take corrective action. Both actions drive performance improvement

3. ASSESS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ANALYTICAL CAPABILITIES AND CURRENT DATA STATE

You've outlined what's important to your organization. You have a clear view of what needs to be measured and how you'll segment what you're measuring. But does your organization have the data and the skills needed to succeed?

Use a 2x2 grid, as in Figure 5, to help you locate your position in your analytical world and start the process to move to an analytically driven approach (top right quadrant of Figure 5). What is missing? Data? The people to process the data? Both?

Your people: Do you have analytical minds at work?

When it comes to thinking about your people – the brain power behind the data – ask a few questions:

- Are your analysts strong at developing reports? Do they have the basic spreadsheet skills?
- Do they ask leading, insightful questions and challenge themselves to explore the data for new insights to drive your business?
- Are they organized and methodical in their approach? Do they have a plan?
- Do they understand segmentation? Do they think about peeling the onion to understand the layers?

Once you have assessed your organization's analytical capabilities, the final step in completing your data strategy is assessing the current state of your data. Data needs to be clean, complete, comprehensive and connected – that kind of data yields actionable insights that help strengthen decision-making and improve your organization's performance. Three core areas to assess the state of your data are listed below, followed by questions to help you assess as you review:

1. Data inventory: What do you have?

- Do you have a data dictionary? This is a complete list of the data elements or fields contained in your database with a description of the data that populates each field.
- What data elements are collected and stored?
- Where are they stored?

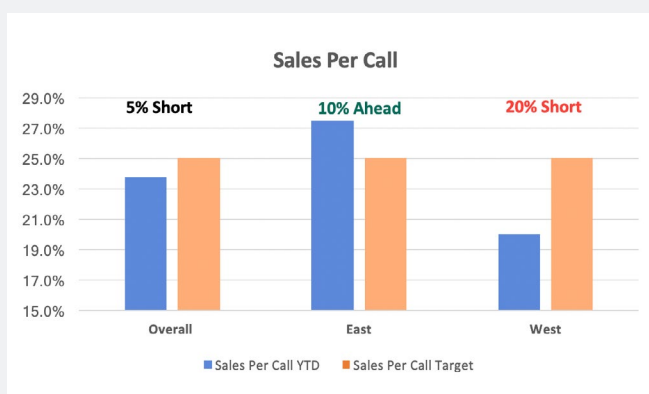


Figure 4.

Avoid the flaw of averages: Segmentation helps you uncover outliers in your data. In this example, segmentation reveals potential use of best practices in the East that could support the lagging West.

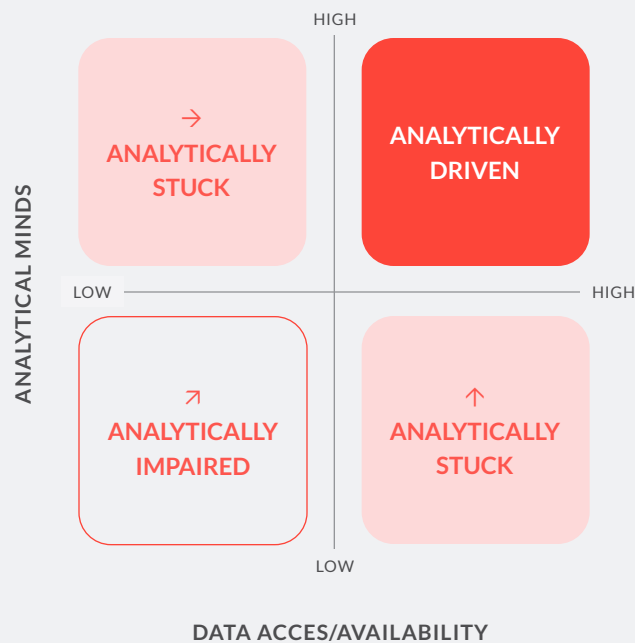


Figure 5.

Mapping your organization's analytical abilities is an important step to developing a roadmap for improvement.

- What values are entered into each data element?
- Are you missing any information you should be capturing – data elements or fields?
- Are there gaps or missing data within any elements or fields, (e.g., are you missing email addresses for 25% of your members)?
- Do you have historical data?
- Do you have the root data required to derive all of your KPIs?

2. Data quality: How reliable and useful is it?

- What is the source of the data – members or customers, a process or an external source (e.g., CRM system, Google Analytics, social platforms, call centre, sales reports)?
- Do you trust your data and its reporting?
- Do you employ any third-party data validation services (e.g., address verification)?

- Is the data aligned and connected at a customer or member level? How?

3. Data accessibility: Can it be analyzed?

- How accessible is your data – can you get what you need? How long does it take?
- Who has and enables access to your data?
- How current is your data – is it updated in real time or as a function of daily/weekly/monthly processes?
- Does your data cadence match your decision cadence? For example, is revenue data available quarterly but investment decisions are made monthly? This may result in misalignment and weaker decisions.
- How safe and secure is your data?
- Can the data be aggregated to a segment level for each segment type?

Putting strategy into practice: Dashboards, diagnostics and discovery

Your organization has a clear line of sight on its marketing KSFs and KPIs. You have a sound segmentation strategy. And finally, you have assessed your organization's dataset and analytical resources using the analytical capability map and you've addressed opportunities to improve the quality and accessibility of your data, as well as your organization's analytical capabilities. Now it's time to put your data strategy into practice.

1. ESTABLISH YOUR KPI DASHBOARD TO COMMUNICATE WITH DECISION-MAKERS

Dashboards are a critical tool in communicating vital marketing information to your organization's decision-makers. At Halmyre, we advise our clients to keep it simple when it comes to dashboards. They should provide consolidated, concise, core KPI information in one place and should be published at a frequency consistent with management decision-making – for example, to match the timing of senior leadership meetings, board reports, etc. We recommend that where possible, a dashboard start

with data that can be generated with little manual intervention.

What to include in a dashboard and how often to update it can be a difficult balancing act. See Figure 6 for a sample dashboard for a membership-based organization.

Your dashboard needs to be able to draw a broad picture of your organization's performance, providing insights into key segments and showing performance over time and relative to comparisons – for example, targets or past-year performance – all while remaining simple to read and understand.

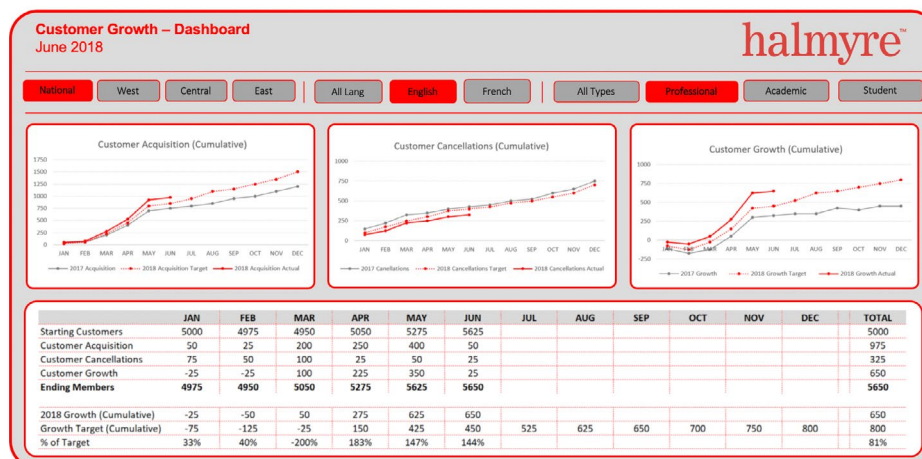
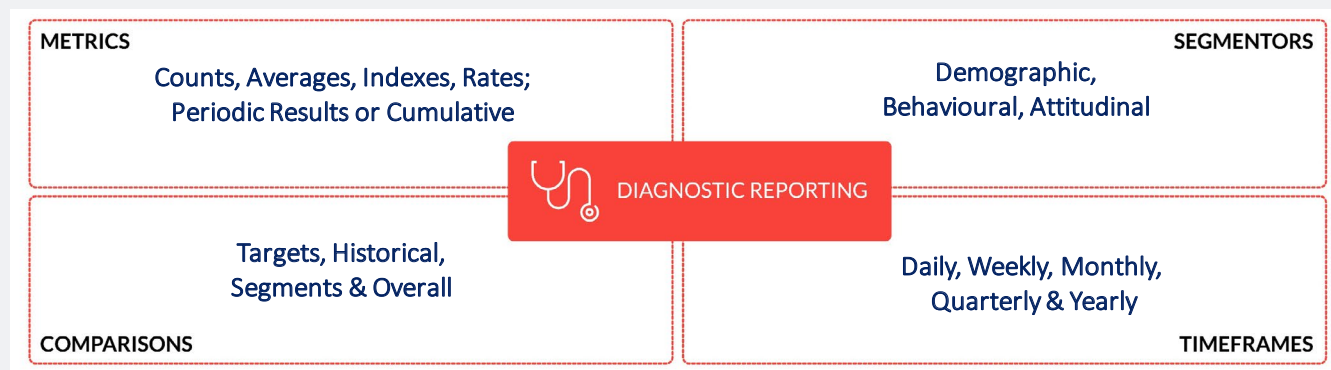


Figure 6.

A picture is worth a thousand words. A KPI dashboard is a succinct visual consolidation of information in one place.

Figure 7.

Diagnostic reporting complements your management dashboard by diving deep to identify trends, patterns and outliers.



How to build an effective dashboard

- Organize it by KSFs/KPIs and think elevator pitch: include only what your decision-makers require.
- Align updates with the cadence of decision-making (e.g., monthly, quarterly, annually).
- Support point-in-time results with trended metrics for a sense of direction and degree of movement over time.
- Strive for formatting consistency to ensure ease of reading and interpretation.
- Line graphs are the right choice most of the time because they reveal trends, patterns and outliers.

Creating a dashboard for your organization is a vital basic step that enables leaders to command the measurable impact of their marketing strategy and

plans on their corporate strategy. It is a necessary foundational investment to make if you want a true understanding of the impact of your marketing strategy on your corporate goals and objectives.

2. DEVELOP DIAGNOSTIC REPORTING

While your dashboard is driven by your data strategy's KPIs, diagnostic reporting is where you'll organize numbers by segments to further identify trends, patterns and, most importantly, outliers. Think of diagnostic reporting as a microscope that enables deeper analysis of the organization's performance. As noted in Figure 7, the building blocks of insightful diagnostic reporting are metrics, segments, comparisons and timeframes.

Let's look at an example of a diagnostic approach in action. Considering a membership-based organization, let's imagine a point-in-time metric alone.

2024 Acquisition Results

June 2024 = 50
2024 YTD = 975

By themselves, these counts provide little information. Is the organization in good shape? What actions can your marketing team take to correct or improve upon past performance? Or maybe these results are amazing – how do you replicate them? It's hard to tell.

However, if you plot the membership count month-over-month on a chart and add corresponding monthly objectives and the previous year's results, the health of the organization's membership base becomes clearer. See Figure 8 below for an illustration of this point.

In this case, with the greater detail, we can see that overall customer growth has improved slightly over the previous year and is on track with the current-year goal.

Still, by themselves, even these data points might lead the organization to believe all is well and nothing needs to be addressed in their marketing plan.

An even deeper look under the microscope of diagnostics, illustrated in Figure 9, shows that the organization is underperforming in the West and outperforming in the East – another example of the power of the outliers and of the importance of using segmentation to avoid the flaw of averages.

This example shows the power of asking more detailed questions, using basic analytical skills, having an inquiring mind and harnessing the tools provided by your data. With the different stories in the East and West now clear for this organization, a number of follow-up questions could be asked about what's different in the two regions, what's the impact and most importantly, what can marketing do to augment its strengths and mitigate its weaknesses?



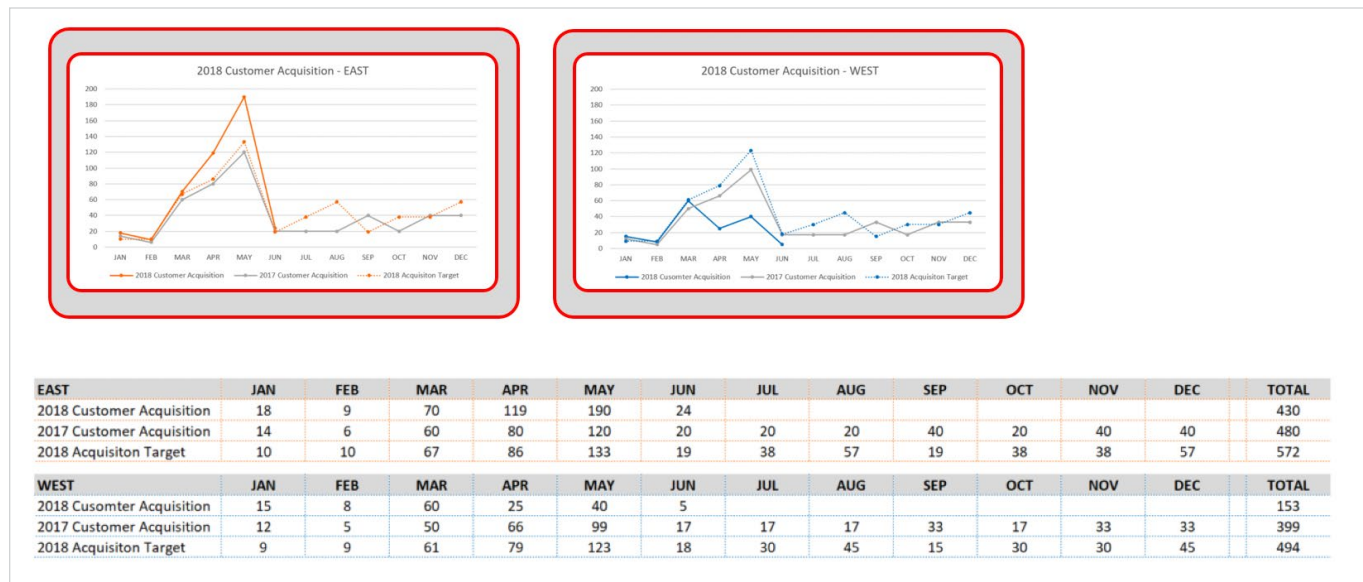
Figure 8.

Mapping longer trends and patterns helps tell the story.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
2018 Customer Acquisition	50	25	200	250	400	50	50	50	100	50	100	100	975
2017 Customer Acquisition	35	15	150	200	300	50	50	50	100	50	100	100	1200
2018 Acquisition Target	25	25	175	225	350	50	100	150	50	100	100	150	1500

Figure 9.

A detailed diagnostic picture – putting the data under a microscope, especially with a supporting table, reveals much more about the outlier activities in the West for this organization.



3. FURTHER STRENGTHEN YOUR DATA PRACTICE THROUGH DISCOVERY

Discovery is the final step, the identification of unknown segment insights – trends, patterns and outliers. These insights help decision-makers pose new, unexpected questions to further understand and improve the organization. A deeper understanding of the organization, the audiences it serves and the products or services it provides can drive meaningful action.

Discovery is the process of finding problems and opportunities for management to consider for action and/or resolution. Discovery is led by your analytical minds, driven by curiosity and supported by the skills to explore data. It can be described as follows:

- It's a function of active analysis – like pulling on a thread.
- It seeks to answer a stated question or to understand a well-defined problem or opportunity.
- It can identify opportunities for new products, process improvements and benefits to marketing results.
- It leverages the same dataset that diagnostic reporting is built on.
- It enables strategic sourcing of members or customers for research and pilot testing.
- It relies heavily on ad hoc analysis.

Discovery is essential fuel for a progressive, evolving marketing strategy and plan. It is the heartbeat of “how can we be better?”

Your marketing measurement: Conclusion and key takeaways

We'll close with six actionable reminders to help reshape the way your organization collects, analyzes and acts on business data:

1. Focus on what matters: Develop a data strategy driven by your organization's goals, KSFs and KPIs.
2. Reflect and improve: Assess and address your organization's analytical capabilities.
3. Review and revise: Ensure your data is clean, complete, comprehensive and connected.
4. Keep it simple: Establish a recurring dashboard to deliver core data to decision-makers.
5. Lower the microscope: Use segmentation to identify subgroup patterns, trends and outliers through diagnostic reporting.
6. Explore and discover: Use ad hoc analysis to further explain issues, to pose new questions and challenges, and to inform and revise your corporate business and marketing strategies.

hello@halmyre.com

 www.linkedin.com/company/halmyre

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