



LGK Vision White Paper Series

In the Thick of It: Big Data versus Gut Instinct

by Nancy L. Hohns



In a continuing series of marketing communications insight for small business, marketing strategist Nancy L. Hohns explains why it is critical to leverage data with intuition to facilitate effective business decisions and favorable customer experiences.

Now that the term Big Data is used in the everyday lexicon of marketers and executives, business people everywhere are paying careful attention to the role it plays – or should play – in the decision-making process. Fundamentally, all business is about making decisions. And Big Data (a term that describes quantitative data produced through analysis of huge datasets) has become one of the go-to tools for gathering new information about human behavior and preferences used to impact a wide range of marketing, IT, sales, risk and operations and customer services decisions.

The problem, as we see it, is that Big Data provides the numbers, graphs and factoids that constitute a continuous stream of information that tells businesses what their customers are doing but, and this is really important, not how or why they are doing it.

That's where the value of thoughtful observation and gut instinct comes into play. Great marketers instinctively know how to look at the metrics as an indicator of performance, and then draw upon their own creative talents and analytical abilities to see beyond the data to develop critical key insights that inform action. They never lose sight of the big picture. They know that one or two blips in the dashboard are not reason enough to change direction and jeopardize end goals. They look for developing patterns. When one or two blips on the dashboard become a regular recurring event, it's time to dig deeper. It's time to ask pertinent questions and seek relevant answers.

By leveraging data and key analytics along with their own intelligence, experience and intuition, marketing and business professionals will be better positioned to drive business growth and increase market share. The marriage of Big Data and gut instinct makes good marketing sense.



BIG DATA INTERVENTION
Take a thoughtful approach to the collection and application of data.

- Revisit your business and marketing plans. Review the objectives and determine whether the standard of measurement is qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both.
- Create buyer personas for your target audience. *A buyer persona is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer based on market research and real data about your existing customers. When creating your buyer persona(s), consider including customer demographics, behavior patterns, motivations and goals.** This is a critical step that allows you to determine what type of data you need for customer insight.

*Source: HubSpot Inc.

The marriage of Big Data and gut instinct makes good marketing sense.



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Big Data tells what has happened in the customer's world, hence your business world, at any given moment. It provides companies with an abundance of data that can be used to support operating decisions.

Gut instinct helps guide the process of better understanding a customer's experience and may trigger hypotheses that lead to increased effectiveness. The knowledge gained along the way will prove vital to solving challenging problems and improving business outcomes.

It's up to you to identify the crucial patterns that lead to the strategic insights that solve problems. It's up to you to tell the story that always begins, and ends, with your customer.

About Nancy L. Hohns

Nancy L. Hohns is LGK's in-house strategist, a marketing communications leader and idea architect with more than 25 years national experience in marketing, brand strategy, advertising, public relations and special events. She has a proven track record of producing game-changing work in agency, corporate, public and nonprofit environments; a demonstrated ability to solve problems, generate workable solutions, formulate breakthrough concepts and connect to multiple stakeholders through multiple channels; and an earned reputation for attaining powerful results in the consumer, retail, food, service, trade marketing and energy efficiency industries. Nancy currently serves on the Global Advisory Council of the World Brand Congress.

About LGK Marketing Communications Collective, Inc.

LGK Marketing Communications Collective, Inc. (LGK) is a marketing communications practice based in Boynton Beach, FL and Washington, DC. Founded in 2009, the practice is composed of independent consultants who facilitate marketing tactics for small to medium-sized businesses and organizations throughout the United States. LGK is registered with the federal government as a minority and women-owned contractor, with the Small Business Administration as a women-owned small business (WOSB) and designated by the state of Florida as an African-American and women-owned business. LGK also serves as an Executive Advisory Corps marketing consultant for member agencies of Nonprofits First in Palm Beach County, FL.



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BIG DATA INTERVENTION (continued)

- Take inventory of your current marketing assets and identify what business intelligence they offer (e.g., website visits, page views and activity; email opens and clicks; CRM leads, prospects and conversions; content post comments and interactions; surveys and polls; snail mail notes from customers and prospects; trade show signup forms).

- Have a third-party evaluate your current marketing efforts:

The Marketing Score
www.lgkmarketingcc.com

The SCORE Marketing Assessment Tool
www.score.org/resources/marketing-assessment-tool

HubSpot Marketing Grader
<https://marketing.grader.com>

- Research software and platforms thoroughly for vendors that offer programs and prices that match your need and budget. Here are two sites we trust for objective reviews.

TechCrunch CrunchBase
www.crunchbase.com

GetApp
<http://ow.ly/yvAgJ>

WORDS OF WISDOM

Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense.

Gertrude Stein