

CUSTOMER STORY

Getty Images Transforms its Data Strategy to Get a Better Picture of its Audience

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Imagine carefully planning to launch a new customer relationship management (CRM) platform to 30 offices across 20 countries in 5 continents – in six weeks. While it might sound impossible, Getty Images' Greg McLaughlin made it a reality. "It was a whirlwind project," McLaughlin recalls. "But we set a plan, executed it very well and as a result, it went as smoothly as possible. A master data foundation was fundamental to the project's success."

Managing and implementing CRM and master data management (MDM) solutions comes as second nature for Greg McLaughlin. He's been honing his craft for more than two decades, long before either of those acronyms meant anything to anyone. As Getty Images' Vice President of Global Sales Operations, McLaughlin oversees sales enablement, sales operations, learning and development, and manages the company's global CRM platform. Last year he was tasked with streamlining and optimizing the majority of Getty Images' front-end sales, marketing, and customer support processes. Getting that right, on a global scale, is no easy task. It's a massive undertaking that starts and ends with data, specifically master data.

"Data is critical to our operation. It ensures us that we're reaching the right audience and that we understand our customers and prospects."



It's about creating a structure for your data and having a regular rigor around maintaining that structure, identifying how data gets into your systems, where it goes once it gets in, and how you master it across those systems."

McLaughlin recognized that the company first needed a really strong foundation in order to find a way to manage the company's CRM including a complete 360-degree view of the customer in a way to ignite its sales and marketing strategy. "Ultimately, we wanted to drive increased pipeline and accelerate close rates, improve productivity for our sales team, and deliver a better overall customer experience," says McLaughlin. "This project would help get us there."

"Very early in the process we began thinking about how to clean our data, which is how a lot of companies start." But McLaughlin knows from experience that it takes more than just cleaning your data to create a trusted view of your customers and prospects.



ENTER MASTER DATA

Tackling a project of this nature can be overwhelming, especially for a sales and marketing specialist like McLaughlin. “I’ve worked in marketing, in sales, and even operations,” he explains. “Ironically, the only department I haven’t worked in is IT. But, I’ve been able to learn from the different leaders that I’ve worked for in all of those different functional areas what’s important to each part of their business.”

“As I’ve gotten deeper and deeper into my career, I’ve been able to take all those learnings, put them together and recognize how a master data strategy can address the full set of business needs.”

Through the years, McLaughlin has learned that master data is the foundation on which a company should build its data-driven strategy. That’s because when data is mastered – meaning it is consistently structured and governed – it contains the central pieces of information about the customers you sell to, vendors you buy from, parties you partner with, and prospects you are interested in, as well as the products you make and services you provide. And, once it is mastered at the application-level, like a CRM system for instance, it gains more value because it can be seamlessly shared between applications or departments, and even across the enterprise to form that elusive, 360 customer view needed for better decision making and creating better customer experiences.



GETTING STARTED

McLaughlin has some advice for organizations looking to implement similar strategies.

“I think about it like cleaning your basement,” McLaughlin explains. “You’ve got this big basement full of old stuff, and you have to start somewhere. Start small and clean a little bit. Before you know it, you give yourself a little breathing room to clean the next spot and the next, and so on.” In other words, don’t try

and do everything at once, you’ll only set yourself up for failure, according to McLaughlin. Instead, he suggests taking it in steps.

“First, understand where your data lives,” recommends McLaughlin. “Where is it across all these different disparate sources? And where did it originate? You need to know who’s creating the data and why.”

“It’s important before you even try to engage in your strategy to start to look at your processes and figure out how to minimize the unique creation points of data,” says McLaughlin. He believes the fewer points, the easier it is to govern and master your data.

Ultimately, data should give your teams insight into customers, prospects, and partners across geographies, industries, and segments. You can leverage all your teams and third-party systems to achieve breadth, but depth usually comes from a third-party system that can enrich your data with insight and information that your teams don’t or can’t collect.

“You can’t do it yourself; you need somebody who’s got the expertise,” says McLaughlin. “That’s why we partnered with Dun & Bradstreet to help us organize and connect the data.” The last step is developing a persistent strategy around how you’re going to regularly refresh that newly cleaned data.



MASTER DATA CUTS ACROSS THE WHOLE BUSINESS

As a business leader that has implemented a lot of CRM systems, McLaughlin knows that without driving support for the project across the organization, it will never get off the ground. “Driving adoption is all about selling internally and influencing people to buy into a common vision,” he explains. “You have to show people what I call the overwhelming benefit. What it really is, is a vision where the value of engaging in a process or adopting a technology is so much greater than the level of effort to engage or to perform a certain set of tasks or processes that it completely overwhelms the effort.”

As to who owns this process, McLaughlin believes everyone has to play a part. “I think that it really should be a joint effort between finance, technology and sales and marketing, so that finance can govern and drive the back-end processes and make sure that the customer experiences are good. IT can really manage the delivery and the storage of the data and possibly the flow back-and-forth with a third-party like a Dun & Bradstreet.

“At the end of the day, sales and marketing needs to give the customer perspective, certainly the internal customer perspective,” explains McLaughlin. “I think all of those elements come together to form a strategy, because master data cuts across the whole business.”

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