Driving Customer-Centric Growth: A Practical Roadmap

The Pivotal Role of Insights and Analytics In the Customer-Centric Organization

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Editors' Note
The need to connect deeply with the consumer has led many brands to replace traditional product-focused business models with a customer-centric approach. Insights2020—the largest global marketing research initiative to date—has provided the strategic framework and practical guidelines to "help leaders in the fields of marketing and insights and analytics drive customer-centric growth." The 2015 project, led by Kantar Vermeer (renamed in 2016 from Millward Brown Vermeer), included interviews with 337 business, marketing, and insights and analytics leaders, and an online survey of 10,495 practitioners from 60 countries. In the pages that follow, Kantar Vermeer authors offer an in-depth look at the Insights2020 findings, data, and methodology that inform their roadmap for companies to develop a customer-centric business model in which insights and analytics plays a pivotal role. Such a model, according to the authors, is what has led to strong revenue growth at "overperformers" (i.e., *brands experiencing higher revenue growth than their peers across the category).*

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Kantar Vermeer with partners Korn Ferry, ESOMAR, the Advertising Research Foundation, and LinkedIn, conducted a large-scale global empirical study containing insights from both qualitative vision interviews as well as quantitative survey analysis covering all regions and industries. The findings of that study, Insights2020, provided the basis for this article.

The authors claim to have uncovered the relationship between customer centricity and revenue growth as well as the dimensions and drivers of customer-centric growth.

The purpose of this article is to provide brands a practical roadmap to customer-centric revenue growth and to decode the role of insights and analytics in driving that growth.

Insights2020 investigated:

- the role of insights and analytics in driving business strategy and growth
- the delivery of a total experience
- building a customer-obsessed organization
- leadership competencies and behaviors of overperformers (brands with strong revenue growth).

Insights2020 work builds on the findings of the 2014 study, Marketing2020 (de Swaan Arons, van den Driest, and Weed, 2014), which focused on helping global chief marketing officers (CMOs) align marketing strategy, structure, and capability with business growth.

The current article is based on data derived from a number of sources, namely:

- Insights2020's 337 vision interviews with industry leaders and innovators, both within and outside marketing and the market research industry
- Insights2020's online global survey of 10,495 completes
- a detailed literature search
- the authors' prior experience of having conducted Marketing2020: Organizing for Growth, a 2013 study which focused on aligning marketing strategy, structure, and capability with business growth.

DOI: 10.2501/JAR-2016-029

The quantitative survey data used in this article is based on a data pull on September 18, 2015.

INSIGHTS2020 BACKGROUND

The Relevance Of Customer-Centric Growth

Customer-centric companies are growing revenue faster than their competitors and are creating personalized, and often experiential, value propositions based on data-driven insights. "Overperformers"—brands that are experiencing higher revenue growth than their peers across the category—are fostering a more customer-centric business culture and prioritizing the alignment of their insights and analytics strategy, structure, and capability. Insights2020 findings inform the current article's description of what it takes to outperform and how to drive a more customer-centric mind-set and approach within the organization.

The authors believe that—to an even greater degree than any other business-related "revolution" in the last century—this study has the potential to upend everything thought to be known about business. Its findings, in fact, could open real possibilities that only a decade ago seemed like science fiction. By 2020 there will be more than 50 billion connected devices worldwide; that's seven devices per person. Welcome to the era of the connected customer!

It's difficult to imagine the possibilities for the ocean of behavioral data these devices will provide. It means marketers, advertisers, and business leaders finally will have the data available to better understand people and what they want—and to reshape brands and businesses to become truly customer centric. Being customer centric is imperative in a connected world because traditional business value drivers simply don't cut it anymore. Anyone can produce quality products. Manufacturing no longer provides a sustainable competitive advantage. Access to distribution channels now is widely available, both on- and offline. Thus, the true source of competitive advantage lies in understanding the needs of customers and serving them in a fast, transparent, and credible way: being customer centric.

Although customer centricity has been a field of strategic importance to brands and companies (Shah, Rust, Parasuraman, Staeling, and Day, 2006), the financial crisis emphasized a stronger focus on customers instead of solely focusing on shareholders (Verhoef, 2012). The Cambridge, MA–based Marketing Science Institute (MSI, 2014) considers the customer experience that a brand or company delivers as the industry's single most important research challenge. Although positive customer experiences are assumed to improve the performance in the purchase funnel (*i.e.*, convergence rates) and customer loyalty—which drives bottom-line growth—it has become increasingly complex to create, manage, and control to deliver positive customer experiences.

There are three external factors driving this (Fader, 2012; Lemon and Verhoef, 2015):

- Touchpoint explosion and reduced control of the experience within: to scroll, check, and buy;
- Increasing empowerment of customers: to get what they want, whenever they want, and from whomever they want;
- Product centricity loses traction: technological-progress, globalization, and deregulation causing less sustainable competitive advantages for brands and companies.

Customer Centricity: A Misunderstood Concept

Customer centricity often is confused with customer service. Both concepts have similar means to different ends. They have in common the fact that they place the customer first in delivering the highest possible customer experience or service. The fundamental difference lies in the receiving-end perspective and the ultimate objective of the action.

By 2020 there will be more than 50 billion connected devices worldwide; that's seven devices per person.

Consider two examples of the receiving-end perspective:

- In a restaurant where the service is really slow, you can't catch the waiter's eye—the waitstaff seem to be avoiding you. They are showing a complete lack of customer centricity.
- In another restaurant, every 30 seconds the waiter comes to the table and asks whether everything is alright, whether there is anything he can do, and then the headwaiter comes every two minutes, and then the manager comes by several times as well. There is very high customer centricity—and an equally unhappy customer.

In fact, the second restaurant has as little an idea about what the customer needs as the first one—and yet they both think they are very customer centric. They have defined customer centricity for themselves—they have not tuned in to what the customer wants.

Many organizations claim to be customer centric, yet only a fraction can deliver on the promise with proper insights bridging the gap. They misinterpret being customer centric with being customer friendly, often for the wrong reasons.

Customer centricity focuses on making profit and maximizing those profits over as long a time period as possible. By contrast, the goal of customer service is customer satisfaction regardless of cost and profit. An earlier definition of customer centricity has guided the current authors: "Customer centricity is a strategy that aligns a company's development and delivery of its products and services with the current and future needs of a select set of customers in order to maximize their long-term financial value to the firm" (Fader, 2012; p. 9).

To become successful as a strategy, customer centricity must be implemented throughout the organization, the current authors believe. It should be built and based on the most profitable customers a company has.

This means companies must abandon the traditional, product-focused business model for one that is built around the customer:

- Product-centric organizations are built around the demand of the product (Fader, 2012):
  - ✧ Create a product
  - ✧ Market a product
  - ✧ Sell a product.

- Customer-centric organizations are built around the most profitable customer groups:
  - ✧ Understand your customers
  - ✧ Identify the most profitable ones
  - ✧ Mine them for more information
  - ✧ Build experiences.

The results of the first wave of Insights2020 research demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between customer centricity and revenue growth overperformance. Therefore, the current authors asked, "What are the drivers of customer centricity, and how do we achieve customer centricity?"

When Vermeer started the Insights2020 journey, the authors had anticipated that many of the findings would revolve around data science, software, and technology. Instead, the study uncovered that there was a much higher emphasis on the human element, organizational connectedness, leadership qualities, and orchestration skills.

The Need for Customer Centricity

Customer centricity started as a concept but lacked data backing it to a large extent. By 2020, the current authors predict, we will live in a connected society of people and devices. Currently, there are approximately 25 billion devices globally that can connect to each other, which has quadrupled in the last seven years. It will grow further to an astounding 50 billion devices by 2020. This knowledge opens up a wealth of opportunities to gather (behavioral) data and distil insights to better deliver on; with that capability, companies can be customer centric.

Traditional value drivers no longer deliver a sustainable competitive advantage. Dominant sources in the last century have lost their relevance. In the first half of the 20th century the focus was on manufacturing and shifted to distribution in the latter half of the century. Globalization decreased once-prominent geographical advantages. Where products are manufactured has become less important, and distribution often is outsourced to specialized partners. After 1990, digitalization increased, making for an even greater availability of information. But the technology progress that appeared with it also enabled speed and quality of creation and duplication.

We currently live in the age of the connected customer; hence we must be customer centric.

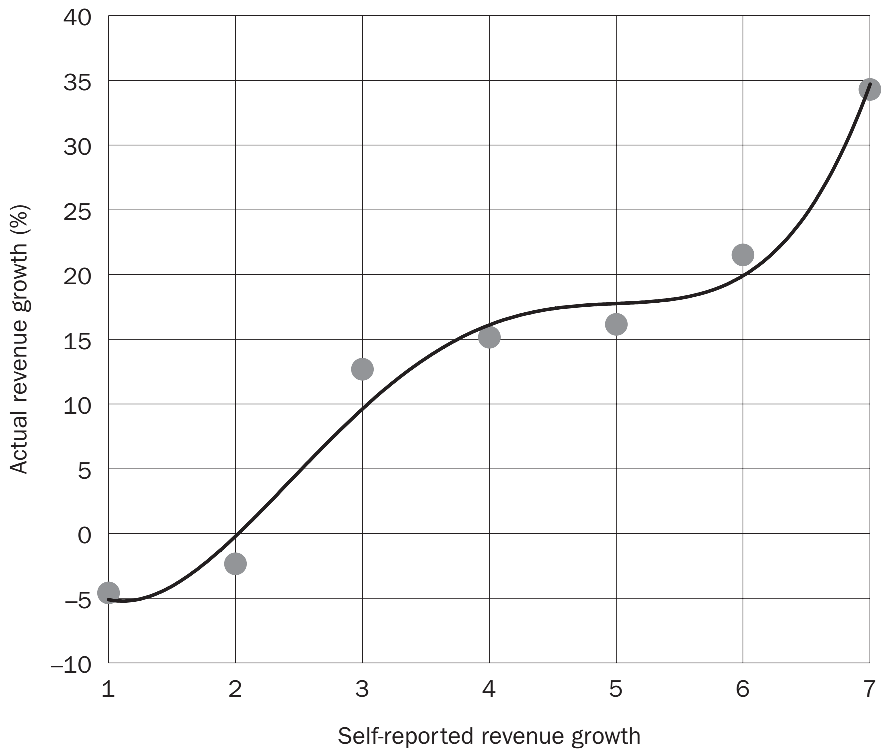
In a subsample of observations the authors of this article validated the self-reported revenue growth (by participants in the Marketing2020 study)—on a 7-point scale—and compared it with actual revenue growth.[1] There was a high correlation between the self-reported revenue growth and actual revenue growth (percentage growth based on actual revenue; See Figure 1). Especially for the top boxes and the bottom boxes of self-reported growth, strong patterns were clear. And it made sense: If you worked at Apple, you knew you were overperforming, and if you worked at the Taiwanese mobile device manufacturer, HTC, you knew that you were performing below par versus your competitors. From the online survey of 10,495 practitioners worldwide, the current authors analyzed the contribution of 66 potential variables (drivers) that contributed most to customer-centric growth. By doing this, the current researchers could quantify the impact of these drivers on revenue growth—demonstrating the urgency for customer centricity.

Becoming Customer Centric: Opportunities and Challenges

The reasons for becoming customer centric were compelling—but key questions remained: How do we get there? Which related factors keep business, marketing, and insights and analytics leaders awake at night? What do they see as the biggest challenges and opportunities? Among respondents' considerations were the following:

- **Speed**. "Patience is becoming a rare commodity" was a repeated theme in the Insights2020 interviews; consumers have lost patience and don't want to wait. There is a demand for real-time answers and solutions, regardless of the channel, person, or touchpoint. And many companies are acting on it. Dutch airline KLM, for example, promises a response within

[1] *Actual growth data was obtained at Bloomberg.com.*



Note: *x*-axis reflects self-reported growth on a 7-point scale; *y*-axis represents actual growth rate (source: Bloomberg.com). Dots indicate an aggregate of survey respondents.

Figure 1 Relation between Study Respondents' Self-Reported Growth vs. Actual Growth

one hour to all questions through social media, 24/7. Lack of response has proved perilous for brands (Sexton, 2015).

- **Integrity**. This means integrity by being transparent about why you do business and how you do business (sourcing, sustainability, ethics), and also integrity around (data) privacy of your consumers and customers.

- **Convenience**. Consumers demand solutions according to what is easiest for them, rather than being forced to use solutions that companies already have created or implemented. Seamless integration of on- and offline channels/touchpoints is the most common challenge in this area.

- **Relevance**. Some companies go as far as personalization, using data in a way that will be relevant for the end consumer. A hotel asking for a guest's personal data every time he or she checks in is acceptable as long as the hotel couples the interaction with an action which makes it relevant for that guest's experience—such as remembering, for example, smoking preference or even intolerance to feather pillows.

The industry leaders surveyed were asked to prioritize a series of external and internal factors that they felt were essential for becoming customer centric. Among external factors (in the context of opportunities), the "ability to translate insights into actions" was chosen by more than half of responders as most important, followed by "increasing the importance of brand purpose to customers" (See Table 1), as consumers identify themselves more with brands that have a higher purpose.

Two other external factors also ranked high in priority:

- "personalization of products and services"
- "availability of behavioral data."

Among the most important internal factors (challenges) cited were (See Table 2):

- internal barriers (54 percent of industry leaders marked this among their top three challenges)
- legacy of structure.

Moreover, the industry leaders cited the integration of insights and analytics as essential. Among the opportunities, this

TABLE 1

Opportunities for Customer Centricity

Rank	Opportunity (External Factors)	Priority (%)
1	Ability to translate insights into actions	50.3
2	Increasing importance of brand purpose to customers	35.9
3	Personalization of products and services	35.7
4	Availability of behavioral data	34.1
5	Ability to engage in 1-on-1 relations with customers	30.7

Note: Priority of opportunity (i.e., *first, second, and third in importance) ranked by Insights2020 respondents.*

TABLE 2

Challenges to Customer Centricity

Rank	Challenges (Internal Factors)	Priority (%)
1	Internal barriers	54.0
2	Legacy of structure	43.0
3	Making sense of all data available	37.5
4	Recruiting and training whole-brain people (*i.e.*, with full-business-context/insights and analytics mind-sets	33.3
5	Increasing importance of brand purpose to customers	26.0

*Note: Priority of challenges (*i.e.*, first, second, and third in importance) ranked by Insights2020 respondents*

related to "availability of behavioral data" (Rank 4), and among the challenges: "making sense of all data available" (Rank 3).

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

A contribution analysis of the Insights2020 data revealed three key clusters (dimensions) of customer centricity at overperforming companies (See Figure 2):

- **Total experience**: Focused on delivering a total experience
- **Customer obsession**: Obsessed with the customer; everybody, all the time
- **Insights engine**: "Actioned" the insights and analytics function to its fullest potential.

These three dimensions together provide a holistic approach to achieving customer-centric growth, the current authors believe. The total experience dimension typically looks at the outside world, what to deliver from a receiving-end perspective in terms of brand purpose, customization, and touchpoint consistency. The customer obsession dimension is more internally oriented, driving the organization's mentality and mind-set in the context of leadership priority and the willingness to collaborate and experiment.

The third dimension, the insights engine, could be considered as the strategic lever to customer-centric growth, prompting these questions:

- Is the insights and analytics function used to its fullest potential?
- Is all the power that is in the data unlocked in the right way?
- Are critical capabilities in place to execute?

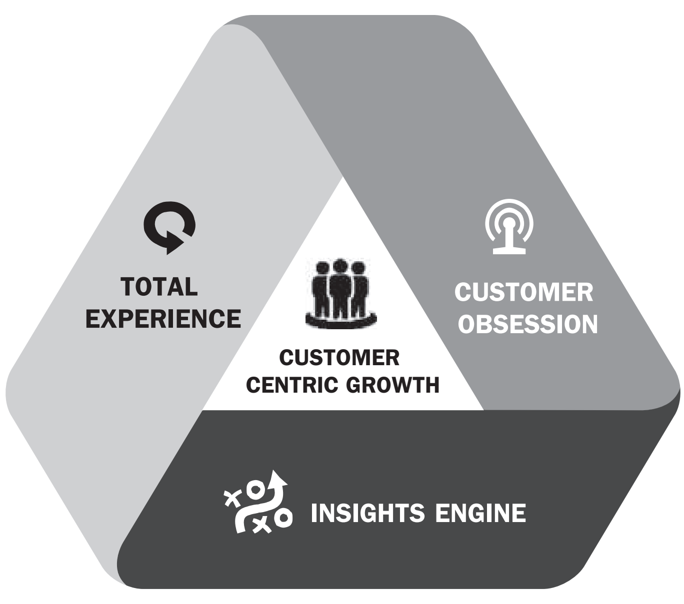


Figure 2 The Customer Centricity Model Illustrated

Dimension 1 Analysis: Deliver a Total Experience

Customers expect much more than good products or services—they expect a seamless, consistent, tailored-to-their-needs brand experience that goes beyond functional benefits and is built on a clear purpose for why the brand exists. Winning organizations understand this: 80 percent of overperforming companies are invested in ensuring that all activities are purpose-led, compared with only 32 percent of underperformers, as reported in the Insights2020 study.

- **The "Purpose-Led" Driver**
  Great brand purpose typically is based on a mix of "inside-out" factors (brand DNA, credibility, heritage, founder's passion) and "outside-in" factors (customer needs, white spaces, societal shifts).

  The biggest challenge lies not in defining a purpose but in "living" or infusing it consistently across the whole organization—ensuring that it remains elevated and a guide to all business activities, not just an element of brand communications or the marketing mix. Ultimately, purpose should be the foundation of all strategic choices and decisions. It should be used to create a movement for employees and customers, a movement that has an emotional and societal impact.

The authors learned that there are typically four maturity levels that lead to an organization's ability to be fully purpose-led:

- ✧ The base level relates to having a brand's defined purpose be part of or—better—drive brand communication, followed by a level in which it is part of the total marketing mix.
  - – A defined purpose also should become a substantial part of the initiative in the product, place, and price categories.
- ✧ The next level up is to have the purpose working for the whole organization as a North Star—all departments, all function levels, no exceptions, with a unified, compelling, and strong direction "guider" for all actions by all employees, and
- ✧ The highest level to achieve a societal movement, either fully by the individual or by teaming up with others.

Whiskas, the Mars Inc. cat food brand, links all business decisions and actions to its brand purpose. On the basis of mass qualitative research, Whiskas learned that people are fascinated by the big-cat characteristics they see inside every little cat and the similarities that their home cats share with big relatives in the wild: tigers, cheetahs, jaguars, and panthers. From there, Whiskas elevated its positioning, which previously had been about care, to a purposeful positioning about "nurturing the cat's true nature."

This purpose not only was integrated in all brand communications and activities but also translated into the actual product. The effort involved adapting the shape of the pellets and the nutritional profile of the product to what Whiskas understood the cats really needed, rather than what their owners thought looked nice. On top of the functional and emotional execution of the purpose, Whiskas joined forces with the World Wildlife Fund to create a societal movement to protect endangered white tigers in Siberia as a natural extension of their support for the nature of all cats.[2]

- **The Customization Driver**
  As part of delivering a total experience, overperformers more likely will use data-driven insights to customize their offer (73 percent versus 31 percent of underperformers). This can range from customizing the actual product to customizing service, pricing, distribution, or other elements of the marketing mix. Using insights and analytics is critical here: knowing what your customer thinks, does, needs, and wants is essential input for deciding how to customize the offer.

The level of customization differs by industry and depends heavily on the investment needed to move from offering "one-size-fits-all" to a fully personalized offer. One example is how telematics (pricing car insurance policies based on actual driving behavior instead of "risk-profile segmentation") is prompting huge changes in the insurance industry through personalization.

The continuum of customization maturity runs from a one-size-fits-all approach to an implemented segmentation with a differentiated go-to-market strategy. The next level relates to microtargeting, and the highest level is a full one-to-one approach. Although the customization driver might relate better to some industries (services) compared with others (fast-moving consumer goods), it is not a limitation per se.

- **The Touchpoint Consistency Driver**
  In addition to customizing offers and adding depth to customer relationships, overperformers are very much focused on delivering "breadth"—using insights and analytics to create a consistent experience across all touchpoints (64 percent versus 29 percent of underperformers).

An effective approach to delivering consistency is to start by focusing on a few select touchpoints—as the base level on the maturity ladder—and slowly expanding into more "moments of truth" (key instances of contact between a potential customer and a brand; Moran, Muzellec, and Nolan, 2014) along the customer journey. Ultimately, overperformers, in close collaboration with agencies and partners, expand this consistency beyond their own touchpoints.

Burberry—after years of relentless focus on revitalizing the brand through its own touchpoints, for example—was the first brand to launch an Apple Music channel in 2015.[3] Focused on British music talent, the channel extended the brand's footprint in collaboration with agencies and partners, without losing focus on its highly consistent brand identity.

Dimension 2 Analysis: Build a Customer-Obsessed Organization

The second dimension of customer-centric growth is to drive customer obsession throughout the organization (See Figure

[2] *"Whiskas & WWF." Retrieved March 22, 2016, from World Wildlife Fund website: http://www.wwf.org.uk/about_wwf/working_with_business/companies_we_partner/whiskas.cfm*

[3] *"Burberry Is the First Brand to Integrate with Apple Music." (2015, September 14). Retrieved March 2, 2016, from* Forbes *website: http://www.forbes.com/sites/hughmcintyre/2015/09/15/burberry-is-the-first-brand-to-integrate-with-apple-music/#2529590e409b*

2), taking the voice of the customer into account in every business decision. This was observed to be the case for 87 percent of overperformers versus 22 percent of underperformers, implying that the customer centricity strategy must be embraced by all functions of the company (observed at 79 percent of overperformers versus 13 percent of underperformers). This driver demonstrated the largest link with revenue growth in the study.

- **The "Embraced by All" Driver**
  Customer obsession should apply to all internal processes and decisions as well as to all external partnerships and relationships. At a base level, customer centricity is outsourced to insights and analytics—hardly a strategy in the authors' view. Subsequent levels of maturity then tap into the introduction of customer stewardship more broadly in the organization, with customer centricity embedded in all functions, processes, and in decision making. The highest level is a seamless alignment with external partners, so that the strategy impacts the collaborative work with external partners as well.

  Overperformers tend to have much more strategic clarity because the customer-centricity strategy is a priority for top leadership (observed at 91 percent of overperformers versus 48 percent of underperformers).

- **Leadership Priority Drivers**
  Overperformers tend to have much more strategic clarity because the customer-centricity strategy is a priority for top leadership (observed at 91 percent of overperformers versus 48 percent of underperformers). Another way to embed customer obsession across the organization is to use a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that drive the right behaviors. Overperformers base incentives on customer-related KPIs (observed at 45 percent of overperformers versus 25 percent of underperformers), motivating employees to bring customer centricity to life. So, it is not only that leadership advocates customer centricity but also that customer centricity is embedded in personal measures to incentivize specific behavior. The highest maturity level in leadership priority is having customer centricity as a key company metric acting as a guiding principle for growth.

Finally, culture and leadership are an essential part of this dimension. Culture at overperforming organizations is skewed more toward embracing risk and experimentation. The maturity ladder starts with a risk management mind-set, followed by occasional risk-stimulating experimentation. When this becomes a more structured approach, budget and capacity are allocated toward experimentation, where the highest level results in full empowerment of all employees. "Take intelligent risks" as LinkedIn defines it, is a very powerful way of driving change and moving fast.

- **Collaboration And Experimentation Drivers**
  Culture at overperforming organizations is skewed more toward embracing risk and experimentation. The maturity ladder starts with a risk management mind-set, followed by occasional risk-stimulating experimentation. When this becomes a more structured approach,

Sources: GoPro (demonstrating its "capturing the customer experience" theme) and a customer who provided the image.

Figure 3 GoPro "Hero" in Action

budget and capacity are allocated toward experimentation, where the highest level results in full empowerment of all employees. "Take intelligent risks" as LinkedIn defines it, is a very powerful way of driving change and moving fast. Overperformers tend to have a much more collaborative cultural environment that is stretched to maximum levels. These companies follow a project-based team approach, ensuring that the right talent is available for the right project. Some people call these "just-in-time" teams.

Collaboration starts with a bilateral department working together as a base maturity level. The next level of collaboration extends across all functions within an organization. Higher up, the collaboration is institutionalized with external partners and to its fullest potential with end-users. This sometimes feels a bit uncomfortable, but it is actually a very promising execution of collaboration.

GoPro, a San Mateo, CA, maker of cameras used for extreme-action videography, is an example of an overperforming organization that has embraced complete collaboration with its customers: Its marketing materials feature pictures and videos shot by users. Instead of paying agencies and professional photographers to shoot the best material, GoPro rewards its users for sharing the best, real-life material (See Figure 3). Indeed, the company's collaborative mind-set extends all the way to the end-customer. Its marketing tag line: "This Is Your Life. Be a Hero."

Dimension 3 Analysis: Creating an Insights Engine

The Insights2020 results showed a third dimension of customer-centric growth: the mind-sets, role, and impact of insights and analytics. The "insights engines" dimension appears to be the most important compared with "total experience" and "customer obsession." In fact, the fundament of customer centricity should start with the insights engine.

Having a proper insights engine in place makes it easier for the organization to build a customer-obsessed mind-set and to deliver a total experience to end-clients. A full 51 percent of overperformers indicated that the insights and analytics function is used to their full potential. This is four times greater than the scores from underperforming companies and indicates that in these firms, insights and analytics are influencing all parts of the business planning cycle.

- **The Leading Role Of Insights and Analytics**
  For this to be achieved, important changes have emerged from the past, the current authors observed. Winning insights and analytics groups are evolving from the traditional support function role (within marketing) to one of a proactive team player. In that role, the insights and analytics group provides scenario planning and recommendations and ultimately is regarded by the rest of the business as a fully integrated business partner that has a seat at the leadership table, driving strategy and real-time execution together with marketing, information technology (IT), and finance colleagues. This goes beyond playing an inspiring or challenging role to the business, the mid-levels of the maturity ladder that drives the strategic agenda of an organization. It also relates to where insights and analytics reports into an organization.

  This is exactly the evolution currently underway at Unilever. The consumer and market insights (CMI) function is included in all major business decisions and all parts of the business cycles, and operates as a business partner. Under the guidance of Stan Sthanunathan, the Unilever CMI department in 2016 appears to be on a successful journey from being a marketing support function to delivering on its stated mission to "inspire and provoke to enable transformational action."

  Additionally, there are significant differences between over- and underperformers in the instances of insights and analytics leaders that report directly to the executive chamber. For overperforming organizations this percentage is almost three times as high. India's mega conglomerate TATA Sons is one of these overperformers; its head of insights and analytics, Harish Bhat, has reported directly to the chairman, Cyrus P. Mistry since 2014. The current authors believe this is a bellwether for the future.

- **Unlocking the Power Of the Data Driver**
  None of the companies that participated in the current study complained about a lack of data. Rather, the authors characterized the enormous increase in data availability as "infobesity." Unlocking the power of this data, the authors believe, provides an enormous opportunity for insights and analytics to evolve from "data and information provider"—delivering internal stakeholders consumer, market, and competitive information—to actually becoming full partners and part of the solution. This includes contributing to the value proposition through personalization, touchpoint consistency, and, ultimately, business growth. Leveraging data will be key to delivering a total experience in the digital age, the authors predict.

  Often the challenge is working across disparate datasets—such as customer/consumer research, brand tracking, social media interactions, shopper data, internal (volumetric, financial) data, and media results. These datasets usually are owned by different teams or even different companies, and this is a reality that businesses will deal with for many years to come. The lack of connectivity between the data silos is not holding back the fastest-growing organizations, though. To fully leverage the power of the data they possess, overperformers are centralizing ownership into the "single source of the truth" construct and organizing into so-called "expert communities" that collaborate to turn data into actionable insights.

Further growth will require moving effectively along the path of unlocking the power of data across all sources, the authors believe. This growth starts with knowing what data a company owns and includes connecting data sources to optimize for multichannel experiences. It includes combining social-media data with market research and sales data to enable a better understanding of channel dynamics and customer needs across different touchpoints. Top levels of the maturity ladder relate to having data leveraged as service to customers to make their lives easier and fulfill their (unmet) needs now and in the future.

- **Critical Capabilities for Insights and Analytics at Overperformers**
  Evolving to a world where insights and analytics take a leading role in the business requires a significant change in the critical capabilities of all employees as well as the insights and analytics organization itself. The results of Insights2020 showed marked differences between over- and underperformers in terms of the insights and analytics profile: Overperformers' employees demonstrated more of a business context mind-set. Furthermore, they are able to find creative ways to answer complex business questions in what the authors refer to as a "whole-brain" approach, and they were better storytellers than their underperforming counterparts.

Having this business sense and preparation to conduct a leadership conversation is probably the most essential first step for insights and analytics to take on the path to a more leading role in the organization—the entry-ticket to the C-suite. This requires the capability to combine the science and analytics of what the data says (left-brain orientation) with the art of deriving creative recommendations (right-brain orientation) that resonate both internally and externally. Insights and analytics significantly increases its impact by bringing data to life and turning data into customer stories. Much has been written about the power of storytelling, and people working in insights and analytics should recognize that, quoting author Brené Brown, "stories are data with a soul" (Gallo, 2014), and data-driven stories can be very powerful.

MAKING INSIGHTS2020 ACTIONABLE

A New Era for Insights and Analytics

The first wave of Insights2020 results identified the solutions, cultures, structures, and capabilities that are prominent at overperforming, customer-centric organizations. These flags highlighted some of the most important changes that will be needed for insights and analytics teams to better connect with their colleagues, contribute to business growth, and learn to link everything they do to business objectives.

The 10 drivers of customer-centric growth will be essential enablers of growth as increasingly connected consumers allow companies to understand their unique needs and behaviors in detail, while traditional competitive advantages become commodities. The first wave of Insights2020 results proved that the brands and organizations that first adopt customer-centric strategies are reaping a competitive advantage, and are driving revenue growth faster than their competitors by focusing on the current model's three dimensions:

- Deliver a total experience to your customers;
- Build a customer-obsessed organization;
- Create a powerful insights engine that allows you to harness all the possibilities the new insights and analytics has to offer your business.

Benchmarking to Identify Opportunity Gaps

Business, marketing, and insights and analytics leaders who want to apply these findings to their own companies may be interested in benchmarking their own organizations to the findings of the quantitative survey. One way to do so, the current authors suggested, is by using Kantar Vermeer's Insights2020 benchmarking tool, PulseCheck, which helps companies assess themselves for customer-centricity readiness. This method requires a minimum of 50 internal participants and can be used to identify key opportunity areas for growth and key challenges to address.

The Road Forward

True to the findings on the importance of experimentation and iterative improvement, the Insights2020 journey will continue as a movement to support customer-centric growth. The next phase of this study will shift its focus from the "what" to *how* to achieve the changes essential to driving growth:

- How can we best drive customer centricity throughout the organization?
- How can we identify the best metrics to use internally and externally to measure and reward progress?

- How can we best distil insights from multiple internal and external data sources?

CONCLUSIONS

The current article has explored the three dimensions of a customer-centric growth model and their key contributing drivers. Customer-centric growth is more relevant than ever, the authors believe, because the rise of connected devices has greatly improved the understanding of customer behaviors and needs.

As a result, companies can but also must be customer centric to gain competitive advantage, because traditional value drivers are commoditizing. Insights2020 data demonstrated that customer centricity and revenue growth go hand in hand—further underscoring the necessity of becoming customer centric.

To achieve customer-centric growth, the authors encourage business, marketing, and insights and analytics leaders to focus collaboratively on improving three dimensions:

- delivering total experience (external)
- having a true customer obsession (internal)
- exploiting the insights engine to the maximum, by using insights and analytics to its full potential.

Insights2020's ongoing investigations will continue to rely on participants willing to share their experiences. The authors encourage readers of this journal to be future participants with whom they can collaborate and experiment using the robust data sources made available in this ongoing study. JAR

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank all participants in the Insights2020 qualitative vision interviews (337 interviews were conducted, from May 2015 through September 2015) as well as all respondents who took the time to participate in the quant survey (with 10,495 completes, from July 27, 2015, through September 2015). In addition to the respondents, the authors also thank their partners—local marketing and research associations and publishers—for activating their members to participate. The Insights2020 advisory board and the project's founding partners contributed extensively, ensuring that this initiative would be one of a kind. Insights2020 research was bolstered with online behavior analysis by LinkedIn and crowd-sourcing led by Wharton University.

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