

Your Digital Intelligence Strategy Must Match The Speed Of Your Customers

Strategic Plan: The Digital Intelligence Playbook

by Cinny Little and James McCormick

November 30, 2016

Why Read This Report

To remain competitive, customer insights pros must optimize their firm's digital intelligence — the practice of continuously optimizing customer engagement with data, analytics, and insights — to keep up with the speed of the customer. This report defines a five-component strategic plan to get you there.

This is an update of a previously published report; Forrester reviews and updates it periodically for continued relevance and accuracy.

Key Takeaways

Elevate Digital Intelligence With A Strategic Plan

Digital intelligence is not a project: It's a continuous initiative that transforms businesses and customer experiences. A strategic plan incorporates data and technology, people and process, metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs), and customer engagement optimization.

Outdated Approaches Hobble Digital Intelligence

Many firms claim to have a digital analytics strategy — but most are incomplete and lack a modern approach for applying data-rich digital analytics in real time.

Reboot With Digital Intelligence

Most businesses claim to be insights-influenced. But to survive, your business must go beyond that and become insights-driven. Reboot your approach to deliver competitive advantage with a robust digital intelligence strategy.

Your Digital Intelligence Strategy Must Match The Speed Of Your Customers

Strategic Plan: The Digital Intelligence Playbook

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Forrester wrote this report by drawing insight from ongoing research.

Related Research Documents

- [Continually Optimize Experiences To Differentiate And Compete For Customers](#)
- [The Insights-Driven Business](#)
- [Optimize Customer Experience With A Digital Intelligence Business Case](#)

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Digital Insights Approaches Aren't Keeping Up With Customers

Firms that excel at using data and analytics to optimize their digital businesses will together generate \$1.2 trillion per annum in revenue by 2020.¹ And digital intelligence — the practice of continuously optimizing customer experiences with data, analytics, and insights — fuels every insights-driven business.² Firms know that this approach gives them competitive advantage, and many have made significant investments in digital analytics data and technology to generate actionable customer insights.³ Yet progress toward mature practices is hobbled as firms:

- › **Have incomplete digital intelligence strategies that don't match customer behavior.** Today's device-hopping customers interact with brands across multiple touchpoints — from web to mobile to social channels — across the entire customer life cycle. However, many digital intelligence strategies focus myopically on analyzing and optimizing digital marketing campaigns, or analyze only web activity and not mobile. Strategic plans often miss the vision and opportunity to apply digital intelligence across all digital channels, and also across all of a firm's customer online and offline touchpoints — including customer support, product development, and product delivery.
- › **Fail to apply analytics at the speed of the customer — in real time.** Effective digital intelligence requires the direct delivery of data-driven insights to continually optimize customer interactions and experiences.⁴ This requires a tight integration of the data, the analytics, and the systems that interact with the customer. Yet many practices have a traditional approach in which they apply analytics manually and deliver analysis via reports and dashboards that look back at past customer behavior — rather than applying real-time insights and actions, such as segmentation and personalization, to the customer interactions.
- › **Can't combine customer data across experiences and contexts.** CI pros are not strangers to big data, and organizations are working to build systems of insight that move toward a single architecture for big data convergence with agile and actionable insights.⁵ Yet many firms continue to use a siloed approach to digital intelligence. Firms must capture customer behavior, feedback, and context and correlate every click, action, and interaction, from channel and device behavior (web, mobile, internet of things [IoT]) to context (such as location).

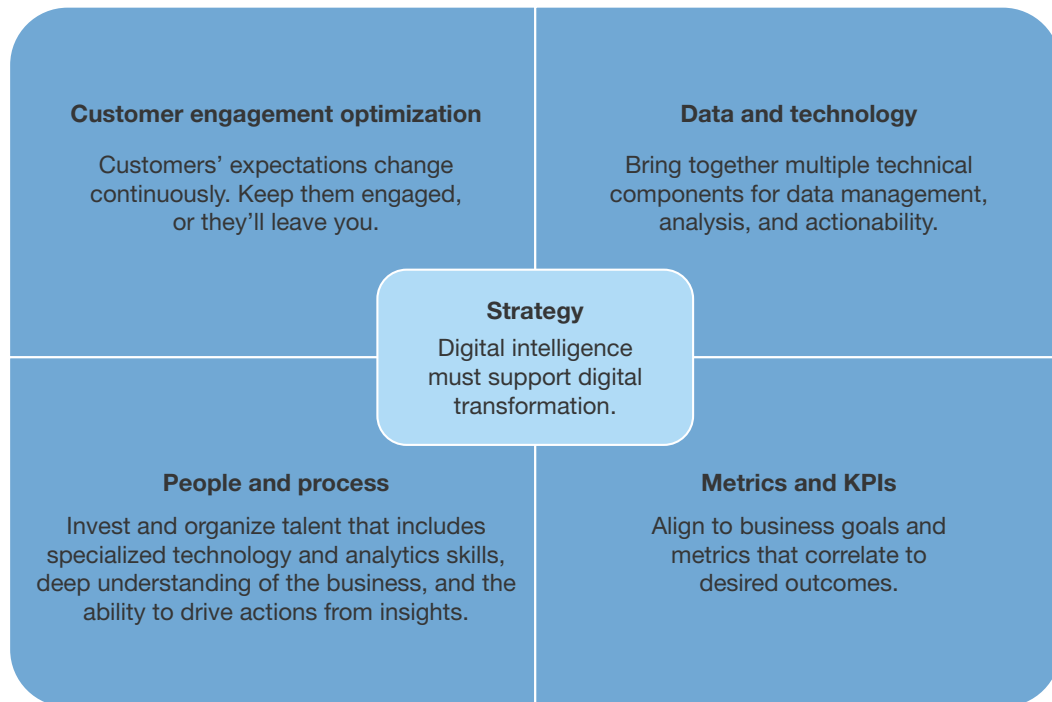
Your Strategic Plan Must Support Digital Transformation

As customer needs, behaviors, and preferences change, the proportion of digital to nondigital customer interactions is increasing. To remain competitive, digital intelligence practices must constantly refresh their view of customers with new data and insights that fuel optimization of the customer interactions that matter most to business outcomes.⁶ Comprehensive analytics must incorporate a combination of technologies, a wide set of stakeholders and users, multiple outputs spanning reports and dashboards, data sources, and a laser focus on driving optimization and direct

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action.⁷ To achieve this vision, CI pros must build a strategic plan that includes detailed descriptions and guidance for five components: strategy, data and technology, people and process, metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs), and customer engagement optimization (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 A Digital Intelligence Strategic Plan Includes Five Components**Digital Intelligence Must Continuously Evolve The Customer Experience**

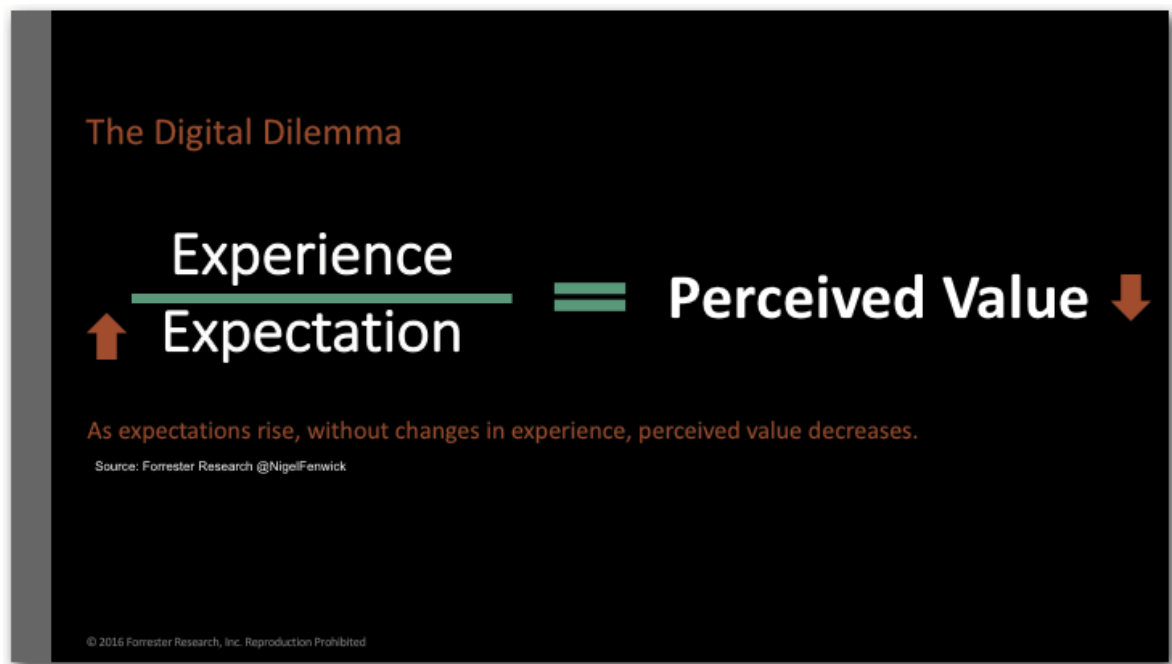
To remain competitive, firms' digital intelligence strategy must solve the digital dilemma: As customers' expectations rise and the digital experience isn't optimized to meet those expectations, customers' perception of value falls — and the customer may go elsewhere (see Figure 2).⁸ An effective digital intelligence strategy must support this priority with a long-term commitment to technical and organizational change that guides and informs the:

- › **Management of digital customer data.** The capacity to manage large volumes of customer data from a broad range of digital sources is a baseline requirement for a digital intelligence strategy. Customer data must contain information across all digital and offline channels, including behavioral, contextual, and business data (such as sales and product information).

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- › **Liberation and democratization of customer insights.** A digital intelligence strategy must extend data-driven insights beyond exclusive use by technical staff and analysts. Analytics teams must provide advanced capabilities to business stakeholders across the enterprise via role-driven, self-service interfaces and functionality. In addition, digital analytics must extend beyond reports and dashboards to deliver real-time, actionable insights to customer interactions.
- › **Transformation of customer experience with continuous optimization.** Digital intelligence needs to keep up with constantly shifting customer expectations by informing actions that drive the most optimized customer interactions based on the most up-to-date insights of the customer possible.⁹ To achieve this vision, the strategy should focus on processes that will repeatedly learn from every customer interaction to continually evolve the treatments delivered in future interactions.

FIGURE 2 The Digital Dilemma

Source: Forrester Research

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Deliver Customer Insights And Obsession With Data And Technology Investment

To accommodate large-scale customer data inputs and meet the analytics requirements of the business, CI pros must invest substantial resources into designing, implementing, and maintaining the necessary infrastructure to support in-depth analytics that drive optimized customer experiences. Supporting digital intelligence demands that you engineer the technical architectures to:

- › **Bring together and synchronize multiple digital analytics tools and technologies.** CI pros must employ a combination of technologies to collect, process, store, analyze, distribute, and act on digital insights at the speed of the customer. When considering technology in this environment — in which data and functionality integrations between tools are a given — solution packaging, open architectures, adherence to standards, and interoperability matter as much as native functionality and user experience. CI pros must also consider the IoT's impact on their business. While only 20% of digital analytics vendors currently offer some sort of IoT support, Forrester predicts that number will double in 2017.¹⁰
- › **Manage data at the user level.** CI practices must extend their digital capabilities past aggregating data for reporting purposes to collection and retention of granular, customer-level data that supports action. Individual-level data — such as unique session and customer data — drives advanced real-time segmentation and continuous optimization of customer interactions through personalization, targeting, and recommendations. For example, AFC Ajax, one of Europe's premier soccer clubs, combines online behavior with known individual customer data to boost fans' digital engagement through personalized and relevant content.¹¹
- › **Reduce data latency — and get to real time.** Today's top brands are in a race to engage customers with fresh content and offer new features to stay ahead of competitors. For instance, the responsiveness to new customer insights in the online gaming industry is measured in minutes or seconds, rather than hours or days. Latency incurs an opportunity cost to gaming firms; analyzing data that is several hours old can mean the difference between delighting and losing a player. One gaming firm states that all of its online game data is available to product managers and betting agents within 5 or fewer minutes of collection, while another firm notes that that no dashboard goes longer than 15 minutes without an update.

Create An Insights-Driven Business With Talent, Process, And Organization

CI leaders seeking to mature their digital analytics practice must hire and organize the right talent. Insights professionals today must meet the parallel requirements of implementing advanced, action-based digital analytics — that business stakeholders can access, understand, and act on. To support digital analytics at the pace and depth you need to keep up with the customer, CI pros must:

- › **Invest in analytics talent.** Mature digital analytics practices emphasize the business applications of data, but they recognize the need for both specialized technology and analytics skills, as well as deep understanding of the business. Groupon, a firm with a mature digital analytics practice,

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maintains a dedicated team of analysts.¹² These teams are divided into two skill sets: 1) analysts to support standard and ad hoc analysis projects and 2) engineering or development staff to manage data collection, processing, and analysis applications.

- › **Partner with business stakeholders to scale analytics across the enterprise.** To succeed, digital intelligence must closely align with business needs, not be an isolated function. So it's no surprise that over two-thirds of firms surveyed for The Forrester Wave™: Web Analytics, Q2 2014, stated that their digital analytics practice was embedded within core business functions such as marketing or eCommerce.¹³ CI leaders must support their business partners in linking digital insights to actions that improve customer experience — both within and across channels. To do this, CI pros should work closely with both internal (their firm's business technology [BT] team) and external (their vendor's professional services team) partners to manage and deploy data, insights, and technology as part of the BT agenda.¹⁴
- › **Flex their digital intelligence organization to support their business model.** Analytics organization structures vary between three typical models: decentralized teams that are “owned by” individual business units; a centralized team that serves the whole organization; or a center of excellence (CoE) in a hub and spoke model that provides analytics, governance and support, program management, and expertise across the organization.¹⁵ There's no single ideal digital analytics organization model. Typically, a CoE is the most evolved and effective approach. While moving to that model can be a challenging and politically charged process, digital team executives agree that the benefits — a lower cost base, more focused attention on metrics and actions — are worth the effort.

Actionable Digital Insights Are The Ones Aligned To The Right Metrics And KPIs

Digitally intelligent firms must align to the most relevant business goals and dive deep into the factors that correlate to desired outcomes.¹⁶ To gain digital insights that drive the business, CI pros must:

- › **Establish the context and purpose of measurement.** CI pros and business stakeholders must agree on the value and objectives of their digital touchpoints — such as websites, mobile apps, and wearables. At the macro level, there are a finite number of reasons why businesses have a digital touchpoint, such as publishing content, lead generation, revenue generation (eCommerce), engagement (e.g., blogs and social platforms), and product delivery (e.g., software-as-a-service [SaaS] platforms.). Understanding the business reasons for a digital touchpoint and the objectives of each establishes a basis for defining business-useful KPIs against which you can track performance. The optimal approach is to align measurement with KPIs stakeholders already measure — and are measured on.
- › **Measure and monitor customer segments.** Different customers have different value to your business, so segmentation is essential for differentiating them and targeting. With a segmentation strategy in place, CI pros can efficiently apply the way the business thinks to metrics, analysis, reports, test and learn activities, and targeting. This approach enables you to focus on effective

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actionable outcomes and optimized customer interactions. In addition, you can extend enterprise segmentation strategies to many functions, including marketing (e.g., targeting campaigns), customer support (e.g., tailoring response to request for help), and product delivery (e.g., changing the experience delivered in products).

- › **Provide a complete range of metrics.** Ultimately, all measurement strategies need to focus on the success of their digital touchpoints and measure against KPIs that are important to the business and their customers.¹⁷ However, digital intelligence demands the visibility of not only performance against business objectives, but also of efficacy of touchpoints, tactics, and the customer experience. To achieve this, a mature digital measurement program typically applies multiple measurement and analytics techniques. You'll need to understand the performance of each channel and campaign, using, for example, traffic volume and app downloads to assess channels and click-through rates for campaigns. You'll also need to analyze customer relationships for such metrics as average revenue per customer type and customer satisfaction trends.

Continually Boost Customer Experience With Testing And Machine Learning

Today, about half of all firms report that enhancing their digital analytics and experience optimization capabilities and tools is a priority (see Figure 3). The ability to succeed in leveraging those capabilities to engage customers' demands that CI pros master two interdependent and iterative processes. The first phase is supporting analytics that cut through digital data noise and conjecture to accurately assess the reactions of customers and customer segments to different content, promotions, and experiences. This first phase provides the intelligence for the second, "take action" phase, which provides iterative changes to segmentation and experiences needed to optimize these interactive components. To continuously optimize customer engagements, CI pros must:

- › **Provide business users with testing tools.** While it may sound unrealistic to put testing tools in the hands of the business user, a simple reorganization and a realignment of existing resources may be all you need to get started. This is the path Giles Richardson, head of direct banking analytics at the UK-based retail bank Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), took.¹⁸ His analytics team, which had been doing the heavy lifting within optimization programs, pivoted to support and enablement, and they partnered with approximately 50 of the bank's journey managers. These journey managers — referred to as "Superstar DJs" — received training and access to tools from the analytics team so that they could manage and run many of their own optimization tactics. The result? Overall, optimization accelerated from two to 70 tests per quarter in less than a year, and Richardson saw the value of optimization for the business delivered through conversion uplift and other KPIs almost triple within the year.
- › **Automate targeting and personalization.** Firms struggle with too few resources to support the manual design and application of customer experiences. CI pros must automate the use of digital customer data to scale the delivery of optimized and coordinated customer experiences across touchpoints and time. For example, RBS uses dynamic targeting to continuously optimize content

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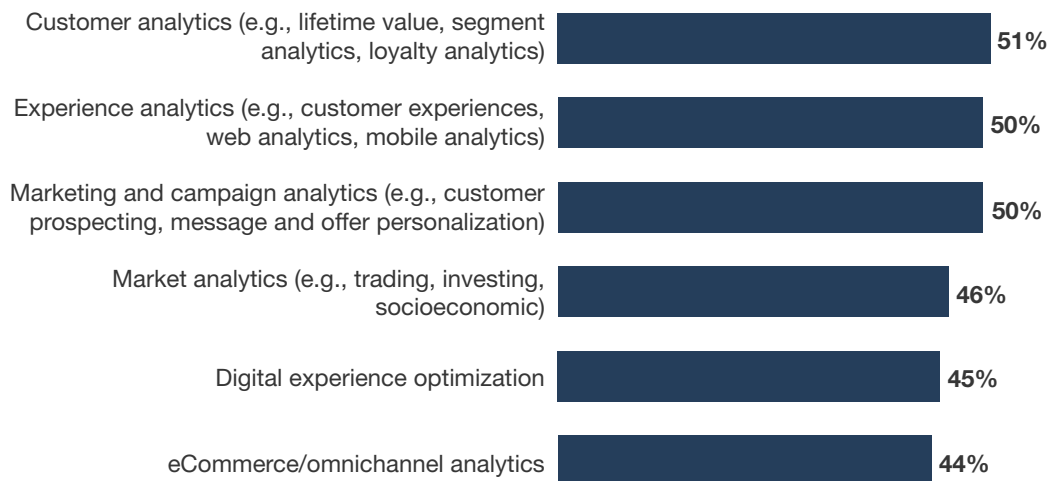
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and offers. When new capabilities were first rolled out, the bank accelerated time-to-market of new experiences from months to two weeks and saw a 20% increase in loan application completion coming from mobile channels.¹⁹

- › **Keep up with customers through machine learning and advanced analytics.** The increasing pace of digital customer interactions requires machine learning and advanced analytics to optimize marketing and experiences at the speed of the customer. For example, in 2016, the digital and content team of The Championships tennis tournament at Wimbledon expected a dip in digital audience because of a perfect storm of concurrent European sports events, from the Tour de France to soccer to Formula One races. The team successfully used machine learning to mine social media and gain a comprehensive real-time view of sentiments about Wimbledon. As it was able to make decisions and place content in social channels more rapidly than in the past, results showed not the expected dip but a match of the previous year's record-breaking performance in fan engagement, as well as improved reach to new, younger audiences.²⁰

FIGURE 3 Enhancing Digital Intelligence Capabilities Is A Priority For Firms**“What are your firm’s plans to use big data technology for the following analytics use cases?”**

(Implementing/implemented and expanding/upgrading implementation)



Base: 3,443 global data and analytics technology decision-makers
(multiple responses accepted; not all response options shown)

Source: Forrester's Global Business Technographics® Data And Analytics Survey, 2016

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Recommendations**Fuel The Insights-Driven Business With Digital Intelligence**

As the ways customers can digitally interact with brands continue to proliferate, organizations must ensure that they keep pace with optimizing the customer experience to match or even exceed customer expectations. Failing to do so will risk losing customers to competitors that are effectively using digital data to optimize interactions for business advantage. To implement digital intelligence, CI pros must:

- › **Scale digital analytics with big data architectures.** Develop explicit plans for how your organization will manage the technology, infrastructure, and resources necessary to accommodate the volume, variety, and pace of digital marketing data. This includes collecting, organizing, and storing data, as well implementing front-end tools to enable business partners to conduct advanced analysis and optimization tasks. Data will only continue to expand by several multiples in the coming years, so you must work with your technology partners to leverage enterprise big data architectures with the capacity to deliver to the necessary scale.
- › **Make digital intelligence easy to adopt by aligning activities with your firm's culture.** Get traction with stakeholders to drive more actions from insights. Do this by surfacing digital analytics in frameworks and dashboards that stakeholders already use or are measured on.²¹ For example, a critical success factor in GlaxoSmithKline's (GSK) global rollout of web and digital marketing analytics has been mirroring the metrics framework for that program to the one already used to measure overall customer engagement. GSK started the rollout in the US, and when that was working well, it began extending to dozens of countries. The tie to familiar frameworks makes the program easy to adopt for regional marketing heads and country general managers, even if digital analytics is not a familiar topic for them.
- › **Build for speed by bringing analytics and action closer together.** Consumers' preferences change, and competition is intensifying at ever-accelerating rates. Speed confers a fundamental advantage: CI pros must treat digital intelligence as the ability not only to conduct analytics but also to take action faster.²² Digital intelligence offers a myriad new capabilities: the ability to quickly act on new opportunities, fix technical glitches before the user experience is interrupted, and offer interesting products at the exact moment customers are ready to buy. Merge analysis and action by embedding analytics into the business and automating optimization where possible.
- › **Build effective business cases to invest in digital intelligence as an enterprise asset.** Treat your digital intelligence platforms as enterprise assets that support your organization's core business competencies. Digital intelligence provides a consistent, high-performance view of digital data that provides insights to applications in operations, product development, finance, customer service, and eCommerce, as well as marketing. Your organization must avoid siloed data sources across the enterprise and leverage the data assets as broadly as possible.

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Supplemental Material

Survey Methodology

Forrester's Global Business Technographics® Data And Analytics Survey, 2016, was fielded in March 2016. This online survey included 3,343 respondents in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, the UK, and the US from companies with 100 or more employees.

Forrester's Business Technographics ensures that the final survey population contains only those with significant involvement in the planning, funding, and purchasing of business and technology products and services. ResearchNow fielded this survey on behalf of Forrester. Survey respondent incentives include points redeemable for gift certificates.

Please note that the brand questions included in this survey should not be used to measure market share. The purpose of Forrester's Business Technographics brand questions is to show usage of a brand by a specific target audience at one point in time.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Forrester has identified voraciously competitive firms, which it calls insights-driven businesses; these businesses embed analytics and software deeply into their operating model to be customer-obsessed. These companies are highly competitive and are growing much faster than those that are not as insights-driven. See the Forrester report [“The Insights-Driven Business.”](#)
- ² To develop a modern approach to digital analytics that adequately covers the breadth of data, analysis techniques, and delivery of insights to support decision-making and optimized actions, CI pros must reimagine their expectations and requirements. Digital intelligence is an evolutionary step beyond traditional digital analytics — making it a competitive asset if executed well. See the Forrester report [“Optimize Customer Experience With A Digital Intelligence Business Case.”](#)
- ³ Firms can fall into four transformational stages of digital intelligence maturity: evaluate, elevate, accelerate, and differentiate. Forrester has developed a tool to help you assess where you fall within these stages. Use the total assessment score total to determine your organization’s current digital intelligence stage, as this marks your starting point and informs your digital intelligence strategy. See the Forrester report [“How Smart Are You At Delivering Digital Customer Experience?.”](#)
- ⁴ To keep up with customers and constantly meet their expectations, firms must adopt a continuous optimization approach that tightly integrates analytics with optimization techniques to constantly evolve the execution of interactions. See the Forrester report [“Transform Customer Experience With Continuous Optimization.”](#)
- ⁵ Forrester defines systems of insight as the business discipline and technologies needed to harness insights at scale and consistently turn data into action. The convergence of agile analytics applications and big data with these systems of insights is helping democratize data and insights. See the Forrester report [“It’s Time To Upgrade Business Intelligence To Systems Of Insight.”](#)
- ⁶ As customers’ digital interactions with brands have grown, the age of the customer has unfolded — an age in which customers, not brands, hold the balance of power. No matter how embedded your brand is in your customers’ lives, the many ways customers have to digitally interact with your competitors have made it easy for them to consider and consume their products and services — and move on should they not meet their expectations. See the Forrester report [“Continually Optimize Experiences To Differentiate And Compete For Customers.”](#)
- ⁷ An effective digital intelligence strategy covers all aspects of a measurement and analytics program. Before collecting data, defining metrics, or designing reports, you should document your organization’s current capabilities and readiness with Forrester’s digital intelligence maturity assessment. The assessment scores five dimensions of Forrester’s digital intelligence adoption road map — strategy, data and technology, people and process, metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs), and digital engagement optimization. See the Forrester report [“How Smart Are You At Delivering Digital Customer Experience?.”](#)
- ⁸ Source: Nigel Fenwick, “How To Solve The Digital Dilemma,” Nigel Fenwick’s blog, August 26, 2016 (http://blogs.forrester.com/nigel_fenwick/16-08-26-how_to_solve_the_digital_dilemma).
- ⁹ Forrester defines continuous optimization as an analytics-driven approach that seeks to leverage every customer interaction to evolve the understanding of the customer, which is in turn used to adapt and optimize current and future customer experiences. See the Forrester report [“Transform Customer Experience With Continuous Optimization.”](#)
- ¹⁰ Digital analytics vendors Cloudera, Google, MapR Technologies, and SAP lead the way. But the pressure placed on vendors’ customers and competitors will push others to play catch-up. See the Forrester report [“Predictions 2017: Artificial Intelligence Will Drive The Insights Revolution.”](#)
- ¹¹ Mark van Leest, media manager at Ajax, talked about the use of data-driven personalization to increase individual fan loyalty. Source: “The CRM strategy of soccer club Ajax,” GX Software (<https://www.gxsoftware.com/resources/webinar/webinar-the-crm-strategy-of-soccer-club-ajax.htm>).

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- ¹² For Groupon, the use of measurement and analytics to engage and target its customers across its digital touchpoints — including mobile — is a strategic imperative. To support its strategy, Groupon dedicates a large staff of data analysts and engineers to the ongoing maintenance and extension of its analytics platform. See the Forrester report “[Case Study: Groupon Differentiates On Mobile Analytics Expertise.](#)”
- ¹³ Over two-thirds of web analytics practices — a core digital analytics capability — were owned by marketing or eCommerce teams in 2014, up from 55% in 2011. See the Forrester report “[Gauging Web Analytics Practices In The Age Of The Customer.](#)”
- ¹⁴ More than ever before, the possibilities and limitations of technology both fuel and constrain digital business design. Business executives must build tight collaborations with both customer experience and technology management colleagues if they are to succeed. See the Forrester report “[Accelerate Digital Business With A BT Agenda.](#)”
- ¹⁵ Our research shows that there are three models for digital intelligence organizations, each with benefits and drawbacks: dedicated (decentralized) analytics teams in lines of business (LOBs) or regions; centralized channel-specific analytics that serve multiple LOBs; and the center of excellence (CoE) model, which combines dedicated and shared resources. There’s no one-size-fits-all approach to organizing digital intelligence. Firms should consider the balance of benefits and compromises each model brings. See the Forrester report “[Organize For Digital Intelligence With These Three Models.](#)”
- ¹⁶ To help firms make sense of and organize their understanding of customers as they interact, Forrester has created a digital intelligence measurement framework with three categories that guide priorities and choices: customer experience, customer relationship, and comparative insights measurement. See the Forrester report “[Instrument Your Business With Digitally Intelligent Measurement.](#)”
- ¹⁷ CI pros must collect several layers of digital measurement to gain a holistic view of the customer. These include customer experience, customer relationship, and comparative metrics. See the Forrester report “[Instrument Your Business With Digitally Intelligent Measurement.](#)”
- ¹⁸ Giles Richardson presented at the 2016 Adobe Summit, where he talked about “Superstar DJs” and the optimization approach at RBS. RBS is one of the retail banking subsidiaries of The Royal Bank of Scotland Group. Source: Giles Richardson, “Becoming an Experience Business,” Summit Online, March 22, 2016 (<http://2016.summit.adobe.com/na/sessions/summit-online/#/video/>).
- ¹⁹ Source: “RBS, earning customer trust,” Adobe (<https://www.images2.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/customer-success/pdfs/royal-bank-of-scotland-case-study.pdf>).
- ²⁰ Source: “Wimbledon 2016,” IBM Case Studies (<http://ecc.ibm.com/case-study/us-en/ECCF-WWC12371USEN>).
- ²¹ Make CI’s activities easy for stakeholders to adopt by tying the work to existing, familiar processes wherever possible. See the Forrester report “[Brief: Organizing For Customer Insights — And What Matters More.](#)”
- ²² In the age of the customer, the race will be won or lost based on your firm’s ability to know your customers and react faster and better than your competitors. See the Forrester report “[In The Age Of The Customer, Insight Isn’t Enough.](#)”

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