

BRANDLOGIK

AN INTRODUCTION TO

BIG DATA



THE FUTURE IS NOW

BIG DATA

Many of our clients and contacts ask what Big Data can do for their business. This is an introduction – an overview of what Big Data can do for you and offers to help you start a data-driven approach to branding and marketing your business. It's designed to help you start to make your brand and design decisions with a Big Data informed mindset.



BIG PICTURE

YOU'RE PROBABLY USING BIG DATA TOOLS ALREADY

Google, Facebook and Amazon are essentially Big Data companies, so you're probably using at least some of the tools they offer every day. Google search, for example, is a Big Data tool that everyone can use – the trick is to turn it into a tool that works for you and your business. So let's look at Big Data and what it is.

WHAT IS BIG DATA?

One of the secrets of better brand engagement and better business growth is being able to accurately measure your brand's performance. You will probably have heard of Big Data and how it's leading to exponential growth for specialist companies in sectors such as mobile communications and big players like Google and Amazon.

Essentially Big Data is about finding meaning in what you can measure about your business performance and you may have already come across data mining tools that measure specific business areas such as social media.

A Big Data approach allows business owners and managers to see the future before it happens, to see the meaning and the patterns in what they are doing now that can tell them what will happen to them and their business tomorrow.

In other words it gives you a better, more reliable view of your own performance and customer behaviour and takes a lot of the gut feeling out of business strategy by giving fast, reliable, real-time insights.

'The common thread is a commitment to using data analytics to gain a better understanding of customers. While imbuing the entire organization with this big data mindset requires a sustained effort, the impact – in the form of stronger customer relationships, increased sales, and a more nimble and responsive enterprise – more than justifies the effort.' Florian Zettelmeyer

A Big Data approach can turn knowledge, visibility and insight into competitive marketing and brand advantage.

A BIG DATA APPROACH IS NOT JUST FOR BIG COMPANIES

The Big Data mindset, using a methodology based on measurement, is valuable to businesses of all sizes. Everyone can gain a brand advantage and get better engagement and growth if they apply the right tools to extract the information and meaning they need to make better decisions right now.

If so much that surrounds your brand can be called intangible – the ‘look and feel’ the visual language of the design – how do you measure your brand’s performance and turn that into insightful data?

The answer is to measure the performance of your brand against several key indicators. Put simply, if your brand is working for you at all levels, then it will be helping you to produce results that can themselves be measured and can provide you with crucial information on your brand performance and its contribution to the growth of your business.

FIRST STEPS TO HAVING A BIG DATA MINDSET

Start getting insight into consumer trends and user behaviour in everything connected to your business. Everything you do is an important part of your brand and product experience, so measure as much as you can, especially in the area of customer feedback and how your campaigns and design innovation change user behaviour.

It's probably not feasible, or even useful, for you to have a team of data analysts using Hadoop sifting through your company and customer data in the hope of uncovering actionable insights. But you probably already have feedback and listening systems in place that tell you about your brand performance and the thoughts and views of your customers.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF DATA AND INSIGHT

You probably already have a social media account like Twitter, or Facebook, that gives you the chance to measure and react to your sales and marketing messages and brand performance.

You can listen and learn from what clients and potential clients are saying about you and your competitors and what they're looking for from you and other companies. Twitter and Google, for example, make great Big Data tools, as their open search engines can give you a large amount of free data and information that can help drive your business and brand decisions.

You may not have the luxury of full-scale data analysis, but if you take the time to think and digest what social media and organic search results can tell you, then you're using a Big Data approach, where your decisions are based not on gut feeling alone, or conjecture, but on live social data mined from your own and other easily available sources.

If you operate in a B2B environment, there is no more effective Big Data tool than LinkedIn where you can use saved searches, build prospect lists and search a wide variety of criteria to build a unique data-rich resource to help drive your new business strategy, without even having to pay for a premium account.

With a Big Data mindset you can start to use LinkedIn as your own personal database for new business prospects.

DESIGN CAMPAIGNS YOU CAN EASILY TRACK AND MEASURE

‘Marketing executives must understand that the obstacles they face in generating more customer insights arise not from the increasing amounts of data but from shortcomings in their approach to data analytics.’ Florian Zettelmeyer

You should design your marketing processes with data in mind. Google AdSense and Facebook advertising both give you access to a rich resource of potential targets for your products or your services, which can also be approached with a Big Data mindset, to ensure your marketing campaigns and brand promotions reach their desired targets.

You get fast, accurate feedback on the effectiveness of your campaigns and this speed of response is exactly what a brand owner needs to measure and respond to new campaigns and brand projects. It takes a willingness to be flexible and to have the speed and desire to adapt and evolve.

YOUR WEBSITE CAN BE YOUR MAIN BIG DATA TOOL

Your website is one of the primary resources of easily available data. If you have registered your site with Google Webmaster tools, for example, you get valuable information on how visitors are using your site without having to pay for expensive analysis.

If your site is built on a platform like WordPress, you also get great tracking and feedback from useful plug-ins like Jetpack, that help you learn more about where your users come from and can help you get more and better traffic from your web design and content.

IDEAS AND CREATIVITY STILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART

Ideas and creativity still play a crucial role in the brand development process, they just need to be based on solid, measurable, data-driven foundations that can tell you what tomorrow will be like for you and your business.

So you see these are all things any marketer or business owner can do right now to begin to adopt a Big Data mindset and help grow your business in a competitive and cluttered market. The most important thing, however, is to be ready to adapt as soon as useful information becomes available. As Charles Darwin said 'it is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.'

BIG DATA IS AN EVOLUTION OF BUSINESS PROCESSES

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The Big Data model then is to aim to become the Amazon or the Netflix of your market, by being the business that listens to and responds to what your clients want now and will probably want tomorrow. You may find this approach can help you empower your business and your brand and give you confidence in, and full ownership of, your future.

‘The techniques of correlational analysis are being aided and enhanced by a fast-growing set of novel approaches and software that can tease out non-causal relationships in data from many different angles – rather like the way cubist painters tried to capture the image of a woman’s face from multiple viewpoints at once.’

From Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think, London, 2013.

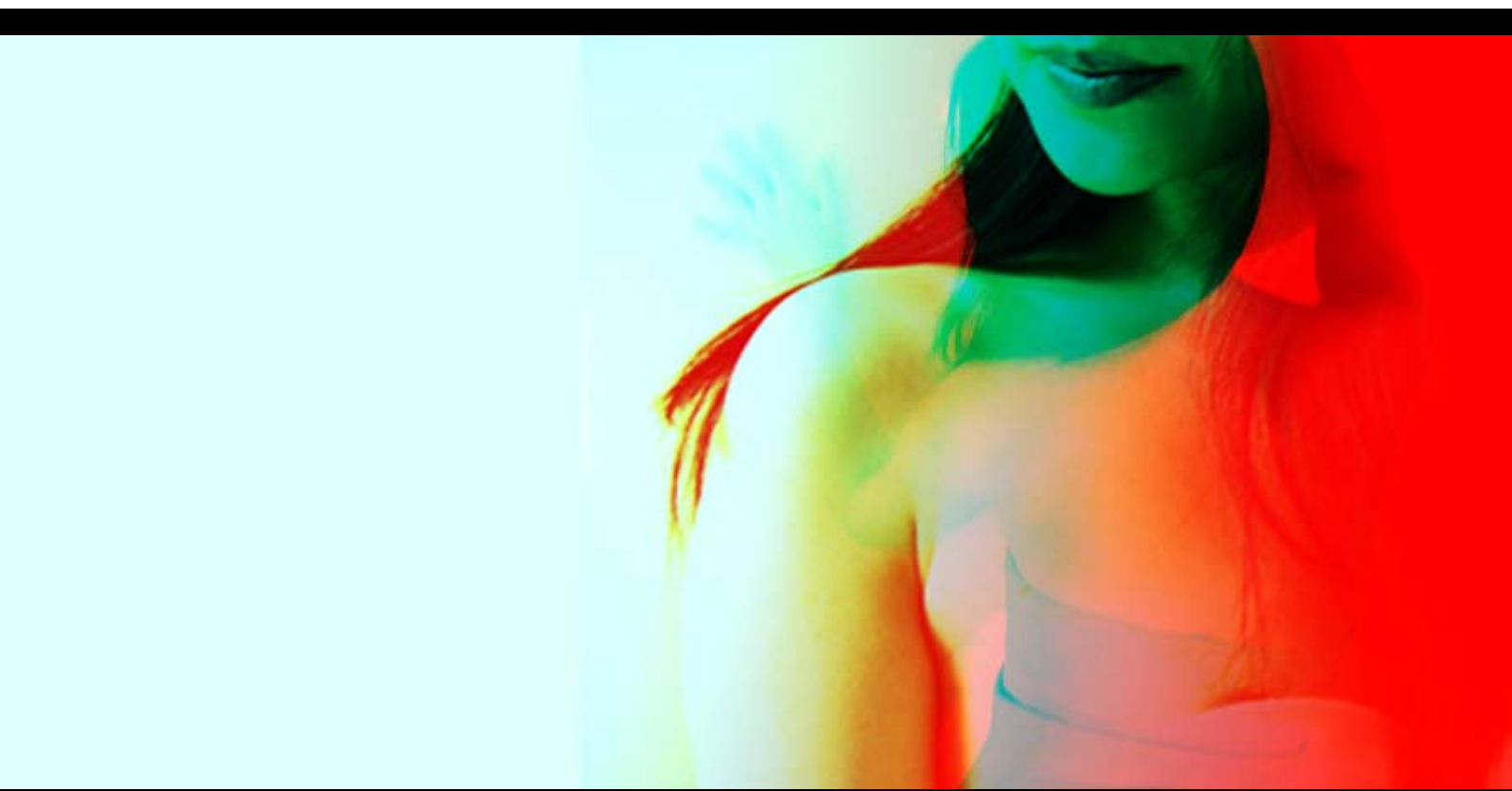
A CUBIST APPROACH TO SEEING HOW YOUR BRAND WORKS

If you consider how you normally measure your customers, or even your social media engagement, you probably gather information from a single fixed viewpoint, such as the number of sales in a given period, or the number of Twitter followers. But what happens if you take a Cubist mindset, realising that your users, your customers and your potential business targets are dynamic, fluid, and changeable?

You begin to understand that it's more useful to take a multiplicity of viewpoints to communicate and engage with them in a more meaningful way. This is where a Cubist metaphor is very useful.

A big data approach to managing your business lets you see your business and your customers more 'in the round' – from as many different viewpoints as possible. This gives you a multi-dimensional view that's more valuable when you're making important business and brand decisions such as launching new products, or planning new campaigns.

It helps tell you what your business is doing now and in the near future, and it's based on correlational analysis which gives you a good idea what your users and your customers will be doing too. Leaving the aesthetic considerations aside, big data gives you a Cubist viewpoint that you simply don't get from being static and rooted in place and time.



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This can take you into the area of predictive analytics that is beyond the scope of this introduction to Big Data, but involves using the information you get from data analytics to predict what your customers will want next and start delivering it.

A NOTE ON CORRELATION

Some managers and business owners can have a tough time implementing Big Data insights because they show correlation, not causation – that is, they tell you what and not why certain things are happening. But when you're trying to understand the behaviour of your business correlation is often enough – allowing you to act first then understand why later.

SUMMARY

If Big Data sounds like a nice theory that's of little practical value, then think about this. I've found that our own business is growing as we're gathering new insights and making new data and technology-driven connections that more traditional design agencies normally miss out on. It's an approach that's helping us grow and develop in new and often unexpected ways.

Knowing more and knowing it faster, seeing your business and your clients and future clients from a range of different viewpoints, gives you a very valuable business advantage.

The Big Data approach to branding can let you see the future of your brand's performance before it happens – it can let you see your future now. And that's quite a competitive advantage for you and your business.

CREDITS

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FURTHER READING

Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think, Viktor Mayer-Schonberger and Kenneth Cukier, London, 2013

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