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Advancing acquisition takes more than just technology

Brands need new customers to thrive and grow. But with tough competition for both attention and share of wallets, acquiring new customers is a challenge. In fact, in our annual CX trends report, 61% of businesses said customer acquisition has become more competitive in the last 12-18 months.

In this environment, it's easy to see why brands get so excited about any new technology that promises to help them acquire new customers. And there are plenty to choose from. Accelerated by the emergence of AI, the martech market is expected to expand by more than 8% each year through 2032.

Many of these solutions deliver huge value to brands and their customers. But technology alone won't solve your acquisition challenges – it's just an enabler. To really advance customer acquisition, these technologies need to be properly managed. They need to be fully integrated into your technology stack. And they need to be fueled by a strong foundation of data and identity.

The best way to acquire new customers is to really understand your existing customers – then find and engage prospects who resemble your best customers. Customer intelligence, created by combining the right data with robust identity resolution, is core to this strategy.

Let's start with identity resolution, because that's what connects data.

> **"There is no silver bullet. No technology – however shiny and hyped-up it is – can do the hard work of understanding and engaging customers for you."**
>
> Tate Olinghouse,
> Chief Revenue Officer,
> Acxiom

Identity underpins acquisition activities

The third-party cookie deprecation saga caused a lot of discussion about identity. But it masked the real point, which is that brands need to move from a device-based approach to a person-based approach to identity. Even with Google's decision not to deprecate cookies in Chrome, 40% of the cookies on the internet are already deprecated on browsers including Safari, Firefox and Mozilla. What's more, channels such as mobile apps and connected TV that are already used in omnichannel acquisition campaigns have never used cookies.

Person-based identity enables brands to consolidate and match all the diverse data signals and identifiers and link them to one individual in an identity graph. Imagine each person within that graph has a key ring, and each identifier – from a name, email address, or phone number to an identifier like UID 2.0 – is a key on that key ring. This way brands can bring data together to really understand who they're talking to – whether that's an existing customer or a future customer – and deliver relevant, personalized experiences.

Brands often assume – quite understandably – that they don't need an enterprise identity solution because identity is included in technologies like customer data platforms (CDPs). But while CDPs are indispensable to achieve unified, accessible first-party customer data, they're not designed to support enterprise identity because their matching capabilities are very basic.

**The Reality Behind CDPs and Identity**

Find out more about how you can maximize the performance of your CDP by extending its capabilities with an enterprise identity solution.

Read the guide

The range of matching techniques martech and identity solutions use varies from simple to sophisticated:

- **Direct stitching:** The simplest form of identity resolution where two identifiers (such as email addresses) need to be a 100% match.

- **Fuzzy logic:** Probabilistic logic allows close matches to be linked (for example email addresses with a missing symbol).

- **Referential matching:** A more advanced form of identity resolution where identifiers are linked with a third-party referential graph.

- **Rules-based identity:** Where brands use their first-party data combined with a referential graph for their own view of identity.
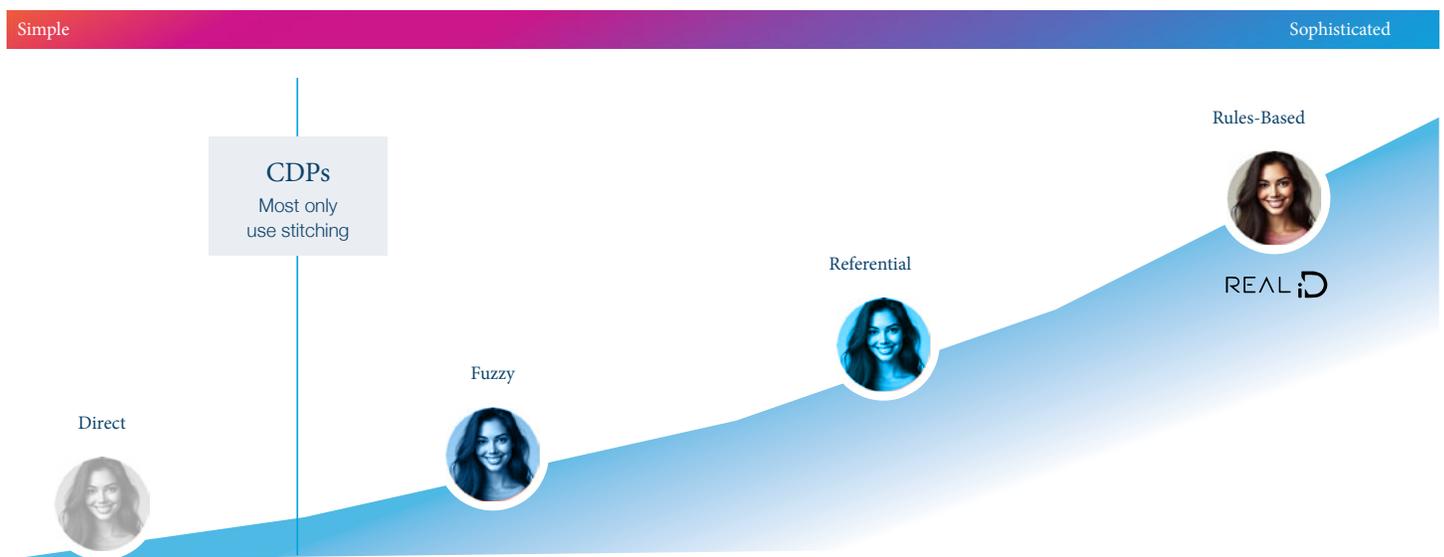
An enterprise-level identity management capability forms a permanent identity backbone so brands gain a complete view of their customers (and the customers they'd like to have). Using rules-based identity, brands can recognize customers and prospects no matter what device or channel they are using. They can use this customer intelligence to fuel martech solutions and engage customers and prospects with relevant experiences.

Success Story: America's Test Kitchen

Discover how Acxiom's Real Identity solution provides America's Test Kitchen with a single and consistent view of its customers.

Find out more

First-party data is the new currency

As we move toward person-based identity, a brand's first-party data is an essential part of customer intelligence. First-party data is simply the information you capture when a person interacts with your brand via owned or paid channels, and it has a number of benefits:

- **Privacy:** You can be sure data is collected in accordance with evolving regulations and, with consent becoming the norm, you can be sure you're using customers' data in the way they want you to.

- **Relevance:** Data relates to real people who are interested in, and interacting with your brand across a variety of touchpoints. This makes it highly relevant information to fuel acquisition strategies.

- **Accuracy:** With the information coming directly from the person to your brand, you know it's accurate and actionable.

- **Resilience:** Creating a strong first-party data asset gives your brand more control and helps you build resilience for the future, no matter what changes take place in the ecosystem.

But while first-party data is growing in importance, it does come with some inherent limitations:

A narrow view

With first-party data, brands only see customer information from direct interactions – such as when they visit a website, come into a store, or sign up for a newsletter. While this is valuable, it only gives a narrow view of that customer, rather than a holistic understanding of the person's wants, needs, and preferences.

Data duplication

When customers interact with a brand via different channels, they may use different data identifiers. This makes it hard to see that the person visiting your website from a desktop, for example, is the same person who clicked on a mobile ad on Facebook. Email addresses are the classic example of duplication, with the majority of people having at least two email addresses, and 28% having more than four.

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"We want to bring everything in because we cannot activate a campaign with just one set of data. We want to have those different touch points and really need to understand our customers."

Shreya Shinde Manager,
AEP Product Owner,
Prudential Financial

Data decay

As soon as data is collected it starts to lose its relevance, with 36% of data becoming obsolete every year. That's because people move, change jobs, get new email addresses and phone numbers, get married (or divorced), and develop new interests.

Limited reach

No matter how extensive a brand's first-party data is, it will only include the people who are already aware of and interacting with the brand. There are likely to be millions more people not yet acquainted with the brand who could become valuable customers – you just need to access them.

Some of these limitations can be solved with the robust identity layer we discussed earlier. Duplication, for example, can be eradicated by creating a unique first-party identity graph to which all data and identifiers are attached.

But the other limitations require first-party data to be supplemented with information from other sources, and connected using identity. By keeping proprietary first-party data safe in your own identity graph and supplementing it with second- and third-party sources, you can get an accurate, holistic view, and wider reach.

Second-party partnerships are on the rise

As first-party data becomes more central to customer acquisition, brands are recognizing the benefits of collaborating with partner brands and making use of the first-party information those brands have access to. This is known as second-party data.

These partnerships are supported by data clean room technologies, which provide a trusted space for brands to share information in a controlled and protected way that doesn't reveal personally identifiable information (PII). And, in turn, data clean rooms are supported by rules-based identity resolution.

By sharing second-party information with trusted partners, brands can gain a broader view of their own customers in areas where the two data sets overlap. They can also expand their reach by building new audiences within their partners' data that resemble their own high-value customers.

Right now, these second-party arrangements are often limited to the more obvious partnerships, such as airlines collaborating with hotel chains. But brands are increasingly entering into multi-brand partnerships that blur industry lines and allow them to deliver relevant, integrated customer experiences based on a much larger insight pool. This phenomenon is known as the ecosystem economy, and it's likely to be a growing trend moving forward.

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"Where the industry is heading, especially with second-party partnerships, you actually have the best of both worlds. You have the best of scale, best of trust now being brought to the table through that common second-party ecosystem."

Kumar Subramanyam
Global Head of Marketing
Data Sciences, HP Inc.

Opportunities Await in the Ecosystem Economy

Discover how you can join the brands coming together across industries to connect and expand the customer experience — and why you should.

Get the guide

A third-party perspective gives a holistic view

To enrich first-party data, achieve a holistic view of each individual, ensure data is as accurate as possible, and build new audiences of prospects who look like your best customers, you need a third-party perspective.

Third-party data offers unique insights into people's attitudes, behaviors, and preferences. Beyond the information available in your own first-party data, a third-party perspective can give you insight into:

- **Common hobbies and interests**

- **The causes they're likely to care about**

- **The types of vehicles they may be interested in**

- **Their preferred communication channels**

- **Their travel preferences and frequencies**

- **The likely makeup of their household**

Third-party data can be appended to a brand's first-party graph, giving a full picture of the customer and ensuring relevant experiences that will resonate. It can be used for ongoing data hygiene to keep first-party data accurate and up to date. And it can be used to create new acquisition audiences that share the important attributes of the brand's best customers.

Third-party data needs to be ethically sourced, of exceptional quality, and refreshed regularly to ensure it is current. It should also contain a mix of predictive, attitudinal, behavioral and transactional insights to give a complete view.

See your customers in a whole new light

Try Acxiom's Data Portrait Analysis to understand your customers at a deeper level and see how you can provide more personalized experiences to the people your brand wants to reach the most.

Try the DPA

Reaching the right prospects across platforms

Once brands have the right foundations for customer intelligence, they can build lookalike audiences. These aren't just people in the same age group, or with the same zip code as customers. They are people who share the values, preferences, interests and other key attributes that make them most likely to become a valuable customer of your brand.

Your brand might have first-party data on 20 million customers, but that's just a fraction of the people you could reach with well-structured prospecting campaigns. With a solution like Acxiom's digital graph, where interactions with 90% of the U.S. adult population show up every 48 hours, you can build lookalike audiences that contain new groups of highly relevant prospects

Because brands have control of these lookalike audiences, they can be platform agnostic. They know who they're reaching and engaging with whether they're putting that audience into Google, Meta, or any other platform.
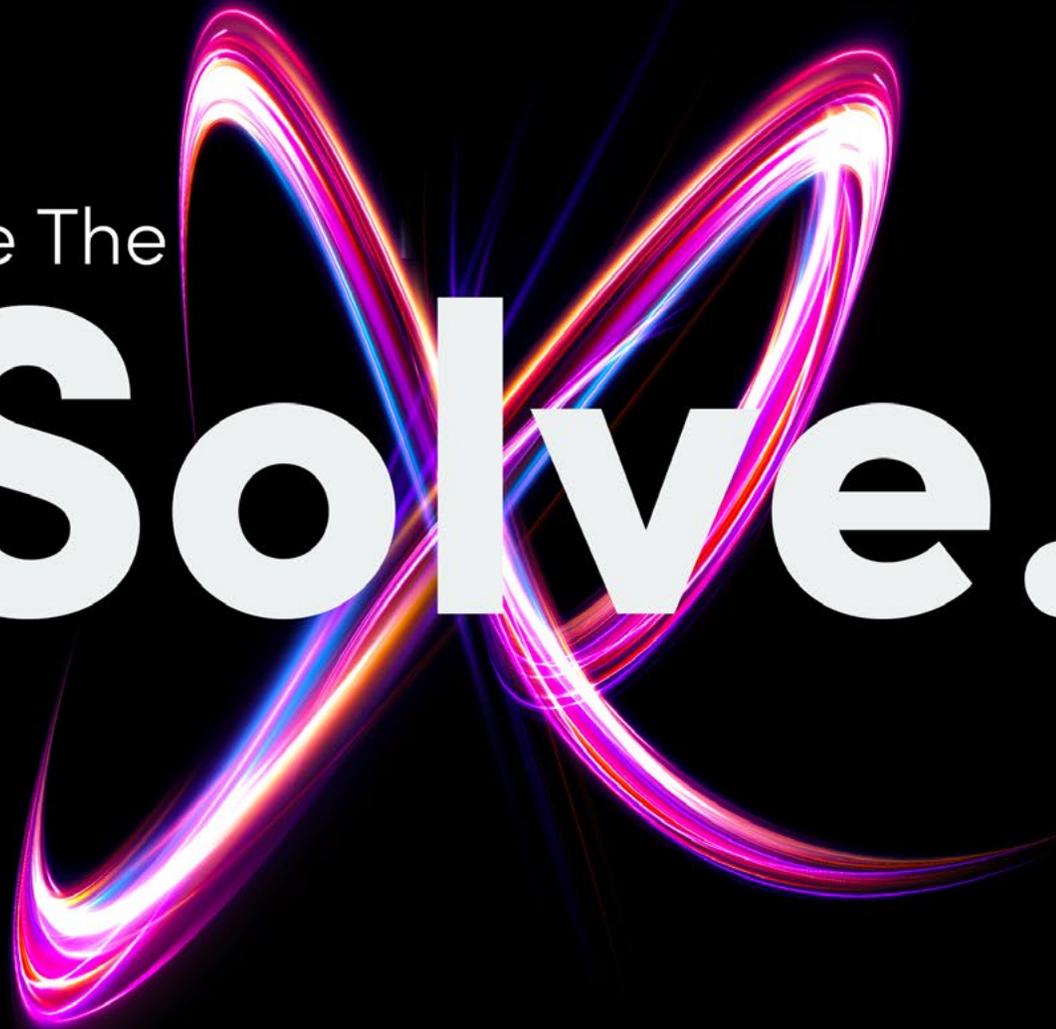
This is the point at which those exciting new marketing technologies we talked about at the start finally come into their own. Fueled by customer intelligence, these AI-powered applications will help you craft relevant, personalized experiences that help turn your prospects into loyal customers.

Acquisition may be getting more competitive. But by fueling emerging marketing technologies with customer intelligence you can get ahead of the competition and meaningfully connect with brand new audiences.

Lookalike Audience

Your brand 20 million people

ACXIOM

260 million people

35 billion signals
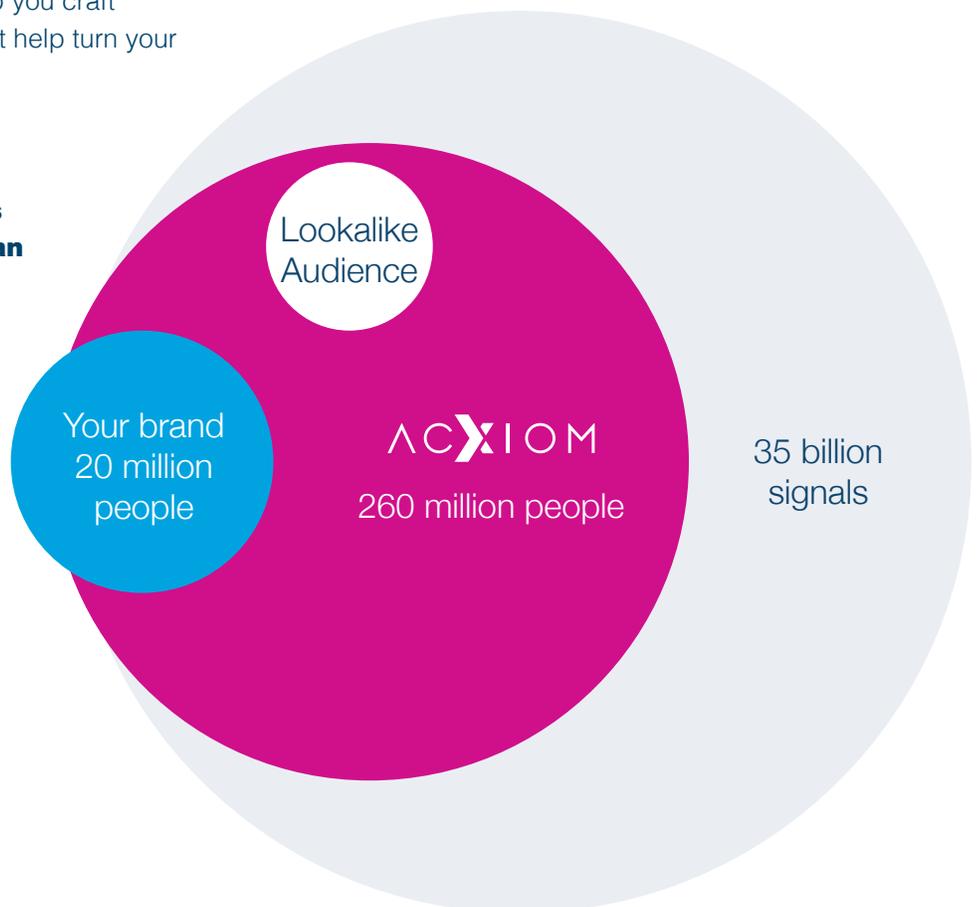
Love The

Solve.

ac**X**iom

Mass Martech Modernization

Upgrading martech is a necessity, so what's the game plan?

Over 200 brands surveyed

share their top modernization challenges for 2025

Goals of the study were to:

1 Understand where brands stand in their martech modernization journey.

2 Explore what brands define as an ideal martech stack.

3 Determine how professional services partners can add value.

F I N D I N G S

Brands are gearing up for a martech reset

- **34%** of brands selected "developing a martech strategy" as a top three priority, one of the top selections.

- **65%** of marketers anticipate at least a **5%** martech budget increase in the next **12** months.

Brands prioritize keeping a unified view and struggle with cloud migration by themselves

- **32%** of organizations face challenges securing internal expertise to guide cloud migration.

- **30%** battle with configuring and optimizing cloud-based marketing operations.

A lack of expertise and strategy challenge brands to implement effective martech

- Only **10%** completely agree they have the necessary skills internally to manage their martech solutions.

- Over a fifth **(21%)** of professionals surveyed do not have an articulated martech roadmap or strategy.

Brands need dedicated martech partners

- Only **12%** of organizations have a martech team.

- **35%** more organizations have a martech roadmap when they work with a services partner vs. those that don't.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Investing in martech is now essential.

- Lack of expertise and confidence hinders martech optimization and adoption of cloud based options like, AI.

- Disconnected data hinders unified customer view.

- Strong expertise needed for successful martech operations.

- Brands gain confidence with expert partners.

- Service partners boost martech roadmap adoption.

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Contact us to learn more about getting more value out of your data and tech investments

Forrester Total Economic Impact™ | TEI

Acxiom commissioned Forrester Consulting to conduct a Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) study and examine the potential return on investment (ROI) enterprises may realize by working with Acxiom's Salesforce services to support proactive conversations around the value of working with Acxiom.

The study shows that brands who use Acxiom services maximize their Salesforce value and customer data while controlling costs and timelines for projects such as Salesforce implementations, database management, journey development, technical builds, troubleshooting, and ongoing strategy.

Challenges and Their Impact

Inability to Unify Customer Data

The struggle to consolidate data from various sources, makes it difficult to create a single, effective view of customers.

Inconsistent Data Quality

Data accuracy challenges lead to incomplete or duplicate information that undermines Marketing efforts.

Inefficient Customer Journey Development

The lack of streamlined processes leads to slower and more complicated development of customer journeys.

Staff Augmentation Needs

The need for specialized expertise in customer data management and marketing automation increases reliance on external consultants or temporary hires.

Expanded Project Timelines

Resource limitations and technical debt extend timelines for Salesforce projects, delaying essential marketing initiatives.

Operational Cost Challenges

Managing Salesforce expenses is challenging due to necessary investments, leading to unexpected costs and budget overruns.

> **"Acxiom is a trusted partner for us, and we work very well with them side by side. When we decided to align all of our technology on Salesforce, Acxiom was the obvious choice to help us implement and move forward with us."**
>
> CRM manager, transportation

Transformative Benefits

Maximized Salesforce Investments

Acxiom helps organizations leverage Salesforce Solutions effectively, ensuring they receive maximum value from their technology investments.

Revenue Growth

Personalized marketing strategies and improved customer engagement lead to significant increases in revenue.

Operational Efficiency

Clients benefit from faster project completions and reduced personnel costs, enabling quicker returns on their investments.

Cost Savings

By minimizing the need for external consulting and reducing support desk expenses, organizations achieve substantial cost savings.

Unified Customer Data

Solutions provide a comprehensive view of customer data, enhancing insights and enabling informed decision-making.

Continuous Optimization

Ongoing improvements in Salesforce utilization ensure clients maximize the long-term value of their investments.

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"Partnering with Acxiom has transformed our ability to understand and engage with our customers. Their expertise has driven measurable results and streamlined our processes"

Marketing Director, Financial Services

Overall, Acxiom Delivers

RESULTS

107%	$1.87M	$3.61M	<6 mos.
ROI	Net Present Value (NPV)	Total Benefits	Payback Period

Maximized SF Value

Acxiom helps organizations unlock the full potential of their Salesforce investments and customer data.

Controlled Costs and Timelines

We effectively manage costs and timelines for Salesforce implementations, database management, journey development, technical builds, troubleshooting, and ongoing strategy.

Expertise Across Platforms

Acxiom provides the technical and strategic expertise needed for Salesforce Marketing Cloud, Salesforce Data Cloud, and customer data projects.

About Acxiom

Acxiom® is the global leader in customer intelligence and stands at the forefront of AI-enabled, data-driven marketing. As part of the Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc. (IPG), we specialize in high-performance solutions that boost customer acquisition and retention while fueling growth for the world's biggest brands and agencies. We transform omnichannel marketing strategies and execution using our AI-powered data and identity foundation, cloud-based data management, and martech and analytics services. For over 55 years, our teams across the US, UK, Germany, China, Poland, and Mexico have helped businesses optimize their marketing and advertising investments while prioritizing customer privacy.

Discover more at acxiom.com, where marketing is made better.

TO LEARN MORE
about how Acxiom can work for you, contact us at info@acxiom.com

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