



# WHY EVERY BRAND SHOULD ADOPT A 'GROWTH MARKETING' MINDSET

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The idea of 'growth hacking' was popularised around 10 years ago as businesses like Amazon and Airbnb famously used an Agile and data-led approach to turbo-charge growth in all aspects of their business. Growth marketing is an offshoot of that same thinking, and shares many of the core facets of growth hacking, as both use an Agile approach to test and learn. In the post-pandemic world, growth marketing is a discipline that is increasingly prominent, with marketers under more pressure than ever to maximise the effectiveness of their budgets.

New Digital Age and digital marketing consultancy CvE - Control v Exposed - recently held a roundtable discussion with senior marketers from a variety of mass market and DTC brands. The discussion included Mondelez, Unilever and Weetabix as well as brands that operate with a DTC model such as Bella & Duke, Gymbox and NIVEA, which recently launched a DTC e-commerce platform. NDA editor Justin Pearse chaired the discussion and was joined by CvE's Paul Frampton, Global President, and Aidan Mark, Global Director, Performance Strategy. The discussion was focused on how these businesses are all adopting a growth marketing approach, with the brand representatives sharing their thoughts on this emerging discipline.



Tushar Kaul, CMO



Benazir Barlet-Batada,  
Marketing Director



Rory McEntee,  
Brand & Marketing Director



Unilever  
Seb Bardin,  
Head of Ecommerce Marketing



Adam Wright,  
Head of Digital



Gareth Turner,  
Head of Marketing

## WHAT IS GROWTH MARKETING?

Growth marketing can mean different things to different organisations, and that was reflected in the discussion. The idea that 'all marketing is growth marketing' was a popular thought, but there were nuances in terms of how this is being applied.

The most obvious use cases for growth marketing come from digital and performance media. Growth marketing relies on rich data, which digital channels have in abundance. It was agreed that 'test and learn' is a key facet of growth marketing, and digital enables that with a real-time view.

While much of the industry would associate growth marketing with digital media, the attendees had a broader definition, with most striving to apply growth marketing principles to the full marketing funnel. It was agreed that upper funnel brand-building media is just as important for driving growth as the more measurable lower funnel tactics.

Rory McEntee, Brand and Marketing Director at Gymbox, emphasised the importance of retention marketing as a facet of growth marketing. All comms can play a role in driving business growth, so it is important that contribution to growth from all aspects of the marketing mix is recognised.

Benazir Barlet-Batada, Marketing Director, Mondelez, and Gareth Turner, Head of Marketing, Weetabix, both highlighted how much growth had occurred within their businesses during Covid, much of which they attributed to the strength and trust that consumers place on their respective brands. Brand reputation is an important facet of growth marketing that more digitally focused brands often struggle to quantify or even recognise. For many of the attendees in the session, balancing long- and short-term business requirements, in keeping with the teachings of effectiveness gurus Les Binet and Peter Field, was key.



***Growth marketing  
relies on rich data***

Adam Wright, Head of Digital at Beiersdorf (NIVEA) had a more specific definition of growth marketing. For Wright, growth marketing is about optimising one specific part of the funnel or customer journey.



**Wright says, "Having a specific focus for where comms will influence behaviour is highly important, as to scale growth marketing the learnings need to be repeatable."**

For Seb Bardin, Head of E-commerce Marketing at Unilever, growth marketing is different from conventional marketing in that the discipline strives to connect the media metrics - readily available in marketing - with real-world business outcomes. This definition appeared to reach consensus with our group, as it unites all marketers, even if the techniques used may differ from business to business. CvE President Paul Frampton built on this definition to say that growth marketing includes any form of marketing discipline that can be measured through to business outcome. He went on to say that "most marketing hypotheses can be proven or disproven with a well-thought-out testing and experimentation agenda, which is the backbone of growth marketing". Frampton's definition is consistent with that given by leading growth marketing thinker Julian Shapiro.

He defines growth marketing as "iterative and data-driven revenue optimisation". Shapiro goes on to explain that growth marketing is "a rigorous methodology consisting of experimentation, data collection, iteration and behavioural psychology".

The definition given by Shapiro seemed to encapsulate the wide variety of methods being used by the roundtable group, reflecting the different strategies and marketing levers used to drive growth in each organisation in attendance. Our group thought that despite common perceptions, growth marketing is not done justice when termed 'growth hacking'; it is instead a new and emerging approach to marketing where the obsession is iterative testing and maximising conversion to purchase.

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**“ Growth marketing is a rigorous methodology consisting of experimentation, data collection, iteration and behavioural psychology. ”**

**Julian Shapiro**

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It is CvE's view that while driving growth through marketing of course includes many traditional aspects of brand-building (among other disciplines) 'Growth marketing' itself is unique in that it is enabled by technologies, methodologies, and a data-driven approach. .

A traditional Byron Sharp approach to marketing might involve reaching all light buyers within a category and hoping for long-term success, whereas growth marketing may adopt the very same tactic (among others),

but goes a step further by quantifying the impact of reaching those light buyers in terms of incremental business revenue.



## DATA'S ROLE IN GROWTH MARKETING

The role of data in facilitating growth marketing was also discussed in some detail. It was agreed that DTC brands often have a competitive advantage when it comes to growth marketing, due to the additional first-party data they have access to. Indeed, NIVEA has recently launched its own DTC ecommerce proposition for the specific use case of acquiring more customer data.

Adam Wright from NIVEA surprised the group with the frequency in which his DTC business runs testing – up to three tests per week throughout the full calendar year. Bella & Duke CMO Tushar Kaul backed up this same approach and emphasised the need for rigorous and ongoing testing in most DTC businesses. Whilst DTC brands may have a data advantage, that is not preventing more

traditional brands from thinking intelligently about the data they do have access to. Mondelez's Barlet-Batada highlighted that while the ROI from upper funnel media can be harder to quantify, that does not mean it is not measurable – as brand tracking and other proxies can be used in place of economic numbers.

Rory McEntee from Gymbox pointed out that having more data is not always an advantage, as his business “almost has more data than we know what to do with”. Having data structures and a clear plan to drive growth is key, even when data is in abundance. The idea of testing as a business culture surfaced. For DTC brands, test and learn is often in the business DNA, and this is a practice that many of the larger brands are actively trying to incorporate into their own business processes.

**Gareth Turner from Weetabix confessed that "traditional brands have a lot to learn from their DTC companions when it comes to testing".**



Barlet-Batada backed up the idea that big brands are looking to do more testing but warned that more testing does not always yield better results. She said when you do lots of testing, it can make it harder to know the true impact of your work. McEntee concurred: "When you run social 70 ads a week, it can be hard to know what is really driving growth."

CvE Strategy Director Aidan Mark, spoke of his experience in working with large organisations: "Often with a huge testing plan, you do a lot of testing but not a lot of learning. I've seen businesses that run hundreds of tests in a year, but without any concrete, repeatable or scalable learnings."

Having a marketing team judge their own work can potentially lead to misrepresentation of the result and a perpetuation of existing biases. The group agreed that clear test learnings are vital to make testing initiatives worthwhile.

As a traditional brand that has recently adopted DTC practices, Adam Wright from NIVEA offered some practical guidance to make the transition more achievable. He said "often we do three big tests per year," which are big testing variables that significantly help to shift the needle, but that these larger tests are also underpinned with many smaller tests. This approach has helped him cherry-pick the best growth driving elements from different forms of business.



**CvE's Strategy Director Aidan Mark says, "With an abundance of data, as most marketers now have access to, it is possible to perpetuate biases in measurement that impact campaign learnings. Instead of taking data at face value, a more effective route forward is to ensure stakeholders representing different aspects of the business 'peer review' the methodology, assumptions, data sources and learnings to ensure results are fairly represented."**



## DIFFERENT DATA USE CASES FOR GROWTH MARKETING

With lots of different businesses represented at the roundtable, it was unsurprising to hear that there are many nuances in terms of how data is being used to generate growth. Where a 'traditional' growth marketing approach might optimise the data coming from marketing channels, our group had lots of new and additional use cases for data-fuelled growth marketing.

Indeed growth marketing isn't always purely a mathematical exercise. For many direct-to-consumer businesses, ongoing testing is crucial for growth marketing using their vast amounts of data, this is emphasised by Bella & Duke CMO Tushar Kaul. He argued that growth marketing is more than just a numbers game:



"Growth marketing is about recruiting the right types of customers that drive profitable lifetime value. Efforts are enhanced when data is used to identify and persuade the profitable customer segments"

Bella & Duke also use marketing data to better understand how the brand can play a positive role in their customers' lives.

Seb Bardin from Unilever highlighted an interesting trend: "My team uses insights from data to identify consumer needs, therefore turning marketing data into new product-led opportunities"



CvE's Paul Frampton summarised the different use cases for data in growth marketing:

"Ultimately we use data to identify the barriers that stop people buying, in order to overcome those barriers."



## GROWTH MARKETING AS A BUSINESS CULTURE

With so many new and emerging use cases for growth marketing, Rory McEntee from Gymbox argued that:



"Growth marketing is often a cultural thing. It is about the mindset of practitioners and the organisational structure that surrounds them as much as anything else."

NIVEA's Wright agrees. He mentioned the use of cross-functional teams to make growth marketing more powerful than simply a function. This process helps to ensure that the full organisation moves in the same direction.

CvE's Frampton argued that brands employing a new framework can consider using the term "cross functional" instead of "Agile" or "test and learn" because ultimately this process is about empowering talent to connect between teams. He believed that applying a marketing test and learn approach to other sides of the business would often be beneficial, pointing to the successes of Google and Amazon as obvious blueprints to that cross-functional agile process.

Noting that while Agile is not the only way, it does offer a framework for efficient use of data that leads to measurable results.

For businesses looking to adopt more growth marketing into their operations, Tushar Kaul from Bella & Duke offered recruitment advice;



"Mindset is the most important thing. A growth mindset and attitude are something you either have or you don't"



## AGILE MARKETING IS THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION

While CvE's Frampton noted that Agile is not the only way to move an organisation forward, it can be a perfect fit for some growth marketing organisations. Marketing's evolution toward digital has taken us from long lead times, to quick, measurable results, it would only be appropriate for Agile methodologies to follow. Ultimately, setting up the right process for an Agile marketing team will help organisations become not just one-day growth marketers, but proven and successful growth masters.

Whether our marketers mentioned a focus on retention marketing, DTC or balancing long and short-term growth requirements, each agreed that identifying the problem, establishing a hypothesis, and leading a formal test and learn process led to their best results. As that framework is also a key tenet of Agile, marrying the two can offer the working style that many test and learn teams are lacking.

Before training a team on traditional Agile, it is beneficial for a marketing team to define their own version of the methodology. Agile offers several workstreams that must remain intact, but there is flexibility in areas like the length of sprints, organisational structure and budgets spent on each test. Marketers need to weigh the aspects that will push their growth forward with others that may frustrate or overwhelm their team. While some teams may be equipped to run several tests at a time in regular cycles, others may prefer to spread theirs out, taking breaks between sprints. A good process is the key to growth, but that process must have full buy-in from all participants to ensure lasting success.

Companies like Dell, ING, Teradata and CafePress have seen great success implementing Agile across their marketing organisations. They cite shorter time to market, more automated workflows, less bureaucracy and better customer service as benefits. Each note that it can be an upfront heavy-lift to implement a new mindset and operational structure into an organisation. However, training a marketing team on Agile ways of working is an excellent way to ensure a shift to a common test and learn mindset, and enable growth marketing at scale.



## MAIN TAKEAWAYS FOR MARKETERS WHO WANT TO GET BETTER AT GROWTH MARKETING

Growth marketing is now a discipline that is influencing how brands of all types manage and optimise their marketing efforts. Our discussion demonstrated that growth marketing principles can be applied to all forms of data, not just marketing or digital media data.

What may surprise outsiders is that this emerging segment of marketing is as much about culture as it is about data. Marketing is about persuasion and influence, so it is important to recognise the humans that exist behind the data being used to power business growth. The examples given by our participants show that brand tracking and consumer insights data can be

a competitive advantage when not all brands think in that same way.

It is clear to us that with the exponential growth in the amount of data that exists, growth marketing is here to stay, and our industry will no doubt find innovative ways to exploit this data and to drive growth in effective and measurable ways.

To conclude our report, we leave you with five tips to help leaders adopt growth marketing into their own organisation:



### 1. You don't need huge amounts of data to become a growth marketing practitioner.

Our panel included FMCG brands, companies not associated with rich first-party data, and they are able to adopt a growth marketing mindset based on the data that is available to them. A combination of brand tracking, search data, social media data as well web analytics will exist in most businesses.



### 2. Growth can be driven at all stages of the customer journey.

When growth can be generated from awareness driving marketing through to loyalty marketing, and everything in between, this means that businesses of all types can benefit from an iterative data-led approach in taking customers through purchase journeys.



**3. Documentation is unglamorous, but it is a vital aspect of growth marketing.**

For businesses to adopt data-led learnings, it is important that those learnings and assumptions are clearly documented for others to follow. This is a key component of iterative improvement - it is hard to continuously improve revenue results when past learnings are forgotten or misunderstood.



**4. Marketing works on at least two timescales; the short term, as well as the long term.**

Our panel drew a distinction between growth marketing, which encapsulates all forms of marketing, and performance marketing, which operates on short-term measures of success only. This distinction is important, because an effective growth marketer will need both long- and short-term success data in order to maximise the potential of marketing.



**5. Linked to the above point, brands should use data to judge success in both relative and absolute terms.**

By this we mean that relative measures of success, potentially metrics that don't quantify economic numbers, can still be used to power growth marketing. If your marketing is regularly generating improvements to quantifiable data that ladders up to an economic benefit - that's OK. In simple terms, this might mean using softer metrics like brand tracking and site traffic to judge whether changes in marketing are contributing towards growth.



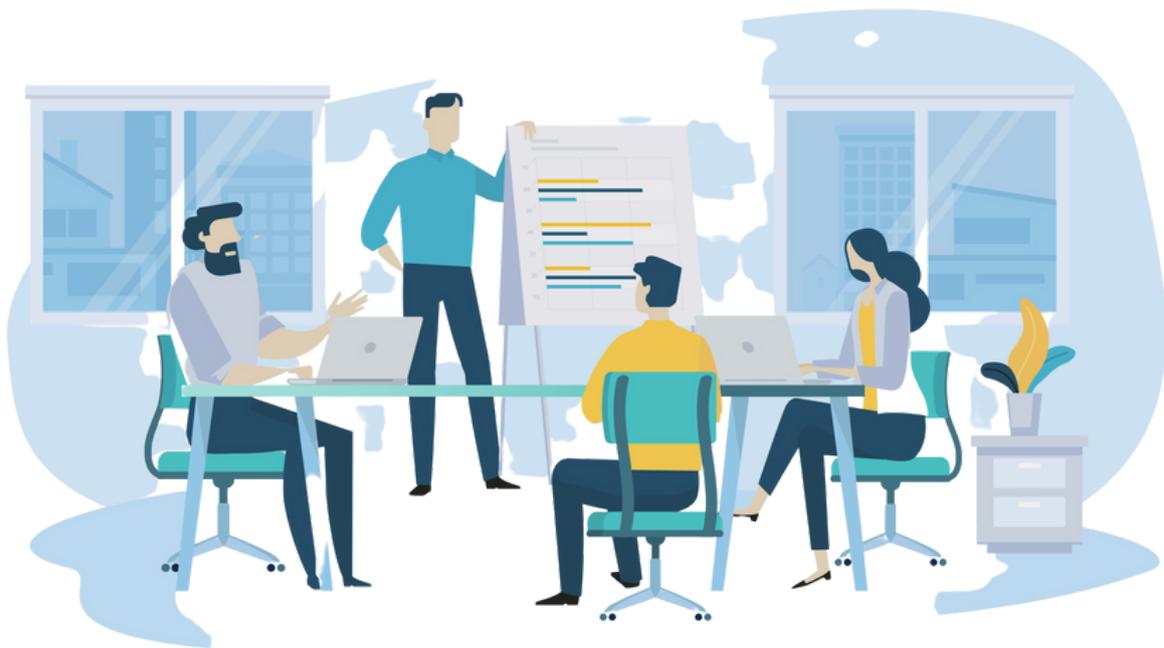
To that end, CvE recommends that brands think about how to build a culture where testing, curiosity and an analytical mindset are encouraged.



Of course, brands should always strive to tie back marketing efforts to the economic benefits it is generating, but that does not mean that growth marketing success should be limited to ROI metrics alone.

While changing an organisation's way of doing business can seem like an impossible task, CvE's approach is a step-by-step plan that allows for small victories in the process. Most modern marketers are well on their way, and with our 'good-better-best' approach, they can easily transform their department and bring their organisation along with them.

Whether your brand is just beginning its journey in growth marketing, or needs support at different points along the way, CvE conducts workshops, builds frameworks, and embeds staff to help identify your best path forward. From implementing agile methodologies into your workstreams to establishing uniform test and learn processes across departments, we will support you in your digital transformation.



## About CvE

Consultancy 1st, Agency 2nd.

CvE advises brands on their digital marketing transformation agenda through a combination of advisory and consulting and then co-pilots the transformation by providing on-demand, hands-on expertise across media, technology and data.

We are an agile, action orientated advisor for brave and trail blazing marketers that lead change in their organisations, and who are not afraid to be the first in doing something entirely new because they believe it's right.

Our integrated view of media, technology & data solves complex marketing challenges and gets your transformation over the line, through a combination of both trusted advisory + hands-on expertise.

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## About NDA

New Digital Age, owned by Bluestripe Group, covers the latest news, insight, opinion and research on all aspects of digital media and marketing NDA is dedicated to providing inspiration about the companies technologies and people powering the next wave of disruption in our industry Justin Pearse, Editor of New Digital Age, worked at The Drum and Digiday and was previously Editor of New Media Age.



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