



# Making Measurement Meaningful

Intelligent Marketing

**DM**  
Data &  
Marketing  
Association **A**

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# / Executive Summary

This whitepaper outlines six fundamental challenges, identified by the expert panel, that inhibit the meaningful measurement of marketing campaign effectiveness:

## 1. The disconnect between brand and response measurement.

Siloed thinking and a fragmented agency landscape mean there's often little acknowledgement or systematic measurement of the combined effects of brand and direct response spend. This results in an inconsistent view of short- and long-term campaign impact.

## 2. Measuring the impact of quality.

A focus on less meaningful effectiveness data points has led to quality media environments being undervalued on media plans. Advertisers suffer from poorer marketing return on investment (ROI) and media owners suffer financially.

## 3. A measurement framework for all.

The use of measurement frameworks which help businesses create a common understanding of how to measure campaign impact in a way that links to business objectives is far from commonplace. Widespread adoption of measurement frameworks will help the industry overcome many of the communication challenges inherent in measurement.

## 4. Measurement across platforms.

Establishing best practice in measuring ad effectiveness across channels, and between digital walled gardens and the rest of the media ecosystem, is vital to boost understanding of the true incremental effects of media investment.

## 5. Structural challenges in measurement.

Advertiser in-housing and siloed measurement skills are hampering attempts to establish a consistent view of effectiveness across marketing spend. If data is the oxygen of the measurement world, people are needed to interpret that data and make it meaningful.

## 6. Optimising metrics that matter.

With a huge volume of real-time digital campaign delivery metrics at their fingertips, marketers are often guilty of optimising what they can rather than what they should. Best practice use of first-party data and brand measurement for campaign optimisation are important industry aspirations.

## A note on terminology

*A number of different terms are used in the text to describe campaigns with short-term sales objectives. These include "direct response", "activation" and "performance." The lack of consistent industry terminology is a challenge considered in this whitepaper.*

# / Introduction

“The sheer number of consumer touchpoints and the explosion of media consumption data have gone hand-in-hand over the past decade. Data is key to planning, optimising, delivering and measuring campaigns, yet the exponential growth in available data sources has complicated rather than simplified these tasks.

Measuring media effectiveness is an area of the planning cycle profoundly affected by the volume of data organisations deal with today. If marketers are to measure incremental campaign effects accurately and without bias they must plan, deliver and optimise advertising measurement more effectively using a system everyone understands.

A series of ground-breaking studies have helped marketers dig deeper into the planning decisions that are required to maximise campaign impact and business growth. From Field and Binet’s *The Long and Short of it*, to Field and Hurman’s *The Effectiveness Code* and Dr Grace Kite’s *The Wrong and Real of It*, we have more knowledge than ever on what effectiveness means in the modern media landscape.

Yet gaps remain. There’s an increasing sense brand and direct response are being unfairly played off against each other rather than the industry exploring their mutual benefits in full. In addition, short- and long-term effectiveness are presented as a binary either/or option.

Many marketers measure what they can, rather than what they should. This suggests traditional measurement models lack the subtlety needed in a multi-channel world.

The DMA has always admired - and awarded - marketing with a laser focus on aligning customer needs to business outcomes. The Media Council is now taking the lead to debate fundamental measurement challenges which still exist. Part of our mission is to help brands and agencies establish a common language and set of benchmarks to measure effectiveness.

As a starting point, we held a roundtable of industry experts featuring media owners and agencies in November 2020. It offered a unique perspective from a cross-section of the industry.”



**Hattie Whiting**

Chair of DMA Media Council



Roundtable attendees included:

**Eleanor Marshall** – Commercial Data Director, Global

**Charlotte Putnam** – Global Data Strategy Director, Dentsu Aegis

**Jennie Roper** – Head of Insight, Kinetic Worldwide

**Martin Greenbank** – Head of Advertising Research and Development, Channel 4

**Danny Spears** – Chief Operating Officer, The Ozone Project

**Joanna Lawrence** - Strategy and Client Development, Telegraph Media Group

**Enzo Diliberto** - Global Insight Director, FT

**Hattie Whiting** – Chair of DMA Media Council

**Ian Gibbs** – Founder, Data Stories Consulting

**Rachel Aldighieri** – Managing Director, DMA

**Tim Bond** – Head of Insight, DMA

**Rosie Atherfold** – Head of Councils, DMA

Discussions centred on the panel's experience in the measurement space, and broader industry measurement issues.

This accompanying whitepaper also explores what the industry as a whole can do to tackle the issues head on.



# / Making Measurement Meaningful: Six Challenges and Suggested Solutions

Our expert panel identified six fundamental challenges that stand in the way of strategies for more effective measurement. But for each issue they also agreed several remedies are within the industry's reach.

Let's take look in greater depth at each problem, and the proposed solutions:

## 1. The disconnect between brand and response measurement



We have different flavours of agency since the split of media and creative agencies... and each one will say 'ours is the best way of doing it'. We've created a whole industry structure that divides opinion about what works and what doesn't.

**Martin Greenbank**  
Channel 4

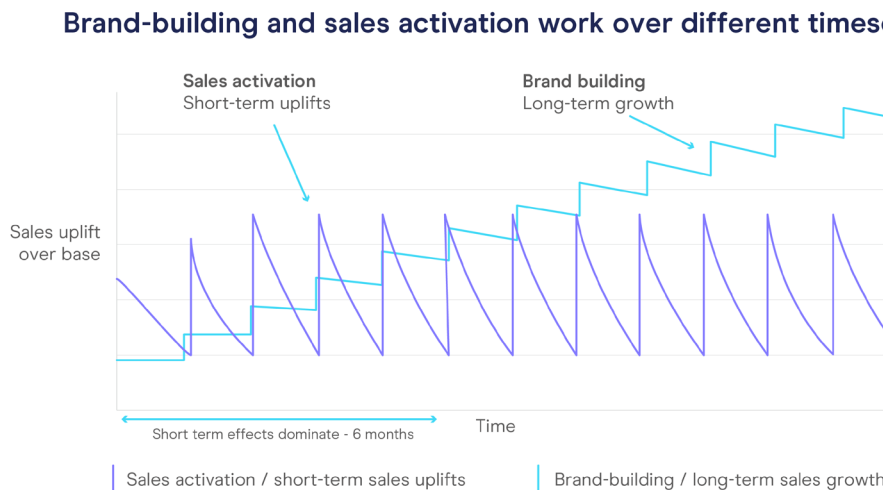
The marketing industry is very good at presenting seemingly competing planning decisions as binary options: mass marketing vs. granular audience targeting; above-the-line vs. below-the-line channel selection; acquisition vs. retention; long-term growth vs. short-term survival.

Nowhere is this more true than in the debate about brand building vs. direct response. For many brands both are vital for long-term success, and their effects are compounded by carefully balancing the two.

### Modelled measurement falls short in the real world

Figure 1 below features a chart produced by effectiveness gurus Peter Field and Les Binet. This illustration is virtually ubiquitous in marketing strategy presentations. It describes the short-term effects of direct response activity and the long-term impact of brand-building marketing investment.

Figure 1 :



Source: Les Binet and Peter Field, Media in Focus: Marketing Effectiveness in the Digital Era, IPA (Figure 02)

While the chart offers a neat, succinct view of each activity over time, organisations can't always achieve a joined-up approach to measurement of sales activation and brand-building investment.

## Why organisations fail to find a joined-up approach

The panel identified five difficulties:

1. A default to 'easy' measurement: measuring what can be measured rather than what should be measured. Success of many offline channels is simpler to calculate using brand metrics. For brands that make most of their revenue online, directly attributable digital metrics are more readily available.
2. When a brand's sales attribution is harder to measure online (e.g. FMCG, where many sales are fulfilled offline and anonymously) there's a tendency to use less meaningful metrics such as clicks, likes and shares. These ultimately say little about the impact of marketing spend on business performance.
3. Direct response performance data is becoming cheaper and more readily accessible. It's also available historically, enabling campaign performance to be measured quickly from the outset. More enhanced sales measurement - from footfall to online shopper panels - is clearly welcome, but not at the expense of brand measurement if brand building is a key objective. Metrics must match objectives.



4. Siloes must be dismantled to allow joined-up thinking. The word “digital” is often conflated with “performance”, so digital and direct marketing specialists tackle response measurement, while above-the-line agencies and marketers deal with brand measurement. There is no real acknowledgment of their combined effects.
5. The media industry suffers from short-termism. The average CMO spends around 3.5 years in post. As a result, they often focus on quarterly sales targets not long-term brand health. Joined-up response and brand tracking are hampered as a result.

“Out of home media is strong for brand building, but it’s much easier if you can show clients in the short term that their spend has driven performance. We might measure footfall, web visits and so on – it’s easier for them to see the tangible benefits.”

- Jennie Roper, Kinetic

#### Actions that will make measurement meaningful:

1. The creation of a measurement database will help quantify the scale of the challenges outlined i.e. answering the question of which industries and channels are failing to use the metrics that matter when reporting on effectiveness.
2. The production of a playbook that definitively details the data sources and organisations that can help advertisers and agencies measure both sales and brand impact across media channels.

## 2. Measuring the impact of quality



There's a disconnect between how value is created and how it's rewarded. We used to believe engaging with consumers and taking a share of their attention was the way to influence brand preference, yet we're caught in a framework imposed by the big platforms that is just about clicks. Brands are forgoing real business impact, while publishers and content creators struggle with the economics.

**Danny Spears**  
Ozone

Panellists represented media owners that are some of the UK's biggest providers of original, quality entertainment and news content. While many pitch their significant reach to advertisers, measurement of rich contextual media environments sparked debate.

### Recognising quality contextual environments

Participants discussed the price vs. value disconnect in ad inventory. This has yet to be resolved through effective measurement.

The biggest impact occurs in digital with the majority of UK ad spend now being funnelled to Google and Facebook. But it's a challenge for all platforms.

The value of an ad appearing in a trusted, quality contextual environment, rather than amid user-generated or social content, is proven. Yet this doesn't translate to relative ad rates. Meaningful measurement of quality contextual environments is therefore essential.

### The resurgence of contextually targeted advertising

Third-party cookies are on the way out, removing an important source of data for audience targeting. There may be a resurgence in contextually targeted advertising online - for example, travel ads appearing in travel environments, rather than via retargeting.

This trend will strengthen the case for effective measurement of quality contextual environments.

## The halo effect of media owner values transmitted to advertisers

Measuring the impact of quality extends beyond the media environment. It also covers how the advertiser is perceived.

'Brand rub' effects can transmit media owner values to the advertiser. In turn, brands perceived as offering quality will reap incremental sales. This dovetails with issues around holistic brand vs. direct response measurement discussed earlier.

The success of Tesco's Eff Week Grand Prix win in the 2020 IPA Effectiveness Awards was dubbed a best-in-class example of how these effects can be measured, demonstrating considerable business value.

### Actions that will make measurement meaningful:

1. Systematic industry-wide ad research that generates the data to demonstrate the value of advertising in quality contextual environments, and influences ad inventory pricing decisions accordingly.
2. Preparing agencies and advertisers for the future of ad measurement in a cookieless world. What measurement methodologies are available to capture ad exposure and effects if they can no longer be tracked passively using cookies in the digital space?



### 3. A measurement framework for all



Client attribution models are black box, offering little understanding of what we could have done to optimise campaign performance. If there was some standardisation or common language of the approach to how different media data sources should be fed into these models - particularly for media which isn't digital or clickable - that would be a really good idea.

#### **Roundtable attendee**

Planning an efficient campaign is one thing; measuring its effectiveness is quite another. Yet all too often “efficiency” is used as a byword for “effectiveness”.

The roundtable attendees stated measurement objectives are rarely given the importance they deserve in campaign planning cycles. In addition, a lack of common understanding of measurement terminology and marketing effects can hinder accurate reporting.

The answer put forward is the establishment of coherent measurement frameworks.

#### **Using frameworks for mid- and post-campaign optimisation**

Measurement frameworks would force marketers to consider campaign objectives and KPIs, while setting measurable targets and timeframes.

Of course, no business sets out to achieve a high clickthrough rate. Instead, they seek to hit customer acquisition, retention and brand health targets.

Framework adoption will focus both post-campaign evaluation and mid-campaign optimisation.

## **Rallying around a common view of effectiveness**

Frameworks will help the industry rally around a common definition of effectiveness, although it may vary depending on campaign goals.

A unifying definition of long-term vs. short-term effectiveness will also be beneficial. Long-term effects are often conflated with brand impact, and short-term effects with sales impact. Both impacts can of course be achieved in each timeframe.

## **Benchmarking effectiveness rapidly, at scale**

Measurement frameworks help marketers build effectiveness benchmarks rapidly and at scale.

In turn, benchmark databases give marketers context for campaign performance. This is vital when measuring incremental ad impact will only get harder.

Media owners and agencies can provide a vital service to advertisers requiring a clear method of evaluating the relative performance of their investments. Target setting - whether for sales, ROI or brand - is an uncomfortable experience for some marketers.

## **A more consistent approach to marketing mix modelling**

The expert panel highlighted a lack of representation for some media channels in econometric models.

Marketing mix modelling is vital for measuring long-term marketing effectiveness, but practitioners cite little consensus on the best time-series data and underlying model assumption data to use.

A consistent, coherent measurement framework could help tackle the issue, by aligning clients, agencies and measurement specialists with a common set of goals, definitions and data at the campaign briefing stage.

## Fostering a shared C-suite understanding of effective media spend

CEO and CFO disconnect can be resolved with the use of formally agreed measurement frameworks. Each campaign would be judged using relevant metrics and within the timeframe it deserves.

This, in turn, would allow the boardroom to adopt a shared understanding of the effectiveness of media spend.

### Actions that will make measurement meaningful:

1. Creating a simplified measurement framework template to help marketers set campaign objectives which ladder down from overall business goals. Frameworks should help with target setting, KPI selection, detail the measurement solutions available and provide a system for capturing benchmark data.
2. A measurement framework can coalesce around a common language for measurement data by defining key industry terms, removing ambiguity from current discussions about measurement. For example, “direct response” is a problematic term, frequently conflated with “activation” and “performance marketing”. Should the industry just be referring to “impact”, whether in the brand or sales arena?
3. Best practice econometric guides which aim to provide measurement practitioners with a guide to all data sources (e.g. industry data, media planning data, first-party data) available when building measurement models.



## 4. Measurement across platforms



There is a self-fulfilling prophecy as the media landscape becomes more complex: you need deeper experts in more specific areas. They tend to have different KPIs related to their disciplines. Whether brand or performance focused, all metrics should ultimately be proxies for their contribution to delivering sales. How do we compare discipline-specific proxies for smarter cross-channel planning?

**Joanna Lawrence**

Telegraph Media Group

Today, few pitches are won by those hailing traditional media's value compared to other channels.

Instead, the role of each individual channel in complex customer journeys must be acknowledged, while their combined effects are simultaneously explored and measured in full.

A multi-platform reality produces measurement challenges and opportunities around discerning incremental sales and brand effects. Some of these are considered below.

### Why measurement is hard without platform standardisation

The fundamentally different ways in which consumers engage with a particular media channel necessitates specific measurement methodologies - as any JIC will tell you. Similarly, ad exposure measurement differs by channel and often produces different results depending on the methodology used.

Passive ad measurement solutions - such as the use of cookies for digital, Audience Content Recognition for TV and radio, and location data for out of home - differs greatly from methods which explicitly ask consumers about ad recall or rely on opportunity-to-see probabilities.

With little standardisation across platforms, the multi-channel effect of media exposure is hard to measure, and benchmarks are harder to build.

## Single channel measurement can ignore the role of offline media

As a knock-on effect of disjointed cross-platform measurement, marketers commonly opt for single-channel measurement. This often leads to channel impact on the customer journey to conversion being overstated.

Last-click attribution is a case in point. Because digital is more readily measurable, it often gets all the credit for driving digital traffic and sales without acknowledging the role of offline media.

## The pitfalls of failing to apply past learnings to future campaigns

True cross-platform measurement is also hindered by accusations that are so-often levelled at the ‘walled gardens’ of Google and Facebook.

A lack of data transparency and an inability to conduct third-party measurement studies without first going through the platforms’ filters can inhibit truly joined-up measurement.

It is then relegated to a simple post-campaign box-ticking exercise, along with a tool to justify ad spend, rather than a method of applying past learnings to future media strategy.

## Bridging the credibility gap with the truth about performance

The issue of credibility and transparency in media owner-provided research isn’t confined to Google and Facebook. Roundtable attendees discussed the challenges of “marking your own homework”: selling the media space and reporting on the effectiveness by which it is valued.

The solution to this credibility gap is for media owners to focus less on simply telling positive stories about campaign performance, and instead provide an unvarnished truth which highlights campaign over- and under-performance, while offering solutions to how campaign performance can be optimised going forward.

### Actions that will make measurement meaningful:

1. Best practice guides that advise how to unify, or at the very least compare, effectiveness data and measurement solutions across different media channels and methodologies.
2. Guidance on which data points are actually useful for each channel. Not all data is created equal, and marketers need help to discern what matters most – especially when working with a channel for the first time.

## 5. Structural challenges in measurement



The move towards in-housing is an issue for agencies. When clients bring performance teams in-house they might not have the experience or industry knowledge that we carry. They seek digital-first metrics rather than looking at brand or marketing performance holistically.

**Charlotte Putnam**  
Dentsu Aegis

The trend towards advertiser in-housing continues to create tension between brand and agency, with knock-on effects throughout the measurement space.

Brand-owned CRM data is readily used for customer retention and activation campaigns, so direct marketing functions are most frequently brought in-house.

All too often, “digital” is conflated with “performance” and teams deploying CRM data are disconnected from traditional marketing teams handling above-the-line spend.

### The potentially negative impact of measuring in silos

With direct response and brand measurement taking place in silos, little acknowledgement is given to their mutually complementary, or even negative, impact.

To illustrate the point, imagine an advertiser that continually discounts struggling to shift the dial on quality or premium brand metrics, no matter how much it invests in brand building.



## Measurement skills shortage is adding to the problem

A measurement skills shortage is another common problem. Agency workers are often time poor and overworked, contributing to some of the highest staff turnover figures of all sectors in the UK.

With many employees complaining about time spent on administrative campaign management work - particularly with digital campaigns - they have little time to focus on, or upskill for, measurement.

Because measurement silos exist between and within agencies, many practitioners have an in-depth understanding of their own piece of the picture but lack a holistic view of how this impacts the client's wider business goals.

### Actions that will make measurement meaningful:

1. Addressing the measurement skills gap through dedicated training courses that look to upskill new industry starters in meaningful measurement, and also break down the silos between different measurement disciplines.
2. Providing training and support for in-house marketing teams who may not be as aware of developments in measurement practices as their agency counterparts.

## 6. Optimising metrics that matter



Optimisation based on benchmarking is important. Overlaying brand uplift studies with performance reports, combined with first-party data, gives planning teams data to pre-plan campaigns. Then, when the campaign is live, the data to optimise performance.

**Enzo Diliberto**  
The FT

Measuring marketing effectiveness should not be seen as merely a post-campaign activity. It must touch all areas of the planning cycle.

Campaign measurement should inform future campaign strategy and planning decisions related to channel, audience, creative and frequency. In addition, it should be used to optimise current campaign performance in real-time.

Some measurement methodologies are better for optimisation than others, depending on the time lag between tracking effects and exposure. While few people would expect a campaign to be optimised on marketing mix model results in real-time, the industry must aspire to use sophisticated behavioural digital signals - rather than clicks, likes and shares - when making real-time delivery decisions.

### Towards common KPIs and meaningful metrics

Roundtable participants discussed the importance of working with brands and agencies to devise a tightly defined set of campaign KPIs. A meaningful signal could then be agreed to optimise campaign delivery.

While some metrics relate to campaign delivery as a hygiene factor - after all, brands need assurance they got what they paid for - other metrics are more meaningful; for example, viewable impressions.

## Measurement solutions that get to the heart of the value debate

Direct response campaigns with a clear, attributable line-of-sight to customer acquisitions and sales afford their managers more meaningful data to inform campaign delivery decisions.

But those who work in the brand-building space have limited options. The expert panel expressed considerable interest in real-time brand measurement solutions, which could help solve the quality context value conundrum.

### Actions that will make measurement meaningful:

1. A guide to the metrics that matter when optimising campaign delivery. If sales and brand metrics are too difficult to measure in real-time, which data signals and proxies are most effective for maximising ad impact while campaigns are live? How can first-party data can be used to greater effect when combined with campaign optimisation metrics?
2. A guide to available real-time brand measurement tools available in the marketplace to help marketers move this measurement practice in to the mainstream.

# / Summary of Challenges and Actions

The Challenges	Actions that will make measurement meaningful:
<p><b>1. The disconnect between brand and response measurement.</b></p> <p>Siloed thinking and a fragmented agency landscape mean there's often little acknowledgement or systematic measurement of the combined effects of brand and direct response spend. This results in an inconsistent view of short- and long-term campaign impact.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The creation of a measurement database will help quantify the scale of the challenges outlined i.e. answering the question of which industries and channels are failing to use the metrics that matter when reporting on effectiveness.</li> <li>2. The production of a playbook that definitively details the data sources and organisations that can help advertisers and agencies measure both sales and brand impact across media channels.</li> </ol>
<p><b>2. Measuring the impact of quality.</b></p> <p>A focus on less meaningful effectiveness data points has led to quality media environments being undervalued on media plans. Advertisers suffer from poorer marketing return on investment (ROI) and media owners suffer financially.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Systematic industry-wide ad research that generates the data to demonstrate the value of advertising in quality contextual environments, and influences ad inventory pricing decisions accordingly.</li> <li>2. Preparing agencies and advertisers for the future of ad measurement in a cookieless world. What measurement methodologies are available to capture ad exposure and effects if they can no longer be tracked passively using cookies in the digital space?</li> </ol>
<p><b>3. A measurement framework for all.</b></p> <p>The use of measurement frameworks which help businesses create a common understanding of how to measure campaign impacting a way that links to business objectives is far from commonplace. Widespread adoption of measurement frameworks will help the industry overcome many of the communication challenges inherent in measurement.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating a simplified measurement framework template to help marketers set campaign objectives which ladder down from overall business goals. Frameworks should help with target setting, KPI selection, detail the measurement solutions available and provide a system for capturing benchmark data.</li> <li>2. A measurement framework can coalesce around a common language for measurement data by defining key industry terms, removing ambiguity from current discussions about measurement. For example, "direct response" is a problematic term, frequently conflated with "activation" and "performance marketing". Should the industry just be referring to "impact", whether in the brand or sales arena?</li> <li>3. Best practice econometric guides which aim to provide measurement practitioners with a guide to all data sources (e.g. industry data, media planning data, first-party data) available when building measurement models.</li> </ol>

<p><b>4. Measurement across platforms.</b></p> <p>Establishing best practice in measuring ad effectiveness across channels, and between digital walled gardens and the rest of the media ecosystem, is vital to boost understanding of the true incremental effects of media investment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Best practice guides that advise how to unify, or at the very least compare, effectiveness data and measurement solutions across different media channels and methodologies.</li> <li>2. Guidance on which data points are actually useful for each channel. Not all data is created equal, and marketers need help to discern what matters most – especially when working with a channel for the first time.</li> </ol>
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# / Conclusion

Some of the challenges outlined in this whitepaper are arguably deep-rooted and structural.

Yet many are simply due to a lack of industry consensus about how to measure effectiveness. At present, intermediaries sit between brands and consumers measuring a range of often disparate objectives and offering no insight into advertising impact.

For example, digital's historical focus on clickthrough rates as a measure of campaign success has created a sub-optimal online environment for consumers. This has prompted a rise in ad fraud and ad blocking, and the proliferation of low-quality content at the expense of the continued existence of quality news, entertainment and content brands.

Organisational inertia is perhaps the biggest challenge facing proponents of improved measurement. Time-poor marketers have increasingly specialised skills which leave them unable to consider the planning cycle holistically. They also lack incentives to measure effectively.

Joined-up thinking between advertisers, agencies, intermediaries (e.g. ad tech and martech), media owners and industry bodies is essential to deliver meaningful measurement that directly links consumer action and business performance.

The DMA recommends members consider the actions outlined in each section and the summary of recommendations. We will also propose a roadmap outlining which recommendations the DMA will seek to implement.



# / About the Author

With more than 15 years' experience in media and advertising measurement, including stints at **Kantar** and the **Guardian**, where he was Head of Commercial Insight for nearly a decade, Ian Gibbs acts as an independent data consultant through his business **Data Stories**.

He divides his time between **JICMAIL** (the industry currency for direct mail) as Director of Data Leadership and Learning, and a diverse range of clients (including **NBC Universal**, **Freewheel**, **Twinnings** and **On Device Research**).

He runs measurement projects, builds effectiveness databases and trains teams on how to harness the power of effective measurement frameworks.



**Ian Gibbs**

Founder, Data Stories Consulting

# / About the Data & Marketing Association

The Data & Marketing Association (DMA) is the driving force of intelligent marketing.

Guided by our customer-first principles enshrined in the DMA Code, we champion a rich fusion of technology, diverse talent, creativity, research and insight to set standards for the UK's data and marketing community to meet in order to thrive.

We deliver this mission through a fully integrated, classroom-to-boardroom approach that supports you, your team and your business at every stage of your development.

Through DMA Talent we create pathways for the next generation of marketers; our world-class training institute, the Institute of Data & Marketing, delivers learning to corporations and individuals; and through the DMA we deliver advocacy, legal and compliance support, as well as research, insight and a packed events calendar.

With more than 1,000 corporate members, we are Europe's largest community of data-driven marketers.

[www.dma.org.uk](http://www.dma.org.uk)

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