

GENERATIVE MARKETING INTELLIGENCE

# A new way for innovative brands to drive *efficiency* and *performance*

How brands can pool together their best data and apply AI to transform marketing strategy.



In Partnership with **AdAge**

**In today's complex marketing environment, brands are navigating an unprecedented level of change, driven by increasingly diverse audiences, fragmented media ecosystems, rising consumer expectations and mounting efficiency pressures.**

At the same time, technology like artificial intelligence that can help address all of these challenges is evolving at warp speed. Marketers, however, are still struggling to apply the best data into AI models for maximum impact. And in some scenarios, they are relying on a singular AI model for core marketing use cases rather than tailoring the technology to specific business goals and needs.

The reality is that a single perfect dataset for AI does not exist. Maximizing use of the technology for marketing purposes requires a different tack: co-creating with AI by pooling together various datasets to generate new intelligence from them. Toronto-based digital advertising agency DAC calls this generative marketing intelligence (GMI).



**"All of these leaps of insight that we're trying to make are going to require us to bring together maybe a dozen different data sets. But it has to be a 'whole is greater than the sum of its parts' type of experience. The insight that comes out of that is much more powerful than just stitching stuff together."**



**Robert Cooney**

*Vice President, Client Strategy, DAC*

This white paper explores a compelling perspective on how GMI can be a transformative solution to today's marketing challenges.





# Why today's approach to data and AI isn't solving marketer pain points

On the surface, most marketers understand the necessity of harnessing their rich data and using AI to target and engage audiences more efficiently and effectively. However, many have yet to truly combine these elements to enhance their understanding of target customers and how, when and where to engage them best.

First, marketers must expand beyond a monolithic view of their audience to account for additional segments or personas, each requiring different creative and messages to engage with a brand. Yet, marketers are still not always clear on who their key audiences are because they have not enriched their data with other sources to find new segments. If they did, they might unearth some surprising insights that could spur business growth.

Cooney shares the example of a menswear retailer that makes its most significant margin on suits. By digging further into their data, DAC found another unrecognized audience that mostly buys sneakers, not suits, from them. This is a key finding, because while most people want to try on suits in person, those who know their shoe size are typically comfortable buying sneakers online.

**"It completely changed the way we would go to market to say, 'OK, when we're trying to move sneakers as a product, anywhere in the country through e-commerce is great,'"** Cooney said. **"When we're trying to move suits, you've got to get people near a store location, and it's a different demographic. So that more nuanced understanding was fundamental to the growth of the business."**

Second, brands still struggle to determine the best digital touchpoints to reach these audiences. Digital advertising has long suffered from shiny object syndrome, and it persists with more emerging commerce channels like TikTok and Reddit, where many brands want to invest budget even if it doesn't make sense for their business.

**"You have to be choosy about the channels that you deploy your budget on. What we're finding through this process is that you can make an impact with less, embracing the fragmentation and being OK with not being everywhere. But if you use data to really, truly understand your audience, you know where to put your dollars."**



**Jenna Watson**

*Vice President, Media, DAC*

Third, rising consumer expectations continue to keep all brands on their toes, requiring marketers to **"hook somebody in about two seconds,"** as Watson put it. Capturing attention requires being agile enough to make a message work in a bunch of different formats, because **"nobody's gonna sit around and wait for the thing that you're trying to tell them,"** Watson said.

**"The last best experience always becomes the new standard,"** he said. **"So, using these AI-powered, dynamic experiences to make everything seem seamless so it's a perfectly relevant touchpoint—from the very first time you're saying hello to a customer, right through to managing their data from online to offline—so that when they show up in store, you already know what they're interested in and what they're looking for. It's just benchmark stuff now that they expect all brands to do that; otherwise, it's just, 'Sorry, I'm going elsewhere.'"**

Even smaller brands can deliver this type of experience without the heavy lift of one-to-one personalization in real-time by being in tune with the context the ad is showing up in and the kind of message that is helpful to what they're trying to achieve, Cooney said.





Finally, mounting efficiency pressures are begging for AI assistance. But it's not just about using the technology to copywrite multiple different ad messages (though that certainly is part of it). One untapped AI use case is targeting at the local level.

*"You can be incredibly efficient if you just figure out the right locations,"* Watson said. *"Maybe it's fewer channels, but it's a full-funnel program with smaller footprints."*

This doesn't mean that if you have 100 stores, you should create 100 separate campaigns. Instead, brands can leverage location-based clustering, which uses AI to enrich audience insights and then combines them with location-level data—sourced from state census information, drive time to a store or sales from stores in specific regions, for example. This process could illuminate a cluster of stores that are not physically near each other but have similar business conditions and attract shoppers who behave similarly and have the same media preferences.



## Structured vs. unstructured data and why it matters

AI stands to unlock much value from structured and unstructured data.

- **Structured data** follows a format or structure and set of rules, making it easy to search, sort and analyze. Its nature makes it easily understandable by humans and machines alike.
- **Unstructured data** does not have a predefined format, is typically large and comprises 90% of all enterprise-generated data, [according to IBM](#). This data can include both textual and nontextual data and both qualitative (social media comments) and quantitative (figures embedded in text) data.

*"On the one hand, there's a huge benefit from having data well-structured, through performing repeatable types of analysis,"* Cooney said. *"And AI is good at taking data that might be in a bunch of different formats, because every client has their standard, and then trying to fit that to a data architecture that we've predefined."*

For unstructured data, the goal of AI isn't to try to structure it—it's unstructured for a reason, after all. For example, say a brand has a bunch of video interviews of customers. You don't want to try to fit that information into a prefab list of questions. Instead, you might use an AI tool to transcribe and capture as much meaning from the interviews as possible—say, for teasing out customer quotes you might want to showcase on your website.

“We now can put both types of data together into one cohesive knowledge graph and start to ask questions of it,” Cooney said. “And that’s unlocking a lot of value that we’ve never seen before, because the technology just didn’t exist.”

This is where having a dynamic approach to AI models comes into play. Because the models evolve so fast, other technologies developed to leverage them might become outdated in a matter of weeks. The better approach is one Cooney describes as “scaffolding”—building technology around the models to connect them to larger data sets and putting some structure around it. This custom-built scaffolding can easily come down when the AI models release new native functionality (for example, if ChatGPT comes out with something that can easily connect to big databases).

## Driving continuous optimization and brand growth with GMI

This is the essence of what DAC is doing with GMI.

DAC’s approach combines multiple large language models to analyze and interpret market data. Using the agency’s proprietary integrated marketing platform, IRIS, they synthesize multi-platform data and leverage AI to drive continuous optimization and brand growth. As a result, DAC has a unique ability to tap into more profound insights and create highly customized marketing strategies.





**What this looks like in practice:** Brands get bespoke models whose output is a knowledge graph tailored to their goals and needs. It's assembled from both their own data and insight work that highlights a better understanding of the target audience in the marketplace and across competitors. **IRIS** sits on top of all of it, with access to this rich data set behind the scenes. DAC then helps build a media plan from these insights, fueling a more robust knowledge graph as they go.

In one example, a regional internet service provider in the U.S. lacked a national presence. Their service was scattered, and so media decisions were being made down to the zip code level to acquire customers reasonably. The best data set DAC found is maintained by the Federal Communications Commission (meaning it was also free). It offered, down to the census region level, every internet service provider and what connection type they offer.

*"So you know if you're the only one in that zone who's got a fiber line, or if there're nine different competitors who do, and you've only got DSL," Cooney said. "And you would make a totally different media investment decision, depending on whether you're the only game in town, or whether you're fighting a losing battle."*

Through GMI, DAC was able to take that data on the connection footprint and overlay it with the brand's ideal target audiences and their media consumption. Those ideally suited data sources all came together into a footprint assessment.

In another example, a clothing retailer discovered an audience segment only interested in graphic tees because they were doing collaborations with a lot of video game and anime artists. The audience primarily targeted young men who are consuming media on Twitch, as opposed to other social platforms.

## Five ways GMI can turbocharge your marketing

1. **Adapt to diverse audiences** by synthesizing data from both proprietary and public sources, making sense of localized insights to create more nuanced and effective targeting strategies.
2. **Build meaningful consumer relationships** by orchestrating context-aware, intent-driven experiences—customizing content and creative dynamically across media moments and platforms.
3. **Navigate fragmented media landscapes** through a unified view of cross-platform consumption and more thoughtful planning, ensuring the right reach and frequency across screens without waste.
4. **Overcome measurement gaps** from privacy and signal loss by rapidly iterating cost-effective statistical models, leveraging first-party data and accelerating adoption of modern attribution techniques.
5. **Drive operational efficiency** by coordinating test-and-learn frameworks, reducing the cost of failure and tying media performance directly to business outcomes.

## What must brands do to take advantage of this capability and, really, the overarching promise that AI carries for marketing?

From the perspective of the actual assets needed to get the most out of GMI, it's typically **"stuff you would ask for in a marketing mix model,"** Watson said. This includes actual performance and business data across profitability and revenue. On the surface, however, it's having an open mind and a willingness to move into the present state, she said.

**"In a lot of cases, we might tell you something you disagree with or don't love, or it's not how you've always done things,"** she said. **"We might tell you that you're going to need to work with us or some other provider to rapidly iterate on your creative 100, 200, 1,000 times to make this thing impactful. So, I think it's much more of just a partnership ethos and the desire to go see where it'll take us."**

Cooney adds that brands must also maintain this mindset in the data exchange and AI aspects, embracing the technology as a true co-creator and intentionally trying to expose themselves to the sometimes surprising benefits it brings to the table. AI might not tire of doing endless iterations of a creative idea, but the real power comes from humans curating the best of the output from the model.

**"We want those upside surprises of throwing a bunch of data at it and trusting that the model is doing something exciting,"** he said. **"I can promise you, you'll be astonished by how good the models are at coming back with thoughtful responses to broader prompts in which the AI can have some free rein and creativity."**





# About DAC

Founded in 1972, DAC is an international full-funnel media agency with over 600 employees and 12 offices across the United States, Canada and Europe. We connect brands with customers at every stage of their journey with enterprise-to-local strategies powered by proprietary technology.

Our team of experts help brands achieve awareness and performance both globally and locally through our innovative solutions across paid media, SEO, content strategy, local presence management, reputation management and data analytics.

DAC’s campaigns drive unmatched outcomes for our clients, earning us Google’s 2024 Agency Excellence Award, U.S. Agency Awards 2024 Integrated Search Agency of the Year, and Digiday Media Buying & Planning Awards 2025 Most Innovative Independent Agency.

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