CaliberMind

MARKETING MEANS BUSINESS: A TRILOGY

A three-part reflection on shaping the marketing value narrative
to win the boardroom, tame the algorithm, and own the bottom line

Part 3:

Marketing's Relationship With Data

TOP SECRET

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Marketing's Relationship With Data

We're looking at more dashboards than ever, but don't see eye to eye.

We track more metrics than ever, but disagree on what they mean.

We want to be data-driven, but it takes weeks to get a half-baked answer.

There's no denying, we as marketeers have gotten really good at collecting data. But much to our frustration, that data isn't giving us the clarity, conviction, or credibility we hoped for.

How is it that with so much data, we still find ourselves guessing?

THE PROBLEM
Your data can't get the story straight

What would happen if a police detective interrogated your tech stack?

Every tool would give a different version of events.

- Google Analytics would bet money it was the ad campaigns that generated the most leads.
- Your ABM platform thinks it "owns" the pipeline because it ran the awareness program.
- Your marketing automation platform says, "Actually, those leads came from my nurture sequences."
- And the CRM? It's standing in the corner with its arms crossed, refusing to accept anything that didn't happen inside its walls.

Each one inflates its role in the story because it was built to make its metrics look important.

The more channels we have, the more tools we have, the more conflicting numbers we have. Each marketing analytics tool, on its own, is an unreliable witness. What's worse, none of these tools were truly designed to harmonize with one another.

This leaves your RevOps folks stitching data points together — and marketing leaders praying no one will scrutinize their report.

No wonder many of us have experienced the classic QBR standoff. Marketing walks in saying, "We drove $3M in revenue." Sales fires up their CRM and says, "That can't be, because Salesforce shows pipeline was only $1.5M."

Awkward silence.

There's no such thing as being "half right" at a QBR. If you're only half-right, you're wrong. So whose numbers do you think execs will trust?

As Nadia Davis said on the ***Humans of Martech*** podcast, **"Nobody ever scrutinizes sales pipeline. It's holy. You don't touch sales pipeline."**

Your CRM is untouchable. It's the source of truth for not just Sales, but Finance.

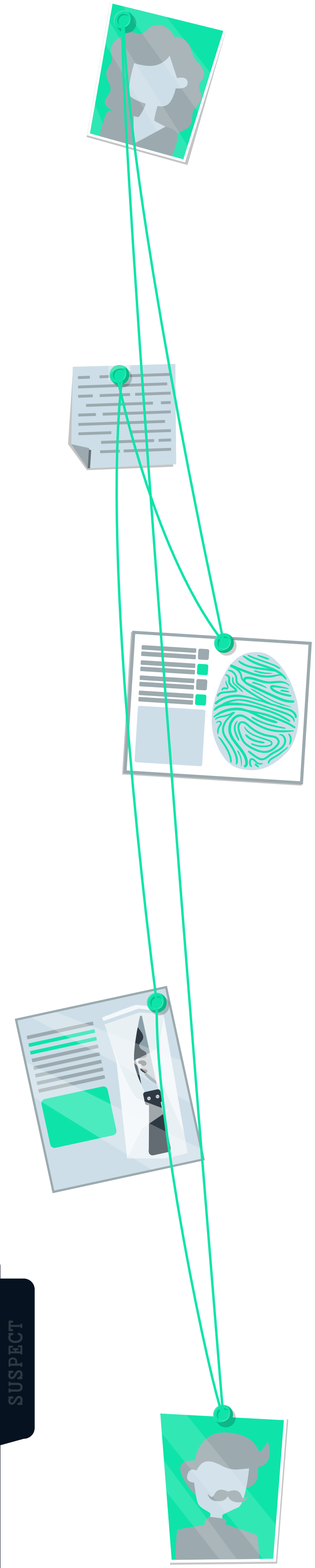
So when the Marketing–Sales story contradicts itself, it's trust in Marketing — not Sales — that tanks.

In reality, both sides are partly right. But since each side has a different system of record, it's hard to reconcile two seemingly conflicting stories.

WHY IT'S HAPPENING

Black boxes, bad data, and your beloved CRM

The lack of trust in numbers (and in the people who report them) is rooted in infrastructure and instrumentation that wasn't built for the way enterprise marketing and sales teams go to market.
One example is black-box off-the-shelf marketing analytics tools.



Black boxes take your trust for granted

Let's take a trip down memory lane.

You're in high school, maybe 11th or 12th grade. You're sitting in math class.

Do you remember those equations and calculations where you had to "show your work"? In assignments, exams, and on the whiteboard, giving the correct answer wasn't enough. You had to show how you arrived at that answer. Some students found this part annoying, but there was a real purpose to showing your work.

First, it demonstrated that you understood the logic and the laws. If your answer was wrong, your teacher could pinpoint which part of your process took a wrong turn, so you could learn from it and course-correct.

Second, it gave your answer credibility. It proved there was no guessing, no luck, and no cheating involved. To own your answer, you had to be able to retrace your steps. It wasn't until well into your adult years that you realized why documenting your work is crucial in industries where calculations are a life-and-death matter.

You see where we're going with this.

While marketing isn't exactly a highly mathematical discipline at every turn, "showing your work" is exactly what's missing in many of today's marketing analytics systems.

"There are a lot of what I call 'black box AI systems.' It does something, it spits something out, and it kind of looks directionally right. But you don't have the ability to lift the covers and see what's under the hood, understand data lineage, double-click into that, QA."[1]

Scott Brinker - Editor, Chiefmartec

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[1] CaliberMind, Hitchhiker's Guide to Marketing Analytics, Ep. 9, https://calibermind.com/events/hgma-moving-into-2026-state-of-martech-and-marketing-analytics/

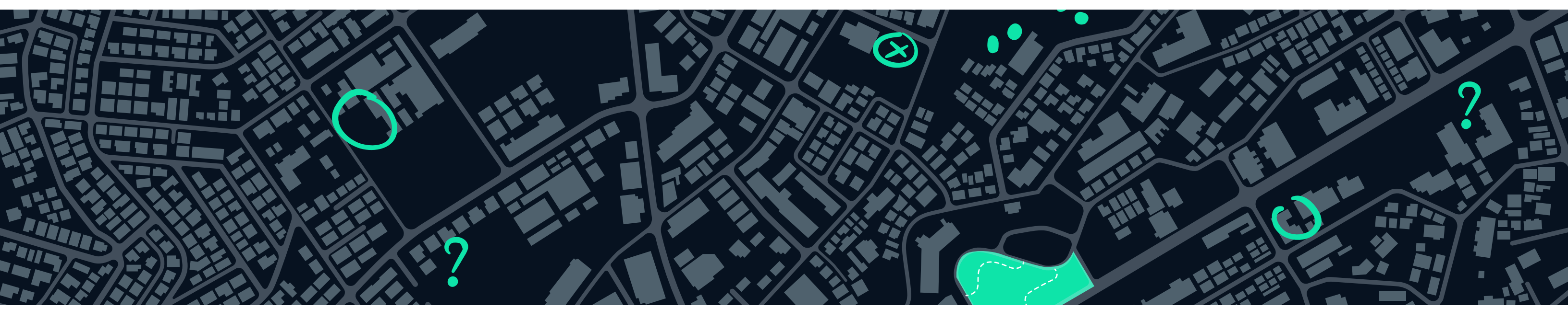
For example, a popular MTA tool will spit out revenue attribution numbers. But those numbers are based on incomplete data, rigid object definitions, and assumptive data modeling. The tool doesn't give you a window into these mechanisms, nor does it allow you to adapt those mechanisms to your business.

Another example, ABM tools will have analytics modules, but those modules are limited to digital touchpoints only. On top of that, you're bound by their own arbitrary account scoring. It works as long as your sales team doesn't question it. Good luck.

Even if you trust the answer it spits out, you can't convince your leadership to trust it.

Mary Batchelder, Senior Revenue Marketing Manager at CaliberMind, says it this way:

> **"As a Marketing Operations leader, my core mission, across all of the organizations where I have worked, has always been to prove marketing's impact on revenue with reliable, executive-grade reporting. This requires not just producing numbers, but earning trust in the numbers being produced."**



While black-box answers might be enough for some smaller companies, they're definitely not enough for larger cross-functional teams where being accountable to the business is equally as important as executing the campaigns.

Mary puts it bluntly:

> **"Many modern marketing analytics tools ... might present beautifully visualized data and seemingly precise attribution models, but if you can't peer inside to understand how those numbers were derived, you're operating on faith, not fact."**

[2] Mary Batchelder, "Audit or Bust: Why Enterprise Marketing Ops Can't Trust the Instant Answers of Black Box AI," July 9, 2025, https://calibermind.com/articles/audit-or-bust-why-enterprise-marketing-ops-cant-trust-the-instant-answers-of-black-box-ai/

Black-box solutions can spell trouble for larger GTM teams for a number of reasons:

- **Data inaccuracies and inconsistencies lead to "silent fails."** That's when the numbers are plausible (and thus don't trigger any alarm bells). People don't realize the numbers were wrong until after they make a series of misinformed decisions and reap the consequences.
- **Fragile architecture doesn't stand up to enterprise complexity.** Simplistic off-the-shelf marketing analytics tools weren't designed to handle complex, siloed, fragmented data. The underlying mechanisms can't clean, transform, or model your inputs in a way that makes sense for your business. You find yourself in the classic garbage-in garbage-out conundrum.
- **Artificial intelligence makes it worse.** In the previous chapter, we talked about AI being an amplifier. It applies here too. In the context of analytics, AI will not just get it wrong; it'll make you confidently wrong, faster. Bad data pollutes everything downstream.

"In an environment increasingly reliant on AI to crunch vast datasets, the ability to audit, understand, double click into and validate every figure should be a fundamental requirement for maintaining data trust, ensuring compliance, and driving truly informed strategic decisions," says Mary.[2]

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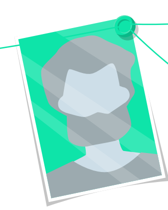
For your cross-functional team to be successful, you need alignment. And to have alignment, you need trust. And to have trust, you need transparency to make sure you're all working from the same shared definitions, weights, and calculations. Black-box analytics tools stand in the way of that.

But obscure analytics isn't the only problem. The evaluation process of these tools and their alternatives can be obscure as well.



[2] Mary Batchelder, "Audit or Bust: Why Enterprise Marketing Ops Can't Trust the Instant Answers of Black Box AI," July 9, 2025, https://calibermind.com/articles/audit-or-bust-why-enterprise-marketing-ops-cant-trust-the-instant-answers-of-black-box-ai/

Martech vendors aren't upfront about their limitations

When marketers market marketing tools to other marketers, we get a taste of our own medicine. Often, we don't know what we're actually buying. And it could be because of any of the following reasons:

- The brand marketing is so on point, you're almost jealous.
- The social proof and influencer marketing on LinkedIn is convincing.
- The sales reps don't have enough technical knowledge to understand the limitations of the product.
- The sales reps aren't data-savvy enough to help you evaluate if the product is a good fit for your environment.
- Their investors are pushing the company through a "growth at all costs" phase where qualifying buyers (*cough* … you) isn't really a thing.
- You didn't have an experienced in-house data scientist to ascertain whether the product could handle your data complexities.

All too often, marketing teams don't wake up to the constraints of the product until after the contract is signed. We know, because some of our customers come to us with the wildest stories. Some marketers are dismayed to discover the tool they'd just purchased is so limited that it lacks the main capability they purchased it for in the first place! To save face, they make up for the missing functionality with their own manual calculations while continuing to pay for the tool. Talk about expectations versus reality!

Joe Schattschneider, our Director of Data Strategy, says:

> **"RevOps professionals are very jaded. They've been promised every marketing and sales tool under the sun that was going to completely solve all of their problems. And none of them have."[3]**

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[3] RevOps Co-op, "AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," https://www.revopscoop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly

Nadia Davis has been on the buying side as well. The overpromise-underdeliver epidemic is real:

"ABM tools have the analytics module, and they will sell it to you — "Don't you worry; we've got everything." They do not. They will collect the digital touchpoints. They will not bring in anything offline. They will not bring in any of your custom objects. So you're getting a partial picture. And if you convince your business that clicks and impressions in 2025 still move the needle, you don't need to go [outside] the circle. Just buy your ABM platform."

However, as Nadia knows from experience, many popular marketing analytics solutions simply cannot wrap themselves around larger companies with high average deal size, long sales cycles, and complex buyer journeys involving large buying groups.

Word to the wise: Know before you buy. And if you don't know what you don't know, summon a person at your org who does. (We recommend a skeptical data-savvy ops maestro who's been burned before.)

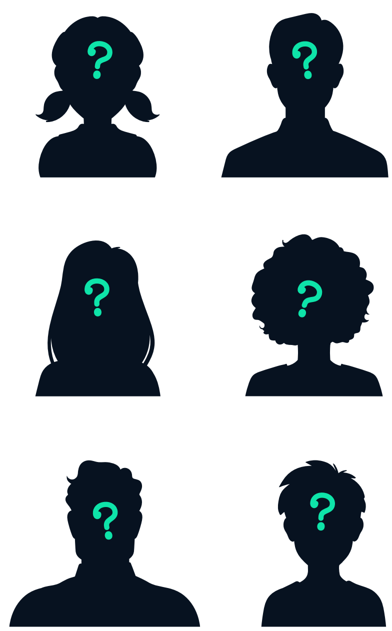
Data hygiene is on the back burner

Organizations with vast volumes of data shared across product, marketing, sales, and customer success struggle with data hygiene.

And it's no wonder. When data is shared by everyone, it's owned by no one. Everyone wants access, but few rush towards accountability.

Documentation, if it even exists, is outdated. Definitions drift over time. People leave, and the tribal knowledge goes with them.

Teams get so busy executing, foundational data maintenance is treated as optional instead of mission-critical. A campaign ends, the next one begins, and the backlog of "we'll clean that up later" grows until it's too intimidating for anyone to tackle.



Your CRM is a crime scene

Unfortunately, with poor data hygiene, your CRM — the de facto source of truth for Sales, Finance, and the board — becomes a mess:

- **Duplicate records**
- **Redundant job titles and roles**
- **Inconsistent field entry formats**
- **Orphaned leads that should be contacts**
- **Leads that should be matched to accounts**
- **i-frames populated with noise your sellers don't know what to do with**

Even a quarterly cleanup project, while better than nothing, isn't enough. You're still piecing data together manually to make sure you're presenting the most up-to-date numbers.

Not to mention, every business feels like they have to figure it out as they go. There doesn't seem to be a blueprint for how to do data stewardship right. Every go-to-market team, every organization, will have slightly different ways of cleaning and connecting their data. There's no "industry standard" way of making it work.

Then there's the fact that businesses are always going through change.

In an ***OpsCast* chat with Michael Hartman**, Eric Westerkamp (our CEO) said messy data isn't always the result of a flaw in your process:

> **"Imagine a situation where you were on one MAP, Eloqua, and you migrated to Marketo. Or vice versa. Happens all the time. Sure, the data from Eloqua looks different. And maybe you had a different way of naming channels, and it just changed. ... But you now want to run reporting that looks at how things have changed over time. ... So you need a way ... to map all these channels to this new naming so your reporting looks like a continuum. ... If your system can't handle that type of transformation of data, you're going to end up with gaps. ... And those mismatches are going to start to surface up into your reporting. ... It's just going to look like a jumble of data."**

So as your business and tech stacks evolve, these changes, while normal and expected, add to the challenge of seeing your data on a continuum.

CRMs have low ceilings

Consider, too, that CRMs were never designed to tell the full story. They're relational databases for person-level records, built to track leads, opportunities, deal stages — not omni-channel buyer journeys. CRM logic flattens reality. It wasn't built to reflect the nuance of today's buying committees, the symbiotic relationship between Marketing and Sales, or the influence of brand and community.

At one of our **Funnel Lab Fridays**, Eric Westerkamp, Misha Salkinder (VP of Technical Delivery at CaliberMind), and Drew Smith (Founder & CEO of Attributa) discussed the pros and cons of in-app versus data warehouse approaches to attribution.

Misha, who works daily with our enterprise customers, pointed out that as buyer journeys become more sophisticated and marketers become more data-savvy, they hit a ceiling with what they can do inside Salesforce (or other CRM):

> **"For forward-looking organizations that want to be able to predict pipeline or opportunities, for example, you're probably going to want to build features that don't come out of the box and are very difficult to present in Salesforce — number of touches by buying groups, number of touches by certain departments or job levels — to be able to parse the data … and build more robust models, exporting the data will be necessary."**

In other words, savvy forward-looking teams who have matured past the defensive stage of proving marketing contribution and are now driving future marketing investment want to be able to dig deeper. That's when their questions become more interesting. That's also when joining the data becomes really difficult to do — and when they're forced to come to terms with the limits of their instrumentation.

APIs create new problems for enterprises

APIs were supposed to get rid of silos by making our systems “talk” to each other.

And yet, the 2025 State of Your Stack Survey reported that “data integration is the biggest martech management challenge.” In fact, “data silos [were] cited as the top concern by survey respondents.”[4]

Even though APIs allow you to connect systems technically, that doesn’t mean they’re aligned logically. You can have the semblance of an integrated system that still doesn’t tell a coherent story.

Also, APIs often create new challenges. Eric points out that as organizations grow larger, they hit breaking point with API calls:

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> **“Every application wants to talk to Salesforce and get access to those APIs to do the work. And it’s blowing up the system.”[5]**

It’s just one of the reasons large companies move to storing their marketing events and CRM data in a data warehouse, like Snowflake, BigQuery, or Redshift, and their attribution tool performs advanced processing on top of that environment.

Plus, they want the flexibility, advanced analytics using AI and machine learning, and custom reporting through their own BI tools. While this is often the next logical step to bringing all your data together, new challenges arise when time to insight is simply too slow for fast-moving marketing teams. This brings up the issue of data ownership.

[4] MarTech is marketing, 2025 State of Your Stack Survey, https://info.martech.org/MTC_2504_2025StackSurv_Download1.html
[5] CaliberMind, “Funnel Lab Fridays: Attribution: In-App vs Data Warehouse,” Jan. 30, 2025, https://calibermind.com/articles/funnel-lab-fridays-attribution-in-app-vs-data-warehouse/

Data ownership (and proximity to business decisions) is in flux

From one company to another, data ownership will look different.

In some companies, Marketing Operations teams own the data. That means the data stays close to the part of the business that's using it. Often, however, Marketing Operations teams aren't treated as a strategic unit that influences decisions but more as tactical order takers (something we unpack in this *Hitchhiker's Guide to Marketing Analytics* episode). And this can slow progress on the data maturity front.

In other, often larger, companies, there's a centralized Data team. They own all the BI and are in charge of all the analytics. Your marketing team is essentially a customer, and if you want something built or you want to dig into the data, you'll have to open a ticket.

Misha Salkinder has seen cases of the latter when working with large companies that have all the data they could possibly want, centralized, but lack the expertise or collaboration to make use of it.

"I've seen situations in which there have been a lot of marketing end users [with clear] requirements for what they would like to see. And some data gets pushed in there. But there really wasn't enough of a technical resource in order to be able to normalize the data [to avoid having] duplicate data and ballooning and have nonsensical reporting.

On the other hand, not having enough end user inputs ... is that you create reports that aren't very meaningful to the board, to the CEO. And you end up having a lot of data in there which is noise, which could be just as problematic.

We often have customers who come to us and say 'We've tried, but we just can't get internal buy-in. ... We have a centralized data warehouse. It's all in there. ... But I cannot show my CMO anything of value.' So, I do think that not only does it require different skill sets, it requires those people to really communicate with each other."[6]

Moral of the story: No matter which approach your business takes, you'll have to solve for some kind of bottleneck. If it's not technical in nature, it's human; and vice versa.

[6] CaliberMind, "DIY Attribution: Connecting Data Sources (When & How)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq2WkGTysdU

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

How to rebuild trust in marketing data

The problems we've talked about — siloed systems, black-box obscurity, messy CRM data, and unclear stewardship — all result in a breakdown of trust. Not just trust in the data, but trust between the people using it.

When everyone is looking at data within their own silo, you simply can't foster cross-functional alignment.

Data flows through your organization's veins. Your organization must have a culture of wanting to work together to build the kind of infrastructure and instrumentation that'll allow you to operate as one body.

This element of culture is exactly why we'll fully admit all of this is easier said than done. It really does require all teams to unite around a singular goal, ultimately for the benefit of the business. And the effort will have to be joint and continuous.

Introducing TRUST

Rebuilding trust in marketing data is a very holistic, multifaceted process. To help you remember the main pillars, we'll give you a mnemonic: TRUST.

T – Transparency

Transparency doesn't mean giving everyone access to everything. It means there's an ability to investigate how we arrived at a number.

Nadia Davis says, **"Make sure you think about data lineage and auditability early on."**[7]

Take custom dashboards, for instance. Even if you (or your vendors) manage to build custom dashboards to help people in specific roles access metrics that are important to them, you've solved only half of the problem. It's like the high school mathematics scenario we talked about. You managed to supply an answer, but there's nothing to "show the work."

"Stakeholders want to understand what's behind the numbers visualized on the dashboard," says Nadia as she introduces CaliberMind's Role-Based Dashboards.

[7] RevOps Co-op, "AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," https://www.revopscoop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly

Ideally, your marketing and data teams should be moving towards instrumentation that allows you to both see and control the logic. Mature organizations will have data-savvy people with hands-on experience who want access to see the SQL queries powering your reports and dashboards.

Make it clear where the data comes from, how it's modeled, and what assumptions sit underneath each metric. Auditability builds credibility.

So, as your business grows and evolves, you need to work towards a data infrastructure that's traceable, verifiable, and customizable. It needs to be able to grow with your organization as your goals and needs become more complex.

Again, this will not happen on the back of one champion. Teams need to rally together to understand one another's needs and work together to create a roadmap.

R – Roadmap

With data projects, it's very common to focus on how far you are from the ideal and get discouraged. It's a glass-half-empty kind of thing.

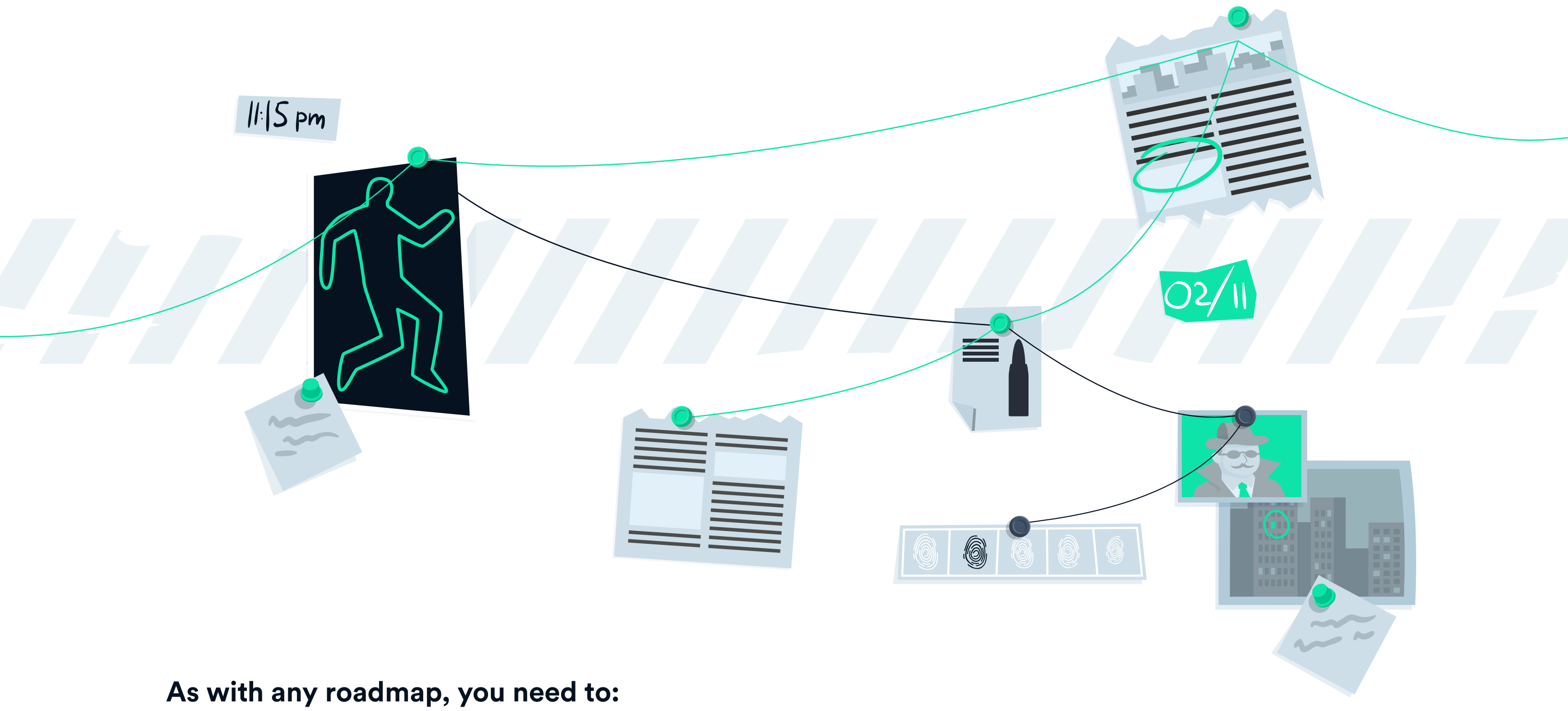
What you need to realize is there isn't a single company that has reached perfection, because that "ideal state" isn't a static target. We have to accept that the destination is in many ways a moving target.

But rather than letting that discourage us, we can look at it as a North Star. It's the direction of our movement that's important — not whether we've crossed some kind of finish line.

Data work is never "done." There's no magic day when every dashboard is 100% accurate and your reports get a standing ovation.

With that in mind, it's important to have a **roadmap.**

In fact, think of your data as a product. A product has a roadmap with features that should enable user capabilities, and those capabilities should help users make measurable progress. It's the same with your data. Your teams are consumers and users of data. And the goal is always to make progress for the business.



As with any roadmap, you need to:

- **Set priorities** — and sign off on them as a team.
- **Define concrete checkpoints** for the direction you're going.
- **Do pilot projects** before scaling across the org.
- **Create room for iteration.** Accept that you'll have to test, audit, and make adjustments.
- **Communicate, collaborate, and show** you have one another's interests in mind (*cough* Marketing and Sales and their rocky relationship). It just makes buy-in easier.

Put simply, don't try to boil the ocean. Break your goals down into manageable chunks.

We like the practical advice of Asaf Rothem, VP of Marketing at Investing.com:

> **"Come up with one company-changing play within three months. This doesn't mean it goes into production, but it means you have something to talk about."[8]**

Importantly, Asaf emphasizes that it all starts with having conversations outside of our silos, so that we can solve one another's problems for the good of the business.

[8] CMO Alliance, CMO Convo [podcast], "The CMO Survival Guide for 2025 and Beyond," https://www.cmoalliance.com/the-cmo-survival-guide-for-2025-with-asaf-rothem/

U – Utility

Your data, insights, and reports should be useful.

You'd think we wouldn't need to state the obvious. But when it comes to data, it's so easy to get lost in the noise, because there's just so much of it and there are an infinite number of ways to interact with it.

One of Misha Salkinder's favorite words is curate.

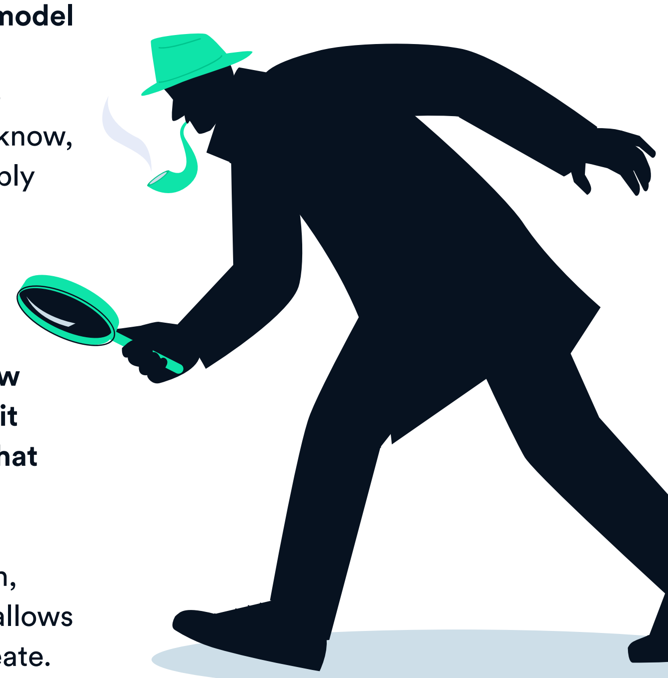
> **"Sometimes data comes in a level of granularity that while it works for the sake of data, in terms of reporting, it doesn't. That's why it's important to not just collect data, but curate it for the questions you're trying to answer."**

Curation can mean lots of different things. It might mean:

- **Unifying or bucketing certain data points**
- **Excluding a dataset altogether**
- **Omitting certain touches for a specific attribution model**

It all depends on the context and relevance to answering the question at hand. Sometimes it just takes common sense to know, for example, that a training event for existing customers simply isn't attribution-worthy alongside your other campaigns.

However, Misha often warns against over-engineering. **"There are diminishing returns with going too deep and over-engineering."**[9] He adds, **"It's a little bit of an art. I know we're talking about the science of how the data flows, but it really is important to remember the utility of this ... and what we're trying to accomplish."**[10]



Of course, this brings us back to the topic of instrumentation, because you'll need to have data warehousing in place that allows you to control what goes into the reports you're trying to create.

[9] CaliberMind, "How to Use Funnel Data to Improve Your B2B Marketing Motion," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSxTvmRfcz8
[10] CaliberMind, "DIY Attribution: Connecting Data Sources (When & How)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq2WkGTysdU

Drew Smith, CEO and Founder of Attributa, joined us on Episode 5 in our ***Hitchhiker's Guide to Marketing Analytics*** live event series, where he shared an ultra practical framework for how to go from reporting for reporting's sake to building a reporting ecosystem that leads to meaningful, actionable insights. He says:

> **"Marketing reporting should always strive to be both interesting and useful. Interesting means that something is important, which changes based on the recipient. ... You have to tailor what you're going to report on based on who is going to be the recipient of that data. Useful means that something leads to meaningful action."[11]**

Another aspect of data utility is access. Data can be a goldmine that just sits there un-mined. So in order to evolve your data maturity, you should always revisit the conversation about who has access and how and for what purpose. Which brings us to data stewardship.

S – Stewardship

Democratization is a popular word when we talk about data.

Joshua Kanter, a four-time CMO who spent the earliest parts of his career buried in SQL, warns about the pitfalls of democratizing data:

> **"When you talk about data democratization, there's a sort of implicit assumption that the data itself has good integrity, that it's clear, and if only people could engage with it — if only they had access to it — then we'd all make better decisions and we'd see the world the same way."**

But it's never as simple as that.

He says that in his years of consulting, he sees that often people bring bias, personal instincts, and preconceived ideas and "they're just looking for the data to confirm what they already believe."

[11] Humans of Martech, Ep. 174, "Joshua Kanter: A 4-Time CMO on the Case Against Data Democritization," https://humansofmartech.com/2025/06/17/174-joshua-kanter-the-case-against-data-democratization/

Presenting the data is one thing. Interpreting is another, and interpreting the data takes skill.

That doesn't mean you should deprive your organization from access to data; it just means you should democratize responsibly.

"The important thing is to pair good business judgment with a solid understanding of data," says Kanter. The goal is for the right people to see the right data in the right context to make informed decisions.

He advocates for making sure you hire data-literate marketers and savvy analysts who can be a bridge between the business layer and the data layer. He goes so far as to say this:

> **"I think it's true that not every CMO has an affinity for the data side of things. ... I do happen to believe, though, for the kinds of businesses that I work in, the strategic role of a marketing leader requires fluency in data and technology."**

So when you're talking about becoming (or evolving) as a data-driven organization, you must know where and how your needs for data literacy and fluency will be met.

Nadia Davis says that this is where we need to open our eyes to how ops and analyst roles may evolve — not by chance, but by design!

> **"Even with AI, I think the role will never go away because somebody still has to educate the rest of the business. ... I love this [notion of MOps and analytics teams] being the stewards, the trainers for the rest of the business."[12]**

[12] RevOps Co-op, "AI for Marketing Analytics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," https://www.revopscoop.com/webinar-series/ai-marketing-analytics-good-bad-ugly

So you should start to think along the path of your Marketing Operations and Analytics teams as:

- Data stewards
- Translators of business requirements into queries and outputs
- Trainers of individual contributors on interpreting data correctly
- Connectors of individual metrics to revenue outcomes
- Keepers of the book (aka “data dictionary”)

Another important part of it is documentation, such as maintaining a data dictionary.

Joe Schattschneider says the challenge of documentation grows the more advanced your data maturity is:

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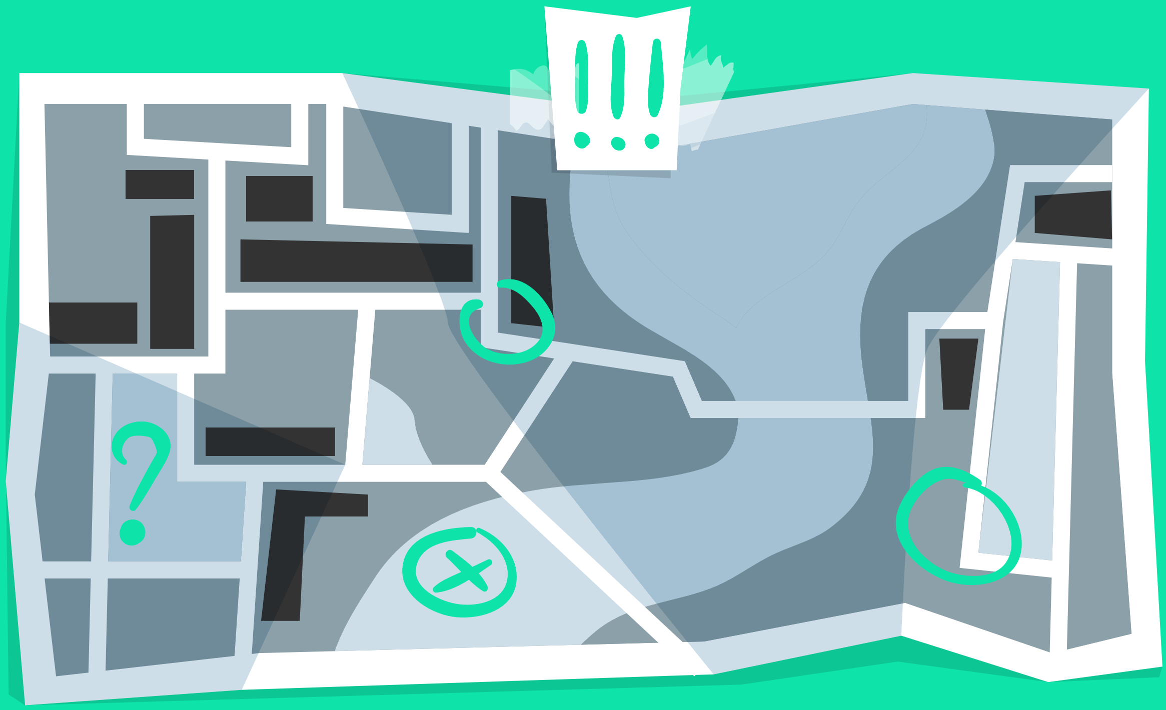
“The more data you have in your organization, the tougher it is to get it all documented and maintained. It’s an interesting Catch-22.”

So, let’s just say, it’s a good problem to have, but you do have to do something about it. Nadia thinks the manual, repetitive processes there are a great place to consider adding some AI assistance.



[11] Humans of Martech, Ep. 174, “Joshua Kanter: A 4-Time CMO on the Case Against Data Democritization,” https://humansofmartech.com/2025/06/17/174-joshua-kanter-the-case-against-data-democratization/

T – Truth

At the end of the day, this is what every marketing leader is chasing — a shared version of the truth.

Not the truth in some absolute, mathematical sense (because that doesn't exist). Every dataset, every system, and every model is an interpretation of reality, not reality itself.

Misha likes to use the word "lens."

> **"Once you've set up your data to be attribution-ready [in a data warehouse as opposed to in-app attribution], all of a sudden you can ask a lot of different questions that don't necessarily have an attribution lens. 'How should I structure my funnel ... given this unified buyer journey?' 'What should we be doing more of?' ... These questions are still within the realm of marketing analytical questions, but not necessarily within the attribution lens."[13]**

With attribution, for example, there's no point debating which attribution model is superior. The most mature marketing teams will want to apply different models depending on what question they're trying to answer. In fact, sometimes different models inform each other.

Misha explains:

> **"What we at CaliberMind, for example, do is much less of 'Build this model versus that model.' It's the curation of data itself, and then the models are different flavors of leading marketing questions that can help you make better decisions."[14]**

[13] CaliberMind, "The Absolute Best Way to Optimize Your Attribution Strategy," The ABSOLUTE BEST Way to Optimize Your Attribution Strategy

[14] CaliberMind, "How to Use Funnel Data to Improve Your B2B Marketing Motion," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSxTvmRfcz8

For truth to be discovered, you first need to be genuinely curious (and not always with an agenda). That's probably the most beautiful thing about data maturity. It affords teams the luxury of being curious with their data. They start to see the possibilities of being able to answer questions of not just what happened in the past, but how they can fine-tune their marketing activities by funnel stage, industry, product line, and more.

Curiosity is a cousin to creativity. In many ways, data — which is historically seen as part of STEM — becomes very much an art as well. When data inspires you to be curious, you get creative with your questions. And that creativity in the "ask" eventually allows you to get creative with your campaigns (but with less guessing!).

Now, we need to add something important here.

In the realm of data, for truth to be actionable, it doesn't always need to be 100% certain.

It needs to be confidently directional.

It's important to be data-driven, but it can go to such extremes that some people refuse to take action on anything unless they can be 100% certain. That's not a healthy place to be, as it can slow you down in low-risk, low-effort, low-ROI areas.

Even when we have the data telling us that one ad type works better than another, guess what — our target audience evolves too, and they will surprise us and challenge everything we know.

You want your GTM team to align on *what's true enough to act on.*

Directionally correct beats theoretically perfect. Because the power of data lies not in precision, but in its ability to unite people around the same narrative — one credible enough to drive decisions with confidence.

To recap

Rebuilding trust in data takes patience, shared effort, and the right foundation. It happens when teams can trace how a number was calculated, see where it came from, and agree on what it means.

- **Transparency** creates visibility into the logic behind your reports.
- **Roadmap** helps you move forward deliberately, one initiative at a time.
- **Utility** keeps your data practical and actionable for the people who need it most.
- **Stewardship** reinforces a shared responsibility to care for the integrity of your data.
- **Truth** is what emerges when all these parts work together — a common story your business can stand behind.

Data maturity is a sign that your organization has learned to ask questions, stay curious, and build an arsenal of insight together.

The Next Chapter Is Yours To Write

Marketing has always been about understanding people — what moves them, what motivates them, what makes them act.

Today, that understanding still begins with intuition and a deep connection to what makes us human. But now, with the added lens of data, we get to be even savvier. And the more savvy we are, the more strategic we can be.

The marketing leaders who thrive in this next era more than creative thinkers or tech adopters. They're translators — weaving together art and analytics, human insight and machine intelligence, storytelling and science.

One thing hasn't changed: our ability to adapt faster than anyone else. The next phase belongs to marketers who connect the dots across people, platforms, and performance — and who lead with both empathy and evidence.

This ebook is just the start.

Marketing's next chapter isn't being written for us — it's being written by us.

At CaliberMind, we help B2B marketing leaders turn data into direction and complexity into confidence. Why not continue the journey with us?

Explore our Hitchhiker's Guide to Marketing Analytics — a free, on-demand series where every session comes with practical takeaways you can put to work right away.

Watch “Hitchhiker‘s Guide to Marketing Analytics“

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About CaliberMind

CaliberMind partners with many enterprise teams to help them travel their data journey with confidence and trust behind the numbers.

We offer unparalleled analytical capabilities and flexibility in custom report and dashboard building with data governance at the center of our platform.

If you're curious about how we can help your team, **let's talk!**

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MARKETING MEANS BUSINESS: A TRILOGY

A three-part reflection on shaping the marketing value narrative
to win the boardroom, tame the algorithm, and own the bottom line

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