

Turning ideas into reality—The “how to” of machine learning Coach, Epsilon

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OVERVIEW

Machine learning is so pervasive that you probably use it dozens of times a day without knowing it. In the past decade, it has given us self-driving cars, speech recognition, online product recommendations, effective web search, fraud detection and more. Marketers often talk about the strategies behind machine learning but lack the “how to” component.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Personalization has been slowly adopted** in the email channel.
- **Email as a channel hasn’t had to be personal**—it’s been relevant but not personal. It is a low-cost channel and was always effective. There is a cost to being more personal. How do you get your organization to shift? It’s not about the cost, but about the shift.
- **How do you leverage data to drive email content?**
 - Use data to decide what will resonate, creative, subject line, CTA; understanding their trajectory; infer every aspect of the communication—it can get overwhelming. Determine the subset of data and the elements we want to impact; then start testing it.
 - Subject line is half the battle. The biggest problem is getting people to open— to move the open rate is big upside. It makes sense to use data to improve the daily grind of the program. For example, iterations of SL based on data is one of the easier things to do.
- **How can you prepare for machine learning in email?**
 - You have to have the right assets to support the machine learning. The data, a template that can accommodate the decisions and generate dynamic content and style guide and business rules (the guardrails) for the machine.
 - Metadata behind product photography, creative is often overlooked, (no asset management system). It is important to think it through—marrying data with creative experience. It is a challenge. And getting creative team onboard to do the process.
- **Other unexpected challenges**... Be careful with seed lists. Figure out ways to preview content to make for a better experience. Answers questions about different iterations and show the data behind it (hold out groups, controls).

KEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

- **How will machine learning impact the industry going forward?**

- It will change the role of email marketer; what do the coding jobs become?
- You need to be a project manager and an analyst.

- **Any advice to get started?**

- Don't boil the ocean. Start with a finite, digestible opportunity aligned tightly with your organization's objectives. Sell inside the organization, especially within the email channel—why should the CMO care?
- Put it on the ROI report; have a strong plan to make a compelling case. Tie the story together with CRM and data-driven marketing and email. Start somewhere specific and establish wins. They don't have to be sexy.

"Machine learning will take the mechanics out of email by giving the machine repetitive tasks. This will give people more time to do content curation, sourcing and organization."

– Kara Trivunovic, SVP, Digital Solutions, Epsilon

"To get started with machine learning, don't boil the ocean. Start with a finite, digestible opportunity aligned tightly with your organization's objectives."

– Bradley Breuer, Senior Director, Coach