Title: Is Machine Learning the Key to Unlocking Your Marketing Potential?

Or: Machine Learning and Marketing: What You Need to Know

Experienced marketers have likely often heard the term "machine learning" (ML) mulled over by thought leaders in the field, as well as carelessly tossed around by noisemakers looking to score trend-setting points. In the case of machine learning and marketing, oddly enough, nobody is wrong. Machine learning *is* an intricate subject that marketers should study and learn inside and out, and it *should* be shouted from the rooftops so every marketer who's missing out doesn't continue to do so.

And missing out you just may be. O'Reilly Media's most recent report, [The State of Machine Learning Adoption in the Enterprise](#), found that 36% of respondents worldwide have been using machine learning for two or more years, while 15% claimed five or more years, leaving under half of the organizations queried in the "just looking category". Instead of remaining in the dwindling "just looking" category for another year, take this opportunity to see if machine learning really is something you need to know more about, and possibly be on your way to the next steps by the time you're done reading.

What Is Machine Learning? [H2]

It's important to be able to confidently define machine learning before diving into its marketing applications. Machine learning is a branch of Artificial Intelligence with countless applications across countless subject areas (we'll just focus on marketing here). It's data driven; that is, a machine learning model needs exorbitant amounts of data, [sourced from your own organization](#), to produce meaningful results. Machine learning systems analyze data to extract relevant patterns without necessary human input. With those analyses, a machine learning system can come to conclusions and take action independently.

Machine Learning Applications in Marketing [H2]

As mentioned, the use cases for machine learning in marketing are endless. It's worth mentioning that machine learning tools for marketing, in general, serve two different purposes. First, there are those tools that lend to marketing automation, and then those that lend to marketing research. There isn't a strict divide between the two, but it might be helpful to categorize ML tools as such to better define what you're really looking to accomplish.

Machine Learning for Marketing Automation [H3]

With marketing automation, a machine learning system can streamline business processes and take repetitive tasks off your plate. Using stores of data on past transactions or customers, marketing automation can answer queries as a chatbot, make recommendations for additional purchases to customers, or segment your audience in order to deliver the most effective targeted ads, email campaigns, or loyalty discounts. All of these applications exponentially raise ROIs for marketing investments. All you have to do is collect the data relevant to your organization for an ML system to

analyze. If you're just starting out with machine learning as a marketer, marketing automation is a great first path to pursue.

Machine Learning for Marketing Research [H3]

If you're interested in analyzing complex trends to draw your own big picture conclusions, try machine learning for your marketing research. A machine learning system can analyze thousands of characteristics across countless audience members to present you with complex pictures of, for example, your most valuable customers, those most likely to abscond, and what efforts would be worth taking to retain the former and convince the latter to stay. Machine learning is excellent for sales forecasting, KPI analysis, and identifying and taking action on unusual or unexpected trend developments.

Trying Out Machine Learning [H2]

The best way to gage whether or not machine learning is for you is to try it out, and measure its effectiveness. Audience segmentation tools are a great place to start, since they can provide results from both categories of ML: automation and research. Audience segmentation itself has many practical benefits. Using machine learning to segment your customer base can allow your email campaign to send targeted, relevant emails to your customers, leading to greater interaction rates. In terms of research, it can help you identify segments most likely to abandon the conversion process midway. You could then try an A/B test to gage the best way to get those customers to stay, and, back to automation, have your system automatically deliver those incentives at the exact moments most likely to cause abandonment.

If you don't want to implement automation right away, you could simply use machine learning to segment your audience based on chosen characteristics, and analyze KPIs for each segment you create. Those more granular insights can allow you to make informed decisions you never could have become aware of on your own. Just remember, the more data you have, the more characterizations you can analyze, and the more precise segments you can create, leading to better return on targeted efforts.

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