

Customizations can cause no end of headaches

Off-the-shelf doesn't always work, but a custom solution can be great or create a lot of problems.

- **It puts you in the technology business.**
- **It distracts you from your actual mission.**
- **There's no "one and done." The costs keep racking up.**
- **It interferes with your ability to integrate with other platforms.**

Think about these four things before you go the custom route.

1. **Explain the problem** and why and how your current solution is not meeting expectations. Be honest: how bad is it?
2. **Distinguish necessary and whimsical customizations.** Every item needs to justify itself. "Custom" is not an excuse to go crazy.
3. **Consider the virtue of simplicity**, even if it seems boring.
4. **Document every customization** so that a tech guy from Romania who doesn't know your business can understand it.

A longer version of this article will appear on the Martech.org site in a couple days, and on my site a few days later. If you're following me on LinkedIn, you'll see it there.

Takeaways:

- A custom technology solution can distract you from your real business.
- Calculate the long-term costs and potential problems with a custom solution.

What if programmatic advertising died?

An interesting exercise in disaster planning is to **imagine what you'd do if all your current sources of revenue disappeared.**

Bob Hoffman's *Adscam* makes a persuasive case that programmatic advertising might as well have, because it's mostly garbage. It may have stopped returning results and you didn't notice.

I often say that every business book I've read could easily have been 1/5 as long. That doesn't apply to the two I've read from Hoffman. His books are both short and fun to read, and he boils the topic down to the bone.

Hoffman believes in advertising, but he's sure the programmatic side is worse than useless. In fact, he blames it for a lot of current social ills.

Takeaways:

- Read Hoffman's *Adscam*.
- Be very suspicious of your programmatic ad spend.
- Buy your ads from the people who display them.

Adscam claims ad fraud has become pervasive because ...

- **Advertisers no longer buy ads from the people who display them, and**
- **The system for buying ads is largely incomprehensible.** (Not in the sense that you can't use it, but in the sense that you can't understand how it works.)

Hoffman says ad fraud falls into three buckets: **fraudulent audiences, fraudulent websites, or fraudulent clicks.**

When you put it all together, ad fraud is one of the largest frauds in history, and **only three percent of programmatic ad purchases result in actual ads seen by people.**

As a final note, recent studies show that **ads work best when they are next to relevant content.** (What a surprise!) Structure your ad spend accordingly.

Sources for new product ideas

Editors' opinions are great, and the idea from the CEO's lover is ... an idea. But there are other ways to get new product suggestions. I like the ones that come from data. **Use data as a source for ideas, and to verify or discredit hunches.**

Analytics can give a hint. You noticed that lots of people viewed your article on stomach cancer, but were they drive-bys or were they customers? Are they the sort of people who would be willing to pay? As my friend Chris Moffa says, **"there's all the difference in the world between someone who will spend a dollar and someone who won't."**

Takeaways:

- Use data as a source of and a check on product ideas.
- A customer data platform is a great tool for this.
- Don't confuse what people like with what they're willing to pay for.
- Look for ways to turn customer interactions into data.

I have to remind myself that I have a bias against exclusively ad-supported products. My inclination is to qualify "lots of traffic" with "yes, but will they pay?" But that's not always necessary. Ad revenue is also revenue.

A customer data platform can help where analytics fails. You can divide your traffic between what your customers read and what the hoi polloi read. Segment analysis can reveal trends that you can test.

Mine customer comments. You can listen in on calls, or you can read CSR summaries, but better yet, **find a way to turn customer interactions into data.** E.g., 10 percent of our audience is asking about tablets.

Social media. **If your market is disgruntled baboons, get product ideas from Twitter.** But seriously, remember the free vs. paid issue. Social media trends might give good ideas for ad-supported articles, but be cautious before you convert that to a paid concept.

Q&A sessions at events provide good qualitative feedback, but you need to quantify what you hear with further research. This reminds me of the ILEX conference I attended in Austin this year. It was all about market research, and I found myself wondering why, if it works for people who sell consumer goods, publishers don't do more of it.

Finally, **data can tell you if customers are using your service the way you thought they would.** If they're not, that might open new possibilities.

Watch the video: CDP use cases for publishers

In this 12-minute video, **I explain the benefits publishers can reap from a customer data platform by outlining 14 use cases.** The list is not exhaustive, but it presents some basic ways publishers can benefit by implementing a CDP.

Things such as ...

- Customized emails in response to a visitor's online activity
- Encouraging online renewals
- Managing different levels of access (like a paywall)
- Creating custom audiences for advertisers
- Identifying unengaged users
- Creating new customer journeys ...



... and a lot more. **Use the QR code to see the video.**

“My kids are always on TikTok”

From time to time we get a new dose of “everybody’s doing this, we should do it too.” Such advice stems from a laudable desire to notice what’s going on in the world, and a slightly less laudable desire to chase the shiny new object.

Yes, there are lots of people on TikTok. There are also lots of people at a football stadium. That doesn’t mean you should advertise there.

Ask yourself ...

- **Are they my target market?**
- **Are they the sort of people who like my product, and pay for such things?**
- **Are they in the mood to buy something when they’re in this environment?**

That last one is key. I remember seeing a preacher on the DC Metro one day, and I thought “even if somebody wants to hear your message, they don’t want to hear it here and now.”

We often hear stories about a company that’s making a killing on TikTok. Yes, and Michael Jordan made a lot of money playing basketball. That doesn’t mean you will.

I’ve been encouraged to try it, and I might.

But before you jump into the latest thing, **consider the opportunity cost.** What are you *not doing* in order to play with TikTok?

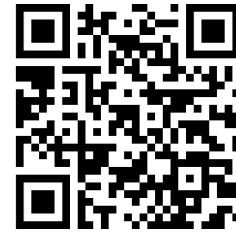
Takeaways:

- “Lots of people” doesn’t mean “lots of your people.”
- One company’s success might be an outlier.
- Consider the opportunity cost before you invest in TikTok.

Prefer to listen? Try the Podcast

I decided to make a print newsletter because I figured everyone's inbox is full, but their mailbox is relatively empty. That doesn't mean this is the only way you can access this content.

You can read these (and other) articles on my website, and now **you can listen to the latest *Krehbiel Letter* on *The Krehbiel Letter Podcast***. Use the QR code on the right.



Let me know what you think, and if you like it, please tell a friend.

CDP implementation mistakes to avoid

It's easy to make a mess of a CDP implementation. Too many companies buy into the hype without enough preparation, and then a year later they wonder where their investment has gone. **Here are ten things to avoid.**

1. Rushing it
2. Not thinking carefully about identity
3. Sticking to one source of truth
4. Overlooking analytics
5. Ignoring organizational silos
6. Having no leader
7. Forgetting time-based requirements
8. Ignoring capacity issues
9. Buying into crazy integration claims
10. Overlooking the invoice



If you want more details on each of these CDP mistakes, **read the longer version on my site**. Use the QR code to link to the article.

Events question: does “hybrid” ever work?

I love live events, and virtual events can be okay, but **my experience with hybrid events has been negative.**

Is that just me? I don't think so. Everyone I've asked says the same thing.

The biggest operational problem is the Q&A. It never seems to work.

On a more subjective level, the online and the live audiences don't feel any connection. **They don't both feel as if they're part of the same event.**

Agree? Disagree? Weigh in on my site.

Call me at 240-687-1230, or visit krehbielgroup.com.