

One-on-One Interview Series

CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER



ODGERS BERNDTSON
Search Intelligence



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Chief Information Officer

Odgers Berndtson is the 6th largest executive search firm world-wide. Our CIO practice leadership in the region is a reflection of our 15 years of achievements across Asia Pacific.

This interview series will take you inside the mind of Asia's most forward-looking Chief Information Officers. They will share their personal views on their impact on society, the evolution of their role, the new technological trends and their experience with the millennials.



**Harpreet
Kaintel**
CHIEF INTELLIGENCE
OFFICER
ZENITH OPTIMEDIA

Harpreet is not a Chief Information Officer; his role at a marketing agency with a focus on return on investment is quite different. He has a personal passion for business analytics and strategy and he applies both to the decision-making process in areas such as marketing effectiveness and customer analytics. We took interest in discovering how he used his own very unique experience to redefine his role and how he mixes it with his vision of technology.



CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE MISLEADING PART OF YOUR CIO TITLE?

There is a lot you can do with a piece of data, but figuring out what is right and relevant for your business, that is what we thought would be the intelligence in “Chief Intelligence Officer”, but we were naïve as it still gets read as ‘Information’... [laughs].

A GREAT CHIEF INTELLIGENCE OFFICER'S VISION CONSISTS OF...

Empowering the decisions that take place within an organization in a very swift and intelligent manner and taking out the value judgments to a large extent. Enabling the managers to have the right information, which is then translated into great insights and is used to create business value. I think it's just connecting those dots within the organization and putting information into a very intelligent format.

DO YOU THINK THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF INTELLIGENCE OFFICER CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON SOCIETY AT LARGE?

Absolutely. If you look at it from a productivity point of view, the moment you are utilising the right information you are eliminating spaces where we are being unproductive and wasting resources. The second thing is helping people who, due to a lack of information, are struggling to do their jobs in an efficient manner. The last thing the CIO can do for society is to put that information out in the public space so that it's accessible and meaningful to consumers, end-users, and any other stakeholders of the organization.

WHAT ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE CDO, IS THAT RELEVANT IN YOUR WORLD?

These titles can sometimes be confusing. CDO for us is what I mentioned as misleading about my CIO title. We see CIO and CDO as overlapping. Fact is that cloud is making a huge shift to the I in CIO as we knew – we need to let go of the legacy systems and convert ourselves to ‘Intelligence’ or Data, whatever you would want to call it. The task is use technology to get the right information/data brought into the business, add in data science and then connect it to decision makers. So technology + data sciences is the way forward. What is missing from the puzzle is data science – we are chasing the hardware, missing the value of the software and knowledge of data science.



Simple reason is that IT still sticks to its legacy systems, marketing/management doesn't have full understanding of what is possible and we are stuck in a space where we are not maximising the potential of this huge asset.

TELL US ABOUT THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN YOUR WORLD?

Every time a brand touches a consumer, they form an impression of that brand. Whether a consumer sees an ad, hears about it from a friend or sees somebody driving a car on the road, everything contributes to the customer experience. So, how do we target our communication within that context? Making sure the customer experience associated with our client's brand is positive and that it is more positive than that created by our competitors is what advertising and communication is concerned about.

Specifically in terms of data analytics: how do we capture every step a consumer goes through on their digital journey to find a particular product or solution in a useful data format? Let's say that they want to go on a holiday. When do they start looking for information? When do they start making decisions? How do they make those decisions? Collecting this data and answering these questions is the core role of data analytics. The customer experience loop is absolutely paramount in this business.

I think the challenge is that digital is not linear. We are all used to analysing a linear CX loop: awareness, consideration, purchase, experience. It just doesn't work that way anymore.

A hotel can spend millions of dollars on advertising that can go absolutely to waste when somebody reads a comment online published by a friend who had a terrible experience. How do you react to this kind of information in real time? You still have to plan your ad campaign and media activities but as you invest that money you also have to start tracking its effect: what types of experiences am I delivering? Are people talking about the things I want them to talk about? Are there any negative experiences I can address and correct in real time? That's where the customer experience and the digital world come together.



WHAT ABOUT MANAGING MILLENNIALS IN YOUR BUSINESS: ARE THEY CHANGING THE WAY YOU WORK?

“Change” is a very timid word for it! It is absolutely shaking things up. Anyone who claims they’ve figured out how millennials think and behave is fooling themselves. Everybody is chasing these guys because they are growing up in an ecosystem that is very different from what every other generation has been through. Take Facebook for example: it’s like a party where parents have crashed, so the youngsters are looking for newer ways to connect.

I think the whole concept of “customer experience” is acquiring a completely different meaning for this generation. Experience is instant now, rather than life-long. We used to build experiences with a service or a product. These days, experiences are built with apps.

Instant gratification is what millennials expect but it is not how the traditional world of advertising and communication has developed. Millennials will first go out and ask others who have tried a brand or a product. Then they will try it and dump it as fast as they picked it up. So succeeding in this market is about how can you stay fresh and relevant.

In the past, we would spend three months creating an ad from research that was six months old. By the time it goes live, that consumer doesn’t exist anymore. So being up to date, being able to talk to consumers through messaging on the fly is a technological and data challenge.

DATA AS A COMPANY ASSET

Data has always been something that key decision makers want to use but there hasn’t been enough of it. Making sure the data we have is accurate is another challenge. Consumer and advertising data is very research-based so it’s worth testing the accuracy or bias of the research.

Now we have much more data available. When you take data from Google, for example, you are not relying on a small sample, you are looking at data from a large segment of the population. Is it an asset? Absolutely. Are we treating it as an asset? Give and take.

I think we are still way behind what we could be doing. We need to let the data do some of the talking. I am not suggesting that the data can make decisions – it cannot – let’s be very clear about that. Data is an enabler; it is not a decision maker. We need to be more consistent, more disciplined and better at harnessing the power of data science. We are using data to craft dashboards, but what’s the science behind it? Are we really using data as an asset? Not yet and we have a lot of challenges ahead in that regard.



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Eduardo de Barros is a Consultant in the Singapore office focused on CIO, CTO, CSO, CDO roles, part of the regional Information Technology team operating across South East Asia. He studied I.T. during 6 years and started his career in 2005 as the Chief Editor of an Information Technology magazine. His passion for recruitment appeared while building a team within a start-up, thus leading him to join a global recruitment firm. He then founded his search firm in Geneva, where he built his reputation in recruiting technology experts for private banks. Of Portuguese origins, he is raised in France and has learnt business in Switzerland.



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