



**Unlocking growth with a unified
customer data ecosystem**

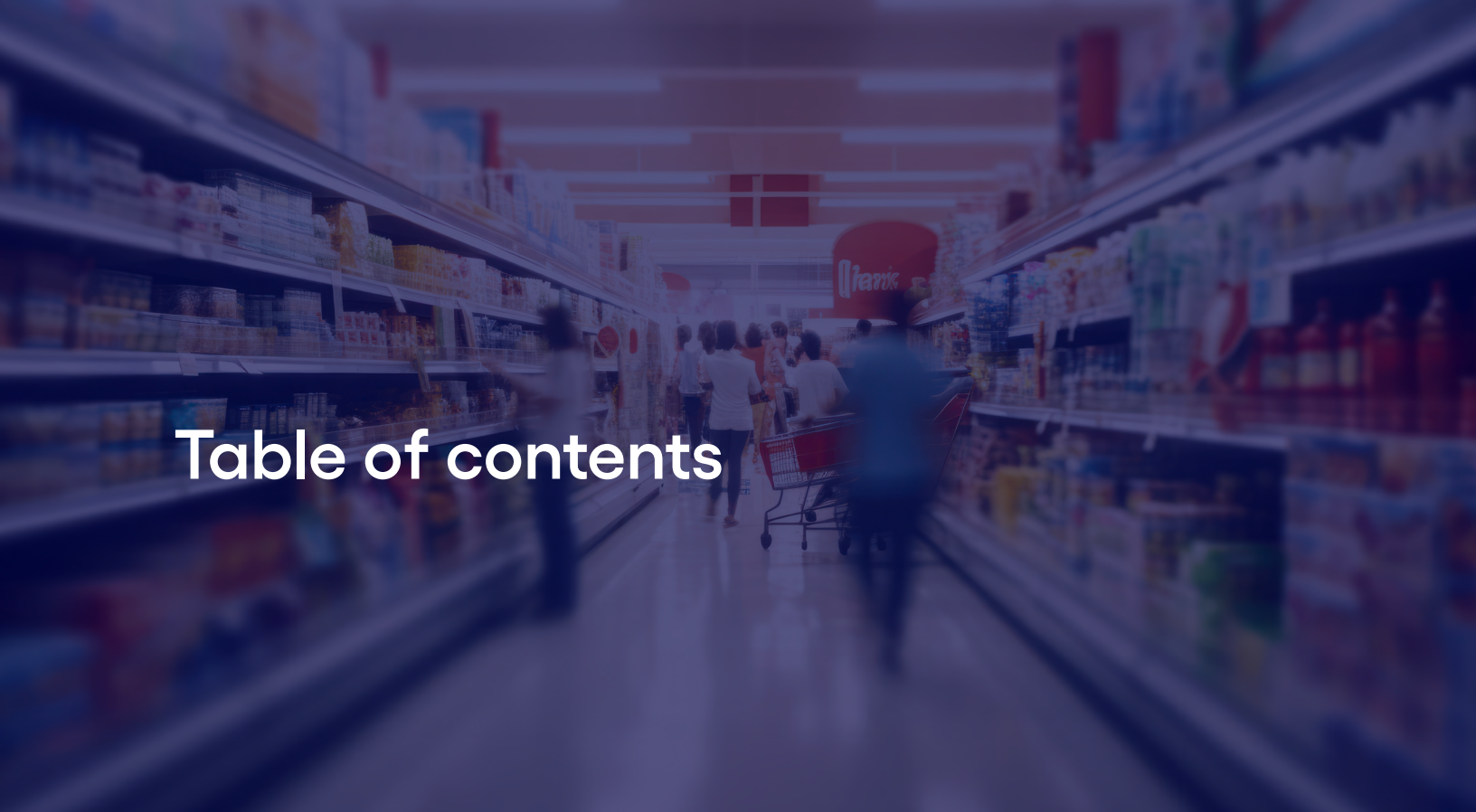


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Executive summary

Here's a harsh reality consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies are facing: fragmented customer data = disconnected experiences.

Cognizant's customer data ecosystem (CDE) helps companies unlock real-time customer insights, deliver hyper-personalized engagement and drive revenue growth. **Recent reports** suggest that 75% of customers expect a consistent experience across every channel they engage with, but only 25% are satisfied with the experience provided.

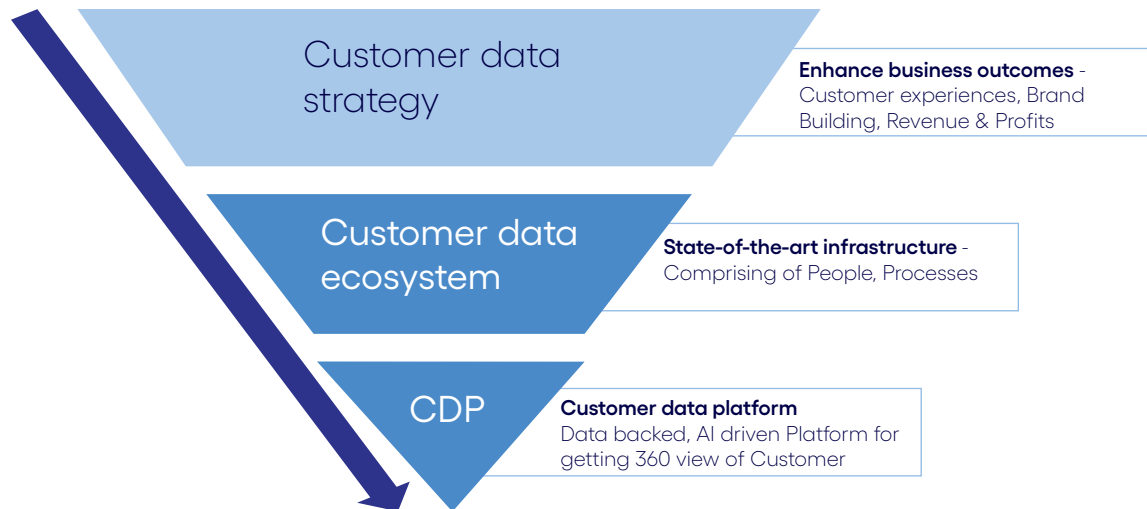
With our expertise in AI, ML and data unification, we help businesses create a 360-degree customer profile that enhances retention, optimizes marketing spend and identifies new revenue opportunities. Our pre-built tools and accelerators ensure faster adoption of customer data platforms (CDPs), delivering measurable impact and tangible ROI.

This white paper examines the importance of a customer data ecosystem in establishing a cohesive customer data strategy, the benefits of deploying a CDP, and methods for initiating this process.

Cognizant's CDE framework

At Cognizant, we're often asked what the most important component of a CDE is. Our answer is simple—having a broader customer data strategy. This helps to mitigate inefficiencies, lost opportunities and inconsistent growth. It is important to introduce a comprehensive analytics plan to understand customer behavior, influence purchasing decisions, and create effective marketing and business offerings. Without a robust customer data strategy, companies risk losing real-time access to customer data, hindering their ability to predict next actions and suggest better offers. The inability to build a unified customer identity impedes effective audience segmentation, resulting in fragmented customer views and scattered user histories across devices. Additionally, without insights into customer behavior, orchestrating efficient customer journeys becomes challenging. As a result, businesses are unable to derive valuable customer insights or deliver seamless omnichannel experiences.

Cognizant's CDE framework helps CPGs in acquiring new customers and business opportunities while creating a streamlined environment for the entire customer behavior lifecycle, enabling the extraction of meaningful insights.



Key industry trends emphasizing the need for a CDE

A well-defined customer data strategy enables businesses to gather, unify and analyze customer data in real time, providing a comprehensive view of customer behavior. This holistic approach not only enhances customer engagement through hyper-personalized interactions but also drives revenue growth by identifying new business opportunities.

In this section, we explore several key trends shaping the need for a robust CDE:

- **Omnichannel customer experience:** Providing a seamless and consistent experience across all channels, including web, mobile, social media and retail stores. Customers expect a consistent experience across every channel they choose to engage.
- **E-commerce and D2C expansion:** The expansion of e-commerce and direct-to-consumer (D2C) channels is reshaping the way customers interact with brands.
- **Social media influence:** Social media plays a significant role in product discovery and customer engagement, with **41% of customers** discovering products on social media. This necessitates stronger engagement strategies as the customers' propensity to switch gets higher.
- **Personalization and customization:** Personalized engagements drive customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customers seek personalized prices and promotions tailored to their preferences.
- **Sustainability and ethical consumerism:** Customers are increasingly concerned about sustainability and ethical practices, emphasizing the need for tailored communications on sustainability practices.

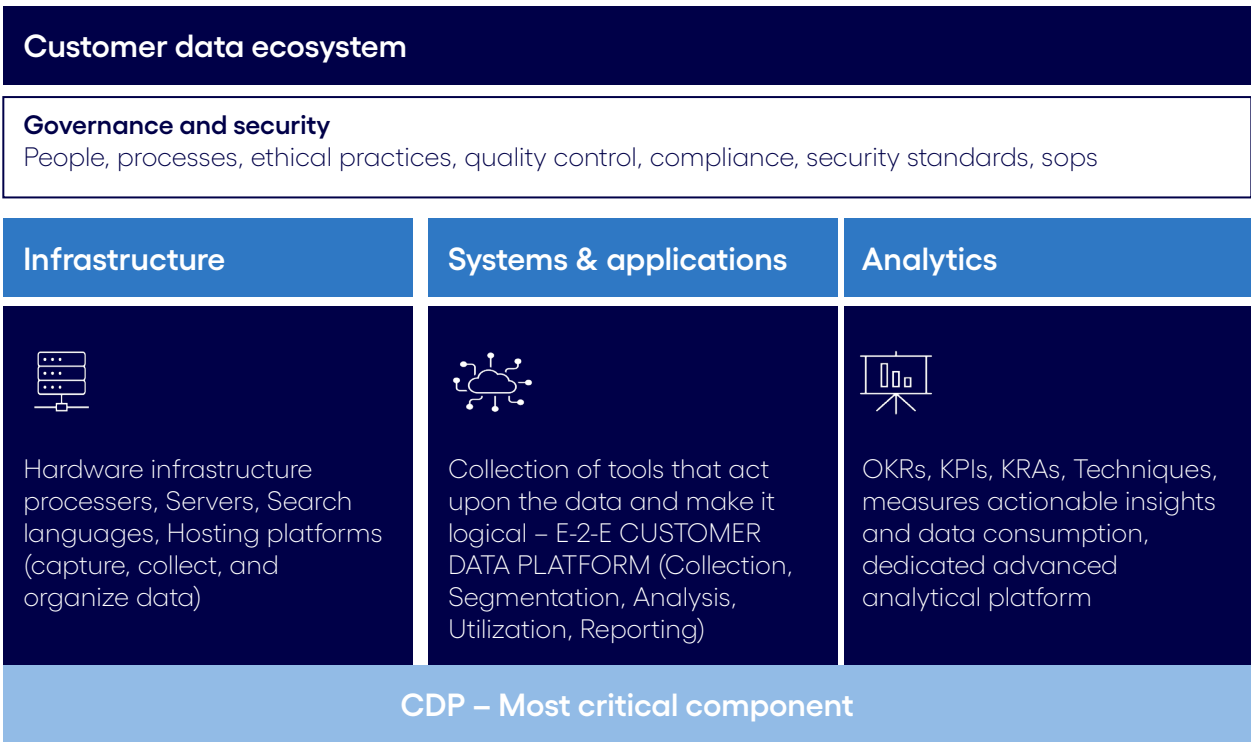
Building a robust CDE

Cognizant's approach to building a robust CDE focuses on enabling key capabilities such as:

- Building a unified customer profile
- Enabling targeted marketing and personalization
- Providing actionable insights and predictive capabilities
- Enhancing customer experiences
- Streamlining operations
- Ensuring performance tracking and compliance

What does our platform look like?

It's a data-backed, AI-driven platform that provides a comprehensive 360-degree view of the customer. This platform combines enterprise infrastructure and applications to aggregate and analyze information, enabling companies to better understand their customers and develop superior marketing, pricing and operational strategies.

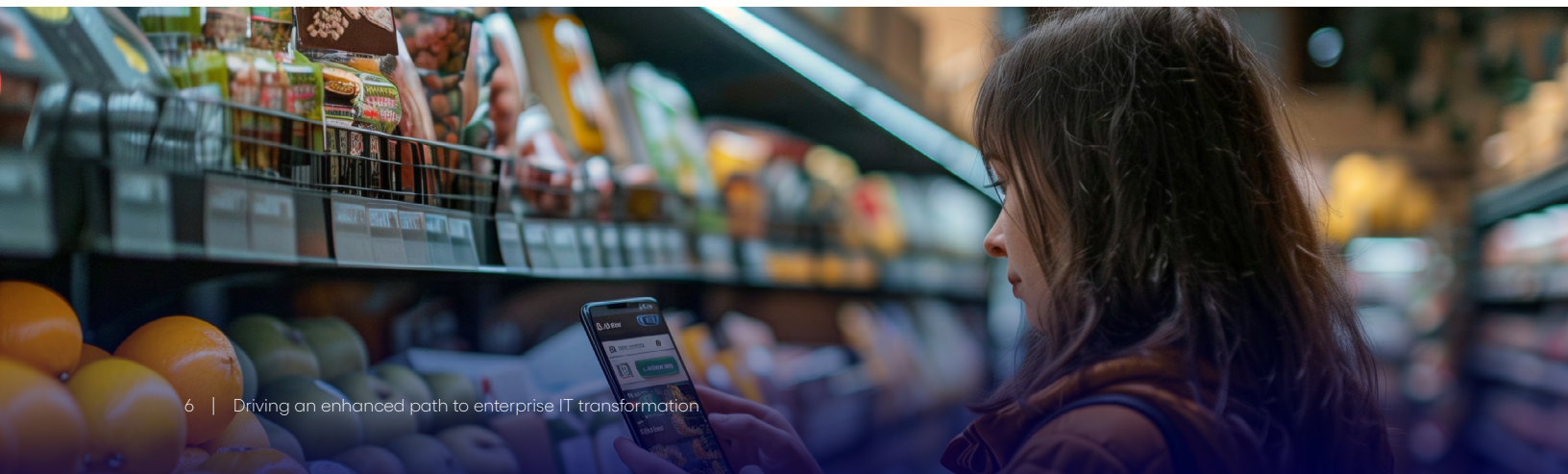
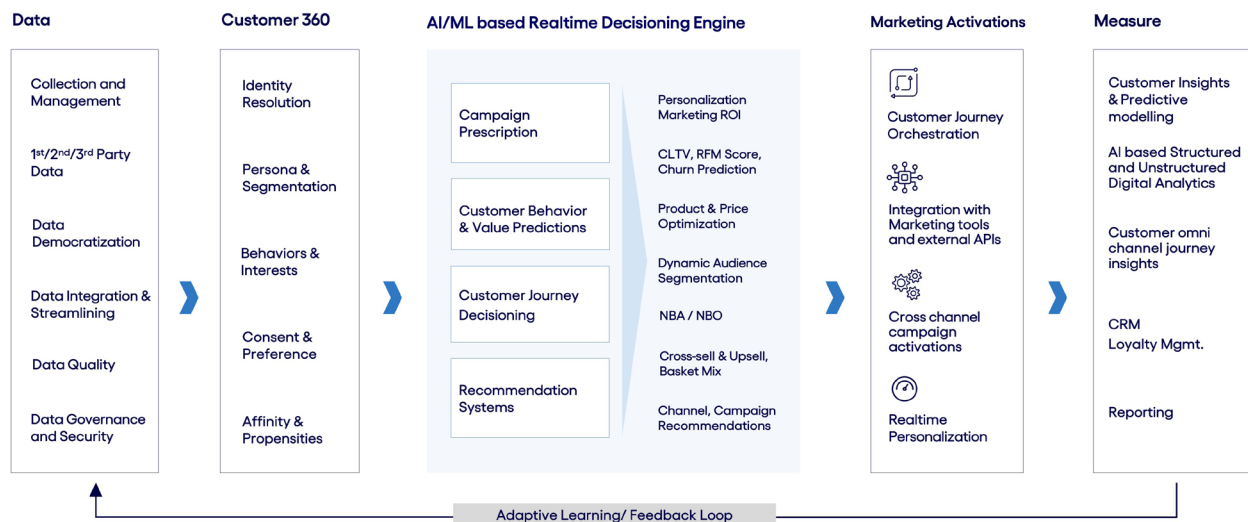


Our customer data platform (CDP) aggregates data from various touchpoints to create a unified customer profile, enabling hyper-personalized experiences.

Key components that a CDE should enable:

1. **Data aggregation and unification:** Creating comprehensive data sets by consolidating and gathering data from different sources
2. **Data analysis:** Extracting meaningful data insights through advanced analytics and data mining techniques
3. **Customer profiling:** Businesses can tailor their strategies and offerings to specific customer groups based on their preferences, behaviors and demographics
4. **Predictive modeling:** Models can be built by leveraging historical data to forecast future customer behavior
5. **Marketing and campaign management:** To foster brand loyalty, businesses can cater to individual preferences by customizing marketing efforts, product offerings and customer experiences
6. **Privacy and security:** Built-in security and data protection ensures customer trust can be maintained

This diagram illustrates the foundational layers—ranging from infrastructure and analytics to governance and applications—that support a unified, AI-driven customer data platform. The CDP sits at the center, enabling real-time insights, segmentation, and personalized engagement across channels.



By leveraging rapidly advancing technologies such as artificial intelligence and generative AI, Cognizant can automate data democratization, analysis, recommendations, design and strategy. Through adaptive learning and feedback loops, our ML algorithms develop a robust customer data strategy, opportunity identification engine and idea generation framework.

We engineer experiences across various channels—web, mobile, social media and retail stores—using a layered and integrated approach to create a seamless customer experience. Our technical architecture enhances existing MarTech and analytical capabilities.

Leveraging the right insights

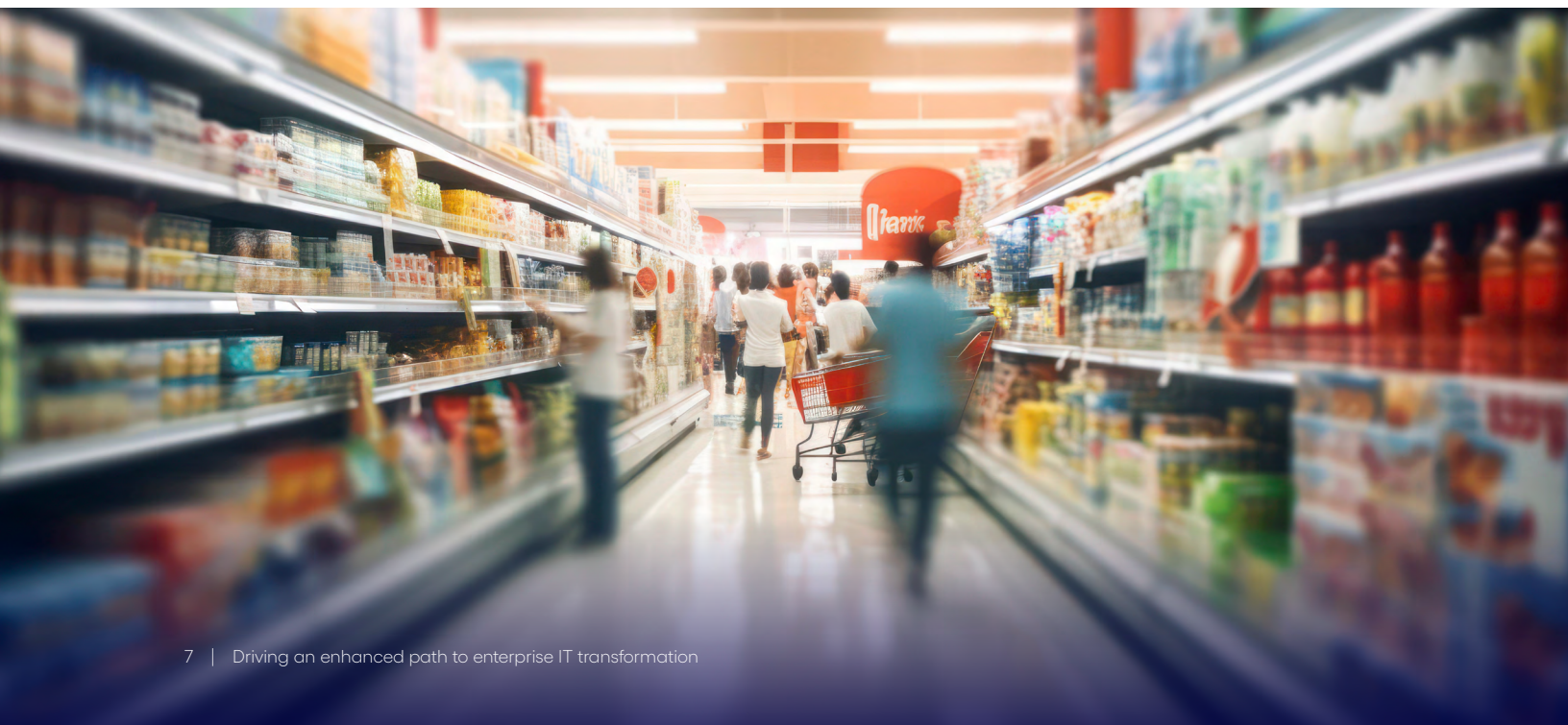
Effective customer data ecosystems rely on delivering the right insights to the right people. A persona-based approach ensures each stakeholder—whether marketing, sales, or service—receives tailored, actionable information aligned with their goals.

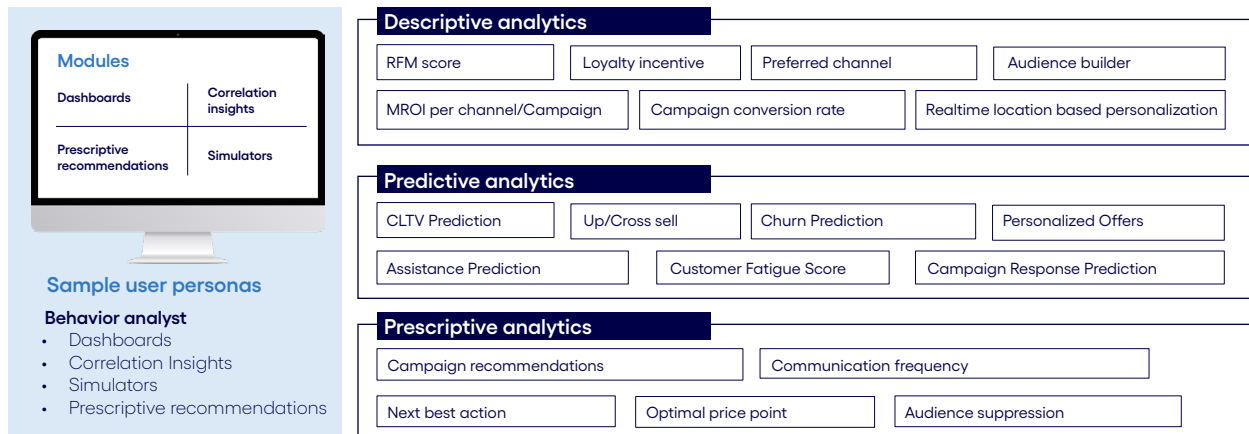
The key is to start by identifying key personas and understanding their specific needs. Then, generate targeted insights: campaign performance for marketers, lead conversion for sales, and engagement metrics for service teams.

Focus on high-impact data that drives decisions. Use three levels of insights:

- **Descriptive** – what happened and why
- **Predictive** – what's likely to happen
- **Prescriptive** – what to do next

By aligning insights with persona needs, organizations empower teams to act decisively and drive better outcomes.





Key use cases to maximize CDE outcomes

A use-case driven approach to building CDE helps in demonstrating business value early on. This also ensures that the effort remains focused on the goal. In this section, we reference critical use cases that shape CDE strategies for CPGs today, using potential value and data maturity.

- 1. Look-alike acquisition models:** Analyze their best customers to find attributes that distinguish them and then find others who are similar.
- 2. Cross-sell programs:** Identify which products each customer is most likely to buy, based on a complete view of purchases across all channels.

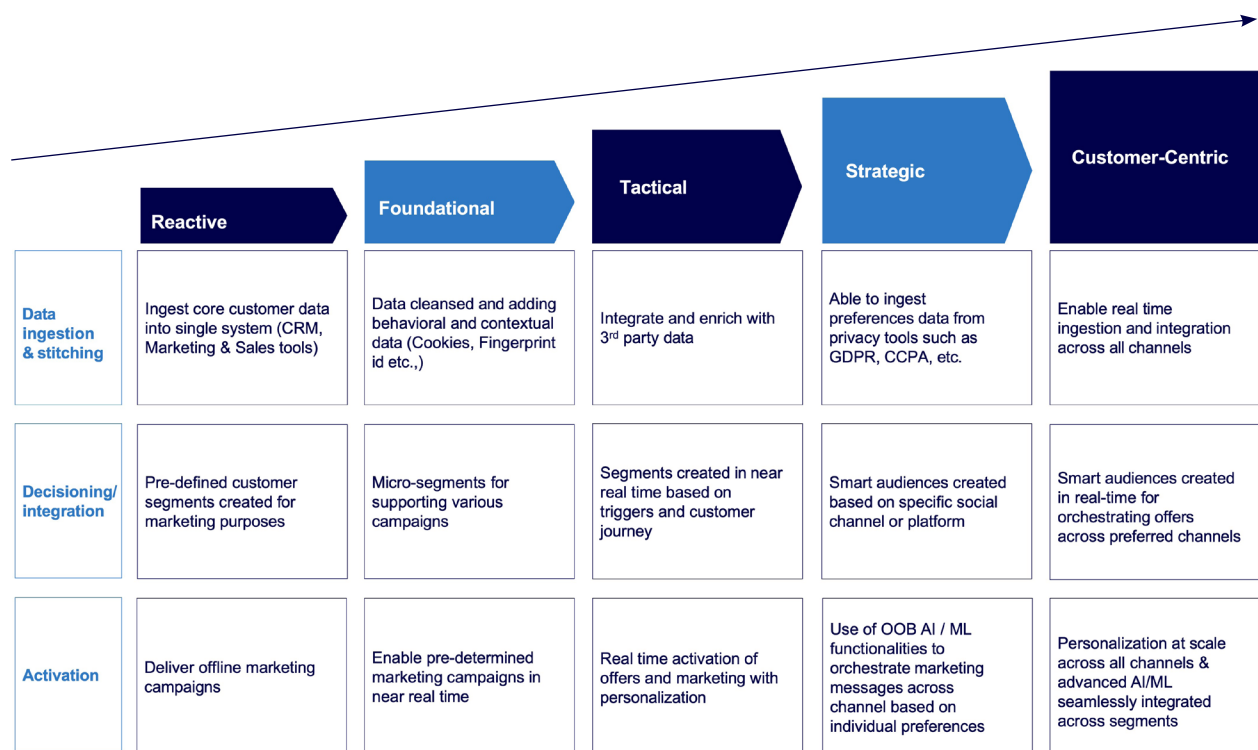


3. **Retargeting:** Provide better experiences for customers by removing customers who have made a purchase from retargeting programs in email, social or display advertising programs.
4. **Customer support:** Enable employees to view complete timeline of messages sent, customer behaviors and purchases across all channels.
5. **Churn prevention:** Adjust customer treatments based on recent experiences, such as pausing marketing emails to customers who recently made a complaint or offering help to those who had a problem.
6. **Loyalty program:** Provide a consolidated view of customer activity, including behaviors that were not captured with a loyalty member ID.
7. **Journey management:** Create individual journey maps and react with appropriate treatments when customers move or don't move from one stage to the next.
8. **Geolocation targeting:** Leverage location data to deliver targeted messages or offers relevant to a customer's specific location.
9. **Attribution:** Assess the impact of campaigns on immediate purchases and long-term behaviors and thereby measure program, content and product performance.
10. **Reduce cart abandonment:** Reduce cart abandonments in real time or via email personalized offers.
11. **Improve ROAS:** Identify effective and non-effective ads and channels to optimize the ad spend. Track in real time the effectiveness of ad spends and campaign performance to optimize the spend.



Where do you stand today?

We recognize that no company starts from zero. By evaluating the maturity of the CDE across data ingestion, integration and activation stages, we help in identifying strategies to advance capabilities and achieve sustained profit growth. Assessing these stages helps pinpoint areas for improvement and tailor solutions that align with the company's current capabilities, ensuring a progressive path towards enhanced customer data utilization and business success.



The solution: A unified, AI-driven CDE

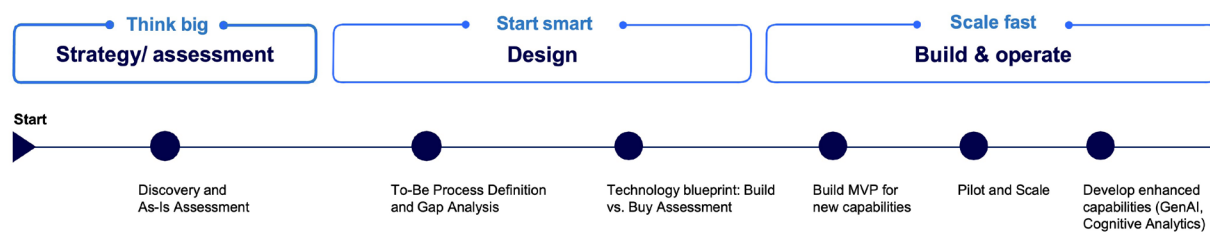
Getting started on a best-in-class CDE journey

Our engagement begins with a strategic assessment to define and align business goals through leadership workshops. We identify growth levers and perform a comprehensive gap analysis that sets the foundation for an intelligent design start.

We approach building a robust CDE framework through studying customer journey maps and prioritizing the necessary capabilities that align to objectives. These elements are crucial for calibrating the CDP-decision framework and establishing evaluation criteria.

Once the framework is established, we define the future-state architecture and identify consolidation candidates. This step is pivotal in developing a value-driven implementation roadmap, which spans governance, consumer journey, roadmap planning and technology spectrum, ensuring a holistic approach to achieving our goals.

In summary, this structured engagement approach is designed to seamlessly guide businesses through the process of creating an effective and sustainable CDE strategy.



Strategy	Design	Build & Operate
Vision and objectives: Understand vision and define objectives Maturity assessment: - Understand current state capabilities - Map the current state maturity Identify opportunities through - Stated pain points and objectives - Industry best practices Business case: Develop a business case/benefits case if required	To-Be state: Define future state processes Identify customer data use cases: - Build a list of CDP use cases - Identify metrics or measure of success for each use case - Prioritize use cases Identify capabilities: Build future state capabilities list Define MVP: Define MVP which covers the high priority use cases Develop high level technology solution architecture: - Evaluate potential solution options including Lift, shift and enhance current solution (Build) vs New solution (Buy) - Finalize solution option along with ROM for each solution option Solution roadmap: Build a long-term solution roadmap	MVP and rollout: Develop MVP and Rollout Change management: Build and implement the change management strategy Measure and refine: Measure Business value realized Develop beyond MVP: Bring in additional use cases Scale: Scale up to other brands and markets

Cognizant's CDE is designed to break down silos, unify customer intelligence and drive seamless experiences across all touchpoints.

Key features and benefits

Customer 360: A unified, real-time view of every customer

By integrating structured and unstructured data from multiple sources, Cognizant helps organizations create a single source of truth for every customer, capturing:

- Demographic data (age, location, preferences)
- Behavioral insights (purchase history, browsing patterns, engagement metrics)
- Real-time interactions (in-store visits, mobile app activity, social media engagement)

Business impact: Increased customer retention, loyalty and engagement

AI-powered personalization and dynamic segmentation

Using machine learning models, Cognizant enables businesses to:

- Segment customers dynamically based on real-time behavior and intent
- Deliver hyper-personalized marketing across email, web, mobile and social media
- Automate next best action (NBA)/next best offer (NBO) to improve conversions

Business impact: Improved marketing efficiency, reduced acquisition costs, higher customer satisfaction

Accelerating CDP adoption with pre-built tools and accelerators

Many businesses struggle with long and costly CDP implementations. Cognizant's ready-to-use accelerators simplify deployment, helping organizations:

- Integrate a CDP in weeks, not months
- Reduce implementation costs and complexity
- Scale quickly across multiple brands and regions

Business impact: Faster time to value and increased adoption of customer-centric strategies

AI-driven predictive analytics for growth and market expansion

Cognizant's AI-driven predictive models analyze customer data to:

- Identify new market segments and expansion opportunities
- Optimize pricing and promotions based on demand patterns
- Forecast trends to stay ahead of customer expectations

Business impact: Increased revenue through smarter product and business decisions

Proven success: How Cognizant is driving business growth

Global brand boosts digital revenue through MarTech transformation

Challenge: A leading global brand with a diverse portfolio of consumer products had limited revenue from digital channels and lacked a unified digital experience across its multiple brands and markets.

Solution: Cognizant partnered with a major technology provider to lead the client's digital transformation by implementing a global digital marketing and commerce platform.

Key initiatives included:

- Streamlining brand experiences across channels while allowing flexibility for specific brands
- Enhancing digital commerce with experience-driven solutions
- Enabling semi-automated compliance with data privacy regulations
- Establishing a foundation for omnichannel personalization using a suite of integrated content, analytics, campaign, targeting, and commerce tools
- Creating a unified view of the customer and a segmented customer base, which enabled precise and effective targeted campaigns

Results:

- Year 1: 33% increase in conversion rate and 20% increase in customer engagement
- Year 2: 48% increase in peak sales
- Targeted campaigns driven by customer insights contributed significantly to revenue growth

Online retailer grows customer base with hyper-personalized marketing

Challenge: A leading online grocery retailer, newly formed through a joint venture, aimed to deliver hyper-personalized customer experiences. However, it lacked the foundational IT systems needed to support real-time data integration, targeted marketing, and scalable operations.

Solution: Cognizant was selected by the retailer's technology vendors to lead the transformation. Using an agile delivery approach, Cognizant:

- Built a cloud-first enterprise data platform to unify internal and external data sources
- Enabled a 360° customer view to support personalized marketing
- Integrated a marketing suite with advanced campaign management tools
- Deployed predictive analytics to optimize workforce scheduling and customer support

Results:

- 17% year-over-year growth in customer base within the first six months
- 26%–34% lower total cost of ownership compared to other cloud alternatives
- Scalable platforms that support future growth and real-time, personalized engagement

Conclusion

The CDE is a powerful framework that enables CPG companies to better understand their customers, craft superior marketing strategies and drive business growth. By leveraging advanced technologies and robust governance, businesses can achieve a unified, interconnected and omnichannel experience for their customers.

Ready to harness the power of real-time customer intelligence? Let's unlock new revenue streams and drive unparalleled growth.

About the authors



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Vinay leads the strategy office for the Consumer Business Unit, backed by over 20 years of consulting expertise in the CPG and travel and hospitality (T&H) sectors. As a trusted advisor to CIOs and CDAOs, he specializes in developing data and AI strategies, bringing valuable insights for creating effective go-to-market strategies for CPG and travel and hospitality clients.

Before joining Cognizant, Vinay managed numerous digital and data transformation projects for prominent CPG and airline companies. His experience includes setting up and leading data and AI centers of excellence at top global consulting firms, demonstrating his capability in spearheading innovation and growth in digital transformation and data analytics.



Abhishek Pandey

Consulting Principal—Data Strategy Consulting, Retail and Consumer Goods

Abhishek leads the Data Strategy Consulting practice for the Retail and Consumer Goods industry. He has over 20 years of work experience in business and data consulting, advising CIOs and CDOs across the retail and consumer goods value chain to help build data and insights-driven organizations. He specializes in marketing, sales, innovation & R&D, merchandising and supply chain. He has been instrumental in driving decision-making, ensuring solution and strategy alignment, driving best-practice adoption and institutionalizing processes across multiple engagements.



Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSI) engineers modern businesses. We help our clients modernize technology, reimagine processes and transform experiences so they can stay ahead in our fast-changing world. Together, we're improving everyday life. See how at www.cognizant.com or [@Cognizant](https://twitter.com/Cognizant).

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