

Data dont lie to meow



OUTBOUND

A MARKETING SCI-FI PODCAST

Data, don't lie to meow - Data obsessed marketers trace analytics using state of the art tech; discovers that "Cats" are their top demo -they follow the data to a disastrous, and dander-covered conclusion.

CAST -

CEO - Neil

Marketer 1 - Gem

Marketer 2 - Samuel

Jen from Analytics - Vix

Scene 1 (*music bed - modern*)

Gem - I hate to admit it, but I love me a bit of small talk. Just helps you figure people out. Weed out the weirdos. The bad kind, that is. The bigots. The phobes. And the utterly dull as fuck.

Whatever the question, their response — or lack of it — be it evasive, effusive, engaging, speaks volumes. Within a few words, and a few seconds, you'll get the measure of them.

We all know the Shackleton-grade icebreaker: "Dog person or cat person?"

So simple. So often portending to binary suppositions -

Dog people are extroverts who'll crap on your lawn,

Cat people are introverts who'll scratch your eyes out.

It's this "fast and loose" research that I want to discuss. Particularly the cat bit. I want to share a...cautionary tale of marketing, analytics, and how following the numbers alone can lead to data driven insanity.

Meow, how does that sound? Good? Good.

Although cat people WILL scratch your eyes out. I've seen it.

(music slams)

A bit of housekeeping before we start. I'm gem. Copywriter, dreamweaver, sub-level marketer and general shat upon creative at the global ad agency on the hill. You know the one. IPP.

Total grunt work.

But I get on with it, I've got Sam. Long term creative partner. Long term friend. Long term general pain in the arse. We push our underrated, unappreciated campaigns along, run reports, keep the rhythm of the agency at tempo, try to avoid stagnation. And nervous breakdown.

So, back to the point. The tale. Hold on to your cats, it's about to get hella weird. Nope, think weirder. That's it. *Purrfect*.

It was early last year, and the boss had piled us into the War Room (aptly named, it turns out) for another quarterly rah-rah meeting. Or so I assumed. Damn, how wrong I was...

(sfx office)

Sam and I grabbed 'our' chairs — the two closest to the door — and braced ourselves for the impending hour of hot air.

(sfx room, squeaky chairs, coughs)

CEO - Ok, it's 5 past, I think we can get started. Good morning everyone, thank you for being here. This quarter is shaping up to be another recordbreaker here at IPP. That's thanks to everyone in this room, so let's give ourselves a round of applause.

(applause)

Gem - *(leaning into whisper)* I wonder if I can offset this round of applause to my student loan?

(looks around)

Where's Kim from Sales?

Sam - Giving themselves yet more handjobs. Standard. Haven't seen Kim.

CEO - And on this enthusiasm I want to pivot to analytics, because the team has some extraordinary news to share with you all. Over to you, Jen.

Sam - Oh God - *(facepalm)*

Gem - Oh yes - *(giddy to audience)* Sam's former love interest, Jen from analytics. The bad kind of weirdo. Mad as a box of frogs, that one. I've seen the data.

(weak applause)

Jen - Thank you Bill. And thank you all for being here on this, what I know you'll agree is a rather momentous occasion, and one we'll be remembering for the rest of our lives. All nine of them. *(chuckles)*

Gem - *(to audience)* Told you. The data doesn't lie.

(music picks up)

Jen - Thanks to LeadVortex, the groundbreaking new processing algorithm in our marketing and analytics toolstack, IPP is able to redefine the way we interpret and understand data. LeadVortex has given us an unprecedented insight into our user demographics and addressable market statistics, and it's uncovered our most valuable target audience.

Our core demographic isn't 40 something with a cat.

(pause)

Jen - Our core demographic is THE CAT.

(small stab - gasps - surprise - muttering and discussions among the team)

CEO - *(leaning into mic)* Ok, ok! Calm down. I know it sounds crazy. But I've looked at the data myself. It's crystal clear.

(music builds to stab)

Jen - And so I'm thrilled to announce that we're pivoting 100%. In response to LeadVortex's unquestionable data insight we're going all in on Cat Marketing. MarCATing, if you will.
(chuckles at her own joke)

Gem - *(to audience)* I take it back.

OUTBOUND INTRO -

Scene 2 - *(back at the cubicles with Gem & Sam)*

Gem - It's...I mean, I...*(speechless)*

Sam - It's hilarious.

Gem - No mate, it's RIDICULOUS. Not to mention whole new levels of HOW THE FUCK ARE WE MEANT TO DO THAT?

Sam - Shit, I hadn't thought of that.

Gem - Mate, how do we get A CAT to engage with our blog?

Sam - With you writing it? Not a chance.

Gem - Sam! I'm serious. This is proper butt clenching territory. Where was Kim, from Sales? Does she know she has to sell to cats now?

Sam - I wonder how long it'll go on? I can't see them committing a ton of content to this idea? Do cats even read English? Didn't they used to use hieroglyphics?

Gem - *(noticing Jen approaching)* - Shit, look busy, it's the Catwoman herself...

Sam - What? Who? *(looks up, sees Jen)* - Oh, Jen! *(awkwardly)* Hi.

(footsteps to desk, slam big stack of papers on desk)

Jen - *(chipper)* Hello Sammy chops. *(trying to be civil)* gem. *(slaps stack)* The concepts for our

new feline market are back from creative. 80 wild and whimsical ideas our clients will go *cat* *litterally* crazy for (realising neither Sam or gem are buying her joke, she reverts to serious and managerial) We need copy for at least half for them drafted by EOP.

Sam - Forty briefs?

Jen - Sammy chops, this is important. (*leans in*) We both know how quickly you can get things done.

(*gem sniggers*)

So, what are we waiting for? Let's get ready to kick some *ads!* (*walks away, laughing at yet another dreadful pun*)

Gem - Yes SAMMY CHOPS! Let's (mimics Jen) kick some ads!

Sam - Save it, gem. This won't last. You'll see...

(*music picks up*)

NARRATOR GEM - Well, the joke was on us. We actually pivoted 100% to serve the feline market. All of the KPIs. The OKRs, the ICP. All of them shifted to cats.

New hires, new departments, new line items. All for the 'Feline Initiative.'

My days, usually filled writing blogs about marketing and advertising, were now spent interviewing cat-fluencers: prominent cats with inexplicably large followings on social. Often wearing jewellery or teeny tiny cat outfits. One had its nails painted. I wish I was joking.

I wrote an expose on the cat from the Fancy Feast commercials to reach upwardly mobile felines. Although to be fair it *is* easier to run a Zoom meeting without humans present. Most times the cats just sat there.

The decision was made to have cats in the office. Then, wait for it, on staff. And that's when things — and Sam — took a turn for the worse.

(*back at cubicles - cat noises*)

Gem - And another purrrrfect kitty cat Zoom is in the can! Just talked to a few Siamese about K-Pop. Love them a bit of K-Pop, the Siamese.

Sam - Sounds brilliant! I've just finished a call with Disney+ about a branded reboot of 'Cats' starring Judi Dench -

G - Didn't they LITERALLY just do a reboot?

S - This one will have *just* Judi in it. No Corden.

G - Thank God for that. Still scarred from the trailer.

S - I thought this Feline Initiative was totally nuts at first, but I'm kind of enjoying it now.

G - Mate, you can't be serious?

Look around you. This is NOT how an agency is supposed to run. Our line manager is not meant to be a tabby. The receptionist shouldn't be a wrinkled scrotum with whiskers. Sam, today it's wearing earrings. EARRINGS.

And where's Kim, from Sales? She's just disappeared.

S - She's on holiday or something, gem. You've got to relax. Just go with the flow. Trust me, I've learned to do it and it's so much easier.

G - But it's damaging the business. We haven't been profitable since day one. Our bottom line is fucked.

(considering him)

You're leaning into this for other reasons, aren't you Sam? Not just for the pussieees, but for the pussaaaay...

S - HEY! (suddenly angry) It has nothing to do with that! It's our new direction and purpose. Jen has made this place fun! Admit it!

For years we've been churning out content no one reads, ads no one likes, attending meetings, webinars and conferences that bore us out of our skulls. The cats — *these* cats — have saved us from that unbearable mundanity.

(music picks up)

Narrator Gem - Ok so that was the moment I knew Sam had lost it. He knows I'm not a cat person. He knows I'm not enjoying this. He's not a cat person either. HOW IS HE ENJOYING IT? And I was NOT going to drink from Jenny's cat bowl of "Kool-Aid".

Listener, I was right not to. Things — shockingly — got worse. Much, much worse.

The C-Suite coughed up their first hairball when they saw the P&Ls for the quarter. IPP's 100% feline directive lead to one long line of sad faces.

On Tuesday, they let the Head of Cat Relations go. Then it was the live CatChat Operators. Followed by a string of redundancies that stripped our shell of a once proud agency back to its threadbare, cat-ravaged core.

But as the employees were sent home one by one, none of the cats left the building.

In fact, more showed up everyday. Some with hats. Waistcoats. Taking their lead from the cat-fluencers, we even saw some painted nails. It was clear we were in deep shit. And that things need to change. Fast.

(Office sfx)

Gem - So when the all-paws meeting was called a few weeks later, I was prepared for the mea culpa.

I was dressed in full-on schadenfreude. There was leopard print. "Who's the big cat now, bitches..."

Sam and I stuck ourselves at the back of the room. Still no sign of Kim. But that was hardly the weirdest thing now. Especially with Sam, despite everything, still all-in on the whole cat thing.

The meeting would be good. The CEO would fire Jen, pull a huge 180, Sam would snap out of it and I could Zoom with humans again. The Siamese would finally stop banging on about K-Pop.

I was ready to ditch the cats. I missed the grunt work. I missed being only *metaphorically* shat upon.

But of course, whenever you're talking about data, nothing sticks to the plan. Certainly not reality.

(Sfx room, LOTS of cats, squeaky chairs)

CEO - Ok, it's 5 past - I think we can get started.

Good morning everyone, thank you for being here. As most of you know, this quarter was difficult.

Gem - (to audience) Understatement of the fucking year.

CEO - Our Feline Initiative experienced some teething issues getting out of the litterbox, and I take responsibility for that. The data was clearly telling a different story to the one we took away. And for that, I apologise.

Gem - (*whispering to Sam*) That's a first. Ugh, the Burmese is shedding everywhere. Veronica's allergies will be flaring up again in no time.

Sam - (*petting a cat*) Get over it gem. (*looking at cat in face*) Shedding just comes with the territory, (*cutesy wutesy*) isn't that right Terrance?

Gem - (ugh) Fuck's sake.

CEO - But what I won't be sorry for, is what I'm about to announce - (*music intensifies*)

Our analytics team has done something extraordinary with their latest round of LeadVortex-driven research and I think a lot of people here are going to be VERY excited about what's been unearthed. Jen?

Jen - Thanks Bill! Ok so let me just start off by saying we're not infallible. Even us as data scientists sometimes get the numbers wrong. We're mere mortals, just like you.

Gem - (to audience) Charming.

CEO - As you've experienced, it's been a rocky quarter. There have been some adjustments to the Feline Initiative....

(*cat attacks someone*)

We've been working on the data - viewing the analytics from a more cat-first perspective, and our latest findings are going to put IPP back on the map. They're going to launch us into the future.

Our data integrations and stat visualisations weren't telling us the full story. It wasn't a new product or product line that was going to save IPP. What was required, was an ENTIRELY NEW business model.

So, as of today, IPP won't be working in advertising. We won't be marketing to cats. We'll be WORKING WITH THEM.

I'm beyond proud to say that we're launching the *first ever* Catpreneur WorkShare Branding Lab. Content made by cats, made for cats, and 100% RUN BY CATS.

Gem - (to audience) Please tell me she's kidding.

Jen - I've invited Mr Whiskers, our new head of Sales, to share his thoughts on our exciting new direction. Take it away, Gene!

Mr. Whiskers - (cat noises) (*Music and cat sfx builds to FINALE*)

OUTRO - Data - Marketers love it, advertisers require it, and yet, for something so critical to an industries function, data can be misleading, deceiving, and even downright destructive. For Gem, Sam, and the rest of the cats and kittens of the IPP ad agency, they discovered the cost of a data driven strategy, and paid the paw-shaped price - For them, it was a one way ticket to meow town, for us, it's just another trip, headed OUTBOUND.