

# Meet Plinc, powerful data & smart people turning casual customers into consistent buyers

*As part of our quick founder questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to James Melhuish, CEO of Plinc about personalised customer marketing, generative AI and the vital role people continue to play.*

Temps de lecture : minute

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13 January 2024

Plinc is customer data technology that helps brands leverage their customer data to gain a competitive advantage.

In today's market - and regardless of your industry - delivering personalised customer marketing can determine the success of your business. However, many marketing teams still haven't achieved personalisation, as they lack fresh customer insights to work with. With this in mind, Plinc connects and processes businesses' vast amounts of customer data to generate precious insights for marketers to leverage for their campaigns.

I've been the CEO of *Plinc* (formerly called Planning-inc) for the past ten years, but have spent over two decades at the company. This has allowed me to witness how our MarTech solutions have helped brands and marketing teams achieve game-changing customer marketing over the years.

## What's been happening at the company

## *since we last spoke with your Chief Strategy Officer in Feb 2022?*

Since then, the company has really cemented itself as an authority in leveraging businesses' customer data to help them achieve hyper-personalisation - at scale. We're incredibly proud that our technology has turbocharged the marketing campaigns of the biggest retailers in the UK, including Argos, M&S, and Halfords.

One of our biggest milestones was the launch of Unilyze, our AI-enhanced customer data platform. At a time when an increasing number of marketers look to incorporate AI into their operations, it's incredibly important to highlight that, without a strong foundation of unified and accessible data, AI is rendered useless. For example, generative AI can perform magic, but not without a basic foundation of unified customer data. After all, the output of an AI model will only be as good as the data it's trained on.

Unilyze was created for this purpose, easily integrating, connecting and enriching all of a business' data sources. Unilyze's generative AI capabilities have been the icing on the cake, enabling marketers to overcome many of the challenges of delivering personalisation at scale. Simply put, Unilyze makes insight and activation easy - music to customer marketers' ears. Separately, the company's recent rebrand was also an incredibly exciting milestone.

## **What was the catalyst for launching the rebrand now?**

Ultimately, the rebrand was triggered by Plinc's aim to be far more product focused going forward.

It's also worth noting that the generative AI revolution helped us concentrate on elevating what is a huge differentiator for us – our people. This hype reinforced what we still firmly believe in: talented people will remain a crucial component of effective marketing. As such, we wanted our new brand to reflect this mindset by also elevating the smart people behind our solutions.

## But why, in the midst of these major AI developments, does Plinc want to be known for its people?

Our people are what differentiates us. The world of customer data can be incredibly complex, so we differentiate ourselves by developing an incredibly powerful technology with smart people attached to it, providing exceptional expertise, advice and customer service.

AI is going to transform marketing as we know it, but we need people to help us with that transition and to help keep AI 'in line'. While everyone focuses purely on tech, we believe there's a vital role for people.

Essentially, Plinc's brand reflects this mission to keep things simple and fresh in a complex world where customer data reigns supreme. With AI continuing to disrupt our industry, it's vital we don't lose sight of the expertise Plinc's people bring.

## So what role does customer data play in a retail business today?

Customer data plays an incredibly important role because it can give a retail business crucial insights on its customers. This way, marketing teams can use valuable insights to create personalised campaigns, which are the lifeblood of successful customer experiences.

Today, customers expect experiences that reflect their specific contexts and interests. Getting this right could be game-changing for any business. Indeed, we know that basket sizes can grow by at least 20% when marketing teams employ personalised recommendations. Similarly, customers feel a closer affinity with the brand, encouraging loyalty at a critical time for the retail sector.

However, the truth is that resources are already stretched across marketing teams, making personalisation at-scale too time-consuming to facilitate. With this in mind, customer data and AI will become pivotal for retailers to earn loyalty.

## What is one piece of advice would you give other CEOs or future CEOs in retail?

Most executives working in retail will know that customer retention has never been more important. This will continue to be a huge focus throughout 2024, with the cost-of-living crisis prompting more retailers to bolster loyalty.

As such, I would recommend CEOs and future CEOs in this sector to evaluate how they can enhance their customer marketing activities. Similarly, I would also advise them to fix any shaky data foundations across the business so they can leverage data to their advantage.

After all, understanding and reacting to customers' interactions with the brand, and anticipating their behaviours, will have a big say in their success.

James Melhuish, CEO of *Plinc*.

