Adaptive Advertising Personalization Platform

Manoj Rajshekar
CEO & Co-founder

CEOCFO: *Mr. Rajshekar, what is the concept for EngageClick?*
Mr. Rajshekar: The concept for the company is helping you reach out to your customers on a one on one conversation across all the digital channels and at several touch points in a customer's journey with their company.

CEOCFO: *What do you understand about that process that perhaps others do not?*
Mr. Rajshekar: That is a very good question. What happens in the digital world is that the lines between the sales and the marketing groups are getting blurred. Pretty much anyone who is doing any kind of marketing, now are getting into the sales aspect of how they qualify the leads and how to eventually take from the upper funnel deeper into the sales funnel itself. In the real world people interact with sales people for any kind of purchase or enquiry. It's all a one on one conversation. However in the digital world the customers could be exposed to the brand at all times, from different channels and on different devices. Beauty about it is that there is a lot of digital information available at every interaction. Challenge is how do you quickly digest all this data and have a meaningful digital conversation, which is humanly possible. This is where Machine Learning and Artificial based systems become key and that is what we do at EngageClick.

CEOCFO: *How do you do that? What is the secret?*
Mr. Rajshekar: Our team comes from a strong Data Science background and core DNA in the company is Data Science. We see the challenge of large data being available at every step of decision making and we also see this as a big opportunity of how would you make intelligent decisions at a large scale and within a small duration, which runs in millisecond. And the platform is built under those principles of identifying deep patterns within the vast amounts of data from multiple channels and multiple devices. These principles form the basis of the algorithms that forms the core of the platform.

CEOCFO: *Is it a matter of developing the correct algorithm? Is it a matter of knowing what goes in the mix? What is important in putting together the artificial intelligence so that the machine learning is done in the most meaningful way?*
Mr. Rajshekar: There are two factors to it. One is identifying all of the data signals; whatever is possible to get. It can come from different sources. It can come from the devices. It can come from the publishers where your marketing messages are being delivered, in this case digital ads. It can also come from the context of what we know about the user. There are many elements which are related to the demographic information, something like what is based on the location, the events around the location, what the weather conditions are like over there, what kind of device this person is coming from and what kind of functionalities or what kind of sensors those devices have. You can pretty much look at so many different magnitudes of data. First you have to identify what is pertaining to that. You have to collect it in real time. Then, you have to write the necessary algorithms to make sense of that and give you some predictive modeling on the right combination of marketing.

CEOCFO: *What might you add in the mix of what you are looking at that not everyone would realize is important?*
Mr. Rajshekar: Currently, the industry is trying to identify who the right audience is for showing an ad, which has fairly matured. However once the audience has been identified, the same message or version of communication is being used. This has lead to consumers ignoring ads as they are not relevant to their intent and seem too generic. The industry has realized this and there is a frantic push to have a personalized communication with all their customers being agnostic of the channel or device they come from. There has been some recent solutions addressing this but are more of a rule

based engines which would not scale and which would be more reactive in judging the best way to communicate rather than being predictive. The other challenge which we address is the fact that most of the content currently is static and non-interactive. I see ads on smartphones that are still images and non-interactive even though the smartphones are much more sophisticated than your traditional computers. Most of the devices have various tactile sensors which aren't being leveraged in digital advertising.

Our platform takes static content, identifies the capabilities on the phones and utilizes the learning to make the static content more interactive and engaging. Making it interactive helps on having an active conversation with your customers.

CEOCFO: *Are companies coming to you because they understand the need for such depth or are they surprised to find out that you can go to such a deep level?*
Mr. Rajshekar: The market has realized the need and the digital marketers are looking for solutions that could provide those needs. They are aware of the fact that if they have to deliver the same message to each and everyone, who is getting exposed to my brand? It is like someone walking into a coffee shop and the barista offers only one variation and one size of coffee to everyone who is coming in through the door. That does not suffice. They are aware of the fact that personalization is going to be key and many of the digital marketers want to go in that direction. The challenge that they have is that they have the need, but they do not have the necessary tools. The necessary tools are kind of fragmented. If you want to do reach out to different customers coming from different channels, they would need to deal with multiple solutions for the different channels. What this creates is not just the operational challenges, but also fails in providing flexibility to optimize across channels, adaptively allocate budgets to the right channels at different times of the day or week. However, if I have one single platform, now I can identify how people are resonating to my messages and what time of the day and what medium is attributing to it and adaptively spend more on those channels.

> **"Helping you reach out to your customers on a one on one conversation across all the digital channels and at several touch points in a customer's journey." - Manoj Rajshekar**

CEOCFO: *How are you able to keep it easy enough for people to use it and use it all the time?*
Mr. Rajshekar: We come from a very strong technology background and most of us are from schools like MIT, CMU and Berkley. We understand the technology part of making it scale as well as keeping it simple for our customers. But, mainly we are consumers of digital ads daily. We understand the pain points both from a consumer and a digital marketer perspective.

CEOCFO: *What types of companies are typically coming to you for help?*
Mr. Rajshekar: We are getting good interest from large enterprises where they have a scale issue of reaching out to their large audience across different channels and on different devices. For example a company would be selling it. They also have the need to have a consistent messaging for an individual both on on-domain or off-domain interactions with their customers on various channels.

CEOCFO: *EngageClick recently released your platform 2.0. What has changed? What is better today than it was three months ago?*
Mr. Rajshekar: During the last three months we have strengthened on the following capabilities

- Data sourcing
  o The platform's data sourcing capabilities source first-party data from any Data Management Platform (DMP), as well as third-party data from data providers and other intent-based platforms.
- Data Parsing and Cleaning
  o After the sourcing of data, several machine learning and feature selection algorithms built into the platform help parse the data to eliminate irrelevant data for better training purposes, and use the data features that are most important to learning systems.
- Training and Modeling
  o The platform uses cleaned data to train models for better prediction mechanisms. Various models are used for different KPIs across branding and the performance-related marketplace.
- Predicting, Personalization and Programmatic
  o After getting the models up and running, the algorithm can identify a consumer and make an intelligent prediction for better marketing messages, format, call-to-actions, look-and-feel, etc. Personalized messages can be formed by group level data or cookies, and device ID-based 1:1 messaging. The programmatic platform enables the creation of an ad unit that can assemble pieces of brand elements together in real time.

CEOCFO: *How is business?*
Mr. Rajshekar: Business is great! We are getting repeatability in our business model, which is a fantastic sign. We are getting strong interest both in the US and overseas. We are delivering good value to the customers where the customers are attributing the platform to increase in their sales on an ongoing basis.

CEOCFO: *Why choose EngageClick?*
Mr. Rajshekar: One of the things is there are several missing pieces in their ecosystem. I mentioned earlier, if you are a digital marketer one of the challenge you might be trying to overcome is figure out what's the best way to have a one on one conversation with your customer in the digital world and you might have also realized how complicated the challenge is due to the plethora of channels and devices involved. The other challenge is the limited insights you would get from the other platforms related to your campaign. Our platform provides deep analytics at all stages of the interaction with a customer, which aren't available from some of the current platforms. Some of the insights are just not limited to what is happening with the campaign, but also what's the reason a specific set of combinations of an ad that is being delivered, resonating with certain sections of the audience. What kind of intent do they express at the time when the ad was shown or when they clicked on the ad? What did they do after they clicked on the ad? What did they do after they clicked on the ad on that page? We give a lot of other insights that people do not get. If you were responsible for spending someone else's money as either an agency or marketer, then you definitely would need to know these additional analytics, which you aren't currently getting.

CEOCFO: *What should people remember most when they read about EngageClick?*
Mr. Rajshekar: Machine Learning based Customer Engagement solution that helps in communicating to customers in a personalized and scalable way across channels and varying devices.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

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