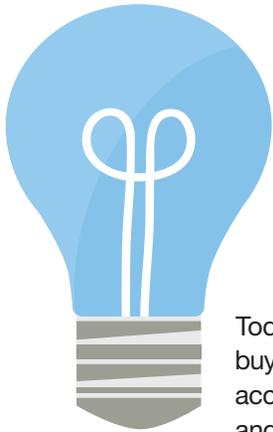


15 Ideas for Anchoring Your Marketing Approach Around Customer Behaviors and Preferences





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Today, customers control the buying journey, a trend that has accelerated with the proliferation and increased sophistication of mobile devices. Customers

decide where to research, how to buy, when to purchase, and where to buy. And perhaps most daunting for businesses, these hyper-informed customers and prospects have high expectations.

As businesses move to engage these contacts in an incredibly connected world, marketers are taking on the key responsibility of managing customer experiences. According to a recent Econsultancy study, 81 percent of marketers feel they contextually understand their customers, but only 38 percent of customers agree that they receive relevant communication.¹ So what are some of the challenges marketers are facing, and how can they overcome them?

To help deliver outstanding experiences, marketers should aim to be completely in sync with customers. To achieve this, it's not enough to base interactions on the explicit demographic data customers provide to you. Gathering implicit data around behaviors and what contacts do in your channels at any given

point is also key. Capturing and using this implicit behavioral data in your engagement strategy allows you to communicate in context, better addressing where customers and prospects are in their buyer journey and allowing you as the marketer to be more relevant.

Moving from a product-driven, broad segment-based approach to a customer-centric approach is easier said than done. Marketers have to deal with an immense amount of data flowing in from a multitude of channels such as Web, physical stores, social, mobile, call centers and more.

To further complicate matters, marketing or other technology platforms for these channels have typically developed over time and often don't "talk" to each other. Given data and system fragmentation, connecting the relevant aspects of the customer information available for marketing strategies is a complex task. In this white paper, you'll find specific strategies and tactics you can leverage throughout the buyer journey to better connect relevant customer data, personalize engagement and move to a more customer-centric approach.

Whether B2B, B2C or both, the key areas many marketers focus on are "Acquisition,"

"Nurture," "Conversion," "Loyalty" and "Advocacy," so that's how you'll find this white paper organized. Depending on your industry or product/service offered, you might use different terms.

What's important isn't the exact terminology used, but rather that you look at each of these areas through the eyes of your customers, seeking ideas you can implement across their journey to better engage your contacts and improve their experience. With that in mind, here are 15 to get you started.



VIDEO

"Integrating Data into Your Marketing Operations"



Acquisition

With constant pressure in many companies to grow their contact list/database, acquisition is a key function for the majority of marketers. Typically, effective marketers use a combination of several tactics to drive database growth, including events, focus groups, content marketing, print/TV/radio advertising, SEO, paid media, social, telemarketing, email, SMS and more.

Some marketers tend to focus on more outbound activities despite the potential for inbound marketing to substantially improve lead generation results. If your message is already resonating with an individual, then there's a good chance of that person converting from an unknown to a known lead through the acquisition process. Here are some easy-to-implement tactics to help enhance your acquisition efforts:

Social Login

More than 2 billion people (about 1/3 of the world's population) use social networks.²

Allowing customers to register using one of their social IDs such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn can help make the opt-in experience faster and better, something that's even more critical given the increase in engagement on smartphones, where filling out forms can be cumbersome.

From a marketer's perspective, this reduces form abandonment and provides access to key pieces of customers' social profile data (exact fields vary depending on the social network) that can be used to retarget and personalize the customer experience. Relatively easy to implement, social login is a list acquisition strategy you should strongly consider if you aren't already employing it.

Social Advertising

Social networks have an immense amount of user data. Today, they offer marketers advanced targeting options that can be used in a variety of strategic ways. Examples include:

- **Interest-based targeting:** Match users' reported or known areas of interest, such as a particular sport, profession, industry, product, travel, etc.
- **Behavioral-based targeting:** Leverage behaviors such as app downloads, purchases, likes, etc. to drive relevant content.
- **Location-based targeting:** Reach audiences within certain geographic parameters, such as the radius of a city, and provide related offers.

Marketers also have the option of creating custom audiences, in which they provide a list of people they want to target based not only on social data, but also demographic data and behavioral actions taken outside of the social network (case study downloads, product purchases, email opens, etc.). Regardless of which combination of approaches you take, consider making social advertising an integral part of your acquisition efforts.

Lookalike Audiences

This powerful form of social advertising enables you to acquire contacts similar to your best customers by sharing their demographic and/

or behavioral data with social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The social network then identifies additional users that have similar characteristics and allows you to create super-targeted communications.

While there are numerous database growth tactics available to marketers today, these three acquisition strategies can help you increase your targeting abilities while providing an improved acquisition ROI.



VIDEO
“Using Social to Power List Growth: Look-alike Models”



Nurture

Whether you're a B2B or B2C marketer, there's usually a period after prospects show initial interest during which they spend time exploring options. For example, there are likely numerous contacts in your database who were attracted to your "email magnet" (e.g., a discount offer for new subscribers) but haven't yet made a purchase or completed the next step in their journey.

Effective content marketing helps pull buyers to your brand during their research phase. To that end, new IDC research indicates that high-tech marketers are spending more than 40 percent of their budget on content marketing practices.³ In this landscape, it's critical to have relevant, contextual content so customers continue engaging with you and interacting with the assets they need. So, how can you improve your content marketing efforts?

Progressive Profiling

To avoid taxing contacts with long questionnaires, many savvy marketers use progressive Web forms to capture data, setting up rules that enable them to incrementally collect key demographic and preference behaviors. Generally, this involves prioritizing the list of questions you'd like to ask your contacts and indicating how many should be addressed during each exchange.

To complement your progressive profiling efforts, aim to capture behaviors across all your channels, such as "email open," "Facebook like," "app install," "abandoned cart," "Web download," "accepted offer," "entered zone" and "customer service case opened."

By combining explicit data customers provide about themselves with this recorded behavioral data, you'll arrive at a clearer picture of what each customer is looking for, enabling you to deliver more relevant communications.

Sophisticated Personalization

Sending too many generic messages to large segments can result in weak response rates

and increase unsubscribes. According to Econsultancy, 88 percent of marketers agree their organization's growth depends on personalization and better customer knowledge.⁴

One tactic for getting more personalized is to increase the number of behavior-triggered messages you send. You might also serve up dynamic content based on previous behaviors, such as in this example of a generic versus personalized "thank you" email to contacts who attended an event:

- **General message:** Same email to all who participated, regardless of what they did at the event, where they are in the buyer journey, and how they've interacted with you in the past.
- **Personalized message:** Tailored to the individual's specific interests based on the sessions attended, position in buying cycle and past behaviors across email, Web and mobile.

By opting for messaging similar to the second, more personalized interaction, you'll provide added value and help contacts move ahead in their learning process.

Dynamic Retargeting

Tools are emerging that enable marketers to retarget and nurture contacts in a more sophisticated fashion across more channels. Look for ways that you can deliver retargeting ads that understand a contact beyond the product he or she just viewed, taking into account everything you knew about that person and changing based on built-in rule sets.

By enhancing your nurture efforts, you'll help fill the gaps that can emerge as contacts spend more time on search and social – and less time interacting directly with your business.



VIDEO

"Adding Context and Value to Your Retargeting Efforts"



Conversion

Once you generate interest among your contacts, there are several methods to help convert leads to customers. The classic campaign elements of content, offer and context are all vital aspects that are critical for success.

In many cases, campaign effectiveness requires your marketing automation platform to “talk” to your Web, social and CRM platforms so you understand the full customer context and can provide the most relevant offer. Here are three ways to increase conversions:

Abandoned Cart Programs

If you provide ecommerce capabilities on your website, creating an abandoned cart remarketing program is a no-brainer. In many cases, a simple reminder nudge is all it takes to move contacts to purchase items left in their carts. Factors to consider include:

- **Timing:** For shorter sales cycles, you probably want to engage quickly, often within minutes. For longer sales cycles, you might wait a little longer but still send a note with helpful information, later followed by targeted offers.
- **Customer context:** Is this a known or unknown customer? If known, do they have a channel preference based on the behaviors you’ve captured? If they respond well to email, you might send a retargeting offer via this channel, whereas if they’ve downloaded your app, a push notification might work better. In the case of an unknown visitor, you may need to use cookie information to retarget on paid media.
- **Industry:** Your knowledge of your industry’s sales cycles and abandonment rates should

inform your decisions regarding pace, content and frequency.

If you’ve already implemented a cart abandonment program implementation, try adding layers of sophistication (dynamic content, multipart series, etc.) to take your efforts up a notch.

Browse Abandonment Programs

For those marketers who have had success with cart recovery campaigns, a browse abandonment program is a logical next step. You might, for example, set up an automated program so that once a named user visits one or more specific product pages in a category on your site, your platform could automatically trigger a message featuring the best sellers in the category, and potentially include an offer.

By playing back content you know the person is interested in, you subtly reinforce that you’re paying attention — driving the personalization quotient through the roof.

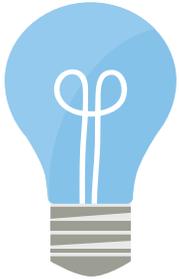
Marketing and CRM Integration

In the case of B2B organizations, sales and marketing integration is key for making sure

marketing-generated leads are routing to sales teams at the right time. You don’t want to move a lead too soon if the customer is still in the early learning stages, but if behaviors indicate a prospect is close to making a decision, sales may be the best channel through which to engage.

You want to be able to use behaviors to make smart routing decisions. For example, if a customer downloads a white paper on “social marketing” and then a few weeks later watches your product demo video, you can probably assume they’re in the process of evaluating a social marketing platform. Do you have a lead scoring and management system in place – as well as the related integration between your digital marketing platform and CRM system – to capture these behaviors, assign them value, and then route those prospects who have reached a certain threshold to sales?

You don’t want to make a strong effort to acquire and nurture contacts, only to lose them on the brink of conversion, so think hard about this stage in the buyer journey and address any weaknesses in how you interact with contacts at this point.



Loyalty

Many marketers are laser-focused on acquisition. As a result, they overlook the numerous surveys indicating that it costs between 5 and 20 times more to acquire a new customer versus retaining an existing customer.

In this digitally informed age, it's easier for customers to switch brands. In many cases, the biggest reason customers leave isn't price or product, but the brand experience. Building loyalty by delivering more than what customers expect and doing so consistently is key. As marketers, it's wise to look beyond reward points and discounts and focus on the value you can deliver across multiple aspects of the customer experience. So, what are some ways to enhance this experience and increase customer lifetime value?

Profile Enrichment Emails

Purchase-triggered profile enrichment emails are a powerful tool for complementing your behavioral data by confirming information about brand and category preferences, general interests and core demographics. For example, imagine a customer just bought a mountain bike. Is this person more interested in high-adrenaline racing or leisure riding? Biking near home, or destinations and travel? And should you ever send anything about road, BMX or cruiser bicycles?

To increase participation, position your request as an opportunity for customers to provide additional information based on what they bought so you can continue to provide them relevant content that closely aligns with their interests.

Post-Purchase Experience Campaigns

Use the purchase, behavioral and explicit data you're captured to help customers make the most of their experience. Connect

them with local events and communities aligned with their interests. Stay engaged by providing useful and relevant content related to their purchase and other behaviors, such as "Guide to Becoming an Expert Rider," "How to Stay Fit and Avoid Common Cycling Injuries," "Maintaining Your Mountain Bike," etc.

Cross-Sell Offers

Continue to monitor each customer's interest areas and behaviors, and engage in a relevant,

timely manner by suggesting products and content based on these areas. For example, if a contact downloaded your "How to Stay Fit and Avoid Common Cycling Injuries" guide, you might present that individual with safety products such as cycling sunglasses that offer protection from UV radiation and random bits of debris. Later on, if the cyclist mentions racing on social platforms, you might offer that person a "Preparing for a Mountain Bike Race" guide and promote your fitness heart rate monitors.

Loyalty is about continuously adding value. Make sure you understand how your customers use your products and what you can do to build stronger relationships with these contacts. Observe how other companies, including those outside your industry, are adding value for existing customers. By providing a differentiated experience for your best customers, you'll demonstrate your commitment to their satisfaction and positively impact future buying decisions.



VIDEO

"Adding Value for Customers Post-Purchase"



Advocacy

More and more marketers are starting to leverage the power of advocacy in a programmatic way. While marketers have always used certain forms of advocacy, such as references and event speaking, the growth of social media and marketing automation provides exciting new opportunities to foster advocacy.

Today, customers can easily share product experiences, and this is playing a key role in the buying process. Buyers trust what their peers have to say and actively look for opinions before purchasing. As a marketer, how do you create enough value for your customers to become advocates? And how do you do this at scale? Let's look at some easy tactics you can start leveraging immediately.

Social Listening and Sharing

Staying engaged with your customers socially means being able to listen effectively and knowing when to request that your biggest fans share their experience with your products. Look deeply at tools, such as IBM's Personality Insights API, that enable you to listen at scale.

The travel industry, for example, uses social advocacy extensively, knowing that many shoppers won't book a hotel or travel package if they don't see enough positive customer comments and stories. If customers are using your product to create or do something fun, such as cooking a meal (food or cooking gear retailer), making a craft or kit (hobby company) or growing something (gardening business), consider asking them to share their experience on social.

For B2B organizations, social advocacy may come in the form of case studies and short videos. Format is important to social sharing, so continuously test content, offers and delivery vehicle.

Product Review Request Emails

For many businesses, product review request emails serve as the main driver and source of reviews — while also encouraging follow-on purchases from the reviewer. Timing for these purchase-driven messages varies based on product type/category and whether the item would have a specific use day, but typically a minimum of a few weeks following the customer's receipt of the product is the way to go, since this will allow the buyer adequate time to form an opinion.

To take your efforts to the next level, send a triggered "Your review has been posted" thank-you email as soon as the customer's review is live. Include a link to the review and redemption of any incentive promised in the review-solicitation email. This builds credibility by providing evidence that the review is live, gives reviewers the opportunity to see their name on your site, and provides another touchpoint. Remember to encourage customers to share the review or comments via their social networks.

Co-Create the Brand

Some forward-thinking organizations are engaging their customers to shape and become part of the brand experience. For example, IBM client Moosejaw ran a "customer-as-brand-ambassador" initiative, sending a humorous email encouraging customers to send in selfies taken with a Moosejaw logo flag. The message generated an 18 percent higher click-through rate than average, with the company receiving hundreds of new customer pictures it used throughout its marketing.

Consider inviting customers to share new ideas, get involved in discussions and vote for ideas they support. You can use the responses as a springboard for introducing new products and services, building a sense of community in the process.

When crafting your loyalty and advocacy programs, remember that your biggest brand enthusiasts are probably the ones most likely to have friends who could be prospective customers. With that in mind, it's worth the extra effort to provide them with extraordinary experiences.

Conclusion

There's a firehose of customer data coming at marketers today, and with more interconnected devices emerging (wearables, smart watches, etc.), cultivating a seamless customer experience is likely to grow even more challenging. Building out a data-driven marketing strategy and technology stack that enables you to capture behaviors across channels is key. The majority of marketers don't want to spend time on solving data structuring and modeling problems but just want relevant data they can use executing strategies. The ability to continuously build on an individual customer's profile based on real-time behaviors across

channels is becoming increasingly important to personalize your communications.

By employing smart tactics that help you learn more about your customers and prospects, taking steps to connect silos in your marketing systems and processes, and thinking carefully about how you can use the information you have to deliver relevant, timely content to your customers, you'll be well-positioned to shift to a more customer-centric approach. Focus on understanding customers contextually and delivering a personalized experience, and you'll be likely to meet – and exceed – the lofty expectations of today's buyers.

Footnotes

- 1-IBM and Econsultancy, "[The Consumer Conversation: the experience void between brands and their customers](#)," 2015
- 2-Statista, "[Number of social network users worldwide from 2010 to 2019 \(in billions\)](#)," 2016
- 3-IDC, "[IDC FutureScape: Worldwide Chief Marketing Office Advisory 2016 Predictions](#)," Nov. '15
- 4-IBM and Econsultancy, "[The Consumer Conversation](#)," 2015

About IBM Marketing Cloud

IBM Marketing Cloud, part of the IBM Marketing Solutions portfolio, powers the delivery of exceptional experiences for customers across the buyer journey by leveraging customer data and behaviors, providing analytical insights and automating relevant cross-channel interactions. The cloud-based digital marketing platform provides email marketing, lead management and mobile engagement functionality to inform and drive personalized interactions in real time. To find out more, please contact us at 1-866-745-8767 or +44 20 7202 5930 and visit ibmmarketingcloud.com/contact.

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