

How to Synchronize Your Marketing With the Customer Journey

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We often hear pundits say "**brand** loyalty is dead." Though I don't believe it's completely buried, I do agree that the price a **brand** must pay to ensure consumers are as loyal as they were 10-20 years ago has increased dramatically.

Not to mention that by the year 2020 loyalty will be based solely on experience, not on price or quality of product or service, [research indicates](#).

Why this trend?

Digitally empowered consumers are fickle in our hyper-connected economy. They have so many options, available via so many avenues, that creating and maintaining loyalty is extremely difficult.

Brand loyalty will get you only so far when consumers can **google** your product or service and immediately see whether a competitor's pricing or location works better for them.

Which is why data-driven customer engagement is a must—to understand whether price motivates purchase or something else will get this person to your site or in your physical location to make a purchase.

In short, you have to know your customers well enough that you can predict what they want. But where do you begin, and what steps must you take?

Let me suggest four steps for synchronizing your **brand marketing** with the customer journey.

1. **Create and maintain a panoramic customer view**

When **marketing** departments, call centers, service operations, and merchandisers operate independently based on their own distinct views of the customer, both customer engagement and **marketing** efforts suffer.

Consider a scenario where a customer's call center history (showing his disputed charges) is in

one database while his demographic data is in another database. If those databases are not connected, there's a good chance your **marketing** department will be reaching out to him with offers while he's in the middle of a contentious debate with your customer relations group. Imagine the frustration from the customer's point of view.

Tim Morris, vice-president of customer interaction management at **Scotiabank**, recently presented at the 2015 SAS Global Forum Executive Conference on how the bank uses analytics to delight customers. The very first step was to connect and enhance the bank's channels from a data perspective so customers don't have to tell their story two, three, or four times; then, the bank made the information available to its front-line reps so they could see all customer interactions in a single portal.

Having a single data hub that can deliver contextual information to front-line **brand** representatives is what ensures that the right conversation happens at the right time, a definite first step toward delighting customers.

2. Understand and anticipate customer behavior

Creating a panoramic view of the customer lets you look back at past activities, but what about the future? How does a **brand** anticipate or forecast what is to come?

Through advanced analytics using segmentation, modeling, forecasting, and optimization you can predict behavior and identify how different customer segments are most likely to respond to specific content, campaigns, and **marketing** actions:

- **Segmentation** allows granular clustering of known customers and anonymous prospects based on particular data attributes or behaviors.
- **Modeling** provides scores relating to retention, attrition, and propensities by customer to be developed.
- **Forecasting** predicts the likelihood of customers to undertake certain actions or behaviors in both the near and long term.
- **Optimization** ensures that your customers are contacted with appropriate and contextualized offers as you engage with them over time. (Because the last thing you want to do is employ analytical techniques to make your offers personalized and relevant, but then over-contact your customer base and so cause alienation.)

3. Orchestrate the next best action across any channel

So the data and analytic techniques are now there. Next up is orchestration—or being able to automate engagement activities with customers.

We can group channels into two categories: ones that focus primarily on outbound (**brand** to consumer), and ones that service inbound requests (from consumer to the **brand**).

On the outbound side, **marketing** automation software can help quickly define target segments, prioritize selection rules, choose appropriate communication channels, schedule and execute

campaigns, analyze results, and make adjustments to improve future campaign performance across all of your channels.

From an inbound perspective, decision-management software can work customers and prospects through a decision workflow when they contact the **brand** so that they receive the next best action or offer from an individual perspective—that is, based on analytical calculations and insights that are derived behind the scenes.

4. **Accurately measure results to inform future actions**

It's hard to understate the importance of accurate measurement for examining the effectiveness of your **marketing**.

Use response-attribution modeling to understand the customer's conversion path and to know where to assign **marketing** credit by channel. Then you can create future **marketing**-mix optimization models, test/control strategies, predictive models, and **marketing** campaigns that account for the best performing methods and touch points.

With adaptive, agile **marketing** you can test your offers and content quickly, on a small scale, and nurture richer customer interactions. Then rapid feedback will demonstrate when and how to modify the customer's experience to get the most impact. Plus, you'll have access to campaign reports and dashboards so you can understand when to modify campaigns and across which channels.

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With a single view of each customer, the analytics to provide insight, and the ability to orchestrate and measure **marketing** program and campaigns, you'll have the keys to **marketing** success.

Innovating to deliver new content to new or previously unknown customer segments requires responsive, agile **marketing**. Developing more profitable **marketing** campaigns requires detailed customer knowledge from an engagement standpoint. Avoiding low-value and unprofitable **marketing** channels requires attribution knowledge.

An analytically driven **marketing** program gives you the insight you need to nurture loyal customers who rely on quality content.

When you deliver on those expectations, you can charge a premium for the experience your customer receives. You'll boost customer value and increase profits at the same time.