Getting the Digital Handshake Right

THE SIX HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL RETAIL MARKETERS

The Right Customer Experience

Consider a typical visit to a brick-and-mortar retail store. As you search through the racks, deciding what to buy, what type of salesperson do you hope for? Someone aggressive, continuously asking if you're ready to make a purchase? Or someone who's never there when you have a question, no matter how hard you look? Ideally, most customers would say, the perfect salesperson falls somewhere in between. Someone who's ready to jump in with assistance, but happily follows your cue.

Thanks to years of shopping in stores, consumers today know exactly what they want from that brick-and-mortar experience—and savvy retailers know how to train their salespeople to get it right. But what about a different shopping situation? What type of experience attracts or repels online shoppers? And what do digital retailers need to do in order to deliver the experience that compels customers to buy?

With so many retailers to choose from, modern consumers don't need to put up with a digital experience they consider subpar. And as the digital marketplace grows, they know exactly what they want. This makes today a tipping point for retail marketers: with so many new ways of reaching potential customers, they need to find the perfect mix. They have to get their digital handshake right.

THE DIGITAL HANDSHAKE

Building a Positive Customer Experience Through Organized Messaging

Establishing that perfect digital experience starts with organization—that is, the organization of the marketing department. Many marketing departments have structured themselves in silos, with teams put in place piece by piece in reaction to each new technology innovation, whether those technologies relate to digital advertising, mobile advertising, email marketing, or something else. But as time has passed, that approach has proven detrimental, with teams working against each other, instead of toward integrated consumer goals. Customers, as a result, face messaging that's disjointed, disorganized, and often too little or too much.

Controlling the final customer experience means coordinating those teams not around individual technologies, but around the audience. In doing so, marketers can better control the information they send out, so that consumers are neither inundated nor ignored. But that's just the beginning.

To get the digital handshake right, marketers have to examine their processes even further, and develop new habits that put their brands ahead.

FINDING THE RIGHT MARKETING MIX

Six Habits of a Successful Modern Marketer

1 **Start With Mobile**

Modern buyers don't limit their shopping to a fixed location. Rather, a high percentage of email opens today come from mobile devices and tablets. That means, in today's digital environment, consumers looking to explore your brands don't differentiate between your mobile site and website. They expect the same quality of experience from both, and when they don't find it they can become discouraged and walk away. That's why successful marketers don't think of the two separately, but as a single symbiotic whole.

That means marketers should work mobile into each step of their marketing endeavors, making it a key component in their content strategy. By offering the same level of interaction and engagement no matter where those customers are buying, they'll optimize their experience overall.

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2   Find the Right Balance

After a customer visits your online store, what's the next step? Do they receive a follow-up email, reminding them of their abandoned cart or browsing experience? Will they see an ad for a related product on their mobile device or custom ads through their web browser? Are emails from partners and customized reminders standard? Is the answer all of the above and then some?

Done the right way, these follow-up messages can keep a consumer engaged with your brand. Too much, though, and they can inundate customers until your ads and emails become nothing but digital noise—something to be ignored. It's up to the marketing department to strike the right balance.

To do so, successful marketing teams manage the content their audience receives, building a strategy that keeps the end customer in mind—and creating a conversation, rather than a mishmash of disconnected messaging. Those teams not only work together, but they're enabled by technology, so that even when a consumer's behavior is hard to predict— moving from a website to a mobile device, browsing through options with no seeming pattern to their buying needs—marketers have the tools they require to find that balance faster, while still hitting the right customer touch points to inspire them to buy.

3   Understand Short-Term Performance Goals Versus Long-Term Brand Equity

Is your marketing team simply trying to meet their lead goals or other short-term objectives? Or are they trying to deliver an experience to your customer that shows how your brand truly fits into their lifestyle, in an effort to create lasting long-term loyalty?

To create lasting brand equity, successful marketers set out a long-term plan, with short-term goals that contribute to rather than work against it. The wrong short-term initiatives can interfere with long-term objectives, especially when those goals are created in a silo, pitting one team against the next, or an online store against its brick-and-mortar counterpart. When teams can work together, a more streamlined approach is created—one that puts the customer first.

4   Create the Right Design Experience

Every brand needs to maintain a cohesive image, continuously building on that foundation so that consumers know what they can expect. That brand integrity will dictate the look and feel of a company's website, advertising, and email messaging—but it shouldn't be the only thing that does. There's a science behind how potential buyers interact with the information they receive, and marketers need to understand and consider that as well. Bad design can frustrate consumers, lending to a negative experience overall. What constitutes good design, though, is constantly changing, with evolving habits and new trends. Design needs vary, too, depending on the device a consumer might be using—a customer reads content differently on a desktop than on a mobile device.

The trick for marketers is to find that sweet spot between their own brand standards and current design trends. To find that, savvy marketers constantly test the experience as a whole—from the colors they use and images they select, to their copy and page order.

"The most successful marketers test robustly, with rules in place to ensure accurate results, and logs that help them keep track of what's come before, to learn from every iteration over time."

5   Regularly Test Engagement and Big Business Questions

For marketers looking to create an ideal customer experience in today's retail environment, it's important to truly understand consumers' needs. Making the wrong assumptions can mean the difference between a happy customer and one who walks away empty-handed. Marketers need to regularly test not only their design, but all of the big questions that dictate the experience they provide.
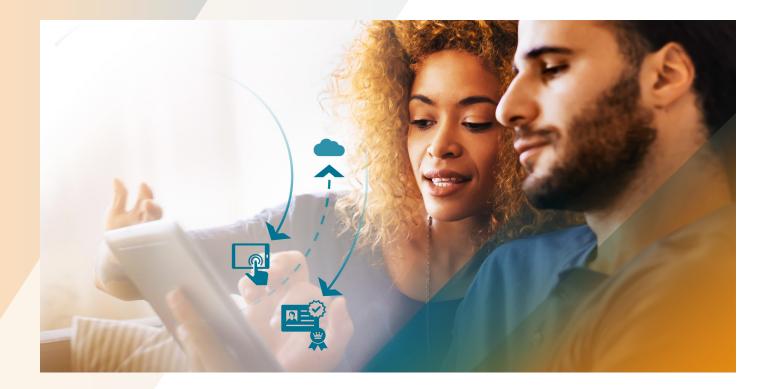
Take free shipping as an example. Many marketers still assume it's a deal breaker in their bid to get a consumer to complete their shopping cart. But that might not be the case, depending on the audience you're trying to attract—some customers may be more interested in a company's social outreach efforts, for example, depending on their demographic and personal needs.

Getting to know your audience, and testing your assumptions, can help move a company forward—and, with needs constantly changing, that testing shouldn't stop even after a winning solution is found. The most successful marketers test robustly, with rules in place to ensure accurate results, and logs that help them keep track of what's come before, to learn from every iteration over time. They'll also test at volume, across any number of variants throughout the sales funnel, trying to optimize the customer journey at every step of the way.

6   Go Beyond Personalization

Modern marketers know that personalization is key to getting an audience to notice and remain loyal to a brand. But the best modern marketers also understand that there are more universal aspects to their messaging and design that go beyond personalization, and when done right can improve the shopping experience as a whole. Those details continuously need to be monitored to make sure they stand up against the competition.

How many clicks does it take for a consumer to complete their product research and ultimate purchase? Are you losing value in the ensuing journey? How can you optimize that experience? Marketers should be continuously improving this overall experience, building in efficiency where they can and evolving as expectations do. Those expectations will differ across personas and geographies, too. The right technology can help marketers get it right across the board.

HOW ORACLE MARKETING CLOUD FITS IN

Oracle Marketing Cloud gives modern marketers the tools they need to deliver an online experience that will compel their consumers—inspiring them to purchase and remain loyal customers after they do.

By integrating proprietary customer data and robust third-party data, Oracle Marketing Cloud helps marketers build complete profiles and better target the right audiences. It works across channels and devices, acting as a hub that orchestrates marketing messaging more effectively to reach customers wherever they may be and help develop direct relationships with consumers.

By strengthening the customer experience across engagement opportunities, connecting disparate data sources, and conducting constant and robust testing, Oracle Marketing Cloud offers the right mix of insight-driven personalized marketing, helping retail marketers get their digital handshake right.

CONCLUSION

As consumers have become savvier in the digital shopping environment, they've determined exactly the buying experience they want—just as they have in brick-and-mortar stores. It's up to retailers to provide that, neither inundating a customer nor ignoring them in their marketing efforts. By perfecting their digital handshake and keeping that marketing mix just right, they can create happy and loyal customers. The right tools can help them achieve that.

TAKEAWAYS

1 Modern consumers know exactly what they want from their digital shopping experiences, and it's up to retailers to get it right. With so many new ways of reaching potential customers, they need to find the perfect marketing mix, to appeal to consumers but not to overwhelm them.

2 Disjointed marketing departments, siloed around technologies, can lead to a disorganized customer experience, and either too little or too much messaging. Controlling the final customer experience means coordinating those teams around the audience, to better control the information distributed.

3 Successful marketers make mobile a key component in their content strategy, offering the same level of interaction and engagement no matter where customers are buying.

4 Marketers can achieve lasting equity by setting out a long-term plan and creating short-term goals that contribute to it. By doing so, teams can more effectively work together with a singular plan in mind.

5 It's important to test regularly and robustly, even after a winning solution has been found, in order to optimize the customer journey at every step of the process and keep up with changing trends and expectations.

6 Beyond personalization, marketers should create a universal experience that appeals to customers across personas and geographies—optimizing the customer journey at every step of the way. Beyond personalization, marketers should create a universal experience that appeals to customers across personas and geographies—optimizing the customer journey at every step of the way.

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ABOUT ORACLE MARKETING CLOUD

B2B and B2C marketers use Oracle Marketing Cloud, an integrated portfolio of best-in-class applications, to drive sales, brand and customer loyalty. OMC offers the industry's richest datasets and most adaptive intelligence so marketers can deliver irresistible, consistent and connected experiences to customers wherever they are and however they choose to engage.

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