Meeting omni-channel consumer demands

High-definition customer profiles drive smarter interactions
Driven by a flood of information, the rise of social media and an explosion of connected mobile devices that provide consumers with access to the information they need when and where they want it, the consumer has taken the upper hand in the marketer/consumer relationship and there’s no turning back.

In the process, the always-on consumer has replaced the sales channel at the core of the relationship and decides for herself when, where and how she will interact with a brand. Complicating matters for the marketer are the ever-expanding media and channels through which their customers can engage, including: social media, brick and mortar stores, Websites, search, e-commerce, mobile apps, traditional advertising and more. This is the new omni-channel consumer reality and successful marketers will embrace the challenge of engaging their customers across channels with interactions, content and experiences that put the customer at the center of their brand.

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The omni-channel consumer is empowered, informed and connected. She is blind to channels when it comes to interacting with a brand and gets frustrated when a company’s internal silos keep her from having a seamless experience. In addition, because the omni-channel consumer can access product and price information anywhere and anytime — whether she’s in the early planning stages of a purchase or about to make a transaction — she is a marketer’s to win or lose up until the very last second.
Welcome to the era of the omni-channel consumer

Marketers understandably struggle with the sudden shift in consumer behavior. But they need only look at the overwhelming statistics to awaken to the fact that we are already solidly in the era of the omni-channel consumer and that the time for action is now.

Eighty-four percent of all U.S. adults (195 million individuals) are digital today. That means they have a smartphone, a digital tablet or a computer. In addition, the vast majority of digital consumers are conducting digital transactions. In fact, 93 percent of PC owners, 76 percent of smartphone owners and 96 percent of tablet owners have used those respective devices to make a purchase.

The boundaries between physical and virtual commerce are also becoming increasingly blurred with 53 percent of smartphone owners now showrooming, meaning they use their smartphone in a physical retail store to find a better price online or at another store.

Likewise, 44 percent of all digital consumers “webroom,” defined as using the Internet to gathering information about a product before visiting a physical retail store to make a purchase.

With the rise of social media, consumers now have a media platform of their own to influence others when it comes to the brands they love as well as those they don’t. In fact, 89 percent of digital consumers access social media during a typical week. Among those, nearly a quarter share their views about products and brands and nearly a third are influenced by product reviews and advertising they see on social media.

Marketers need to take heed of these stats and ensure that they quickly remove barriers that might keep their customers from having a seamless cross-channel experience and reorient to meet the expectations and demands of today’s omni-channel consumer.

195 million U.S. adults are now digital: 84%

- 96% have used it to make a purchase
- 58% own a smartphone
- 76% have used it to make a purchase
- 33% own a tablet
- 73% own a laptop
- 93% have used it to make a purchase
### The Omni-channel Consumer Bill of Rights

At every interaction, the omni-channel consumer is evaluating your brand against their key demands and constantly deciding if they want to continue the relationship. If your brand doesn’t deliver, they won’t think twice about moving on. In order to survive and thrive in this new era, marketers not only need to deliver on the omni-channel consumer demands, they need to reorient their mindset to see these demands as the core of a larger set of consumer rights. We’ve identified five key demands of the omni-channel consumer that marketers must meet. Together, these demands make up the Omni-Channel Consumer Bill of Rights.

Marketers slow to recognize the paradigm shift will not be ready to meet the demands of the omni-channel consumer and may face disappointed customers who won’t come back. Marketers that honor the rights of the omni-channel consumer will be rewarded with more business, loyalty and advocacy for their brand.

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<th>Demand</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RECOGNIZE ME</strong></td>
<td>The omni-channel consumer wants to be recognized. At every touch point, marketers must demonstrate that they know who she is as well as what she wants.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TREAT ME AS AN INDIVIDUAL</strong></td>
<td>Personalized content, messaging and offers are a must. To prove that they know the omni-channel consumer, marketers need to focus on the things she cares about and speak in a voice with which she can relate.</td>
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<td><strong>MAKE IT EASY FOR ME</strong></td>
<td>The omni-channel consumer should have a seamless cross-channel brand experience. Marketers need to empower the omni-channel consumer to interact with their brand and transact through the channel of her choice.</td>
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<td><strong>ANTICIPATE MY NEEDS</strong></td>
<td>The omni-channel consumer demands convenience. Marketers must be helpful and informative along every step of the way and be able to move mountains without being noticed.</td>
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<td><strong>GIVE ME A VOICE</strong></td>
<td>Opinions matter. Marketers must value the omni-channel consumer’s honest opinions and give her the tools she needs to share them when and where she wants.</td>
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Creating cross-channel interactions that matter

Reorienting to adapt in the era of the omni-channel consumer is hard work, but marketers who want to successfully position their business for the future must keep the customer at the core of their marketing strategy. That’s because in order to deliver the seamless cross-channel interactions that the omni-channel consumer demands, marketers need a deep understanding of the customer’s behaviors, her motivations and which channels she prefers when engaging and transacting with the brand. A consistent and robust customer definition shared across the organization ensures that the marketer’s entire spectrum of interactions with the customer is designed to deliver a seamless brand experience.

While every organization will have a different roadmap to success when reorienting to the omni-channel consumer, the objectives are universal. There are three foundational elements that marketers have to put in place to ensure their success.

Develop high-definition customer profiles

The omni-channel consumer wants marketers to know her, and not just her name, birthday and email address. To demonstrate that they really know who she is, marketers need to develop high-definition customer profiles that inform every customer interaction. These high-definition profiles marry detailed customer data and descriptive third party data to deliver a single, actionable profile that provides a complete picture of the customer.

Most marketers, instead, maintain two disconnected, low-definition customer profiles, one based solely on customer data and another typically based on survey data. That’s not to say that both types of profiles are not valuable. But, separately, they fail to deliver the intelligent interactions demanded by the omni-channel consumer.

Marketers have incredibly rich data on their customers that tell them everything from what they’ve purchased, their purchase frequency and channel preference. They also commonly know which emails are opened and clicked on by time of day and device and which coupons their customers have redeemed. This data can be used to segment customers based on their behaviors, but it is primarily leveraged for tactical marketing purposes. Customer value, for instance, drives direct marketing tactics. Website visit behavior triggers re-targeting tactics. Email un-opens trigger a re-activation tactic. While this data helps marketers react to consumer behavior, it provides a very limited view of the customer’s mindset and motivations, which are the keys to unlocking greater customer value and loyalty.
For those types of insights, many marketers have separately developed customer personas. Personas provide marketers with creative descriptions of their target customers, usually segmented by differences in some attitude or general preference. Personas can be helpful in designing customer experiences, focusing content strategies and ensuring marketers stay focused on key customer outcomes. However, quite often personas are limited because they don’t have the ability to connect with customer data to enable accurate cross-channel execution.

So on one hand, marketers have a limited view of their customers that reveals only what they do within the physical and virtual walls of their business. And on the other hand, they have descriptive personas that they struggle to make actionable. High-definition customer profiles resolve those differences by connecting the insights into who the consumer is and what motivates them to the customer behavioral data. The combined dataset provides marketers with a complete understanding of the consumer that can be used to identify consumer segments unique to the marketer’s customer base. Marketers can also add key data points from the third party directly onto their customer file giving them the ability to execute on these variables across channels. These data points can include things such as lifestyle characteristics, purchase influences, media habits and more.

The key to achieving high-definition profiles is connecting the wide array of third party data to a marketer’s customer file. Third party data from a trusted partner provides valuable insights into a customer's lifestyle, attitudes, motivations, shopping behavior and a full range of her brand preferences, including those she buys from you and those she buys elsewhere. Third party data can even deliver insights into what influences a customer’s purchases and how.
To illustrate the value of high-definition profiles, we’ll use a case of two “Danas.” Each Dana is considered to be among the marketer’s best customers. According to their customer files, the two Danas look pretty much alike: They have a similar demographic profile, both recently purchased the same high-end smartphone, they interact with the brand online and through mobile, but they commonly buy in-store.

However, when a high-definition profile of each Dana is revealed, we learn that one Dana always has to have the latest gadgets. She routinely reads up on new and forthcoming tech products online and compares the features of the leading models so she knows which one is the best. Once she decides to make a purchase, she seeks out the best price and is often among the first to buy after something is released.

The other Dana is all about style and status and is often motivated on impulse to buy products based on what her favorite celebrities use. For especially “hot” items, she needs it now and at any price. Click-and-pick provides her with a fast track to getting an item in hand because even next day shopping is too long to wait. Using the marketer’s mobile app, she checks out inventory levels at nearby stores, has the item set aside and picks it up on her way home from work with her trendsetter status intact.

Experienced data providers are able to consistently deliver these exact types of insights by successfully marrying their detailed consumer data to a marketer’s customer files. As a result, marketers can make smarter decisions to confidently design, plan and deliver superior brand experiences that deliver authentic interactions with the omni-channel consumer.
Create engaging and personalized content, messaging and offers that connect with key segments

Informed by high-definition customer profiles, marketers can create targeted content for customers using messaging and offers designed to resonate. By doing this, marketers create a meaningful and personalized connection and superior brand experience throughout the customer lifecycle.

Marketers don’t need to design unique content and messaging for each customer, but it should feel like they did. To maximize engagement, marketers develop multiple versions of content, messaging and offers that are mixed and matched as appropriate according to the high-definition customer profiles. The resulting communications feel personalized and ultimately drive sales and build brand loyalty.

To be most effective, marketers must deploy personalized content, messaging and offers at each point of interaction with the customer. Doing so ensures that the business remains a familiar face and speaks to the customer in a recognizable voice. This also allows the marketer to repeatedly demonstrate to the omni-channel consumer that they know who she is and that they welcome her back.

Because consumer lifestyles and preferences are constantly changing, marketers need to make sure that their customer data is updated with every new interaction and that the customer is routinely assessed to ensure that she is being targeted with the most relevant content and offers. Messaging must also be regularly updated to ensure that the voice of the brand stays fresh without becoming unfamiliar.

For an example of how this works, we'll refer back to the two Danas. In planning their campaign around the launch of the new smartphone, the marketer uses their high-definition customer profiles to identify individuals who are most likely to buy the device. In this case, both Danas were flagged as likely buyers; however each Dana will receive different variations of the content. Gadget-loving Dana will receive content for the model with more storage while the style and status Dana will receive content showing off the range of colors from which she can choose.

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<td>64MB memory or 32MB</td>
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Next, it's time to pick the messaging and offers that will resonate with each.
Knowing that gadget-loving Dana conducts exhaustive research online, messaging aimed at her when she’s in the information-gathering phase should be focused on the knowledge and expertise of the marketer’s staff, on their wide selection of brands and on any comparison tools and product reviews they can offer to help her decide if the product is right for her. As she determines that this is, in fact, her next phone, messaging needs to shift to price, value and inventory. To seal the deal, the marketer may offer her a discount that she can use either on this phone or on a future purchase in order to keep her as a repeat customer.

Messaging aimed at style and status Dana should be focused on image and flair and prominently feature pictures of celebrities using the phone. Because this Dana is all about having the product before anyone else, the marketer should remind her of the release date and let her know that if she pre-orders the phone, she can be among the first to have it. Style and status Dana isn’t price sensitive—she gets what she wants—so marketers shouldn’t leave money on the table by extending her a discount. Instead, they should focus on promoting their selection of fashionable accessories that she can use to personalize her new device. In addition, if the marketer hosts exclusive events, this is the customer to invite. She’ll be honored to be on “the list” and generate buzz for the brand when she brags to her friends about her VIP status.

These two examples illustrate the importance of identifying and delivering targeted content, personalized messaging and relevant offers to every shopper. In fact, doing so is a critical step in creating meaningful interactions with the omni-channel consumer.
In the era of the omni-channel consumer, the purchase funnel is gone — replaced by surround sound purchase opportunities where the consumer gets to pick. That makes the job of maintaining relevant and effective communications with the consumer exponentially difficult, yet many marketers still run campaigns channel-by-channel as if nothing has changed. As a result, marketers increasingly find themselves either speaking when no one is listening or speaking in a disjointed manner. In order to have an authentic conversation with the omni-channel consumer, marketers need an integrated cross-channel communication strategy designed to let the conversation flow and follow the consumer wherever she is.

Rather than focusing their efforts on tactical execution, such as creating promotions, scheduling campaigns and deploying channel-by-channel, marketers taking an integrated cross-channel approach focus more on strategy. Specifically, they identify the customer they wish to engage, define the customer journey for her and ultimately build a relationship.

At the foundation of the integrated cross-channel strategy are the marketer’s high-definition customer profiles. These profiles contain insights from the third party data partner that reveal the customer’s channel preferences, the devices she uses and the best time of day to reach her through each channel. This ensures that the marketer engages the consumer when and where she is ready to listen. With the typical cross-channel strategy integrating between three and four channels, marketers need to establish rules for determining the messaging, cadence and channel of contact that let the data determine the details of the next communication.
Another advantage of letting in-depth consumer profiles power the communication strategy is that marketers can use those same profiles to create look-a-like models for use in acquisition campaigns. In fact, the same model can be deployed consistently across channels whether it’s to an ad targeting service to drive smarter display ads or to addressable TV to send specific commercials to targeted households. With each new interaction, databases are updated and automated dashboards deliver insights the CMO needs to optimize cross-channel campaigns and make informed decisions when allocating budget to maximize success.

At the end of the day, marketers who use their high-definition customer profiles to drive an integrated cross-channel communication strategy don’t just guarantee intelligent interactions with their customers; they guarantee intelligent interactions with their customer every time.
Summary

Never in history have consumers been more informed, empowered and connected. And with the balance of power now firmly in the hands of the omni-channel consumer, it’s time for marketers to take a different approach.

A good first step is to commit the Omni-channel Consumer Bill of Rights to heart:

- RECOGNIZE ME
- TREAT ME AS AN INDIVIDUAL
- MAKE IT EASY FOR ME
- ANTICIPATE MY NEEDS
- GIVE ME A VOICE

The first and most important step in catering to the omni-channel consumer is developing high-definition customer profiles by integrating rich customer data with third party insights into consumers’ lifestyles, attitudes, motivations, brand preferences, cross-channel media habits and more. With these powerful data assets combined, marketers are armed with complete and actionable insights into their customers’ behaviors and mindset both inside and outside of the physical and virtual walls of their business.

These high-definition profiles not only drive the development and deployment of personalized content, messaging and offer strategies. They act as a roadmap for planning out the customer journey. It won’t happen overnight or without a lot of hard work, but marketers who fully embrace and cater to the omni-channel consumer should find that barriers fall away, lines of communication open and long-lasting and profitable relationships are built.

Marketers with these rights top of mind are well-positioned to successfully reorient to the omni-channel consumer and to get on with the task of creating cross-channel interactions that matter.