

Online customer strategy: Make the most of it

 By [Richard Mullins](#)

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Most brands today still operate their online marketing in silos, with little connection between the different channels they use to communicate with and market to their customers. However, customers are moving seamlessly between a range of electronic channels, engaging with your business through social media, display ads, search, email and many other points of contact.

Often, different teams are responsible for managing different channels and customer data from different touch-points, so systems are not consolidated into a single view of the customer. They drive campaigns in isolation, not looking at the ways that the same customers have interacted with them across different channels. Most marketers are not looking at the overall story of customer conversation across all channels, but are instead looking at each chapter in the story separately.

Tailoring conversations

This means that most businesses are losing out on opportunities to boost the overall performance of their marketing by tracking customer engagement at each point of contact and then tailoring content at each point to the customer's need in that context. We should no longer assume that a customer had a single point of entry into our business, but rather that he or she followed a process of conversion that involved a number of steps across multiple channels.

Thus, if you start looking at interactions across all these channels in a holistic manner, you can drive better return on investment from every customer contact point you use. You can begin to understand how each touch-point contributes to a conversion, and deliver the correct content for the stage that the customer is at in the lifecycle at each point of contact.

Whereas what used to matter to us, was that we were consistent in our messaging at each touch-point, what is really important now is that we engage with the customer in a manner that is relevant to his or her context. We should understand the conversion funnel; where the opportunities lie to acquire and influence customers.

Tracking crucial

For example, if a customer searched for a product and visited the website without buying the item, the next ad we serve should be a remarketing ad with a discount or some other incentive geared towards getting the customer to convert. However, if the customer bought a product after the initial search, the next ad should be geared towards up selling or retention.

Getting this right is not easy. It depends on putting the right workflow and technology in place to track and analyse

customers across a range of channels so that we can understand content and engagement options for each channel and how these relate to the broader strategy.

It demands that we put processes in place to deliver the right content to the customer based on their engagement at a given time and touch-point. Customer contact strategies are emerging as one of the most important aspects of our online marketing, as we try to manage marketing across a growing choice of channels.

ABOUT RICHARD MULLINS

Richard Mullins is the director at Acceleration. He opened Acceleration's Johannesburg office in 2000 and has played an instrumental role in the growth of Acceleration in South Africa.

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