The unified customer experience imperative.

Strategic alignments to help your organisation deliver unified customer experiences.
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Connect the customer’s experience in a new era of marketing.

In a recent Adobe survey, 76% of marketers said marketing had changed more in the last two years than in the previous fifty.¹

Marketing in the digital age means you can reach your audiences with more touchpoints and on more channels than ever before. But it also means the customer journey is increasing in complexity. No longer can you predictably guide your customers through a funnel to conversion and loyalty, because digital gives them more control over where and when they choose to interact with your brand. The new imperative for marketers is a unified customer experience—a consistent, relevant brand experience that spans all channels and touchpoints, whether customers are online or offline.

The unified customer experience has become a differentiator that propels brands ahead of their competitors. An organisation that delivers the same personalised messaging and fulfils its promises across channels has a greater ability to attract, convert and retain customers. In doing so, it creates relationships that inspire loyalty, reducing acquisition costs and increasing the customer’s lifetime value to the brand.

Unfortunately, many organisations are still struggling to offer these experiences to their customers. As the digital ecosystem grew around traditional marketing, channels were naturally divided into siloed departments, leading to fragmented messages, campaigns and experiences. The investments required to deliver consistent and engaging experiences across channels take a significant commitment from the entire organisation.

Leading companies recognise that aligning their executive leadership, organisational structure, channels and technology investments is the key to delivering a unified customer experience, whether customers are online, on mobile or in person. The following pages illustrate why this alignment is essential in the emerging world of the hyper-connected customer.
In the next few years, what do marketers think will be important to include in their digital marketing strategies?

- **70%**
  - A clear understanding of customer journeys across channels

- **66%**
  - Consistency of message across channels

- **57%**
  - Training teams in new techniques, channels and disciplines

- **45%**
  - Knowing where and when customers use different devices

- **43%**
  - Using online data to optimise the offline experience

- **37%**
  - Using offline data to optimise the online experience
START WITH LEADERSHIP

Align CMOs and CIOs to work towards one consumer-centric vision.

“The process of shifting to a customer-centric culture takes time. In a committed organisation with executive buy-in, getting there can easily be a two-to-three-year journey. When everyone sees how important customer experience is to your company’s future, and how critically important everyone’s individual contribution is to delivering it, you’ll be able to align everything your company does with helping your customers achieve their goals.”

- Michael Hinshaw
  CEO, McorpCX

42% of marketers say that securing the executive support of their company leaders is a top challenge of digital transformation.¹

The boundaries between marketing and IT are becoming increasingly blurred in the age of digital marketing. Marketers, who were traditionally tasked with building creative and brand strategies, are now also expected to turn their organisation’s data into cross-channel, personalised experiences. IT professionals are charged with analysing that same data and providing actionable insight, while...
integrating technologies that enable fast, scalable content delivery through digital channels. Because of this fairly new, interdependent dynamic, CMOs and CIOs need to work together more closely to benefit the entire business.

But the process of folding digital into corporate marketing has spawned a power struggle in many organisations. Harvard Business Review has reported that CMOs and CIOs claim they do not trust or understand each other. Some companies have responded by hiring Chief Digital Officers to bridge the gap between marketing and IT silos. Regardless of their respective positions, when CMOs and CIOs are working against each other, it leads to inefficient results that are reflected in the customer experience.

Fortunately, leaders in these key positions are starting to recognise the need for cross-functional cooperation. In forward-thinking companies, CMOs and CIOs are moving away from the short-term revenue goals of the last century and toward the consumer-centric mandates of the present. Only by working together can they implement initiatives that will inspire teams across disciplines to ensure delivery of consistent, cross-channel brand experience to their customers.

43% of CMOs and 50% of CIOs say that their relationships with each other have improved in 2014, but 45% of both groups say more collaboration is needed. 43% of CMOs and 50% of CIOs say that their relationships with each other have improved in 2014, but 45% of both groups say more collaboration is needed.

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The unified customer experience imperative.

“The goal is simple: to present the right products and messages to the right people at the right time. We’ve always tried to think in terms of putting ourselves in our customers’ shoes.”

- Gil Cayabyab
Vice President of Marketing, Smart Furniture

For many organisations, the ability to deliver a unified customer experience means reinventing themselves, because it is the result of every part of an organisation working together. From sales and production to finance and marketing, a cross-team approach breaks through organisational silos to strengthen the brand message across channels. And as the digital landscape continues to expand, it’s becoming ever more important to unite marketing with other corporate departments, since the most effective cross-channel strategies draw on expertise from multiple functions.

“Inspiration strengthens commitment, of course, but when it’s rooted in a respected brand purpose, all employees will be motivated by the same mission. This enhances collaboration and, as more and more employees come into contact with customers, also helps ensure consistent customer experiences.”

– Harvard Business Review
After the financial crisis of 2008, Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) worked hard to rebuild customer confidence in their products and services. Visionaries within the 300-year-old institution realised that to remain vital in the marketplace, their organisation would need to now offer what they called “a perfect customer experience”—one that would leverage digital capabilities to offer personalised, timely cross-channel engagement and information.

This new approach required RBS to assemble agile teams, pulling from different skillsets and functions within the organisation. To encourage unrestrained participation and shared insight, previous titles were set aside and a new identity—Superstar DJs (short for digital journeys)—was established. Guest DJs, from departments such as Customer Experience, HR and legal are asked to lend cross-functional expertise and insights. And when a DJ from one department, like checking accounts, invites a guest DJ from another department, like the call centre, to help optimise their customer experience delivery, more opportunities and insights are uncovered than one team could find on its own.

Together, the DJs share their findings to encourage organisation-wide learning and reiteration of successful customer engagement initiatives. And RBS marketers have created a team of ambassadors who are communicating the value of data-driven strategies throughout the company.

“Raising visibility from our digital marketing platform and data-driven strategies was vital to the shift. We had to have concrete, measurable insights and ways for our cross-functional teams to act on them to propel RBS into its next chapter.”

- Giles Richardson
Head of Analytics, RBS
“Whether a customer opens a direct-mail piece, receives a follow-up email, visits a branch or applies for a loan on a mobile device, the entire customer experience should mirror customer needs perfectly. We must be everywhere customers are and personally cater to their needs at every turn.”

- Giles Richardson
  Head of Analytics, RBS

Customers today are connected to an average of three devices. Some even use two devices at the same time. For example, a fan of a streaming online series might watch on a laptop while simultaneously tweeting about that night’s episode on a smartphone. But a customer’s channel choices vary widely depending on the activity. Marketers are realising that, typically, customers are getting a first look at their brand on mobile web, but knowing the channel where conversion will happen is impossible.

Major retail brands are implementing strategies to connect channels across the customer journey. To understand the level of unification retailers truly offer to customers, Forrester created a typical customer journey and followed it from beginning to end at select retailers.

The researchers found that the retailer most adept at delivering unified customer experiences allows customers to build shopping lists and add items to their carts on any device and continue onto another device without having to start over. For instance, from a laptop, a customer can choose the items needed for a home improvement project. Upon arriving at the store, the customer can access the list from a mobile device and add more items, and the list will automatically update across devices. From the retailer’s mobile site, a customer can check availability of a product, locate the product with the store’s layout map, or even buy the product and pick it up at customer service.”
But Forrester found that even the top-performing retailer still struggles to achieve its unified customer experience goals. Filters on the website meant to help customers narrow their product searches were vastly different from the filters on the mobile site, creating a disconnected brand experience. Emails were not formatted for a mobile screen, and some emails sent from the retailer’s mobile site were never received.

Personalisation is another key component of unified customer experiences and retailers struggle to achieve it for every customer. While many retailers recognise the importance of personalisation and think they’re doing it well, some of their customers aren’t happy with the personalised messages they receive.

The personalisation gap.

64% of retailers say they are somewhat satisfied with their personalisation strategy

17% of retailers say they are very satisfied with their personalisation strategy

19% of retailers say they are extremely satisfied with their personalisation strategy

20% of customers say the personalisation they receive is not well done

20% of customers say the personalisation they receive is too intrusive

versus
Canadian Tire is one of North America’s largest retailers, with 1,500 locations. At any given moment, 90% of Canadians are never further than 15 minutes from a Canadian Tire store or one of its divisions. Two years ago, amid predictions that brick-and-mortar stores were in peril, the company realised that in order to remain successful, they would have to use digital technology to transform the in-store experience.

In an initiative called ‘Let’s get phygital’, Canadian Tire’s sporting goods subsidiary, Sport Chek, redesigned its busiest store to offer unique interactive experiences that leverage touch, gesture and radio frequency identification (RFID) technologies. With the use of digital screens, customers can do things like digitally analyse their golf swing or take advantage of dynamic bicycle fitting. Other digital capabilities allow associates to quickly perform industrial services like ski tuning, for example, which they can now do at the rate of 60 pairs per hour.

Bringing digital capabilities into the physical store brought the flagship location 50% sales growth. Perhaps as a result of a ‘phygital’ halo effect, the Sport Chek stores that were not redesigned saw an increase in sales of 20% over the same period.

“Harnessing digital connections to foster deeper human connections is the highest opportunity of bridging the digital and physical worlds.”

- Rebecca Lieb
Industry Analyst, Altimeter Group
The unified customer experience imperative.

Starwood Hotels is testing the limits of unified customer experience delivery, offering their guests unique experiences from arrival to departure. At select hotels, guests can bypass the front desk with the Starwood Preferred Guest app, which turns a smartphone into a digital room key. Upon entry, an in-room tablet provided by the hotel serves the guest personalized messages and offers based on their preferences. The tablet also acts as an interactive tool that centralises guests’ needs, allowing them to do things like control the temperature and brightness of the room or order from the room service menu. As guests move around the property with the smartphone app, hotel staff can recognise them — using the StarGuest associate app on their own digital devices — and offer highly relevant recommendations.

“Our marketing ecosystem includes more than 40 separate internal and external systems, but that central foundational layer — where everything feeds in, where it all comes together, and analytics intersects with personalisation — is Adobe Marketing Cloud. It’s the key to the effectiveness of our digital marketing.”

- Christopher Marin
  Director of Digital Marketing Platforms, CSC

The Aberdeen Group reports that digitally mature companies create lifetime customers and enjoy a nearly 10% year-over-year increase in revenue compared to just over 3% for less mature organisations.¹⁰

A customer’s cross-channel journey can encompass several touchpoints or just a few. The challenge for marketers is to engage in the channels that the customer chooses, with the personalisation and real-time delivery customers expect from every interaction.

GROW MARKETING CAPABILITIES
Align digital maturity with customer experience goals.
For organisations to deliver these engaging, 360-degree experiences, they need the ability to completely understand the customer’s journey. Implementing a simple, four-step formula — Listen, Predict, Assemble and Deliver — into your processes can help you see what your customers need and how to best interact with them.

Before your organisation can successfully deliver a unified experience, you must align these capabilities with your customer experience goals. The Adobe Digital Maturity Model can help you understand how well your organisation has invested in the necessary technology, training and process infrastructure.

The unified experience formula.

1. **Listen**
   Gather the customer data your organisation has that will help you interpret your customer’s intentions and expectations across anonymous and known audiences.

2. **Predict**
   Consider the content and offers your organisation has created and how they will meet the expectations of specific segments of your customer base at defined locations along the customer journey.

3. **Assemble**
   Match your content and offers with your customer data and begin building a cohesive experience.

4. **Deliver**
   Engage the customer with the customised experience, ensuring that your content adjusts appropriately to your customer’s device and channel preferences.

To act on each step of this formula, key digital marketing capabilities are required:

- Analytics is the foundation for recognising customer segments and individual behaviours.
- Testing is critical to predicting and optimising the content that will be most engaging.
- Content management is crucial to enabling delivery of rich and engaging customer experiences across channels and devices.
Today, it's more important than ever before to deliver unified customer experiences. As new companies — born executing digital best practices — enter the marketplace and legacy enterprises make incremental improvements, they continually raise your customers' expectation of what's possible. To remain competitive, your organisation must invest in organisational alignment that gets your teams working to achieve the same consumer-centric vision, connects your traditionally siloed online and offline channels and takes your digital marketing maturity to the next level.

"If we can create truly valuable, remarkable experiences that make the customer want to share them, we win. The customer will share those stories across all the platforms that we’ll never have the capability to be on. That's the brass ring."

- Robert Rose
Senior Contributing Analyst,
Digital Clarity Group

Take the next steps toward delivering Unified Customer Experiences that build brand loyalty and drive ROI.

1. **Assess your digital maturity**
   Use the Adobe Digital Experience Self Assessment tool to benchmark your organisation's current abilities and help you set long-term goals for growth.

2. **Get community insight**
   Meet with your colleagues to hear how other organisations are approaching customer engagement today, and learn new ways to structure your organisation for success.

3. **Calibrate your KPIs**
   Review your KPIs and make adjustments as necessary to ensure they are in alignment with your unified customer experience goals.
Adobe Marketing Cloud is the most comprehensive and integrated marketing solution available, enabling marketers to measure, personalise and optimise marketing campaigns and digital experiences for optimal marketing performance. With its complete set of solutions, including Adobe Analytics, Adobe Target, Adobe Social, Adobe Experience Manager, Adobe Media Optimizer and Adobe Campaign, as well as real-time dashboards and a collaborative interface, marketers are able to combine data, insights and digital content to deliver the optimal brand experience to their customers.

And it gives you everything you need to get deep insight into your customers, build personalised and unified customer experiences and manage your content and assets.

4. Harvard Business Review. The Dangerous Tension Between CMOs and CIOs. 29 August 2013.