Connecting with people across their every *dimension.*

Cross-channel experiences for
consumers in all their complexity.

For decades, economists believed people made rational choices, psychologists thought they could categorise us into clearly defined personality types and marketers were sure that customers followed linear funnels toward purchase.

Not so anymore. That's because the world has come to realise that we humans are multidimensional. We have many sides to our lives and our personalities. We don't follow logical, linear paths. And what we like one minute, we don't like the next. As businesses increasingly focus on customers, they see that they're not simple and static personas. Instead they're complex and dynamic individuals.

"The behaviour of a consumer can vary drastically from day to day, with a good or bad mood directly impacting how they perceive their interactions with a brand."

Liraz Margalit, PhD
Head of Behavioural Research, Clicktale

As if this didn't present enough variables for businesses to consider, customer expectations are dramatically changing for every kind of organisation – and at an incredible speed. Manufacturing customers working on terminals a couple years back now expect simple, mobile purchase experiences for complex orders. Travelers now balk if any part of the process isn't as simple as requesting a ride and assuming they'll get personalised, location-specific content served up for their entertainment long before they even leave home.

A multitude of channels, but minimal customer patience.
The nearly infinite ways we engage with the digital world adds yet another layer of complexity. We bounce across devices, locations and channels so much now, we're not even consciously aware of it. Without a thought, we go from laptops during the workday to tablets sitting on our nightstands to our phones whenever we have a second. In fact, the average person with a smartphone uses 30 different apps a month. Then there are all the email accounts, the messaging apps, the multiple flavours of social. Even when we watch television, we're doing something else.
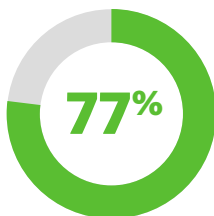

*Seventy-seven percent of Americans engage with a
so-called "second screen" – a mobile device or laptop,
for example – while watching television.*

Source: eMarketer

Few companies understand the complex cross-channel nature of customers better than [Sky UK,](#) an international media and entertainment company. "Seventy-one percent of our customers use more than three channels to interact with us," says Rob McLaughlin, head of digital analytics at Sky. "And it's actually us as a business waking up to that fact, and providing solutions and experiences that reflect that omnichannel reality."

The reality is that customers expect experiences across all channels to be seamless, uninterrupted and informed – from brand media to website, organic social to ecommerce purchase, digital app to physical store. That's why digitally savvy, customer-centric organisations are increasingly realising multi-channel delivery isn't the same thing as cross-channel experiences. It's the difference between having all the ingredients for a recipe and having the actual dish, wonderfully cooked and beautifully presented.

71%
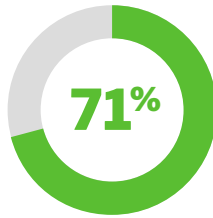
Seventy-one percent of our customers use more than three channels to interact with Sky UK.

Source: Rob McLaughlin, Sky UK

The <u>rewards</u> of embracing
human complexity.

Companies delivering personalised experiences in various channels often achieve the measurable, immediate performance gains organisations love – more clicks, higher conversions and better engagement, for example. But a true, holistic cross-channel strategy can go far beyond these quick wins. Tackling – or better yet, embracing – the complexity of customer behaviour can lead to differentiation in competitive markets, increased loyalty among the most valuable customers and big revenue gains.

Consider the travel and hospitality company [Virgin Holidays](). They've seen conversion rates one-and-a-half times higher through personalised content in emails. But they're also aiming for something greater than immediate returns on tactics in a single channel. They want to win in their highly competitive space and, perhaps most importantly, to connect deeply with their customers over the long haul.

"We spend a lot of our time thinking about how we can give the customer a better experience," says Saul Lopes, customer lifecycle lead at Virgin Holidays. For Lopes and his team, that thinking extends across the entire customer journey, from initial booking to pre-departure to post-holiday and beyond. The result of this focus on customer experience is large-scale and long-term business impact, with a 66 percent increase in awareness and a 33 percent lift in revenue.

66%
increase in awareness

33%
lift in revenue

Source: Saul Lopes, Virgin Holidays

Another travel and hospitality leader, Travelocity, is also dedicated to understanding all aspects of the customer across their journey, both literal and figurative. "Customers now expect us to understand them at a deeper level," says Shane Lewis, director of email marketing at Travelocity. And that requires seeing customers as multidimensional and communicating with them dynamically. "The end goal is a very complex, conversational message with our customer," Lewis says. "So it's not just email anymore. We've got push, SMS, social – but really, at the end of the day, we're innovating for the sake of talking with customers in the best way possible."

Opening up Pandora's possibilities.

Organisations of all kinds, across all industries, are developing innovative cross-channel strategies tailored to their unique environment and needs. For the music service Pandora, it's about extending the music magic that happens inside their platform and pushing it out via all other channels. "We use the power of our personal recommendations for that next artist or that next song and actually talk to you about it in an email campaign, a push notification or other off-platform marketing," says Chris Phillips, chief product officer at Pandora.

To personalise experiences across channels, Pandora is capitalising on the tens of billions of data points they use to personalise their music. This specific kind of music- and data-powered customer empathy might be unique to Pandora, but it illustrates how marketers of all types can dial in their personalisation efforts by unifying disparate customer data.

Brands that master cross-channel personalisation now have the power to create consistent customer experiences and foster deeper "experience loyalty" for many years to come. "Younger generations are no longer 'brand loyal,'" says Andy Jacobs, managing director at PwC. "Instead, they're experience loyal. They're going to choose the experiences that are consistently personalised to their needs and desires, and that make them feel valued and important."

How to <u>add</u> the human *dimension.*

I t's your job to overcome the challenges of cross-channel personalisation for nuanced, ever-changing customers – and to deliver experiences that effectively address their many sides, create long-term bonds with them and up-level your business in their eyes. The good news is it's easier today than it's ever been.

Here are some best practices for those looking to move beyond executing in individual channels to fully orchestrated, contextually informed experiences

across every touchpoint for a customer, at every stage in their relationship with your organisation.

▶ **Be all about the customer.**

According to a Forrester report commissioned by Adobe, companies that meet the criteria for being "customer obsessed" substantially outperform those that don't. For example, 22 percent of the customer-obsessed organisations in the study exceeded their revenue goals three or more years in a row, while only 2 percent of those who were "customer naïve" achieved that. The numbers nearly reverse when looking at who missed revenue goals last year, with 26 percent of customer-naïve companies saying they missed those goals, compared to only 3 percent of those that are customer obsessed.

26% *Twenty-six percent of customer-naïve companies missed their revenue goals last year.*

Source: Forrester

But beware – just because your organisation says it's customer obsessed doesn't mean it is. It requires walking the walk, with the customer squarely at the center of organisational structure, technology, processes, metrics, talent and culture. While 60 percent of respondents in the report said they were customer obsessed, only 12 percent actually met Forrester's criteria for that label.

Get the Forrester report commissioned by Adobe:
"Email Marketing Can Launch Customer Obsession"

Those who obsess win.

Companies who meet the Forrester criteria for "customer obsessed" often exceed their revenue goals, while those who rank as "customer naïve" rarely do.

"Which of the following best describes your company's revenue performance?"

■ Customer obsessed   ■ Customer committed   ■ Customer aware   ■ Customer naïve

We have exceeded our revenue goals three years in a row or more.
- 22%
- 15%
- 9%
- 2%

We have exceeded our revenue goals the past two years.
- 19%
- 13%
- 7%
- 0%

We exceeded our revenue goals last year.
- 38%
- 24%
- 17%
- 16%

We met our revenue goals last year.
- 19%
- 42%
- 56%
- 56%

We did not meet our revenue goals last year.
- 3%
- 7%
- 11%
- 26%

Base: Customer naïve = 57; customer aware = 116; customer committed = 55; customer obsessed = 32; decision makers at U.S. companies with 500+ employees

Source: Forrester and Adobe

▶ Think like customers, not like org charts.

As Forrester implies, the way companies are organisationally set up can be a huge hurdle to executing a cross-channel strategy. Because internal teams aren't connected to one another, experiences are often executed and measured in isolation. "Organisations aren't designed for the new cross-channel world order," says Gary Laben, global chief data officer at Wunderman. "So a terrible experience with the operations department isn't connected to a great experience with the sales department at the other end. In fact, these departments don't even know that the other experience exists."

"Organisations aren't designed for the new cross-channel world order."

Gary Laben
Global Chief Data Officer, Wunderman

But organisations with mature, cross-channel programmes think like their customers, not like their org charts. This starts by bringing disparate and unlikely departments together, so that they can begin to synchronise all their online and real-world experiences. Technology and technology-empowered processes can help with this. They can improve collaboration and even unify organisations, especially when there's standardisation across the board – instead of a whole slew of point solutions that only individual teams use or understand.

Get in-depth with this organisational readiness article

▶ Unite complex customer data into one.

Organisational disconnect can also present a data challenge. Many companies lack a centralised place to create, manage and orchestrate experiences, which means data from critical channels like display and web can't be integrated with other valuable data sources, like CRM systems, call centre logs or product return records. Because of this, the picture of the customer often remains inaccessible and woefully incomplete.

The answer is to put all that data in a single, easy-to-access place. Then you don't have to query dozens of different systems and reconcile multiple data types and customer touchpoint histories. This single view can include all the data customers leave behind as they interact with your brand, including online sources like web, mobile and social, as well as offline sources like in-store, event or call centre data. It can also include second- and third-party data, providing another dimension for an even richer, more complete picture of your customers. With this single customer view, you'll be able to uncover new insights that enable you to speak directly to customers, understand and address their unique needs, even anticipate their desires.

Sky UK, for example, brings unique and powerful datasets to the mix to increase its customer intelligence. "We put technologies into our web app and television platforms which allow us to understand customer behaviour," says McLaughlin. "We bring that back and mix it in with intelligence we have in the offline world to do amazing things in digital and offline channels."

"We put technologies into our web app and television platforms which allow us to understand customer behaviour."

Rob McLaughlin
Head of Digital Analytics, Sky UK

▶ **Be real-time and context-correct.**

It's easy to fall a step behind customers, to act on what they've done in the past rather than what they're wanting to accomplish right now, right where they are – whether that's their location, current behaviour or even mindset. In a PwC survey, less than half of firms said they use real-time customer interaction and contextual data for personalisation.

Travel and hospitality companies know the importance real-time, contextual customer experiences. From discovering and booking travel to the trip itself and memories that follow, customers have lots of options, and in-the-moment experiences can make all the difference. Loyalty might come down to an upgrade offer that anticipates a traveller's preferences as they're waiting for a flight, or a favourite drink offered the moment that traveller takes their seat. Or customer satisfaction might depend on softening the blow of lost luggage with an in-app notification that alerts the passenger of the issue before they even get to baggage claim – and then automatically routes the luggage to their hotel.

Loyalty might come down to an upgrade offer that anticipates a traveller's preferences as they're waiting for a flight, or a favourite drink offered the moment that traveller takes their seat.

Timeliness and context are nearly always essential dimensions of effective cross-channel campaigns, no matter what the industry. A manufacturer may want to use Internet of Things to provide real-time maintenance updates for their customers, while a secondary school pupil might need the nearest physical store to pick up an online back-to-school clothing order. In either case, it's all about the here and now.

The reality is that "here and now" regularly means shifts in channels. And the better channels can work together, with automated triggers that execute instantly, the more marketers can make the experience continuous, timely and right for the customer.

▶ Listen to understand, measure to validate.

You can't understand people in all their complexities if you don't pay attention to them. That's why it's necessary to listen to customer interactions across all channels and devices, wherever they go, at all times. By performing a true cross-channel analysis, you can connect the dots across touchpoints and identify new opportunities to delight your customers every step of the way. Plus, you can find opportunities to increase your own performance – how activities on the web lead to offline conversions and vice versa, for example.

One way to do this is through algorithmic attribution, which allows you to determine the complete sequence of events that leads a customer toward a purchase. By measuring the precise impact of each marketing touch along a customer's journey to conversion, you can continually fine-tune your content, improve and deepen your personalisation and avoid overspending on less effective channels and tactics.

You can dive deeper into each individual marketing touch to see specifically what worked within each interaction – and what didn't. Start by looking at obvious performance metrics, such as response rates, campaign lift or return on marketing investment. Then take a closer look at engagement metrics, such as how long customers spend viewing content and how often they return to it.

But don't stop there. "Customer-obsessed marketing emphasises the impact on the customer – lifetime value, wallet share or advocacy," says Forrester analyst Rusty Warner. To find this lifetime value, zoom your measurement lens out again, so you can see beyond single transactions to understand the overall experience that each customer is having – from what they think of your brand to whether they're advocating for you. Keep in mind that one poor experience can cause a ripple effect, leading to an overall negative brand perception. So the measurement of each interaction must be tied to the measurement of the overall customer experience and loyalty. To accomplish this, identify analytics technologies that help you make the leap from measuring campaign performance to understanding end-to-end customer experiences.

"Customer-obsessed marketing emphasises the impact on the customer – lifetime value, wallet share or advocacy."

Rusty Warner
Analyst, Forrester

▶ **Test and optimise.**

In addition to collecting and analysing data across all your channels, consider a more expansive testing and optimising approach, one that looks holistically across the whole customer journey. For example, you may want to look at how your customers move from display ads to your web and mobile channels, and even how their behaviours differ from mobile websites to mobile apps.

This kind of cross-channel testing enables a deep examination of your customers' complex digital actions. But examination is nothing without action – which in this case means optimisation across whole conversion paths. One example of this is what's called "dynamic creative optimisation," which uses rules and algorithms to automate delivery of the most relevant experiences possible across each customer's journeys. Among its many benefits, dynamic creative optimisation can limit message overexposure even across several channels, ultimately improving marketing performance. So no surprise that organisations who've put this in action are seeing increased engagement, conversions and revenue.

Definition:

Dynamic creative optimisation

A means of optimisation that uses rules and algorithms to automate delivery of the most relevant experiences possible across each customer's journeys.

Content for your customer's *many sides.*

Organisational structure, data, measurement, optimisation – these foundational, quantitatively based components of a cross-channel strategy are essential. But equally essential is content that moves customers emotionally, informs them about a topic they care about, helps them do what they want to do. In short, customers are looking for content that provides true value to them as individuals *at this very moment.* Here are a few best practices for valuable content across their journeys.
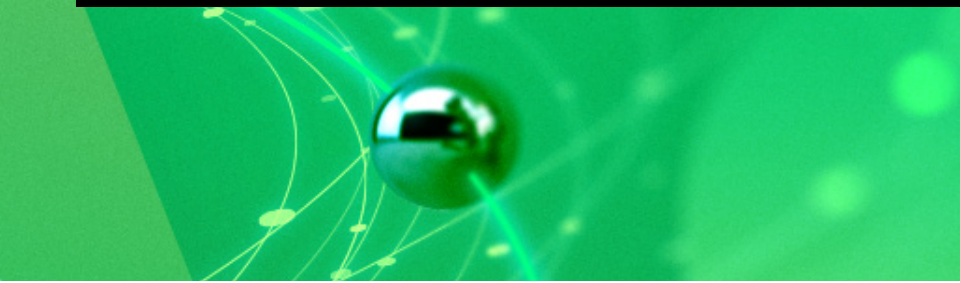
For new prospects just discovering your world:

- **Start with value.** Before producing any piece of content, always ask a "value" question – What type of content will your customers find relevant or valuable at a very specific interaction point?

- **Focus on story.** Stories are how we humans make sense of the world, and savvy marketers increasingly know story-making is the path to connection with their customers. "In the worst-case scenarios before, a client with a $50 million media budget would set aside $2 million to [develop] story-driven content. Now the entire budget has a story-driven foundation," says Scott Donation, former global chief content officer at Universal McCann.

- **Understand how customers use your content.** Discover what draws your audience to your content channels. For example, skincare and beauty company Glossier keeps its audiences engaged with user-generated content, candid organic social interaction and timely, audience-attuned advice in a wide variety of media formats.

- **Keep a steady pace of fresh and valued content creation.** Have an editorial and production plan to keep your content fresh and appealing, especially when it comes to discovery content.

For existing customers, where loyalty is the goal:

- **Help customers understand how to extend the value of their relationship with your brand.** Almost all products can benefit from inventive and helpful content that inspires customers – whether that's personalised status reports showing how customers used your product, inspirational customer stories or high-quality educational content.

- **Offer customers exclusive updates on your products.** Customers often have a stake in the future of a brand and want to know where the product and design are going. This is a place where the interplay between social and email can be particularly valuable.

Where <u>cross-channel</u> <u>experiences</u> go from *here.*

Every day, online, you see the impact of data and machine learning on cross-channel, personalised experiences. Data and machine learning power the hyper-relevance of social media. Leading e-commerce brands use them to nudge consumers forward, across countless channels and dimensions of buying behaviours. And billions of searches every day are tailored to the device users have, the places they're located and the context in which they find themselves.

Thanks to the power of data and machine learning, top-tier cross-channel personalisation has become the baseline for customers. Good news, though – technology is increasingly extending these high-powered cross-channel personalisation capabilities to all organisations, giving them in-depth customer understanding and moment-to-moment agility – exactly what's needed to meet the diverse traits and always-shifting whims of the customer.

For example, the right technology, powered by data and machine learning, makes possible all the content variations for different audiences and channels, automatically targeting the best segments and transforming once-vexing manual processes into precise, in-tune assembly lines. Plus, data-powered algorithms can automate personalisation decisions – and, as a side benefit, reduce internal squabbles. "Automation alleviates internal turf wars and the very human temptation to solve the problem by just throwing everything everyone wants up on a website carousel," says Drew Burns, senior product marketing manager at Adobe.

And this is just the start. As you increase your cross-channel orchestration and measurement capabilities, your content creation processes will become more efficient, customer decisions more intelligent and marketing efforts more effective. Experiences will be finely tuned to customer behaviour and current environment, automatically adapting to their moment-to-moment shifts across channels and desires. And most importantly, you'll be able to make meaningful, long-standing connections with customers in all their complexity.

"Good marketing doesn't feel like marketing. It really should feel natural."

Betty Bakkali
Relationship Marketing Manager, Nestle

Adobe can help.

With the cross-channel marketing capabilities in Adobe Experience Cloud, you can deliver consistent, personalised experiences everywhere customers go.

Adobe Campaign

Understand customer journeys end to end, deliver, optimise and measure custom campaigns across multiple online and offline channels.

Adobe Advertising Cloud

Tie one-to-one campaign management to programmatic ad management to broaden the view of the customer and retarget on search or display channels.

Adobe Experience Manager

Manage, access and share content from a single place for consistent messaging in your cross-channel campaigns.

Adobe Analytics

Measure the effectiveness of campaigns across multiple touchpoints from anonymous to authenticated customer.

Adobe Target

Improve campaign conversion and create more contextual content by testing before you deliver.

Adobe Audience Manager

Share audiences and segments across solutions, use look-alike modelling to find your best new customers and enrich data for enhanced targeting and personalisation.

Learn more about how you can personalise, automate and deliver cross-channel experiences.

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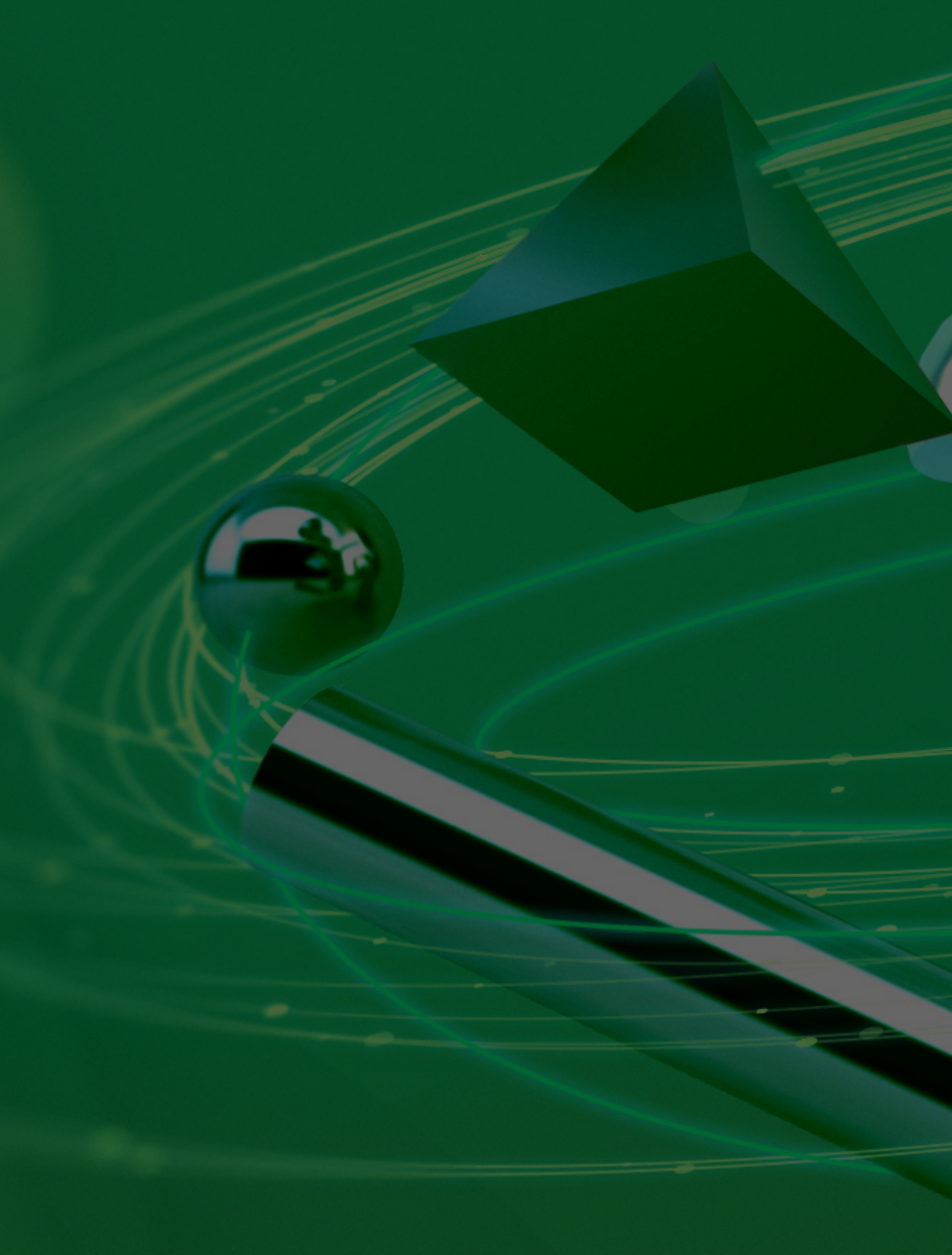*Gary Laben, global chief data officer, Wunderman, personal interview, February 2016.*

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