



Becoming an experience-based business

Your blueprint for a strong
digital foundation





Start with a blueprint.

More than ever, customers expect holistic, personalized, relevant experiences, and brands that aren't engineered to keep pace with this transformation are struggling. In fact, the average lifespan of S&P 500 companies dropped from 33 years in 1965 to just 20 years in 2017, and it is expected to drop to 12 years by 2027, according to Innosight.

Conversely, companies that are developing strategies and technology foundations based on transforming customer experiences are winning. Digitally based super-brands like Uber, Airbnb, and Amazon have created new industries by providing breakthrough customer experiences.

The average lifespan of S&P 500 companies



None of these brands would be successful today without having a solid, modern, experience-based foundation:



At a foundational level, if Airbnb hadn't included the ability to pull in content from people all over the world, with only a basic level of security and scalability, would their business model still work?

Uber

If Uber couldn't use real-time data with a consolidated platform to personalize their service to users' preferences and location, as well as to instantly scale on-peak demand times (for example, Friday at 9 p.m. versus Monday at 3 a.m.) would their model be as successful?



If Amazon did not have the analytics to look through millions of products and interactions to make personalized, relevant recommendations, would their customers be able to find what they're looking for and keep coming back to them again and again?

From relatively new apps like DoorDash and Stitch Fix that reengineer entire markets to established companies like Google, Netflix, and Apple, organizations building on a revolutionary foundation for how they go to market are succeeding because of their focus on customer experiences. The same foundation is available to you.

Enterprises built for today's customers are clearly different.

Today, marketing has moved beyond a toolset based on incremental updates to existing technology and processes and a series of legacy systems jerry-rigged together with the digital equivalent of duct tape. For one thing, the emergence and importance of customer experiences have changed everything. According to the Adobe 2020 Digital Trends report, the companies that lead in customer service are three times more likely to have significantly exceeded their 2019 business goals than companies that don't focus on customer experience.

With the explosion of channels and an increased emphasis on personalization and real-time engagement, you're now potentially talking about hundreds or thousands of different customer experiences that need to be created, managed, and delivered to reach all your core segments and buyer personas. And each of these experiences needs to be differentiated, relevant, and compelling.

The customer experience mandate requires a comprehensive digital foundation, which is an integrated system that offers increased scalability, flexibility, and seamless delivery. And for a digital foundation to perform at the highest level, it needs to be able to build in experiences based on information from a growing list of customer touchpoints.



At a minimum, marketers today need a toolset that can recognize individuals as they move across devices. Next, they need to understand consumers at a granular level. If someone has a prior relationship as a customer or shopper with a given brand or product, then the context of that relationship should be understood and reflected in any channel or on any device. Additionally, all these touchpoints and interactions need to be bulletproof secure and flip-a-switch scalable to reach new audiences and markets.

For enterprises to succeed in the future and thrive in the age of digital transformation, they will need to make changes to their marketing approach.



Customer expectations and their impact on digital marketing.

It's an increasingly mobile world. People need the ability to complete any task in any location or, at the very least, to start a process or journey in one location or on one device and seamlessly complete it on another. If they start shopping for a product on their laptop at work during lunch, they want to be able to pick up a tablet at home that evening and finish the transaction. This is the rule, not the exception.

People want an experience to be both relevant and personal. If they view some content—like a product comparison or white paper—subsequent emails, mobile notifications, and web pages should know that and pick up the conversation where they left off, adding value to the customer experience.

According to PwC, "73 percent of all people point to customer experience as an important factor in their purchasing decisions. Yet only 49 percent of U.S. consumers say companies provide a good customer experience today."

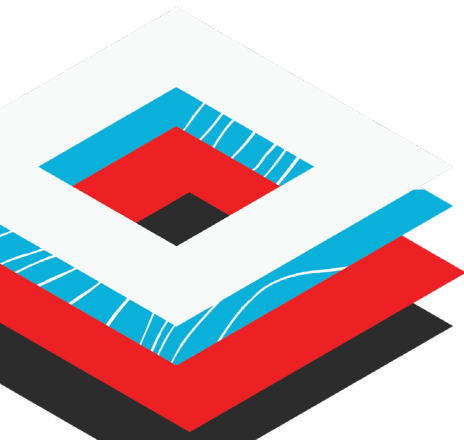
If a consumer has indicated a clear affinity for some element of your brand or product in one channel, that information should be extended to and used as a building block for the next.



For example, if a customer adds a product to their cart on your web store but doesn't purchase, can you connect that commerce data and your campaign systems to make your next email communication with that individual more meaningful?

Or if a customer unsubscribes from your mailing list or shipping is delayed for your best-selling product, how can you use this time-sensitive information to improve the customer experience?

In short, people expect the option to order meals, subscribe to favorite products, pick up purchases curbside, review their order history, obtain transportation, and much more on their own terms—and all through the technology embedded in their phone, watch, smart speaker, or any other device they choose.



Customer experience is built on a new foundation.

There's no way around it. The creation and delivery of relevant digital experiences is complicated. When it comes to personalization, more than one in four marketers cite technology as a major hurdle.

Clearly, organizations need to make investments at the foundational level to overcome such a significant bottleneck. Marketing teams today need a foundation based on a new set of requirements, including the following:



It should be built on a single, easy-to-use, unified platform. Having the right design and user interface—from the ground up—with integration among the core tools, workflows, and data sets.



It should have the extensibility to tap into existing and future enterprise systems for customer data to augment and enhance the customer experience. And it should feature integration among all the components necessary to manage and optimize experiences (testing, analytics, personalization, audience management, and so on), which is best accomplished with a cloud-native system that keeps all the tools connected and up to date.



It should provide the highest level of security to every channel, every employee, and every customer within that single platform design, while fulfilling all relevant industry and government standards and protocols, as well as operating within data privacy laws.



It should be fully scalable on a cloud-based infrastructure to ensure it's always up to date and to take advantage of on-demand resources to meet capacity requirements.

This "experience-based" foundation is probably different from the tools your organization has developed over the last 10 years. In this guide, we'll show you why you need to evolve and how you can emulate the success of leaders like Kao, Telegraph Media Group, and Philips. They're delivering outstanding experiences because they've adopted best practices enabled by advances in cloud computing and streamlined modern marketing processes. And so can you.



Advantages of a unified foundation

	Marketing via disparate tools-based infrastructure	Experience-based digital foundation
Experience and campaign creation and optimization	Analytics, targeting, segmentation, and content are managed on a channel-by-channel basis hindering analysis and optimization of the customer journey.	Common layers for integrating campaigns, data, segments, and targeting provide rapid experience development across channels and a deep understanding of campaign performance.
Experience security management	Security protocol, testing, compliance, and management evolves on a project-by-project basis. Variable standards create vulnerability.	Centralized management drives compliance to all best-in-class industry and government standards, yielding a broad and deep security framework.
Experience extension, integrations, and standardization	New data sets and system integrations are scoped and managed on a one-off basis requiring significant lead time for new capability development.	A flexible and extensible software architecture supports integrations, new data, and expanded capabilities. It offers easy scalability as needs grow.

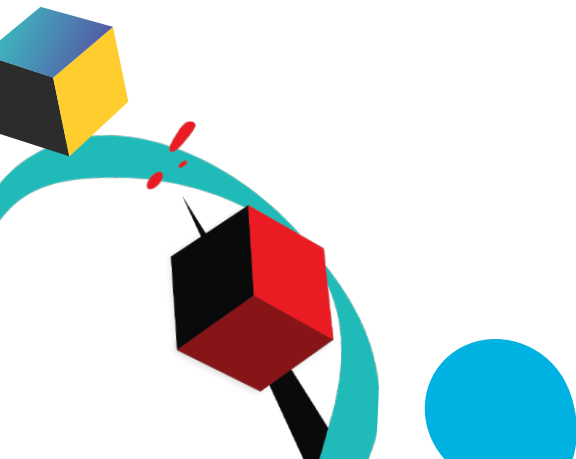
Marketing via disparate tools-based infrastructure

Experience management, delivery, and deployment model

Experiences are managed on a channel, brand, campaign, or project-by-project basis. Infrastructure to support the end-to-end customer journey is managed through a mix of in-house, partners, vendors, and service providers.

Experience-based digital foundation

A cloud-native architecture streamlines experience development and improves time to market. Hardware and software architecture designed to test, scope, maintain, and deploy is managed by best-in-class experience management teams. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine-learning (ML) support rapid experience delivery.



Experiences and campaigns need something in common.

Seventy-three percent of customers say experience is key to influencing brand loyalty, according to PwC. It's a priority to build a foundation that integrates the core components of experience creation and delivery. Those include personalization and analytics plus content, asset, and audience management.



Rather than spending an exorbitant amount of time configuring multiple-channel and device-specific experience delivery systems, you can set up a common, easy-to-use, unified foundation that acts as a central hub. Here are a few examples of organizations that are benefiting from having a common layer for experience creation and delivery across all channels:



The [Kao Corporation](#) wanted to meet the demands of increasing traffic on their 250 global websites. They're able to do this by adopting a mobile-first design philosophy and improving content management across all devices using an integrated CMS and DAM platform. They saw 20 percent faster updates with mobile website support and improved flexibility and localization.



telegraphmediagroup

[Telegraph Media Group](#) understands that newsgroups need to adapt by embracing digital innovation. To stay competitive and remain connected to their millions of users, they developed modern, clean, and fast websites to quickly deliver relevant experiences to readers. This resulted in tripled daily acquisitions for registrations, leading to higher revenue and better customer experiences.

PHILIPS

[Philips](#) cut costs by 90 percent when they developed a data-driven marketing culture and brought in a digital marketing platform to seamlessly test, measure, and deliver personalized content across global sites.

A centralized layer for content and campaign management.

By integrating the processes and libraries used to assemble and deliver campaigns for websites, mobile (including both web and apps), and email, you can ensure the consistency and quality of the experience. The goal is to allow the assets, messaging, and offers attached to one marketing campaign to be easily repurposed, delivered, and optimized as the customer engages with the brand across channels or devices. Centralizing this layer removes redundancy, resulting in cost savings from reduced workflow, quicker production cycles, and reduced time to market. Think “design once, use multiple times” while personalizing your message for each channel and audience.





A common layer for audiences and personalization.

You need a way to assemble content differently for different individuals and customer journeys. For example, if your web page doesn't change its content to reflect a search engine query or an action in your mobile app, you're missing an opportunity to improve the experience through personalization. Done well, personalization can decrease the number of steps the customer needs to complete their given journey by offering more relevant information at each stage.



27%

of marketers believe data is the key obstacle to personalization—revealing their weaknesses in data collection, integration, and protection.

Source: Gartner

Delivering personalized experiences at scale also requires audience management, which facilitates the creation of comprehensive customer profiles. Companies look to multiple sources of data to create that comprehensive view.

As all sophisticated marketers know, a company's most powerful data asset is its first-party data. First-party data is the foundation for how companies understand their customers. As such, it's the core building block for personalization. These details should be accessible as a common layer in a centralized location and then grouped based on similar attributes.

When first-party data can't provide all the necessary information about consumers at every point of their journey, second-party data—data exchanged between partners or through a formal information exchange can fill some gaps in the customer journey and allow you to identify more individuals across devices.

Most people today use multiple devices daily. In a typical day, someone might use a smartphone, a tablet, a desktop computer, a laptop, a wearable health device, and an RFID-enabled identity card at work, each generating its own data stream indicating preferences and behaviors.

The final data set to consider is third-party data. Third-party data providers have a breadth of information about consumers, including behavior- and intent-based data gathered from external websites as well as data aggregators.

Imagine this scenario: Sam is in the process of buying a computer monitor with Acme, an e-commerce merchant. She browses different monitor models using the Acme app on her tablet. Later that day, she decides on a monitor and purchases one on her laptop via the Acme website. Currently, most brands would continue to serve Sam ads for monitors. By stitching together data sources, Acme recognizes Sam's tablet search for a monitor and laptop purchase as being from the same individual. So they immediately stop advertising monitors to Sam and start giving her offers for other office items, like a keyboard or mouse.

This is the heart of offering personalized experiences: powerful first-party data, augmented with relevant information from second parties—and then further enhanced with third-party data from the open market. Each data source looks at customer behavior from a different angle, and combined offers a holistic picture of the customer. It can yield additional benefits downstream, including enhanced abilities to find new customers based on the behavior of current users.



A common analytics layer pre-engineered into every channel.

Customers leave a fingerprint on each screen and channel they visit. If you're actively listening, you can ensure that you assemble the right content and target it based on the rules for each channel, campaign, and audience. But this requires a centralized approach to analytics, one that can understand behavior on mobile devices, within an app, or on a website and connect that to a given individual—whether they're authenticated or anonymous.

The payoff from this common layer comes in the form of advanced analytics, including attribution modeling. Attribution modeling combines data from interactions with content, offers, and campaigns across multiple channels and yields specific recommendations on where to place credit for the success of a given campaign or offer. Armed with these details, marketers have a scorecard to revise and test improvements to the customer experience. Attribution modeling is so important that by 2023, 75 percent of marketers will use multitouch attribution, according to IDC.

And this common layer of analytics goes still deeper. It allows you to get a step ahead of your customers with predictive analytics. By looking at all the available data across channels for statistically significant relationships and behaviors, you can automate the process of determining the best options for the next best offer, experience, or even potential future campaigns. And some companies can now do it in real time.



Security for every layer, process, touchpoint, and piece of data.

Think about the number of different systems you need to manage, authenticate, and integrate to process the content and customer information necessary for delivering personalized experiences. Add to that number the rising tide of future systems and touchpoints to support the growth of mobile and the Internet of Things.

At a minimum, today you have to manage email, e-commerce, social media, billing, shipping, content servers, DAM, and CRM. Additionally, the presentation layer of experiences based on that data generates gigabytes of information about consumers and uses terabytes of content to build these experiences. Keeping all this data secure is a daunting challenge. Daily examples are being added to the diverse list of companies whose foundations are cracking under this pressure.

Your customer information, permissions, and preferences are gold, but only if you don't violate customer trust. GDPR and good business ethics require you to communicate how you use and secure customer data. The fact is that as your customers interact with more devices and channels, you develop even deeper customer profiles to serve those extended experiences. To support that growth, you need a centralized process and managing customer preferences, including cookies, channel preferences, and permissions—such as phone, email, or app push notifications.

The key to securing that data is to build an omnichannel foundation where all touchpoints, channels, and campaigns can share the same centralized customer profiles—with a common security, authentication, and personalization layer on top of that.

Not only do you need to implement an efficient process for each and every customer touchpoint, you also need to ensure that your enterprise can meet all the relevant security and compliance standards, such as FedRAMP, SOC 2, HIPAA, GLBA, and ISO 27001, as well as new laws regulating customer privacy. However, compliance is a journey—not a destination. Standards and requirements are continually changing, and staying on top of them can tax your resources—especially if you have multiple vendors and disparate solutions trying to come together to deliver the customer experience.

Building a secure digital foundation using only internal resources, however, is getting harder and harder. Fortunately, service providers exist today who host and manage the entire continuum of tools and infrastructure for experience management and delivery. According to a special report by SolarWinds and the 2112 Group, “97 percent of surveyed partners reported some form of revenue-generating IT service offering.”

Managed services offerings that take an omnichannel approach are not only built with pre-engineered security at the foundational level, they can ensure that as security needs evolve, so does your system.



An experience management and delivery solution that scales in real time.

Any organization, retailer, educator, manufacturer, or government entity needs to be able to respond to growth and potentially huge spikes in traffic. Various reasons, such as seasonal marketing campaigns during the holidays or expansion due to a merger or acquisition, require you to scale sometimes literally overnight.

The requirements for the technical environment for delivering experiences are very deep and continually evolving. As such, organizations are increasingly embracing cloud-based models.

At its most fundamental level, competing in the digital economy requires rapid growth and expansion of servers, software deployment, integration, and technical expertise. Leveraging hosting and managed services as the foundational layer in the cloud instantly makes available all the digital, technical, and physical resources for scaling experience delivery. The question here is one of time to market and time to respond to market conditions.

There's no instant "scale" switch built into the wall in the non-experience-based foundation.

The requirements for the technical environment for delivering experiences are very deep and continually evolving. As such, organizations are increasingly embracing cloud-based models. Advantages of a cloud-based model include the agility to quickly create and deploy campaigns or brand sites without stopping to plan and consider additions to IT staff and on-premises infrastructure. Building up

on-premises infrastructure and expertise to support these strategies just isn't time- and cost-effective.

By choosing a cloud-native foundation, you potentially gain many end-to-end benefits:



Cloud agility: A cloud-native foundation is always current and always secure, with patches deployed as they're available.



Fluid experiences: It's a single source of content that allows for easy adaptation for any channel.



Marketer and developer velocity: It streamlines work processes so developers, marketers, and creatives can work together more easily.



Experience optimization: With the help of AI and ML, it allows you to deliver optimal experiences at scale.



Steps to building the experience-based foundation.

Clearly, there's room for improvement with foundations based on the incremental adoption of disparate digital marketing toolsets. But if this describes your current foundation, how can you move forward without compromising your business? Consider these steps as you move toward a more experience-based foundation:

1

Prioritize the capabilities that position you for growth

Unless you're a startup, chances are you don't have the option to swap out all your current tools for a new foundation in one move. Because of limited IT resources and hiring or budgetary considerations, you may need to outsource various components of your digital foundation to best support your strategy. You can start by prioritizing where to invest in the capability layers from the experience-based foundation.

Here are a few examples of marketing challenges and how they might influence your prioritization efforts.



Maintaining a consistent experience across multiple channels: A new fitness company offered an incredible web experience, complete with live instruction and a library of health and exercise resources. But while the company boasted cutting-edge content, their mobile

app was rudimentary and difficult to navigate. Without a unified foundation the company couldn't offer the same level of service across all channels. To stay competitive with other home fitness companies, they needed to raise the bar by creating a holistic experience based on common customer experience capabilities across web and mobile.



Creating personalized experiences at scale: A large financial institution with a diverse customer base struggled to personalize content to each audience. Decisions around content and offers were manual, and customer data sets were offline and difficult to access. Through a cloud automation initiative, they enabled a process to bring in branch data with call-center data and online data each night. Now they can automate personalization. When a customer comes back to their site, they use automation to rate their next best offer for you. For customers interested in credit cards, they advertise only those that specific customers are eligible for. This institution saw a lift of hundreds of percentage points in click-through rate compared to the previous offline and manual approach, demonstrating the successful prioritization of the personalization layer.



Supporting globalization: The key driver for digital transformation must go beyond just survival. Companies must set a goal for growth. Entering new markets requires content, translations, and messaging for different languages, cultures, and behaviors. As an example of globalization, Uber's toolset and development path included an almost seamless country-to-country rolling launch. Global companies need to have global reach wherever customers are—or will be next. A centralized layer for content and asset management enables you to rapidly scale and deploy new channels and new experience delivery models anywhere, anytime.

Keep in mind that a true digital foundation—one with the majority of the design features we've documented here—will enable an agile response to all these opportunities.

2

Work with IT to find common ground

You should come to an agreement across your organization on the common ground for a win-win scenario to build out the digital foundation. Everyone in your organization may see the big picture, but it's a larger problem than any single department can solve. Today, it's a necessity—not just an option—to maintain your competitive advantage through your digital foundation. You have to get everyone on the same page to do it, build common ground between IT and marketing, and provide a prioritized plan that can meet everyone's needs.

3

Create a prioritized plan for customer experiences and research solutions

Furthermore, you should determine which experiences you want to strengthen for your customer journey in both the short term and the long term, and what capabilities you need to achieve those strengthened experiences. Discuss the need to push more customer data to mobile. Figure out what levels of security you may need. Think about which mundane, automatable tasks like hardware and software maintenance you can dedicate resources to.

The blueprint is redefined, and your future depends on it.

Brands that are thriving in this environment were not built on a foundation of disparate tools that evolved incrementally. Today's digital disruptors have built their foundations at the base level to manage and deliver experiences across

channels and devices and to scale to thousands and millions of experiences daily. These organizations invested in infrastructures built on a blueprint designed to personalize each interaction, make it impactful, and ensure it's bulletproof —and hackerproof.

If you want to reap all of the benefits today's technology can offer, your organization has to fully embrace the complex needs of its digital experienced-based foundation.

The choice is yours. Now.





Adobe can help.

Adobe Experience Manager is a cloud-native platform that manages both digital assets and content. When working in tandem with other solutions, including Adobe Target, Adobe Sensei, and Adobe Analytics, Experience Manager lets you create consistent, personalized experiences optimized for each customer, then automate delivery of those experiences.

Learn how an Adobe digital foundation can support your business.

[Get details](#)

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