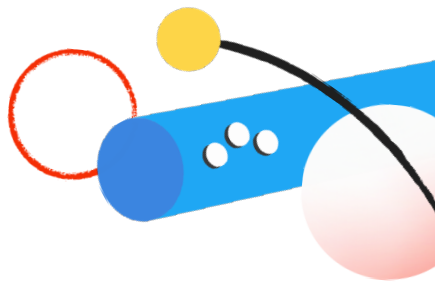




EXPERIENCE ESSENTIALS

How to have one-on-one conversations with millions of customers.





Just the basics.

“ If you want to be a good conversationalist, be a good listener. To be interesting, be interested.”

Dale Carnegie

Conversation is the language of connection. And the best conversationalists know how to forge deep connections by actively listening and responding to the conversation in a fluid and genuine manner. It's an art as much as a science.

There is a similar “art and science” approach to becoming an experience business. In our multipart Experience Essentials series, we examine the basics of customer experience (CX)—the building blocks you'll want to have in place to sustain customer experience management (CXM) success. A big part of that success includes conversing one-on-one with customers about their individual interests and needs rather than having generic conversations that often miss the mark.

In this installment of the Experience Essential series, we reveal what great conversations with your customers look like. We also provide you with the fundamental steps you need to take in order to have one-on-one conversations with every customer, every time.

The customer experience—elevated.

CXM creates a holistic customer experience—following the customer on their journey from initial awareness all the way through to an ongoing relationship with your brand. CXM shows you what your customers need in the moment and delivers it in real time, at scale, and across every channel.



The challenge of sustaining one-on-one conversations.

“ It’s really the implicit and explicit information a customer gives us. What can we glean from the situation and context that surrounds it and how can that inform the conversation? You need to pay attention to what’s going on with a person. Traditional campaign marketing lacks that context.”

Kevin Lindsay

Director of Product Marketing, Adobe

When Dana first went online to look for a new pair of running shoes, she was thrilled to find the right size and style at the right price. She made the purchase and excitedly awaited the arrival of her new shoes in the mail. And waited. And waited.

Realizing something was amiss, she went to the brand's website, initiated a chat session, and learned—much to her frustration—that the shoes were backordered. Sensing her annoyance, the rep tagged the session in the system and moved Dana to the “inconvenienced customer” segment. Within seconds, she received an SMS with a promo code for the brand's generous influencer discount. By the time she ended her chat, she'd gone from frustrated to delighted.

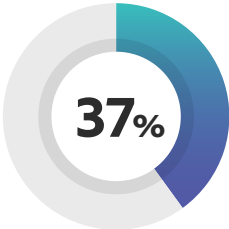
When Dana received her shoes, she activated a QR code on a “How'd we do?” insert and provided explicit feedback on her experience. In return, the brand added an extra 500 points to her rewards account. While they should've reached out in the first place to let her know her shipment was delayed, their relevant and proactive interactions with Dana after she made contact kept her engaged and increased her loyalty to the brand—making her receptive to hearing more from them in the future.

Like the arc of a great conversation, the brand's ability to listen to Dana's concerns, anticipate what she needed next, and respond with appropriate back-and-forth interactions left her feeling understood, supported, and more likely to return—with rewards points in hand—for her next running shoes purchase.

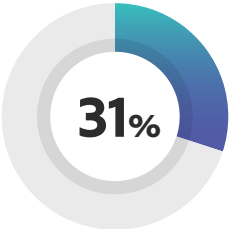
Customers crave this type of personalized experience—one that makes them feel like they're conversing with a brand that knows them and remembers their past interactions. But these types of one-on-one conversations can only happen when we're listening and reacting in the moment. And being able to do this at scale—with every customer, every time—has been a continual struggle for most brands.

Instead, the conversations brands have with their customers often feel fragmented and forced. While marketers want to have more relevant conversations, their current martech stack doesn't have sophisticated enough data management and integration capabilities to allow them to actively listen for and respond to real-time signals from their customers and from their own businesses, beyond just marketing data (aka product inventory, shipping partners, etc). This makes sustaining one-on-one conversations almost impossible. As a result, many marketers end up having conversations that aren't personalized, timely, or consistent.

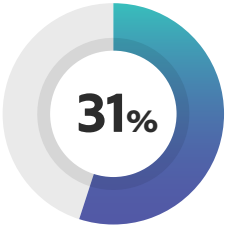
There is now a way to listen and respond in real time to customers at scale, wherever they're at—even if your martech stack isn't highly sophisticated or integrated. And we're about to show you how.



of organizations can't personalize, automate, and deliver cross-channel campaigns.



of organizations cannot quickly create, manage, and deliver relevant content.



of organizations do not have a complete view of the customer.

Source: OMDIA



Where to start.

Great conversations don't just happen—they're crafted. And to craft meaningful conversations with your customers, you need to follow these four steps.

Step 1: Lay the groundwork for great conversations.

If you want to have a conversation with someone, you first need to know what they want to talk about. This starts with information gathering. You might ask where the person is from, where they work, or what hobbies they have.

As a brand, before you begin any conversation with your customer, you need to go on a similar fact-finding mission. What have they purchased in the past? How much did they spend? Did they buy online, on mobile, or in store? From there, you need to unify this data, both first-party and third-party, so that you have a complete history of past interactions that you can use to tailor your conversations.

If your customer is new and you don't have past data, you can still lay the groundwork for great conversations by offering a more general welcome campaign. Then, as they begin to engage with your brand, you can update their journey in real time. For instance, if you see from their engagement data that they're only clicking on running shoes and not dress shoes, you can make sure you're tying in that data to their customer profile—so that the next email you send is about athletic gear and not dress wear.

Getting this data will be much easier when you:

1. Have buy-in across the organization.

When everyone is on board, it becomes much easier to take a collaborative approach, which is required in order to map the entire customer experience across all interactions with your brand, not just those with marketing.

2. Break down organizational silos.

To become adept at active listening, you need to build cross-functional teams that align on customer experience goals and KPIs, technology stack, and data governance. This will then allow you to keep your customer profiles updated in real time (Step 1) and actively “listen” by tracking channel engagement data.

3. Identify key customer journeys.

With a complete customer profile, you can then identify key journeys to focus on and ramp up personalization appropriately, so that you’re having a conversation that builds continuously on what you know from past interactions.

Step 2: Actively listen to your customer.

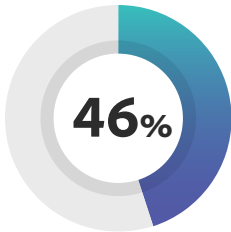
The best conversationalists are also good listeners. For your conversations with your customers to feel fluid and authentic, it’s vital you put yourself in your customers’ shoes and understand their perspective. Active listening means paying attention to context in real time so that you know what’s going on with your customer at that exact moment in their journey.

To become adept at active listening, you first have to connect all your offline data across marketing and services touchpoints (web,

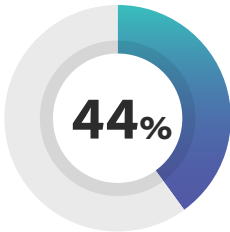
CRM, call center) into a customer profile that updates in real time (that was step 1). This will then allow you to “listen” by tracking channel engagement data.

For instance, with a real-time profile that is ingesting signals from the mobile app the customer previously downloaded from your website, you can use geo-location technology to know when a customer has entered your store. You can then respond to that signal with a well-timed “10 percent off everything in the store today only” promotion to encourage them to buy more than they may have planned. If they make an in-store purchase, you can follow up in the moment by sending them an email that thanks them for the purchase and provides information on how they can get the most of their new item. Of course, this must all be done while respecting the customer’s privacy and having their consent to use location data to improve their experience.

Real-time access to data is essential to one-on-one conversations.



of organizations say it's critical to have access to real-time data feeds and dashboards.



of organizations say it's critical to connect all first- and third-party data sources into unified customer profiles.

Source: OMDIA

Step 3: Be responsive to the conversation.

A great conversationalist knows that timing is everything—they initiate conversations when the other person is most receptive and they pause at just the right moments. In business, this means being able to deliver timely offers or experiences based on the real-time signals you're getting from your customers.

After all, what good is it to have a customer profile that has a history of all past interactions (step 1) and is connected to data sources so that it is automatically updating in real-time (step 2), if you can't take action when it would be most appreciated by the customer? Being responsive is all about responding at the right time—whether it's immediate or at a future moment.

Maybe a customer has been back to your website three times in the last hour to check out a specific leather jacket. These "signals" tell you the customer wants to buy the jacket, but something is holding them back—likely the price or the urgency to buy. You can respond in the moment by sending an email that offers a discount for a limited time on coats and jackets. This extra nudge may be all they need to answer back in a timely fashion and make the purchase. But if you respond a day or week later because of data lags in your martech stack, the buyer may no longer be interested.

A responsive conversation with your customer might also take an opposite approach. You might want to halt promotional communications when signals—such as opening a chat or submitting a customer service form—tell you the customer is experiencing friction with your brand and it's not a good selling moment. Once the service engagement closes, you can send



something special, such as an extra discount or a free product, to show empathy for the hassle of having to go through a customer service engagement.

Responding moment to moment, location to location, and knowing when to start, stop, pause, or adjust journeys according to customer actions and reactions, ensures you're engaging in a timely and appropriate conversation.

Achieving this kind of in-the-moment responsiveness is now much more possible with the use of AI and ML algorithms, which can uncover signals hidden deep in the data, as well as the tools which can ingest those signals quickly, analyze automatically, and quickly activate the insights with minimal lag. This way you can respond exactly when you need to be because the entire process is automated.

Step 4: Deliver conversations of substance.

No one wants to listen to someone drone on about something they couldn't care less about—and a good conversationalist knows this. The same is true for your customers. While they want you to be responsive, they only want to hear from you when you have something relevant and of value to say. They don't want to feel sold to or have your marketing agenda forced on them.

A centralized decisioning tool can help you craft relevant, personal, useful, and contextual conversations. An evolution in decision management technology, centralized decisioning gives you a repository of customer data that everyone can tap into—so you can quickly determine what the next-best-action or next-best-offer

should be. With the help of AI and machine learning technology, you can also surface predictive insights that help you understand how to best communicate with customers at every step of their journey. This makes it easier to automate decisions and maximizes your ability to deliver one-to-one experiences at scale.

For instance, if you run a restaurant or other appointment-based business, you could use AI to determine when best to send a reminder to each customer (for some, 1 hour before, for others, just 15 minutes before), along with specific directions to your restaurant from their location. Or, if you know that people who spend more than a certain amount of time looking at a specific destination are more likely to book a trip, you could create a tailored journey. Give them location-specific offerings rather than putting these customers in your generic welcome program.



Make great conversations effortless.



As a marketer, you can also create effortless one-on-one conversations with your customers. It starts with your people and processes—getting organizational buy-in and improving cross-department collaboration. And while it does require technology, it doesn't require a complex integration between your martech stack and data management tools. Instead, you can now use Adobe Experience Cloud to support your omnichannel campaigns and real-time conversations with customers, simplifying both the technology and the processes involved in creating personalized conversations. Within Adobe Experience Cloud you can bring together your marketing and customer data sources and use centralized offer decisioning to determine the best offer and where to send it based on real-time interactions with your customers.

Powered by AI and machine learning, Adobe Experience Cloud offers lightning speed data analysis, intelligent decision-making, and predictive capabilities. As a result, every step of the customer conversation becomes easier and faster. From capturing signals right when they happen, to knowing when to respond and what to send, you'll be able to scale one-to-one personalization in ways you've never been able to achieve before. What's more, because it will reduce the effort spent behind the scenes delivering one-on-one conversations, you'll have more time to creatively and empathetically engage with your customers—and that makes for the best conversations of all.

Learn more about how you can converse one-on-one with your customers.

[Get details](#)



Sources

- 1 Mila D' Antonio, Mike Grier, and Joe Stewart, "[Customer Journey Optimization: The Key to Relevant Engagement](#)," OMDIA, in partnership with Adobe, February 26, 2020.



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