ORACLE®
WEBCENTER

An Oracle White Paper
October 2013

The Digital Customer Journey: How to Build an Online Experience that Drives Sales and Loyalty

Introduction

This is an always connected world. Every minute of every day, two million search queries are made on Google, nearly 700,000 pieces of content are shared on Facebook, 571 new websites are created, and consumers spend $272,000 shopping online.[1] People shop, play, connect and conduct business online and the digital channel is often preffered by customers for researching, selecting, and transacting with brands. As a result, the corporate or brand web presence remains one of the most important assets in the marketing mix and developing a digital experience that converts site visitors into long-term, loyal customers is an essential component of an organization's overall marketing strategy.

In this increasingly digital world, organizations must deliver an online experience that supports and nurtures prospects along the entire customer journey. This requires addressing customers' needs starting with the initiation of the purchase process through research and selection, right on through to conversion, service and ultimately, advocacy. Today's customers expect an engaging, consistent and connected digital experience at every touch point, regardless of whether they are prospective customers visiting the brand website for the first time or existing customers logging in to look up account information or conduct a transaction.

This paper examines the various phases of the digital customer journey and what savvy organizations can do to meet customers' expectations and requirements at each step. This paper will take a look at the technology required in order to deliver on these expectations including business intelligence, CRM, portal, marketing automation, and search, and how they can be integrated with Web content management (WCM) techology to connect and optimize the digital experience across customer touch points. Finally, we will take a look at how Oracle's WCM solution, Oracle WebCenter Sites, enables organizations to deliver the kind of digital customer experiences that drive sales and loyalty today.

---

[1] Shea Bennet, "Twitter, Facebook, Google, YouTube – What Happens on the Internet Every 60 Seconds?" *All Twitter*, *Media Bistro*, 25 June 2012, http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/data-never-sleeps_b24551

The Role of the Brand Website in the Digital Customer Journey

While social networking sites have become frequent online destinations for people today, company sponsored brand websites still play a central and critical role in the digital customer journey. In fact, brand websites remain a preferred source for information gathering during the purchase process, second only to search engines in popularity.[2] Not only is the brand website a preferred source for information, it is also a highly trusted one. Nearly 60% of online consumers trust the information they find on company websites, a percentage that far exceeds trust in all other forms of paid advertising.[3] Since the brand website is such a highly preferred and trusted destination during the customer journey, organizations will want to assure that it delivers a truly engaging experience to their site visitors.

Part of an organization's success in doing this will depend on their content marketing strategy. In other words, they will need to provide site visitors with the right mix of thought leadership, product/service information, videos, testimonials and other marketing content to help educate, convince and otherwise address the needs of prospective customers at each stage of their journey.
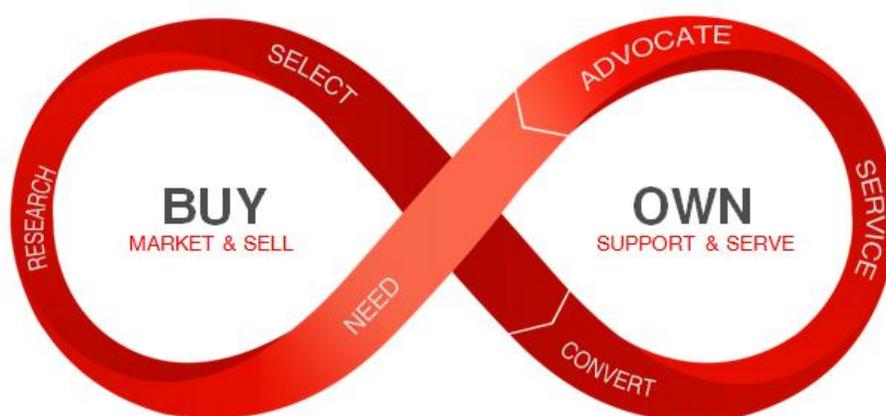

Figure 1 - Key Phases in the Digital Customer Journey

Other contributing factors to an organization's success in this area are the various customer experience technologies that need come together to deliver an engaging and consistent digital experience. Discussed heavily throughout this paper is Web content management (WCM), or Web experience management (WEM), a technology which plays a key role in the digital experience technology ecosystem by enabling marketers and other non-technical business users to drive engagement, relevancy and interaction via the brand web presence and through the digital customer journey, using the marketing content that's been developed for that purpose.

---

[2] Colby Vogt and Ken Alldredge, "Understanding the Role of the Internet in the Lives of Consumers" *Fleishman-Hillard and Harris Interactive*, 2012, http://push.fleishmanhillard.netdna-cdn.com/dii/2012-DII-White-Paper.pdf

[3] Neilsen, "Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages," *Neilsen*, 10 April 2011, http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/reports/2012/global-trust-in-advertising-and-brand-messages.html

The Digital Customer Journey: Research Phase

The brand website is a critical touch point for potential customers as they begin the purchase process with online research. At this stage in the customer lifecycle, the focus should be on informing, educating, and developing relationships with prospective customers so that they'll seriously consider the organization's brand as a solution to their specific problems or needs. There are a number of ways in which a WCM solution can help an organization facilitate the research phase of the customer journey by enabling marketers to deliver content in more meaningful ways that promote engagement with the brand.

Driving Relevancy

Today, it's no longer acceptable to deliver a one-size-fits-all digital customer experience. Instead, organizations must demonstrate that they know their customers by providing them with relevant and personalized digital experiences that takes their preferences, behavior and past history with the brand into account. Providing customers with relevant content makes it easier for them to find and understand how an organization's products and services can help them meet their particular objectives. More relevant digital experiences also lead to greater site stickiness, more repeat visits and higher conversion rates. To deliver a more relevant digital experience, organizations should select a WCM solution that provides marketers with easy to use segmentation and targeting capabilities that empower them to deliver the most appealing and relevant content to specific segments of their site visitors. For organizations with a high volume of segments or a desire to move to a more automated approach to targeting, integrating the WCM solution with a predictive decisioning engine that automatically determines the right content to show to a particular visitor, can be used to optimize the performance of content targeting efforts.

Figure 2 – Organizations must be prepared to engage customers anytime, anywhere across a multitude of PC's, mobile phones and tablets.

Optimizing for Mobile

The digital customer experience is an increasingly mobile one thanks to the ubiquity of cell phones and tablets. As usage has grown, a rich and engaging mobile experience has become a necessary component of an organization's digital strategy. The challenge, however, is in creating and managing mobile experiences that are optimized for delivery to the thousands of different devices that exist today and for those to come in the future. Again, a WCM solution can help by enabling organizations to easily extend their traditional Web presence to the mobile channel so they can deliver highly personalized and relevant multichannel marketing initiatives, while also saving significant time and effort in managing mobile sites. Organizations should look for a WCM solution that allows for the reuse

of existing Web content, site plans and navigation for mobile delivery, in order to streamline and simplify mobile site management, while still meeting the needs of today's demanding mobile customers.

Promoting Social Interaction

Customers expect their digital experience with a brand to be as social and interactive as their experiences on social networks like Facebook and Twitter. To fulfill these expectations, organizations must provide customers with plenty of opportunities to interact socially via the web presence. This means incorporating user-generated content capabilities such as ratings, reviews, or comments into the web presence, where appropriate, and integrating with social networks to facilitate this participation by enabling visitors to log in to the site with their familiar social network ID's and to easily share content they like from the site with their social networks. To achieve this kind of interactivity, look for a WCM solution that allows marketers to easily incorporate social computing features into the web presence in order to drive engagement and foster community. Social participation can be encouraged while maintaining the integrity of the brand, as long as these social computing features come with robust moderation capabilities to assure that all user-generated content on the site remains relevant and informative while adhering to the community's guidelines.

The Digital Customer Journey: Selection Phase

Once an organization has successfully engaged the customer during the research phase, the focus of the digital experience should shift toward guiding and influencing the customer's selection process. This often involves making it easier for customers to search for and discover suitable solutions for their needs. Depending on an organization's business model, there are numerous approaches that aid in the selection process during the customer journey. These may include the targeting of relevant content to specific segments of site visitors, endorsements from other customers in the form of comments, ratings or reviews on the site, or the incorporation of faceted search and guided navigation into the web presence.

Figure 3 - Streamline and influence the selection process by using segmentation and targeting to deliver the most relevant content to site visitors automatically.

One of the ways to influence the selection process on your web presence is by using the segmentation and targeting tools that are native to many WCM platforms to deliver a more relevant and personalized online experience. As potential customers browse through the site, explicit criteria, implicit criteria or a combination of these attributes can be used to deliver the most relevant information to customers thereby aiding their selection process. For an organization with a broad set of solutions that are specialized for buyers with distinct needs (financial services or insurance are good examples), segmentation and targeting can be used to narrow the number of solutions being featured to those that are most relevant to a particular visitor.

Organizations shouldn't overlook the power of peer influence when it comes to the selection process either. 75% of consumers put a high degree of trust into the opinions fellow consumers have posted online.[4] By incorporating user-generated content (UGC) features into the web presence such as comments, ratings and reviews, organizations can tap into the extremely persuasive powers of other customers to help influence the behavior of your site visitors and make their selection process easier. To more easily enable these capabilities, look for a WCM solution that includes robust tools for UGC deployment, moderation and management out-of-the-box.

Often, the search experience on a website frustrates potential buyers or provides them with too many irrelevant results to wade through. During the product selection process, site visitors want the ability to navigate based on their own unique preferences and to view content and search results that are most relevant to them. For businesses that have a large number of products or services, integrating faceted search into the web presence can be an effective way for potential customers to dynamically explore the site and find relevant and desired items more quickly and easily. Faceted search can be integrated with the WCM solution to optimize the search capabilities on the web presence, in order to deliver more precise, more relevant, and more complete results that help guide and influence product selection, leading to increased conversion rates and customer satisfaction.

The Digital Customer Journey: Conversion Phase

Websites span the spectrum from marketing-driven to commerce-driven. For business models that include an ecommerce component, the measure of a conversion is an online purchase. In an ecommerce scenario, speeding and simplifying the purchase process is a vital step in the digital customer experience journey. A streamlined and efficient online purchase process is vital to preventing shopping cart abandonment. The purchase process can even become another opportunity for engaging customers and influencing them to purchase more or related products; it can also be structured to incentivize customers to take action now through the offer of various promotions. For organizations with sites that are both marketing and commerce oriented, look for a WCM solution that can be easily integrated with an ecommerce platform in order to provide customers with transactional capabilities.

> "Oracle WebCenter Sites—from the start—delivered important benefits. We've redesigned the online scheduling process and are seeing more potential customers completing consultation bookings online. More important, the solution opens a world of other possibilities as we plan to migrate Pella.com and our dealer microsites to the platform, and leverage it to optimize the Web experience for our mobile devices." – *Teri Lancaster, IT Manager, Customer Experience Applications, Pella Corporation*

Outside of ecommerce, the action that defines a conversion can vary from industry to industry or even company to company. In many organizations, a conversion involves generating a sales lead out of a registration for some form of high value marketing content on the website such as a white paper or webcast. This type of conversion typically takes place via a web form during which a prospective customer's contact and other profile information is exchanged. To assure that these newly created leads are captured and followed up on appropriately according to set business rules, organizations may wish to consider integrating their WCM solution with a marketing automation

---

[4] Neilsen, "Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages," *Neilsen*, 10 April 2011,
http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/reports/2012/global-trust-in-advertising-and-brand-messages.html

platform. This type of integration enables the organization to capture, score and route leads from the web presence appropriately, whether they are destined for further nurturing by the marketing team as part of an email campaign or routed to the CRM system where the sales team is alerted to follow up with the lead directly.

The Digital Customer Journey: Service Phase

Often, an organization will require both a public marketing site where visitors can find general information early in the customer journey and a self-service presence that enables customers to access secure information and conduct transactions online. This is especially true in industries such as financial services where online banking is both a convenience for customers and an opportunity for the institution to upsell and cross sell additional, relevant services. At this stage of the customer journey, it's important that the transition from the public site to the secure site is seamless, both from a branding perspective and a technical one. This can be accomplished by integrating the WCM powered marketing site with a portal solution. The portal can then provide customers with access to the self-service capabilities they need to look up their account information, engage in transactions and otherwise conduct their business with the organization online.

The Digital Customer Journey: Advocacy Phase

The final phase of the customer journey that organizations must consider carefully is the advocacy phase, during which satisfied customers become advocates for the brand and recommend it to others. The opinions that people share about their experiences with a product or brand are a highly valued sources of information relied upon by prospective customers as they contemplate a purchasing decision. In fact, 70% of consumers trust the opinions of other online users, making it one of the most trusted types of information that potential buyers consider, second only to the opinions of people they know personally.[5]
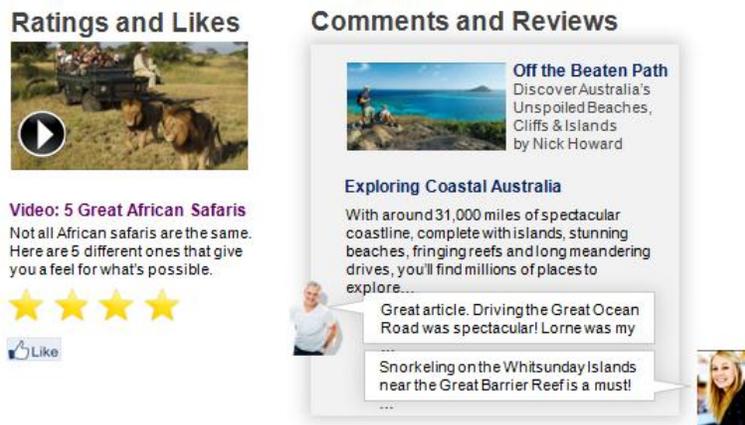

Figure 4 - Enable helpful comments, reviews, ratings or likes on the brand site thereby turning satisfied customers into brand advocates.

---

[5] Neilsen, "Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages," *Neilsen*, 10 April 2011,
http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/reports/2012/global-trust-in-advertising-and-brand-messages.html

Organizations can tap into the influence their satisfied customers have over prospective customers by making it easy for them to share their experiences with their social networks, and to contribute helpful comments, ratings or reviews of products and services on the brand site. This kind of social sharing and contribution of user-generated content can be encouraged by enabling social login on your web presence, whereby customers can log in to the website quickly and easily using their familiar social networking profiles. Make sure such capabilities come out of the box with the chosen WCM solution.

Conclusion

Today's customers prefer the digital channel for researching, selecting, and transacting with brands and the brand web presence continues to be a highly trusted source of information during the purchase process. As a result, a successful marketing strategy includes delivering a digital experience that engages site visitors and converts them into loyal customers. Because today's customers expect a digital experience that supports and nurtures them along the entire customer journey, crafting an experience that is engaging, consistent and connected at every touch point can be a great challenge.

When it comes to facilitating the delivery of an engaging online experience across the customer lifecycle, WCM technology can play a central role. Organizations should seek out a WCM solution that empowers marketers to create and manage a relevant and interactive digital experience while minimizing reliance on IT for the execution of digital marketing efforts. The WCM solution should simplify delivery and optimization of the experience across web, mobile and social channels, while facilitating integration with complementary customer experience applications. By integrating the WCM solution with complementary applications such as BI, commerce, CRM, marketing automation, portal and search, organizations can connect and optimize the experience across digital touch points to support and nurture prospects along the entire customer journey.

Figure 5 – Oracle WebCenter Sites empowers marketers to create and manage relevant and interactive digital experiences across web, mobile and social channels.

About Oracle WebCenter Sites

Oracle WebCenter Sites enables marketers and other business users to easily create, manage and moderate contextually relevant, social and interactive digital experiences across multiple channels on a global scale to drive sales and customer loyalty. This Web content management (WCM) solution automates the entire process of managing the Web presence including business user content authoring, delivery of high-scale dynamic sites, content targeting and optimization, user-generated content, social networking integration, and mobile Web delivery. A key component of Oracle's customer experience (CX) ecosystem, Oracle WebCenter Sites can be integrated with other CX applications including business intelligence, customer relationship management, commerce, enterprise content management, marketing automation, portal, search and social relationship management. Oracle WebCenter Sites uniquely offers organizations the ability to connect the customer experience across all touch points - to build loyalty, drive customer acquisition, and reduce operational costs.

ORACLE®

Delivering a Cost Efficient and Integrated
A/P Automation Solution with
Oracle WebCenter Imaging

October 2013

Oracle Corporation
World Headquarters
500 Oracle Parkway
Redwood Shores, CA 94065
U.S.A.

Worldwide Inquiries:
Phone: +1.650.506.7000
Fax: +1.650.506.7200

oracle.com

Hardware and Software, Engineered to Work Together