

Five Steps to Marketing Genius: Improving the Customer Journey



Who should be calling you a marketing genius? (Hint: It's not your boss.) The answer might surprise you, because the definition of marketing success is changing.

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This edition published June 2015

“That is amazing!”

“How did you do it?”

“What a breakthrough!”

Envision your strategies and tactics coming together so well that everyone starts calling you a “marketing genius.” What would that mean for you and your organization? Since marketers are becoming increasingly accountable for revenue generation,⁽¹⁾ marketing success can directly impact business growth.

Ten, twenty, or even thirty years ago, inventing the advertorial or pioneering a new brand identity might have earned you the title of “marketing genius.” However, the work of marketers and the measurements of their success have changed dramatically since that time.

With the changes, some things have become easier, but some things are much harder. It’s easier to be a marketing genius, because of the numerous marketing technology tools that are out there to help you. It’s harder, however, because putting those tools to use requires a new kind of data-driven marketer who is able to provide a great customer experience using insights from large amounts of data.



Marketers are moving away from branding and creative activities to the science of data and measurement. When asked what skills they need to develop, marketers put ‘advertising/branding’ and ‘creative/graphic arts’ at the very bottom of the list. The most important skill needed? Digital engagement.

- The Economist, “The Rise of the Marketer,” 2015

Speaking of data: Marketers know that the most important piece of information that organizations possess is customer data. 74% of marketers surveyed by Adobe Systems agreed that acquiring and using data to make decisions about marketing activities is the new reality.⁽¹⁾

The most important group of people who could call you a marketing genius doesn't include your boss, shareholders, or colleagues. **It's your customers.** Marketers today are in charge of the customer experience (and its budget) more than anyone else in the organization.



Between now and 2020, three out of four marketers say they will become responsible for the customer experience at their organization.

- The Economist, "The Rise of the Marketer," 2015

Customers expect a great experience – and the need for organizations to deliver a great experience has never been more imperative. 86% of customers in a survey said that they were even willing to pay more for it.⁽²⁾ Since customers today can find anything they want from a variety of vendors, the basics of price, product, placement, and promotion no longer offer a way to stand out from the competition.

The one way you can still stand out – and become a marketing genius along the way – is by providing a great customer experience. This shift means that the data-driven marketer must move away from a focus on customer **transactions** to re-focus on customer **interactions**.

To do this effectively, marketers must map out the ideal 1:1 customer journey and improve the experience all along the way. Be a marketing genius for your customers, and great results in service, engagement, and ultimately revenue will follow.

The map of a customer journey varies by different industries and even different companies within the same industry. Customer journey maps help marketers create a personal, individualized experience to move each customer on the way to a particular goal that provides value to the organization.



Only 17% of companies have fully integrated customer data across the entire organization.

- 2015 State of Marketing Leadership Report from Salesforce and LinkedIn

A journey has a beginning and an end. Right from the start all the way to the finish, a successful customer journey depends on high quality customer data, no matter where it is acquired or retained. All marketers deserve to have their applications, campaigns, and messaging fueled with clean, consistent and connected customer information.

We are in the age of engagement, and meaningful interaction throughout the customer journey requires relevant and timely communication. This communication takes many forms, including email marketing, direct mail, in-person interactions at events or in-store, social media channels, in call centers, or on mobile channels.

Verifying the quality of your customer contact data at the time of acquisition and at all points of retention is the first step you need to take toward the goal of a great customer experience and gaining a view into the total customer relationship across channels, touchpoints and lines of business.

That is what marketing genius is all about today.

Insert these critical steps in your customer journey maps:

- 1. Acquisition - Acquiring Data**
- 2. Verification - Real-time Data Validation**
- 3. Enrichment - Personalization + Segmentation**
- 4. Implementation - Putting Data to Use**
- 5. Governance - Continuous Data Validation**

Let's break down each of these five steps:

ACQUISITION

For the majority of respondents in one recent Salesforce.com survey, data acquisition is the top internal priority.⁽³⁾ Success in acquiring customer data begins with organic growth channels. These channels include your organization's call center, digital channels like a website form or online shopping cart application, and in-store at point-of-sale.

However, data acquisition can create big problems for marketers. Errors are likely to occur when your organization's representative at an event, in-store at point-of-sale, or in a call center is collecting an email address, phone number, or mailing address that is unfamiliar to them.

Customers can also make mistakes when entering their own information. Remember that people who visit your digital channels move quickly – in fact, most purchases online are made within 5-8 minutes, and typos will happen.^[4]

VERIFICATION

The ideal time to validate customer contact information is at the point when the customer is still engaged. For this reason, real-time data validation should always be a part of your marketing strategy.

Email Addresses: Invalid or malicious email addresses can easily creep into your customer contact data. Sending to even one spam trap can cause you to be blacklisted, and sending to multiple invalid email addresses can increase your bounce rate to dangerous levels. All marketers want to reliably reach customers via email marketing, which has some of the best return-on-investment levels in the business. Blacklisting and deliverability problems can wreak havoc on your email communications. Getting removed from a blacklist so you can confidently send email again can be a time-consuming and expensive endeavor that takes a lot of resources to resolve. It is not something that your email service provider can protect you from, repair, or detect for you.



When email addresses change at a rate of almost 23% per year, it becomes difficult for every corner of the organization to be confident that the contact data that they must rely on is accurate.

- Hubspot Report on Database Decay

Verifying email addresses **before** they enter your database – and before you ever use them – will help reduce bounces and malicious email threats that cause issues in your overall email marketing plans.

Phone Numbers: A surprising number of customers – up to 80% – need some form of support to complete a purchase,⁽⁵⁾ and the phone is their preferred method of support. This makes accurate customer phone numbers more important than ever for establishing a great customer experience across your organization. Verifying a phone number and being able to learn more about it, including if it is a mobile or landline number, is becoming more valuable than ever to marketers who are concerned with the customer experience.

Mailing Addresses: For direct mail and successful customer order delivery, verified and corrected mailing addresses are essential. Marketers concerned with the customer experience should know that 30% of customers will never buy from an organization again if there is even one shipping error, according to *Material Handling and Logistics Magazine*.

Below: Example of a webform using real-time contact data verification while the customer is still engaged and can make corrections.

Subscribe to Our Monthly Newsletter

Email Address ❌ Invalid Email Address. Please re-enter.

First Name

Last Name

Address ✅

City ✅

State ✅

ZIP Code ✅

Phone Number ❌ Invalid Phone Number. Please re-enter.

Technology tools available today can verify and correct customer addresses in real-time on webforms, shopping carts, or in call centers so errors are corrected immediately while the customer is still available to confirm the address.

Less than half of companies are using customer data from touchpoints on the customer journey to gain insight or create engagement, but that number is set to increase greatly in the next five years.

- The Economist, "The Rise of the Marketer," 2015



Great customer experiences rely on great customer data. Yet as simple as the principle seems, few organizations have mastered it.

ENRICHMENT

The top priority that will be most important to a company's marketing success in the future is personalization, according to marketers polled in a survey by Adobe Systems.⁽¹⁾

Segmentation of your customers allows you to be more relevant with every engagement along their journey. When you acquire customer data that is verified as valid and ready to use, you can segment your customer lists and personalize messaging with confidence that your insights are correct.

Better engagement in this way leads to great return on investment. If there are gaps in your data that prevent you from segmenting your messages or personalizing your communication, marketing technology tools exist that can help enrich your data to provide deeper insights.

IMPLEMENTATION

Now that your customer data is acquired, verified, and enriched, you have confidence that you are working with great data. You will want to incorporate this trusted data throughout the customer journey, from customer orders, email marketing, direct mail, customer service, and social campaigns, to name a few. APIs make implementation of data quality services easy, so marketers can get started quickly with very little training or maintenance needed.

Marketers use many communication channels, but the one that is growing is the mobile channel. One of the increasingly important applications of clean, consistent, and connected customer data is being able to use SMS mobile messaging for customer communication. If you know which customers in your database have mobile numbers, you can communicate with them to opt them into your mobile messaging program. This is the channel your customers prefer and respond quickly to, with 90% of messages read within 3 minutes.⁽⁶⁾ SMS mobile messaging is the most popular form of communication in history, Portio Research found. Marketers can apply it to send many kinds of messages to improve the customer experience, including alerts, promotions, notifications, reminders, and verifications.

GOVERNANCE

Marketers retain customer information in many places, such as a CRM system, marketing automation applications, an email service provider, in spreadsheets, and in other applications. Once you begin to use your customer data, your job is not yet complete. To ensure consistent and continuous data quality into the future, your data should be governed, so it is verified and cleansed on a regular basis. Data changes often, especially contact data. 30% of email addresses change each year, according to MarketingSherpa; and the United States Postal Service reports that there are 128,000 change-of-address requests made every day. Data governance helps marketers keep their contact data fresh and up-to-date.

The Future of Marketing Genius

Marketing's role in the organization as the driver of a great experience throughout the customer journey is growing in importance and will soon affect all aspects of an organization's success. When marketers map the 1:1 customer journey, adding the five steps listed here will improve the customer experience from beginning to end. Acquire data, verify it in real-time, personalize and segment it, put it to use, and then retain and re-verify it on a consistent schedule. Adding these steps to the customer journey map will provide marketers with higher engagement rates and ultimately more revenue.

Informatica Data as a Service helps marketers tap into their inner marketing genius. Contact our team to find out how our data quality services, data enrichment services, and mobile services can improve your customer's journey, strengthen your engagement, and drive growth for your organization. Visit infa.media/daas-contactus to contact us.



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IN00_0615_02906