emarsys

4 Pillars of Personalization:

How Adopting 1:1 Marketing into Your Digital Strategy Is Critical in the Wake of COVID-19

**Featuring insights from...** CUE® BRANDALLEY THE NON·STOP DESIGNER SALE adidas RUNTASTIC sallybeauty BULK POWDERS ...and more.

Personalization is a growing expectation from customers — yes, 63% of North American and U.K. consumers expect personalized communications from brands ([eMarketer](#)), and there's no doubt that number will continue to grow. And with the onset of COVID-19, consumers have even higher expectations for brands to understand and meet their needs as their lives are shifted by the pandemic.
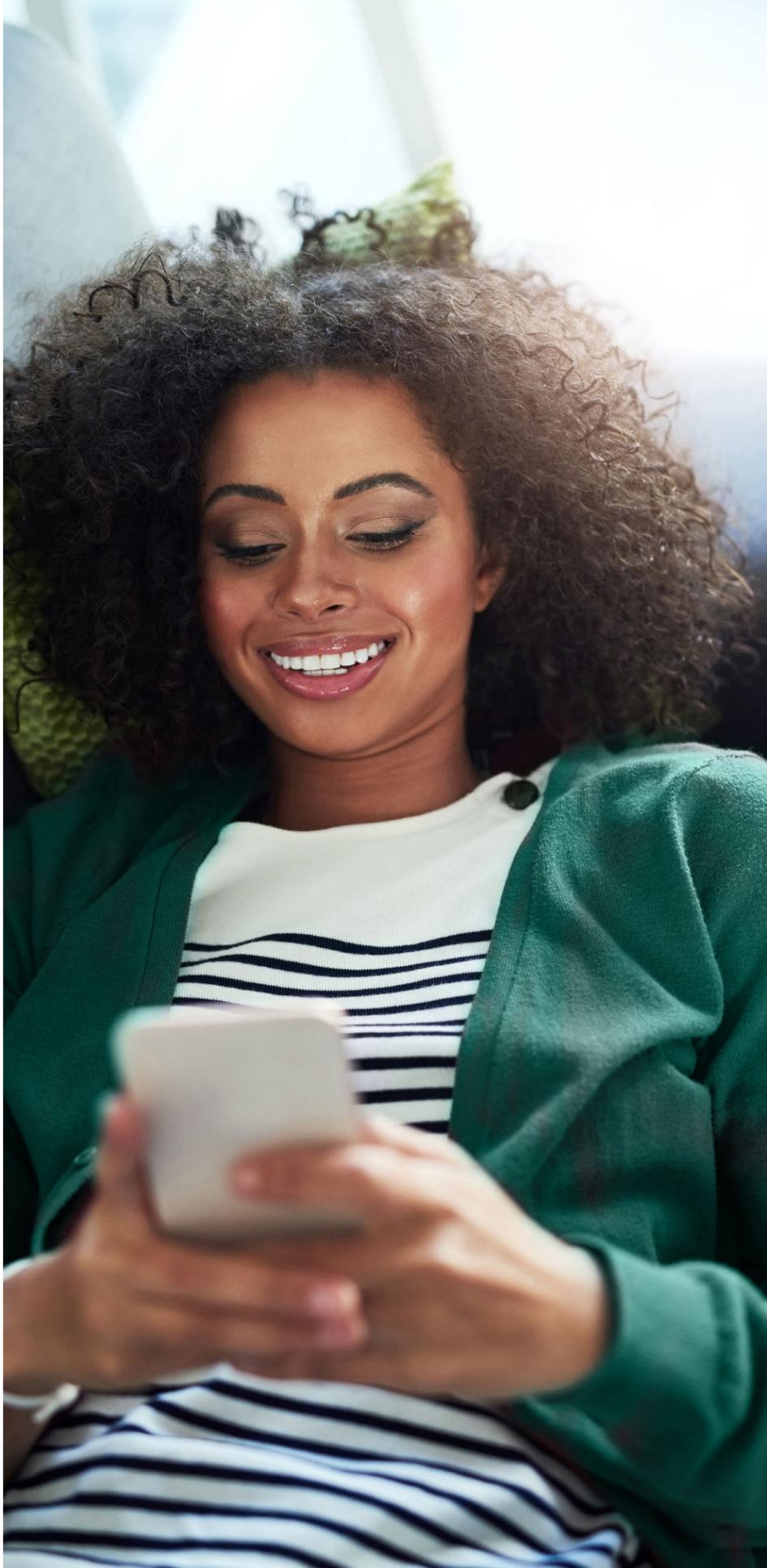
To keep up with consumer expectations, more and more brands, emboldened by ever-advancing martech solutions, are adopting personalization strategies into their digital marketing efforts. However, those who actually get it right, those who are achieving [true 1:1 personalization](#), have figured out there are four golden rules to personalization:

1. **It's a conversation, not a monologue**

2. **Think like a consumer first, a marketer second**

3. **With great data comes great responsibility**

4. **Use technology that keeps your customers at the forefront**

To give you a better idea of what these 4 crucial tenets look like, we went directly to the source. We've put together some of the best [insights](#) and [successes](#) our clients have shared with us about achieving true 1:1 personalization with their customers and how — when applied correctly — they generate happy, loyal shoppers (and better business results for their brands).

01

It's a Conversation, Not a Monologue
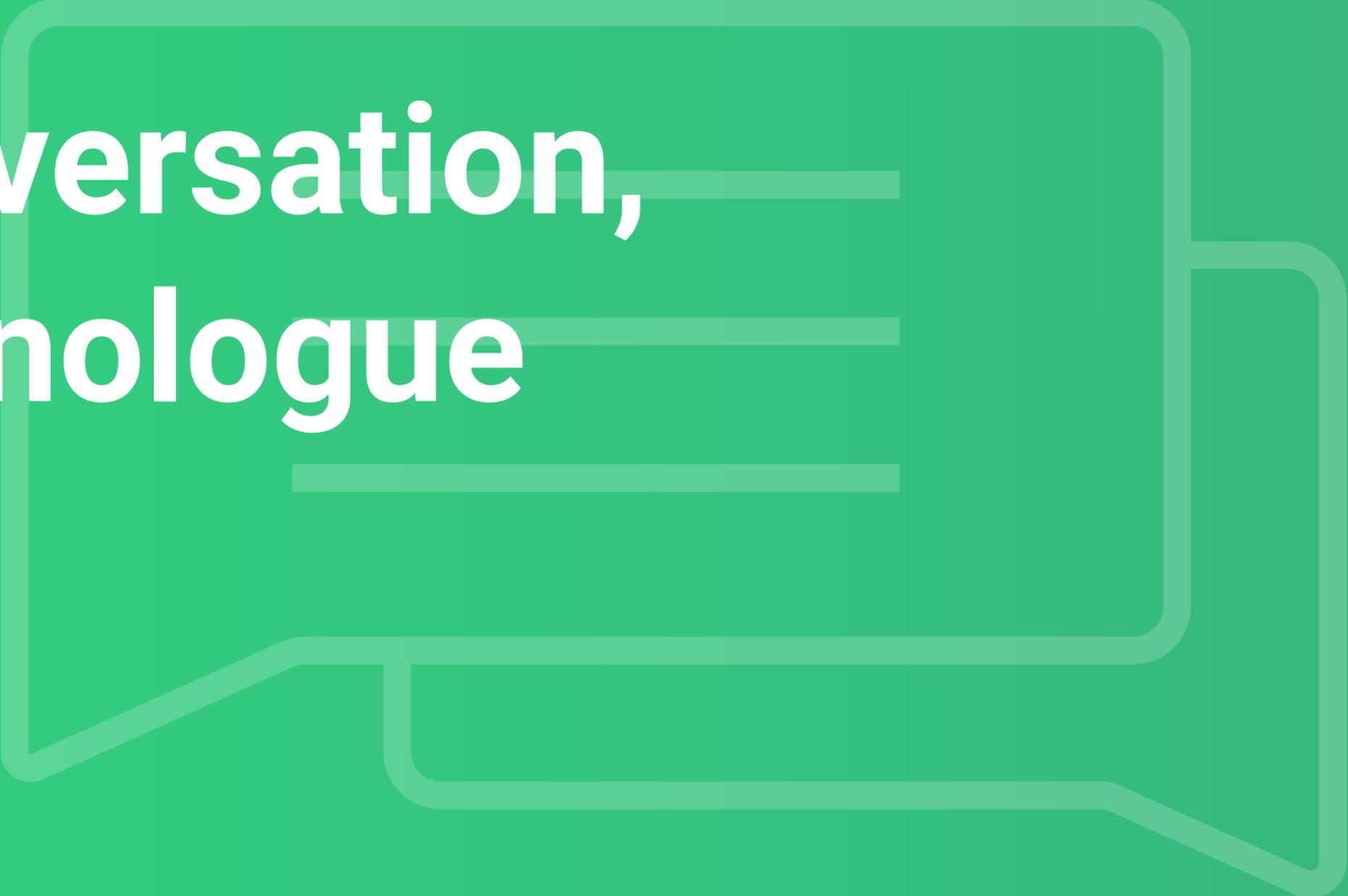
Have you ever been having a conversation with someone, and instead of the other person pausing and actively listening to what you have to say, they're just waiting for their turn to talk? It's frustrating. It feels invalidating, and it defeats the whole point of the conversation.

A conversation should be two (or more) people engaging one another, to learn more about each other. There's a discourse involved, a back-and-forth flow. When done correctly, 1:1 personalization should work the same. You should be continuously learning about your customer just as much as they are learning about your brand.

Not every company has mastered the art of conversation with their customers. Data from CMO council via eMarketer indicates that

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Scott Jonsmyth-Clarke

Former Group CRM & Digital Communications Manager

"By having [a] more conversational approach and learning more about that customer, showing that your brand really wants to understand who they are as a particular person, [customers] will respond to that. Anyone would. It's part of building a human relationship."

when it comes to companies and their ability to listen to their customers:

▸ 33% are "Just OK"

▸ 17% are "Not Very Good"

▸ 7% are "Terrible"

To be successful with personalization, your brand has to be better than "Just OK." And you certainly can't be terrible. Your team has to not only be prepared to send personalized communications to customers, but they need to be equipped to listen in response. They need to be prepared to have a conversation.

As COVID-19 continues to impact the concerns and priorities of your customers, you need to be ready to respond to their changing needs. Like any good listener, you should pay attention to what your customers are saying, and be sure that your communication back to them is relevant, respectful, and valuable for the customer.

CUE

Shane Lenton
CIO

"For our customer, [personalization] means we're having a consistent conversation with them. It means whether they're receiving some communication from us… ideally we're sending that communication at the right time. We're personalizing that communication *as much as possible. When we're interacting with them in the store, it means that we know about them."*

The Art of Conversation

Framing personalization as a conversation with customers, opposed to just a one-way marketing engagement, is crucial for brands looking to deliver true 1:1 personalized customer engagement.

It's also imperative for brands looking to drive business results.

Sally Europe was able to leverage a conversational approach to marketing and:

- **Increase email-attributed web sales growth by 43% YOY**
- **Increase AOV with web recommendations 19%**
- **Increase total monthly sales attributed to digital communication channels by 20%.**

sallybeauty

Scott Jonsmyth-Clarke

Former Group CRM & Digital Communications Manager 2015-2019

"Friendship marketing is the concept we've been working on for quite a while now — it's customer-first and having a more conversational approach with customers. The way I always think about it is like this: you can understand their transactions, web interactions, call center [touch points], and in-store... but what about what the customer is saying? How do you bring that back into your database and leverage that data to then close the loop?"

Think Like a Consumer First, a Marketer Second

As marketers we spend a considerable amount of time thinking about the myriad ways we can reach out to customers — not only in terms of channel, but also in terms of execution.

While advances in martech allow you to get granular and tactful in your approach, it's important to consider not just how your communication will be sent, but also how it will be received. Sensitivity in this regard is more critical in the face of COVID-19, as a brand's communication and messaging has to make sense in the context of the changes to day-to-day life that many people are experiencing. Do customers want to receive messages with seasonal product recommendations for their upcoming travel plans? Probably not, if their travel has been impacted by the Coronavirus, as it has for most of the world.

B R A N D A L L E Y
THE NON-STOP DESIGNER SALE

Alexandra (Simion) Vancea

Head of Marketing

"Brands have to remember... we have been very lucky in the sense that we've been able to onboard a lot of technology from the past two years to help with marketing strategies and customer service and development and so on. But we've always done it thinking that we're talking to a human being. We're still talking to a person regardless of what we used to deliver the content."

Perhaps you've had a great campaign planned for a while, and you're keen to execute. But is it still relevant in light of COVID-19? Think about it as if you were a consumer, not the marketer — how would you feel about receiving those particular campaign communications?

Marketers who are most successful at driving results using 1:1 personalization know when to take off their marketer's hat and instead put on their consumer hat. Remember: We're all consumers. We know what kind of marketing we respond to. We know what kind of brand communication makes us feel valued (or not).

For Mark Sherwood, Global Head of CRM for Bulk Powders, this approach means asking customers the right questions — the kind of questions that customers are willing and excited to answer, and that can yield insights to help deliver better personalization:

BULK POWDERS

Mark Sherwood

Head of Europe

"We wanted to create a simple user journey and put ourselves in the mindset of the consumer. We're all consumers first, and marketers second. And that really kind of hit home with me."

"We tried to put ourselves in the mindset of the consumer and say, 'Okay, if we were a consumer, what would we want to do?' So we started with the beginning, we created [for] them a nice welcome program. During that welcome program, we ask our customers to tell us about [themselves]. Why have they come to Bulk Powders? What are they buying? What are their goals? What type of products do they like?"

It's this approach to 1:1 personalized marketing — consideration of the customer's frame-of-mind first — that helped Bulk Powders achieve amazing results in customer retention.

"With Emarsys, we are creating personal 1:1 experiences for our 1.5 million customers globally. We have automated 500 unique journeys, which resulted in 70% retention."

CUE®

Shane Lenton
CIO

"We're looking [at] … how [customers] are consuming television these days, how they're consuming music, how they're living their daily lives… and then we're looking at that from our perspective as a retailer…. and saying, 'How can we provide a more convenient personalized experience that these other… verticals or these other areas where consumers are consuming content and end product [can]?' So from that perspective it's been really important for us to really execute on that and look at how we can achieve that same sort of [frictionless experience for our customers](#)"

03

With Great Data Comes Great Responsibility

To execute true 1:1 personalization, the kind that will actually be meaningful to the customer and produce results for your brand, you'll need great customer data. The best source for this data is, of course, the customers themselves.

To get great data from your customers, keep these three things in mind:

1. **Make sure you're providing value in exchange for customer data.** Brands need to rely on their customers to provide them the detailed data that allows for better personalization. Customers are willing to participate in this exchange, so long as they're getting value in return for this offering. A welcome offer? Customer survey? A poll about upcoming products? Whatever you use, frame your request in a way that customers understand how they benefit from sharing information.

CMO

Pure Play E-tailer

"[As a customer], the more data you decide to share, the easier your life is going to be. And as we approach it that way — and in an honest, transparent way — I think we will continue to see the efficacy of that personalization... that 1:1 personalization... become greater and greater."

2. **Be truthful in how you intend to use your customer's data.**

   Customers understand there is a give-and-take — in order to receive the personalized offers that will be most useful to them, they have to reveal some information about themselves. If you're clear about how you intend to use it, opposed to being obtuse or sneaky, they won't mind your collection of data.

3. **If customers trust you enough with their data, it needs to be put to good use.**

   If it's simply a means to up the intensity of advertising they receive, they'll become frustrated and feel used. Instead, employ data to provide customers with meaningful, relevant offerings (without overdoing it).

BULK POWDERS

Mark Sherwood

Head of Europe

"If you make it clear to consumers as to why you're <u>asking for data</u>, and what you're going to do with it, then, (a), you'll get a good response, and (b), consumers are happy to share it for you. What they're not happy [with] is if you collect data, you don't tell them why you're doing it, and it just kind of [feels like a] creepy approach."

Delivering Human Experiences with Superhuman Technology

The most engaging personalization occurs when marketers can deliver experiences that are grounded in human connection. Runtastic — a leading manufacturer of fitness tracking apps and wearables — wanted to consolidate communication for their users and provide the perfect community-based experience where customers could share their fitness journeys and connect with one another.

The result was an increase in retention and customer loyalty:

▸ **+300% increase in campaign creation efficiency**

▸ **+8,000,000 app opens driven from campaign content**

▸ **200+ data points for customer journey optimization**

adidas RUNTASTIC

Stephanie Peterson

CMO (2012-2018)

"[Runtastic] offers dozens and dozens of products and services which we organize in four strategic fields: cardio, strength, daily habits and nutrition. And through this approach we really think that we can help our consumers get from point 'A' to point 'B,' whatever that point be might be. So we want to help people reach their goals, become their best selves. And then we have this layer over the four strategic fields which is really: Our users, the data that they're generating (which helps us do our jobs as best as possible) and that community element. Which is so important in life. We need to feel like we belong, we need to have purpose. And community can be both digital and offline."

04

Use Technology That Keeps Your Customer at the Forefront

Human-centric personalization is the holy grail of marketing. It's what many — if not all — brands aspire to achieve. The problem is that such a high degree of personalization is really difficult to scale.

That's because many martech solutions that are designed to help you scale your marketing efforts may not facilitate personalized marketing. Scalable marketing, more often that not, is by its very nature depersonalized. That's what makes it scalable — you don't have to make it special to any one person.

To deliver predictable, profitable business outcomes, marketers must rely on technology solutions that enable them to collect large amounts of rich customer data and create scalable, automated marketing. Artificial Intelligence and machine learning are the most potent solutions for this.
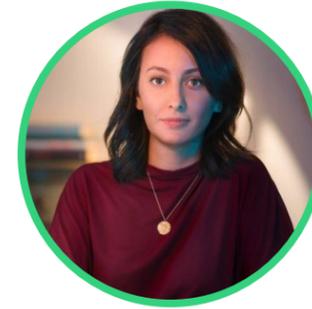
B R A N D A L L E Y
THE NON-STOP DESIGNER SALE

Alexandra (Simion) Vancea

Head of Marketing

"We are still one of those companies that read every single customer review everywhere to make sure that, if there is an issue somewhere, we address it as fast as we can. And we also implement our marketing strategies based on what the customer thinks and how the customer behaves... Obviously it's fine to have tech on board and see what else product-wise might be out there, but just do it with the customer at the heart of your business. [We] basically wanted to go old school in a sense and remind everyone that: You still have a customer you have to listen to, and make sure that everything you do is for your customers."

At the same time, to deliver the highly personalized online experiences customers deserve, marketers need solutions that allow them to keep customers at the forefront of everything they do. They need tech and a digital strategy that helps them deliver personalized product recommendations, content, incentives, offers, and more, so that customers feel valued, understood, and recognized by the brand. That's what makes customer engagement and loyalty programs so crucial.

The key is to use a marketing solution that not only addresses the broader business concerns of the brand, but more importantly, keeps the focus on providing customers with unparalleled personalized experiences across all channels and devices. This is exactly what the Emarsys Customer Engagement Platform was designed to do.

Mark Sherwood

Head of Europe

"There's not a single email that we send that isn't personalized in one way, shape, or form. And we do that by using all of the tools within Emarsys and identifying what type of customer they are, what type of content they're interested in… we put the relevant [content] in that is relevant for our consumer."

Connecting With Customers When It's Most Critical

Part of keeping the customer at the forefront of everything you do requires the ability to quickly reach your customers with updates or information that impact the business, or more importantly, the customer themselves. Your brand needs to be agile enough to communicate informative, empathetic, and supportive messages to customers via your website, email, or any important channel, if and whenever necessary.

This is particularly imperative during time-sensitive, critical situations like the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a swift and widespread impact on commerce all across the globe.

Many of our clients, including Curacao, RG Barry, and Covetrus have taken a proactive approach to the COVID-19 situation, and were able to use their customer engagement platform to quickly provide customers with updates about how the company is responding.

Dearfoams (an RG Barry brand), let their customers know that, for every pair of full price slippers purchased, another pair will be provided for healthcare workers. Curacao set up a neighbor support fund to help those diagnosed with COVID-19.

What kind of information will be pertinent for customers during critical situations?

- ‣ Store closures or hours-of-operation

- ‣ Product availability

- ‣ Delivery updates or issues

- ‣ Inventory updates

- ‣ Problems with supply chain

- ‣ Resources for customers

- ‣ Community initiatives

Although some information will be broad enough that all customers will benefit from receiving it, some of it is better served in a personalized way.

For example, if a customer is interested in a sold-out item (either due to demand or supply chain), they may want personalized communication to let them know that the item is back in stock and available to order.

Achieving this flexibility in delivering 1:1 communication will require the right technology. To deliver the right message at the right time, you'll need to have your customer data, sales data, and product [data connected](#) in a single platform.

Conclusion

The brands most successful with their marketing efforts will continue to evolve, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach, and instead, focus on personalization. In order to win your share of customers, retain them, and continue to make them happy throughout the customer lifecycle, your brand must adopt this focus into its marketing strategy.

Actively conversing with customers, having a customer-first mentality, being respectful with customer data, and choosing the right partner to help you deliver customer-focused experiences is crucial. Get these four rules down, and you're sure to have success with personalization. And by the way, you'll have a tremendous advantage if you choose a partner like Emarsys that can provide you with proven customer engagement strategies to

help you deliver true 1:1 personalized experiences — the kind that lead to trusted, loyal, and lasting customer relationships.

Personalization is not a niche approach to marketing — not by a long shot. It's a customer expectation. It's what your customers want. And in keeping with the tried-and-true marketing adage of "the customer is always right," make sure you are delivering your customers the personalized experiences they deserve and desire.

As your brand responds to the new reality imposed by COVID-19 and you adapt your digital marketing strategy to ensure progress toward your desired business outcomes, be sure to keep personalization at the forefront of your efforts. It's not just good marketing — it's a sign of respect and appreciation for your customers, and it's what your customers deserve.

Key Takeaways for Personalization

▸ Personalization requires a conversational approach to marketing. What does that mean? Listen to your customers, get their feedback, and use it to provide them with meaningful, relevant content (that they want to receive).

▸ Imagine yourself as the customer. Think about how the customer might feel as they engage with your brand. If YOU were the customer, what kind of communication would you want to receive? What would keep you happy and loyal? What would make you want to buy?

▸ Use customer data wisely and responsibly. For true personalized engagement, you'll need customers to share information about themselves. To do this, be willing to offer something of value in exchange for that data. Be candid in how you intend to use it. And once you have it, treat it with respect.

▸ Choose a partner with expertise in helping brands deliver highly personalized customer experiences. For 1:1 personalization that makes customers happy and drives business results, you'll need a solution that can help you bring customer data, technology, and proven marketing strategy together into one unified platform.

Ready to build the 4 Pillars of Personalization into your marketing strategy?

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