



omNovos
omnichannel customer engagement solutions

People not Personas

Marketing in the age of
data and personalization

For the majority of the twentieth century, and well into the first decade of the new millennium, marketers have relied heavily on the practice of persona-based marketing to reach, influence, and persuade potential customers to buy their products or services. And, within that timeframe, it was the best approach to take as it was the most focused approach available.

The concept was simplistic: create a persona of a "person" who was most likely to be interested in the product or service, develop go-to-market strategies, ads and offers that spoke to that persona, and then by default let natural selection take its course. However, in the last few years the idea that all potential targets have the same habits, wants, likes, and so on, has become borderline ridiculous. Why? Simply put, data has now changed the game entirely.

Gone are the days of guesstimating who would be interested in what type of products and services, to now having the ability to know exactly what each individual actually wants. This is a turning point, not an evolutionary one—but a revolutionary one.



The Consumer Expectation Revolution

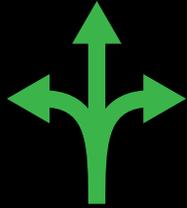
We know it's all about data, but it's so much more than that. From social media, to eCommerce, mobile apps, the list goes on, consumers are now not only fully aware that their data is being collected, they count on it to be leveraged for their own benefit. It's this expectation that is driving omnichannel engagement as the only way businesses can remain competitive—and the numbers don't lie.

As of 2019, 80% of customers have said that overall brand experience is as important as products and services. So much so that 67% of consumers are willing to pay more for a great experience. This is where companies need to pay attention and to focus their efforts going forward.

For example, in a recent study, retailers who adopt omnichannel strategies have been shown to achieve 91% greater year-over-year customer retention rates compared to businesses that don't. Furthermore, companies with extremely strong omnichannel customer engagement retain on average 89% of their customers, compared to 33% for companies with weak omnichannel customer engagement.

With these studies painting a clear picture of customer expectations, it's safe to say that customers now expect personalization all the time and will, in turn, reward the business with far greater customer loyalty.





The New Path Forward

So the question becomes, how does one transition from out-of-date and irrelevant persona-based marketing practices to the required ability to connect with customers on a 1:1 basis? As stated, it all begins with data.

As the first step, data unification is paramount: Collecting and connecting all data sources into one single source of truth.

To do this requires what is known as a Customer Data Platform (CDP). The CDP's ultimate purpose is to unify any and all desired data types and data sources to build a complete picture of the customer and then make those profiles available to the marketing systems of engagement.

This is where real personalization begins. For instance, if real 1:1 personalization means knowing the customer, their buying habits, likes, dislikes, and so on, that data must be captured through all channels including online, in-app, and in-store.

Here are a few simple examples of personalized customer data



Online

Every time a customer or potential customer logs into an eCommerce platform, they are most likely to search for desired goods or services. This search history alone begins to paint a very clear picture as to what they like. Furthermore, add to that their purchase history and the picture becomes even more detailed. All of this is collected by the CDP.



In-App

Similar to that of an eCommerce site, an app is simply an extension of the online store—with more added features that begin to connect online with in-store and beyond. As customers, or potential customers, search, interact, and purchase goods and services through the app, the same user profile information as previously mentioned is captured by the CDP.



In-Store

For in-store interactions, the same data and online and in-app applies. The only difference is how it's collected and then shared to the CDP. This can include connecting the CDP to the Point-of-Sale (POS) system for information regarding a customer's transactions, and even integrating in-store movement via beacons or WiFi browsing while shopping can provide an incredible level of granularity.

So, what is the result of all this collected data? It creates the most important data type in modern history—the Single-User-Profile.



Once the data can be accessed and leveraged from all points, the next logical step (and the magic ingredient in all of this) is the automation engine that connects the data with the people. This is done by leveraging single-user-profiles to deliver meaningful experiences—all based on real and actionable data.

The importance of the automation system paired with single-user-profiles cannot be overstated. It is what enables the single-user-profile to deliver a comprehensive and complete picture of an organization's customers; for example, where they live and work, what types of goods and services they want, and what type of marketing they want.

With a single-user-profile, retailers will know every transaction from every channel and will be able to build highly customized offers based on all their customers' activities. They will know what their customers buy, where they buy it, when they buy it, what type of promotions they like, and when they are most likely to react to promotions. The data gathered creates the platform on which all messaging is delivered—the analytics of behavior become the driving force behind all marketing efforts.

Furthermore, that insight into customers' behavior enables retailers to identify their most valuable customers and determine where to focus promotions; get real-time, accurate customer information and order history from all channels, employees and touchpoints; and optimize cross-channel operations to respond to changing customer behaviors and preferences—the expectation that the right message is, in fact, the right message, and more.



The Holy Grail of the Single-User-Profile





People are People

So that retailers know their customers as individuals and gain insight into their behavior, components such as a CDP, a robust automation system, and leveraging single-user-profile data is paramount for an omnichannel strategy. From there, the sky is the limit. Whether it's mobile apps, in-store connectivity to single-user-profile data for staff members, and so much more—they all add to the customer experience.

And best of all, people will be treated like people, and not just a persona.