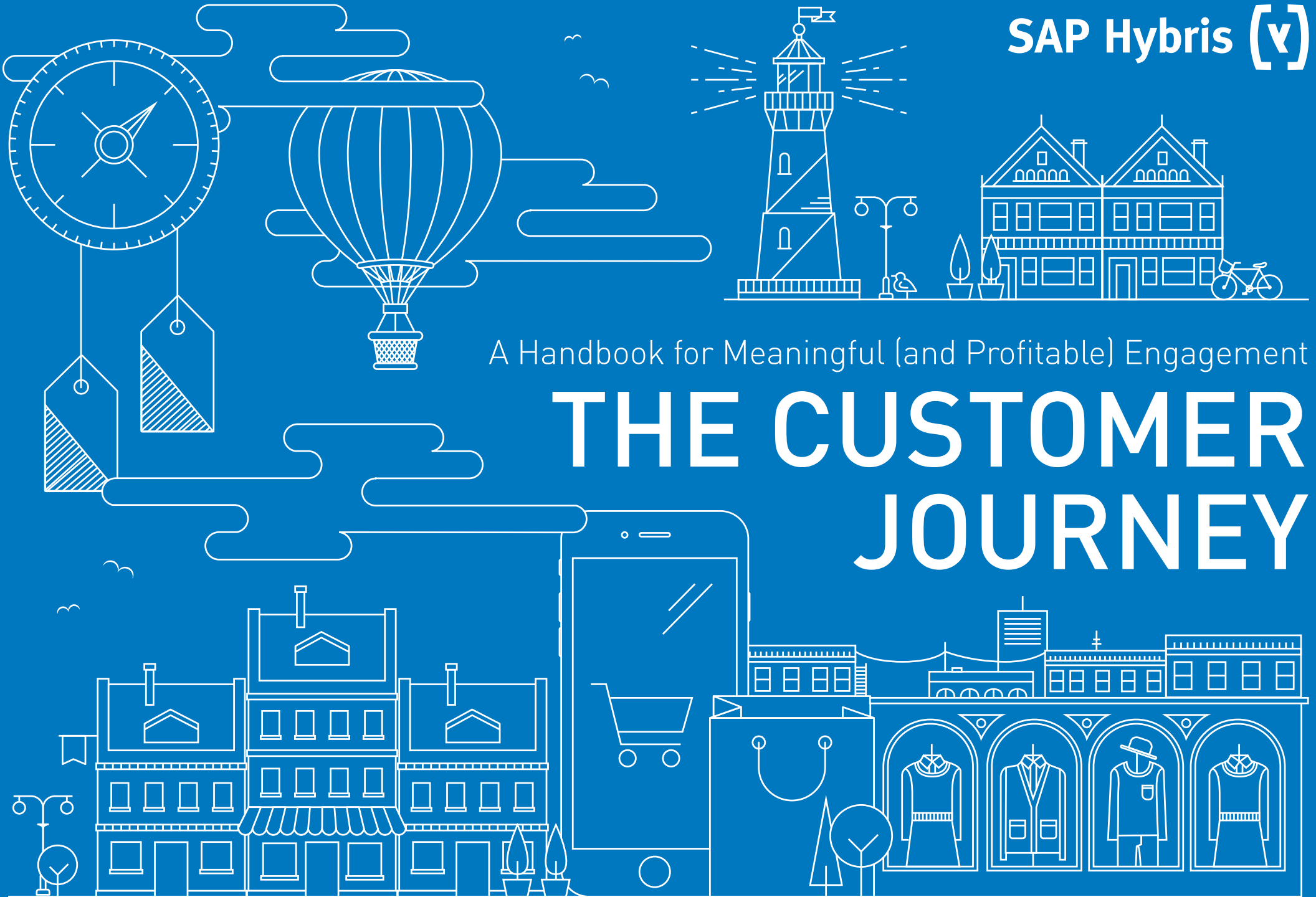


SAP Hybris (v)

A Handbook for Meaningful (and Profitable) Engagement

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY



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INTRODUCTION

NEW GAME, NEW RULES.

It did not happen overnight, but it happened. Commoditization and global competition have put the squeeze on nearly every industry. To make matters worse, financial markets have become more demanding than in decades past. Everyone is looking for sustainable growth, but few have found the secret formula for achieving it.

What does this have to do with customer engagement? Everything. Businesses have optimized their operations to the point where there are precious few gains to be made. CEOs are shifting their focus to their customer-facing teams – marketing, sales, commerce, and customer service – to bring in more customers and sustain deeper customer relationships. The rules of the game have changed.

TIME FOR ADVANCED THINKING

This is a tall order for companies that have spent years investing in technology and establishing processes to manage a traditional customer relationship model. The old models were rooted in the idea that customers always move in a linear progression from awareness, to interest, desire, and action in a carefully orchestrated series of steps directed by a salesperson. That model divided marketing, sales, commerce, and customer service into silos with separate processes, tools, and goals.

It is time to toss out the old models. The modern customer journey is amorphous – spanning across channels and touch points. It can start anywhere, anytime, and move in any direction – even backwards and in loops. Most important, each journey is unique. Whether buying or getting help for a product, customers will vary their process each time, based on what is convenient at that moment.

YOU ARE NOT THE BOSS

Customers are seizing control of the marketplace. They are more digitally connected, socially networked, and better informed than ever before. They have become savvy consumers in their personal lives and sophisticated buyers at work. They source most of their information from third parties, and when they finally decide to interact with a business, they expect to be able to do their research, make a purchase, and get assistance on any channel they choose. They expect that each new interaction will be personalized and occur within the context of the last one. Their tolerance for fragmented experiences is lower than ever, and they are very much in control of their own journey.

This e-book is all about creating a 21st-century model for customer engagement, by providing:

- 1 A vocabulary and visual construct to map out the customer journey.
- 2 Practical tips on engaging customers at each phase of the journey.
- 3 Suggestions for nudging customers from one stage to the next.
- 4 Ideas on how marketing, sales, customer service, and commerce teams can join forces to create consistency.
- 5 Recommendations on applying technology to create compelling and differentiated experiences.

AWARENESS

WHAT IS THE CUSTOMER DOING?

At this early stage in the journey, customers are passive. Since they are not yet aware of their needs, they move through their day until a triggering action occurs. That action can either be an external event (a supplier e-mail stating they are not able to deliver needed raw materials in time) or a realization (seeing a commercial for a new phone and deciding their old phone no longer meets their needs). Many of these triggers are beyond your control, but some are well within it.

HOW SHOULD BUSINESSES ENGAGE THE CUSTOMER?

Although customers are passive, your business should always be active, always on your best game. To enter your customers' consciousness, your message should engage them on the channels where they are. If you can influence a realization of need and create a trigger, you immediately become the standard for comparison. In the case of external triggers, being present in the customer's consciousness increases the likelihood that your products or services will be part of the Discovery phase.

Omnichannel engagement requires more content and more diverse information – delivered through a steady stream of relevant information, across multiple touch points, in real time. It is important to optimize how content is presented to each of these touch points. For example, mobile devices have unique screen sizes with less text space, smaller video frames, and different video encoding. Making investments that enrich content helps deepen engagement.

WHAT TECHNIQUES SHOULD BUSINESSES EMPLOY?

At this initial stage, companies can reach customers in numerous ways, including but not limited to:

- Advertising on relevant media (TV, print, and digital ads)
- Participating in topical conversations on social media
- Appearing in topic query search results
- Executing outbound campaigns on relevant topics

Your customer may engage only one of these touch points, but all are necessary components of an efficient and effective marketing plan. Ensure your marketers provide multiple entry points at the start of the customer journey. From there, it is a matter of meeting customers' needs, regardless of the route they take.

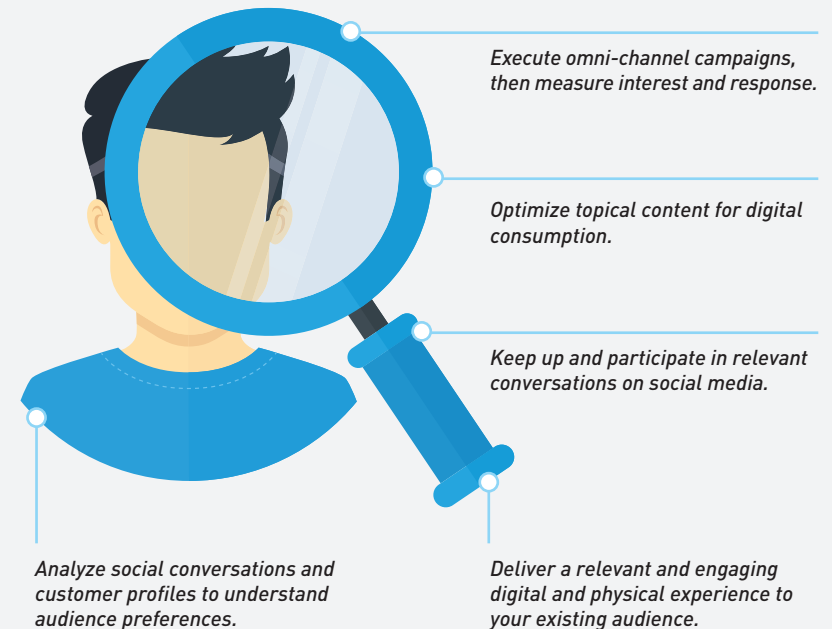
Prepare your marketing team to be ready for anything, and to act with the help of your sales team, commerce team, service team, and cross-departmental customer engagement

WHAT IS AWARENESS?

The customer journey does not begin when people enter a store or visit a website. It starts when they first become aware they have a need. A variety of sources create that moment – some your company can control, others it cannot.

“I think I have a need.”

Marketers taking the lead at this stage should:



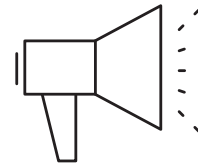
Should I be moving forward?

If the need remains clear in customers' minds, they will advance from the Awareness phase to the Discovery phase. They evaluate the next steps available to them, and their mentality shifts to investigation. This marks their decision to move from passive to active, transitioning from absorbing general information to seeking out more detail through various routes.

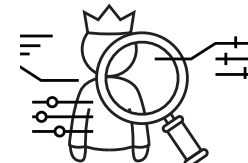
To gently nudge the customer from Awareness to Discovery, your marketing, sales, customer service, and commerce teams must work together, to:



Improve the relevance and convenience of your content.



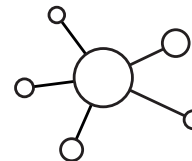
Plan and execute optimized awareness campaigns.



Analyze shopping behaviors, share insights, and make continuous improvements to the customer experience.



Analyze social conversations and customer profiles to understand audience preferences.



Collect and share intelligence from sales interactions.



Establish a social media presence based on marketing social listening insights.

DISCOVERY

WHAT IS THE CUSTOMER DOING?

Customers are evaluating options at a high level. Their research is generally light and focused on their need rather than a specific business, product, or service. From quick Web searches to casual conversations with peers, customers are trying to get a sense of the scope of their requirements. They are exploring both their need and potential ways to address it.

HOW SHOULD BUSINESSES ENGAGE THE CUSTOMER?

At the company level, the goal is to establish your business as a reliable source of information and offer a potential solution. Since customers are only exploring the possibility of a solution rather than seeking direct and detailed evaluations, your primary objective should be to deliver topical content that helps them assess their need. Engaging them at this point should be done through a series of soft actions that lead them to more content, rather than a purchase. This early impression is your opportunity to put your business on the customers' radar for when they are ready to take more focused actions.

To catch potential customers' attention:

- Appear in search results for queries related to the topic, problem, and solution.
- Participate in topical conversations on the social Web.
- Provide a rich and engaging experience at each touch point.
- Deliver topical and informative content, as well as thought leadership pieces.
- Engage curious customers via their preferred channels.

WHAT IS DISCOVERY?

Now that customers are aware they may have a need, they switch to a mode of actively gathering information to evaluate that need. At this point they begin to determine whether the need is real or perceived, and whether it is worth pursuing, given their financial situation and ability to invest the time in making a selection.

WHAT TECHNIQUES SHOULD BUSINESSES EMPLOY?

“Let me see if this is really something I need and if anyone has a solution.”

The initial contact with customers can influence all future interactions, particularly whether they will consider your company as a legitimate option. This is why you must ensure your brand is exceptionally visible to customers performing light research.

Your marketers and customer service organizations should team up to optimize structured and unstructured topical and product-related content for digital consumption. This will drive the appearance of your business in organic search engine results, and begin to position your company as a trusted source of information.

Marketers should also develop a content strategy that includes relevant content designed for this phase of the customer journey, consistent with other information and experiences that customers encounter as they progress. Content should include calls to action for customers to further inform themselves in this phase or to move into the Interest phase.

Customers seeking stories about others with similar needs rely heavily on social networks. Salespeople, marketers, commerce, and customer service representatives need to be present on these channels, and should be very intentional about their presence. The goal should be to participate in conversations and contribute knowledge, resisting the temptation to pitch products or push people toward shopping experiences – unless it is appropriate in the context of the conversation. Using appropriate tools can help scale social monitoring and engagement efforts across organizational boundaries.

Should I look at my options?

After doing the research, customers face a decision on whether they should invest more time into serious research, or whether their need is really not that great. Your goal is to influence customers to decide they have a need, and then continue to use your content and expert knowledge to engage them as they enter the next phase of their journey.

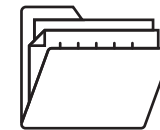
To succeed in nudging customers forward, you can employ the following ideas:



Create helpful content designed to inspire curiosity and evoke a desire to learn more.



Present a personalized experience for customers with a progression of related content that draws them forward.



Leverage an analysis of content consumption data and interaction data to identify the most successful assets and tactics for drawing your audience into engagement, and bake that into your strategy.



Task your commerce team to keep the customer experience personalized and relevant by leveraging the latest technologies.



Have your customer service teams identify up-sell opportunities and create leads for sales follow-up.

INTEREST

WHAT IS THE CUSTOMER DOING?

Customers enter this phase actively seeking to build a comprehensive list of viable solutions. They return to their preferred research channels to collect high-level information about each solution to decide whether to keep it on their list. The research may be informal, but it is focused. By exploring the breadth of choices, customers begin to zero in on their ideal solution. They gather data points, such as price, and add new evaluation factors that they did not initially consider. They research companies, comparing solutions, seeking third-party reviews, and asking for input from friends and family – all with the goal of building a solid short list of solutions that merit deeper consideration.

HOW SHOULD BUSINESSES ENGAGE THE CUSTOMER?

Customers are now beginning to investigate your offerings, which is why this phase is critical for sowing the seeds of differentiation. Their experience must be convenient – enabling them to get information quickly, whether through independent exploration or interaction with your marketing, commerce, or sales teams. Customer service can also play a critical role, since presales questions often come in through the contact center.

As part of your engagement efforts, you should:

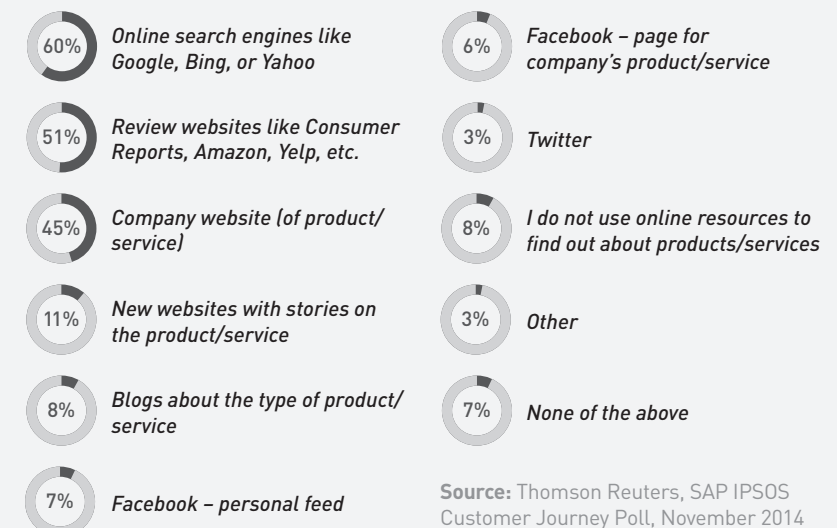
- Offer third-party opinions, both professional and personal.
- Help them understand you have helped other customers address similar needs.
- Provide a rich and engaging experience at every touch point.
- Run campaigns specifically designed to quickly inform customers and position key differentiators.
- Address initial inquiries about available features and benefits while introducing your strengths in new areas of consideration.

WHAT IS INTEREST?

During the Interest phase, customers cast a broad net to gather all their options, and quickly evaluate each one to determine if any can be dismissed. Their goal in this phase is to consider all of the possible solutions and narrow them down to a short list for an eventual purchase decision. Given their financial situation and ability to invest the time in making a selection.

“I need to see what my options are and come up with a short list.”

When conducting research about a product or service, which – if any – of the following online resources do you prefer?



Source: Thomson Reuters, SAP IPSOS Customer Journey Poll, November 2014

WHAT TECHNIQUES SHOULD BUSINESSES EMPLOY?

When addressing consumers or business buyers, marketers should seek out the individual and market to that audience of one. You can do this by analyzing your customers' purchases, shopping behavior, public social media conversations, and indicated preferences to determine ways to enhance and personalize their experiences.

Focus on identifying where customers have information gaps, and build content and tactics that leverage technology to present the right information at the right time to maximize impact.

This shows that you understand their concerns and have a vested interest in helping them find

a solution. How-to guides, white papers, surveys, and webinars can effectively engage your customers and showcase your brand voice and expertise. Use these as resources to initiate the conversations you want to have with your customers.

Going beyond content and connecting your customers with existing brand advocates benefits both your brand and your customers. Social media is the ideal platform to fast-track your business into the Consideration phase. Asking salespeople and customer service agents to encourage customers to post reviews will build a library of positive experiences that engender trust. In the case of negative reviews, publicly tackling customer service issues creates transparency and builds trust with your audience, showing them that

providing a better experience for customers is your priority.

As customers interact with your business across multiple touch points to gather the information they need, you should factor the channel into the commerce experience you create. This means recognizing that convenient access to general information should be the priority attribute for a mobile Web experience, while personal connection and subtle, non-pushy interaction are more important attributes for individual interaction.

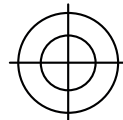
Customer service organizations can take an active role in helping marketers and commerce teams create content that educates and engages customers.

DECISION TIME

Is this a solution that seems to fit my needs? Do I want to take the time to dig into it?"

At the end of the Interest phase, your customers will have a solid understanding of what they need and a short list of vendors they believe can meet their need. But they still have hard work ahead. They must decide whether they are prepared to spend the time researching the vendors on their list, or simply live with their need. Alternatively, they may not have found a solution and are returning to the Discovery phase to do more research.

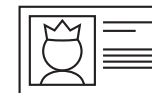
To help their journey advance, consider these suggestions as you engage customers in the Interest phase:



Proactively deliver a targeted stream of content to keep customers engaged.



Provide a consistent, omni-channel customer experience.



Make it easy for customers to find the important information by personalizing their experience based on who they are and where they are in their journey.



Create trust by delivering value in each interaction and validating your position through customer advocates and third parties.

CONSIDERATION

WHAT IS THE CUSTOMER DOING?

Customers are aggressively seeking information to determine their best option. This means comparing pros and cons, prices, features, service offerings, and reviews – and searching for information that will effectively answer their questions to build their confidence in the choice they make. They get hands-on experience with products, interview service providers, watch demonstrations, and heavily engage with salespeople. They also interact with third parties – other customers, reviewers, industry analysts, and more – for independent verification of solution provider claims.

HOW SHOULD BUSINESSES ENGAGE THE CUSTOMER?

Appropriately engaging customers in the Consideration phase is critical, as this is when competition is at its peak. Delivering information customers want on the channels they prefer is vital. To separate your business from the rest, you must be proactive: use insight to answer their questions before they ask them (and the ones they might not even think to ask), and communicate your value propositions early and often. Demonstrate your expertise, build trust, and prompt customers to take action.

The best ways to do so are to:

- Anticipate and eliminate objections and perceived barriers to action.
- Focus on personalization for both high-and low-touch interactions.
- Ensure that service availability and service-level agreement policies are clearly communicated.
- Expose customers to the ownership experience through branded communities and by showcasing your customer service responsiveness through social channels, review sites, and other current commerce technologies.
- Identify influencers in the decision-making process, and engage them along with the decision-maker.
- Offer credible third-party opinions to support your claims.

WHAT IS CONSIDERATION?

Your customer launches into the Consideration phase to make a final decision. This phase can vary in length, depending on the size of the short list, the number of key decision criteria, the quantity of stakeholders, and the size of the purchase.

WHAT TECHNIQUES SHOULD BUSINESSES EMPLOY?

“It is time to research and compare the choices on my short list so I can pick one.”

This is the most critical time for all parts of your business to work in concert and be on-message. Marketing should act as an orchestrator, ensuring that commerce, sales, and customer service are using the same language and communicating in a consistent style across channels to create a seamless experience. This is easiest when the systems and processes used are tightly integrated, and include tools that facilitate collaboration and sharing of knowledge.

Draw customers into immersive experiences with your brand to keep them focused on your solution. Enabling customers to easily compare products, including competing products, keeps them with you. If they have questions about those comparisons, your customer support team can shine by fielding presales questions.

It is not just about providing the facts – it is about offering an experience that helps them know that your solution is appropriate and conclude it is the best choice. To help convince customers, keep your social efforts focused. Continue to monitor conversations and ensure influencers are connected to potential buyers.

Using data-driven marketing techniques, you can identify the right offers for the right audiences. Perks like free trials, pilots, and freemium offers targeted to the appropriate audience are great ways to put your solution into your customers' hands and help establish familiarity and trust. Sending targeted, highly personalized offers as part of a campaign creates a sense of urgency and accelerates a decision.

DECISION TIME

“I have found a winner. Should I buy it?”

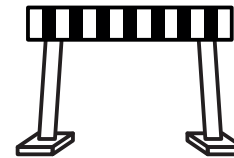
Customers have come to a pivotal point in their journey. They have already spent their time looking for the right solution, and now must decide whether to spend their money on it. This moment of decision has always been the focus

of marketing, commerce, and sales teams, but customer service can get involved, too.

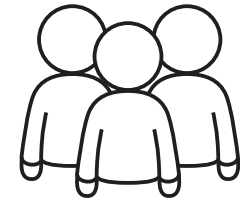
Here are a few ideas for moving this forward:



Analyze both structured and unstructured data about your customer to draw out behavioral insights that can sway the decision.



Remove any barrier to purchase to eliminate the possibility of rethinking the decision.



Maximize your staff availability for one-on-one interactions at the decision point, but ensure everyone has full visibility into customer records to avoid disjointed interactions.

RESCUING THE JOURNEY

The decision point between the Consideration and Action phases is the pivotal point in the customer journey. This is when customers decide to invest more than just time, making this the point when the risk of the journey coming to a premature end is at its highest. Business-to-consumer and retail may see this take the shape of abandoned shopping carts. Business-to-business sellers may experience this as stalled opportunities or verbal notice of a competitive selection or a negative decision.

These moments represent a chance to re-engage customers to salvage the journey. By running a recovery campaign on each abandoned cart, business-to-consumer companies can reclaim as many as half of those reticent consumers and complete a transaction. These campaigns are highly personalized and should employ real-time, on-site messages, tailored e-mail follow up, and retargeted advertisements working in concert to engage the individual.

In business-to-business situations, a common practice is for salespeople to launch an all-out effort to motivate buyers to reconsider their decision. An often-missed opportunity is the chance to partner with marketing to conduct a similar, account-based recovery campaign. This campaign would target highly personalized messages to overcome the objections customers may have cited as the reasons for deciding not to proceed.



ACTION

WHAT IS THE CUSTOMER DOING?

Having decided to continue with the purchase, they are now moving to execute the purchase transaction. For simple purchases, the process can be as simple as swiping a credit card at a kiosk. For complex procurements, customers will be navigating their internal buying process, learning about your sales process, and finalizing price and terms negotiations.

HOW SHOULD BUSINESSES ENGAGE THE CUSTOMER?

Although customers have moved through several rounds of evaluation in deciding to purchase your goods or services, strong engagement is necessary to the end. This need increases in proportion to the duration of the Action phase.

For situations with a long Action phase, most businesses expect a salesperson to keep them informed and engaged, but there are other opportunities to drive engagement. For complex transactions that take time to finalize, marketing and customer service play important roles, although price, terms, and transaction details are generally coordinated by sales.

Your commerce team can also contribute to the success of this phase by ensuring that all doors of the omni-channel experience are always open. If a customer wants to purchase online and pickup in store, that should be an easy option. If they want to browse online and make a purchase in the store, they should not be discouraged – it is entirely possible that

they might spend more in the store than on-line. And if they want to execute a transaction at 2:00am and need assistance, make sure that is available.

To facilitate the ideal buying process:

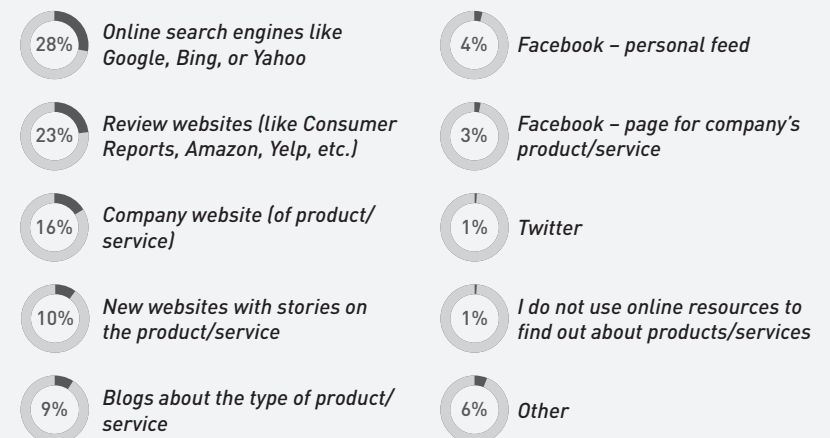
- Avoid losing momentum in the process with steady engagement.
- Use collaboration tools to bring together the right people from both sides.
- Eliminate artificial barriers and offer assistance in complying with their processes.
- Create rewarding experiences during and following the purchase.
- Combine omni-channel commerce with in-store and in-person touch points.
- Streamline the purchase path by embracing technology such as one-click shopping carts.
- Make it as easy as possible for prospects to transact business with conveniences like subscription purchases and online subscription management.

WHAT IS ACTION?

The Action phase is when the purchase occurs. From a one-click online transaction to months of contract redlining and price negotiation, the purchasing process varies widely by industry. The Action phase is ultimately driven by the buying process, your company's selling process, and any regulatory requirements governing the sale.

“I am ready to buy. Let's finalize the price and terms, and arrange payment.”

From the list below, please indicate how you personally prefer to communicate with a company when you want information about its products/services.



Source: Thomson Reuters, SAP IPSOS Customer Journey Poll, November 2014

WHAT TECHNIQUES SHOULD BUSINESSES EMPLOY?

Customers typically have an idea of what is required of them, but they may still need guidance to complete the transaction. Information is generally delivered by a salesperson, but marketers can execute packaged campaigns that inform customers about the process and encourage completion, while reminding them of the wisdom and benefits of their decision.

The Action phase is the perfect time to introduce buyers to the customer service organization. Starting the ownership experience on a positive note, even before the transaction completes, can cement the decision and set the stage for continued engagement throughout the Use phase.

A successful purchase is often a matter of collaboration, sometimes between teams of people, from both your business and your customers businesses. Both sides are working towards the next step, but miscommunication can lead to confusion and a poor experience. In the long run, customers want a brand they can depend on, and the brand needs customers that it can grow with. Fostering a collaborative environment in the purchase process is imperative. Use a collaboration technology to establish a place and process for communication. Be proactive. Ask questions, make suggestions, and keep everyone on the same page.

The Action phase is an opportunity to pave the way for customer advocacy of your brand and offerings. Capturing information about why

they have selected your offering, and what benefits they expect to achieve, will enable you to guide them to make positive, public comments. It can also help you understand how to tweak your offerings, if you are not delivering the value that customers are expecting. Including a discussion or survey on this topic as part of this phase will set up an ongoing dialogue as the basis for future engagement.

DECISION TIME

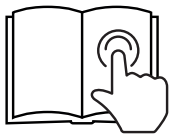
“Now that I bought it, when and how am I going to use it?”

As the transaction concludes, customers face the question of how to put their purchase to use. Most people have had the experience of buying something, and then not using it as they intended, or perhaps not at all.

This is an important factor in the customer experience. If the decision to buy delivers poor results, their perception will be that the brand promise and the solution's value have not been fulfilled.

Worse, it can result in a product return or service cancellation.

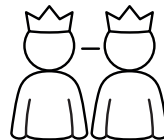
To make sure customers realize value, and set the stage for loyalty and advocacy:



Execute post-purchase campaigns to remind customers about the features and benefits of their purchase, with instructions for use, when appropriate.



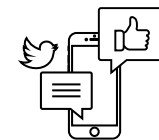
After a waiting period, survey customers about their satisfaction.



Connect new customers with existing customers who can provide encouragement and assistance, and can help drive expanded use over time.



If possible, track product usage and make recommendations for full utilization.



Pay close attention to social media commentary.

USE

WHAT IS THE CUSTOMER DOING?

Equipped with the new purchase, customers assess whether the solution and vendor are satisfactory. They test their predictions and reaffirm their selection as the right one. Once the solution's worth and effectiveness are evaluated, if the reaction is positive, the new status quo is established. Buyers begin to identify themselves as your customer and are poised to consider additional products and services from your business. If their reaction is negative, they will decide whether to file a complaint with your service team or simply move to another solution or vendor.

HOW SHOULD BUSINESSES ENGAGE THE CUSTOMER?

Even though they may be your customers right now, that does not mean they will be forever. This relationship requires nurturing to prevent defection, and interruption-free engagement is critical. Your business must continually interact with customers to ensure the brand promise is kept and they continue to have good experiences.

To remain attentive and cultivate a positive customer experience:

- Prevent buyer's remorse by helping customers feel secure in their decision.
- Help customers realize and measure the value of their purchase.
- Inform customers how to use the solution to maximize value.

- Provide proactive, omnichannel service with a focus on customer experience.
- Create opportunities for customers to become public advocates.
- Make it easy for customers to enhance their experience through the easy purchase of accessories, add-ons, and upgrades.

WHAT TECHNIQUES SHOULD BUSINESSES EMPLOY?

Now that your customers are using the product or service they have discovered, researched, and purchased, there's a good chance they will reach out with questions, complaints, or feedback. Your business should not disappear from customers' view after purchase. Instead, customer service should be proactive in helping buyers use their preferred channel to get assistance, and your commerce team should make sure that all relevant tools are implemented to support a superior customer experience.

Some people read the manual and others do not, but insightful product documentation and self-service help experiences are opportunities for marketing to influence the quality of the customer experience in the Use phase. Just as your marketing team made high-quality content easily available for customers building their short list, they can work with product and support teams to make high-quality, multimedia product documentation that is just as easy to access. When done correctly, this will contribute to organic search engine

WHAT IS USE?

In the Use phase, customers have purchased their solution and are actively using it. For most industries, this is generally the longest phase of the customer journey, when people form their opinion of the product or service, and decide if your brand promise has been fulfilled. This phase is critical to developing loyalty and setting the stage for positive customer advocacy.

"I now own it. I hope it solves my problem and does what they promised."

results that customers use in the Discovery, Interest, and Consideration phases.

You can also create great experiences while deflecting direct support costs by encouraging peer-to-peer interaction through your brand's social community. Facilitating this interaction scales your support capabilities and creates a familial experience that inspires continued participation – and brand loyalty, by extension. It is, however, important to have your marketing, commerce, customer service, and sales teams monitor and participate in these conversations.

Be aware that trying to force the direction of the conversation may lead to undesired responses. The goal of your participation should be to provide insight, advice, and guidance and build on other customer responses. Be present, pay attention, and help accordingly – and transition the conversation into a formal support channel, when necessary. Your support role in social communities can do a lot for your brand's reputation – both good and bad.

As the longest phase of the journey, the Use phase represents the best opportunity to deepen customer relationships. Personalized post-purchase, up-sell, and cross-sell campaigns can enhance the experience and engender loyalty. Look outside your industry at how others use loyalty programs and communications to find innovative ways to engage customers. It is important that customers feel confident about their ownership, not pressured or pestered.

DECISION TIME

“I am busy. Should I bother sharing my experience?”

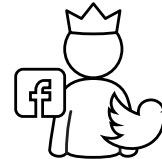
After leveraging the social web to talk about their purchase decision, customers will decide whether they want to share their experience about your company and products. Unfortunately, bad experiences are often more likely to drive social sharing. If customers feel the purchased solution delivered poor results, they

will want to warn others – making it more important to influence them with positive experiences.

To turn customers into advocates:



Run post-purchase campaigns to encourage sharing positive experiences, including live, online, and in communities.



Combine social and customer data to identify and target customers who would be likely to advocate on your behalf.



Give your commerce team the responsibility and authority to implement and maintain omni-channel commerce tools that deliver an experience that both informs and empowers customers to make the right buying decisions for themselves.



Enable support and marketing teams to identify and reinforce positive advocacy statements.



Resist the urge to police negative comments. Rather, use them as an opportunity to showcase how responsive your brand is to customer concerns.

ADVOCACY

WHAT IS THE CUSTOMER DOING?

Whether the experience has been positive or negative, a customer will have concrete feelings about your solution and will want to share them. Negative experiences motivate customers to warn others, while positive experiences create advocates. Customers will typically share their opinions in person with friends, family, and colleagues, inform their followers on social networks, or post reviews for other shoppers to find.

HOW SHOULD BUSINESSES ENGAGE THE CUSTOMER?

This phase is the most publicly visible opportunity for you to engage your customer. Marketing and customer service should monitor social channels for brand or product mentions, encouraging further posting of positive comments or quickly addressing challenges mentioned in negative comments. They should also seek to identify the most vocal advocates and cultivate them. Your commerce team should ensure that your site includes all of the omni-channel technology needed to allow customers to share their experiences in all the ways that they want to interact.

To continue customer engagement during this phase:

- Identify advocacy statements through social listening.
- Provide customers with tools to make advocacy easy.
- Encourage customers to broaden advocacy to new channels.

- Connect advocates with each other via social and community channels.
- Plan, post, and target content for social publishing.

WHAT TECHNIQUES SHOULD BUSINESSES EMPLOY?

This stage of the customer journey is easily the most personal. Your engagement here empowers customers to use their own voices to help others. The challenge tends to be one of incentive. Create incentives by making advocacy a rewarded behavior – with a simple recognition such as a personalized thank you, or earned status in a branded community, or something more tangible such as sneak peeks at new products, exclusive promotional offers, and special trials. This will build loyalty and motivate supporters to get the word out.

Analyze social and support data to identify the individuals who are your greatest advocates, and engage them with exclusive opportunities and specialized support. Recognize that these people are key early-phase influencers who can drive growth for your business.

Build advocacy initiatives into customer service experiences, and execute advocacy campaigns that include tools that make sharing easy. This can be as simple as adding a request at the end of a customer service call script for customers to share their positive experience on Facebook, or as elaborate as adding an Instagram photo booth at a sponsored event. Whatever you do, be creative and work to eliminate all barriers to sharing.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

The Advocacy phase is often short and may be interspersed among the other phases. Here, customers share their opinions, good or bad, online or in person. These opinions are based primarily on experiences during the Consideration and Use phases, and are generally consumed by others during all phases of their customer journey. Engagement during the Advocacy phase should be a critical part of your growth strategy.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Whether your customers are buying consulting services, camshafts, or cranberry juice, the phases of the customer journey do not change, and neither do their attributes. What does change, by industry, is the relative percentage of time that customers spend in each of the phases, the level of engagement within each phase, and the length of the overall journey.

For example, in consumer journeys, the Action phase is generally short. Once a consumer makes the decision to take action, the purchase transaction completes very quickly. Even a more complex purchase such as a car – where factors like third-party financing, family consensus, and price negotiation are part of the process – is completed with relative speed and simplicity when compared with most business-to-business purchases.

Conversely, the relationships that consumers form with brands are seldom as durable as those that businesses establish in B2B commerce. Consider the relationship between an airline and its aircraft supplier, or between a publicly traded company and its external auditors. These are not lightly cast aside in favor of a vendor with a slightly better price.

Do not forget to account for these factors when you map out your customers' journeys.



CONTACT

For more information about customer engagement solutions from SAP, please contact your SAP Partner.

About SAP Hybris

SAP Hybris enables businesses to transform how they engage with customers, innovate how they do business, and simplify their technology landscape. With a comprehensive approach to customer engagement and commerce, our solutions unlock opportunities to optimize your customers' experience and transform your business. We help you drive relevant, contextual experiences across all of your customer touch-points in real-time, so that you can create strong differentiation and build competitive advantage in the Digital Economy.

SAP Hybris has helped some of the world's leading organizations transform themselves in response to changing market conditions and customer expectations – delivering exceptional experiences, adding new channels, evolving their business models, and entering new markets. How can we help you?

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