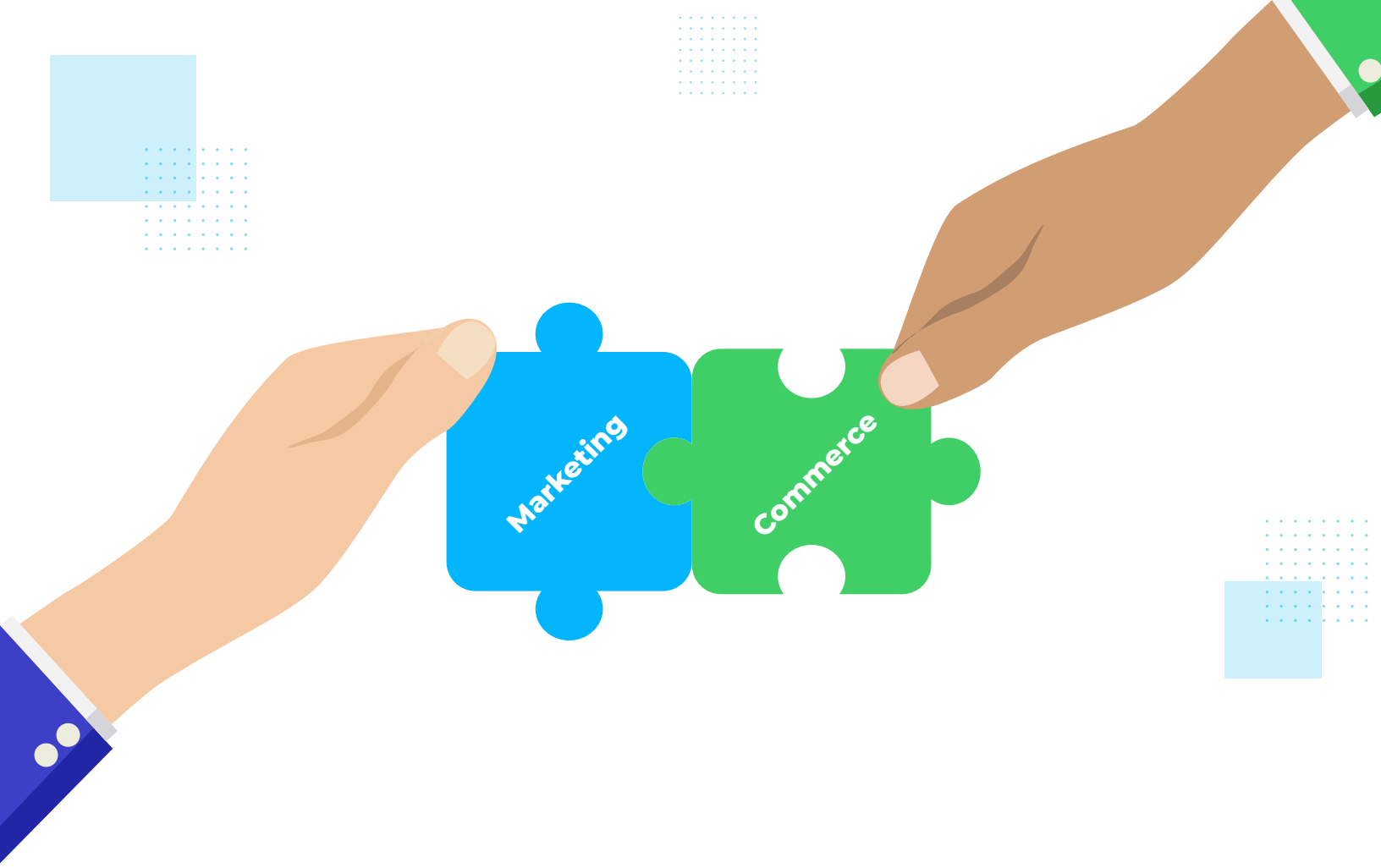

Today's Consumer Expectations Require A Brand New Approach

Traditionally, marketing and commerce teams have worked independently of each other. Marketing creates, executes, and evaluates customer-facing campaigns, while commerce teams determine promotions, view purchase information, and manage products. There's a missing piece between the two.

Bringing marketing and commerce together brings in a centralized, holistic understanding of your customer that includes both engagement and transactional information, and having this full picture allows brands to connect with their customers on a deeper, more personal level.

How marketing and commerce are related

Marketing engagement and transaction behavior influence one another; a customer gets an email that leads them to your website, which features a recommended product or promotion that inspires the individual to make a purchase, and the cycle starts again. But if the two teams are operating separately, it becomes difficult to truly understand why the customer took the actions they did, and therefore tricky to determine strategically how to market to them moving forward.

Creating a link between the two gives marketing and commerce teams the ability to view the entire customer journey. While this path was once linear, it is becoming more and more complex as the way consumers buy products evolves with the introduction of new shopping channels. Additionally, once a customer makes a purchase, the path is not complete; it is continuous. The purchase of one product should lead to more targeted marketing messages, which hopefully results in the customer making additional purchases, and so on. Unfortunately, 78% of companies surveyed by Boston Consulting Group responded that they could not attribute value to individual touch points with customers.

Ultimately, both functions need to be thinking past the customer's final step of making the purchase; they need to consider how to get the customer to that point with relevant messaging. A healthy combination of promotional and educational marketing content makes your brand both a trusted resource and a place that values their customers and offers great products.

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Marketing for commerce

Consumer marketing is constantly changing; what was once seen as a way to spread the same message to as many people as possible with as little effort as possible is becoming far more complex, due to evolving consumer expectations. With so many channels available, marketers have to decide which to leverage, and how best to do so.

Marketing strategies

It's difficult for a brand to not have a presence on **social media**. That is where your audience is, and therefore where you should be. PwC's 2018 Global Consumer Insights Survey found social media to be the top place people went online to get purchase inspiration. However, simply having an account on social media platforms and randomly posting isn't enough; each platform should be used to its full potential and taking strengths and weaknesses into account. For instance, Instagram is visual, so showcase products with high-quality photos and make it shoppable. Twitter is great for urgent business announcements, and paid Facebook ads let you target users based on interests, location, and various other criteria. Regardless of the channel, any time you can include video, do so –a third of all the time spent online is dedicated to watching videos, according to Forbes.

Email remains one of the most effective marketing channels, and should be a top priority in your customer engagement strategy. More than 59% of marketers say email is the most effective channel, according to Campaign Monitor's 2018 Email Marketing Industry Report. It is a tool that allows you to share news, promotions and other business information, and gives your brand a voice. It can be used to encourage people to complete an order in their shopping cart, or follow up after a purchase to keep your brand top of mind. A major benefit of email is that it can be automated; once you segment your audience and establish automated campaigns, the emails do the rest for you. It's key to remember that you must nurture your customer database and keep a close eye on your email lists, not only to ensure every customer is getting the right messaging, but to also protect their privacy.

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According to B2C content marketing findings from the Content Marketing Institute, 86% of B2C marketers use content marketing strategies. **Content marketing** is becoming an increasingly popular approach, as it serves two purposes: first, by targeting specific keywords relevant to your brand through blogs, white papers, and other written pieces, you in turn increase traffic to your site; second, it positions your brand as a thought leader and subject matter expert in your given field. It can be tempting to allocate your time and efforts to only promotional marketing materials, but in the end your audience will tire of being bombarded by messages that only communicate that you want them to buy something from you, not that you care about their needs and interests as a customer.

According to Forrester, 72% of consumers said they were more likely to shop more frequently with retailers that send relevant communications.

Tips for marketing for commerce

Marketing for your commerce business is different than traditional marketing; customers want to feel connected with you before buying your products or services. We recommend the following:

- **Personalize.** People don't appreciate feeling like they are just one of thousands receiving impersonal messages from you; they want to feel heard and understood. According to Forrester, 72% of consumers said they were more likely to shop more frequently with retailers that send relevant communications. There are so many tools available now that allow you to personalize messages and campaigns to individual customers based on their unique interests and behavior; capitalize on those tools and you will see positive results.
- **See the journey as a whole, not just touchpoints.** You obviously want to dedicate attention to every email, social post, blog, and other marketing actions, but you should look at these from the viewpoint of how they play into the entire customer journey. A one-off email may garner great engagement, but what are its long-term effects if it doesn't have a place within your larger strategy? Plan–and automate (as mentioned above)–so that every step of the journey leads to the next sensible step, eventually leading customers to make a purchase.
- **Take advantage of word-of-mouth marketing.** Word-of-mouth remains a useful marketing tool; incentivize your customers to review your company or a specific product, or refer a friend, with discounts. People are more likely to buy from a certain brand if they hear about it from someone they trust.

Using data to fill the gap

Data should always be the main focus of both marketing and commerce strategies. After all, data helps you understand campaign effectiveness, customer purchase behavior, and revenue generated for your business, among other things. It is what links marketing and commerce together, and should inform business strategy moving forward, when analyzed and used properly.

Commerce teams should be collecting purchase and transaction data, giving insight into customer interests and behavior. For instance, if a person purchases a suitcase, it shows that they do some kind of traveling. Leveraging this information, marketing uncovers methods for best engaging them moving forward. The customer purchased a suitcase and does some form of traveling, so direct them to similar products, such as luggage tags, dopp kits, passport holders, etc. that they are more likely inclined to purchase, and send them related content (travel tips, best practices for packing, etc.) that brings value.