



## **Connect Customer Experience, Convenience, and Differentiation to Business Results**

By Laura Patterson

After I reviewed several marketing dashboards recently, one thing became clear: Online metrics abound—from website metrics such as site visits, page views, open rates, and click-throughs, to social media metrics such as fans, followers, likes, and online authority rankings such as those from Klout and MOZ's Social Authority.

Some companies have found ways to link online activity to the pipeline, such as visit-to-conversion or engagement-to-conversion ratios, which populate their dashboards as well. But B2B marketers, who often face a long and complex buying cycle in which buyers may follow and visit over an extended period, need to focus and report on metrics that connect customer behavior to business results.

B2B customers typically name numerous site visits and early visits represent a part of the evaluation and consideration phases. Those online visits are a precursor to action. As a result, consider exploring how to link online metrics and data from programs to how well you've created preference and consideration in the customer's buying stages. Doing so will require research and A/B testing to track which areas of your marketing efforts best support your customers' buying process.

The key is to develop a way to understand how the customer behavior you can monitor influences the buying process. The more you can connect customer behavior, online or offline that relates to engagement, experience, consideration, preference, and consumption the more likely you'll be able to increase profitable sales.

Here are three areas to monitor and how to tie them to more outcome-based metrics.

### **1. Experience**

In today's environment, face-to-face contact with a customer may come later rather than sooner. Customers experience your company various ways—your website, your emails, your phone conversations, and, hopefully, face-to-face encounters.

The interactions include those you can control (your website, your blog, your emails) and those you cannot control (reviews, comments, and tweets). Therefore, the more ways we can monitor and measure experience and create opportunities to help customers with critical steps in the buying decision, the better.

Those critical steps are often decision points in the buying process. Once you've identified the decision points in your customer's buying process, focus on creating a positive experience for those steps or decision points, especially those that will help them decide to actually reach out and engage in a voice or face-to-face conversation.

Whether online or offline, tie experience metrics to cost of sale and time to purchase.

## **2. Convenience**

Everyone is busy, and so convenience has become table stakes.

In the B2B world, it's common for customers to need something that's customized—not "off the shelf"—or additional components to complete the product.

How hard or easy you make customization may signal to a customer how hard or easy it is to do business with you. Whenever possible, make options and components easy to find, access, and convenient to buy.

Average order value and repeat purchase can provide directional insight into how hard or easy customers find doing business with you.

## **3. Differentiation**

As marketers we know that importance of competitive differentiation and positioning. Being able to articulate that differentiation is paramount in a world composed of nothing but clutter.

The key aspects of your differentiation and the associated benefits need to be easy for customers to glean through text, photography, and video. Consider how you can make it possible for customers to experience that differentiation online and for the online experience to resemble the actual (offline) product.

Connect your differentiation efforts to time to purchase, rate of customer acquisition, and preference.

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By monitoring experience, convenience, and differentiation, you will start to craft a much more comprehensive view of your impact on the customer's buying behavior and thus the effectiveness

of your marketing programs. The closer you can link customer behavior to business outcomes, the better.

Although putting yourself in the customer's shoes can be difficult, peers and colleagues can be extremely useful devil's advocates and can help you do so.

As we have come to realize in the past decade, almost anything is quantifiable.

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