Influencing the eCommerce customer journey
The ultimate marketing goal is to drive revenue, right? Of course. Whether we trigger an email, run an ad, or send direct mail, the goal is the same.

But there isn’t always a clear cause and effect relationship between a marketing campaign and the revenue it generates. That’s because for most customers, the path to purchase is a journey with many potential stops along the way. And when marketers become too focused on immediate returns, the overall marketing strategy can suffer.

Understanding each stage of the customer journey – and knowing how to measure success at each stage – is essential for choosing the right strategy to move customers forward. In particular, measuring success at early stages of the journey shouldn’t be based on dollars generated alone. To optimize ROI, marketers need to recognize the value of moving customers from one stage of the journey to the next.

To move online shoppers along the customer journey, marketers need to:
- **Understand** its stages
- **Know** how to measure success at each stage
- **Choose** the right strategy at each stage to move the customer forward
The customer journey is defined in many ways, but there are at least 5 distinct stages for the online shopper:

1) **Unengaged** - Not currently engaged with your brand. No recent purchases or visits to your site, or opened email.

2) **Loosely Engaged** - Somewhat engaged but not moving forward. Recently opened your email or visited your website, but only briefly.

3) **Showing Interest** - Spent some time on your site browsing products, but did not cart anything or make a purchase.

4) **Deciding** - Placed items in the cart but did not make a purchase.

5) **Purchased** - Mission accomplished! Now it’s time to keep them active.
Why is knowing how to measure success so important?

Traditional measures can be misleading, particularly for email marketers focusing on dollars per email. In fact, it can be counter productive to focus on dollars when attempting to re-engage your Unengaged customers. For them, simply opening an email should be considered a success. Why? Because now that customer is Loosely Engaged. And why is this valuable? Because now he or she is 6x more likely to move on to Showing Interest in the next 30 days.

A rolling stone picks up speed

Once a customer is Showing Interest, you’ve more than doubled their likelihood of making a purchase in the next 30 days. But now it’s important to keep the momentum going – because if you can move them on to Deciding, they’ll be 11x more likely to make a purchase!
Let’s stop and reflect

Typically, less than 4 out of every 1,000 Unengaged customers will make a purchase in the next 30 days. By contrast, 44 out of every 1,000 customers at the Deciding stage will make a purchase. So, by moving the Unengaged customer incrementally forward to Deciding, you’ve increased the likelihood of this customer making a purchase by 1000%! Each transition along the way is an important measure of success from the previous stage. Now that we know how to measure success, we can look more closely at the strategies to move customers along.
Strategies to move customers along

Unengaged customers

Unengaged customers are not visiting your website – and you want getting them there. One of the best ways to do this is getting them to open an email (and ultimately click through to your site). Send-time optimization and personalized subject lines can be effective, but too often the Unengaged will simply delete your email without giving it a second look. The key is to get the email in front of them when they’re not in “delete mode.” A new technology called Send Time Perfection™ leverages 3rd party data to deploy an email at the very moment a customer is browsing another retailer’s site or opening another retailer’s email. This ensures the customer is in “shopping mode” and primed to open your email. This technology typically results in open rates of 25% or higher with chronic non-openers.
Loosely Engaged customers

These customers recently opened an email or briefly visited your site, but are not moving forward. A great strategy for moving them along is to leverage advanced personalization such as real-time, dynamic product recommendations and offers in your emails and on-site displays.

eCommerce giants like Amazon leverage Dynamic Product Recommendations all the time. They use current shopping activity, shopping history, and the activity/history of others who looked at similar items to recommend products that are likely to be of interest to you. You can leverage this same ability directly on your website via lightboxes and push-down displays, keeping customers engaged once they get there. This is especially cost effective if your website does not have this functionality already, or if you have a thin IT staff.

Be sure to use a service provider with true live content decisioning and rendering that takes place in real-time. Email recommendations should be rendered at the moment the email is opened to ensure 1) the content is the most relevant it can be 2) recommended products are in stock, and 3) pricing information is accurate at the time of the open.

Dynamic Offers are also very effective with this group, letting you change the level of discount (such as a percentage off) depending on the customer’s level of engagement. For example, if you decide to give 25% off to site visitors who are Loosely Engaged, you can make sure that customers farther along the customer journey don’t receive this offer (or maybe receive a lesser discount such as 10% off). A great delivery mechanism for the Loosely Engaged web visitor is an “exit intent” offer that appears if the visitor starts moving the cursor to exit the site.
The active loop

Showing Interest ➔ Deciding ➔ Purchased

When customers progress past *Loosely Engaged*, they’ve entered what we call the **Active Loop**. Here, the goal becomes not only to keep them moving forward, but to keep them cycling through the stages of Showing Interest, Deciding and Purchased – again and again. Customers in the **Active Loop** usually represent less than 10% of your customer base, but they make **more than 40%** of your purchases – which is why it’s so important to keep them there.

One of the most effective tools for keeping them in the loop is triggered email. Numerous industry studies show that triggered email generates drastically higher open and click-through rates than traditional marketing email.
As a general rule of thumb, the majority of your email revenue should be coming from triggered email. If it’s not, then you’re falling short of your email revenue potential.

To take full advantage of triggered email versatility and value, be sure to use both website triggers – activated by a customer’s activity on your website, and product triggers – which also incorporate changes in your product catalog (e.g., Now On Sale or Back in Stock).

You should also use product recommendations in your triggered email. Recent research demonstrates that product recommendations in abandoned cart and abandoned browse emails generate 10% more revenue when compared to controls without recommendations.
Onsite Messaging

Lightboxes and pushdowns are also extremely valuable for keeping customers in the **Active Loop**. They let you do nearly anything that a triggered email can do - but they’re triggered in real time by website actions.

Their great advantages include reaching out to customers before they leave your website, and reaching website visitors who have not yet opted into your email list. With the right real-time customer interaction company, many online shoppers can be identified and their interests tracked even if they’re not on your email list.
Identifying Website Visitors

At the heart of all of these strategies is **identifying website visitors**. If you’re not identifying at least 70% of your cart abandoners and 60% of browse abandoners, you’re missing out on easy triggered email revenue.

It’s also important that your customer identification is unified. Multiple device use by visitors have become the norm, with more than a third of Americans owning three or more digital devices. Most online shoppers also typically have two or more email addresses. With conventional data collection, a customer using three different devices to visit your site might be identified as three different people. Add two or more associated email addresses, and the customer can easily become six or more people identified separately in your data. This can result in “50 First Dates Syndrome,” where your communications with a returning customer show no recognition of previous visits. To avoid this, you should be using technology that creates a persistent identifier for each shopper and continuously updates it, regardless of device or email address used, merging all data together to identify one individual.

It’s also essential to ensure proper message cadence and suppression within the customer’s **Active Loop**. You should be using rules that limit the number of emails sent and lightboxes displayed in a specified time period. They should also specify what messages should take priority, suppressing other messages when limits are reached.
Self-assessing your current strategy

To assess your current strategy, ask yourself the following:

• Do you have strategies in place that reach customers at each stage of the customer journey? How are you reaching them – Email? Lightboxes? Personalized content on your site?

• Are the reports you generate truly assessing the effectiveness of your strategies based on their ability to move customers forward in the customer journey?

• Is your web visitor identification up to par, identifying at least 70% of cart abandoners and 60% of browse abandoners?

• Are you able to generate dynamic live product recommendations and offers with content determined at the moment the customer views the message?

• Are you using message delivery rules that ensure consistent content and proper cadence that’s not overly redundant?

If you find yourself falling short, don’t worry. Strategies to support the customer journey don’t have to be implemented all at once, and they don’t have to be expensive or require vendor changes either. You can use a zero configuration service provider that runs programs “on top” of your website and doesn’t slow it down, without requiring coding changes or significant involvement from your IT department.
Conclusion

This guide should give you a new perspective on ways to influence the eCommerce customer journey, armed with knowing the journey is a multi-stage process and moving customers to the next stage is always a success.

About us

4Cite is the first and only full-service, Real-Time Interaction Management services provider that uses data, analytics and the proprietary 4Cite Data Network™ to enable e-commerce retailers to identify customers and improve engagement with real-time, personalized offers, making it easy to acquire, retain and reactivate customers, drive brand loyalty, and increase revenues. Try Risk Free for 30-days. Please call Jack Sturn to learn about all that we have to offer at 518.380.5178 ext.106 or email info@4cite.com.