BIGCOMMERCE

Your 2019 Marketing Tech Stack

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Introduction

If you were to put 100 ecommerce professionals into a room and ask them what the #1 struggle was while they were building their brand, it most likely was one of these three things:

1. **Product & market fit,**

2. **Go-to-market strategy, or**

3. **Getting the right mix of customers.**

As more and more people enter the age of digital shopping — and more and more brands move towards an online structure — the increase in competition when it comes to any kind of product is going to grow and grow.

So how do you make sure that you're reaching the right customers, at the right time, with the right messaging?

A lot of it has to do with research: buyer personas, focus groups, A/B testing.

But aside from the pen-to-paper analysis, the suite of products and integrations you use within your marketing strategy matters as well. The tools you use routinely act on make-or-break decisions when it comes to customer acquisition.

Every brand is trying to attract the attention of purchasers — so how do you stand out from the crowd? The answer is often found within your marketing.

Customers now expect a tailored buyer experience and path to purchase. One way to exceed their expectations is by using personalized marketing.

In this guide, we dive deep into four different types of personalized marketing you can use to help grow your business, reach the right consumers, and ultimately increase your bottom line.

01 How to Build Quality Relationships at Scale

Our world is lot more connected and feels a lot smaller than it did a few decades ago. Today, we can reach out to someone on the other side of the world and get a reply within minutes — or seconds.

We're so used to this that it's hard to think of it being any other way. We can now find products and services easily, buy and transact simply, and communicate with each other quickly.

It's easier to talk to each other today, but does that mean the quality of the messages we get from brands has improved? Do we feel closer to the brands we love?

The answer, traditionally, is no.

Building a quality relationship requires:

1. Listening, learning, and collecting information.

2. Recalling facts or judgements based on rules or assumptions.

3. Reacting by communicating in the various ways we speak, write, and convey emotions.

Humans develop rich, personal relationships with people in their social sphere, but brands have traditionally struggled to transfer this into their ecommerce interactions.

The issue is one of scale. For brands that have thousands or millions of customers, you can't sit down and build a relationship with each of them. But with the right technology, you can tailor your approach with your customers on a personal level.

Klaviyo helps you build meaningful customer relationships by listening to and observing your customers, allowing you to turn that information into valuable marketing messages.

If you think "Dear [first name]" counts as personalization, then it's time to demand more from your marketing automation software, dig into your data, and develop deeper relationships with your customers.

Observe Customer Trends by Listening to Data

When email personalization was first gaining momentum, embedding basic contact information like the recipient's first and last name was revolutionary. Now, brands must make broader strides to get ahead of their competition and really reach customers.

There are several ways to listen to and observe your customers' behaviors to better understand their preferences. When it comes to personalization, knowing what your customer wants is instrumental. Below are 3 data sources you should leverage when trying to understand your customers:

1. Ecommerce Data

Listen to both transactional and behavioral data to understand how customers are interacting with your brand.

With a marketing automation platform, you can easily secure historic and real-time data about your customers. When someone visits your store and provides their email (i.e. made a purchase, signed up for the newsletter, filled out a pop-up form, etc.), you'll have access to a slew of data that can be used for personalizing your marketing approach and help drive new or repeat sales.

The following are only a few examples of ecommerce data points that go deeper than just an order number:

- ◢ **Transactional Data**
  - • **Previously purchased products**: What have users purchased before, and how many times?
  - • **Order values:** Are they normally a big spender, or do they stick with smaller items? Do they hover around the "free shipping" threshold?
  - • **Product Categorizations:** Are there certain types of products that they purchase?
  - • **Purchase frequency:** How often are they making a purchase? Is it seasonal?

- ◢ **Behavioral Data**
  - • **Viewed products:** What products are they looking at, but not purchasing?
  - • **Shopping frequency:** Do they browse a few times and then commit to purchasing?
  - • **Cart Abandonment:** How often are they adding items into their cart and then leaving the site?

Ecommerce data represents revenue and should be used to make smart personalization decisions. If you sell pet products and someone only purchased cat-related items, you should avoid sending that customer an email about dog toys.

By listening to your ecommerce data, you'll be able to personalize communications with customers and prospects based on the way they choose to interact with you.

2. Email Data

Listen to email data to determine what your customers respond (or don't) respond to.

In 2018, it's estimated that **more than 281 billion** consumer and business emails were sent per day. Each touch point represents an opportunity to learn more about your customer and tailor your interactions with them.

It may seem obvious, but your open and click rates can provide a wealth of data, especially if you take a closer look at the variables of your email and what factors contributed to either positive or negative results.

Examine the following variables as they relate to your open / click / order rates:

- Audience

- Subject line

- Timing

- Frequency

- Content

- Call-to-action

- Template design

Does a particular time of day work better than another?
Do more images lead to more revenue?

Continue to make adjustments and analyze the results to learn what works and what doesn't. Consider each email a test to improve future communications for each individual contact.

3. Third-Party Data

Listen to third-party data sources for an integrated marketing approach.

Outside of ecommerce and email platforms, there are thousands of digital tools that support brands and their quest to provide a superior customer experience. Whether it's payments or shipping or support, these tools possess invaluable information about your customers and their behaviors. When you ingest and integrate data from third-party sources within your email platform, you'll be able to centralize, extend, and further personalize your marketing — beyond transactional communications. Some examples of third-party data sources to consider:

- ✓ **CRM Platforms** | demand more than "dear _____": Klaviyo integrates with Salesforce to pull in the leads and any custom properties so you can personalize emails based on what you know about the contacts in your funnel. For example, you can trigger your emails based on a prospect or customer's lead source or segment your customers by location to send seasonal or regional promotions.

- ✓ **Rewards Programs** | Recognize your most valuable customers: Smile provides information on Customer Points balance, Customer Referral URL, VIP Tier Name, or VIP tier ID. You can leverage this data to insert rewards program member information – like points balance – to campaign emails. You can also use this information to trigger emails once they've hit a certain points balance to remind them to redeem points OR automate a points balance reminder email to send every 30 days.

- ✓ **Marketing Tools** | Do more without duplicating efforts: Klaviyo integrates with a number of marketing tools to make it easier to do more, without duplicating efforts. For example, Klaviyo's integration with Eventbrite enables you to trigger emails when someone buys a ticket to provide them more info about the event OR send periodic event reminders to everyone that has purchased a ticket leading up to the event.

- ✓ **Payment Software** | Centralize communications and automate emails: Automate your billing communications to let your customers know about failed, refunded or successfully submitted payments. For example, Klaviyo's integration with Stripe enables you to target customers who fail making a payment to let them know they have an overdue balance and include the reason that the payment failed (e.g., Your card has expired, Your card was declined). Or trigger emails when an invoice is issued to notify customers of an upcoming payment.

When you listen to data from third-party sources, you'll be able to learn more about your customers' behaviors to send personalized emails from one centralized source.

Analyze Data to Learn About Your Customers

Your ecommerce marketing strategy should force you to answer the questions who am I targeting and what do they care about? By leveraging diverse data sources, you're able to track not only basic demographic information, but also deep behavioral trends. So now what?

As you look at all the data you've collected across your customer list, you'll begin to see trends that group contacts into different segments. Segmentation is the key to scalable personalization. When you segment your audiences, you'll be able to develop content that customers will feel has been made just for them.

There are thousands of ways to leverage your data in order to segment customers. Below are a few ideas for leveraging data to organize audiences and tailor content.

1. Segmenting by Behaviors

With dynamic segments, you're able to develop audience segmentation based off selected criteria and the list of contacts will automatically update as your customers interact with your brand. For example, consider the following data to develop corresponding segments:

◢ **Average order value**
Spend about a certain amount

◢ **Purchase frequency**
Buy multiple times in one month

◢ **Purchase motivation**
Only buy with coupons

◢ **Acquisition source**
Come from specific marketing channels

◢ **Purchase recovery**
Purchased within the last month

◢ **Shopping cart profile**
Order multiple items in one cart

◢ **Shopping preference**
Buy certain types of products

◢ **Shopping behavior**
Always buy full price

◢ **Browsing behaviors**
Visit frequently but don't buy

2. Segmenting by Events

Create segments based on activities, such as making a purchase or subscribing to a newsletter. Use these dynamic lists to trigger email flows based on their behaviors:
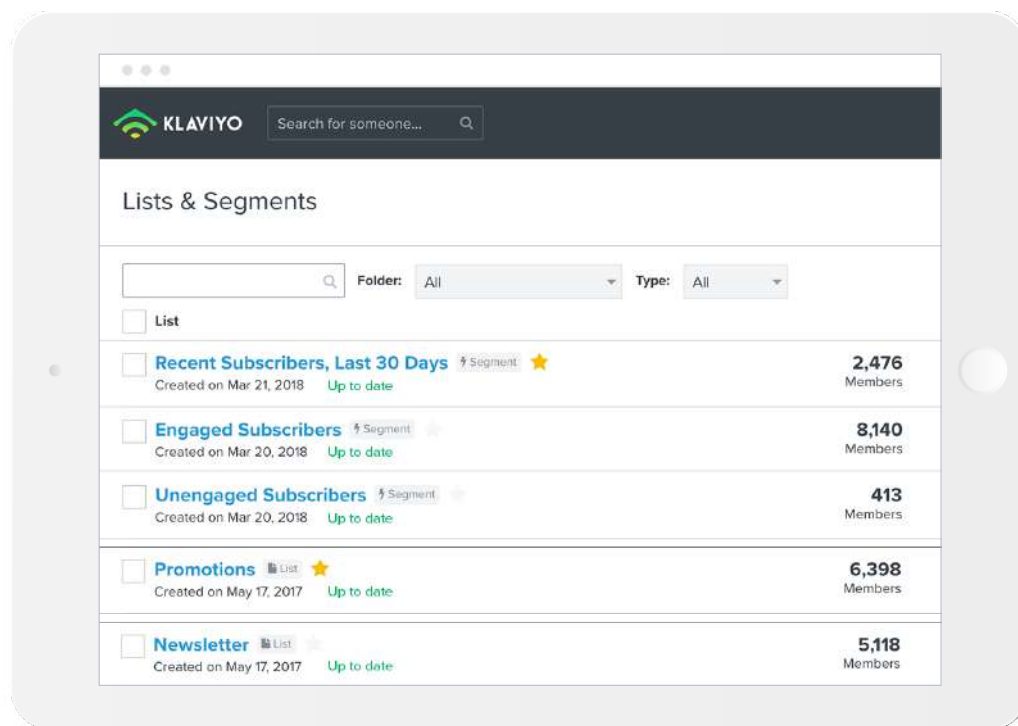
3. Predicting Future Segments

It's easy to segment an audience based on the amount they've spent with you in the past. But how do you predict who will spend the most money in the future? Klaviyo has developed an algorithm for doing this by observing past purchase history, number of purchases, and purchase spend on an individual and holistic basis.

Klaviyo's Predictive Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) takes all of the historic information from your company and comes up with three predicted values:

1. Predicted future CLV: "How much do we expect this customer to spend in the next year?"

2. Predicted number of orders: "How many orders do we expect this customer to make in the next year?"

3. Probability of churn: "How likely is this customer to never purchase again?"
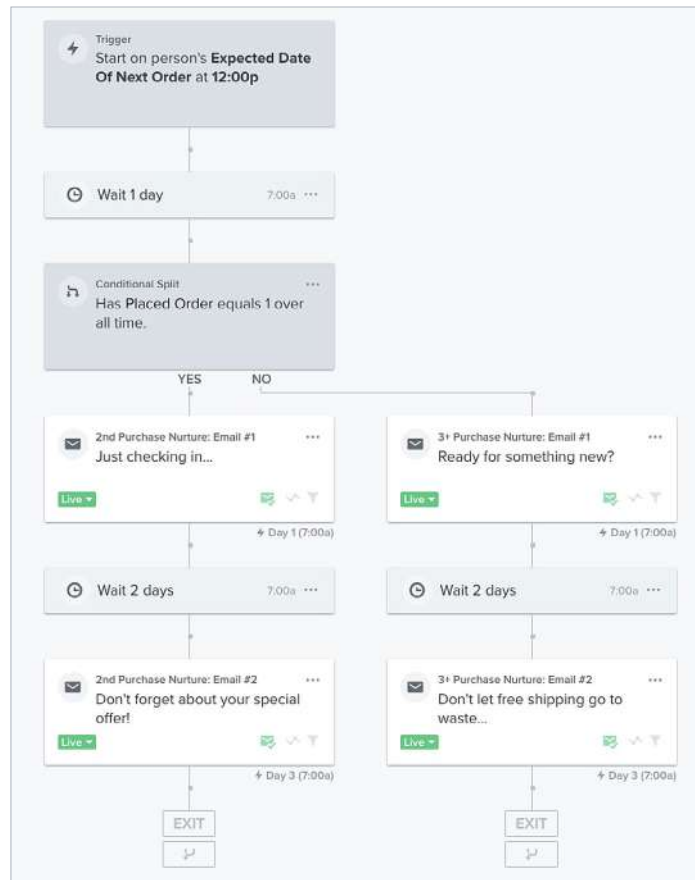
Customer 1

Customer 2
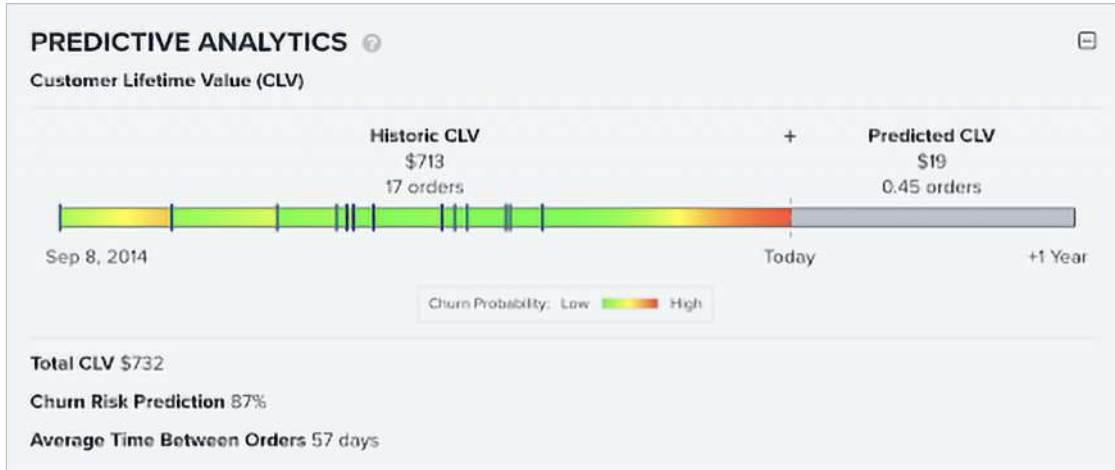
How can you utilize this information?

1. Spot your future VIPs

2. Identify customers you might be at risk of losing

3. Learn which acquisition channels are most lucrative

When will my customers purchase again?

People are creatures of habit. To take advantage of habitual purchasers, Klaviyo built a model that takes into account both the behavior of the population (your entire customer base) and the behavior of each specific customer to predict a date of next order for each customer.

By leveraging the expected date of next order, it's easy to create triggered flows.

How can you utilize this information?

1. Prompt a customer to purchase a bit earlier than they may typically.

2. Send fewer unnecessary discounts.

3. Show your customers that you understand and respect their buying behavior.

Communicate with Purpose

When you think about your marketing, you should always think about data — how to collect more data, and how to analyze that data to drive your strategy. But, to turn all these useful numbers and insights into dollar signs, you need to communicate with purpose.

With automatically triggered flows, based on your segments, you'll be able to send timely and relevant communications to help increase sales, drive repeat purchasers, and improve brand loyalty. Consider implementing the following flows to act with purpose (and ease):

1. Increase Sales by Converting Cart Abandoners

We've all been there — you're browsing for items, add a few into your cart, enter your information, and realize you don't have your card on you. Or you simply get distracted and walk away.

In 2017, Klaviyo analyzed millions of abandoned cart emails and calculated averages for open rates, click-through rates, and revenue per recipient. Customers in the data set generated more than $60 million in sales directly from their abandoned cart emails in our three-month analysis window.

Remind shoppers what they're missing out on and give them another opportunity to reunite with their shopping carts.
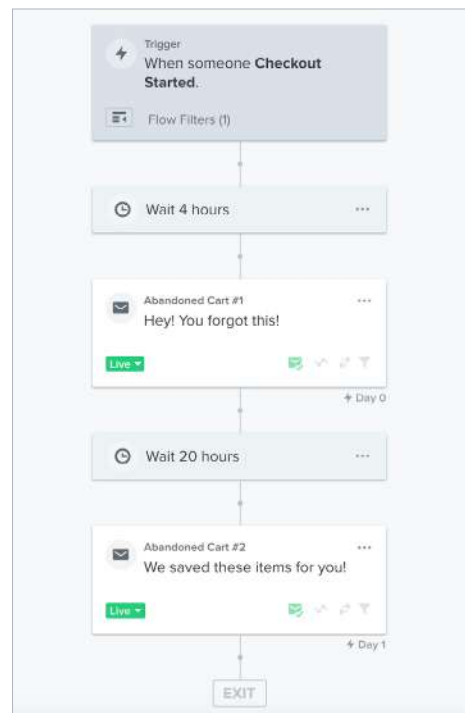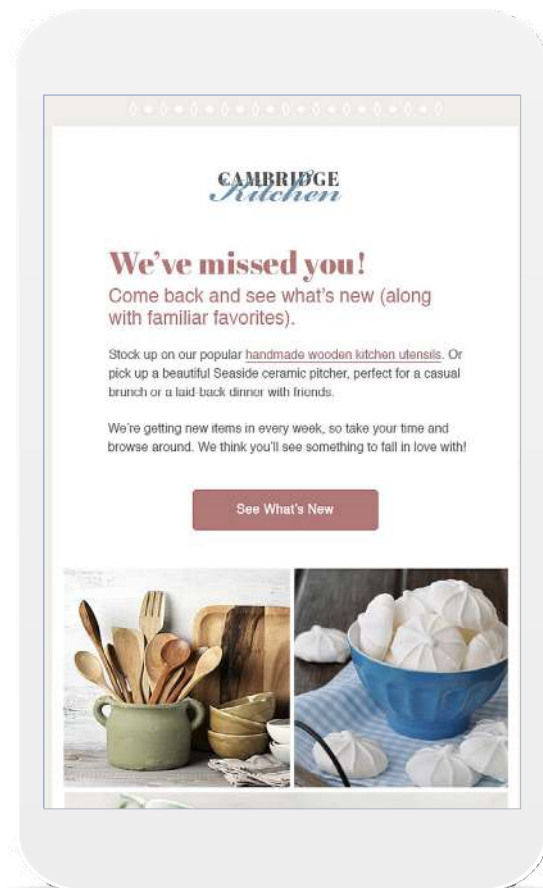
2. Drive Repeat Purchases

Set up triggered flows to thank customers for their purchase, and time emails to remind them why they bought from you in the first place.
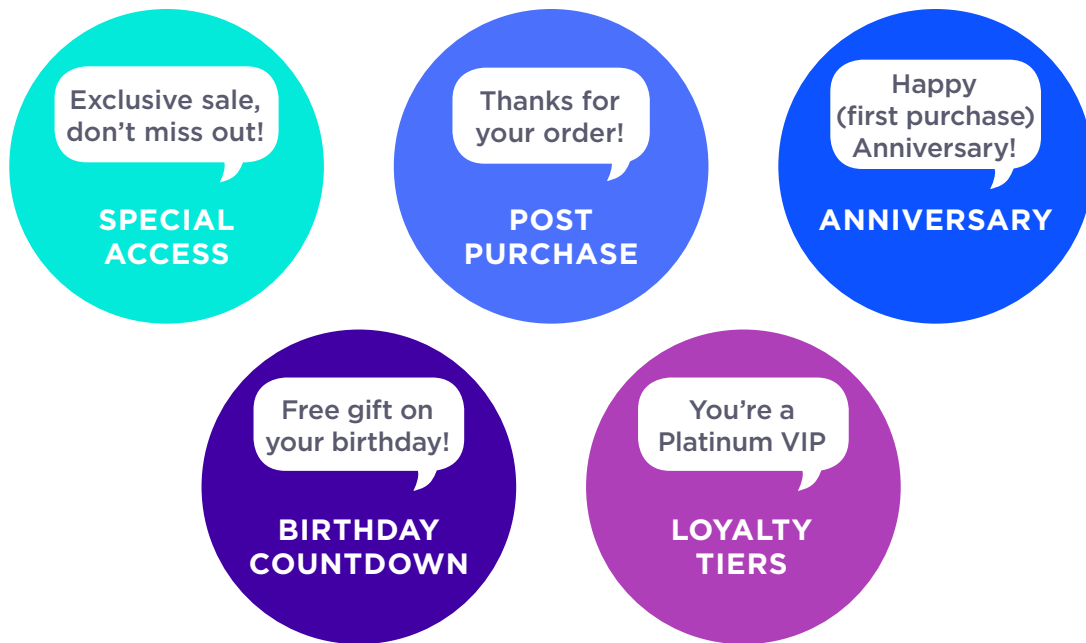
Tailor your winback strategy to customer value. Pair your winback offers with past purchasing behavior to optimize your ability to bring back VIPs.
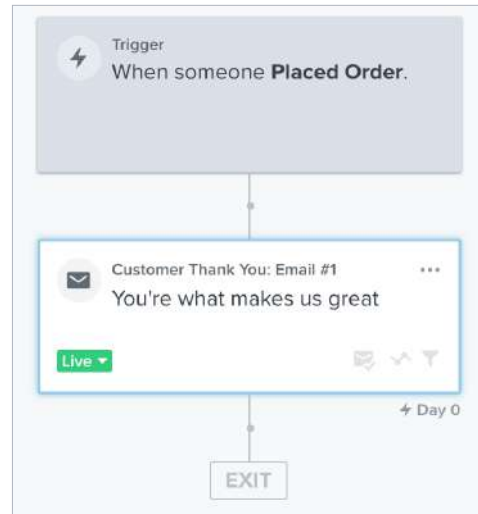
Here's an example of Klaviyo's triggered flows in action.

This email from Cambridge Kitchen reminds the user to visit the site after they've been inactive for awhile.

Exclusive sale, don't miss out!

SPECIAL ACCESS

Thanks for your order!

POST PURCHASE

Happy (first purchase) Anniversary!

ANNIVERSARY

Free gift on your birthday!

BIRTHDAY COUNTDOWN

**You're a Platinum VIP**

LOYALTY TIERS

3. Build Customer Loyalty

Use automation to drive timely touch points with your customers & leverage all data available to give customers a tailored journey as they continue purchasing from you to extend lifetime value.

Match post-purchase notices to customer lifecycle. Give first-time customers an initial thank you or congratulate them on their first purchase — and acknowledge the loyalty of repeat shoppers with special offers.

How can you do this? Some examples:

- Celebrate the date of their first purchase.

- Target existing customers with a popup to collect their birthday to get automatically enrolled in your loyalty program, or set up a countdown to their birthday.

- Create Silver, Gold, and Platinum loyalty tiers based on number of purchases and offer discounts or free gifts with a next purchase when a customer reaches a specific tier.
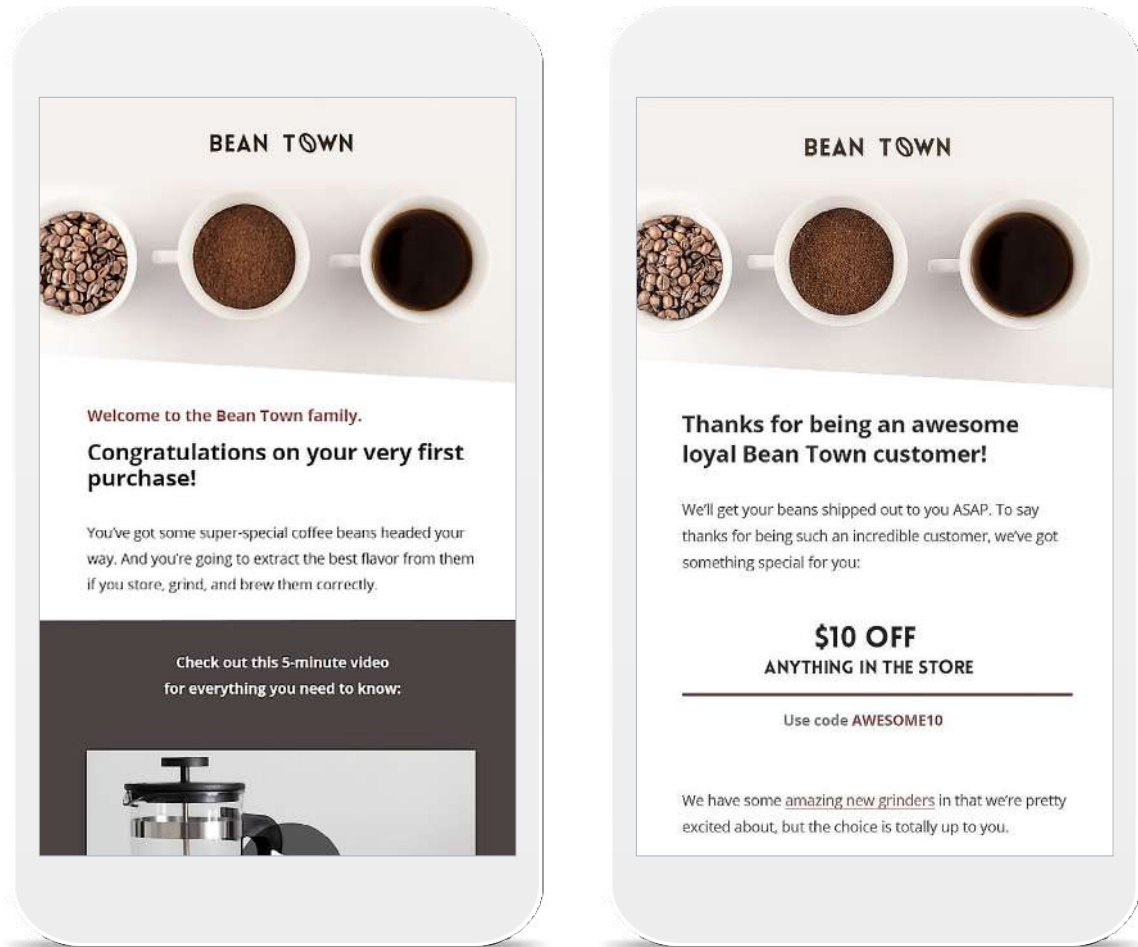
Bean Town honors new customers and returning customers with separate emails.

Personalizing your Marketing Strategy and Building Stronger Relationships with your Customers Starts with Data

When you demand more from your data, you can listen more, analyze better, and act smarter. Develop an action plan based on what you're trying to accomplish and what you've learned about your customer.

About Klaviyo

Klaviyo is a marketing platform that enables ecommerce businesses to build quality relationships with their customers. With deep integrations, advanced data science, and an intuitive interface with built-in automations, Klaviyo makes it possible to create incredibly personal email and advertising campaigns — at scale. On average, Klaviyo customers see a 29% lift in revenue within 6 months of joining. That's why more than 10,000 of the most innovative brands power their marketing with Klaviyo. To learn more about Klaviyo and why you should demand more from your marketing software visit **www.klaviyo.com**

02 Building a Community and Creating Authentic Connections

When it comes to building sustainable growth, there's nothing more effective than a strong brand community.

Studies have shown that 53% of Americans who are part of social brand communities **are more loyal to the brand**, and there's good reason for that! These communities are made up of customers who desire to connect with a brand beyond simply making a purchase, and these relationships are dependent on authentic emotional connections.

You can build these relationships by intentionally investing in every customer. With tactics like personalization, **value-add marketing**, and consistent messaging, you are able to successfully move customers through the three stages of community building by getting them to:

1. Join your community.

2. Engage with it.

3. Share it with others.

These relationships result in customers that have a **306% higher lifetime value** and are much more likely to refer others to your brand.

The easiest way to sustain this cycle is with rewards. With a rewards program, you can encourage real emotional connections with each of your community members by delivering an experience that exceeds what your customers have come to expect from other brands. It's these experiences that make 77% of all customers **more likely to stay with brands that offer rewards!**

In order to get a better idea of what that looks like, let's take a look at how JustNutritive has built their own incredible brand community with rewards.

Encourage Customers to Join by Creating a Sense of Excitement
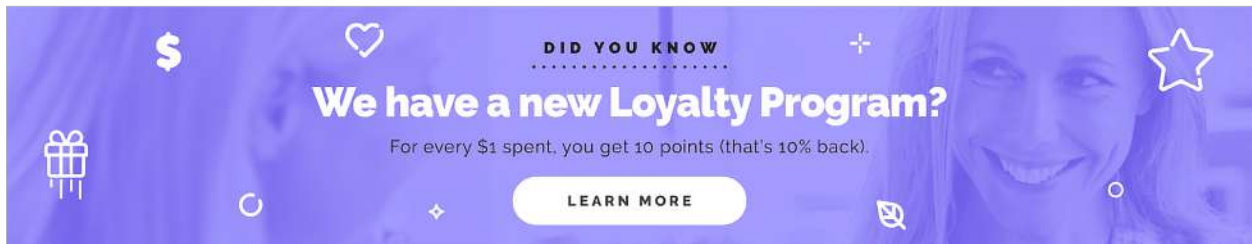
Joy is one of the most addictive emotions your customers can feel. When your members are excited, they are more likely to come back in order to experience that feeling again.

The key is actually getting your customers excited! JustNutritive knew that they needed to offer their community something incredible to not only pique their interest but to also establish valuable patterns of customer behavior. This is what prompted them to start the **JustNutritive Rewards program.** Using points and referrals, they designed a program that would get more customers excited to join their community.

A huge part of their success relied on effective program promotion. After all, how can customers join if they don't know the program exists?

JustNutritive overcame this obstacle by designing a homepage banner that clearly communicates the value of joining their program. Not only that, but they've put this information alongside a smiling face. This creates a desire in their customers to not only take advantage of the promise but to also feel that same sense of joy. Through these elements, JustNutritive's members can see themselves reflected in the program's message and visuals, making it easy to imagine being part of their community.

This joy is evident in all other aspects of their program experience, too. From their program explainer page to each customer's personal rewards panel, it's easy to see yourself as part of their growing community. Combine that with 2,000 bonus points just for creating an account and it's an easy decision to join, making value both tangible and emotional.
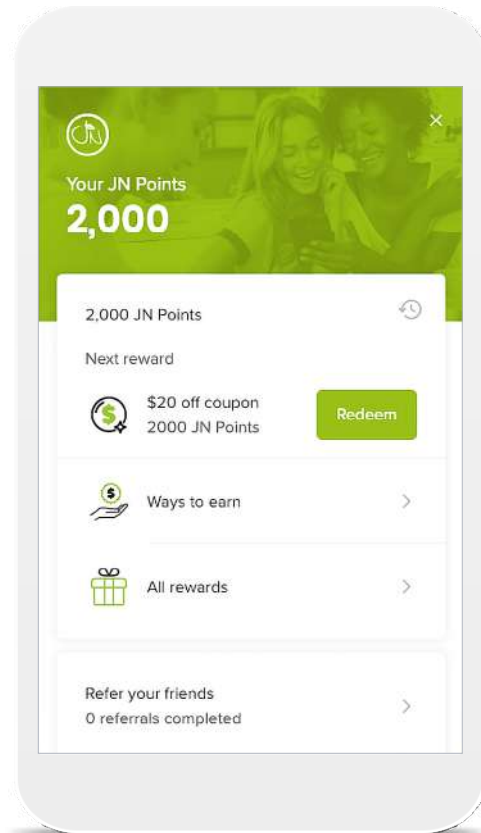
Make Ongoing Engagement Valuable with Different Ways to Earn

You wouldn't propose on the first date, so why do you expect your customers to fall in love with you right off the bat?

If you want them to build authentic connections with your customers, you need them to spend time with your brand. The best way to do that is by giving them valuable reasons to engage with you and explore everything your community has to offer.
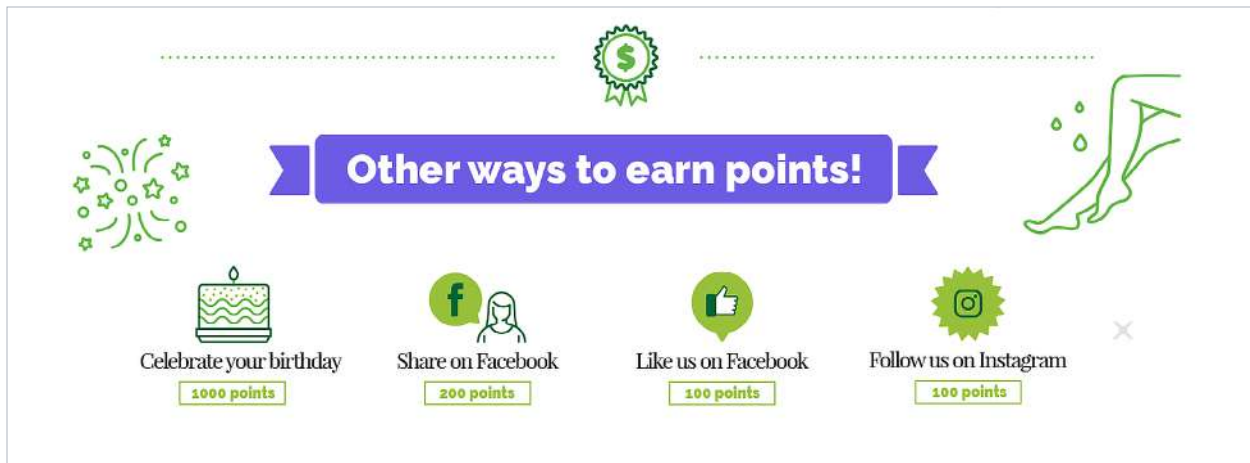
JustNutritive makes engaging easy by rewarding their customers with points for a number of low effort actions like following them on social media or celebrating a birthday. Not only are each of these actions easy for customers to commit to, but JustNutritive has also made it even easier to follow through. By accessing their personal rewards panel, customers can complete a number of low effort, high value actions directly on their site, preserving their shopping experience while still delivering additional value.

These types of engagement establish reciprocal value early on in each customer's relationship with the brand. As a result, this two-way exchange separates JustNutritive from other brands who demand customers make purchases in order to stay connected.

With JustNutritive Rewards, the hair and skin care brand is able to delight customers with earning actions and condition them to re-engage in order to experience that thrill time after time.

Motivate Engaged Members to Spread the Love with Great Reasons to Refer Friends

Referrals are the most effective form of marketing. As peer-to-peer recommendations, they are the **primary factory behind 20-50% of all purchase decisions**, and have a 70% higher conversion rate than any other form of marketing. Customers trust referrals because they trust their friends and the emotional connections they already have with them, creating a valuable opportunity to expand your community reach without investing more in rising acquisition ads.

This makes rewarding for referrals a no-brainer. JustNutritive understood that they needed to find a more sustainable method for inviting new customers to join their brand community and recognized their existing members as their best advocates.

The trick was getting their customers to share their positive experiences with friends and family. A real incentive would turn engaged members into advocating machines, but only if the incentive they offered prospective customers was valuable enough to convince them to actually join their community after hearing about it.
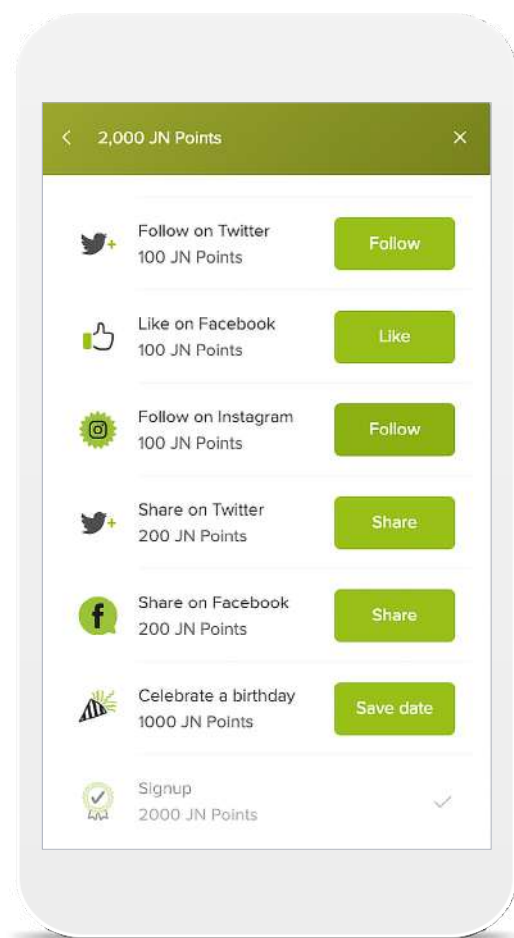
That's why they offer a $20 discount to both their brand advocates and the friends they refer. This generous reward presents their community as valuable, customer-focused, and friendly — in other words, someone new customers would want to get to know. As a result, customers who hear about JustNutritive for the first time are already excited to discover everything they can about the brand and get engaged to start earning more incredible rewards.

With their new and returning customers' priorities at the forefront, JustNutritive turns their referral rewards into the perfect complement to the other elements of their personal rewards experience.

Building Personal Communities with Rewards

When you understand how powerful rewards can be for creating more personal brand experiences, it's easy to see how they fit into your larger community building strategy. By increasing the joy customers feel and clearly establishing reciprocal value, you too can transform every customer relationship from one based on how much they've spent to how they feel about your brand. Now that's what we call authentic connections!

About Smile

At Smile, we believe the future of commerce is rooted in emotional relationships and want to help every business build a strong brand community that promotes sustainable growth. Using a world-class rewards platform, we work with merchants to build effective points, VIP, and referral programs that invite customers to join, engage with, and share these communities with others worldwide.

We're committed to making every merchant and their customers smile :)

03 The Importance of Personalizing your On-site Experience

Most ecommerce retailers understand the importance of personalization in emails, products, and advertisements. It's what helps make that content more relevant and interesting to the target audience.

But what about when it comes to on-site experience?

Sometimes, this is where the ball gets dropped.

However, those who put on-site personalization to work know that it drives impressive results.

In fact, a joint report from **Evergage and Researchscape** shows that as much as 96% of marketers say personalization improves customer relationships — and of those implementing personalization tactics, 66% see an improvement up to 20% reflected in their KPIs.

The trouble is: Many merchants don't know where to begin when it comes to on-site personalization.

A study from **Pure360** reported that many brands are still using basic forms of personalization as a crutch, which results in them missing the mark on effectively engaging with customers. These missed opportunities and half-hearted efforts create opportunities for competitors to take the lead.

As technology continues to evolve and advancements like AI and geolocation are integrated into everyday ecommerce practices, customer experience is becoming the new competitive battleground amongst brands. If merchants aren't creating unique experiences that resonate with customers, they're not only missing out on significant opportunities to build their relationships with customers, but on revenue, too.

Translation: Understanding a customer's journey from start to finish isn't a nice-to-have — it's a must-have. Customer data is the cornerstone of creating personalized on-site experiences that convert.

How Personalization Enriches Cross-channel Customer Experiences

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Before we zoom in to look specifically at on-site personalization tactics, let's first examine personalization as an element of customer experience as a whole — especially from a general marketing and sales angle.

Let's start with some numbers.

According to **eMarketer**, by 2020 global digital ad spending will make up 45% of all ad spending. That's quite a bit of noise and competition within the digital landscape.

So what's a brand to do?

Enter personalization.

A study from **Signal** reports that 60% of advertisers found improved click-through and conversion rates when they integrated personalization into their campaigns, which illustrates that detailed customer data can help refine ad campaign strategies and generate a stronger return on ad spend. What's more: this study also found that personalization helped increase overall customer loyalty and retention as well.

And it doesn't stop there. **Segment** found that 49% of customers not only bought items they didn't intend to buy because of personalized recommendations from a brand, but 44% of customers reported they would likely purchase from that brand again after a personalized experience.

What does this tell us? Personalized experiences bridge the gap between a brand and the customer, resulting in stronger brand loyalty, higher sales, and long-lasting relationships.

Ways to Improve On-site Experience

You likely know personalization is important, but maybe you're unsure about how to approach implementation around on-site experiences.

1. Website Personalization Tactics

Product recommendation tactics are some of the most powerful ways to create a customized experience. According to a study of 100 eCommerce stores from Internet Retailer, including product recommendations on the checkout page yielded a 915% increase in conversion rate.

You want to give customers what they want, so why not create a tailor-made shopping experience?

Building a personalized shopping experience for your customers may sound complicated, but what you're really just suggesting products based on their past behaviors. To make this happen, you can use the data you've collected from a visitor's previous site interactions, such as:

- ◢ Browsing history
- ◢ Keyword searches
- ◢ Purchase history
- ◢ Time on site
- ◢ Seasonal product interest

Keep in mind that how you package these product recommendations has a significant impact on how successful your results will be. There are several ways you can format product recommendations, but one highly effective tactic is leveraging the homepage.

For example, Amazon's homepage is full of personalized product recommendations. From daily deals and popular items to recommendations based on browsing history, purchase history, and engagement with products, Amazon does a good job of spotlighting relevant products front and center every time a shopper visits their site.

In doing this, Amazon uses the data it collects to build unique shopping experiences that show customers relevant products they've been eyeing as well as other products they may be interested in.

2. A/B Testing

A/B testing, otherwise known as split testing, is a powerful way to gauge the impact a specific variable has on your marketing efforts (from copy, to images, to content, and beyond.)

When it comes to personalized on-site customer experiences, what better way to assess its impact than with an A/B test?

Before you jump into split testing every aspect of your on-site experience, take some time to think about the following:

✓ What are you testing and why?   ✓ What will the test prove?

✓ What do you hope to learn
   from the test?

Make sure your customers are segmented (e.g., by browser type, new visitors, returning visitors, etc.) to ensure accuracy during your tests. It's also a good idea to form a hypothesis for your A/B tests.

Here's an example: Because of [insert data/feedback], I think that [add variable you're testing] will result in [insert result you anticipate]. I'll measure the outcome using [insert metric].

Next, think about which specific elements you'll want to examine through tests.

For on-site experiences, there are various elements you can test:

✓ CTA placement or copy   ✓ Images

✓ Page layout (like where best to put   ✓ Landing page copy
   your product recommendations)
                                          ✓ Navigation bars

For example, beauty brand Kopari has tested various versions of their product pages (such as different layouts, images, and copy) to land on their current version, which was proven the most effective for driving conversions.
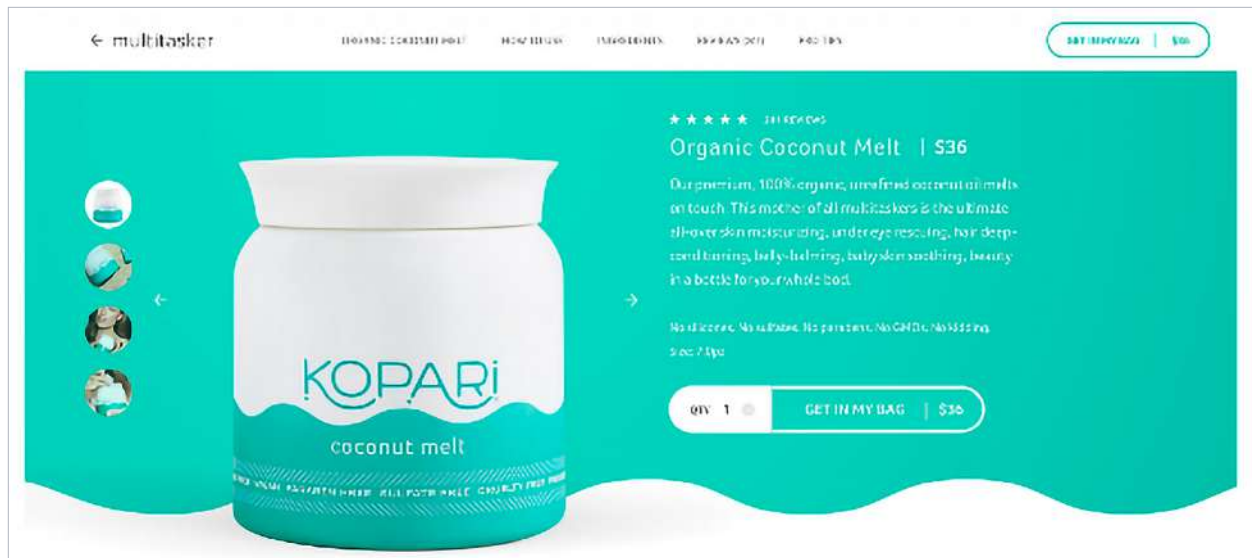
A/B testing is an excellent way to see how your marketing efforts are trending and provide insight into what could be improved.

Segmenting Landing Pages

Most marketers know that it's usually not enough just to get a customer to a landing page for them to make a purchase decision. It's not likely that they are going to visit your site and make a purchase immediately (unless they've had a prior interaction.)

However, optimizing your landing pages based on each customer's journey can help inch them closer to converting. Before you start segmenting your landing pages, it's important to make sure they're optimized to yield the best results possible.

Keep these best practices in mind as you build your landing pages:

- ✓ Eye-catching imagery
- ✓ Attention-grabbing (and holding) copy
- ✓ Impactful calls-to-action
- ✓ Easy-to-follow page layout
- ✓ Sleek, simple design
- ✓ Mobile optimization

As mentioned above, you can A/B test these elements to ensure every component of your website is working to fulfill your marketing goals. As you continue to optimize your landing pages, think about how you could segment them even further for your different types of customers.

For example: If one of your customer groups includes people who enjoy the outdoors and athletics, images on your homepage that reflect this demographic add relevance, like we see in this use case from Camelbak.
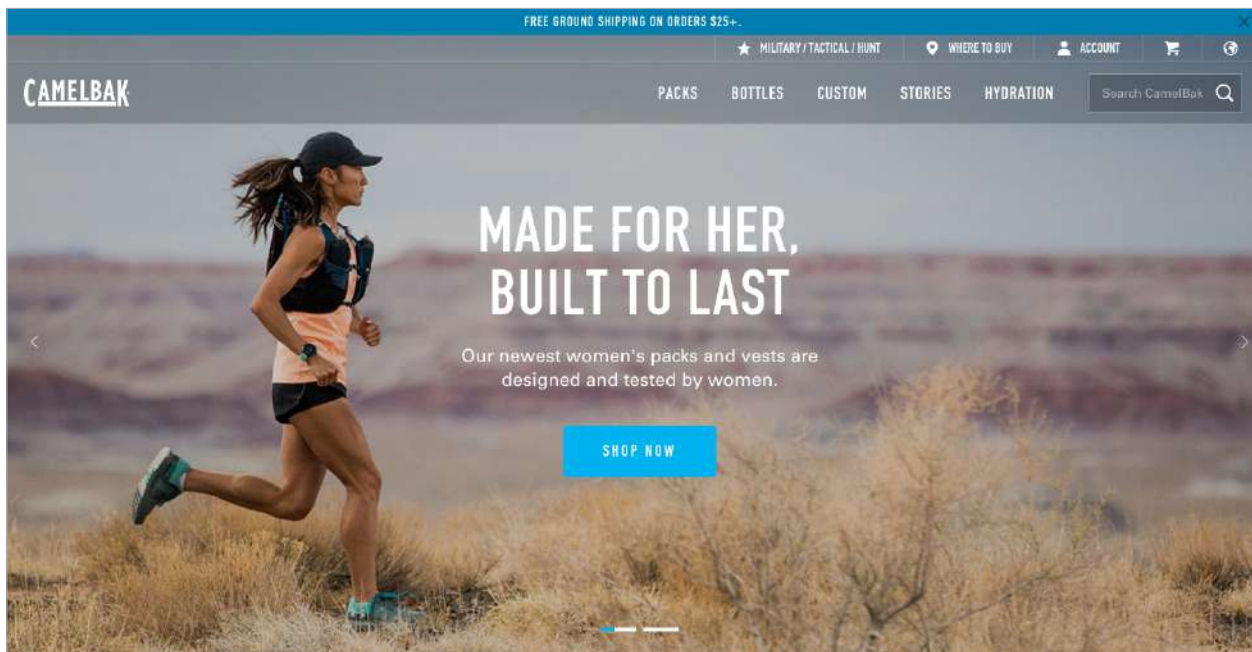
Targeting different audiences with your landing pages through ads, email campaigns, retargeting, and other marketing efforts can ensure the right customers see the right pages. By taking customers to specific landing pages, you're hitting that mark of personalization.

3. Focus on Mobile Experiences

It goes without saying that mobile optimization should be top-of-mind when constructing your on-site experience.

Since Google's **mobile-friendly update** in 2015, there has been an emphasis on websites being designed for mobile devices. But today, the **increase in mobile use** over the last few years calls for sites to be more than just optimized for mobile. They need to go above and beyond.

When it comes to designing a mobile-friendly, personalized ecommerce experience, there are a few things to keep in mind:

1. **Keep things simple:** From checkout to searching for specific products, make essential functions effortless for users. The quickest way for a user to leave your site is a terrible mobile experience, so make navigating, searching, and viewing products as easy as possible.

2. **Don't skimp on the design:** Less is more, but design still matters. After all, design plays a huge role in the accessibility of a website and can make or break the user experience.

3. **Continue to make improvements:** Just as customer behaviors change and evolve, so should your on-site experience. Continue to test elements of your site and make changes with the customer in mind.

The bottom line: Calling your site mobile-friendly isn't enough. You must create an experience that accommodates your customers' preferences, too.

Wrap Up

In this time of subscription-based services and made-for-you products, catering to your customers using data-backed tactics will help you outshine your competitors.

Personalized on-site customer experiences are critical to enhancing the ROI of your store and growing your customer base, so it's time to think strategically about how you'll do that for your brand.

About Shogun

Shogun, backed by Initialized Capital and Y Combinator, is a drag-and-drop landing page builder for e-commerce sites and is the only enterprise-grade page builder for Shopify and BigCommerce with technology that integrates directly into both platforms. Because Shogun empowers marketing and merchandising teams at e-commerce companies to rapidly build and iterate on their webpages, they can create custom shopping experiences.

04 Search & Merchandising for Online Stores

As of June 2018, more than **3,788,140 Google searches** are conducted per minute. That's more than Snaps sent by Snapchat users, songs streamed on Spotify, and Tweets sent by Twitter users.

Customers (and web browsers as a whole) are now accustomed to getting answers quickly. So how can your ecommerce strategy align with this need for information?

Your answer is site search. It's now commonplace to have a search bar in any online store. If a customer knows exactly what they want, they can type it in and quickly get sent to applicable results — right?

It depends on the type of your business, as well as the technology behind your search functionality. B2B (business-to-business) searches operate a bit differently than the B2C (business-to-consumer) search experience.

Using search for B2C products

Most consumers who are looking for products on a website will use a search bar to discover whether or not the products they need are available. B2C searches are typically done with keywords, such as:

◢ Red shirt

◢ Red polo shirt

◢ Red cotton polo shirt

If the site contains a variety of products from different brands, the brand name is often used in the search as well.

If you own a B2C ecommerce store, it's important to use the right titles, keywords, and descriptions for each and every one of your products. If a customer can't find the right product on your site, they will have a bad site experience which will result in a higher amount of shoppers failing to purchase.

The B2B product searching process is much more complex, and it involves a number of different methodologies and strategies that are important to follow.

Using SKUs in a search for B2B products

Unlike B2C retail shoppers, many B2B customers rely on SKU codes (stockkeeping units) to find the products they are looking for and place an order. This is different than the option more commonly known to consumers, the Bar Code (or UPC).
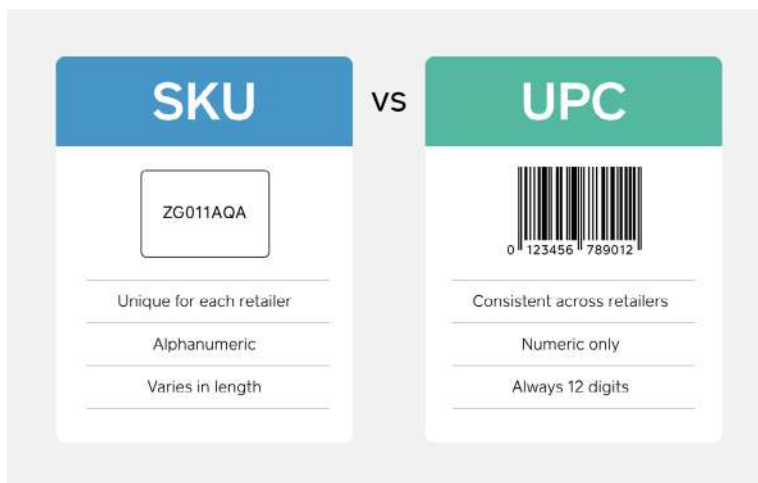

Image via **Square**

This is often because of the complexity of parts, software, and requirements of items built for business use. Examples of B2B products may include:

- Auto parts
- Office accessories
- Software programs

For many B2B businesses, sophisticated search by SKU is a must have as they need to manage and deliver a great customer experience. The challenge is that SKUs have many forms, with special characters, hyphens, dashes, letters, and numbers where customers are prone to make typos.

Your B2B search checklist:

1. SKU Indexing - In order to have your SKUs found in a search, they need to be indexed.

2. Part Numbers - In addition to SKUs, many B2B customers are looking for a product using another SKU-like number. It can be a Manufacturer Part Number, which is different than the SKU, and sometimes, even a competitor SKU number. Make sure all of those are searchable.

3. SKU Auto Typo Correction - It is so easy to make a mistake with a SKU. So when you have SKUs like BMW23JQ-123, make sure that your search app can get the correct result even if the customer typed only the prefix, BMW23JQ, or forgot to type the "-" and typed BMW23JQ123. Given the vast amount of potential mistakes, auto typo correction for SKUs is a must.

For Some Industries, Consider Adding a Product Finder

If your body shop is looking for a new part, such as a brake pad for your 2014 BMW 3 Series, they will first pre-filter by Make-Model-Year, and only then search for a brake pad, as different MMYs of the same car would have different brake pads that may fit. In the automotive and parts industry, it is paramount to prefilter the set of product per the Make-Model-Year before you search. A good search should provide the option for a product finder to focus the search only on the relevant product that fits a particular model. While MMY in automotive is the most common example, a product finder could be used in many other use cases such as machine parts, toner / printer, etc.

Product Finder example:
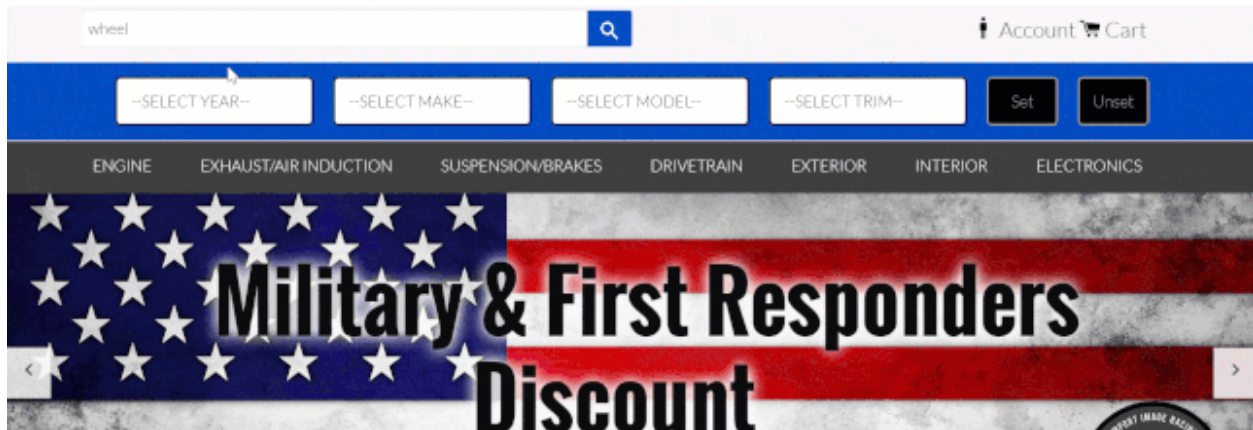
Show Customers Exactly What They Need with Customer Groups and Merchandising

Unlike B2C, B2B commerce segments its customer groups by prices and even by products. Customer groups can include high volume wholesalers, logged-in users, geo-based groups, etc. Each of these groups have a unique customer experience. The wholesalers would have special volume discounts prices, the logged in customers will have coupon codes, and you will probably display different offerings per different geo locations customers.

When it comes to **search,** you must present the correct prices and products to the relevant customer group. That means that different customers groups on your site will see different results not only within the product view but also in the drop-down and search results page, in order to deliver consistent user experience.
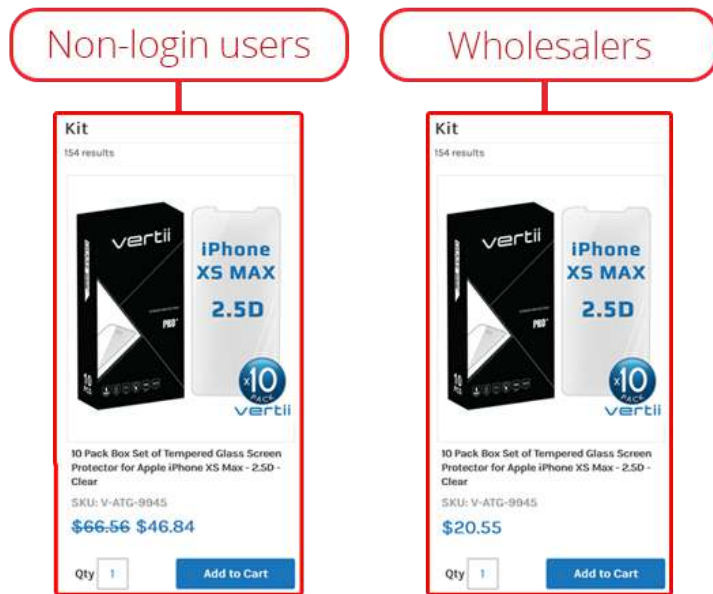
Example: Group Vertical, a wholesale replacement parts for cell phones, tablets, laptops and related accessories is using customer group pricing on their site.

Another way to give a unique customer experience to each customer group, is to **merchandise** your categories per customer group. Merchandising is the art and science of display and arrangement of products for best shopper experience. It is a statement of what you would like to sell, be it through manual arrangement, rules, or AI optimization. Whether you are in the apparel business, electronics, food, or crafts – merchandising gives you control of what you would like to sell and promote.

For example, when a retailer from New York and a retailer from Florida visit your site, and you are wholesaling jackets, you may want to display different jackets categories for each, depending on their location. Not only do you deliver a tailor made customer experience, you will also increase conversion rate with customers getting the most relevant results.

In B2B online stores, customers express what they want to buy through SKUs and Product Finders; While merchants define what they want to sell to each customer group.

Search & Merchandising can improve your conversion significantly as they match what merchants want to sell with what customers want to buy.

About InstantSearch+

InstantSearch+ is bringing an Amazon-like site search to millions of merchants and publishers. Our powerful technology makes it simple for everyone to add a great search app to their site: No coding. No integration. No maintenance. Our highly scalable platform and self-service simplicity allow us to offer all this at an affordable cost. InstantSearch+ has everything you need to engage users across phones, tablets and desktops.

BIGCOMMERCE

BigCommerce is the world's leading cloud ecommerce platform for established and rapidly-growing businesses. Combining enterprise functionality, an open architecture and app ecosystem, and market-leading performance, BigCommerce enables businesses to grow online sales with 80% less cost, time and complexity than on-premise software. BigCommerce powers B2B and B2C ecommerce for industry-leading brands, including:

Hisense   Skullcandy   yellow   bliss   WOOLRICH

CAMELBAK   Clarks   NATORI   Kodak   SHARP

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