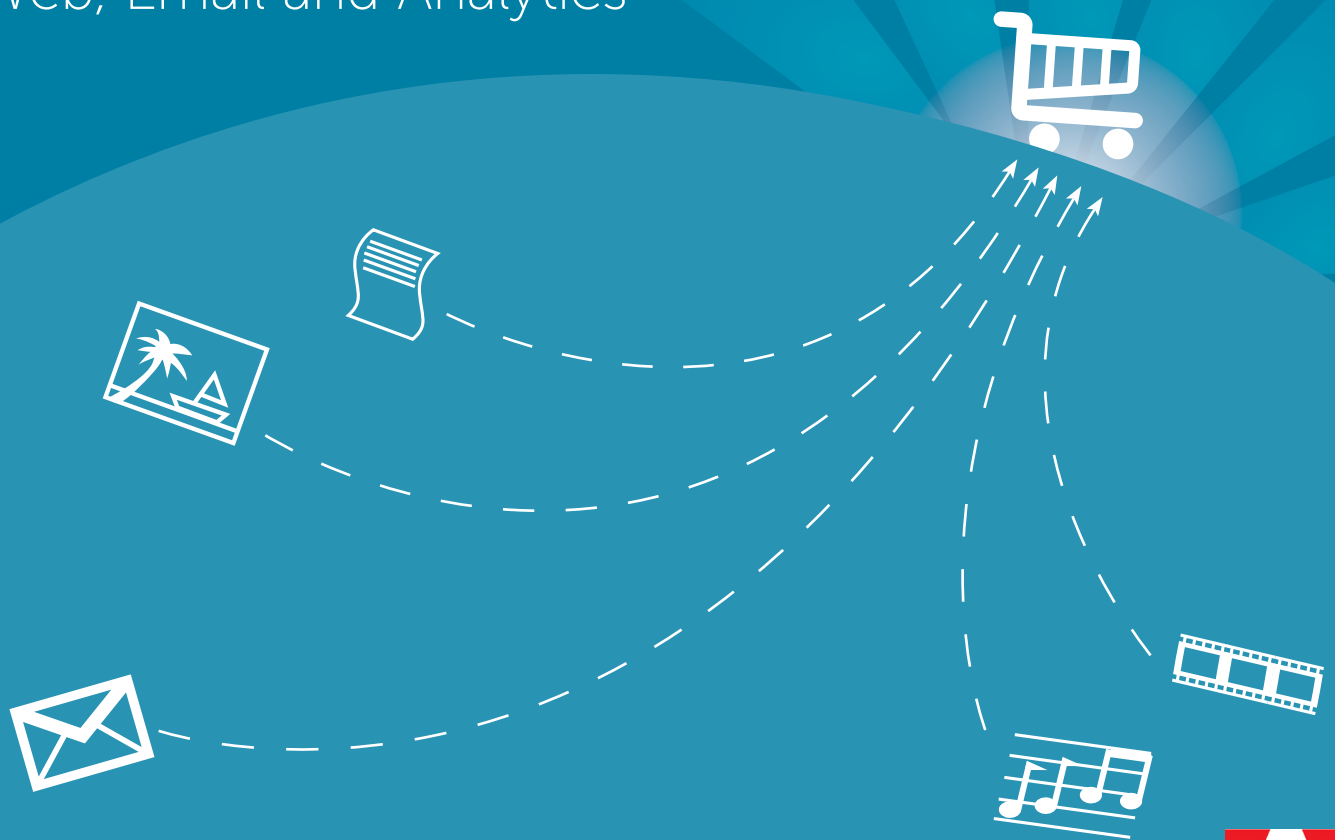# How to Choose the Right Tools for Content-Driven Experiences That Convert

The Winning Trifecta of Web, Email and Analytics

SECTION I

Executive Summary

Did you know that positive customer experiences are emerging as one of the key competitive differentiators for organizations[1], particularly as measured by customer journeys – the paths by which customers arrive at their final purchase destinations?

Brands no longer control those journeys. Customers do, thanks to the sheer number of options and volume of information at their fingertips. The relationship between brands

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How can brands turn information into content-driven experiences that will resonate with their customers' mindsets at just the right touchpoint and moment of engagement?

How can companies harness the two of the most important channels — email and web — to target and deliver the kinds of personalized content and product recommendations that will convert to sales?

And how can organizations harness the power of data and analytics to drive and measure their customers' paths to purchase through actions such as opening an email, clicking a link, filling out an online form or — most rewarding of all — hitting the buy button?

If your company lives by web and email as main channels — along with the conversions that go with them — this white paper will teach you how to deliver the right content through the right combination of technology platforms to help you increase sales and enhance the customer experience. Read on to explore:

❯ How content-driven experiences strengthen the customer journey

❯ How web and email work together to drive conversions

❯ Why personalization is today's digital-marketing gold standard and how to achieve it

❯ Why web content management (WCM), cross-channel campaign management and analytics are the core components for delivering targeted, content-driven experiences

❯ What to look for in selecting the right digital tools

SECTION II

Content: Your Key to a Successful Customer Journey

The Cross-Channel Journey

These days, customers move freely from smartphones, to tablets and PCs, so marketers must be prepared to nurture engagement across multiple devices and screens.

In fact, a recent study by Google found that 90 percent of people who own more than one device routinely switch between screens to work on tasks, and use an average of three different device combinations daily.[2]

In this section, we'll take a look at a sample retail customer journey that illustrates the multi-device challenge, and how a positive, personalized content-driven experience can carry a customer from product awareness to purchase.

Let's say you're shopping for a pair of shoes. You start engaging with your favorite shoe brand on their website. While you browse, the retailer has the opportunity to personalize and optimize your experience by providing product recommendations based on your profile and preferences.

After you leave the website, the retailer can continue engaging with you by sending follow-up emails with relevant, 1-to-1 personalized content based on your behavior while visiting the site. For example, if you spent some time looking at red shoes, the email could be personalized to show only shoes in that color.

This example shows how brands can combine content to create experiences that are consistent, yet personalized across channels. Plus, email can remarket with an enticing offer in a timely manner. As a customer, you feel that the retailer "gets" you and isn't wasting your time. This positive experience carries the customer from initial engagement through to purchase.

While connecting this customer journey with the right content might seem straightforward, it is deceptively challenging to set up. It requires focus on identifying the right delivery channels, using those channels to create personalized communications, and reinforcing those content messages with campaign-driven digital assets such as images and videos.

Although the example above focuses on retail, it could apply to any segment, including travel, media or business-to-business (B2B) sectors.

Web and Email: The Winning Combination

Despite the explosion of app, social and messaging platforms, the Web remains the essential channel for modern organizations in all industries.

In retail, for example, Forrester predicts that by the year 2020, the Web will influence as much as 42 percent of purchases made in store.[3]

But to create those conversions, companies and brands must first drive traffic to their websites, and to make that happen, email is still the most effective tool there is.

In fact, email is such a tried-and-true outbound channel that it remains the workhorse of the digital marketing arsenal, tied with SEO for delivering the highest ROI. According to Econsultancy, on average, email is reported to account for 20 percent of an organization's total sales.[4]

Email is one of the most important channels in delivering content that converts. According to an Accenture study[5], email is the most effective means of communicating personalized offers, recommendations or information.

Web and email marketing create a special synergy when used together. Let's say you go to a website and surf to some products. Next thing you know, you get an email with a special offer for the particular type of product you just browsed. This is a much easier path to conversion, wouldn't you agree?

The Challenge of Silos

So, what's stopping marketers from being successful across email and website channels?

Sometimes the explanation can be as simple as silos that have developed within a marketing organization. For example, there may be a web team dedicated to creating content and tracking user behavior on the site, while another group may be responsible for crafting and delivering emails.

The two departments may have good intentions when it comes to sharing customer data, but they lack the technology to do so within an actionable timeframe. So the campaign team fails to adapt offers and execute triggered messages based on behavioral information.

Instead, they default to sending the same old undifferentiated "batch and blast" communications out to each and every customer.

It's no wonder then, that siloed marketing can cause the digital experience to become disjointed.[6] Customers wonder why the brand is emailing them about blue shoes when they clearly indicated an interest in red shoes when visiting the website. As a result, they become numb to the emails and potentially opt out.

But with the ability to personalize an email with relevant content and images, and later to underscore those messages by repeating them on the customer's email destination landing page, marketers suddenly have the ability to craft unique but consistent experiences for their customers.

The ability to deliver highly personalized content through consistent use of data and assets is the marketing version of the Holy Grail. In fact, nearly two-thirds of marketers state that they would like to do a better job with personalization in their email marketing.[7]

Personalization Drives Conversions

What can email and web personalization do for digital marketers? Let's look at two very different but equally compelling real-life success stories:

C Spire Wireless: Wireless service provider C Spire Wireless reported that by providing "more meaningful, relevant conversations across all touchpoints" they realized an increase of nearly 41 percent in their email open rates, reaching an average of 12.1 percent.[8]

C Spire was able to create comprehensive customer profiles that incorporate demographics, subscription and billing data, campaign interactions and behavioral data such as opens, clicks, app downloads and rewards program

logins. Using this data — together with segmentation and personalization — C Spire went from emailing its entire database to targeting only customers nearing the end of their contracts or those with high-churn devices.

True Value: This retailer-owned hardware store coopera-tive saw an increase in email open rates of 163 percent as a result of better segmentation and targeting. By consol-idating customer data from sources such as e-commerce system feeds and loyalty programs, True Value built email customer profiles which improved open rates through better campaign segmentation and enhanced post-campaign reporting insights.[9]

The potential to convert leads to sales by delivering personalized web and email experiences across a variety of industries is clear. But how can brands and companies identify and implement the components they need to hit the digital marketing deck running?

SECTION III

The Three Pillars of Content-Driven Conversions

In order to deliver content-driven experiences that convert, organizations must include the right mix of platforms and tools in their marketing technology stack.

Three core technologies must integrate seamlessly to provide effective content-driven experiences:

> Web Content Management (WCM)

> Cross-Channel Campaign Management

> Analytics

Web Content Management (WCM)

In its Forrester Wave for WCM report, the research giant names WCM as "the technology and content delivery backbone of digital experiences."[10]

So, even if the Web is not a company's primary delivery channel, content still lies at the heart of all operations, regardless of vertical or industry size.
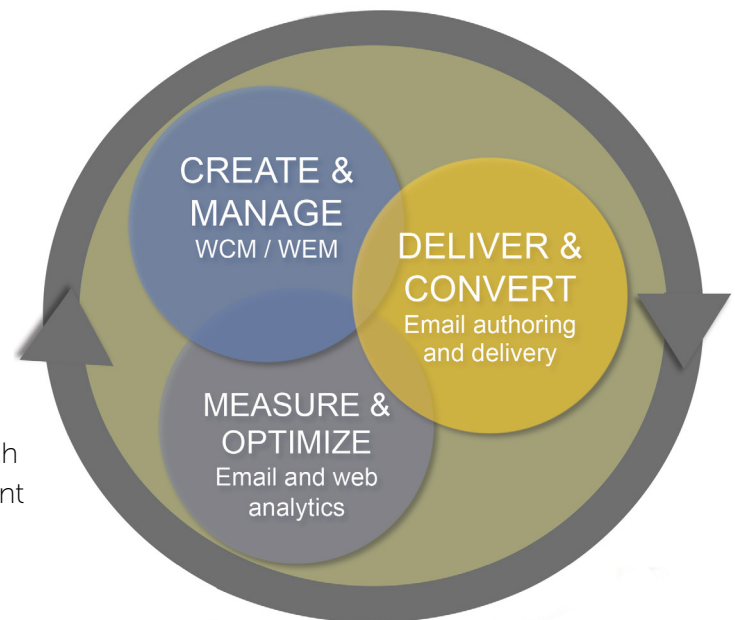
In fact, 60 percent of companies list WCM as a top investment priority.[11]

But content comes in many flavors – from text to rich media. Video is a great example of the valuable role that content plays in driving conversions.

According to a recent study, 73 percent of consumers are more likely to make a purchase after watching a video.[12] Another study reveals that more than 70 percent of respondents claim that video performs better than other content for producing conversions.[13]

> *In fact, 60 percent of companies list WCM as a top investment priority.[11]*

This is where the digital asset management (DAM) component of WCM is invaluable in creating consistent experiences across channels. With strong DAM capabilities, a marketer can easily reuse assets, such as product images, optimized to various channels, in order to deliver consistent and useful experiences to their customers.

Furthermore, with DAM, marketers can get more creative and deliver exciting ways to improve conversions, such as shoppable video. Imagine that when a customer is watching the video, they have the option to buy a product they want right from the video clip, rather than having to search the entire website to find that product.

But even with the best WCM in place, companies will need additional technology to deliver the kinds of personalized, contextual digital experiences that drive customer conversion.

Cross-Channel Campaign Management

With WCM as the foundation, the next layer to consider is cross-channel campaign management.

While 80 percent of marketers state that personalized content in email is highly important to their organizations,[14] two-thirds of marketers report being less than satisfied with their current email marketing efforts.[15]

What is the root of their dissatisfaction? It's the double-whammy perception that email marketing not only lacks integration with their existing marketing and technology, but also is difficult to use.

The solution is to replace "batch and blast" email with the dynamic contextual emails that only a campaign management tool can effectively deliver. These tools also track customer behavior across all channels and focus on specific audiences to receive the most relevant content.

Analytics

Analytics has become an all-purpose term encompassing every data analysis function from predictions based on behavior to website or post-campaign tracking.

Suffice to say, however, that creating contextual email and web functionality is not possible without a commitment to creating a data analytics layer to serve as the central repository for all of a brand's or company's customer interactions.

Bottom line: While marketers may try to get by with one or two of the WCM-email marketing-analytics pillars in place, only by combining all three, can they expect to deliver truly cross-channel, content-driven experiences.

That's because only by having a 360-degree view of customers across all interactions and channels, can marketers expect to provide the necessary degree of personalization across web, email and other channels.

By contrast, when email marketing is isolated and siloed, marketers can only capture email-specific metrics such as open and click-through rates. When that happens, what should be good news — customers clicking through the

email and arriving at the website's landing page — in effect punishes both marketer and customer by shutting down the radar at the precise moment when customers have taken their first big step toward a purchase decision.

However, by bringing together cross-channel campaign management and analytics to continue tracking those customers, marketers can see where customers navigate on the site, which products they click on and which interactions ultimately result in conversion and revenue.

Bottom line: While marketers may try to get by with one or two of the WCM-email marketing-analytics pillars in place, only by combining all three, can they expect to deliver truly cross-channel, content-driven experiences.

SECTION IV

How to Choose:
Buying Criteria

When considering how to invest time and money into a digital-marketing effort capable of delivering personalized communications and measuring their effectiveness, make sure the technology solutions you're considering have all of the following characteristics:

Central Content Repository	The heart of your digital-marketing experience is web content management (WCM), so the solution you choose should be scalable, readily optimized and easy to maintain. The system should also provide maximum flexibility to reuse and standardize content across channels by including a built-in, robust digital asset management system.
Integrated Customer Profiles	Building personalized experiences rests on the ability to understand and track customer behavior across all channels. Tools that consolidate this information into a single customer profile that includes interests, activities and interactions can help deliver the one-to-one messages that are so crucial to ensuring successful cross-sell, up-sell and loyalty initiatives.
Targeted Segmentation	Targeting specific audiences increases the odds that your messaging will cut through the noise of less relevant offers. Solutions that integrate targeted segmentation capabilities that can be updated based on customer behavior are a prerequisite to providing more personalized journeys for your customers.
Visual Campaign Management	Managing customer experience across channels can be complex. One way to simplify the work is with a WCM system that offers access to a visual representation of the workflows associated with your campaign efforts. Tools that allow marketers intuitive ways to design and automate experiences across channels will deliver the most value.

Cross-Channel Execution	The ability to seamlessly design and personalize content using a single tool will make marketers more agile, enabling them to deliver and coordinate experiences across channels in timely and uniquely relevant ways.
Offer and Recommendation Engine	As customers visit your website or open your emails, you want to be sure that the real-time offers your system serves up are relevant to your customers at the exact moment and point of interaction. Look for campaign management and WCM tools with digital asset management capabilities that incorporate these real-time offer engines.
Operational Reporting	Look for tools that help improve your operational efficiency by offering the capability to track campaign performance metrics such as budget, cost, delivery status, recipient activity and overall campaign ROI.
Analytics	Analytics truly test whether you are delivering content that customers want, casting them in the dual roles of campaign optimizer and report card. Analytics can provide you with aggregated data about your customer but to fulfill that promise, make sure that your system allows for integrating your analytics data with your other tools.

Don't Let Your Conversions Slip Away

Today's customer data gives marketers the unprecedented ability to understand customer behavior across digital channels and touchpoints. With the right combination of web content management, cross-channel campaign management and analytics, companies can deliver relevant, personalized messaging that increases conversions, wins wallet share, and provides the agility needed to beat out the competition. ■

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**IRINA GUSEVA
Group Product Marketing Manager**
Email: guseva@adobe.com
@AdobeExpMgr

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