

TRENDS

SUMMER READER



2019

WELCOME TO THE 2019

TRENDS

SUMMER READER



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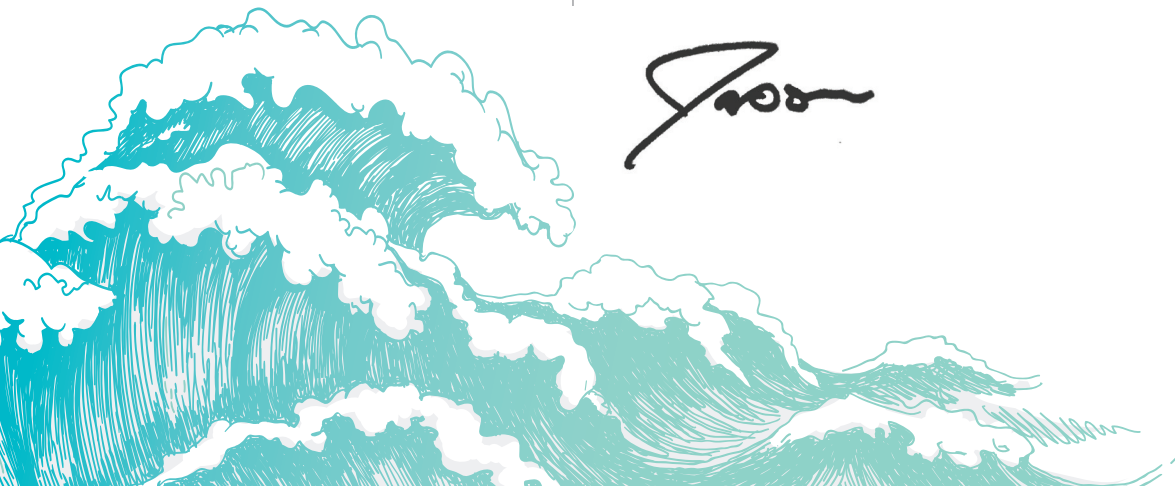
Howdy, Marketers!

During thunder::tech's 20-year voyage we have sought to provide our friends the best marketing education to help their brands innovate and win. Over the past year, we have noticed a positive change amongst marketers where there is an increased hunger to evolve and improve their practices and specifically, an interest to learn more about these trends that affect us all.

Our Trends Summer Reader brings to light the many brave marketers out there and helps tell their stories around marketing trends that matter to you right now. These professionals are accelerating their brands through the turbulence of changing consumer behaviors, the digitization of commerce and evolving business models. We are inspired by them and believe you will be too.

In this year's Summer Reader, we set a course to report on changing consumer behaviors, the state of trade show marketing, evolving video content strategy, the disintermediation of legacy retail and the battle between big data and privacy expectations. These are layered topics in a noisy and sometime confusing landscape of decisions. Therefore, education and storytelling amongst marketers is more important than ever to help us understand and adapt to the tides we are all sailing through.

Welcome aboard for another session of Trends and happy marketing!



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BUILDING BETTER BRAND EXPERIENCES

FOUR SIMPLE STEPS TO ANTICIPATE AND DELIVER ON SHIFTING BUYER BEHAVIORS

Way back in the dawn of commerce, marketing was just called “sales.”

Businesses would hawk their wares to anyone in shouting distance, cold-call exactly at dinner time, and if they were really ahead of the game, they'd have a snazzy logo on their door, or maybe even a business card.

Then, marketing became a thing. The game was who could come up with the catchiest ad to cut through the noise. After that, it was who can create the best, most user-friendly website. Customized content started getting into the mix a short time later.

But now? Now we're beyond that. People are sick of the noise. They don't have time for the game. And they're not picking up their phone if you're not in their contacts.

Within just a few quick years, we've gone from what kind of *content* can we create to what kind of *experience* can we create for our audiences. They want to know that whatever they spend their time and money on, it will enhance their overall life or business.

Beyond being Instagrammable or LinkedIn-worthy, you've got to think about the kind of impactful, valuable and lasting experience you can give your audience before, during and after the purchase. They expect convenience through multiple touch points and buying platforms so they can make decisions however they're most comfortable doing so, whether that be in person, online, over the phone or in an app. Or, a mix of those.

If you haven't been keeping pace with the shift in buying behaviors, first of all, you're not alone.

But now, it's time to act. We spoke with Matt Subel, VP of sales for Platform Brewing Co., and Jennifer Shankleton, Chief Marketing Officer of Kohrman Jackson & Krantz law firm (KJK), to find out how they're getting creative and meeting their audience where they already are. Here are four steps to getting your business on track to delivering exceptional customer experiences that today's buyers expect.

1. Know your business

This may seem like a no-brainer, but

it goes beyond the surface level of knowing what you sell and your brand values. Those are certainly important, but you also need to figure out who you are in the mix of competitors, how the public sees you, and how you can shape their perception to align with the core personality of your business.

Platform Brewing Co. is a craft beer brand that figured it out quickly. They were the new kid in a crowded market and needed to not only make great beer, but also have a unique value proposition to avoid being lost in the brewery surge of the 2010s.

“The most important thing is to know your identity first,” Subel said. “A lot of brands go through a discovery phase over a couple of years, but if you know who you want to be as a brand, you can use that as a foundation to go from. Then, never stop learning.”

Platform's name comes from their original intention of being a platform for home brewers to use their location to test and scale up recipes, learn from their master brewer, and use the company as an incubator to grow a business. Platform

built upon the initial success with this model and expanded it to become a showcase location for other community businesses through collaborative events, guest menus and rotating drafts. Their value proposition became their unique programming that gives beer drinkers the opportunity to try a variety of local food and drink in a social, vibrant environment with Platform's high-quality craft beer as the mainstay.

Using this approach, Platform's marketing has banked on word of mouth and social sharing as complements to their collaborative event programming. The experiences they deliver as a full package—food, drink, local business, community and entertainment—lend themselves to grassroots marketing that effortlessly integrates into buyers' everyday life. On the digital side, they use social channels to promote and cover events with lifestyle visuals and quick information, with Instagram being their main focus.

The main reason that marketing approach is successful, according to Subel, is because Platform knows exactly who they are, and that shows through meaningful collaborations and authentic touch points with customers. This builds loyalty among the community businesses and consumers, and ultimately, leads to widespread advocacy.

2. Know your customers

For both B2C and B2B, knowing what makes your customers tick is a surefire way to get their attention. Shankleton put it simply: The more you know about your customer, the better you can serve them.

"Know your client or customers' business inside and out," she said. "That's the only way you're going to learn what their challenges, motivations, pressures and goals are, or what's happening with their business in next 12 months."

Law firms have traditionally been a bit behind in the digital space, according to Shankleton. Everything used to be done manually, on paper. As they saw their customers and clients becoming more and more tech savvy, they made the shift and went digital with their marketing efforts. Today, they have a podcast, video and full social media strategy.

Over the past two years, KJK decided to take it a step further. They founded a legal technology startup called Connective Counsel that puts legal counsel in the palm of clients' hands—literally. Billed as the industry's first mobile app, Connective Counsel allows clients to access legal documents 24/7, receive secure messages from attorneys, send and track form

contracts, stay up to date on statuses and legal deadlines, and more. They iterate the mobile app based on a continuous feedback loop, and each account is customized for the individual user so that they have the exact experience they want.

It's easy to think that age plays a role in how customers like to communicate, and while on the surface that may be the case, it's definitely not that clear-cut. Not all millennials or Gen Zers prefer 100% digital communication, just like not all Boomers prefer everything in person or over the phone.

"It's dangerous to label any generation with certain stereotypes and behaviors," Shankleton said. "I really think it's unfair and we're selling them short. We need to understand how the individual person is wired."

Subel has seen a similar blurring in generational stereotypes in the beer market. Five or 10 years ago, he said, beer drinkers in their 40s and 50s wouldn't have looked twice at an IPA. Now, that's changed. By diversifying their offerings, listening to real-time customer feedback and targeting personality types rather than specific age ranges, they've been successful in marketing to a multigenerational customer base.



All of us as marketers need to be crazy vigilant about staying on top of trends, and anytime we can share a piece of data that directly affects our business or our clients' businesses, the more information you have the better.

:: Jennifer Shankleton, Chief Marketing Officer of Kohrman, Jackson & Krantz



3. Get cozy with data

Going hand-in-hand with knowing your customer, using data to inform on buying behaviors and trends puts you at an advantage when it comes to marketing and strategic business decisions.

“We’re getting data on a daily basis,” Shankleton said. “With the beauty of the way digital has exploded, you can access business publications’ databases and get very specific with targeted personas and do campaigns and track everything.”

Likewise, Platform uses Nielsen/IRI data and the Armadillo Insight tool to see buying patterns in the retail space for their current and prospective distribution locations. The information is analyzed to identify expansion opportunities or areas of improvement, as well as to see performance across various locations.

“We now have two full-time analysts at the office evaluating our ranking and growth patterns and how we rank against other distributors in the state,” Subel said. “That’s our number one outlet for growth as a brand.”

Collecting this kind of data for sales and marketing purposes is vital for intelligent and informed decision-making, but make sure as you do so, you’re staying in compliance with regulatory requirements and privacy laws (more on that in this *Trends* issue).

Beyond consumer data, keeping yourself informed on basic industry buying behaviors on an individual and staff level is important. Read trade journals and business publications, attend conferences, and have conversations with others in the company and industry.

“All of us as marketers need to be crazy vigilant about staying on top of trends, and anytime we can share a piece of data that directly affects our business or our clients’ businesses, the more information you have the better,” Shankleton said. “Stay on top of trends

not just in your industry but all around, and then share that information.”

4. Say yes

Sounds pretty simple, but it can be difficult for companies to try new things. Many brands struggle to keep up with shifting buying behaviors because, quite frankly, they haven’t shifted their approach to match. New strategies, tactics and tools can be intimidating.

It can be as small as starting a social media page, or as big as expanding your product portfolio. Use the past three sections to make informed suggestions for new ways to reach your audience, and then, say yes and give it a try.



Our strategy has evolved quite rapidly. But it's evolved to opening our doors up and not being so niche, breaking down barriers—that's a necessity for growth to continue in the market.

:: Matt Subel, VP of Sales for Platform Brewing Co.

Platform started off with the mindset that they were going to do something a little unconventional by offering beer types that most of the general public wouldn’t know anything about. Many companies would play it safe, but they went for it, offering sours and other styles that were less mainstream. It was a successful strategy, but even in doing so, they kept an ear to the ground and never stopped trying new things.

“Our strategy has evolved quite rapidly,” Subel said. “Initially it was the hyper-craft-beer geeks and beer aficionados that live and breathe the best new thing.

But it’s evolved to opening our doors up and not being so niche, breaking down barriers—that’s a necessity for growth to continue in the market.”

For KJK, Shankleton said it was initially a bit of a challenge to get attorneys to get on board with shifting to a more innovative and digital approach to client interactions.

“It was definitely an education process for those types who were used to doing business on a handshake,” she said. “They were networkers and rainmakers and did it all organically. It was almost a disruption to their daily operations.”

But once they started seeing the immediate successes of the new campaigns and tactics, they got excited to be a part of it. Their buy-in helped to create an internally collaborative environment where everyone put their strengths into a common goal.

“I’m really pleased and encouraged with the openness to trying new things,” she said. “Anytime you’re working with professionals, doctors, lawyers, academia, anyone highly intelligent and cerebral, you have an opportunity to be able to collaborate and bring the best ideas to the table to put together a robust omnichannel marketing plan.”

As you’re brainstorming about how to give your customers the best experience with your brand, think about the pieces you already have in place at your business and how you can expand on those. Have a strong brand identity and a loyal customer base? Use that to your advantage. Ask your customers (lots of) questions. Access simple tools for insight into your customers’ behaviors and your industry in general. Get creative with your ideas. And never stop learning. ::



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TRADING UP

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF DIGITAL TO TAKE YOUR TRADE SHOW EXPERIENCE FROM PASSIVE TO POWERFUL

Trade shows are still a great way for companies to get in front of large, targeted and engaged audiences, get some face time with prospects and customers, and have the opportunity to showcase products.

Though the concept has been around since medieval times (when they were called “trade fairs”), today’s trade show exhibitors are upping the game.

“Trade shows may seem like a remnant of the past—and, to be honest, some exhibitors are still stuck in the past with their tables of stress balls, bowls of free candy and sell sheets,” said Craig Israel,

Creative Director at thunder::tech. “But the more savvy marketers are leveraging technology to make trade show experiences that engage and interest attendees far more than a free pen.”

Now, exhibitors can bring some of their best digital assets to the physical world and create interactive experiences for attendees to get a real taste of the brand and products.

The intersection of physical and digital
Floor space is expensive, and so is shipping in a ton of materials and decor to simulate the environment your product typically lives in. A manufacturer

of large industrial equipment would have to pay a premium for the floor space to showcase even one product. Landscaping companies that want to showcase their hardscaping capabilities would need to haul in boxes and boxes of heavy material and build out a design on the show floor.

What if that wasn’t necessary? What if companies could reduce the floor space and show all of their products, tailored to each individual attendee’s objective? Sounds a bit like the digital experience where a user can search for a product, click on a website, see the inventory, specs and demo, and make a choice from there.

“It’s really creating a memorable experience more than it is just conveying information. That’s really what digital transformation has to offer.”

:: Madeline Hoyle, User Experience Designer at thunder::tech



STRETCH YOUR REACH

Augment your trade show efforts with digital tactics before, during and after the event. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Reach out to contacts prior to the event using marketing automation strategies.** Invite attendees to meet up at the event, alert contacts who will be attending, and increase awareness that your company will be at the show.
- **Create a custom audience based on the trade show website prior to the event.** Then deliver digital ads to that audience to increase awareness. This audience can also include trade show branded keywords to increase the audience size.
- **Use LinkedIn Ads to reach the right people.** Those with a specific job title, in a specific industry or at specific companies to notify them that your company will be at the event.
- **Utilize geofencing around the trade show.** Target on-site attendees with relevant messaging throughout the event.
- **Add to your marketing automation plan for post-show follow-ups.** Delivering personalized messages and relevant content to new potential leads after they get back to the office and settle into their routines again.

But instead of the rather lonely and passive relationship of online product research, combining a digital experience with the in-person interaction on a trade show floor can make all the difference.

“The most effective way to sell is always going to be one-on-one, between a knowledgeable salesperson and an interested, engaged potential,” Israel said. “Trade shows are still a great venue for putting these two sides of the equation together. Technology, rather than replacing this interaction, can improve it, making it more dynamic, engaging and educational.”

For companies that focus on things that are difficult to show indoors, like an environmental organization, digital tools can be a saving grace. Proof points and examples can be shown in a virtual sense through video, virtual reality (VR) or photos.

“Digital does offer a lot,” said Madeline Hoyle, Senior User Experience Designer at thunder::tech. “We’ve been working with several clients doing digital kiosks, which is basically a 50-inch touch screen tablet that we’re able to get digital content like videos, photos, articles, previews of PDF files, and interactive experiences on the machine. It’s something that can be a really efficient use of space, especially in a smaller booth, and provides a much bigger experience than you might have the budget for.”

Bringing digital assets to a physical environment doesn’t have to be a huge investment. Companies can use their digital assets that already exist, such as videos, simulations, articles or images, and repurpose them to a touch screen or tablet and use these as visual complements to the sales person’s conversation with an attendee.

“There are a lot of experiences and types of products that you can show at a trade show that you couldn’t before,” Hoyle said. “It used to be an abstract conversation and now it can be shown.”

The wow factor

Trade shows are also notorious grounds for one-upping the competition. While many companies are seeing the benefit of repurposing their digital assets in kiosks or tablet form, some brands are taking it a step further and leveraging digital capabilities to create entirely new, trade-show-specific experiences.

One company that is running with this concept is Henkel Corporation, whose OSI brand has a converted semitruck that they take on the road for an interactive training and demo experience. Called the “OSI Roadshow,” it started as a simple demo booth and evolved into a fully immersive experience where people can hold products in their hands, watch instructional videos, try the product and actually see how it performs in a real setting.

Henkel takes the Roadshow Truck to trade shows, customer HQs, and other events that give them an opportunity to interact with people. They use the combination of digital tools and physical experience to amplify their brand messaging and effectiveness.

“The best example of our digital initiatives marrying with our in-field activities is around training,” said Mike TenBrink, Director of Marketing, AC North America, Henkel Corporation. “We deliver the right products, but half of the brand message is that we teach you how to use it in the right application. We had to have some kind of trainability via digital. We took all our training programs and put them on our website.”

Using those training videos within the truck itself has improved the consistency of training while on the road. In the back of the Roadshow Truck is a giant screen that links up to a physical tool that people are interested in. Someone can walk up to a physical shelf of tools, pick up something that piques their interest, set it on a scanner and the scanner will read the material and play a video about that piece of material.



You can hold the product in your hand and listen to a live demo of the piece you're holding. It makes it much more interesting for them. And we don't need someone who knows absolutely everything for every piece of material and application.

:: **Mike TenBrink**, Director of Marketing, AC North America, Henkel Corporation

"You can hold the product in your hand and listen to a live demo of the piece you're holding," TenBrink said. "It makes it much more interesting for them. And we don't need someone who knows absolutely everything for every piece of material and application."

Not everyone can use a semitruck to get their point across. Some others are using high-tech tools such as VR or 3D printing to scale their products to fit within a trade show, and to create fully interactive, customized trade show experiences.

"You have to wow folks," Hoyle said. "There are so many things vying for attention, the simple act of getting ahead of the competition in that regard is invaluable. You're going to get people stopping by simply because what you have is 'cool,' but you're

also going to find qualified leads within that pool. It's really creating a memorable experience more than it is just conveying information. That's really what the digital transformation of the trade show has to offer."

After the show

Once the show floor closes and everyone packs up and goes home, the party's not over.

Automation platforms are digital tools that can be used in nurturing campaigns, based on the information and touch points that you gathered at the show.

"There's a lot more opportunity for personalized nurture campaigns based on trade show interactions," said Dan Lyons, Digital Marketing Team Lead at thunder::tech. "We see a lot more potential from a digital side with the increased

use of marketing automation platforms. You can actually personalize nurturing campaigns based on the interaction with a person at the trade show."

If you have a conversation with someone on the trade show floor, they can be entered into a drip campaign and given information that aligns with what they showed interest in. Setting up a lead score will show how interested they are by how they are engaging.

"It's crucial to monitor someone's behavior to move them from a marketing qualified lead to a sales qualified lead, where you can eventually pitch them and have a sales rep directly follow up," Lyons said. ::



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HERO, HUB, HELP

**A MARKETING STRATEGY THAT
TAKES YOUR VIDEO CONTENT
UP, UP AND AWAY!**

Video used as a content marketing tactic or promotion isn't anything innovative and new in and of itself. Companies are pretty aware that it can be a powerful form of visual marketing on an informative, emotional, or hype-inducing scale; and brands have been shooting video for years.

But now that all that content exists, you've got some important questions to ask: What are you doing with it? Are you just checking the box (Yep! We do video!)? Is your video strategy giving you a good return on your production investment?

Consider this: Every *second*, one *million* minutes of video content will cross global IP networks by 2021, according to Cisco. It's more important now than ever to create a solid framework for your video strategy to make sure you're cutting through the clutter and serving your audience more efficiently. Having a framework will better position you to create, budget, publish and iterate your video content and ultimately, give your audience a better experience.

THE BREAKDOWN

Hero, Hub, and Help video content each have specific purposes for your audience. Building the framework into your overall video and content strategies can help you reach your target audiences with the right content.

	Build Awareness	Influence Consideration	Build Advocates	Brand Re-positioning	Reputation Management
Hero	✓		✓	✓	
Hub		✓	✓		
Help		✓	✓	✓	✓

The 3H approach

Over the past few years, Google has stoked the momentum of a framework called “Hero, Hub, Help,” or 3H for short. The concept is simple, but impactful. Each “H” is a different tier of content based on its purpose for the audience.

- **HERO:** Hero videos are typically of higher production value. These are tentpole pieces of content created around big events like product launches, trade shows or rebrands. They’re less frequent, perhaps published only a couple of times of year.
- **HUB:** Hub content is more episodic, with a regular schedule and theme that appeals to your audience. These could be vlogs, podcasts or series that help build your brand identity and have a level of entertainment.
- **HELP:** Evergreen content such as tips, how-tos, educational and timeless videos work well as Help content. These are typically lower production, meant to provide information to viewers and not necessarily as cost-intensive.

If you already have video inventory, step one would be to conduct an audit to see what you can categorize using the 3H concept. No need to start from scratch if you’ve already put in the effort and created great videos.

How to COPE

Video marketing is an investment. The 3H framework helps you get the most out of your production investment by organizing your content and positioning it for repurposing. The key to doing it effectively is to have a strong plan up front and create a long-term schedule that spans a quarter or even a year.

“When it’s well-planned, you can really get a lot out of your content,” said Matt Stevens, Managing Producer at thunder::tech’s thirtysix::thirtyfive studios. “What we use here at thunder::tech is what we call C.O.P.E., which is Create Once, Publish Everywhere. The idea is to create a piece of content you’re not just using in one medium, you’re using it in all of them.”

The content doesn’t have to (and shouldn’t!) be exactly the same for

every channel, Stevens said. You can work an iterative process into your 3H framework by tweaking your video content to fit different delivery methods. For example, your Hero video can be cut into short snippets for social media, or broken into teasers for paid advertisements. If a short Hub video skyrockets, consider turning it into a more highly produced piece, putting money behind it and creating a Hero video from it. Or if a certain Help topic is a hit with your audience, it may lend itself well to a Hub-style episodic spin-off. No matter what, as you’re shooting video, consider how you can get extra footage at the same time to use as b-roll or file footage down the road, or think about ways you can use images and clips from one project to the next.

Establish an iterative approach not just to your actual videos, but also to your video strategy. It should be a living, breathing, evolving strategy based on performance analysis and feedback. Once you’ve published your videos, establish a metric analysis process to see what’s working and what’s not, and repurpose and amplify

video content that performs well. As you're identifying performance trends, you can evolve and iterate your video strategy. Use qualitative feedback as well as quantitative data such as social interactions, views, or other engagements to measure each video's success rate.

"Don't be afraid to evolve," Stevens said. "Look at your data, look at who's watching it, how often it's being watched and re-evaluate. If you don't get it right the first time, don't be afraid to fail fast and revise as needed. A lot of this content doesn't have to be of high production. If you're not putting too much into it then you can try these things, and if it fails you're not losing that much."

Start now

It may sound like a daunting task to overhaul or launch a video strategy,

but the sooner you start, the less you'll have to "undo" or sift through later. Also, Stevens explains, everything doesn't have to be a highly produced piece of content. The Hero content may be perhaps a bit more high-cost and high-production, but the more frequent Hub and Help content can be short and inexpensively created. It's the framework and process that's important.

"Just because you've got a great piece of content on YouTube doesn't mean you're going to rank high if you're just putting out one piece of content per year," Stevens said. "You're going to rank higher if you're publishing content more regularly."

That's where the Hub content can really come in handy. Hub content is great for building a subscription base or social media followers, because your audience can have consistently scheduled

content that they look forward to. Whereas your Hero content is meant to be a larger-scale impact piece and your Help content can be more frequent, shorter and always on your website or YouTube channel for easy reference. A great way to document the framework and strategy is to use an editorial calendar, showing how the Hero, Hub and Help videos fall into the overall content strategy and timeline.

You may already be doing some of these things, which makes the process even easier to get started. But, if you want to grow going into 2020, you will need to focus on structure and strategy now. ::



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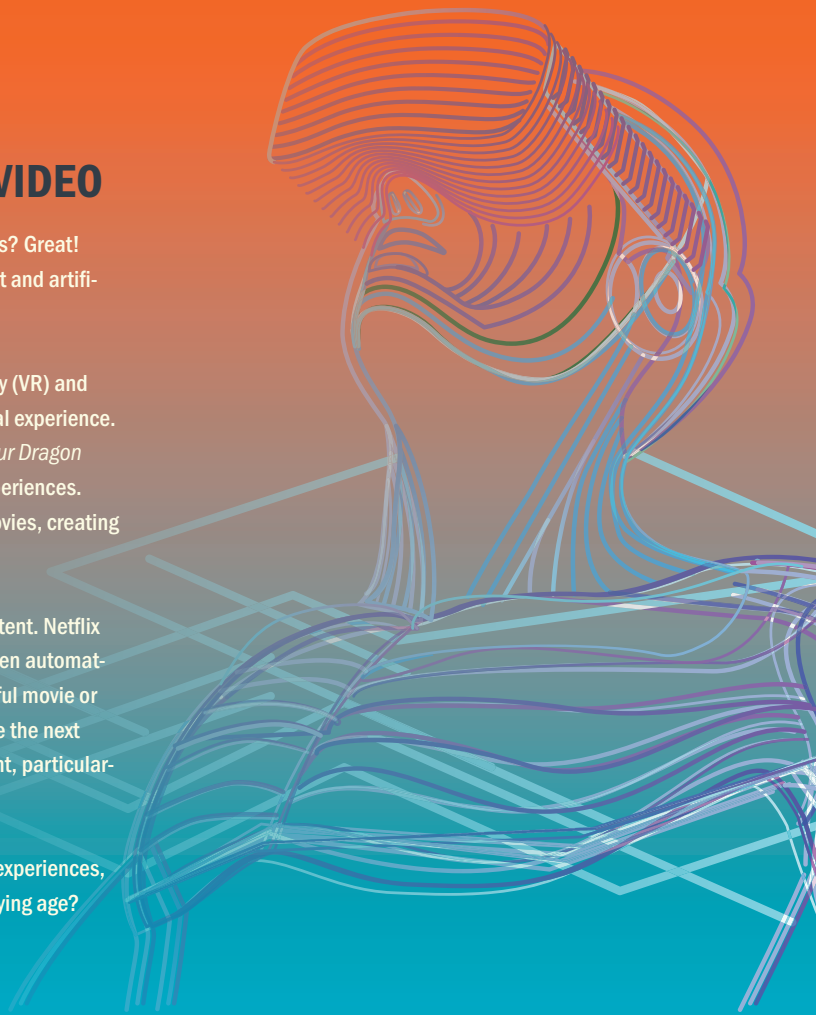
PREPARE FOR THE NEXT SHIFT IN VIDEO

Got a handle on how you're going to produce impactful marketing videos? Great! Now we're going to tease the next big trends in video: Immersive content and artificial intelligence (AI).

Brands are starting to play with immersive content such as virtual reality (VR) and 360-degree video to give consumers a much more realistic and personal experience. Disney Pixar recently created a traveling exhibit for their *How to Train Your Dragon* movies, where they set up equipment in Walmart parking lots for VR experiences. Kids could wear the VR headgear and interact with dragons from the movies, creating immersive content that leaves a lasting impression with their audience.

AI is now evolving to the point of being able to create relevant video content. Netflix is already using this technology, feeding footage to a machine, which then automatically chooses the best content to splice together for a relevant, impactful movie or TV show trailer. While it's still in its infancy, AI video production could be the next automation option when it comes to editing and producing video content, particularly redundant content that is a time-suck for staff.

The thing to keep in mind is, as kids are growing up with these types of experiences, what will they be expecting from brands in the future when they're of buying age?





IT'S ALL IN THE MIX

EMBRACE DIVERSIFIED SALES CHANNELS TO CONNECT WITH SHOPPERS WHERE AND WHEN THEY ARE READY TO BUY

As the Amazon beast eats away at legacy sales channels, middle market retailers are left with a complex variety of tactics to meet changing consumer expectations and preferences. Brand loyalty is a real thing, but it's only a fraction of what plays into the reason consumers buy a specific product.

Often, consumers buy a product or brand because it was recommended by a friend, it has great reviews or it is a popular item. Humans are social creatures, and there's no more visible social community than the digital world. We can see what other people like through social media, online reviews, "popular purchases" rankings, influencer advocacy and commenting systems more than we can ever see in a physical store. The internet is where peer influence has been amplified exponentially...and then has a spotlight shined on it.

This is why legacy sales channels are being disrupted. Brands are finding

creative ways to meet consumers where they are and giving them the experience they expect by adopting an omnichannel approach, including direct-to-consumer marketing and sales, online and mobile selling through proprietary and shared platforms, social media interaction, as well as, yes, the traditional physical presence.

Finding the right balance can be intimidating, but adapting your sales and marketing approach is vital for survival at this point.

The Amazon factor

According to a 2018 Jumpshot report, from 2015-2018 Amazon surpassed Google in product searches, with 90% of Amazon's product views come from the company's own product search and not from advertising, merchandising or product aggregators.

This is proof that people are turning to Amazon not just to buy stuff, but also to do their research. And with Amazon's

search ads popping up at the top of these searches, brands taking advantage of these search ads have more eyes on their products than any other medium. Combine that with user reviews and buyer pictures, and consumers have all they need at their fingertips.

In fact, according to Salesforce, 87% of shoppers began their product search in digital channels in 2017. Some use Amazon and Google as their research tools and then compare prices and reviews around the internet and among friends before choosing a product. Others do all this and then go to a physical store to test or try on a product before committing to a purchase. This is why one solution isn't the answer. The most successful brands are in multiple places, giving consumers a number of ways to find and buy their products.

Finding the right mix

National Food Group is a second-generation, family-owned business that has been around for decades



There are lots of (sales channel) tactics, and you have to be able to learn all of them to find the different pockets of where the customers prefer to be.

:: Kristine Buyers, Creative Services Team Leader for National Food Group



producing nutritional food products for foodservice professionals across the country. After building a trusted brand through wholesale food distribution to K-12, correctional facilities, healthcare organizations, colleges and universities, they have recently innovated and diversified by selling through multiple sales channels and expanding into retail with their Zee Zees brand.

“Our whole team is learning more and studying more closely competitors from a consumer perspective,” said Kristine Buyers, Creative Services Team Leader for National Food Group. “We’re on Amazon and we’re on QVC and we’re working more with influencers and different groups. There are lots of tactics, and you have to be able to learn all of them to find the different pockets of where the customers prefer to be.”

National Food Group made a strategic decision to sell on Amazon rather than splitting their business into a smaller consumer site because they knew consumers were already buying on Amazon. Because they have 30 years of experience in buying and fulfillment, they’re able to manage that aspect in-house.

But, recognizing that consumers need

variety and choice when purchasing, they quickly moved into several other channels.

“We’ve been working with some of these monthly subscription snack boxes because that’s another group of people we wouldn’t reach otherwise, and we’re enjoying the synergy of all of that,” Buyers said. “So the people who get the box, maybe they like the box from SnackNation and they want to continue, then we’ve got the Amazon option for them.”

Zee Zees is also on physical store shelves to get in front of grocery shoppers. They use Google Ads and geofencing so that when Zee Zees comes up on a consumer’s mobile phone, it will actually show them the closest store where they can go buy the products.

On the marketing side, they make sure they are taking full advantage of digital channels to get the word out about their retail products. Aside from Amazon and Google, they launched a whole new set of social platforms for the retail side of the business, including YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest.

In-person, particularly in the food business, can be extremely impactful. National Food Group does taste-testing by placing some of their product samples in grocery home delivery bags, as well as

teaming up with groups like Girls on the Run as a snack provider for events.

Adapting your strategy

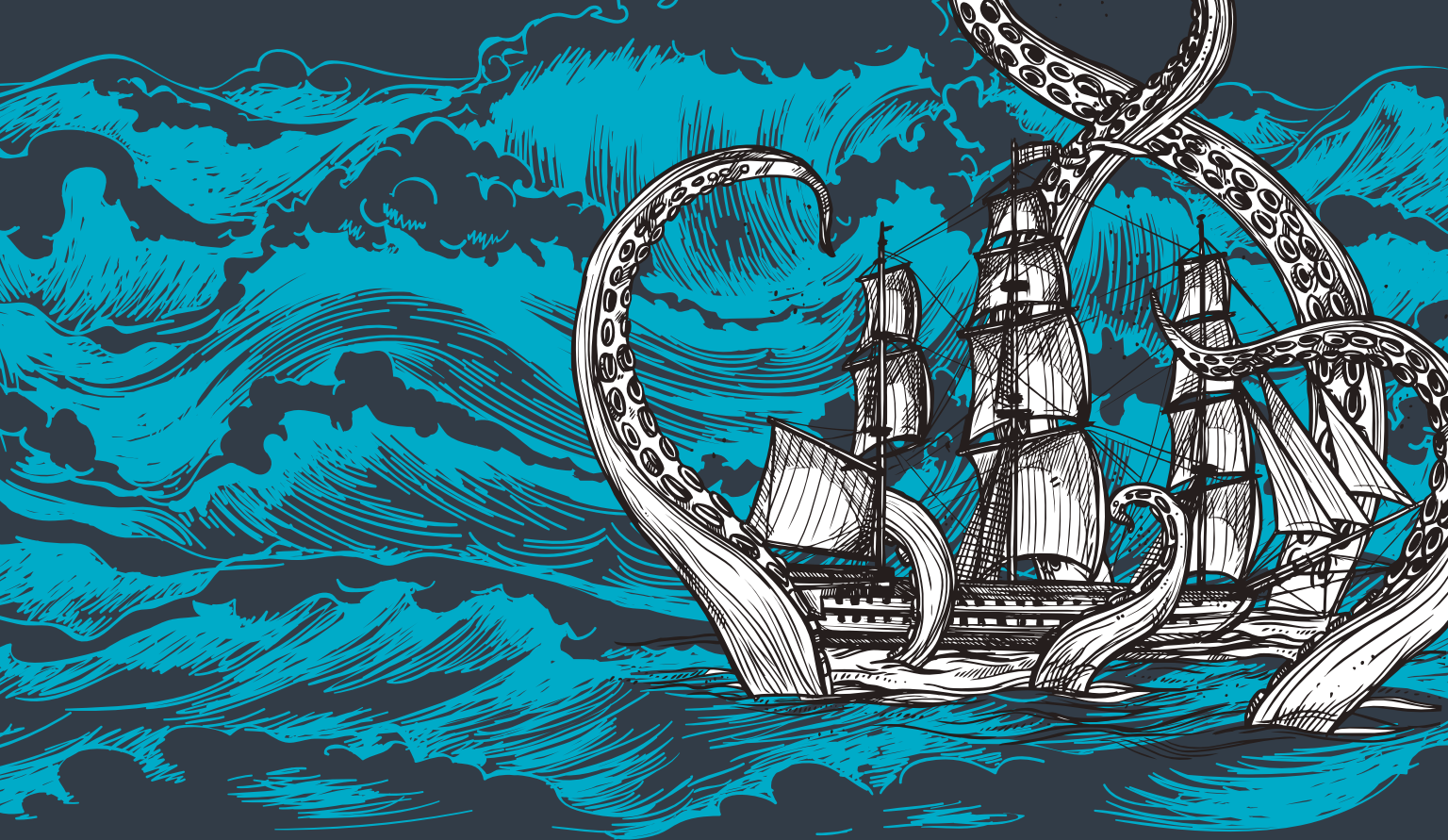
So you know you need to be diversifying your sales channels. How do you get started? Just make the leap. You don’t have to do it all at once; you can learn by experimenting with different channels and ideas and expand on what’s working. But you do need to get started now.

“It’s a marathon, not a sprint,” Buyers said. “We learn something new every day. There are new opportunities and new things that arise. Every day is an adventure.”

Having a partner that knows the channels, buyer behaviors and shifting technology trends can help guide you to a modern, strategic sales and marketing strategy that will position you to remain competitive in a complex retail environment. ::



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TACKLING THE BEAST

HOW TO MEET DATA COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS WITHOUT SACRIFICING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

Recent years have seen an increase of data breaches, many with highly sensitive information being exposed or stolen. The responsibility of keeping an individual's information safe online has typically fallen to the consumer, with widely varying levels of understanding of what it takes to navigate the complex digital world in a secure way.

People are concerned. The high-profile breaches of Yahoo, Equifax, Marriott, Target, J.P. Morgan Chase and others have consumers on edge about what information they're giving to companies, how much of it is really necessary, and what are companies doing to protect it. And the privacy mishaps of Google and Facebook have people paying more attention to how companies are tracking their behavior online.

But the world is very much a digital space now. Consumers expect to be able to interact with a company online, and businesses need to collect information to effectively market to consumers, complete transactions and provide a good user experience.

"Everybody wants to have their convenience, but that convenience gets blocked by privacy," said Jim Ganotis, Information Technology Manager at Destination Cleveland. "It really depends on the consumer sometimes, too. What types of privacy are they willing to give up to get that personalization and convenience? For us, it's trying to find that happy medium."

There is an incredible amount of data being collected from online users, whether they knowingly give it up or not.

The stat we all hear is that 90% of the world's data has been generated in the past two years alone, and if that's the case, every bit of data collected is at risk of a breach.

It's a big responsibility to keep data safe. In an effort to move the onus from the consumer to the businesses that collect their data, governments have been rolling out a smattering of new regulations in recent years, including the much-discussed European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

"The more information we gather as a company, the higher the level of risk we assume knowing that the information can be compromised or used improperly," said Charlie Laurie, Chief Innovation Officer at Palmer Holland.

“From a communications standpoint, the laws are changing, certainly doing business in Europe is a lot harder and marketing is a lot harder than it was this time last year because of the strict opt-in rules that GDPR brings forth.”

California followed suit with a sort of “GDPR-light,” in their California Consumer Privacy Act, and a nationwide regulation is very likely in the near future, with Congress already considering a U.S. version of GDPR. With privacy regulations continuing to grow and data security becoming more and more at risk, it is absolutely vital for businesses that operate online to know where their customers’ data is, how it’s stored, and how to secure it.

Long time coming

Long-standing regulations like the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) of 1998 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 are mainstays that companies have built their compliance on. Those acts will likely evolve with more updated guidelines in the near future, and even though GDPR is only in Europe currently, that’s going to be changing very soon. To avoid some major scrambling and fire drills, companies here in the United States

need to be building on the GDPR regulations to get to a good place for when the U.S. version inevitably hits.

The more recent regulations shouldn’t be a big surprise for companies that have been operating online over the past decade. A far cry from the wild west days of the net when companies could email anyone at any whim, today’s privacy regulations are the result of years of iterations and an attempt to reign in the chaos.

“I’d like to think that for most organizations a lot of this privacy stuff shouldn’t hit them across the head like ‘*Where did that come from?*’—it’s been building for the last decade,” said Bruce Williams, VP of Development Department at thunder::tech. “You started seeing the building blocks of more transparency, more control and more choice out of each individual, you could see that it’s been gradually moving in the favor of the consumer. But now it’s becoming more real because people are afforded that voice and the stakes are higher.”

That’s not saying it isn’t a complex process to get up to speed, particularly with the untangling of years of marketing strategies and the immense amount of

data collected that needs to be brought to compliance with GDPR. Companies have their work cut out for them to make sure they’re ready for the U.S. version.

Because businesses weren’t required in the past to keep such detailed records and policies for user data, many companies are finding it to be a huge challenge to retroactively sift through the data to come to compliance.

Putting it into practice

Part one of getting it all together is making sure you’re in compliance with regulations. Part two is coming up with effective marketing and sales tactics that stay in compliance.

To get up to speed, start with getting your policies in place.

“Even though there’s all this data being created and new tools to help us facilitate all that, probably the most important thing behind all that evolution is having the right policies in place,” Ganotis said. “Even on the websites, making sure you have the right cookie policies, usage policies, as long as you have those in place and people are accepting those terms and conditions when they’re accessing your data, from a legal standpoint, it helps you.”

“

The more information as a company that we gather, the higher the level of risk we assume that the information can be compromised or used improperly.

:: Charlie Laurie, Chief Innovation Officer at Palmer Holland



Having a second (or third) set of eyes from an outsider's point of view also can help fill any gaps that may be present.

"As an agency that touches so many services, we are able to see exactly the point-of-view and the concerns that a middle market or small business or even sometimes an enterprise might not see," Williams said. "I think there



The expectation of the buyer has changed because of the online world. They think, if I can go to Amazon and do something so easily, why can't I go to your site? Why is it so difficult? Their expectation has changed because they know it's possible.

:: Rick Neiman, Digital Transformation Leader at Avery Dennison

are always blind spots that everyone has to question in the organization in terms of where did the data go, and what did it touch?"

Getting legal counsel involved is always

a good idea, whether that's an internal team or a third party to make sure everything is buttoned up. Then, put together a road map to start working on implementation.

"One of the things that we're working on this year is an internal data classification policy and knowing what kind of data we have in-house," Ganotis said. "So as we're collecting all of this data, how do we know what's sensitive, what do we need to secure more than other data, etc."

Once you're in a good place for regulations, your sales and marketing tactics moving forward should be designed to stay within compliance.

The great paradox

Consumers want more privacy and more transparency into the data they give to digital entities. They also want highly personalized, frictionless, custom interactions with companies online. Businesses can't provide customization without gathering personal information from consumers.

And 'round and 'round we go.

So how do companies maintain regulatory compliance, be sensitive to privacy concerns and still deliver

a stellar user experience that today's consumers expect?

"As a small to mid-sized enterprise, what it's almost requiring me to do is to make the choice to back out of some of the marketing activities, or, the avenue we've chosen, to partner with someone who has the expertise and can consult to help us out with these sorts of things," Laurie said. "We had to either do it and hope we don't get into trouble, stop doing it, or look for the right partnerships to help us find creative ways to still move forward with our engagement strategy."

Big businesses like Avery Dennison are also feeling the pull from both sides. Personalized user experiences and immediate information are now expected for a digital transaction. But how does the company get the information they need to deliver that kind of experience?

"The expectation of the buyer has changed because of the online world," said Rick Neiman, Digital Transformation Leader at Avery Dennison. "They think, 'If I can go to Amazon and do something so easily, why can't I go to your site? Why is it so difficult?' Their expectation has changed because they know it's possible."

But really, once you've got your compliance and data mapping and



storage in order, you can still collect a lot of data on consumers as they interact with your digital platforms. To meet privacy expectations and data regulations, you need to be more organized and transparent and give consumers more control over what they give you and how long you keep it. But many marketing tools and tactics are still completely fine to use.

Marketing automation, progressive profiling, chat systems, Google Analytics and CRMs are all data collection tools that are used to create personalized digital experiences. The key is in how you store and use the data, and keeping track of it all in a way that can be mapped back to each individual user.

The upfront organization and policy updates will be the biggest challenge. Onward, almost all major marketing tactics will still be usable for businesses to target customers and personalize content.

Staying ahead of the game

Things are changing quickly, and the consequences for not paying attention to regulatory changes regarding data can be steep. How do businesses stay on top of everything they need to know?

“We talk about this all the time with our vendors and peers and other groups,” Ganotis said. “You have to make sure you’re looking at it from all these different perspectives: a human perspective, legal perspective, consumer perspective, tech perspective and understanding what you’re doing from an ad campaign perspective. Create a checklist to make sure you have policies and resources in place to help make sure everything is current and in compliance.”

Use your legal counsel as your eyes and ears of the industry for compliance issues as well as your gatekeeper.

“When we go to do something that might be a little different or new, we run it through legal first to make sure it’s okay,” Neiman said.

Remember, you’re not in this alone. Just about every company online today has to make some sort of adjustment to their policies to prepare for upcoming privacy regulations. If you’ve got a lot of data from years of digital marketing and sales, getting the help you need can save you a ton of time and money in the long run rather than attempting to do it all internally.

Particularly in small to mid-sized businesses where the staff is already wearing a ton of hats, while it’s important to stay on top of what’s going on, it’s not always practical to stretch roles to encompass the full scope of regulatory compliance.

“Partner up,” Laurie said. “We do our own research from a high level, we keep reading and then work with partners to make sure everything is in line. We will research enough to know when we need to make that phone call.”

Your digital marketing vendor is a great place to start in terms of pulling everything in line and triple-checking that you’re not only compliant, but also still using creative and effective marketing strategies.

Big data isn’t going away, and neither are privacy concerns. The most important step for any organization is to draw a line in the sand and make a game plan that aligns with the brand.

“You need to have someone speak up in your organization and champion it in several ways, even starting with saying ‘We need a stance on this. We need to continue reaching out to people we never talk to, continue emailing people,’ and everyone needs to understand your stance,” Williams said. “If you do that, you can develop your own playbook. The people who have a stance have less of a target on them than those who don’t.” ::



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CHECKLIST FOR COMPLIANCE

- Find out what regulations apply to your business
- Determine likely upcoming regulations that apply to your business
- Map out your customer touch points
- Do an audit of your current data policies and usage
- Do an audit of your current data storage locations
- Have an internal or external legal team review your current compliance
- Develop a roadmap for getting to (and/or staying in) compliance
- Update forms, policies, and subscriptions on your digital platforms
- Work with a designated internal team and/or a trusted partner to begin implementing necessary changes
- Build a marketing and sales strategy using compliant tactics



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