Real-Time Marketing Tactical Guide

A playbook for creating an engaging and personalized experience for your customers
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Introduction

The ability to interact with your customers (and potential customers) in real-time, with consistently relevant content and product recommendations, is now becoming a necessity for marketers – with significant gains to be had.

Yet, with 39% of marketers not yet using data to achieve personalization (and 15% believing it is not even possible at all), there is either a lack of knowledge, expertise or technology holding marketers back from moving to real-time engagement tactics.

In this eBook, we are going to look at some of the strategies that real-time marketers employ to create better relevance, drive up customer engagement and create urgency to encourage conversions.

Then, having understood the tactics to employ and considered the gains that they could provide to your organization, we hope to encourage you on your own path towards creating and using real-time marketing tactics.

39% of marketers are not yet using data in order to achieve personalization.

15% of marketers do not even believe that real-time personalization is even possible.

SOURCE: BlueVenn, Data Deadlock

SOURCE: BlueVenn, Myths of Marketing
Personalization
Data for personalization: The trade-off

The key to a successful personalization strategy starts with the collection of the right data. Therefore, it requires a trade-off with your customers for giving you personal information.

There is a delicate balance to strike when asking for personal data, which includes the volume of data you’re asking for, the type of data you seek and the methods you use to collect it.

You’ll receive far more sign-ups to your email newsletter when you simply ask for the email address and no more, but how can you create relevance and personalization with just an email?

The most successful brands take their customers on a data collection journey, rather than obtaining it all at the beginning of the customer journey.

**Step 1** is the simple collection of the email address.

**Step 2** is their name and then subsequent steps can be deployed to collect additional data about gender, age, size, likes, dislikes, social IDs and so on.

Collecting this data upfront is a challenge and therefore this stepped approach not only helps build your personalization armory, but starts a two-way dialogue between you and your customers. Moreover, it creates the chance to begin a data exchange by offering tips, advice, coupons, points or experiences in exchange for personal data.
The benefits of getting personalization right

BlueVenn's 2017 Data Deadlock report discovered that 63% of consumers found personalized recommendations useful, while Digital Marketing Magazine found that 62% of respondents buy more (and/or more often) when met with personalized retail experiences, with a further 27% actively looking for personalized offers when shopping online.

Moreover, 75% log in to e-commerce websites that cater for their personal preferences based on previous behavior.

A survey by eMarketer says 82% of marketers have experienced an increase in open rates, 75% have seen higher email click through rate and 56% have witnessed an increase in sales by using personalization. An example from VentureBeat reports on a retailer who reported a massive 103% lift in revenue when comparing a personalized email to a control email.
Customers require a reason to give up personal information, and to see value in the data exchange. As such, it's essential that your customers trust you with their data: a survey conducted by F5 Networks points out that 70% of consumers fear data they share with companies will end up in the wrong hands. However, if the benefits look favorable to customers (be it special offers, discounts, loyalty points and so on), and you have established a level of trust with them, many appear willing to share.

Whether this trade-off means an improved hotel experience, more affordable insurance premiums, a more convenient airport check-in, or special treatment from their favorite retailer, feelings are generally the same.

That is, if you can provide a clear definition of the value they will receive for handing over personal information, even customers who are otherwise protective of their data are happier to share.

19% consider personalized offers the most influential on their decision to buy a product or service.  
SOURCE: BlueVenn, Data Deadlock

61.5% are happy to opt-in and trade some degree of data privacy in exchange for improved products, services and experiences.

Ask for a birth date: Offer them a birthday treat!

Ask their gender: Send them offers and customize their homepage based on what they are interested in.

Ask their waist size: Uh oh, now you've crossed the line from considerate to creepy...!

SOURCE: BlueVenn, Data Deadlock
Triggered Messaging
Triggered messaging for better engagement

The ability to interact in real-time using triggers is a powerful tactic but often significantly underused.

These real-time triggers ensure timely responses, alerts or assistance at the critical moment when you could gain or lose a customer, and can take the form of many different types of engagement.

Email triggers are relatively common place in any reputable marketing automation toolkit but newer, modern capabilities through mobile app notifications, live chats, nudges, alerts and so on are becoming the common way to keep your customers engaged and coming back for more.

At scale, this can represent problems and requires careful consideration and planning. However, when executed correctly it can have profound impacts on acquisition and retention, as well as up-sell and cross-sell success.

The key thing to understand is that personalization and triggered messaging need to be used in combination.

Purchase confirmations, alerts, receipts and thank you messages are just the tip of the iceberg for some simple triggers. When combined with deep personalization using successful data collection methods, and dynamic content within the triggered message, it becomes a heavily powerful customer engagement engine.
Examples of Triggered Messaging

Let’s think about the spaghetti that is the modern customer journey. [You can read more about this in our Customer Journey Optimization eBook]

The customer makes their own journey, which they can enter or exit at any point. Their journey might have started after watching a YouTube review, for example, or they could have been advocating a brand for months before their purchase.

Understanding this, marketers should look for ways to support whatever journey a customer is on, by responding, in real-time, using triggered emails, texts or alerts. These triggered messages can be personalized to reflect the appropriate stage a customer is at, and some of the most obvious triggers relate to customer browsing behavior.

EMAIL RECOMMENDATIONS
An email offering recommendations can complement a customer’s site search or most recent purchase, and can encourage cross- and up-selling.

CART ABANDONMENT MESSAGES
If a shopper should abort their purchase, leaving items behind before checking out, a cart abandonment message can tempt them back.
LIVE CHAT

If a customer has spent time procrastinating on a certain page, a chat box that offers the chance to engage one-to-one with a customer service representative can help.

INCENTIVE MESSAGES

Gaming sites, for instance, can use triggered messages to congratulate players on their progress encouraging further play. Or if a player isn’t doing so well, a message that reassures and incentivizes the player to prevent them from leaving.

ANNIVERSARY MESSAGES

A lifecycle message of a membership or purchase anniversary, birthday, product, or service expiry can re-engage with absent customers or celebrate loyal ones.

POP-UPS

Used discerningly, pop up boxes can be triggered to present an eBook to a customer who has spent time researching your product page, or to encourage readers to subscribe to your blog, site, or newsletter.
The opportunities for intervention are broad and can be prompted by social mentions, real-world events and news, a customer leaving a rating, and much more.

As long as the trigger is based on data collected along the customer journey, with a contextually correct message to the appropriate channel, then you’ll create a responsive, valuable, and engaging customer experience.
Countdown Timers
Creating urgency with countdown timers

When shopping online, customers can browse at their leisure. There are no queues at the checkout, or hours of operation to worry about. If you want to buy a pair of shoes at 4am on a Sunday morning, you can. Still, that doesn't mean brands don't want to nudge them down the sales funnel every now and then.

For shoppers, a Countdown Timer is a great way to promote the beginning or end of a sale, or highlight a shipping deadline – which can be especially useful on the run-up to the Holiday season. Additionally, Countdown Timers can be used to notify the customer of in-store opening hours, or the availability of your customer service line.

Essentially a ‘block’ of real-time content, Countdown Timers can be dropped into email and web pages. Which timer you use can also be decided based on real-time customer behavior, meaning different (and/or topical) content can be placed as appropriate.

GDPR Countdown. Are you ready?
349 8 20 3
days hrs mins secs
Get more info on a GDPR Assessment →

The addition of Countdown Timers to your website pages or marketing emails can boost engagement and encourage sales, by using animation to attract the viewer’s attention and driving a sense of urgency.
ANIMATED TIMERS
These are very effective at making an impact, attracting attention and improving page performance. They can be put to use in any number of imaginative ways.

OFFER ENDING TIMERS
Ideal for increasing urgency to take action, or offer a reminder to complete a transaction before a certain deadline. Adding the time until an offer ends in your email header can reinforce the need to act fast, whether or not the Countdown Timer is animated.

COMING SOON TIMERS
Coming Soon Countdown Timers are perfect for events such as the opening of a new store, or seasonal events both online and in-store. Keep your visitors informed and in anticipation for the event!
PRODUCT LAUNCH TIMERS
Build excitement for the arrival of something new with a Launching a product Countdown Timer, to keep your customers engaged and eager for the launch.

STORE INFORMATION TIMERS
With Store Information Countdown Timers, you can keep visitors informed about your opening hours, or the availability of customer service representatives.

Our phone lines are still open for:

00:25:07

Hours Minutes Seconds

To speak to our team, call +44 (0)2031 67 67 67.
Product Recommendations
Making product recommendations in real-time

Personalized recommendation strategies have been found to increase revenue, boost conversion rates and average order values. Little wonder the homepages of Amazon, eBay, Netflix, and the like are dominated by product recommendations.

Using real-time personalization tools, it's not only retail giants who can include Product Recommendations on their website.

From the moment a visitor arrives on your site, these tools can track every product or content they browse in real-time, recording information on what is selling, or being consumed, right at that moment. This knowledge can be combined with rules that decide which piece of customized content – such as a banner, coupon or timers – which will incorporate and display these popular products.

In addition to the standard Product Recommendation option, there are many alternative types, based on a machine learning approach. In addition, a cross channel rules engine will allow recommendations to follow browsers across different interaction points, targeting different customers with different recommendations.
PEOPLE LIKE YOU BUY

Like social proofing (where people use the actions of others to shape or reinforce their own behavior), a ‘People Like You Buy’ option looks at the history for each individual shopper and the products they browsed. Real-time tools use an algorithm that looks at others who browsed the same thing and displays products that those customers often end up buying to others.

FREQUENTLY BOUGHT TOGETHER

This option looks at the product on the current page, then at what people who bought this product have bought to accompany it. For a product that has additional accessories or complementary items, this is great to use as a cross-sell recommendation tool. Additionally, these recommendations can be employed anywhere from product pages and cart checkout pages, to triggered abandonment emails. It also works well as an additional “did you forget?” page during the checkout process.
PEOPLE WHO VIEWED THIS BOUGHT

Using this option acts as a subtle endorsement of the decision to buy, by showing that others have committed to purchase. ‘People Who Viewed This Bought’ promotes the highest converting product that has been bought by the people viewing the current product. Using real-time affinity strategies like these are also a good way to show a larger amount of your product inventory to browsing customers.

Different product recommendation notifications can align with different stages of the customer journey. For example, new customer acquisition can focus on special offer product recommendations, while you can target existing customers with recommendations based on past purchases.

Done well, recommendations don’t feel like a pushy or intrusive way to increase sales. Instead, they’ll feel like a natural extension of your services, helpfully tailored to a customer’s tastes in order to enhance their browsing and shopping experience.
Abandoned Carts
Recovering abandoned carts

An average from 33 major studies puts cart abandonment rates at 68%, and the thought of nearly seven out of 10 customers failing to convert is not a figure that any brand likes to see.

While there are several reasons for leaving a full cart behind, the most common reason is being presented with hidden charges. As a result, adding items is now less of a sign of commitment to purchase than an opportunity to learn the honest, final total of what a customer is thinking of buying.

These costs come in the form of postage charges, tax, installation fees, protection cover, or premium costs for a special color, size or material. Whatever they are, they can all put the brakes on a purchase, disrupting the customer journey.

At the more desirable end of the scale, the contents of a cart could encourage further contemplation, using carts as a makeshift ‘wish list’ where customers can compare the cost of the item they originally chose with alternatives.

Alternatively, customers could just as easily perceive hidden costs as negative experience in their journey and give up on the transaction entirely. According to Business Reporter, 35% of customers will not re-engage with a brand that provides one poor customer experience.
So, what can marketers do? As with many forms of customer journey intervention, it’s far preferable to prevent a poor customer experience before it happens than trying to fix one. For example, abandonment could have been because the checkout process was complicated, convoluted, or generally offered a poor user experience. With that in mind:

• Do customers need to go through a time-consuming (or overly prying) registration process? A one-click ‘social login’ or ‘guest checkout’ can help.

• Do you show an image in the cart of what your customer has added so they can be certain they have chosen the correct item? In some instances, text only can be ambiguous if you offer several similar products.

• Can customers easily make a purchase using a mobile device? Failing to optimize for smartphones or tablets can easily lead to frustration.

• Do you offer a range of payment options? The Business Reporter survey says that 38% of people clicked off a website without completing a transaction because their preferred method of payment had not been offered.

• Are you upfront about delivery costs? If you offer free shipping and returns, it needs to be clearly advertised on your site. It will give customers the confidence that they will not face any hidden charges – a persuasive conversion tactic in itself.
Cart recovery strategies

Even after giving customers a streamlined, no-nonsense checkout experience, a strategy to recover abandoned carts needs to be put in place.

Often, it’s the case that a cart has been put to one side for a later date (a shopper researches on a tablet to complete on a desktop, for example). It may be that a customer is indecisive, forgot, or simply didn’t have the time to complete their purchase. In these instances, a little nudge to remind them can encourage customer to pick up where they left off.
A carefully worded triggered email can accomplish a number of things, such as:

- A reminder of what the customer has in their basket, highlighting an urgency to purchase something that could otherwise be out of stock. These responses can be real-time, after a week or even on a customer’s monthly payday.
- A reminder of flat-rate shipping fees and your returns policy, or an alternative method of collection (a click and collect option, for example).
- Additional incentive to purchase, such as a first-time discount or to promote other benefits of registering.
- A collection of positive reviews of the product (or business) in their cart reinforces their decision, along with recommended complimentary purchases (based on viewing behavior).

- A message that is personalized to the customer. You might take a different approach enticing a first-time shopper back than you do with a customer who has a high value product in their cart. You’re unlikely to want to send a shopper who repeatedly abandons their cart discounts, either.

With the right approach to optimizing the checkout experience and giving customer timely, convenient opportunities to return back to you, many brands have seen around 30% of abandoned carts successfully recovered – a significant amount of revenue your business might not have otherwise seen.
BLUEVENN REAL-TIME CASE STUDY

Working with BlueVenn, a leading international travel operator wanted to create a solid and trustworthy base for its marketing intelligence, to help the company gain control of its data without having to rely on external agencies.

Part of this solution saw the implementation of triggered ticket recovery alerts. For the period of July-October 2016, these messages meant the travel operator was able to generate £535,000 (approx. $664,000). Over the course of a year, this figure equates to an estimated £2m ($2.4m) in recovered ticket revenue per year.

“BlueVenn analytics... allow us to establish a buying pattern, their history, what they do and don't like doing and target them in a smarter way.” CRM Manager.
Conclusion

Even with consumers shopping across channel and around the clock, real-time strategies allow marketers to be ‘always on’. This means the ability to deliver personalized, contextually appropriate content when and where they want it, maintaining their customer journey and sustaining engagement.

Unlike trying to turn timely news into a marketing tweet, this discipline of real-time marketing doesn’t necessarily require a social media manager to be armed with an appropriately pithy hashtag at a moment’s notice. Instead, it enables an automated, customized and relevant message to improve customer service as well as enhance brand sentiment.

This approach to real-time marketing demands data. Not just to collect it, but access to it, the ability to analyze it and the tools to put it into action. Critically, it also requires the permission to use data and this can only be gained when customers see real value in the exchange.

Get the ingredients right and real-time marketing means happy and more engaged customers, better performing campaigns and, most important of all, increased sales and revenue.
BlueRelevance™ is the real-time marketing and personalization module from BlueVenn for delivering customized content and cart abandonment recovery campaigns based on a customer’s habits, customer journey and profile.

**Triggered Messaging**

Using personalized cart recovery emails, organizations have seen an average 6-8% uplift in revenue, and a further 2-4% with browser recovery emails.

Recover abandoned carts and create buyers with personalized product recommendations and purchase triggers.

**Email Personalization**

Organizations see an average 5% increase in email conversion by adding personalized recommendations to emails.

Personalized content renders in real-time – at the point of open rather than the point of send. This allows for blocks of custom content to be served depending on time/rules and ensure that every customer gets a relevant offer.
Website and E-Commerce Personalization

Increase conversions at an average of 5% by incorporating personalized recommendations, offers and content into your web pages.

The days of a one-size-fits all website are gone. Help make the experience more relevant, efficient and contextual by serving them the most appropriate content on your website.

Machine Learning and Real-Time Profiling

BlueRelevance collects data in real-time, to create visitor profiles, make live recommendations and further enrich your customer data.

Through the blending of click stream and behavioral data with transactional and third party data, BlueRelevance utilizes machine learning algorithms to make product recommendations and build relevant customer profiles.
Want to talk about Real-time Marketing & Personalization?

Email us at marketing@bluevenn.com

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