Media engagement

A practical guide for how media companies can simplify greater engagement and personalisation whilst reducing cost.

A new era of engagement challenges and opportunities

Media players today are re-prioritising investment towards immersive B2C and B2B brand experiences in order to attract, engage, and retain customers.

Why? Because customers increasingly consider 'experience' to be as important as products and services. In fact, our research shows an incredible 79% of global consumers think this way which means there's never been a more crucial time to really *know* your audience and relate to what they're experiencing.

What's more, 76% of consumers get frustrated when companies show them products that are not relevant to them, according to McKinsey and Company. This means the experiences customers expect are *personalised* ones.

In addition, there's customer behaviour – which changes constantly. For example, customers are increasingly willing to share personal information in exchange for better experiences, according to our research in the retail sector. This heaps pressure on a business's ability to effectively capture data but also on their ability to develop processes which will allow the data they capture to meaningfully improve customer experience (CX).

Throwing money at the problem isn't enough. The path to delivering on this takes time, sustained investment, and the wrangling of a lot of complexity.

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For starters, such initiatives come in a range of forms. These include everything from the deeply tactical (e.g. adjustments to the user interface and customer journeys), to the highly strategic (e.g. development of differentiating recommendation capabilities). Finding the right approach for your business means striking a delicate balance between these initiatives, based on your objectives and starting point.

A further layer of complexity is that you need to consider every customer touchpoint a customer journey – whether with your employees or third parties – because it will impact engagement. If you provide a great employee experience, that'll filter down to your customers. And if your partners do the same, you'll get a multiplier effect – every interaction will feel like part of a seamless and fulfilling journey, regardless of whether it's self-service, assisted or hybrid.

This has highlighted the importance of experience for business-to-business and business-to-employee initiatives, as well as the more overt business-to-consumer ones. So it's not surprising that our recent Media and Entertainment Industry Insights Report shows that employee experience and productivity are the top two drivers for automation in the sector.

The good news is, if media businesses can adapt to shifting customer behaviour whilst using their customer data to improve experiences, they can make serious gains. In fact, our research shows that 66% of customers are willing to pay more for great experiences.

The bad news is, getting it wrong can have dire consequences:

"Disconnected experiences used to inconvenience customers. They still do, but they cause so much more damage in our current environment because they signal insensitivity."

Tiffany Bova, Growth and Innovation Evangelist – Salesforce.

So what practical steps can businesses take to avoid the pitfalls, increase customer engagement and create better business outcomes?

In this eBook, we delve into:

- The need to define engagement and relevance

- The five key obstacles to engagement media businesses face

- How to practically overcome those obstacles

- The future of customer engagement

Let's dive in.
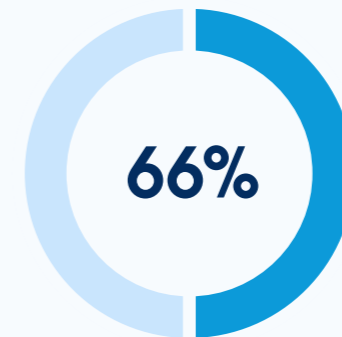
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Decoding engagement and relevance

The words 'engagement' and 'relevance' have been so overused in the media sector, they're practically marketing wallpaper. So before we explore the challenges (and the wealth of opportunities available), we need to clear a few things up...

What do we mean by engagement?

Engagement means *all* the ways a customer connects with or experiences your products and services.

This covers how you:

- Intrigue them in their very first encounter with your marketing

- Move them down the funnel

- Communicate with them as you do so

- Convert them

- Onboard them to your product

- Ensure they're getting the most of your products or services

- Retain them

- Maintain a relationship with them if they churn

- Start the process with them all over again

This is about connected experience delivery across the entire customer lifecycle. Which includes every brand touchpoint, the sales experience, the call centre experience, the instore experience and of course – the digital experience.

How does employee and partner experience drive CX?

When a business offers a great employee experience (EX), they're better equipped to elevate the experience of their customers.

For example, investing in AI solutions that offer smart recommendations to customer support teams can improve CX – but only when viewed through an EX lens. If you opt for a series of disconnected AI solutions, your agents will have to juggle multiple browser tabs or applications for each during a call. That will cause your EX to drop which will seriously impact your CX.

Equally important is the experience of your partners. Many media businesses use delivery or fulfilment partners to access capabilities or talent in key areas. And according to our research, customers overwhelmingly expect these interactions to be consistent.

When a business and its partners are not aligned, it leads to inconsistent CX, or customer journey friction. And customers don't care where the fault technically lies, they lay the blame with your overall brand.

What do we mean by relevance?

Relevance broadly means personalisation – but to avoid friction, this requires further clarification.

Personalisation is far more than segmentation. It's about using customer data to change not only *what* we serve customers (down to the individual level as opposed to segment), but *how* and *when* we serve things to them on their preferred channels. It can be both reactive (ensuring the experience 'grows' towards customer preferences), or proactive (experiences based on informed predictions that create unexpected but positive moments of delight.)

It works in tandem with engagement to elevate CX in a relationship-based (rather than a transactional) approach to products and services.

These definitions bring the scale of both the challenge and opportunity into stark focus.

Over the following pages, we explore the five major obstacles to engagement – and explore how your business can overcome them.

Obstacle 1. Wider and more detailed engagement journeys

The way customers interact with service providers has shifted. For example, streaming giant Hulu found that 50% of its subscribers sign up only to watch one series and then leave. But those subscribers will often resubscribe when there's a new series they want.

Such changes are rewriting the rules of engagement.

First, it elongates the customer journey. These journeys now encompass touchpoints from the very first marketing encounter, through to touchpoints that occur *after* a customer has churned to achieve win-back. *And* building a comprehensive view of the customer across such an extensive journey is extremely complex.

Especially when customers expect media businesses to have more than visibility – they expect them to be in a position to provide proactive and personalised engagement. Customers want businesses to maximise the value of their subscription, and entice them to re-sign up if they leave.
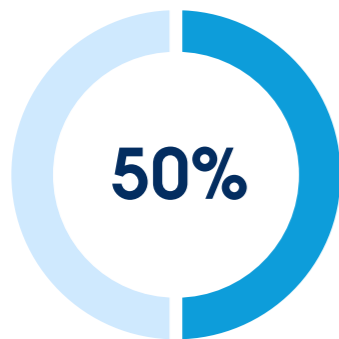
50% Hulu found that **50% of its subscribers** sign up to watch only one series and then leave.

How can businesses adapt?

The first step is a mindset shift away from linear *marketing-to-conversion* journeys and toward a lifecycle or series of loops.

Whilst the scale of this change can be daunting (it requires new mindsets, new skills, and new operating models), industry front runners are already reaping the benefits of this approach.

A great example of this is Handelsblatt Media Group – a business news leader in Germany.

Handelsblatt reimagined their customer engagement:

- **Re-mapping** customer journeys from a lifecycle perspective

- **Restructuring** teams and incentives to align with these journeys

- **Implementing** a new data-driven mindset

- **Supporting** their journeys with the right technology solutions

The result? A tremendous growth in subscriber numbers throughout the entire portfolio – find out more in this great presentation from Handelsblatt.

Obstacle 2. The segmentation mindset

The way media businesses deliver personalisation has evolved:

- We've moved from unsegmented to segmented

- Then from segmentation to one-to-one personalisation

- And now the industry frontrunners are moving to one-to-one personalisation in real time

But many businesses have failed to grasp this evolution. As such they're unable to fully comprehend – let alone orchestrate – the level of personalisation customers expect. They're also unable to see the valuable use cases of personalisation outside of marketing, or appreciate the full breadth of the engagement lifecycle that modern customers need and want.

How can businesses adapt?

Building on an appreciation of wider customer journeys, the next mindset shift is to consider how to take those journeys to the next level through personalisation.

This is something Marek Borowik, Head of Global Fan Engagement at Formula 1® and his team, have been pushing the boundaries of. As he explains in this short piece, "By using AI and automation, we can better understand our data to deliver hyper-personalised, connected, real-time fan experiences."

To get there, businesses have to rethink distribution of marketing content, use performance analytics, and implement smart automation across new cross-channel journeys.

This requires the creation of a more comprehensive data infrastructure. One that can capture information from customer interactions with the customer's consent, help your businesses distil it into insights about customer needs (and potential interests), and then connect that insight to touch points across the full customer journey.

The result is genuinely bespoke interactions that make the customer journey feel more relevant and more human.

hulu

Hulu move beyond segmented thinking

By analysing customer data, Hulu discovered that sampling has become the new loyalty.

Customers often have three to five services, sample before they commit, and 50% of them sign up for a single media asset then leave.

Hulu had a two pronged response. It started by focusing on the first 60 days of a new contract – increasing engagement to increase customer stickiness.

Next it reimagined customer journeys to allow engagement to flow past churn dates. This involved development of after care and after communication materials which reflected a shift towards an ongoing customer relationship cycle model.

The result? Hulu were able to improve key metrics such as reducing churn to 5% (two points below average for SVOD), and increasing the time spent on their platform by an incredible 20%.

Obstacle 3. The skills and strategy gap

Some of the businesses that grasp the evolution of personalisation and engagement and breakfree of the segmentation mindset, run into a new obstacle – a lack of skills and operating model needed to deliver it.

The delegation of responsibility for engagement and personalisation that moves beyond segmentation, often lands on the desk of the CMO.

Consequently, most CMOs find themselves in an impossible situation of trying to deliver this vital shift, without the skills or strategic support to realise it.

Unsurprisingly, just 15% of CMOs believe their company is on the right track with personalisation, according to McKinsey and Company. And according to the Chartered Institute of Marketing, the digital marketing skills of marketers have either stagnated or declined in almost all sectors and at all levels of seniority.

This is bad news at a time when a move from linear customer journeys towards a loop-based journey pattern, requires deeper understanding of digital channels. *And* requires better C-Suite alignment that allows your CMO, CTO, CDO, CPO to 'co-own' experience between them.
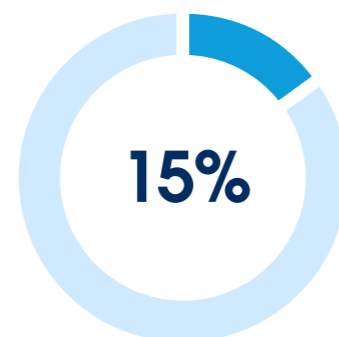
How can businesses adapt?

Step one is to ensure your CMO doesn't have to shoulder all the responsibility for engagement and personalisation. The best way to do that is to build an axis between them, your CTO, and your CFO.

Restructuring your operating model in this way increases collaboration and enables seamless integration of marketing, technology, and business outcomes.

The goal here is connected enterprise transformation – moving away from siloed thinking as well as siloed data. To see what this looks like in practice, check out this great example from RTL Nederland.

Step two is to ensure this restructure goes hand in hand with increased training for marketing teams so they understand how their roles can evolve to meet customer and business needs.

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Obstacle 4. Lack of quality data

The move from segments to individuals also throws the spotlight onto the quality of a business's data.

No matter how good your skills and strategies are, the all-encompassing customer lifecycles you're trying to orchestrate will only function if they are fed with high-quality data.

At Salesforce, we refer to this as AAA quality data. This means data that is:

- **Addressable** – e.g. emails, mobile phone numbers

- **Authenticated** – data that relates to a real person

- **Active** – data that relates to a customer that interacts frequently and has given consent for use of their data

In order to achieve this grade of data, businesses face a challenge in how they capture it and how they ensure they have sufficient permissions to use it.

Unfortunately, many businesses do not address these concerns. This means they can't build the full picture of the customer needed to make customer engagements across the lifecycle meaningful or capture data in the volume they need.

Bad news when the removal of third party cookies means businesses are going to rely even more heavily on their first party data.

How can businesses adapt?

Step one of improving data quality is to set a target. That means defining the outcomes and use cases your business wants to cover – this will inform the kind of data you need.

Step two is developing a data strategy and infrastructure that allows your business to capture AAA data, and have the governance and monitoring in place to maintain it. With the right tools, you'll even be able to achieve AAA+A data – by capturing real-time data – thereby making it 'Actual'.

To successfully achieve this, it's crucial you define your data sources and use the right platforms to harbour this data.

Which means that underpinning this new approach to data is the right choice of Customer Data Platform (CDP). In addition to helping you improve the quality of your data, a CDP can also ensure your business is able to capture it in the volume and regularity needed to make it meaningful.

In cases where the existing data quality is below par for the purposes identified, it's crucial that your business runs a cleaning and migration effort. And finally, your business will need to ensure that any existing processes use the new data source as a basis.

Obstacle 5. Weak integration and implementation

A further challenge is integration and implementation.

Even if your business can capture AAA data in the volume you need to be able to personalise engagement across customer lifecycles, it won't count for much if that data isn't borderless.

If your data can't flow securely from application to application and across departments while closely adhering to user consent and privacy regulations – you simply won't be able to personalise customer journeys across different channels.

How can businesses adapt?

To create this secure but open flow of data, your business needs to connect siloed data across legacy systems and create a single view of customers.

Achieving that means leveraging technology with APIs that allow for borderless data flow between systems and applications to increase the data-driven decision-making abilities.

This is vital when it comes to real-time data which is crucial for delivering media experiences in the right place and at the right time.

There are many ways to approach this (one of which we explore in the next chapter), but whatever your choice, we recommend benchmarking it against the functionality of MuleSoft.

This is a crucial step toward making engagement and personalisation a reality. At a time when our research shows that 74% of customers expect companies to understand their unique needs and expectations, it's also a key part of staying competitive.

The future of engagement: game-changing experiences and deeper emotional connection

There are three key pillars of great engagement: seamless un-siloed experiences, always-on discovery, and the ability to humanise every moment (at scale).

Successfully achieving that requires the right strategy, the right skills, the right mindset – and of course, the right technology choices.

The risk of not balancing these aspects cannot be underestimated – 70% of digital transformations fall short of their objectives, often with profound consequences (according to research from BCG).

In this eBook we've laid practical tips for the strategic, mindset, and skill-based shifts – but how can media businesses make platform choices that allow them to accelerate towards these goals whilst minimising risk?

At Salesforce, we've played a part in making that possible through our Maximise Audience Engagement solution which is now powered by Genie.

Genie operates like a modular toolkit which means it can fit seamlessly into any media company's IT architecture. This allows them to connect data sources, creating an un-siloed experience that removes friction from customers' marketing, care, retail, and live experiences.

The cornerstone of this is enabling media players to unify customer data into a single source of truth, in real time. This lays the foundations for relevant content and communications, and ultimately enables always-on discovery.

Always-on discovery means businesses are able to personalise every moment with AI by using real-time data to enrich each part of the customer experience. Customers benefit from personal recommendations for content, channels, and offers which helps them rationalise the abundance of choice available.

For example, companies are able to customise their website content based on each specific customer.

The cumulative effect is the ability to humanise every moment. This is about detecting signals in real time and triggering the most appropriate messaging based on context. Businesses can then intelligently measure what's working, get actionable insight, and put it into action in a way that optimises growth and improves customer outcomes.

If you want to use a top example of this from outside the media space, check out the great work L'Oreal is doing on this front.

There's no silver bullet for this level of engagement – our products and services are crucial parts of a wider system of change rather than the system of change itself.

Our Maximise Audience Engagement Solution in tandem with our other service offerings can give businesses the toolkit they need to revolutionise their ability to engage and personalise.

Conclusion

The media sector has a huge opportunity to create the kind of experiences that truly engage and delight customers.

But the path there is full of pitfalls for those who do not embrace new ways of thinking, new strategic approaches, and trusted technology platforms which offer unprecedented functionality and can evolve with your needs.

The key takeaways

- Reimagine linear customer journeys

- Move beyond segmentation mindset

- Create an axis between your CMO, CTO, and CFO

- Improve quality of your data through smart CDP choices

- And strengthen integration and implementation through great platform choices

If you'd like to maximise your current business models, and lay the foundations for the next generation of media engagement and growth – contact us and let's get the conversation started.

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