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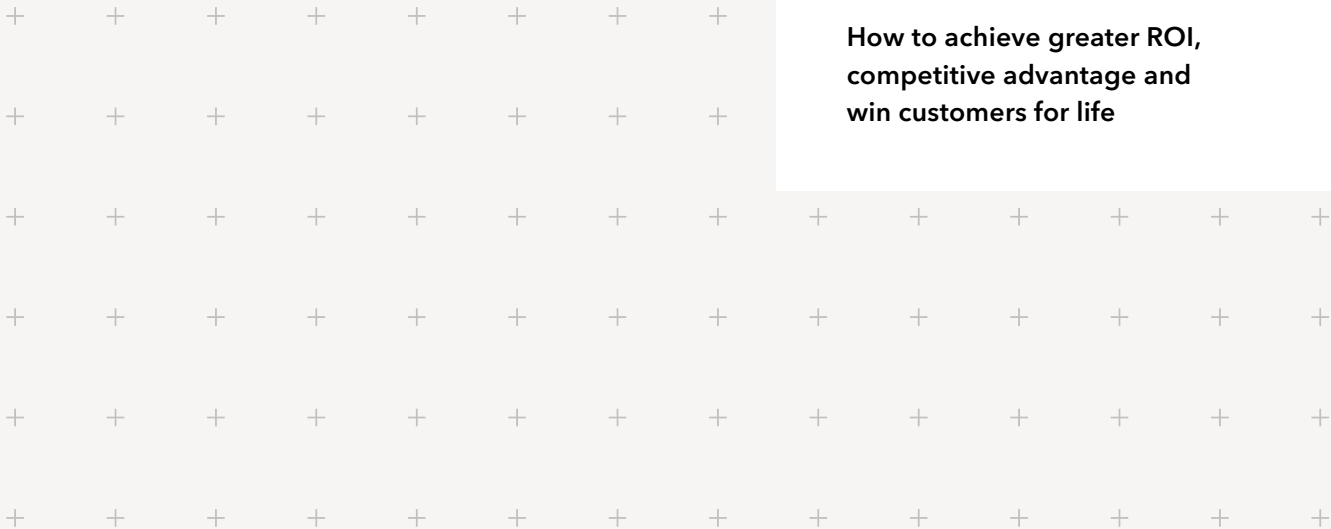
A Strategic Guide for Executives

How to achieve greater ROI, competitive advantage and win customers for life

Successful commerce is about delivering great experiences

As consumers, we all know a great experience when we have one. We also know a bad one. We know how that makes us think, feel, and act at the time — and influences us the next time around.

That's how smart brands are building lifelong customer loyalty — they go beyond a marketplace and create memorable experiences that engage their customers. Without this, companies fall by the wayside.
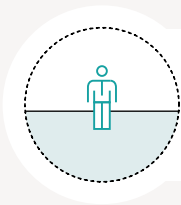
So how can Digital Marketers, Merchandisers, and ecommerce professionals deliver great experiences for customers, time and again?

The evolution of customer relationships

Unknown
Traditional Commerce is transaction-based and largely anonymous. There's a brief encounter at the cart. That's it.

Distant
Experience-driven Commerce offers a veneer of personalization with some hit-and-miss interaction using guesswork.

Intimate
Experience Commerce engages with customers on a 1:1 level – before, during, and after every transaction. It's continual.

140%

Increased spend from customers who have good experiences than those with the poorest experiences*.

* The Value of the Customer Experience, Quantified – Harvard Business Review

A critical question: How close are you to your customers?

Ecommerce has transformed our world. But it's often created a mindset where the transaction is king. Buyers are there to fill online shopping carts and check out – not abandon them – and that's as far as it goes.

But experiences built solely around transactions are not what today's customers want. To them, it's cold and impersonal. If a brand seems only interested in taking their money, then why should they give them any loyalty? So, it's no surprise when a company can't differentiate itself, it has maxed out its discount offers, cannot lower prices any further, and has no idea what to do next.

Some companies attempt to get customers to sign up for newsletters and then only contact them once in a while – or serve everything to them at once in the hope that something will stick. But it's like a fake friendship, built on a shallow understanding of the customer that can end up just irritating people.

In contrast, successful brands realize the quality of the overall experience is something much greater than products and transactions. The transaction is just one step in a full and ongoing, two-way relationship where customers return again and again. To compete effectively, the experience needs to rival or exceed the very best that customers have encountered elsewhere.

Put simply, successful brands go beyond the transaction and focus on creating Experience Commerce.

What's unique about Experience Commerce?

Great experiences are personal, relevant, in context, and consistent across devices. They may start on a tablet during a coffee break, continue the journey on their phone while on a treadmill at the gym, and then make the purchase on their laptop at home in the evening.

We have ideas, we think about them, we make a purchase, we share how we feel, and we remember.

In our minds as consumers, it's all one experience. We don't think in terms of "channels". Life isn't a series of stop/start collisions as we ram into clunky interfaces, databases, and systems (or rather, it shouldn't be).

What today's customers crave is personalized experiences that extend across any channel they decide to use at any time. It should feel easy, natural, and helpful. Companies must be relevant in every step of the customer's journey and serve up interesting, relevant content at just the right moment. It's about predicting, with a high degree of accuracy, what the consumer might want to see next.

This requires an understanding of consumers as individuals — by gathering and seamlessly interpreting their behaviors across multiple touchpoints.
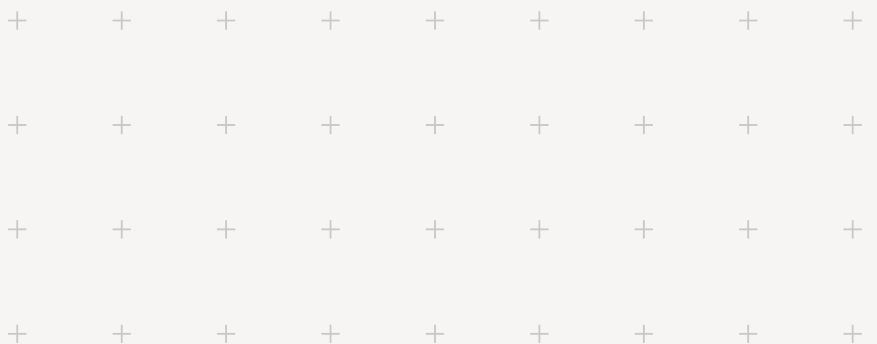
For many brands it's not happening. Why?

Experience Commerce doesn't happen by accident. Brands need the right strategy to adapt to new realities, and the right tools to enable this transformation. Without these, they won't be able to deliver on the promise of Experience Commerce.

Digital Marketers must deliver campaigns that extend beyond the product catalog and online shopping cart. Brands must stay competitive and relevant to win consumers' attention. But not knowing where a customer is in the buying cycle makes it difficult to personalize campaigns and go beyond the transaction. It's also hard to evaluate attribution and uncover the tactics that contribute to higher lifetime customer value and better ROI.

Merchandisers also face big challenges. They may work with too many systems that are not integrated and legacy systems, so there's no single source of the truth. They desperately need "more modern" usability with a consolidated view of all their commerce tools in real time in order to monitor how products are organized, priced, packaged, and listed in the inventory. But instead they have to spend precious time updating multiple online and offline systems. And even then, it's next-to-impossible to get products displayed correctly.

Ecommerce professionals may also struggle with legacy ecommerce systems that are purely focused on shopping cart conversion, recognizing that the conversation starts much earlier and extends much wider. They'd love to be able to understand and manage customer complexity across channels, but insufficient access to the right data, due to inflexible and disparate legacy systems, means they don't stand a chance.

Overall, information and functionality exist within silos — a major problem that stands in the way for all these professionals. Teams are unable to work in harmony. Executives need to invest but are unsure about where. And all of this has a negative impact on the customer. In a fiercely competitive world, this model of marketing is unsustainable.

You need the same flexible, integrated tool many of the world's leading retail brands are leveraging that allows the experience to extend beyond the transaction.

What's the answer?

Content, commerce, and customers are separate in many organizations. One system develops attraction, which may be a CMS, social, or marketing platform. The store is a separate site and marks the end of the attraction journey. The commerce platform then sees the shopper for the first time and wants to start a relationship but knows nothing about them.

In contrast, an Experience Commerce architecture integrates these systems into a single platform. The results are game changing.

Effective marketing surrounds today's customer throughout the journey. In fact, the transaction could very well be in the middle of the experience.

Commerce experiences become personalized and relevant across the customer lifecycle, tactics, channels, and devices. You create an amazing, immersive experience, rather than just a marketplace where your product is positioned the same way as everyone else.

A unified "Experience Database" enables this, consolidating profiles, rules, and interactions from multiple sources and providing the ability to build unique profiles, per consumer, per device.

With these in place, you can personalize during pre-purchase, at purchase and post-purchase for each individual account.

This approach allows you to prioritize the customer experience in every connected phase – across every channel.

At last, digital marketers, merchandisers and ecommerce professionals have a comprehensive and unified set of tools and insights at their fingertips to see clearly for the first time how their customers are behaving. You can deliver the right message to the right person at the right time automatically and create meaningful experiences for your customers. Experience Commerce drives customer loyalty, increases Lifetime Customer Value and ultimately becomes a durable competitive advantage.
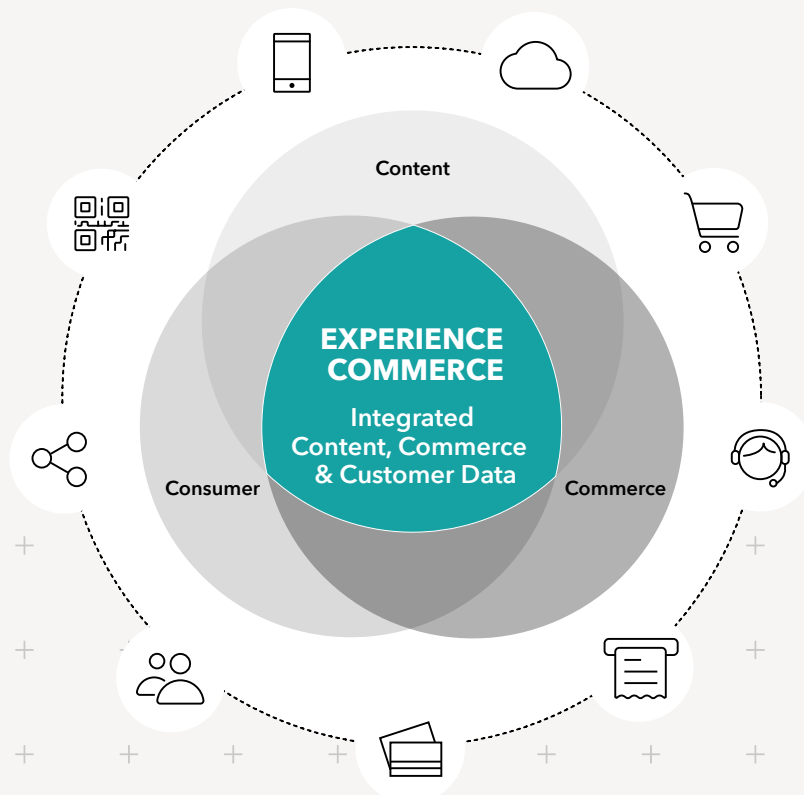
How is Experience Commerce helping companies today?

Modern, next-gen platforms like Sitecore Experience Commerce™ represent the culmination of many years' investment in technology, integration, and unification of tools to efficiently and effectively deliver on an "experience commerce" vision. They bring together Customer data, Content and Commerce – with outstanding results for companies. We're not talking about small incremental changes, but business transformations.

Let's look at Experience Commerce from five different angles:

01

Stronger engagement

Toshiba Australia customizes content and functionality for every customer – with personalization that drives stronger engagement. Everything customers need is now at their fingertips across desktop, tablet, and mobile. Toshiba is equipped with the world's most powerful commerce suite and has raised the bar in customer experience across its industry.

Find out how they did it…

02

Deeper personalization

QNET treats customers as individuals. Macro- and micro-analytics give the company deep insights into what matters to visitors. From a single platform, teams can personalize content based on country, language, previous purchases, and interactions. In fact, QNET can manage completely contextual, entirely relevant customer experiences and retarget visitors with abandoned shopping carts.

Read the full story…

03

Continual sales

Outdoors equipment manufacturer Toro communicates directly with end-customers using the Internet of Things (IoT) as soon as new parts or services are needed. Their app enables ordering in one click. Thanks to the right platform, the company can deliver the speed, convenience, and personalization that delights a digitally native generation.

Read the blog…

04

Ease of use

Pet Supplies Plus tailors each customer's experience to a preferred shopping destination allowing customers to know the specific products carried, pricing, and availability. Additionally, based on self-identified pet ownership content is tailored to various the owners animal's specific needs. And, with a new program called "You Click. We Fetch", customers can buy online and have items immediately ready for pickup in their local store or even carried out to their car.

Find out more…

05

Commercial agility

With a single platform, Neenah Paper can deliver a great customer experience while achieving faster time-to-market and control over infrastructure costs. Elegant product presentation, streamlined purchasing, and integrated payment solutions offer a premium online experience that meets customer needs and prevents migration to competitive sites.

Read the full case study…

What's in it for me?

Experience commerce enables you to know every customer and shape every personalized experience across all channels in real time. Rise to this level and you will thrive – achieving a greater and sustainable ROI, competitive differentiation, and win customers for life.

Sitecore has the tools, strategies and tactics that commerce executives need. And they are available today.

Next steps

Discover how far you are along the road to Experience Commerce. Assess your current readiness by filling out our **Experience Commerce Checklist** to identify ways to transform your performance.

Alternatively, you can Request a demo or contact your local Sitecore representative today.

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