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It's time to do what scares most brands

Ditch the old-school thought process. Create seamless and personal experiences using an omnichannel marketing approach.

More and more B2B brands recognise the term omnichannel marketing as a fully integrated state of client engagement, which includes shared data across channels to achieve a seamless experience. However, for the majority of brands, the implementation of true omnichannel marketing is still within the early stages of adoption.

Our experience of this correlates with a Forrester survey (October 2015) where 1350 buyers and 750 B2B companies stated that: "B2B sellers understand the importance of omnichannel customer engagement but they are inhibited by company silos, both in terms of data and processes" while "excellent customer engagement required the right omnichannel strategy, partner ecosystem and technology infrastructure to meet buyers' expectations."

In order to achieve this seamless communication, it's critical to maintain a consistent flow of relevant information across different client organisations. Let's have a look at three key challenges brands are facing today:

1. Internal organisations, partner ecosystems and how your agency is set up

Brands should anticipate that their prospects might start interacting with one organisation but move on to another as they progress along the decision-making cycle. We have noticed that time spent with clients on removing barriers to allow the flow of information across organisations has increased. To effectively manage client interaction, an omnichannel marketing programme should support, be consistent with and exploit all of the tools at their disposal, across all organisations, right through to the 'last mile' where the client interaction is converted into a sale.

The traditional model, where multiple specialist agencies were managed by an almost equal number of inhouse counterparts, is long gone. Brands either need to internalise marketing production, or outsource to an integrated agency that can provide the marketing infrastructure, experience and agility to plan for real-time changes, while coping with the hundreds of triggers and actions that match each of the different personas in numerous possible customer journeys.

2. Engaging content, through preferred channels to relevant personas

Most brands have adopted some form of persona marketing, although traditional product-oriented

messaging is still the go-to strategy for many global organisations.

The increasing level of complexity related to persona mapping and preferred channels of communication makes it hard for brands to adequately satisfy today's buyers. Brands should allow customers to seamlessly pick up from where they left off; no matter which channel of communication they are using or where they are in the purchase process.

3. Smart technology

An omnichannel approach relies heavily on the use of multiple, sophisticated and integrated technologies. This often means that companies end up paying tens of thousands for incompatible, singular 'best-of-breed' systems because there was no clear roadmap at the beginning of the overall integration and evolution. The migration of data from CRM and PRM through to marketing automation, telemarketing and finally lead management should not create an unnecessary workload or the impression of losing control. Brands should be looking into a SaaS model, which allows modular or full integration with existing CRM systems.

Because these challenges affect all brands, there's too much at stake to delay taking that first step, and brands that will remain market leaders will be the ones that can deliver on the promise of a seamless and personal omnichannel experience now.