Customer Journey Orchestration

Enable an Always-On Marketing Machine to Drive Journey Orchestration

Create Customer Learning Paths to Unlock More Purchases

CMOs Must Craft Experience-Driven Mobile Sites and Apps

Leadership Spotlight

Reset CMO Expectations on Customer Journey Orchestration

With Gartner’s Benjamin Bloom
Letter From the Editor

Organizations have increasingly high expectations for what marketing technology can do to help them orchestrate the customer journey. Yet 71% of senior marketers say they currently struggle to optimize event-triggered marketing interventions across the customer journey.1 As martech stacks grow in size and the variety and complexity of customer expectations steadily rise, CMOs face the challenge of harnessing technology and data — turning data into tangible gains.

This issue of The Chief Marketing Officer starts by dissecting a new creative process you must build out as the critical support system for always-on, automated interventions. Drive a fundamental shift away from utilizing technology to meet campaign development deadlines, and toward supporting the deep integration of technology to sense and respond to customers in something approaching real time. This is a large shift for marketing organizations, one that will require different types of understanding as well as the tight coordination of skills and processes that likely involve the wider enterprise.

But looking at this problem from the customer’s perspective, our research challenges us to think differently about what the most valuable customer journeys look like. When customers experience a self-reflective learning path — a sequence of orchestrated supplier interactions that deepens their own understanding — consumers and B2B buyers are 38% and 147%, respectively, more likely to spend more than originally planned.2 Take deliberate steps to support this type of customer path, a critical tool to harness in your customer journey orchestration strategy.

To operationalize these paths organizations need to mature their event-triggered marketing capabilities and this issue includes a look into the process teams should consistently use. But the technology to execute journey orchestration has also continued to evolve, and many vendors can now credibly claim to support some aspects of this strategy. So we sat down with the Gartner VP Analyst Benjamin Bloom to help you better set expectations for maximizing the value of technology investments in this space.

Finally, we use our Digital IQ data to explore cross-industry marketing performance in mobile marketing. This channel has arguably been most responsible for reshaping customer journeys by blending the physical and digital worlds. Lessons from Genius brands can help you upgrade your approach to responding to — and shaping — customer journeys.

We hope this issue of The Chief Marketing Officer guides your organization’s way to success in 2022 and beyond.

— Michael Giblin

1 Gartner’s CMO Spend and Strategy Survey, 2022
2 2021 Gartner Journey Orchestration Customer Survey

Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.
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Creating a seamless customer experience across all channels is a major undertaking that requires a shift from managing campaigns to managing event-based triggering capabilities. To do this, CMOs must build out a new creative process dedicated to configuring and managing automated interventions.
CMOs have talked about transforming the marketing organization since before the turn of the century. Without difficulty they evangelize a future state of “always-on” marketing that is:

- Predictive
- Adaptive
- Automated
- Personalized

Manifesting these characteristics through technology investments will fail or stall without an organizing principle — a way for marketers to use technology to identify or create customer signals, define responses to those signals, and capture customer interactions with those responses.

The shift from a campaign-based strategy to one focused on configuring automated interactions requires investing in new technology, but ROI is dependent on the execution of new processes and operating models within marketing.

**Review Always-On Marketing Capabilities**

The “always-on marketing machine” that CMOs envision requires organizing a set of capabilities that will be leveraged by a new creative process. The capabilities necessary to do that are audience insight generation, multichannel execution, marketing data management and content management (see Figure 1).

### Figure 1. The Capabilities of Always-On Marketing

- **Audience Insight Generation**
  - Customer Data Analysis

- **Marketing Data Management**
  - Customer Data Collation

- **Multichannel Execution**
  - Marketing Automation
  - CX/CJO Optimization
  - Personalization
  - Marketing Experimentation

- **Content Management**
  - Content Curation
  - Content Storage
  - Metadata Management

Source: Gartner
The current state of technology already enables most of these capabilities — in fact for each capability it is marketing, not technology, that holds marketing back. In particular, Gartner’s CMO clients say their efforts to configure automated interventions face a bottleneck of time and skill sets. Martech leaders claim to only use 58% of their martech stack and cite impediments to utilization such as cross-functional collaboration, data management and the complexity of the martech ecosystem. Traditional creative teams remain overwhelmed by the backlog of brand, product, customer and corporate communications the business demands.

**Establish a New Creative Process to Configure and Manage Event-Based Automated Interventions**

Some companies have managed to configure automated interactions through manual or one-off efforts. To get it done, they may have done the following:

- Pulled a list from a CRM database analyst
- Worked with IT colleagues to map data and configure tools
- Created new content from scratch with agency partners
- Manually deployed that content through siloed channel owners

What many companies failed to realize was that however ad hoc, the effort outlined a process. Documenting how you did or would configure automated interactions — even if you haven’t done such work — is the first step toward defining a new creative process for always-on marketing at scale. The journey orchestration process starts with understanding, followed by defining, experimenting and evolving (see Figure 2).

Although ad hoc may be current-state, a cross-functional fusion team with marketing at the helm ensures the necessary skills and operational independence to support always-on marketing. Fusion teams assemble the skill sets necessary to use input from customer experience analytics, to identify a signal within the data, and to configure and track an automated interaction triggered by that signal.

The process illustrated above is designed to capture positive and negative responses to the questions fusion teams ask throughout the process. To mature journey orchestration capabilities, measure the results of interactions you create, but also capture reasons why other interactions couldn’t be executed. For example, orchestration teams should capture whenever the lack of data, or its timely updating, pose obstacles to specific triggered interventions to inform future efforts. Although the performance of configured interactions help prove the current value of these always-on efforts, teams should likewise assert the value of learning what cannot be configured, and record and analyze barriers to guide successive investment priorities.

CMOs who carefully track and learn from successful and unsuccessful elements of their orchestration process can win additional investment opportunities that mature journey orchestration capabilities and present the brand with more opportunities to offer differentiated experiences.

**Figure 2. Journey Orchestration Process**

![Figure 2. Journey Orchestration Process](image)

Source: Gartner
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<thead>
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<th>Webinar Title</th>
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<td>How CMOs Can Prove and Improve Marketing’s Value</td>
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Journey orchestration is a top priority for chief marketing officers, but many have made costly mistakes setting up orchestration capabilities. CMOs can use this research to identify key shifts they must make for orchestration to be successful.
Journey Orchestration Defined

Competitive dynamics, along with the complexity of unique customer interactions, has led marketers to prioritize a coordinated, customer-focused set of techniques often called journey orchestration. When executed well, this approach can be a powerful mechanism for converting customers and deepening overall customer relationships.

Definition: **Customer journey orchestration** is organizing a set of recommended interactions to create or respond to customer signals throughout the customer life cycle.

Although many CMOs have prioritized this strategy, attaining the desired results can nevertheless prove elusive. In part, this is because successful journey orchestration is not simply the result of doing more, but of executing differently. This places unique burdens on a marketing function as it seeks to scale orchestration. As a result, prepare to make these three important shifts (see Figure 1):

- **Interactions**: How to engage customers
- **People**: Who to involve
- **Process**: What technology and process to use

Shift 1: Orchestration Is Less About the Quantity of Next Best Actions Than Their Quality

**Marketer Belief**: If we could only scale our next best action marketing campaigns, then we could orchestrate customer journeys.

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Figure 1. 3 Shifts to Make Orchestration Efforts Successful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orchestration is not another campaign</td>
<td>Orchestration depends more on skills integration than skills acquisition</td>
<td>Your journey orchestration process should drive technology acquisition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Enabler**:
- **Interactions**: Ability to appropriately respond to customer intentions
- **People**: Ability to source the right mix of skills from within and outside of marketing
- **Process**: Ability to align orchestration efforts to strategic business objectives

Source: Gartner
To develop this deep customer understanding, use customer journey maps to understand the supplier-agnostic paths that customers take when completing a purchase. And know how to determine where customers are in their journey and when to respond. Since customers must complete certain tasks to make progress in their journeys, it is important to identify when customers are working on those tasks to understand the customers’ current journey stages and needs. Markets can now respond to these signals with a customer-centric, orchestrated intervention for the surfaced customer journey stage and need.

Marketers often believe that given the complexity of a typical customer journey, successful orchestration will require the ability to scale triggered next best actions that help customers complete their tasks or journeys. But orchestration is different, and companies need to think more about the quality of their interactions than their quantity. The best orchestration is customer-centric, aiming to help customers achieve their desired outcome. Making this shift requires a deep understanding of customer journeys and customer needs as well as the ability to parse specific signals of intent from volumes of interaction data.

A campaign is marketer-centric, while orchestration is customer-centric.

Here’s an example from Vanguard on how its marketing team adopted a new way of operating to orchestrate customer journeys.

Case-in-Point: Orchestrating Customer Journey

Vanguard

Although Vanguard’s marketing team had constructed customer journey maps, it did not fully account for outside influences and repeated customer actions on the path to purchase. The team undertook ethnographic research and focus groups in which new customers recounted how they made their purchase decisions. The research revealed customers’ natural journeys, depicted in a nonlinear journey map that distinguished between different types of customer tasks. Vanguard tailors interactions across the customer journey depending on the customer task type. This approach has helped Vanguard improve new customer onboarding starts.
CMOs understand that journey orchestration requires a more advanced analytic skill set, but focusing on those specific skills can be myopic. While journey orchestration teams need to possess highly technical skills, for example to build predictive models, this is not all that is needed. There is still a critical need to hypothesize high-value journey orchestration interventions based on a nuanced understanding of customer workflows, channel capabilities and content assets. Those tasks can be accomplished by general marketers who become more data fluent. The productive coordination of advanced analytic and marketing skills will determine initial orchestration success more than the quality of data science.

Set up a cross-functional fusion team to help integrate the right mix of skills needed to turn customer data into signals and configure the appropriate response to that signal. A fusion team also helps marketing solidify the relationship with different functions, such as IT, data analytics and digital center of excellence teams.

Definition: A fusion team is a multidisciplinary team that blends technology or analytics and business-domain expertise. It shares accountability for business and technology outcomes.

A fusion team will help free up enterprise resources with the necessary skills needed to bring orchestration to life. There are many ways that you can organize a fusion team. Here’s one example from İşbank.

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**Case-in-Point: Fusion Team for AI Use Cases**

İşbank has a fusion team for AI with underlying squads that are focused on critical AI use cases, such as retail pricing or marketing. The fusion teams maintain a ratio of 30% IT staff to 70% staff from other parts of the business, such as marketing, channel management, and technical product management functions. The embedded IT staff boost the technical expertise of other team members and broker connections with other technical and governance experts. For the full case study, see Case Study: IT Transformation to Enable the New Digital Workforce (İşbank).

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**Shift 2: Orchestration Depends More on Skills Integration Than Skills Acquisition**

**Marketer Belief:** If we could only hire data scientists, then we could orchestrate customer journeys.

CMOs understand that journey orchestration requires a more advanced analytic skill set, but focusing on those specific skills can be myopic. While journey orchestration teams need to possess highly technical skills, for example to build predictive models, this is not all that is needed. There is still a critical need to hypothesize high-value journey orchestration interventions based on a nuanced understanding of customer workflows, channel capabilities and content assets. Those tasks can be accomplished by general marketers who become more data fluent. The productive coordination of advanced analytic and marketing skills will determine initial orchestration success more than the quality of data science.

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**Shift 3: Your Journey Orchestration Process Should Drive the Acquisition of Technology**

**Marketer Belief:** If we could only buy the right marketing technology, then we could orchestrate customer journeys.

Companies too often create processes to support a new technology rather than allowing processes to drive decisions around technology acquisition and utilization. This mistake is a particular risk for CMOs advancing a strategy of customer journey orchestration. This is because orchestration success typically requires the acquisition and integration of several distinct solutions — from audience insight to execution and content management.
Rather than assuming that technology will reduce the need for process discipline, you will need to fortify decision processes in technology acquisition and execution by working back from outcomes and prioritizing ongoing human judgment:

- **Outcome-oriented decision making:** We often see marketers pursue a technology purchase decision by starting with the technology and ending with the desired business outcomes to justify the purchase. Instead, CMOs should start with the desired business outcomes and end with selecting the best-fit technology (see Figure 2). Taking an outcome-oriented approach enables you to ground every conversation around what you want to achieve instead of focusing on what the technology can do. After deciding on the desired business outcomes, consider where you have gaps in the following journey orchestration capabilities: marketing data management, audience insight generation, multichannel execution or content management. The technology selected needs to be in service of the desired outcomes and orchestration capabilities.

- **Human judgment:** Not every aspect of journey orchestration can be automated by technology because there is still a requirement for human judgment. Whether it is interpreting customer signals or knowing when to recommend a human interaction as part of an orchestrated customer journey, some manual effort will still be necessary and add value to your orchestration efforts. Determine which interactions to automate using technology, which to deliver using manual effort and how to prioritize among them.

### The Path Forward

In summary, orchestration is not about acquisition of people or technology, but rather the intelligent connection of people, process, data and technology to organize a set of recommended customer interactions. To enable these efforts, recalibrate how you:

- Respond to customer intent
- Integrate the necessary skills from within and outside of the marketing function
- Anchor capability development in disciplined and repeatable processes aligned to strategic business objectives

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**Figure 2. Flip the Technology-Oriented Decision Process to an Outcome-Oriented Decision Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology-Oriented Decisions Flow</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
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| Glass Wall of Martech Procurement |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended: Outcome-Oriented Decisions Flow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Gartner*
CMOs: Accelerate your impact with Gartner for Marketers

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Event-triggered marketing is the process of identifying, prioritizing, categorizing, monitoring, optimizing and executing triggered messages. CMOs can quickly supplement existing tactics while working toward optimal next best actions that reach audiences at the right moment.
CMOs recognize the need to make a final break with legacy “batch and blast” campaign tactics. These messages demonstrate minimal sensitivity to customers’ context and are more likely to be perceived as spam, garnering low response rates. CMOs must prioritize responding to specific signals that arise within the customer journey. Event-triggered marketing techniques are essential to this shift.

Event-triggered marketing techniques are contextual interactions that occur in response to detected events, like clickstream behavior or transactions.

These events are signals for timing and for targeting offers and experiences that, through their relevance, provide value to the customer and the company. Opportunities for triggered marketing exist in every industry sector and across channels and touchpoints such as social marketing, mobile marketing, contact centers, lead management, direct mail, email marketing and the Internet of Things. Adopting event-triggered marketing can automate the delivery of appropriate next best actions to customers throughout their journey.

Although the concept of event-triggered marketing isn’t new, it requires marketers to truly understand customer behavior and context, optimize data and technology, and improve the coordination of teams aligned to channels or customer tasks. To embark on or improve the application of event-triggered marketing techniques, follow the five-step process shown in Figure 1.

Many multichannel marketers perform an initial identification of events (Step 1) and then go straight to execution (Step 5). In addition to relying on marketers’ gut-level assumptions, even when individual interventions prove beneficial to the business, the lack of deliberate process will make measurement and optimization more difficult.

Step 1: Build and Prioritize a Library of Events Across the Customer Journey

The first step is to understand meaningful events in the customer/company relationship and to start formally identifying those specific events. Examples include transactions, contract signings, store visits, inbound calls, changes in account balance and even a customer’s device location. Other events may be more broad, such as external influences like economic shifts, weather changes or government legislation. Of course, customers do a lot of things in their journeys, so focus on the more salient events or interactions, or those with the potential to deepen or impair the relationship.

Identify these events through:
- Common industry knowledge and ideation sessions with teams from other customer-facing departments
- Customer focus groups or surveys
- Social listening or voice-of-the-customer analysis
- Journey maps

Figure 1. Five Steps for Capitalizing on Event-Triggered Marketing

- **Step 1**: Build and Prioritize Events Across the Customer Journey
- **Step 2**: Categorize Events Into Scheduled, Anticipated and External
- **Step 3**: Select an Appropriate Way to Monitor Events
- **Step 4**: Optimize Your Events Triggers
- **Step 5**: Execute Events at Scale

Source: Gartner
After building a list of relationship-significant events to identify potential triggers, review your events and select five to seven priorities. Prioritize those that will have the greatest impact on the company and offer the most value to the customer. Form hypotheses about the impact that a triggered marketing message could have, and prepare to mix quick wins with longer-term projects. Note that more strategic impacts such as improved retention, satisfaction and lifetime value may be harder to influence than message engagement rates or web form completions.

Step 2: Categorize Identified Events Into Scheduled, Anticipated and External Triggers

Next, categorize identified events to align them with triggers to process creation. Although several methods exist for categorizing relevant events, many multichannel marketers start by categorizing event triggers into three types of events: scheduled, anticipated and external (see Table 1).

Step 3: Select an Appropriate Way to Monitor Events

There are multiple approaches to monitor and detect events, including studying transactional systems. The type of trigger will determine how to monitor the data. For instance, a rule-based system can trigger a marketing action whenever a data value passes a given threshold or when there is a change in a defined state.

Determining which approach is best depends on:
• Type of event you’ve prioritized
• Technology infrastructure within the organization
• Category of events (scheduled, anticipated or external)

One challenge is that this step requires monitoring multiple systems (e.g., customer records and applications) and depends how frequently those systems are updated (e.g., in real time or every week, month, quarter or year). In a multichannel environment, you want to monitor and detect a significant event regardless of which channel it occurs in. This means that interpretation of an event, such as an intent to purchase, would depend on detection of an event in any of the channels (e.g., call center, website, email, physical store, etc.) where that event could take place. As a result, the more interaction channels you have, the more complex event-triggered marketing processes become.

More mature multichannel marketers may use a system that unifies customer data, such as a customer data platform or multichannel marketing hub, to detect triggers. On the other hand, less mature teams must monitor individual channels and should have greater concern for data capture and data refresh frequency.

Table 1: The Three Event Trigger Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Event Triggers</th>
<th>Anticipated Event Triggers</th>
<th>External Event Triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Set time components</td>
<td>• Unpredictable timing</td>
<td>• Unpredictable timing and source of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both frequent and long term</td>
<td>• Both frequent and long term</td>
<td>• Moderately to highly complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tend to be less complex</td>
<td>• Moderately complex</td>
<td>• Moderate to high impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Usually low impact</td>
<td>• Usually moderate impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example:
- Account anniversary message
- Abandoned shopping cart
- Change in law or regulations

Source: Gartner
To start, determine which data sources (internal or external) to monitor based on accuracy and availability and the frequency of data refreshes. Gain efficiency in event monitoring by selecting a system that already collects and unifies customer behavior and can support the creation of custom event triggers. Over time, create your own events that combine channel-specific behaviors with changes in a predictive model or propensity score.

**Step 4: Optimize Your Event Triggers**

The key to optimizing event-triggered marketing is to identify the best marketing interaction based on the combination of multiple triggers and available offer types. The process is similar to any other optimization exercise where conditions, constraints, rules for change and objectives factor into identifying action plans that provide the best balance in meeting business objectives. For each event where you create a response, determine short- and medium-term business impacts to measure such as a new purchase or increased order value (short term), or improved customer retention (longer term).

A main challenge in this step is getting companywide buy-in for optimization techniques. Take the example of a bank with different lines of business (e.g., credit card, mortgage and investments) that share many of the same customers. Each line of business has different goals to achieve, and many have their own budget and revenue targets. Convincing one department not to engage with a customer or to hold off on offering a product or service so you can optimize profitability of the overall company can be a tough proposition.

To win support for your proposition, pilot optimization techniques initially in one or two lines of business to prove positive results. Use the proof-of-concept results from pilot programs to help gain buy-in from, and funding for, other lines. Make sure you apply optimization techniques to determine the number of interactions for the company as a whole.

**Step 5: Execute Events at Scale**

Execution of event triggers requires process and automation, especially when you’re navigating a complex, multisystem, multichannel environment. Without a well-defined and implemented execution process, your identified triggers will not generate any ROI. However, because companies can eventually reach hundreds of meaningful events in the marketing department alone, attempting to act on every event is unmanageable. Many organizations start with a basic or manual effort but are able to scale by automation and execution of the event triggers. This involves developing collaborative processes alongside technology.

Examples of processes that are needed to execute event triggers include routing and multiple scripting processes for the call center agent, or appending customer information and content within a lead management process to support the sales team.

Bring in team members with enough business acumen to understand the customer journey context as well as your existing marketing programs. In addition to working with IT, customer service and operations to connect customer touchpoints, have a point person who is able to lead creative development using agency or internal resources. Ensure that team members are taking advantage of opportunities to learn the capabilities of your tools and build in appropriate measurements from the start. Prime the team to monitor the performance of your programs and assess whether a lack of progress indicates a new technology vendor is needed.

This last step is likely to be the most challenging due to the burden of:

- Fostering continuous collaboration across functions
- Getting the right data at the time of need from multiple sources
- Evaluating processes and improving on them over time

In the long term, an increasing level of autonomous execution will come from AI and machine learning modules within marketing technology solutions. This will enable an evolution from rule-based to predictive responses to events. But in the current environment, a critical component of success in event-triggered marketing is how well your organization has identified, prioritized and categorized events to begin with.
Reset CMO Expectations on Customer Journey Orchestration: An Interview With Gartner’s Benjamin Bloom

By David Millstein and Benjamin Bloom

Gartner VP Analyst Benjamin Bloom shares his knowledge and experience to help chief marketing officers identify the critical technology drivers of success in customer journey orchestration.
Thanks for sitting down for this interview, Ben! Let’s say a CMO is at a cocktail party and the topic of journey orchestration technology comes up. What’s the first thing they should know about this technology?

Glad to be here — that certainly sounds like quite the party! CMOs should know that “journey orchestration” cannot be bought from just a single stand-alone technology vendor. Instead, vendors may offer relevant capabilities as a part of other marketing technology solutions (e.g., multichannel marketing hubs, personalization engines, etc.) that can help with journey orchestration. As a result, journey orchestration is most likely going to involve integration across many potential offerings.

That’s very interesting! If a CMO is procuring technology to help with orchestration efforts, who should they involve in the procurement process?

I would start by understanding who owns journey orchestration, with the baseline that there might not be a single unified owner at present. Typically, different functions own specific channels or touchpoints within customer journeys, which likely carry over to orchestration. CMOs should involve in the procurement process all functions that will help manage and implement journey orchestration efforts. This likely will include sales, service and product teams. Getting aligned in the buying process will ensure all perspectives are considered and will also make it easier to stay aligned in execution.

So, that raises what seems like an important point: Once a CMO establishes who will own journey orchestration activities, how should they navigate the related change management around orchestration efforts?

This is critical. First, CMOs should identify the capabilities needed to support journey orchestration. A capability-first approach places organizational processes, people, and data in context with technology to enable an organization to perform a specific function such as lead scoring or website personalization. This requires CMOs to look beyond only marketing capabilities and consider how marketing can work with other business functions for orchestration.

Additionally, CMOs should assess how their organization currently communicates with customers by considering the following questions:

- Does marketing tend to identify a “next best action” in the moment, or is it more pre-determined?
- What data sources and existing technology capabilities are involved in this process?
- How significant will the transformation be to develop a system that supports orchestration?

Finally, CMOs will need to change how their teams manage customer data. They will need to move from siloed to connected data repositories so orchestration efforts can occur across the channels that customers use. CMOs should ensure the resources and processes are in place to make this transition go smoothly.

CMOs should know that “journey orchestration” cannot be bought from just a single stand-alone technology vendor.
I'm curious from what you see, what most separates the best companies from their peers in terms of their approach to journey orchestration?

First of all, the best companies have really solved the cross-functional challenges. One common stumbling block is not getting everyone looking at the same success metrics. Successful companies align key performance indicators and create common goals across functions. I'm not necessarily prescribing a complicated reorganization. In some cases, we've seen improved coordination by creating collaborative governance structures. From a technology standpoint, leading companies have a clear and compelling customer value proposition, which drives technology acquisition. The business value comes from a pursuit of deep customer understanding and then devoting the time and resources to derive actionable insight from this understanding.

“From a technology standpoint, leading companies have a clear and compelling customer value proposition, which drives technology acquisition.”

Leading companies are able to more accurately measure the impact of their orchestration activities because the value of the data and technology are in alignment, and there is a clear picture of the actions that customers will take when they are getting value. Successful companies also are willing to start small and iterate, in order to focus refining and optimizing journey orchestration efforts over time as they learn.

This idea of learning and getting better over time brings me to my last question. From your regular conversations with technology vendors as well as clients using these technologies, where do you see this space trending over the next two to three years?

There’s a lot of potential in artificial intelligence and machine learning, and we’ll continue to see advances in their application. But for the foreseeable future, regardless of how much AI and ML are used to automate journey orchestration efforts, I can’t overstate how much of the value companies realize from journey orchestration will still depend on human judgment. This is critical in decisions about resource allocation as well as how to govern and direct technology investments to support differentiating business capabilities.

But just lifting up a bit more: As AI becomes much more integrated into core marketing technologies, CMOs need to be ready to assert their ethical judgment as well. Because of marketing’s closeness to the customer, it will be increasingly important for CMOs to prepare to help define the ethical boundaries of artificial intelligence deployment in their organization, rather than allow it to be left solely to others in the enterprise. Journey orchestration will continue to rely on human judgment to govern and direct technology investments as well as support differentiating business capabilities.

“Journey orchestration will continue to rely on human judgment to govern and direct technology investments as well as support differentiating business capabilities.”
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Learn More
Create Customer Learning Paths to Unlock More Purchases

By Devon Weidemann

CMOs must rethink their current approach to customer journey orchestration or risk limited customer impact. Use this research to provide guidance and learning opportunities that help customers accomplish something that matters to them.
The Problem: Complex, Multichannel Customer Journeys

“Unraveling complex journeys is a big tangled mess that we haven’t been able to give the focus that it needs yet. It’s wildly complex and vendors oversimplify it.”

Marketing Leader, Healthcare

Managing customer journeys feels harder in today’s environment. Customers engage with about four unique channels on average during a purchase experience with a brand — such as website, email, rep interactions and store visits.1 And complexity in customer behavior increases the likelihood of unfortunate errors on the part of brands. In turn, poorly executed multichannel customer journeys lead to customer abandonment, churn, lack of loyalty and less ambitious purchases. Imagine customers enduring a barrage of disconnected emails, needing to remember to repeat tasks that could have been automated (e.g., autofill forms), and encountering sales reps without access to complete customer profiles. That is the current reality for far too many companies. But, if marketing can shape and optimize a deliberate sequence of next best actions, then encouraging customers to stick with the brand and buy more than they would have otherwise — thus boosting marketing’s ROI — seems squarely in view.

But marketers’ current approach to event-triggered and next best action commercial messages isn’t yielding clear signals on how to prioritize customer journey orchestration initiatives. At worst, marketers have had to confront a potentially steep cost: Since every customer is different, marketers will need to configure a huge number of relatively custom-made orchestrated journeys.

Our data confirms this challenge. Gartner analyzed the impact of customers’ experience with different channels, types of next best action messages and even the timing of next best action. We did not find any meaningful differences in the likelihood of customers making more ambitious purchases based on these factors.1 This prompted us to look deeper at the nature of a series of interactions, from the customer’s perspective, to identify common elements of successful journeys.

The Insight: Customers Reward Self-Reflective Learning Paths

We set out to understand what good customer journey orchestration looks like from the customer’s perspective. We considered the characteristics of sequential, multichannel interactions that led customers to spend more than they originally planned. Customers’ perceptions of the path of those interactions naturally fall into three independent categories, which are not mutually exclusive:

- **Seamless path**: Provide a consistent experience across channels
- **Prescriptive path**: Provide personalized recommendations
- **Learning path**: Deepen my understanding of how to accomplish my goals

Surprisingly, we found that when customers perceive the multichannel path as seamless and/or prescriptive, there is no positive effect on buying more than expected. At best, this approach accelerates the progress of customers who were already in-market and inclined to make a purchase from a given brand, but it often fails to change the choices customers make along their path to purchase. In other words, prescription and seamlessness help customers buy exactly what they already intended to buy.
However, when customers experience a high-quality learning path—a sequence of brand interactions that deepens their understanding of how to accomplish their goals—they are more likely to spend more than originally planned (see Figures 1 and 2). Progressive learning helps customers feel more confident and capable in their decision making and therefore more open to making different, more ambitious choices. Just as critically, customers were far less likely to report undertaking a high-quality learning path (25%) than to report a highly prescriptive path (36%) or a highly seamless path (51%).

**Figure 1. Learning Paths Lead B2C Customers to Buy More**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seamless Path</td>
<td>-31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive Path</td>
<td>-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Path</td>
<td>+38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Provide a **consistent** experience across **channels**
- Provide personalized **recommendations**
- Deepen my understanding of how to accomplish my goals

n = 888 B2C customers
Source: Gartner
Note: Logistic regression model with controls for respondent gender, age, level of education, employment status, region, decision-making approach and desire for exploration, relationship with brand/supplier, purchase type, product/service category, cost, purchase speed and ease relative to expectations, level of consideration, product value, and volume of NBAs received.

**Figure 2. Learning Paths Lead B2B Customers to Buy More**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seamless Path</td>
<td>Insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive Path</td>
<td>Insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Path</td>
<td>+147%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Provide a **consistent** experience across **channels**
- Provide personalized **recommendations**
- Deepen my understanding of how to accomplish my goals

n = 511 B2B customers
Source: Gartner
Note: Logistic regression model with controls for respondent gender, age, employment status, region, decision-making approach and desire for exploration, company revenue, buying group size, number of suppliers considered, relationship with brand/supplier, purchase type, product/service category, cost, purchase speed and ease relative to expectations, product value, and volume of NBAs received.
Although customer learning paths are the most valuable, companies often think about this primarily in terms of “learning about the company or its products.” However, the most effective learning experiences cause customers to realize something new about their needs or goals as opposed to something new about the brand’s product or service (see Figure 3).

Progressive learning helps customers feel more confident and capable in their decision making and therefore more open to making different, more ambitious choices.

In fact, there is a measurable impact on learning quality if brands can support or stimulate self-reflective learning *during even one task* within the purchase journey.¹ This requires you to rethink how to approach customer journey orchestration.

**Figure 3. Self-Reflective Learning Beats Product Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learned New Information Related to the Purchase Decision</th>
<th>Realized Something New About Own Needs or Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.29x</td>
<td>1.73x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 1,399 customers
Source: Gartner
Note: Bars represent the proportion of respondents who selected any of the statements included in the buying more index and are indexed to the proportion of respondents who did not agree with each statement for at least one purchase task.
The Way Forward: Marketing Tactics for Self-Reflective Learning

There are a range of practical ways that CMOs can improve the learning quality of their customer journeys by selectively intervening across a number of sequential touchpoints. As a start, we recommend building on existing guided selling infrastructure and tactics (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Marketing Tactics to Support Customers’ Self-Reflective Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>What to Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search Marketing</td>
<td>Buy paid advertising around self-oriented, goal-relevant search terms (e.g., “...do I need” or “...for me”), directing users on a path to guided selling content such as quizzes or diagnostics, and to capitalize on learning-motivated customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Features</td>
<td>Allow customers to filter content (e.g., products, reviews) by experience level and planned usage to help them better understand their own use cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Highlight and link user-generated content with how-to guidance and lessons learned to blend product learning with self-reflective learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Experiences</td>
<td>Provide immersive, simulated product experiences with real-time feedback to progressively reinforce customer learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While marketers often think about the next best action for customers, the ultimate next best action for marketers is to get customers to engage in at least one salient, self-reflective learning task as part of their journey. Since high-quality learning paths do more to change the value of customers’ journeys than any other journey attribute, use this strategy to unlock the value of your company’s orchestration efforts.

1 2021 Gartner Journey Orchestration Customer Survey: This survey was conducted to explore B2B and B2C customers’ perceptions of customer journey orchestration and determine which elements of the customer journey drive commercial outcomes. The research was conducted online from November through December 2021 among 1,786 respondents from the U.S. (n = 836), Canada (n = 322), the U.K. (n = 308), Western Europe (n = 102), Australia (n = 118) and India/Singapore (n = 100). To qualify for the survey, respondents must have considered a purchase and clearly recalled two interactions with a specific brand/supplier in the past six months. B2B customers were required to be full-time employees at a company with at least $500 million in 2020 revenue and have been involved in a significant purchase decision on behalf of their company (i.e., a decision involving multiple potential vendors and more than one decision maker).

2 2021 Gartner Journey Orchestration Customer Survey. Based on respondents who scored at least a 6 (agree) on the respective indexies.

Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

Source: Gartner
Welcome to the Meh-taverse!
With Kyle Rees and Rachel Steinhardt

In this episode, Gartner experts discuss current and future states of the metaverse, what U.S. consumers are thinking about the metaverse now, and how CMOs should assess their brand’s place in these new virtual worlds.

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Mobile serves as the connective tissue in complex customer journeys. Yet, many marketing teams still fail to create positive, differentiating mobile site and app experiences for customers. CMOs must prioritize efforts in mobile site and brand-owned apps to create mobile moments that matter.
The amount of time consumers spend on mobile websites and apps continues to surge.\textsuperscript{1,2} This is especially true over the past 12 months as people steadily return to corporate offices and take vacations for the first time since before the start of the pandemic.\textsuperscript{3} Whether at home or on the go, smartphones serve as the intermediary between brands and their customers. Consumers or prospective buyers may engage with a brand via their smartphone in a variety of ways, but a brand’s mobile site and app are among the most prevalent and experience-defining touchpoints customers leverage across their journey.

But stark differences exist in the ways consumers and business buyers typically leverage these brand-owned channels — and how often. While a brand’s mobile site typically functions primarily as an outward-facing hub for occasional customers or curious prospects, its mobile app is often reserved for only the most committed customers (see Figure 1). To deliver experience-driven mobile sites and apps, define how each platform will offer differentiating experiences that serve the unique needs of these two distinct audiences.

One way you can start to craft experience-driven mobile apps and sites is by benchmarking your team’s own mobile efforts against in- and out-of-category peers. Late in 2021, Gartner ranked brands based on their mobile marketing performance (see Digital IQ: Mobile Marketing Benchmarks for 2021). In particular, Gartner focused on how brands offer mobile users a positive mobile web and app experience, as seen through the lens of user engagement, traffic and site speed. By analyzing over 1,300 brands across 15 industries, Gartner identified the unique strategies and differentiating experiences leading brands in our benchmark incorporate in their mobile marketing approach.

**Steps to Mobile App Success**

The following sections combine the most prevalent takeaways from our benchmark report. Use these insights as inspiration for ways you can direct your team to mobile app success.

**Consider Whether You Even Need an App**

Just because you can build a mobile app, doesn’t mean you should. Mobile apps are resource-intensive and mediocre results don’t justify the high costs of maintenance. Out of the more than 1,300 brands analyzed in our benchmark report, just half had at least one customer-facing app. Consider these questions as you determine the need for a mobile app:

- Is there an opportunity to provide a better — not just different — experience through a brand app that other owned channels can’t provide?
- Do you have a retention or loyalty program that an app could complement by enhancing engagement and data capture?
- Are more site visitors coming from mobile devices or desktop computers?
- Do most competitors have a customer-facing app?

**Figure 1. Differences Between a Brand’s Mobile App vs. Mobile Site**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casual (Reach + Discovery)</th>
<th>Intensity of Engagement</th>
<th>Intimate (Personalized)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobile Site</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exposure: Brand face to the world</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Audience: New, prospective or semiregular customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brand benefits: Brand awareness, greater reach, discoverability, cost-effective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobile App</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exposure: Brand face to the individual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Audience: Committed customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brand benefits: Greater personalization, advanced use cases and features, data collection, offline access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gartner
Streamline the App Experience

According to a Gartner Consumer Community survey, respondents cite “convenience” as the top reason that influences their decision for downloading a brand’s mobile app. While offering loyalty-based incentives and inherent utility are also important factors, overall it’s convenience that consumers crave.

One way your team can provide that convenience is to make your app as streamlined as possible. A good design goal is to minimize the number of taps it takes for a user to complete a goal. This is especially true for transactional-focused apps, where users make frequent purchases, often on the go.

Dunkin’ provides a noteworthy example of a brand app that’s well-optimized for convenience. Through its app, users can save their preferred Dunkin’ location and favorite orders to make ordering ahead and in-store check-out frictionless. Upon opening the app, customers can place an order from their preferred location in just two taps. Its website, however, delivers a different and more nuanced experience. Customers can still order food for pick up and delivery. They can also view detailed nutrition, allergy and ingredient information for each item on the menu, learn more about “DD perks,” the Dunkin’ loyalty card and shop Dunkin’ merchandise.

In this example, Dunkin’s app has a clear purpose that caters to the specific needs of committed customers. The website serves multiple purposes that cater to the various needs of occasional customers or curious prospects. Ultimately, each channel delivers value by providing differentiated experiences that help customers accomplish their unique goals.

Tailor Experiences Using First-Party Data Captured In-App

As ongoing data privacy disruptions continue to hamper marketing efforts, mobile apps will be an increasingly vital channel for collecting and using first-party customer data needed to fuel personalization (see Brands Retreat Behind Walled Gardens as Data Privacy Efforts Take Root). But marketers must tread carefully. According to Gartner’s 2021 Personalization Survey, seventy-six percent of consumers and B2B buyers agree with the statement, “I am very careful about controlling how brands collect and use my personal information.”

5
People are less apprehensive when they’re assured their data will help them in the long run. Nike provides a stellar example of a leading brand that collects first-party data in-app to make its app users’ lives easier. Upon downloading the Nike app, users are asked to complete a short quiz. Before they begin, Nike provides a brief explanation about how the quiz will benefit the user’s app experience. Nike uses this data to tailor the entire app experience. It highlights interest-based shopping categories and preloads product pages with the user’s shoe size already selected. It also promotes geographically relevant events, highlighting the role the app plays in connecting users to online and offline experiences (see Figure 2).

**Promote App Use by Onboarding New App Users**

Just because people download your app doesn’t mean they’ll actually use it. Many brands miss the mark when it comes to guiding new users on how to use their app, resulting in lower engagement. But many leading brands in our benchmark research help new app users explore the full breadth of its functionality by onboarding users through a series of helpful tutorials or instructional content. Arts and crafts retailer Michaels is one notable example.

Upon downloading the Michaels app, users receive a push notification welcoming them and offering a quick overview of the app’s benefits. Those that opt-in are taken through a short series of quick teaching points that help them better understand the app’s benefits. Michaels also uses this as an opportunity to describe the benefits of activating key features, such as enabling location services or signing into an account. This sort of permission priming, where you explain the benefits of the actions you wish users to take, helps guide app users in the right direction without forcing their hand.

**Steps to Mobile Site Success**

The following sections combine the most prevalent takeaways from our benchmark report. Use these insights as inspiration for ways you can direct your team to mobile site success.

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**Figure 2. Nike Tailors the App Experience Using First-Party Data**

Users complete a quiz, giving information such as gender preference, shoe size and athletic interests.

A dedicated section maps one-to-one with selected interests from the quiz.

PDPs are personalized to shoe size to ease conversion.

Geographically relevant events are promoted to the user.

Source: Adapted From Nike
Simplify Your Mobile Site Experience
When reviewing brand mobile websites, we found a stark difference between the design of top-ranked brand mobile homepages versus those of brands in lower ranks. Bottom-ranked brands in our benchmark research tended to have cluttered mobile homepages that were riddled with walls of text, irrelevant images and links, and with long confusing lists of menu items. This is less than ideal for consumers that rely on mobile sites to accomplish tasks quickly. Leading brands, on the other hand, prioritized simple and intuitive mobile sites that were accessible to a wide audience, contained minimal text and had a streamlined and easy to navigate menu (see Figure 3).

Keep Load Times Low
There’s nothing like a slow mobile experience that deflates the expectations of on-the-go and in-the-moment customers. Slower websites are associated with higher bounce rates and lower conversion rates. They are penalized in Google search rankings. Although many factors influence a mobile site’s speed, such as large script files and high-resolution images, we see a clear correlation between the number of images a brand’s mobile homepage hosts and its subsequent load time. For example, mobile homepages among brands that take under two seconds to load have an average of 20 image files on their homepage. However, a mobile homepage that takes six seconds or longer will have an average of 70 image files.

Decide whether having a high number of images on your mobile site is worth the cost of having a potentially slower mobile site. Instruct your team to consult mobile analytics and run in-house tests to explore the effects a slower homepage may have on typical site KPIs, such as bounce rate and pages per visit. Your marketing team should also test metrics tied closer to revenue goals, such as instances of “add to cart” or “request for a quote.” As a general rule, shoot for mobile site speeds of three seconds or less, but two and under is ideal.

Figure 3. Leading Brands Simplify Their Mobile Site Experience

Accessibility

Publix offers a high-contrast mobile homepage with white space and text spacing accessible to a wide audience.

Minimal Text

Chime’s mobile homepage contains minimal text with clean, visual elements and easy-to-read CTAs.

Streamlined Menu

Garmin’s primary navigation features multiple tiers of collapsible menu options and a search text field.

Source: Publix, Chime and Garmin
Ease Complex Purchase Decisions

Due to the complexity of their products and services, many B2B brands forgo a mobile app in lieu of focusing resources on their website and other channels. Only 33% of B2B brands in our benchmark research had a customer-facing brand app.

One notable example of a B2B brand with a superior mobile site is Uline. Its focus on user experience simplifies customers’ product search and comparison tasks. Mimicking its longstanding product catalog, Uline offers a clean, highly visual and easy to navigate mobile site experience for buyers, with intuitive, image-focused category links that are easy to read and tap on a mobile device. Auto-suggest search bars and product calculators help buyers more quickly find the best-fit products for their business. Its product display pages rival those of familiar B2C commerce experiences, such as Amazon, with carousels of product images, color options and more.

1 Desktop vs Mobile vs Tablet Market Share Worldwide, April 2021-April 2022, StatsCounter.
3 TSA Checkpoint Travel Numbers, Transportation Security Administration.
4 Gartner Consumer Community (2-9 September 2021, n = 355). Note: While Gartner Consumer Community (n = 450) members resemble the U.S. general population, the data presented above is based on the responses of community members who chose to take each individual activity (sample sizes vary). Respondent samples for individual activities may not be representative of the general population and the data should only be used for directional insights.
5 2021 Gartner Personalization Survey: This survey was fielded online in October 2021 among 1,499 B2B and B2C customers from the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Australia and New Zealand. To qualify for the survey, respondents must have considered purchasing from a brand or supplier and recalled a recent communication from that brand or supplier. B2B customers must have worked for an organization with at least $250 million in annual revenue and have been involved in a significant purchase decision on behalf of their company (i.e., a decision involving multiple potential vendors and more than one decision maker). The survey was designed to explore buyers’ and consumers’ behaviors and expectations regarding personalized communications.
6 Why Your Site Speed Score Matters, Boldist.