



The Digital Marketer's Manifesto

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To succeed in a customer-centric world, we must truly see our customers.

Not stalk them, but understand them. As customer experience architects, we must collaborate to design and deliver products, services, environments, and personalized experiences that truly meet our customers' needs. As we do, we will transform a traditionally passive and transaction-oriented association into a productive, profitable, and mutually beneficial collaboration with our customers.

To See (sē/verb): to understand

Now that we have entered what Forrester describes as the age of the consumer, those organizations that are able to really see their customers will be the ones that succeed. Indeed, the ability to see—to know where to look, to decode meaning from a glut of information and interactions, and reflect that understanding in our customer experience—is today’s primary source of competitive advantage.

What do we mean by seeing our customers? Seeing means understanding. At its core, seeing is about developing empathy for our prospects and customers. Tim Brown, CEO and President of IDEO, the global innovation and design firm, describes empathy as making an effort to “see the world through the eyes of others, understand the world through their experiences, and feel the world through their emotions.”

Seeing means getting to know our prospects and customers so well that we can accurately describe the physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of their needs and desires. It means having the context from which we can draw useful inferences that enable us to identify their current, emerging, and latent needs—some of which they may not yet be aware—and deliver solutions that meet and exceed their expectations.

Seeing means developing a proprietary understanding that allows us to deliver a remarkable customer experience that delights our customers and distinguishes us from our competition.

Seeing means putting our customers at the center of our strategy, broadening our traditional way of creating strategy, which has focused primarily on optimization and efficiency of our corporate resources, to consider our customers' needs and desires first. This complementary approach to strategy formation encourages us to ask ourselves, "How do we design our products/services/environments/experiences to best meet the needs of our customers?" rather than being satisfied with, "How can we sell this product or service to maximize our profitability?"

Seeing says to our prospects and customers, often without words: "we acknowledge and respect you." It eschews manipulation in favor of transparency, and creates the conditions under which our prospects and customers can get to know us and determine *for themselves* whether they want to engage with us.

Seeing means being committed to creating products, services, environments, and experiences that resonate with our prospects and customers so that we will be invited into their lives before, during, and after purchases. It means being trusted advisors for our prospects and customers, go-to resources, rather than biased advocates for our own company's products and services.

Seeing means viewing our prospects and customers as relationships rather than transactions, knowing that commerce will follow as we form mutually rewarding customer connections. Experienced seers know that as we engage with our unknown prospects in ways that are useful, they often become customers, and in many cases partners, co-creating, co-marketing, and co-serving our brands. Seers calculate customer worth broadly, looking beyond transactions to measurements like customer lifetime value (CLTV) and customer referral value (CRV), or some combination thereof, to keep monitoring what really drives long-term success.

Seeing doesn't mean giving away the bank, or letting our customers haphazardly determine our strategy from minute-to-minute, or being all things to all people. It is a highly focused strategy that operates from a place of shared value, where we help our target prospects and customers reach *their* goals in a way that makes sense for our organizations. In this coveted sweet spot, our solutions meet our prospects' and customers' needs. We are playing on the same team, pursuing the same goals.

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Seeing is not Stalking

Seeing understands. Stalking (as defined on Wikipedia) is “unwanted or obsessive attention by an individual or group toward another person.” Ready access to big data and analytics, marketing automation, highly-targeted advertising capabilities, and mobile devices that allow us to be within feet of our prospects and customers at all times, make it easy to stalk.

Seeing is harder. It requires discipline and confidence. A far cry from the batch and blast practices of an earlier era, seeing individualizes communications to reflect each of our prospect’s and customer’s unique profiles, behaviors, preferences, and ever changing contexts to maximize relevancy. It seeks the minimum effective dose of ongoing engagement as determined by each of our customer’s individualized preferences, no more and no less.

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Seeing delivers this message to our prospects and customers: We respect who you are and what you are trying to achieve and want to be of assistance if we can. Our intentions are honorable. Ultimately, we want to collaborate with you to make your experience with us better, if you are

game. To do so we have to get to know you. We promise to collect only the data that will help us better serve you and to be transparent about what we gather and how we gather it. We respect your preferences, and will provide clear opportunities for you to choose where and how often to communicate with us, or to opt out of communications with us altogether. We welcome the opportunity for you to collaborate with us on our products, services, and experiences. If you like what we do, we would love for you to tell others.

Seeing Is At the Core of Remarkable Customer Experience

Seeing allows us to deliver a remarkable customer experience, today's primary source of competitive advantage. Customer experience is essentially how our customers think, feel, and talk about us. Many factors contribute to our customers' experience with us. Some result from interactions *with* us over time through our products, sales people, website, customer service effort, and social media presences, to name a few. Others stem from the interactions our prospects and customers have *about* us with their peers in reviews, social spaces like Facebook or our customer service communities, or over coffee. However they are formed, these perceptions are fluid and significant—in a recommendation-based economy, customer perceptions largely define our brands.

Customer experience is a fundamental source of competitive advantage because it is important to our prospects and customers. Multiple studies have shown that customer experience profoundly impacts customers' willingness to purchase, the price they are willing to pay, their overall engagement, and whether they will advocate for brands.

Not surprisingly, customer experience also impacts market value. Watermark Consulting found that the stock performance of customer experience leaders profoundly exceeds that of both the S&P 500 and the customer experience laggards. Expectations for customer experience are growing across mature and emerging markets. A recent study found that 57 percent of customers said they hold brands to higher standards than they did previously. (Jack Morton Worldwide)

Seeing Means Doing Business Differently

Knowing how to see, where to look, how to decode meaning from information and interactions, and being able to reflect that understanding in our customer experience is complex. Although many companies want to see, they still have a long way to go. Only 8 percent of customers believe that companies are delivering great brand experiences. (Forrester) Some industries are so lacking that simply being adequate will create a point of differentiation. (Forrester)

How can we really see our customers and reflect that understanding in our customer experience? How is it possible that after talking for decades about bringing our customers' voice into the center of our organizations, we are now able to turn that aspiration into a reality?

Multiple new skills are allowing organizations to successfully see and deliver. The emergence of these skills, combined with a desire to explore how they can work together, provided the impetus for our writing *The Digital Marketer: Ten New Skills You Must Learn to Stay Relevant and Customer-Centric*. Although we often discuss these ten skills in the context of marketing, customer-centricity is a systems-level undertaking. A complex and interconnected system support each of our customer touchpoints, including internal functions such as Operations, IT, Finance, Human Resources, Customer Service, as well as a broader ecosystem, which may include manufacturers, suppliers, media partners, and retailers. Coordinated learning and implementation across this varied group is essential to our ability to deliver remarkable customer experiences, which often requires a realignment of efforts, the integrating of many processes and systems, and adjustments to our organizational culture.

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The Ten New Skills

1. Marketers are becoming experience architects, creating environments and experiences in which their customers are the protagonists and where they feel recognized, assisted, and affirmed—perhaps feeling even more themselves by having been there—even if their product is paint.

Through its My Colortopia website, Glidden Paints transforms the paint color discovery process into an exercise in self-expression. Several engaging tools help people identify their unique style and generate customized-color palettes. Would-be decorators can upload a photo of an object—a couch, rug, or fabric—from which My Colortopia will identify coordinating paint colors. To visualize how colors will look on the walls of people’s homes, users can upload a photo of the room and virtually paint their walls. If the color(s) work, the website will calculate how much paint is needed for the space, identify the closest store where it is available, and generate a shopping list to take along. You have to look hard to find Glidden branding on My Colortopia as it is designed to focus on potential customers, offering useful tools to help them achieve their goals. But when Glidden’s potential customers achieve their goals, Glidden simultaneously achieves its own.

To become successful experience architects, marketers are working closely with user experience teams.

They are applying key principles and processes from design thinking, behavior science, and customer journey and touchpoint analysis to better understand their customers and their experiences, enhance their creative capacity, produce experiences that are likely to elicit a target behavior, and evaluate and optimize their customer experience.

2. Marketers are becoming data analytics savvy, generating insight to better understand, identify, and engage their prospects and customers. Using a combination of new data fields and advanced predictive analytics, the marketing software company, Marketo, uncovered multiple qualified leads— leads that had previously been evaluated and rejected by their traditional lead qualification tool. With enhanced data and analytics, Marketo was able to blend customer profile and behavior data with other relevant attributes to discover predictive patterns that were more accurate than rules-based scoring.

Finding the business value in clicks, shares, swipes, and pins is easier said than done, however. It requires an ability to capture relevant data, integrate disparate data sources, maintain and store massive amounts of information, and apply advanced analytics to detect the important signals amid a lot of noise. While this is primarily the works of data scientists, marketers must be capable of broad analytic thinking to ask the probing questions that frame solid data analysis and be able to run routine analyses on the results. We also need to build and manage technically savvy marketing teams, and influence, if not directly purchase, necessary technology.

3. In order to scale one-to-one communication, marketers are becoming skilled in marketing automation. These integrated customer engagement platforms can steward our prospects and customers across multiple channels throughout the customer journey. Smart marketing automation systems can assess where individuals are in the customer experience journey and distribute content specifically selected for them. They also detect potential content redundancies, changes in cadence, and shifts in interest and priorities, based upon behaviors such as clicks, views, shares, time spent with materials, and adapt content streams accordingly. This means that our customers are only invited into experiences that have a high probability of meeting their needs, avoiding spam.

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Marketing automation also allows us to trace the impact of each marketing interaction on our prospects' and customers' behavior, making it possible for us to continually assess and optimize our efforts, and to more accurately demonstrate marketing's contribution to key financial metrics. For many companies, marketing automation has also brought marketing and sales into closer alignment, helping to alleviate age-old conflicts.

Oracle successfully applied marketing automation technology to create a more personalized online customer experience. A nurturing campaign doubled registration rates, achieved a 96 percent increase in email open rates and a 165% increase in click-through rates. The bottom line: with marketing automation, Oracle was able to increase its sales qualified leads by 20x and reduce deliver time of qualified leads to sales from 120 hours to three hours.

4. Marketers are creating a wide variety of effective content to offer experiences that are truly useful. Our ability to tell great stories and design engaging experiences to catalyze customer connection is critical to engaging with our customers throughout the entire customer journey. To effectively meet their needs, our companies must offer a rich, seamless, and increasingly contextualized experience, across multiple channels.

Contextualization is personalization on steroids. It is marketing experiences that incorporate our prospects' and customers' profile, past behavior, preferences, and beliefs with their current situation—the time, place, location, behaviors, and device—and uses that information to predict and offer relevant experiences.

Amazon contextualizes its engagement by offering highly personalized recommendations. Recognizing that people are often on the go when using their phones, Amazon's app allows users to take a picture of an item with their mobile device and, within seconds, it will identify the

item and provide a range of buying options that are a click away. During a recent blizzard, the shoe retailer DSW was able to contextualize its emails, offering customers in the affected location an invitation to shop online for boots and other footwear while they were stuck indoors.

5. Marketers are incorporating paid, earned, and owned media to enhance credibility and reach. Our content (owned media) remains at the center of all of our experiences. However, in many cases an integrated strategy in which we combine our content with materials created by our prospects and customers (earned media) allows us to harness the most compelling advocates for our businesses: satisfied customers. Similarly, combining our content with new forms of paid media, including paid bloggers and native advertising on social networks, can often reach a broader and more targeted base of prospects and customers in their preferred channels. This converged strategy can create a relevant surround sound that captures people's attention.

GE successfully used paid media in the form of promoted tweets to celebrate Inventors' Day (February 11). In the week leading up to the event, GE shared rich media including photos and video highlighting key inventors via #IWANTTOINVENT. On Inventor's Day, GE invited Twitter users to tweet about *their own* dream inventions.

A team of designers stood by to create blueprint sketches of the hypothetical inventions in real-time; over 70 customized sketches were created that day. The Twitter campaign increased

brand conversations over 4x and placed GE in the enviable position of owning the conversation about invention that day.

6. Marketers are engaging prospects and customers in social spaces. Social networks and communities have become important touchpoints with our prospects and customers. Their interactive nature has turned static text into cross-channel dialogue, bringing brands and customers in direct contact. In many instances, these networks and communities are influencing the design, manufacture, packaging, delivery, and servicing of our products and services, putting our customers directly in the center of our organizations.

To create value in the social sphere, marketers need to be well versed in each community's individual culture and norms of engagement, and be clear about how to best participate. In some instances, we may choose to develop our own social communities, a task that requires considerable initial and ongoing community development and management expertise.

Through its branded community, IBM PartnerWorld, IBM offers a broad range of resources that help its business partners build, sell, and implement IBM-based solutions for their customers. Partners are able to take advantage of IBM programs like *Selling Through Social Insights*, which taps into the power of social listening to increase sales. Social Insights tracks data from over 280 million relevant social sources. The Social Insights dashboard synthesizes “who is talking”

and “what is trending” in five strategic subject areas related to IBM products. Personalized recommendations for relevant content, combined with access to relevant IBM experts, provide rich resources for business partners to get up to speed on what is currently on their prospects’ minds. Armed with this knowledge, business partners are better able to turn leads into sales.

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7. Marketers are redesigning their loyalty programs to reflect what actually drives targeted behaviors. Loyalty erosion and customer defection are pervasive. E-commerce has lowered the barriers to entry for competition, establishing a truly global marketplace.

Building loyalty in an age when people are inundated with options from near and far and can comparison-shop with ease is a demanding task. Ironically, most loyalty programs do not do much to create loyalty. Although people enroll in the programs, the majority are not inspired to remain active.

The best way to create loyalty is to ensure incredible brand satisfaction by creating remarkable customer experiences that show our knowledge of our customers and *our* loyalty to *them*. Offering a loyalty program that enhances the customer experience in a way that our customers find compelling can be a winning strategy.

In its Balance Rewards program, Walgreens pharmacy combines a traditional purchase-based rewards program with a wellness challenge. Through the program, Walgreens rewards its customers for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Members receive points for setting exercise and weight management goals and for taking specific steps to achieve them: walking, running, and recording their weight. Participants can easily track their progress by syncing wireless activity trackers and scales with its website or mobile app or by inputting their data manually. Points can be redeemed for dollars on future Walgreens purchases. Balance Rewards is an important component of Walgreens' overall customer offering as it positions the company as a partner in its customers' overall health.

8. Marketers are becoming increasingly agile, quick to adapt to ever changing customers and market developments. An entrepreneurial approach to decision-making enables us to act quickly and confidently even in the face of ambiguity. There are many components of entrepreneurial decision-making, but the hallmark is learning by doing, creating evidence for or against

our ideas through immediate and frequent testing. This iterative process allows us to continuously act and learn, enhancing our organizations' knowledge, experience, and responsiveness.

By launching its videos in social channels first, the fast-food chain, KFC, identifies what content resonates and is able to adopt pieces that work well for broader distribution. When its highly popular video of motocross rider Bryce Hudson doing a backflip while eating KFC chicken went viral, KFC quickly edited it for TV, and was able to show it to enthusiastic audiences during pre-game Super Bowl coverage.

9. Marketers are igniting customer-centricity across their companies and ecosystems.

Customer-centricity requires a higher level of operational maturity than we have needed in the past, because multiple functions impact our customer experience. Acting like symphony conductors, marketers are inspiring customer-centricity at every important touchpoint. This requires a realignment of efforts, the integrating of many processes and systems, and a shift in many of our organizations' cultures.

United States Automobile Association (USAA) has made a concerted effort to engage its entire company in the customer service effort. A few years ago the company, which serves military personnel and their families, consolidated its customer experience related operations under an EVP of member experience. Today, almost half of USAA's employees are on the member-experi-

ence team, which is responsible for “setting strategy, monitoring performance, and driving innovation.” Seeing its business through the eyes of its customers paid off. Today, USAA enjoys the highest customer experience rankings across all three industries in which the company is active. These rankings translate into hard cash: the company has enjoyed double-digit increases in auto sales and loans.

10. Marketers are taking charge of their careers, regularly nurturing their networks, skills, and creativity.

To take advantage of the opportunities that this new landscape offers, marketers are actively managing our careers to identify the skills and experiences we need and how we are going to acquire them. Intentionally building our networks creates vital and vetted information flows that keep us up-to-date and augment our resource base. Branding ourselves and being thoughtful about proactively managing our reputation and contributions to the field have become essential. Seeking out developmental relationships including mentors and sponsors can offer necessary support to boost our careers.

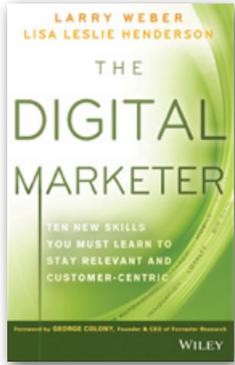
Finally, consciously putting ourselves in situations where we can feed and flex our creative muscles kindles our imagination, uncovering new possibilities for how we can contribute.

We Don't Have to Be Experts to See

As individuals, we do not need to become highly skilled in each of these 10 new areas. However, we do need fluency in each of these skills, with practical knowledge about the opportunities and challenges they bring, and of how they can be combined to transform customer experience into today's most promising source of competitive advantage.

While learning new skills can be challenging, it is also rewarding. In addition to the inherent rewards of being reinvigorated and on-the-cutting edge of the field, marketers that have committed themselves to learning these new skills are becoming key drivers of sales, loyalty, and innovation, producers of revenue rather than generators of expenses. This is good news for marketers as individuals, but also for our companies, as customer experience leaders continually outperform their peers. **It is a great time for all of us, in each of our respective roles, to roll up our sleeves and create a customer-first future.** 📌

Info



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