20 WAYS TO PERSONALIZE EMAIL AND WEB CONTENT TO DELIVER AN AWESOME CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
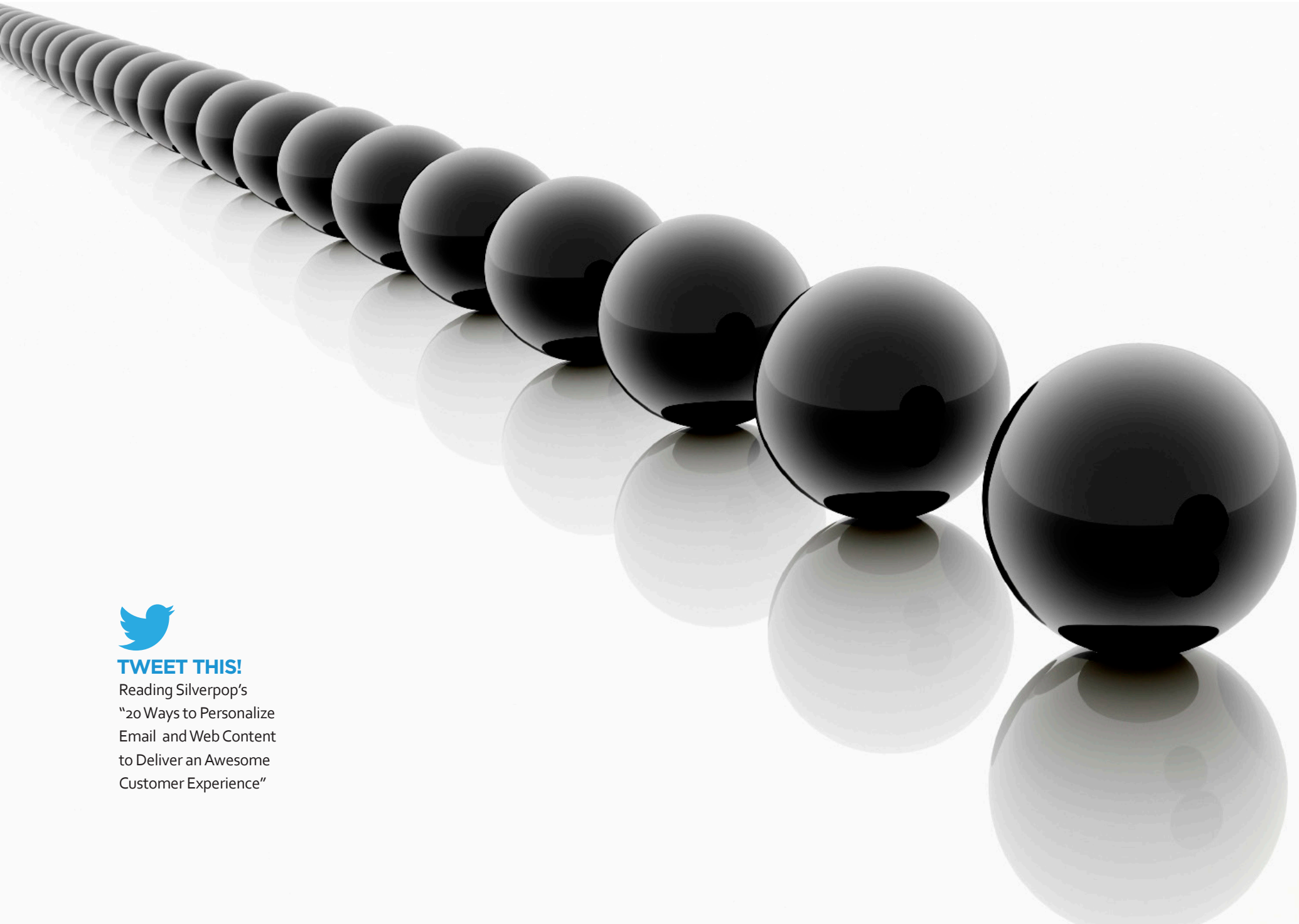
SILVERPOP

An IBM® Company

20 WAYS TO PERSONALIZE EMAIL AND WEB CONTENT TO DELIVER AN AWESOME CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Today, many marketers are discovering that relying too heavily on tried-and-true tactics such as broadcast emails, generalized Web copy and broad segmentation are producing diminishing returns. Simply put, the advent of new communication channels has led to more marketing and advertising noise, forcing many people to tune businesses out because they can't keep up.

Consider the traditional broadcast email campaign. It typically yields conversion rates around 3 percent, leaving the other 97 percent left wanting. What's the solution for those marketers who want to deliver an awesome customer experience to a larger portion of their database? Serving up individualized content for each person.

If you want to deliver this type of amazingly relevant content, you've got to equip your company with a unified marketing database that pulls in behaviors from all the places your customers and prospects interact with you, as well as employing a digital marketing platform that enables you to act on this data.

With those behavioral marketing elements in place, there are countless ways you can customize email and Web content for each person and deliver a fantastic customer experience that will build engagement, strengthen loyalty and, yep, boost revenue. Here are 20 ideas to get you started, organized by category.
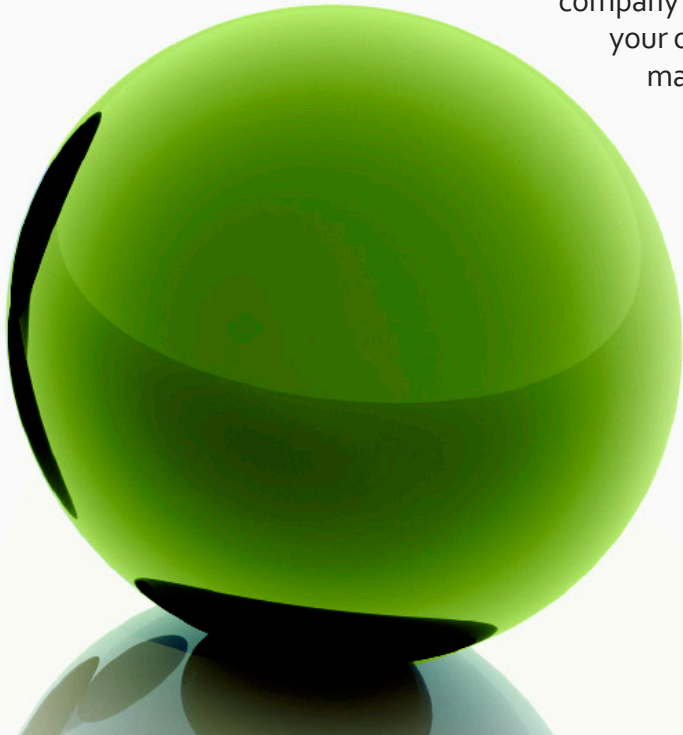
WEBSITE-DRIVEN CONTENT

Whether a contact has visited your home page once during the last month, surfed 18 different pages during the course of six visits, or returned to the same product page three times gives you important information. Try combining the power of Web tracking, relational tables (and, in some cases, a Web analytics integration) with your digital marketing platform to:

1 Prompt people to visit new areas of your site based on previous Web activity.

In today's on-the-go world, most Web surfers won't have time to fully explore your site, so pointing them in the right direction will provide a valuable service and build engagement. Using this tactic is a smart way to build stickiness by sharing all the resources you have to offer

What if, for example, a contact has come to your arts-and-crafts website five times but never visited the blog? Add dynamic content to your emails or website asking that person to "Check out our blog for unique craft ideas."

2 Provide contacts with content to nurture them based on Web pages browsed.

Every company has visitors come to its site without making a purchase, filling out a form, completing a download, etc. These people are often looking for information and reassurance. They want content, advice and tools that help them decide which specific product or solution is right for them.

The next time you engage with these browsers, via email or the Web, offer up educational content to complement their browsing history. Depending on your business, types of content you feature might include selection guides, price calculators, how-to guides, case studies, and customer and employee reviews and testimonials.

Individualize It! *Silverpop Success Story*

Course Hero, a Silicon Valley-based edtech startup dedicated to helping students discover a more efficient and productive learning experience, employs a variety of sophisticated tactics within its lifecycle programs to increase engagement. For example, its emails make use of relational tables, serving up the most relevant content based on website activity as well as information the user has provided.

As a result of the lifecycle campaign Course Hero implemented and its behaviorally targeted emails, customers have become more receptive to its emails. "The use of Engage has helped us strengthen our business by increasing engagement with our subscribers and building brand trust," says Katie Augustus, Course Hero's director of marketing communications.
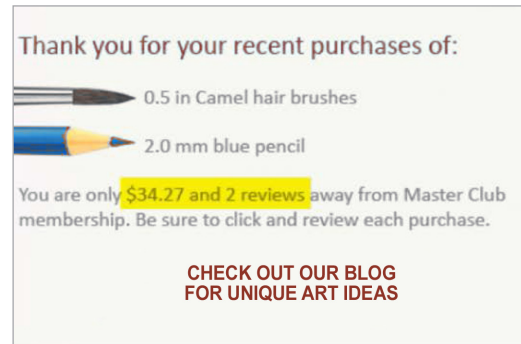
E-COMMERCE-DRIVEN CONTENT

Has a contact purchased a baseball bat or a football helmet from you? One item in the last year or hundreds of dollars worth of gear? Filled up his or her wish list or left an item in a shopping cart? Using an e-commerce integration, relational tables and the power of marketing automation, you might use this data to:

3 **Summarize past purchases with review links, how-to guides and/or related product suggestions.**

A previous purchase is an obvious launching pad for more additional interactions and touch points. Ask for reviews and give your customer an outlet for providing valuable feedback while simultaneously building your archive of user-generated content.

Depending on the item purchased, you might also provide a how-to guide or video and help that person get the most of your product or service, driving customer satisfaction. And take advantage of upsell and cross-sell opportunities by offering related product suggestions within your emails and on your website.

Thank you for your recent purchases of:

0.5 in Camel hair brushes

2.0 mm blue pencil

You are only $34.27 and 2 reviews away from Master Club membership. Be sure to click and review each purchase.

**CHECK OUT OUR BLOG
FOR UNIQUE ART IDEAS**

4 **List amount of purchases to date and reviews away from loyalty club membership.**

Provide a service to customers by, for example, offering a tally of purchases made and communicating what they need to do to attain elite status (make more purchases, post reviews, share content, etc.).

You might be surprised at the response you get when you recognize the business customers have brought to you – and delighted by how they react to the incentives you provide by specifically calling out the actions needed to access additional perks.

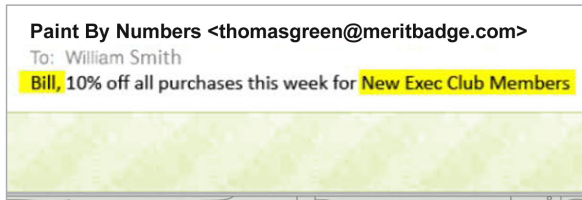**5** **Highlight items currently in the contact's wish list.**

Sometimes all it takes is a gentle nudge to get people to return to a wish list (or, similarly, an abandoned shopping cart) to complete a transaction. Consider adding dynamic content blocks into your emails or website that would showcase these items.

For example, if a customer has a tennis racket and related apparel in his wish list, you might show a picture of that item, a CTA to return to his wish list, pictures of two related recommendations such as tennis balls and shoes, and/or an invitation to share his wish list with family members.

DEMOGRAPHIC-DRIVEN CONTENT

While actions sometimes speak louder than words, who people tell you they are remains a key component of delivering individualized content. Whether through a robust preference center, progressive Web forms or social sign-in, today's digital marketing platforms provide many nuanced ways to gather demographic data. Here are a few tactics you can implement using this data:

Paint By Numbers <thomasgreen@meritbadge.com>
To: William Smith
Bill, 10% off all purchases this week for New Exec Club Members

6 Use first-name personalization in emails, subject lines and/or on the website.

First name is typically one of the earliest pieces of data you get from someone, so put it to use in creative ways, such as in the subject line ("Bill, 10% off all purchases this week") or on your website ("Bill, recommendations just for you").

Just remember to employ it judiciously and test where applicable – overuse of first-name personalization can reek of spam and backfire. Likewise, make sure your default (e.g., "Valued Customer") doesn't come across as too robotic.

7 Serve up resources based on a person's industry or role.

Does a prospect work in high-tech or publishing? Is she a member of the C-suite or a lower-level manager? Speak to your buyers based on what they've told you, providing content on your website or within your emails that matches what they do for a living and who they have to report to at their workplace.

HIGH-TECH BENEFITS
High-tech marketers have a specific set of marketing challenges that include driving high volumes of leads through thought leadership and content, lengthy and complex sales cycles, and a number of diverse people playing a role in the buying decision. Technology marketers need to look at each lead they are generating and determine whether it's ready for sales interaction or needs to be nurtured further along the buying cycle.

8 Personalize email subject line based on loyalty club status, geographic location, or age.

Want to make your subject lines more personal beyond using the recipient's first name? Use demographic info. Did someone just became a member of your exclusive club? How about an offer for "New Exec Club Member"? Does he live in Chicago? Send him a subject line about best places to go running "in the Chicago area."

One Silverpop client, Little Tikes, asks parents/grandparents for their kids' birthdates, then provides customized subject lines based on this information, such as "Perfect Toys for 4-Year-Olds." However you choose to use demographics to personalize your subject lines, there's an added bonus: You can apply these same principals to dynamic content blocks within your emails or on your website.

Duncan Cartledge
Airport Parking and Hotels

Airport Parking and Hotels Campaign Manager Duncan Cartledge discusses how the company uses dynamic content to serve up customized content based on an each individual's travel preferences.
View the video >>>

9 Include the name and contact info for the contact's sales or service rep.

Providing an actual contact name and number for your prospect or customer to contact adds a strong human element to your message. For example, a B2B company could use dynamic content to insert the name and phone number of the prospect's sales rep, with a note to "Call your rep with any questions." Post-purchase, the same principals could apply to customer service.

Call your rep with any questions:
Anne Droyd
(800) 345 6789

GET IT NOW
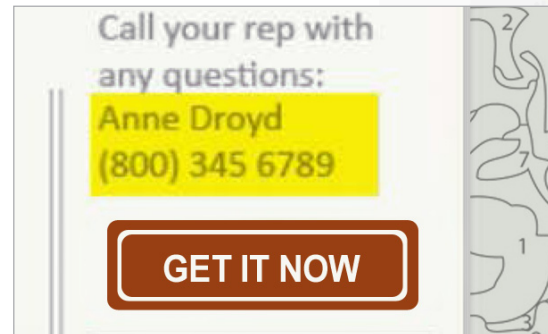
Individualize It! *Silverpop Success Story*

Using Silverpop Engage's dynamic content functionality, Air New Zealand sends personalized pre-flight emails to passengers. These messages include imagery tailored around the upcoming destination, such as shots of local cultural events or popular delicacies, a weather update, and flight details along with the ability to share information with friends via Facebook and Twitter.

Air New Zealand's brand personality also shines through, with each message showcasing a photo of a flight crew member who will be on the recipient's specific flight. The pre-flight emails have an average unique open rate of 69 percent and an average unique click rate of 38 percent. In addition, passenger reaction has been incredibly positive, from thousands of active Facebook comments to some customers even printing out the emails to show the featured flight crew member while on board.

DATE-BASED CONTENT

Getting the timing right is a key component of delivering personalized content. While there are many aspects to delivering the content contacts want exactly when they want it, one way to move toward this goal is to build content around date triggers. Here are a few ideas to get you thinking:

10 Showcase renewal dates, bill due or trial expirations.

Providing a reminder of an "end date" delivers two benefits. First, it offers a service to the prospect or customer by making sure that they don't miss out on an opportunity or aren't inconvenienced. Secondly, it gives marketers the opportunity to drive revenue or move a prospect through the buying cycle.

For example, when a prospect in the middle of a free trial visits your site, you could display a "free trial" reminder showing the days left in the trial with a call to action to sign up. Since the content is triggered by that contact's specific experience, it's inherently relevant.

Free Trial

3 days left → Sign up
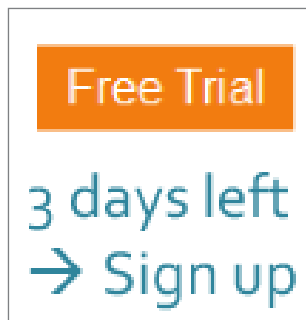
11 Display upcoming birthdays.

Everyone (OK, almost everyone) loves a birthday. Where applicable, consider using a contact's upcoming birthday – or the birthdate of close family members and friends – to drive content.

For example, let's say a customer has provided her mother's birthdate. When she visits your website within 30 days of that date, you could display text such as "Your Mom's birthday is in 17 days – check out our gift ideas for Moms" with a few photos of related products.

12 Prompt them to use your mobile app.

According to Localytics, 26 percent of apps that are downloaded are never used it again. If your company has an app, consider incorporating date-driven content on your website or in your emails that helps entice "app abandoners" to re-engage with you.

For example, for people who downloaded your app but haven't used it in the last month, you might display content telling them what's new or link to a resource providing tips for getting the most out of your app. Remember: A similar approach could be applied to address inactivity in other channels (Web visits, email opens, in-store purchases, etc.).

TWEET THIS!
Reading Silverpop's "20 Ways to Personalize Email and Web Content to Deliver an Awesome Customer Experience"
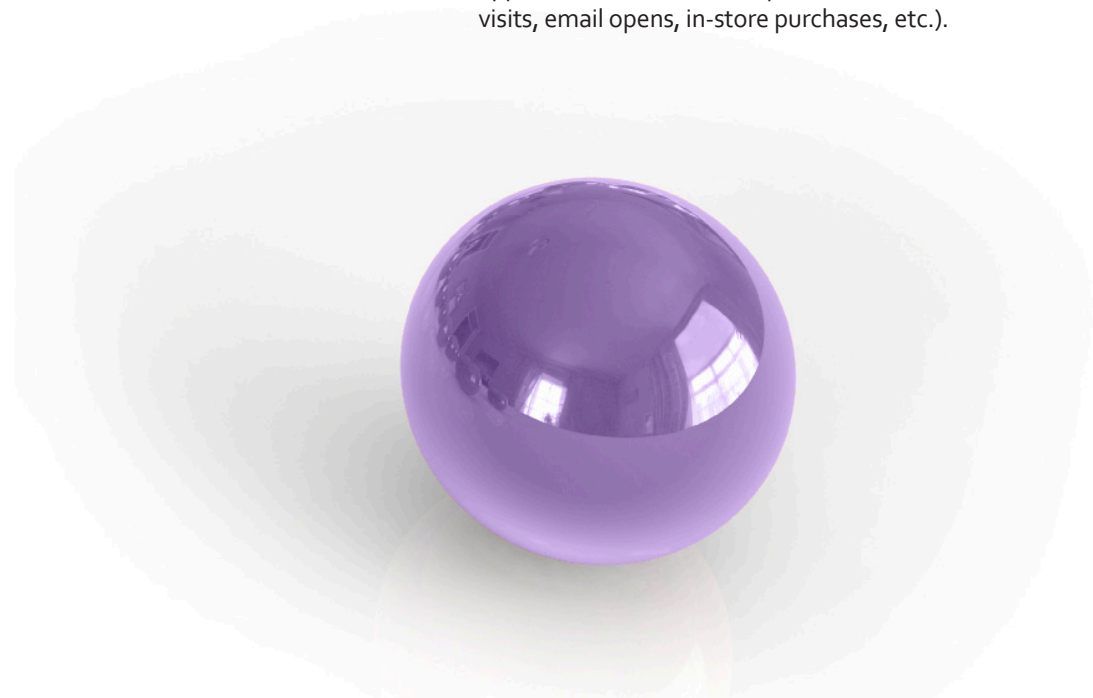
BUYER JOURNEY-DRIVEN CONTENT

Contacts want to consume different content at different points in the buying lifecycle, yet many companies ignore this factor in their messaging. That's akin to assuming that people who love to eat bacon cheeseburgers for dinner would also like to eat this food at 5:30 in the morning. Instead of taking a one-size-all approach, then, try aligning content to each person's wants and needs, based on either the contact's behaviors, what he or she has told you, or a scoring system that combines the two. Here are some ideas – fries not included:

13 Show Web content that matches the campaign that individual is in.

Imagine you take the time to create a sophisticated email campaign that reacts to each action a prospect takes, creating a unique messaging path for each lead in your database. But what happens when a prospect that's in "stage 3" of a campaign visits your website? If she sees "stage 1" content, you've created a mediocre experience and missed an opportunity to connect.

Instead, consider building content blocks on your site that display content matching the messaging of the marketing campaign the person is currently in. Creating a unified, relevant experience across channels will help deliver a superior customer experience.

14 Display content relevant to the stage of the relationship.

From prospects to active buyers, new customers to lapsed ones, you have customers and/or prospects at many different stages in their relationship with you. So, rather than serve up the same content to them all, match pieces of content in your emails or website to the individual's unique place in his or her lifecycle.

Let's say you're a B2B company with content that's early-stage versus latter-stage. If prospects download early-stage content but fail to move forward and take the desired next step, then the next time you email them or they visit your site, you could offer up the next stage of content. Or, you could use scoring to help determine relationship stage and which piece of content would most help nurture them. Post-purchase, these prospects-turned-customers might see a "welcome" piece of dynamic content with helpful resources.

15 Vary discounts and prices by score.

Most companies offer the same sales and discounts to each person in their database. But what if you could move the needle by changing these up depending on the parameters important to your business?

Using scoring, you could set up a system that would help determine the right deal based on your business rules. For example, you might weigh the score (and discount/price) based on time since last purchase. Or, you might do it based on social influence in the hopes of maximizing message reach and strengthening relations with potential brand advocates.

16 Display customized offers based on engagement score.

Regardless of your business, it's likely you have VIP contacts you'd like to deliver unique benefits to. To help you achieve this, consider creating an "engagement score" based on website visits, email opens and social activity, then using this score to determine which contacts receive which content.

For example, those contacts with the highest engagement score might see a "VIP Special Invitation" when they visit your website. Or, they might see a link for an exclusive complimentary service in an email.

GET IT NOW

$17

Regular Price:
$30

OTHER BEHAVIOR-DRIVEN CONTENT

If you want to take your marketing up a notch, bust out of the traditional marketing paradigm, in which companies deliver content based on their timetable, and start serving up content when it's best for your contacts. This customer-centric approach, known as behavioral marketing, uses prospect and customer actions to automatically determine what content each individual sees. While the possibilities are as endless as the ways your contacts interact with you, here are some techniques to consider implementing:

17 Offer different content based on whether a person is socially active.

Social media is all about being an individual and connecting with others, and your marketing should reflect this. Take what you know about a person's social habits — did they sign in on your site using their Facebook profile, do they share your content a lot or did they comment on your blog post? – and use it to serve up unique content.

Maybe the person who signed in via Facebook sees content related to a special Facebook promo you're running. The active social sharer might get an invite to take a "sneak peek" at your product and review it. And perhaps the blog commenter is prompted to check out your Twitter feed to get more thought-provoking content. Every company wants to be more social, and individualizing your Web and email content is one step toward getting there.

18 Send messages at the ideal delivery time for each individual based on their previous inbox behaviors.

The people in your database have unique habits and preferences regarding how and when they interact with the messages in their inboxes. With the right digital marketing technology, you can optimize send times by analyzing recipient behavior on a rolling basis and then predicting the ideal email delivery time for each address on a mailing list. Armed with this information, you can automatically send messages to each recipient based on when he or she is most likely to be checking email, thereby driving click-throughs and conversions.

19 Serve up different content based on whether a person has checked in at a retail location.

Thousands of people each day use their mobile phones to check in at physical locations via

Individualize It! *Silverpop Success Story*

Girl Scouts of the USA found itself a victim of its own success — its weekly promotional emails were so engaging, its website would sometimes crash when subscribers flooded it to purchase promoted merchandise. To solve this problem, it began sending emails using Silverpop's Send Time Optimization feature. By delivering emails at the best time for each recipient, it eliminated the site traffic issues, increased open rates by 10 percent and boosted conversion rates by 12 percent.

Foursquare or Facebook. Acknowledge these actions by using this data to customize the content you display.

For example, when someone who checked in at "Store A" in Philadelphia subsequently visits your website, you might display content highlighting a special promotion at that Philly location. Or, you might use the opportunity to invite that person to engage with you via digital channels – signing up for your email program or following you on Twitter, for instance. Even B2B marketers can get in on the action, serving up personalized content to a prospect that checked in at their trade show booth.

20 Display mobile promotional content based on the individual's mobile use patterns.

Are there contacts in your database who have engaged with you via mobile in some fashion, but haven't downloaded your app or joined your SMS program? Insert a content block in your emails or on your website inviting them do so.

Depending on your platform's capabilities, you might also consider customizing content based on the specific mobile device that person uses. For example, an iPhone user might get content about your new iPhone app, while a Droid owner might see a different call to action.

Conclusion: It's Business … and It's Personal

The sky's the limit when it comes to customizing your content and enhancing the customer experience. Try implementing a few of the tactics listed here, and then add more over time. Before you know it, you'll have moved toward a more sophisticated marketing approach that helps your contacts cut through the advertising and marketing clutter around them by providing the highly relevant, individualized content they crave.

For more ideas on how you can use behavioral marketing to deliver an awesome customer experience, visit Silverpop's "Marketing Best Practices" page and check out these resources:

1) "Behavioral Marketing: What It Is and Why It's So Exciting" (blog)

2) "3 T's for Improving the Customer Experience" (blog)

3) "Let the Buyer Be Your Guide: Leveraging Buyer Behaviors in a Multichannel World" (white paper)

4) "10 Most Effective Retention Marketing Strategies for Digital Marketers" (Webinar)

5) "Personalize the Web Experience for Every Customer Through a CMS Integration" (video)

Silverpop is a digital marketing software company focused on helping marketers transform the customer experience — increasing engagement and driving revenue. Silverpop makes this possible by using customer data and each individual's behaviors to inform and drive every interaction in real time. Watch our demo to see our product in action, and contact Silverpop to see how we can help you accomplish your marketing goals for 2014.

PERSONALIZED CONTENT EXAMPLES
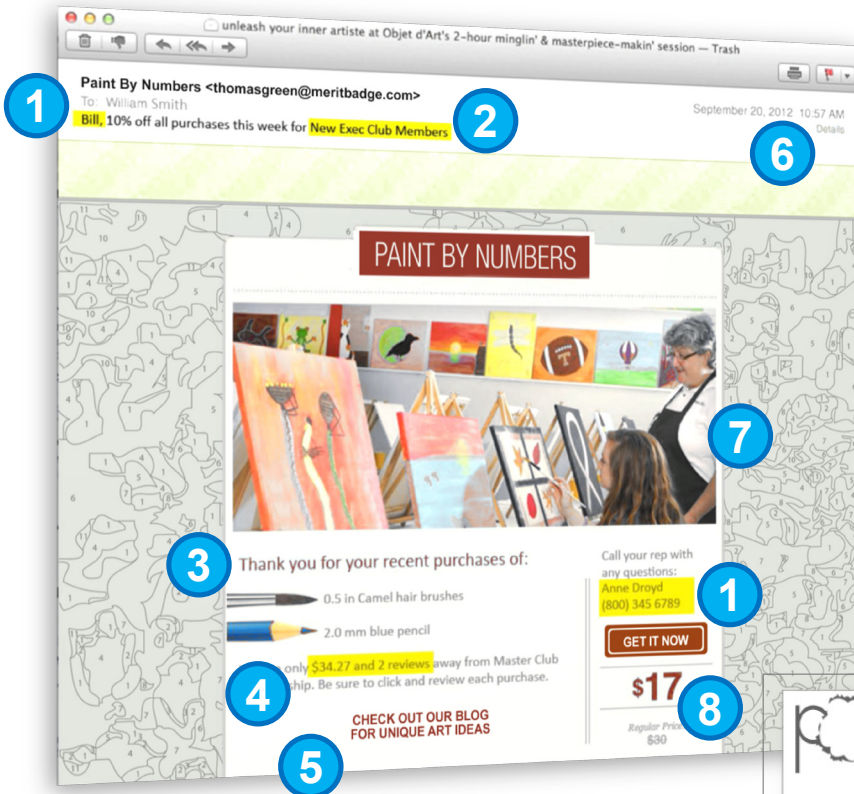
Individualized Email Messaging

1 **Subject Line Personalization**
First name personalization

Personalized Content
Name and contact info for each customer's personal rep

2 **Dynamic Subject Lines**
The subject line changes based on the type and duration of club membership

3 **Individualized Content Lists**
For any customer who has purchased two or more items in the last 90 days, list each purchase with review links

4 **E-commerce-driven Personalization**
Display totals and other engaging content to drive follow-on purchases.

5 **Website-driven Content**
Directly track each customer's web activity and prompt them to visit new areas of the site.

6 **Send Time Optimization**
The message arrives in each individual's inbox at precisely the time that individual is most likely to check email.

7 **Data-driven Dynamic Image**
Image is selected based on demographic and profile info

8 **Score-driven Dynamic Offer**
Discounts/prices vary by social influence and time since last purchase

Individualized Web Experience

1 **Demographic Dynamic Content –** Speak to your buyer based on what they have told you – Industry, job role…

2 **Date based Content**
Display renewal dates, bill due, Trial expirations…

3 **Lifecycle Content**
Display content that is relevant to the stage of the relationship – Welcome, Re-Activation, Existing Customer, Prospect, Active Buyer…

4 **Customized Offers**
Display customized offers based on each individual…

5 **Behavioral Score or Rank based Content**
Display customized offers based on each individual score. For example contacts with an engagement score > 100 see a sneak peak invitation…

6 **Program / Campaign level Content**
Display content that matches the messaging of a marketing campaign the person is currently in.