

E-Commerce



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you physically sell in a country, you will naturally follow their linguistic, business, and legal conventions. Otherwise, few people will understand what it is you're selling.

When marketing your wares on the Web, language is the first point of interaction with a prospective buyer. In countries where English is not the preferred tongue, you will have to provide enough information in the local language for people to find your site and browse

it. If you're actually selling something there, you also need to adapt the registration forms, transactions, shipping, and support mechanisms to work for that country.

Last year we surveyed 2,430 consumers in eight non-English-speaking countries to determine their language preferences when buying on the Web. Most people prefer buying in their own language. More than half our sample buys only at Web sites where the information is presented in their language. People with no or low English skills were six times more likely not to buy from Anglophone sites.

Eighty-five percent of our respondents say that having pre-purchase information in their own language is a critical factor in buying financial services. At the same time, only 45.8% of the sample told us that language is important to buying clothes. The more valuable an item, the more likely it is that someone will want to read about the product and buy it in their own language.

It takes more than language to sell something. Over two-thirds visit English-language sites at least once a month, but just one quarter purchase goods or services at those properties. Even if information is available in their language, it's important to allow them to use their credit cards or national currency.

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Has your multichannel strategy become Frankenstein's monster?

BY PATRICK MCHUGH

As marketers' efforts have grown and expanded into new channels, such as e-mail or mobile, their infrastructure has often become a Frankenstein monster – disparate software and services stitched together and coming apart at the seams as it lurches forward. So how can marketers break free from the constraints of siloed solutions to emerge from the darkness of limited visibility into customer preferences and results?

The best chances for success starts with a clear vision of your goal; in most cases that is ensuring that communication – whether it be e-mail, direct mail, mobile, or all three – is personalized, relevant and targeted. Here we'll discuss the steps along the marketing maturity curve necessary for moving from multichan-

nel to true cross-channel marketing.

Although many organizations claim to practice cross-channel marketing, what they actually do is multichannel marketing, communicating with customers and prospects through multiple disconnected channels without any real consistency or coordination. Disparate systems, often located both in-house and at vendor sites, make it difficult to track interactions.

The solution is the adoption of true cross-channel marketing, combining the attributes of multichannel marketing within a single platform that manages customer information and marketing performance – literally extending “across multiple channels,” including traditional and emerging technologies, to deliver meaningful content to customers and prospects.

As is the case with growth of any type over time, the evolution of multichannel and cross-channel marketing within most organizations follows a maturity curve. Organizations typically begin their evolution by outsourcing all marketing campaigns to mail houses or e-mail service providers. Eventually, organiza-

tions begin to experiment by migrating a preferred channel in-house, a cycle that can continue until all channels are managed in-house.

Consider companies like Sephora, a leading worldwide retail beauty chain. Sephora had outsourced management of its customer loyalty card program to an outsourced service provider. Seeking to gain more flexibility and timely access to the specific buying habits and behavior of its customer base, and the ability

to effectively identify links between online and in-store shoppers, Sephora took its database in-house.

Using enterprise marketing software and data mining technology, Sephora is now able to drill down into a centralized marketing database to compile sophisticated segmentations using each customer's unique transactional history gathered from the various interactions points, including point of sale, Web and the call center. Then through effective outbound coordination across channels, Sephora doubled response rates without increased spending, reduced post-campaign analysis time from five days to one, and improved productivity by 70%.

The range of channels through which marketers will be able to reach customers and prospects will continue to grow, making the practice of true cross-channel marketing more critical than ever before. The ability to integrate and manage technologies and the ability to use them interchangeably will enable organizations to optimize the customer experience. With the right tools, your cross-channel marketing epic doesn't need to become a tragedy.

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