

## Shifting from Mass Marketing to One-to-One Marketing



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In response to decades of marketing overload, consumers have adapted the way they absorb information. Today's consumer hears an operator on the phone or glances at a piece of mail and decides in an instant whether it has value. Messages not immediately identifiable to the individual are promptly cast off into a sea of irrelevant clutter.

As the customer has evolved, so must your business. Companies need to move away from the traditional mass marketing practice of blanketing everyone with the same message (the "one size fits all" approach), and start connecting with consumers on an individual basis. Customers want to feel that you know them, what they need, what they want.

By embracing a one-to-one marketing strategy, your company can enhance its brand position, improve return on investment (ROI) and increase customer retention. Here's where to start:

### Get to know your customers

Every time a customer purchases a good or service, they are telling you something — what kind of products they are interested in, when they are purchasing, how they make payments. Through data acquisition, you have the unique opportunity to listen to them. If a customer doesn't respond to phone contacts but responds to e-mail, take notice. It sounds obvious, but a lot of companies don't do it. They ignore the preferences of customers and, consequently, the customers don't come back.

As we all know, it costs more to acquire new customers than to keep current ones. By creating a relationship that your customer feels is mutually beneficial, you can establish a dialogue. From there, you can collect even more data about your customers — how old they are, how many children they have, what their hobbies are, if they vote, etc. Believe it or not, all of this information will help you better reach both current and potential customers in the future.

### Use data to create customer profiles

Utilizing business intelligence to analyze data, you can create customer profiles that will help you up-sell existing customers and court new ones. Think about one of the most basic examples of business intelligence at work — Amazon.com. What do they do immediately after you make a purchase? Recommend items bought by customers who made similar purchases.

The more data you collect, the better you can pinpoint customer need. When your data tells you that a particular product is consistently purchased by married men in their early 40s living in urban areas with two or fewer children, guess where you should target your marketing efforts? If you don't have the capability to collect and analyze customer data in house, you may have to look outside. But investing in data, profiling and analytics will make a significant difference in your ROI.

### Employ the data in a way that captures the customer

Once you've attained data and created profiles, the next step is using the information to engage customers. How can you take

everything you know about a person and use it to speak to them in the most effective way? This is where technology comes into play.

On the telephone, scripting that was once done with operators rustling through ten different papers can now be accomplished with intelligent software that moves operators through thousands of different scripts seamlessly. In terms of direct mail, you can craft mailers specifically for the individual — or, more accurately, each individual profile.

If you're trying to sell a customer a new vehicle: show a picture of the exact model the customer currently owns (same color and style), and explain how the new vehicle would be more beneficial for their profiled lifestyle (e.g., minivan: accommodate a growing family). When an individual flips through a pile of mail and sees something personalized, the chances of the message being received increase infinitely.

### Embrace technology and adapt to fluctuating markets

In the past, businesses were limited to traditional mass marketing techniques by equipment and cost constraints — but that's no longer the case. Technology has made it feasible and cost-effective for any company to employ a one-on-one marketing strategy.

Variable data printing and digital printing allow companies to easily personalize materials, and the Web has opened up even greater possibilities. Companies can create personalized URLs so every individual receives a unique experience. For example, our minivan owner could be sent to a family-oriented Web page, catered to his profile and interests, while a sports-car driver would be sent to a different landing page entirely.

We've reached an age where technology can actually bring businesses and customers closer together. All these components — teleservices, direct mail, Web — can be used as part of a multi-channeled effort to meet the diverse needs of your customers. By improving the quality of their experience, customers will form a stronger bond with your organization and, as a result, increase your profit potential.

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