



The CURE *for* Your Brand Asset HEADACHES

*Marketing Automation as a
Key to Experience Branding*

Introduction: The Turbulent Road to Modern Branding

By now everyone knows the modern marketing narrative: Mad Men-era of catchy concepts, copywriting, and art is shattered by digital big bang, which gives companies amazing new tools and channels to repackage and communicate their brands. Consumers eventually co-opt those same tools to assume control of their brand journeys, requiring marketers to assist those consumers at every stage of their journey.

Less understood — mostly because the process is still unfolding — is a fundamental shift in consumer mindsets toward the corporate brand as an immersive *experience* from which 87% of consumers want “meaningful relationships.”¹

As this process unfolds, marketers are caught between the traditional ways of managing brand assets and the unprecedented speed with which these assets need to be created, distributed, maintained, integrated, tracked, analyzed, and updated. Yet the operational systems to do this are rarely in place.

How can marketers ensure their brand is consistently presented in a way that facilitates the best customer experience? Better yet, how can they do that without feeling like they have been charged with the Sisyphean task of closely monitoring every individual piece of brand content?

1 “brandshare 2014,” Edelman, 2014

The 5 Major Headaches Plaguing Today's Brand Marketing

Sandwiched between a consumer class expecting a fully immersive brand experience and a C-suite eager for results, sales executives and other marketing asset end users are understandably demanding from marketing the kinds of engaging, timely, personalized assets consumers want.

And for a time, brand marketers were able — just barely — to accommodate those demands. As consumers assumed more and more control of the buyer's journey, resources were shifted from sales to marketing. Marketing, in turn, cranked up the volume on asset creation and distribution while also attempting to retain the siloed operations, hierarchical workflows, linear distribution patterns, and rigid brand protections of old. You can see where this is going, right?

But so great was the pace and scale of the changes, so complete their transformation of the consumer mindset, that brand marketers simply could not keep up. Problems that rose up and festered under those initial stopgap measures eventually flared into five distinct pain points that today plague even some of the world's largest brands.

1. Groundhog Day – Because most marketing organizations “are still working from mid- to late-20th century hierarchies, strategies, and processes,”² end-users' demands for personalized, time-sensitive, one-off assets start to overwhelm marketing's ability to fulfill them. Each day begins to resemble its predecessor as marketing operations grind down into little more than a labor-intensive production factory, primarily succeeding in:

- Gobbling up marketing's time, budget, resources, and morale
- Depriving marketing's creative minds the time they need to innovate
- Missing sales opportunities due to delayed, non-local/personal responses
- Forcing end-users to take matters into their own hands (see next point)

2. Going Rogue – As demand for assets outstrips marketing's capacity to deliver, sales executives and other brand ambassadors go rogue and create their own materials.

Ad-hoc presentations with the wrong logo, personalized collateral with incorrect company information, fast-response proposals missing key terms, knee-jerk social media responses — these rogues go their own way and in the process erode brand integrity from within. Furthermore, our era's unparalleled capacity for instantaneous, global distribution means these off-brand assets can go viral with the click of a mouse.

3. From Friction to Fire – The healthy friction that can contribute 32% annual revenue growth in tightly aligned marketing-sales tandems³ instead erupts into an all-out turf war as those rogue sales executives chip away at marketing's hard-won brand identity.

4. Liabilities – In the heavily regulated banking, pharmaceutical, and insurance industries, keeping consumer messaging 'on brand' isn't just a nice-to-have; it's a lawful requirement. But in an era where a company's global reach is just a mouse click away, off-brand messaging is a universal challenge.

5. Groundhog Day – Yes, we called it Groundhog Day for a reason — it keeps returning. Frustrated (or even damaged) by those rogue marketing efforts, brand marketers further tighten the screws on the very same outdated, rigid marketing practices that created the problems in the first place.

So what's the alternative? The answer, as it turns out, starts with the very same agent that led to all this chaos in the first place: technology. Specifically, the marketing automation and asset management systems that enable brands to deliver that 21st century consumer brand experience.

But it also requires a fundamental change in the brand marketing mindset. Or as marketing technologies and lon Interactive co-founder Scott Brinker puts it: “The real challenge is changing how firms think and behave in this hyper-connected, always-on, customer-controlled digital world. The nature of marketing has exploded from an ancillary communications function to the Grand Central Station of customer experience.”⁴

2 “Content Marketing in 2014: The State of the Enterprise,” Content Marketing Institute, 2014

3 “Sales Enablement: Fulfilling the Last Frontier of Marketing-Sales Alignment,” The Aberdeen Group, 2013

4 “Marketing Technology Landscape Supergraphic 2015,” Chiefmartec.com, 2015

6 Critical Updates to the Modern Brand Formula

In a world where consumers are besieged by a never-ending stream of brand-crafted messages, it is perhaps natural to assume that a brand's value is diluted by all that noise. Or that a brand is further weakened by consumers' newfound control of the buyer's journey.

Wrong. Today more than ever, consumers need brand marketers' help if they are to make informed, confident buying decisions. By that same token, brands need strong identities if they are in fact going to create that brand experience consumers expect.

So what, precisely, goes into that modern brand experience? What are the attributes that will help move brand marketing firmly into the 21st century?

1. **Mutual** – With Millennials in particular, the consumer-brand relationship is considered a two-way street, with 90% willing to share their mobile numbers with brands in exchange for coupons.⁵
2. **Timely** – More than 80% of customers expect same-day responses to their brand inquiries, even via indirect messages through social networks.⁶
3. **Relevant** – Today's consumer expects personally relevant content regardless of touchpoint, time, location, or stage of the buying cycle.
4. **Inclusive** – Younger consumers in particular expect brands to include their feedback, behavior, etc., in their brand development process.
5. **Responsive** – A brand's messaging must take into account the medium through which it is delivered. In the immortal words of Marshall McLuhan: "The medium is the message."⁷
6. **Authentic** – Today's buyer craves authenticity — not marketing — in their brand messaging, with studies demonstrating that even perceived authenticity — such as labeling menu items with homey adjectives like "grandma" — can affect the bottom line.

These, then, are what is expected of the modern brand experience. How can marketers help their brands meet those expectations?

5 "Millennials + Coupons," Buzz Marketing Group, 2015

6 "Do Brands Live Up to Customer Expectations on Social?," BrandWatch, 2015

7 "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man," Marshall McLuhan, 1994

Marketing Asset Production and Management

Earlier we mentioned how the digital era ultimately led to wholesale changes not simply in consumer behavior, but in their expectations of a brand ‘experience.’ That technology-inspired change in the consumer mindset now must, in a sense, be replicated by brand marketers.

Instead of stubbornly attempting to reconcile two different worlds — the pre-digital era’s asset management orthodoxies with modern consumer expectations — these marketers must embrace the tools capable of delivering agile, personalized, time-sensitive content across not just the buyer’s journey, but the entirety of the brand-consumer relationship.

One industry study found that the creation of engaging content and the integration of various content creating groups are plaguing many marketing organizations.⁸ Reporting on parts of the study, CMI said “most content marketing assets are still created in silos — stored on email, agency servers, and orphaned out there, who knows where.”⁹

Clearly, the solution to these problems is staring us in the face. Marketing automation systems — the ones that all seem to have ‘management’ in their names (e.g. Marketing Asset Management, Digital Asset Management, Marketing Resources Management, etc.) — now must take center stage if that seamless brand user experience is to be supported. The right marketing automation system will, among other things, ensure that:

- The right marketing assets are created and shared with the right end users at the right time and in the right form, format, and channel.
- Each asset is stored, catalogued, and made accessible to end users.
- Asset integrity is safeguarded and version controls are monitored.
- Specific campaigns and tactics can be created, monitored, and tracked as well as associated with high-level strategies.
- Marketing’s more innovating minds can do what they do best or, in the words of AOL Advertising’s chief marketing officer, allow “brands and publishers to be more creative.”¹⁰
- Facilitation of enterprise, field, and partner collaboration happens.
- Development, production, and related data can be tracked, reconciled against budgets, and ultimately used for forecasting.

Where in the past such systems — if they existed at all — were little more than paper-based style guides, meta spreadsheets, or storage repositories, today’s marketing automation systems enable brand marketers to execute multi-channel campaigns, capture customer data, and perform analysis on campaign performance and costs to deliver the complete brand experience.

8 “2015 B2B Content Marketing: Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends,” MarketingProfs & Content Marketing Institute, 2014

9 “Using DAM to Turn Your Content Marketing Up to Eleven,” Content Marketing Institute, 2015

10 “How Marketing Will Change in 2015: The Creative Forecast,” Co.Create, 2015

Conclusion: The Benefits of Marketing Automation

We've talked a lot about technology — its role as market disruptor and, ultimately, solution provider. Yet this should not be construed as a technology whitepaper.

As we mentioned earlier, technology may have sparked those fundamental changes in brand marketing, but it was the way the technology ultimately transformed consumers' brand expectations that really matters. In other words, the consumer who uses her smartphone to download a coupon could not care less about the technology: her focus is on convenience and savings.

The same technology-inspired changes are required in the mindsets of brand marketers. The rigid, centrally controlled, siloed operating processes and structures of old cannot meet the needs of today's consumers and their demands for an immersive brand experience.

Technology, says RPMC's Accounts Director Natasha Davidson, will always play an important role in brand

marketing. But it will "be more complementary, sitting in the background, helping the process of engagement but not being the engagement."¹¹

And it's worth noting that nearly two-thirds of best-in-class marketing companies now use marketing automation in conjunction with their CRM systems for enabling lead and sales tracking across the buyer's journey.¹²

The bottom line is that today's marketing organizations already are making impressive strides to deliver the rich media assets that modern consumers expect. And therein lies the key: Marketing automation now must become an integral part of any enterprise marketing strategy, so that it can quietly support that new brand experience being demanded by today's consumer.

11 "Brand Experience Report: Hot Trends for 2015," Event, 2014

12 "The Nature of Lead Nurturing," The Aberdeen Group, 2014



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