FUTURE-PROOF YOUR B2B DIGITAL MARKETING:

The next website evolution
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Digital marketing has come a long way since 1991, when the internet as we know it became available to the wider market. Online experiences have evolved from link-based websites to heavily image and rich media-led experiences. Over more recent years, significant emphasis has been placed on user journeys and the user experience.

But what’s next? Where should B2B digital marketers be focusing their efforts?


Website personalization is the notion that every single website experience should be highly personalized to users. Website personalization is the next game-changing evolution that is fundamental to the future success of B2B digital marketers.

Read on to find out:

- Why website personalization is the next big thing
- Why you should not and cannot ignore it
- What you can do to lead the way with your own digital marketing.
“What’s dangerous is not to evolve”

— Jeff Bezos, Amazon
Where have we been?

It is almost impossible for us to imagine doing business today without the internet or a website. The digital revolution – also known as the third industrial revolution – completely changed the way the world interacts, and the way business is conducted. While the digital revolution began in the late 1950s, it is not yet complete — it continues to bring sweeping changes to the way the world works with continuing technological advancement.

In 1963, the intergalactic computer network was first established – the very first evidence of computer scientists moving towards a network of computers that were geographically distributed. In 1969, this was superseded by ARPANET. It wasn’t until 1991, however, that the “internet” was made available to the mass markets – and so, this was the dawn of the online world as we now know it.
“There was a time when people felt the internet was another world, but now people realize it’s a tool that we use in this world”

—Tim Berners-Lee, WWW Inventor

You may or may not remember the web pages of the early nineties. They were entirely different to the websites we know today. In the days of dial-up, web pages were single pages made up of basic text and hyperlinks. By today’s standards, their format seems so archaic – but at the time, they were the latest innovation and an exciting sign of technological progression.

When searching online, this style of web page is very rarely found today. If it is, it is typically a dormant website or a specialist listing website. Compared with the online experiences available today, this style seems primitive, and wouldn’t be considered as a viable option today. But they served their purpose in being quick to load in a time of slow dial-up connections.
Morphing from web pages to websites: just what is a website?

This might sound like an odd question. But looking back through the years to 1991, the way we use and interact with websites has changed considerably.

When Tim Berners-Lee invented the world wide web, he knew it was going to be huge — a revolution in how the world communicates. But not even he could have predicted just how integral the internet and subsequent websites would become to our everyday lives.

“This could be huge. The idea of stranger’s worldwide sharing ideas instantly is mind boggling.”

— Tim Berners-Lee, 1995

To understand how and why websites have evolved, it’s important to return to basics and understand what a website officially is, and what these essential networks mean for the world of business.
The Oxford Dictionary definition of a website seems simple and is a timeless definition pertaining to the very first websites and no doubt, the websites of the future.

Within this technical definition lies our key focus, and the element that causes continued and rapid website evolution — the “set of related webpages”.

The way businesses build and display these essential pages is paramount to success — and is an ever-shifting process. As technology advances, what once seemed impossible is now a daily fixture. And like many digital mediums, websites need to meet current demands and match modern processes to succeed.
Your Website: 
The ultimate business partner

No matter your business size or sector, buying a domain and creating a website is essential. A website is the online hub of your brand – it’s where people come to learn about you and get to know your products and services. Without a website, your business has little hope of success and growth.

“Websites promote you 24/7: No employee will do that”

— Paul Cookson, Ad Army Group Marketing Services

Understanding the evolution and trends of online experiences is vital to business success. Understanding the changes and just how quickly they happen means businesses can avoid being left behind. The online world moves so quickly that, in order to thrive, digital marketers need to be one step ahead of changes and competition.

As digital marketers, we need to be aware of the past, present and future of the digital world. We need to embrace rapid change and advise businesses on digital strategies to future-proof and ensure success. Not just today, but over the long term — throughout the many trends and evolutions that are guaranteed to happen in the online world.
CHAPTER TWO

The first website step-change

As dial-up became less common, and ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line) was introduced by Telewest in 2000, web pages evolved to become websites. In turn, their pages became increasingly creative. Table-based web page layouts meant that content could be organized, colored graphics could be leveraged, and businesses had more freedom to individualize their appearance.

But this was all about to change — with the release of Adobe Flash.
“When something is such a creative medium as the web, the limits to it are our imagination”

—Tim Berners-Lee, WWW Inventor

Though it took a few years to fully take off, Flash would be the first of many solutions to help businesses embrace website design. It offered a myriad of creative web design features – color-changing navigation, tiled background images, bright colors, and 3D buttons. Flash represents a huge milestone on the website evolution journey – without it, the website experience would not be what it is today.

Thanks to Flash, websites were able to embrace appearance, consider usability in a new way and even start experimenting with video. In the early 2000s, this technology was incredibly new and highly innovative. For the first time, websites were given the ability to grab visitor’s attention and encourage new business opportunities.
The CSS and JavaScript movements

The popularity of Flash was short-lived. As a basic requirement of Flash, each website visitor needed the latest version installed to view the content. This was a huge limitation for those wanting to showcase their business online to as many visitors as possible! This recognized notion of usability and accessibility can still be seen in a big way today.

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) was released to work harmoniously alongside HTML* to improve general website aesthetics, accessibility and functionality.

* Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) a standardized system for tagging text files to achieve font, color, graphic, and hyperlink effects on world wide web pages.

If HTML builds your house foundations, then CSS is your furniture and wallpaper.

CSS allows website developers to separate design from content. Features such as background color, font size and images are defined in a style sheet instead of existing within complicated HTML code.

CSS and HTML made it easier for businesses to create a well branded website with different content across each web page. As the online experience started to mature, the intense, neon designs created by Flash calmed. Business websites embraced white space, higher resolution images and focused on creating a website design that considered the user experience.
<p>JavaScript (JS) an object-oriented computer programming language commonly used to create interactive effects within web browsers</p>

<p>JavaScript – coupled with HTML and CSS – provides the foundation for almost all websites today. Adding JavaScript gives digital marketers the opportunity to create interactive websites, as well as analyze how online audiences interact with every page on the business website.</p>

<p>JavaScript offered marketers the opportunity to <strong>rethink their website design</strong> – and made the online world easier to access and use for each website visitor. After the release of JavaScript, very early social media networks began sprouting. And with the enhanced engagement options and ability to feature more content, eCommerce started to rise.</p>
CHAPTER THREE

Where are we now?

“If your business is not on the internet, then your business will be out of business”

— Bill Gates, Founder, Microsoft
In just a few short decades, the internet, web pages and websites have come a very long way. The rise of the internet means we can move faster than anyone ever thought possible. We have endless business opportunities with few barriers; freer international trade, and anyone with a great business idea and the drive and passion to succeed has the chance to thrive in an open global marketplace.

Today **94% of B2B buyer journeys start online.** The online experience is engrained in both our online and personal lives. Often, we turn to the internet to seek guidance, to research experiences and to see the options available before making a purchasing decision. On average, we make seven different Google searches each and every day. The online influence has never been stronger. With the rise of smart cities, smart technology and the Internet of Things, our reliance on the internet and the online world is only going to increase.
With almost every business now appearing online, our choices have never been so plentiful. Digital marketers are now technicians and scientists discovering the best methods to stand out in the crowd.

Where the first web pages and websites featured streamlined content to ensure faster load speed, modern hyperfast broadband means that websites can now load quicker than ever before. Digital marketers have turned their attentions to learning how to attract customers and stand out in the most competitive global marketplace.
User experience and user navigation

The key focus for most digital marketers and business websites today is excelling in user navigation (UN) and user experience (UX). It is crucial to maximize these two elements to ensure the desired return. Both UN and UX place the website visitor center stage. At their core, both aim to optimize conversion rate by influencing online behaviours and guiding visitors to relevant web content as quickly as possible.

“User experience is everything. It always has been, but it’s still undervalued and under invested in. If you don’t know user-centered design, study it. Hire people who know it. Obsess over it. Live and breathe it.

Get your whole company on board”

— Evan Williams, Co-Founder, Twitter
Jargon buster

**UN**  
**User Navigation** refers to the way website visitors navigate through a business website.

**UJ**  
**User Journey**, is a theoretical ‘journey’ through a business website, closely linked to user navigation. The user journey relates to the ideal path digital marketers and website developers want visitors to take to reach specific goals.

**P2P**  
**Path to Purchase** is equivalent to a user journey in the eCommerce world.

**UX**  
**User Experience** is the end to end experience a visitor has during their time on a business website. UX encompasses UN and UJ, as well as overarching brand experience and visitor engagement levels.

**CRO**  
**Conversion Rate Optimization** refers to the number of website visitors to complete a form, make a purchase or take an action in relation to the total number of website visitors. Effective user navigation and user experience contribute to optimizing conversion rates.
Website design used to be an afterthought. Today, we put the website visitor at the heart of web design. Considering the user’s motivations and desired outcomes – successful web design is powerful and imperative to success.

“The behavior you’re seeing is the behavior you’ve designed for (whether intentional or not)”

— Joshua Porter, InspireUX

Website design for UX and CRO has become a scientific discipline in its own right – a key factor in the online success of business websites. And so, testing outcomes based on different and often complex variables is essential to effective UX and CRO.
The essence of a great user experience design is to create a website comprised of pages that each consider every element of the website experience. They need to join in such a way that meets the motivations and expectations of the site visitor – and simultaneously meets wider business objectives. While every element is important, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The website visitor won’t naturally distinguish between individually optimized parts, but instead the website will be viewed as a whole entity.
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<td>User tracking</td>
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Testing and evolution

The science of UX and CRO is underpinned by a need for testing, analysis and refinement to ensure the most optimized website experience. This is crucial within an evolving online marketplace.

Online analytics tools have become commonplace; from those that map every interaction with a business website (e.g. Google Analytics), to tools that can tell you who has visited your website (e.g. Lead Forensics), through to heat maps giving insight into the parts of your website that attract the most or least attention (e.g. Lucky Orange).
In the consumer world, Amazon is a global leader in online marketing and providing the ultimate user experience. A staggering 82% of consumers cite Amazon as leading the way in providing highly personalized online user experiences (The Drum).
“If we have 4.5 million customers, we shouldn’t have one store. We should have 4.5 million stores.”

— Jeff Bezos, Founder, Amazon

Amazon attempted making personalized recommendations to online consumers as early as May, 2000. BookMatcher was complex and needed high levels of engagement before anything was matched; recommendations leaned heavily towards books that were already best-selling and the algorithms involved encountered frequent load issues.
BookMatcher failed to hit the mark in terms of what the market needed – but the fledgling concept of personalized online shopping experiences was there. And now, we have Amazon. A company that sees more than 197 million people visit its site every single day. According to Statista, that’s more than the entire population of Russia. The brand is, and continues to be, a trailblazer; pushing the boundaries of innovation in the online world. **Amazon has successfully been personalizing online shopping experiences for consumers for almost 20 years.**

Changes in the online expectation of consumers almost always means a forthcoming change for the B2B world. Every online trend that consumers love is often followed by a flurry of changes to B2B sites, experiences and digital representation. B2B marketers know the next game-changing shift is only ever around the corner.

So, what’s next in B2B online marketing…
Step forward website personalization

Website personalization is the next step forwards in the B2B online experience. Looking back at previous changes, it is a highly logical transition.

In the infancy of website development, it was all about function. Next came user experience and user navigation – assisting website visitors on their journey through a website as quickly and easily as possible. Website personalization takes the concept of the user journey a giant leap further. By adjusting the website to each specific user, we create a highly relevant experience from the moment a visitor lands on a business website.

With website personalization there is no need for the visitor to navigate through irrelevant content or multiple drop-down menus. What they need is right there. It is personalized and relevant to them – from the pivotal moment they land on the home page, and throughout their time on the website.
73% of buyers expect to receive a customized online experience. And, it is crucial to remember that those same consumers – who expect and desire personalized content – are the people making purchasing decisions in the business world, too.

It’s not only great for your audience, either. According to Monetate, personalized website experiences result in 20% more sales.

Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is currently taking the B2B marketing world by storm. ABM is nothing new – it’s a resurgence that has bubbled up to the surface again in recent years. And rightly so!

Personalized marketing, specific to your high value business prospects, is proven to yield exceptional results. Previously, ABM was limited to offline or email marketing tactics. In more recent years, it has been opened to personalized social media marketing – but without web personalization, a totally personalized experience was never quite achieved. Despite all the investment and creative key account marketing concepts, the website experience was still static and generic. No matter how successful the UN and UX is, a one-size-fits-all site won’t cut it anymore.

“97% of marketers said ABM had a somewhat higher or much higher ROI than other marketing initiatives.”

— Altera Group

With ABM resurfacing, and advanced technology providing highly personalized online experiences, total personalization can finally be achieved. ABM and website personalization can work harmoniously, hand in hand, to provide exceptional online experiences. ABM can finally be optimized from an end to end perspective – not just with personalized marketing outreach tactics, but with a wholly personalized web experience for every high value prospect.
And, according to Microsoft Research – a website visitor will decide whether to leave or stay on a website within the first 10 seconds of arriving.

Website personalization won’t be a choice for B2B marketers in the future. The personalization evolution has already happened in the online consumer world; and it is firmly underway in the world of B2B marketing.

The resurgence of ABM marketing is an exciting time for businesses and business buyers. Not only does ABM yield a higher return for the business, but also cuts through the noise for buyers. According to McKinsey, 65% of business buyers have been frustrated by irrelevant marketing. In today’s busy business environment, it is little wonder that buyers seek highly relevant, engaging online experiences.

†Reported by Accenture & SiriusDecisions
Prioritize marketing and online personalization

We are entering a new dawn in online experiences; the dawn of high personalization. It is a fundamental change in the way we do business online.

Personalized consumer marketing can only grow – with Amazon continuing to lead the way. The B2B online experience must follow suit. Business buyers are also consumers, and they increasingly expect, and desire personalized relevant experiences. If B2B businesses are to survive and thrive the biggest evolution in online experiences, personalization needs to be at the core of their digital marketing strategy. Website personalization included.
A new kind of online experience

So, what does B2B website personalization look like? The breakthrough technologies in this field will enable your business to offer a website experience like no other – entirely bespoke to each visitor. Greet visitors by name and welcome the company by displaying its logo. Show relevant content that relates to their industry or previous purchase preferences. Promote products relating to the visiting business’s requirements, and present testimonials and business news relating directly to their industry needs. This positions your business as the absolute expert in your prospect’s field – and gives them the ultimate first impression.

Every time your prospects or customers visit your website, they are served highly relevant content. Website personalization is perfect for both new business lead generation and current client retention. No matter who your visitor is, if they offer value to your business, a personalized experience can help ensure they remain engaged with your brand and loyal to your product.
Conquering the data challenge

The central obstacle cited by those seeking to offer advanced website personalization lies in data. Though 80% of B2B organizations claim to be driven by data, more than 70% of digital marketing teams struggle to offer the personalized website experiences they desire. This is down to incomplete or inaccurate prospect and customer data sets.

When you embrace website personalization, select software that helps your team conquer this common data obstacle. Webeo, for example, enables advanced website personalizations without requiring any previously gathered data. Tapping into the largest database of business information in the world, Webeo uses advanced reverse IP tracking to identify your business website visitors. This means it instantaneously offers highly personalized website experiences according to your specific business requirements – using just your existing website. No coding. No data. As simple as that.
Don’t get left behind!

If you are keen to understand how website personalization can work for your B2B website, get in touch. We want to hear from pioneering B2B digital marketers who are passionate about website personalization. Our experts will get to know what you are currently doing from a marketing and online perspective. Then, they will show you how personalization can complement existing digital marketing strategies and skyrocket your conversion rates!

Start your website revolution today!

BOOK A FREE DEMONSTRATION

“Personalization is happening. It’s the next step change in the website evolution story. As digital marketers, we are always looking for the next exciting innovation on the horizon, and along with voice and 3D animation, personalization is the headline for the next wave of innovation.”

—Dan Fedirko, Editor of Elligense
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