

What Marketing Channel or Tactic Will Be Critical to Master in 2015?



Experts recommend where marketers should focus their learning next year—everything from mobile to predictive analytics and from integration to partnership make the list.

As important as it is to deliver a consistent omnichannel customer experience today, marketers also need to provide a top-notch experience within each channel. The challenge for marketers is the breadth of learning required to accomplish that. Marketers must be generalists enough to understand the many channels and technologies available to them. But they also must be expert enough to be effective across channels and deep within at least one of them—which means that marketers need to be master collaborators, as well. So, for example, a marketer may be a master of email, but she also needs to understand mobile, social, and Web well enough to work with marketing experts in those areas to make the connections between email and those channels smooth and effective.

With the constant procession of changes in customer behavior and expectations, and in marketing channels and technologies, knowing what to focus on next in terms of gaining expertise can be confounding. So, we asked several marketing experts for their advice. Here, they provide their insight on what marketing channel or tactic will be critical for marketers to master in 2015.

-Ginger Conlon



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ACCELERATE MOBILE

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Global VP & General Manager of Marketing and CRM Software, Infor

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MARCEL MUNOZ
Chief Technology Officer, Thanx Media

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EMBRACE AUTOMATION

SCOTT VAUGHAN
CMO, Integrate

ERIC BOSCO
CEO, ChoiceStream



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GET INTEGRATED

JOSH HERMAN
VP of Partner and Product Strategy, Acxiom

ROY SHKEDI
CEO and founder, AlmondNet Group

RICKY LIVERSIDGE
CMO and Head of Product, Sizmek



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AMY JONES
VP, Business Solutions, Zeta Interactive

MOLLIE SPILMAN
Chief Revenue Officer, Criteo

RENEE BADURA
VP Omnichannel Sales Strategy, Quad/Graphics



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BE PREDICTIVE

CHRISTOPHE CAMBORDE
CEO, Ezakus

BRIAN FRIEDMAN
CEO and cofounder, Loopd



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MATT STATMAN
President and CCO, Motive

MEASURE FIRST

HAMILTON DAVISON
President and Executive Director, American Catalog Mailers Association



ACCELERATE MOBILE



GRANT HALLORAN, GLOBAL VP & GENERAL MANAGER OF MARKETING AND CRM SOFTWARE, INFOR

Mobile. The paradox of mobile is that consumers largely prefer to engage via mobile devices, which should be a good thing, but identification is far more difficult because cookies don't work there. So, a huge aspect of interaction management is compromised. Marketers need to incentivize consumers to engage through apps that ID the consumer, and also look carefully at new technologies that use device and location data to determine the "probable" ID of the user.

LONI STARK, DIRECTOR, PRODUCT & INDUSTRY MARKETING, ADOBE

Marketers will need to master mobile marketing in 2015. Not as a channel or tactic, but as a way to be part of customer moments, both on- and offline. In those moments brands must be relevant, useful, and delightful. To accomplish this marketers must have the ability to extract meaning from mobile analytics and deliver just the right content. Mobile takes marketing agility, customer insight, and content brevity to the next level. Mobile is bootcamp for marketing. If you master mobile, you'll become a stronger marketer and brand overall.





DAVE WENTKER, CEO, TAPCENTIVE

In-location marketing will probably be the most critical channel in 2015 for a number of reasons. First, thanks to consumers' increasing reliance on mobile devices for just about everything they do—entertain, manage money, play games, shop, travel, and work—they're going to expect brands to deliver highly relevant content at moments that make sense; for example, delivering offers while they're in a store or venue, not after they've left or already made a purchase for the same item.

For brands, the ability to communicate with customers while they're in their physical location has never been greater, for the reasons above and to engage them in ways that are fun but also keep them in stores for longer periods of time.

Right now the in-location marketing focus from most vendors is on beacons, which can reach more consumers' phones. But those technologies are invisible and can lead to "uninvited" messaging that leaves consumer acceptance and participation very much to chance. Going into 2015 brands should consider ways to broaden their approach to proximity and in-location marketing that lets consumers choose their engagement. We believe that means supporting not only beacons, but also visible, interactive NFC technology—the use of dual technology enables brands to reach a larger audience and presents customers a highly visual connection to the brand.

MARCEL MUNOZ, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, THANX MEDIA

Ask consumers what their most trusted device is and the obvious answer is their mobile phone. Until wearable tech hits critical mass, that intimacy with a device can't be ignored. The fun part is embracing how this growing channel is keeping retailers on their toes.

In 2014 we saw the growth of "webrooming"; consumers shopping for the lowest prices online and then getting local stores to match those prices, avoiding shipping delays and cost. Webrooming is the opposite of "showrooming," which is looking at a product in a store and then buying it online. Consumers have found themselves on the corner of instant gratification and feeling confident that they've made the right purchase.

In 2015 it will be critical for marketers to learn how to manage these behaviors, whether the shopper is in the store or online, and find ways to encourage them to move to the point of decision. Innovative ways to place the most relevant prices and research in front of the shopper in real time will support this. Next year marketers also should explore advanced mobile solutions, such as offering in-store pricing discounts when store shoppers check prices on their smartphone or offering live video chats with product experts, all to show shoppers trending products to encourage immediate buys.



EMBRACE AUTOMATION



SCOTT VAUGHAN, CMO, INTEGRATE

“Automation is a trend we continue to see across marketing functions and the customer engagement process, with programmatic ad buying and marketing automation systems. While the top and bottom of the marketing funnel are rapidly becoming automated for most organizations, the middle of the funnel—demand generation—still remains very manual, one process at a time. In 2015 we’ll finally start to see the remaining manual marketing processes become automated as marketers look to eliminate time-sucking demand gen activities and use analytics to achieve a more complete view of their customers’ behaviors and needs.”



ERIC BOSCO, CEO, CHOICESTREAM

In 2015 brands will realize that programmatic media buying will directly reach and engage the consumers that care most about their business.

Brand marketers have been looking to traditional media to build awareness, a strong reputation, and customer loyalty through advertising that establishes brand recognition and entices consumers to buy later. However, as programmatic continues to gain momentum, marketers will reconsider where they use their advertising budget, and understand the added value of one-to-one marketing in both efficiency and relevance.

Instead of allocating spend to traditional media, such as billboard advertising, where brands go to reach a mass audience with a common message, brands will run digital campaigns powered by precise algorithms and machine learning to make a direct connection with the audience they’re most likely to influence. Brands will also be taking increasing advantage of the one-to-one connection to deliver a personally and contextually relevant experience. It’s not just about the reach anymore; it’s about who you connect with and how well you connect.

GET INTEGRATED



JOSH HERMAN, VP OF PARTNER AND PRODUCT STRATEGY, ACXIOM

In 2015 tactical speed is what marketers will need to master the channel question and pull ahead of the competition. Lots of companies, large and small, have successfully moved their direct marketing file simultaneously to both the lettershop

and to at least one other digital channel capable of targeting with that file.

From past campaigns, we've seen the purposeful choreography of a direct mail drop with the same file matched to an online display ad publisher produce a significant increase in response rate, at times 30%, compared to direct mail only. In 2015 removing the friction from that choreography to ensure that the speed-to-execution of those campaigns is not only fast, but also employable across several digital media partners, will allow marketers to master which combination, cadence, and sequence of channels provides the biggest ROI.



ROY SHKEDI, CEO AND FOUNDER, ALMONDNET GROUP

Earlier this year Gartner projected that tablet shipments will overtake PC shipments in 2015. As the New Year draws near, cross-device targeting will become critical to master as consumers divide their time between multiple screens (including smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktops, and TV) more than

ever. A user will check her phone in the morning, read her tablet on the way to work, spend her workday on her desktop, and then spend her last waking hours dividing her time between her laptop, tablet, and TV in the evening at home. In 2015 marketers will need to take all of these devices into consideration when looking to communicate with consumers on their different screens and, as important, measure their campaigns' impact as measured by consumers' behavior across devices.

RICKY LIVERSIDGE, CMO AND HEAD OF PRODUCT, SIZMEK

The biggest mistake marketers could make would be to focus on only one channel. 2015 will be the year of omnichannel—where marketers take a holistic view of their customers, understanding that in one minute they may be talking to them on a smartphone and the next minute they're reaching those same customers on their desktop. Successful marketers will focus on delivering their brand story in a seamless way across all channels: display, mobile, social, and video.

But beyond the importance of each channel is the relevance of the message. Marketers will deliver personalized versions of their brand story that resonate with the audience. They will capitalize on every opportunity to impact people, and engage them completely and easily through ongoing conversations that create lifelong customers.





AMY JONES, VP, BUSINESS SOLUTIONS, ZETA INTERACTIVE

2015 will be a pivotal year for marketers as they continue to refine strategies to convince consumers that they truly understand their wants and needs. The key will not be to master one channel, but to master each channel experienced by your target audience to deliver the right message, through the right channel, at the exact time it's needed.

As the amount of data collected and the number of systems and sources continue to grow, it's critical that marketers focus their knowledge and attention on selecting the right attributes for relevant campaigns. Proper data hygiene and householding will yield a precise approach. Additionally, marketers must automate programs to create efficiencies and optimize the customer touches and channels that yield the best return. Siloed marketing organizations and lack of knowledge-sharing will cost marketers accurate touchpoints in the consumer lifecycle and, ultimately, lead to failure.



MOLLIE SPILMAN, CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER, CRITEO

One of the most important tactics for marketers in 2015 will be the ability to target and successfully deliver personalized, dynamic ads to consumers across all screens. Brands must leverage cross-device technology to connect directly with consumers at the most opportune time to increase conversion. Mobile is increasingly important in the industry, as these devices are playing a significant role in the purchasing process. Mobile screens are becoming larger, giving consumers confidence to easily make important or high-value purchases simply by tapping on a personalized, dynamic ad delivered via cross-device technology. Without leveraging performance marketing, brands will ultimately lose sales and ROI to competing brands that are adopting this strategy.



RENEE BADURA, VP OMNICHANNEL SALES STRATEGY, QUAD/GRAPHICS

It's critical for marketers to establish credibility and rapport with their audience. By understanding what's valuable and coupling that with a strong brand message, everyone wins. Resonate with consumers by providing content they want.

Video is a channel that marketers need to master. We're visual consumers; we shop with our eyes. The Q1 2014 YouTube Insights report by Google culled survey data about millennials and found that YouTube is the top destination for learning about products and services. Marketers who create and tailor video content targeted to specific audiences, and leverage YouTube programming and metrics, will increase brand awareness and product recognition among the 74.3 million consumers ages 18 to 34.

Millennials want more value both on- and offline, from the companies they trust. Combining the power of highly personalized direct mail with targeted video marketing to reach this audience may lead to longer engagements, stronger relationships, and improved campaign results.

BE PREDICTIVE



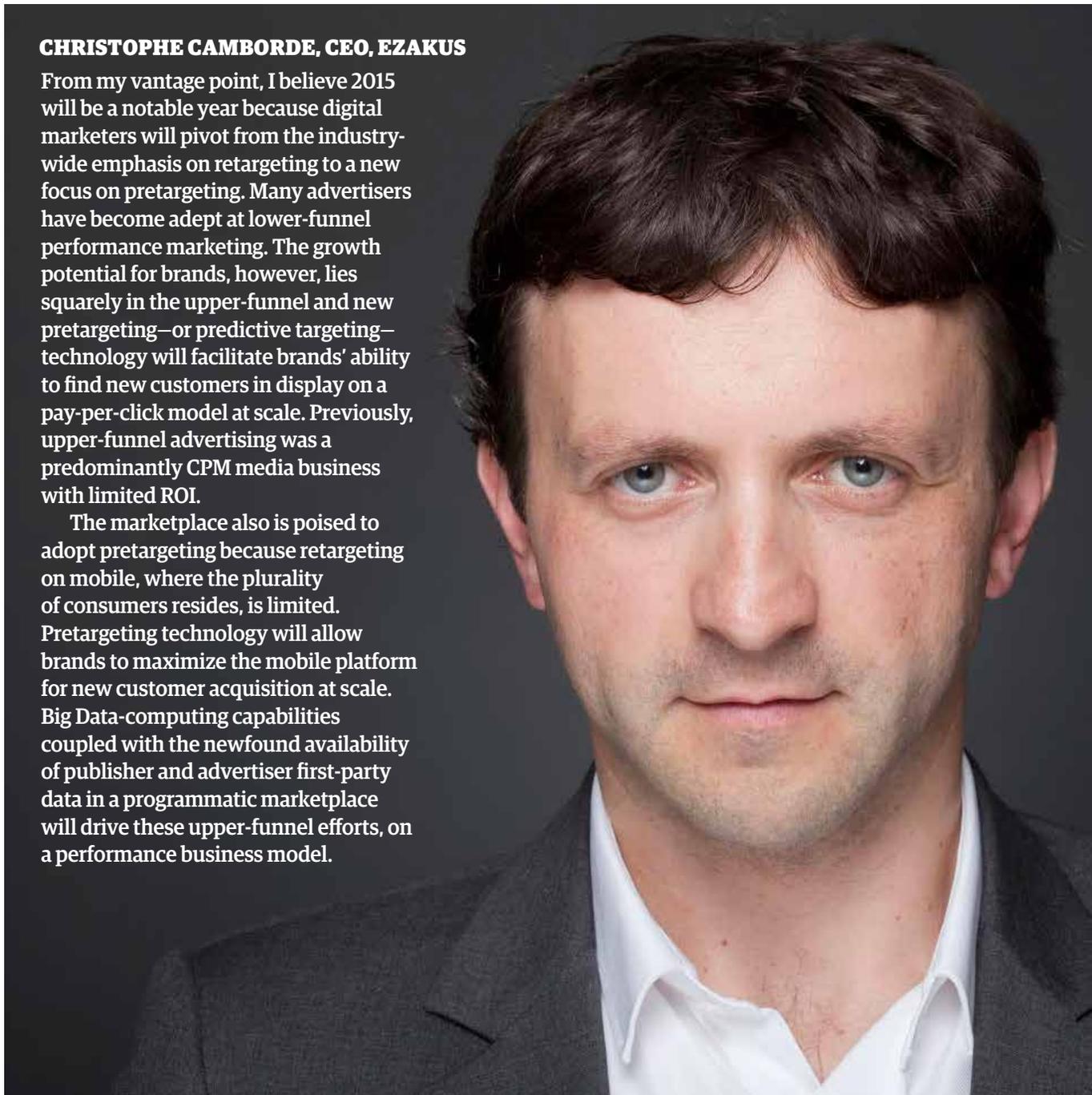
BRIAN FRIEDMAN, CEO AND COFOUNDER, LOOPD

2015 is the year of physical analytics. We're in a new day and age where we can learn about every physical action. Marketers need to start recording and analyzing social decisions not just online, but also offline. It's crucial to understand why customers are prompted to act. Through proximity marketing, marketers can learn from physical actions taking place in the real world to predict and enhance outbound marketing directives. In the past marketers have been unable to record social collisions, which are tremendously valuable to understanding target customers and their surrounding network. Advanced marketers are beginning to learn from people's physical movements to drive their virtual presence. With physical analytics, marketing becomes a more effective two-way street that consists of intelligent and intuitive inbound and outbound interactions.

CHRISTOPHE CAMBORDE, CEO, EZAKUS

From my vantage point, I believe 2015 will be a notable year because digital marketers will pivot from the industry-wide emphasis on retargeting to a new focus on pretargeting. Many advertisers have become adept at lower-funnel performance marketing. The growth potential for brands, however, lies squarely in the upper-funnel and new pretargeting—or predictive targeting—technology will facilitate brands' ability to find new customers in display on a pay-per-click model at scale. Previously, upper-funnel advertising was a predominantly CPM media business with limited ROI.

The marketplace also is poised to adopt pretargeting because retargeting on mobile, where the plurality of consumers resides, is limited. Pretargeting technology will allow brands to maximize the mobile platform for new customer acquisition at scale. Big Data-computing capabilities coupled with the newfound availability of publisher and advertiser first-party data in a programmatic marketplace will drive these upper-funnel efforts, on a performance business model.



PARTNER UP

MATT STATMAN, PRESIDENT AND CCO, MOTIVE

While the challenge to garner attention from consumers is long-standing, today's fragmented viewing habits and proliferation of media channels add complexity. However, they can also present unique opportunities for brands that master the world of media and network partnerships. Collaboration with these channels provides brands the connective tissue to engage an audience through existing relationships with programs, characters, and plot lines.

There are inherent challenges. Media companies are not always well-versed in the creative needs of a brand and often attempt to force integration. Although agencies have the creative chops to concept a compelling partnership, the incentive to do so does not inherently exist since ownership of creative development lies with someone else.

The power of these partnerships warrants the attention of agencies, but should be structured in a way that allows them to stay involved throughout the process—creative oversight, concept collaboration, extension, and promotion—and clearly defines success.



MEASURE FIRST



HAMILTON DAVISON, PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN CATALOG MAILERS ASSOCIATION

The consumer behaviors are shifting, but what is the optimal mix of contact strategies? In a continuous effort to master both traditional and emerging media, direct marketers must not lose sight of what's working. There is a natural tendency to focus on the bright, shiny object that's capturing attention. With all the emphasis on "the new, new thing," it's possible to forget the more mundane but still critically important component to generating revenue. For instance, it's been proven time and again that catalogs and direct mail yield loyal customers and steady response rates, yet a growing number of direct marketers reallocate dollars away from mail to newer channels that may not perform as well. Holding traditional media constant while experimenting with new methods is a much better way than blindly diverting resources from proven, reliable channels, such as catalogs and direct mail.

Ideally, wise marketers take incremental dollars to support new marketing media development. A/B test it against a control to determine the appropriate mix of old and new to preserve revenue and reduce cost. To sway budgets toward mobile or Web marketing and completely away from print would be a big mistake until the new media is vetted and can be used with a full understanding of the impact on sales, lifetime customer value, RFM, and beyond.