THE QUEST FOR THE PERFECT
Identity-Driven Marketer

Recruiting the best talent to deliver cutting-edge customer experience
INTRODUCTION

A DEFINING MOMENT IN MARKETING

The WHO and HOW of Identity-Driven Marketing and Customer Experience

Consumers today have very high expectations. In fact, 60 percent expect brands to deliver tailored customer experiences; seven out of 10 consumers say they prefer content and ads that are customized to their personal interests and shopping habits, and 43 percent report that their desire for personalization has grown in the last year alone.¹

The CMO’s battle to retain customers in this personalization-driven marketplace increasingly relies on managing and activating their brand’s first-party data. This is a job that calls for – or, rather, screams for – identity-driven marketing.

Known also as people-based marketing, identity-driven marketing connects first-party data from across devices and channels to create a 360-degree view of the customer, enabling marketers to deliver messaging that is individualized, contextually relevant and consistent throughout all consumer touchpoints.

Regardless of what you call it, recent marketer survey results indicate that this data-driven marketing mindset is now firmly entrenched across the enterprise landscape, enabling brands to elevate their customer engagement initiatives to unprecedented levels of relevance and intimacy.

But while identity resolution technologies and tools are now commonplace, talent is another story.

Succeeding in this brave new world of 1:1 customer interaction depends on sourcing data-savvy modern marketers with the right combination of expertise and vision to build and execute an effective identity-driven strategy and team.

This research-based guide seeks to quantify the archetype of the perfect identity-driven marketer, pinpointing the fundamental skills and qualifications that today’s cutting-edge marketer absolutely must possess as well as parsing who is responsible for driving engagement efforts that move the needle on customer experience, retention and revenue.

A special thank-you to the CMOs and marketing executives who participated in this research:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDING THE IDEAL IDENTITY-DRIVEN MARKETER
It Matters Now More Than Ever

Consumers have spoken. “They’re saying ‘Talk to me... get to know me,’” says Deborah Sabo, senior vice president of marketing at supermarket chain Food Lion. Indeed, studies show that an ever-increasing number of consumers are willing to interact with brands on a more personal, profound level:²

- **In 2018, 80 percent of customers report a willingness to share product category preferences** with brands, up from 50 percent in 2016.

- **Seventy-two percent of customers are willing to share their email address** with brands, compared to 34 percent in 2016.

- **Sixty-five percent have provided brands with product preferences** in order to get tailored recommendations.

The digital retail space is leading the charge. While eschewing traditional physical loyalty punch cards, virtual brands still provide benefits to repeat customers, creating a strong incentive to share login and purchase data over time. Amazon, the 800-lb. gorilla of the e-commerce uprising, long ago grasped first-party data’s extraordinary capacity to drive personalization at mass-market scale: by collecting information and insight from each shopper interaction across devices and platforms, it built one of the world’s largest and most sophisticated identity graphs to continually refine and redefine the customer journey, complete with loyalty-driving benefits including personalized product recommendations, free shipping, and award-winning video content. Other retailers are bridging the physical and digital worlds to foster allegiance, boost sales and gather intel: for example, Foot Locker’s mobile application, tailored for diehard sneaker collectors, details new product launches and brick-and-mortar locations, as well as offering VIP options for reserving limited-edition items.

Personalization: the silver bullet

Programs such as these that capture first-party behavioral data are signature forays into the promising world and returns of today’s identity-driven marketing. Personalization – delivering messaging that is individualized, contextually relevant and consistent across channels, platforms and devices, all in real time – has emerged as a silver bullet to close the gap between what organizations need to succeed and how consumers want to be engaged. **Companies doing personalization well are seeing revenues grow two to three times faster than those lagging in adoption.³**

“Marketing is now the strategic driver of businesses.”

**Julie Lyle**
Chief Marketing Officer (interim)
BARNES & NOBLE


So what’s the problem?

For starters, the sheer number of marketing technologies available today (5,000-plus, according to the latest iteration of the LUMAscape martech taxonomy) can be overwhelming to marketers trying to determine which solutions will best equip them to deliver one-to-moment messaging.4 A critical gap begins to form.

“Marketing teams and skill sets have not kept pace with the exponential growth in marketing technology – nor have internal learning and development systems, or the technologies themselves, for that matter,” explains Julie Lyle, interim chief marketing officer at bookseller Barnes & Noble. “Often, you’re left with marketing teams that have disparate levels of awareness, capabilities, experience and even strategic understanding of the long-term goal or possibility of identity-driven marketing.”

The problem is exacerbated further by widespread fragmentation within the organization with regard to ownership of customer identity and/or customer experience. The way personalization is defined, executed and measured varies greatly from person to person and company to company. Research conducted for this solution guide bears this out: only 18 percent of marketers have implemented a clear, comprehensive strategy to direct their brand’s present and future identity-driven marketing.

Is there a strategy in place guiding your brand’s present or future identity-driven marketing efforts?

| 58% | YES |
| 18% | YES |
| 24% | NO |

- 58% Yes: we’ve started exploring/developing an identity-based strategy, but it still lacks clarity and definition
- 18% Yes: we’ve developed a clear, comprehensive vision to guide our identity efforts
- 24% No: we’ve not formulated an identity-driven marketing strategy
Recruiting the perfect identity-driven marketer

The implications are wide and deep. These tech/talent gaps and customer identity/CX ownership ambiguities often lead to poor customer experiences, declining brand loyalty and retention, wasted/inefficient spending on ad retargeting, and so on. No less alarming, brands have precious little time to deliberate when and how to put their identity efforts into overdrive: just ask flat-footed incumbents in verticals disrupted by data-driven upstarts such as Amazon, Airbnb and Lyft.

Which brings us to the critical questions posed in this research. The CMO Club, in thought leadership with Signal, recently surveyed 72 CMOs from a range of business-to-consumer and business-to-business brands across all verticals to examine the underlying challenges of implementing an identity-driven marketing approach and finding marketers with the skills and expertise to lead the charge. We also spoke one-on-one with chief marketing officers and marketing executives from consumer and business brand leaders including ASOS, Barnes & Noble, Food Lion, La Quinta Inns & Suites, Sky Betting & Gaming, Starbucks and VF Corporation/Lee Jeans to gain insight into the “who” and “how” of customer identity and customer experience, and why getting those answers right is crucial to long-term success.

Why identity-driven marketing is so vital

In today’s data-driven landscape, relationship management and engagement is king – and kingmaker. And customer identity, in particular, serves as the foundation for all brand engagements.

The Forrester Tech Tide: Martech for B2C Marketers, Q2 2018 even cites identity among the 20 technologies underpinning modern marketing. “As consumers’ expectations for omnichannel experiences grow, marketers should invest in the technologies that enable seamless brand experiences regardless of channel,” Forrester states. “Technologies such as cross-channel identity resolution will play a vital role in bringing omnichannel marketing to life.”

Dean Murr, former senior programmatic manager with apparel retailer ASOS, agrees that identity is imperative. “If you don’t know the customer, you can’t predict or determine who they are, and you can’t use the data. Then you’re just making inferences. That weakens the whole customer experience.”

Brands that recognize their customers as individuals can deliver the personalized experiences they expect. “Our consumers have a different experience depending on age, mindset, price point, fashion sensibility and so on,” explains Kim Yates, vice president of marketing at VF Corporation, which owns lifestyle apparel brands including Lee Jeans. “So we try to make sure our social media, email communications, and even where we land them on lee.com is consistent for that particular experience.”

Brands that don’t recognize their customers face an uphill climb. “The source of a brand’s competitive advantage, profitability or success is no longer product. Merchandise is universally available,” says Julie Lyle, interim chief marketing officer at Barnes & Noble. “Rather, the battle is being played – and won – on the marketing field.”
Answering this question first is instrumental to enumerating the skill sets and characteristics of the ideal identity-driven marketing leader and team member.

“Maybe in the next five years, we’ll reach the point where the role of data and marketing blend seamlessly, because data is so precise and data systems are so well honed that the job of marketers will become much easier,” envisions Kim Yates, vice president of marketing at apparel company VF Corporation/Lee Jeans. Until then, however, the answer to who owns customer identity varies:

Who owns responsibility for building a cohesive identity-driven strategy to consistently deliver personalized customer experience across all touchpoints?

At La Quinta Inns & Suites, marketing owns the responsibility “because we’re the ones who use the data to drive all of our marketing efforts,” explains Julie Cary, the hotel chain’s chief marketing officer. “It is our responsibility to make sure the data is as good as it can be.” That means assigning the loyalty program manager and analytics manager to the task: “It’s important to have both. We use data to drive insights, but also to drive conversations and market to our customers in all the various channels.”

Ownership at Starbucks sits with the marketing team, Tebben says, who have had much success leveraging the data generated from its digital flywheel to deliver more relevant customer experiences. However, regardless of where ownership sits, in retail it takes a cross-functional team effort to be best-in-class in this area, with marketing, the creative studio, operations and technology working in harmony to expand the acquisition funnel and to deliver personalized experiences that meet each customer where they are.

Customer ID falls under the auspices of two teams at Food Lion: the loyalty team, which oversees behavioral data, and the digital team, which manages third-party data and attitudinal data from other sources. “As the role of customer identity becomes a much bigger part of the marketing mix, it will be important to look at the customer holistically by merging both behavioral and attitudinal data to talk to ‘her’ in a more personalized manner. It’s about creating lifetime value with your customers,” Sabo says.

Looking at identity from another perspective, Sam Talbot, head of marketing technology with online gambling company Sky Betting & Gaming, says “Marketing teams leverage the customer identity, but the technical team should be the one that actually owns it and understands how it works.”
Other significant challenges persist, the survey results reveal:

**Most CMOs don’t own all the critical deliverables to implement data-driven marketing philosophies.**

Which department owns responsibility for executing a consistent personal customer experience across all touchpoints? Select all responses that apply:

- 86% Marketing
- 28% Data & Analytics
- 25% IT
- 24% Product
- 8% Other

**CMOs lack consensus on who owns the customer relationship within the organization.**

What is the current job title and/or operating role leading the execution of your identity/customer data-driven plan?

- 24% Manager, Director or Vice President of CRM
- 24% Manager, Director or Vice President of Marketing Technology
- 21% Manager, Director or Vice President of Programmatic Media
- 11% Manager, Director or Vice President of Product Management
- 11% Manager, Director or Vice President of Data & Analytics

**Most CMOs don’t have the necessary partners and support systems to bring about real change.**

What hurdles are you struggling to overcome? Select all responses that apply:

- 61% Budgetary constraints
- 51% Technological integration issues
- 24% Data silos
- 23% Internal politics/conflict
- 8% Limited internal buy-in
Betting on Real-Time Results
SKY BETTING & GAMING

Placing bets with identity-driven marketing has been paying off for Sky Betting & Gaming. The British-based online gaming platform uses a two-method approach to targeting new and existing customers – “lights-out, always-on” campaigns to nurture customer lifecycle activity, and “headline” campaigns to handle major offers and big events – and is finding success by applying customer identity to each approach.

“With the lights-out method, once a customer registers, they are served certain ads and messages throughout their first 28 days as a customer,” Sam Talbot, the company’s head of marketing technology, explains. “Previously those were all decided by us, one week at a time.”

With various solutions and tech in place, Talbot says Sky Betting can now react to customer behaviors and intent signals to make sure it is spending ad dollars efficiently. “If we show seven days of cash-out adverts, but a customer cashes out on day one, there’s no point in showing them for the next six days, so we immediately, in real time, move on to the next messaging strategy.”

This allows the company to consistently and constantly spend money on its customers in the most relevant way – and realize significant savings.

For the headline campaigns, Sky Betting has used identity data to conduct more targeted activity across multiple channels. Talbot cites the much-anticipated Floyd Mayweather-Conor McGregor boxing match in August 2017.

“We were able to take groups of customers who had bet on Mayweather and groups of customers that bet on McGregor, and target them with different messages. When they had the bet on the message that we’d sent, we put them on to a prize list. Then we had them place a bet on the prize list, we would put them on to round betting, and so on, following them through the journey of the site. And if we knew they had a bet on rounds one to six, when it got to round seven we’d show something else.”

This targeted, real-time response to betting activities allowed Sky Betting & Gaming to provide a personalized and interactive customer experience. “We’ve come from a world of batch campaigns where the customer’s experience is based on a predefined time that campaign runs, and we’ve moved to more of an identity-driven, real time-based solution,” Talbot says. “The efficiencies are excellent, and the ability to leverage the first-party data that we’ve got is also excellent.”
Enlightened marketers today understand that customer identity and customer experience should work together to deliver a win for customers and for their brand. It is, in essence, a symbiotic relationship in which each function strengthens and enriches the other.

While no across-the-board consensus emerged from the 1:1 CMO interviews for this research, there are similarities in their holistic approaches to who owns the customer experience within the organization:

“…an important role in delivering joyful customer experiences, and to achieve our aspirations we must embrace that responsibility,” says Tebben, explaining that the Starbucks partners who wear the green apron [baristas] have been and will continue to be the bedrock of creating meaningful customer connections each day. “Our reason for being in the Support Center is to help facilitate these customer connections, whether that be marketing engaging customers via identity-driven, personalized communications, R&D creating the next big product innovation, or supply chain ensuring the right product is in the right place at the right time. So who owns the customer experience at Starbucks – I’d proudly say we all do.”

Cary makes a distinction between owning vs. leading the responsibility of CX. She says no one area, function or person at La Quinta owns it, but that everyone is responsible for delivering great customer experience. In fact, every employee in the company is compensated on Net Promoter Score. To that end, La Quinta created “Here For You”, the brand’s guest and employee experience which defines what the experience should be (see page 11). “Here for You” aligned all associates to a common goal and educated them on how they can impact the guest experience whether they’re on the property or not,” Cary says.

At Barnes & Noble, the responsibility for both customer identity and customer experience falls on the CMO. Lyle emphasizes that assigning ownership to an individual or function (whether it is with the CMO, another team member or another department) is absolutely key. “If you don’t assign a specific person who is held to metrics on how happy the customer is in the store, on the site, pre-, during- and post-shop, then everybody owns it and nobody owns it.” Experience will fall short, she says, because team members will fail to understand how their individual role is part of an entire relationship with the brand and the customer.

For Food Lion, ownership rests at the top. “We truly believe that the entire leadership team owns the customer and the experience,” Sabo states. “Customer service can’t just sit with marketing, or it won’t be successful.”
Identity in Action

Here for You
LA QUINTA

Customer identity and customer experience have converged at La Quinta into a highly successful company-wide initiative known as “Here for You.” “We created the program from an emotional motif to capture, articulate and implement what our guests want from a stay at La Quinta,” says Chief Marketing Officer Julie Cary.

Cary kickstarted the effort by pulling together a cross-functional team with representatives from training, operations and marketing to gain deep insights from the various areas of the organization. The team identified three components that comprise the foundation for the perfect customer experience: the guest wants to be assured they made the right choice, they want to settle in and they want to wake up optimistic, ready to take on the day.

La Quinta then set about educating every employee within the organization to begin thinking about the ways in which they personally impact customer experience on a daily – even moment-by-moment – basis. “It was important that everyone be aligned with this initiative and incentives always help with alignment,” Cary explains.

La Quinta’s loyalty program is one of the ways “Here for You” works in concert with customer identity. Upon check-in, guests who are members of the LQ Returns Military Rewards or book with a military code are greeted by a front-desk staffer thanking them for their service, a sentiment prompted by real-time data in the system. “We know acknowledging our service member is the right thing to do,” says Cary, “and we also know that when we thank people for their service, we drive even higher Net Promoter Scores, which means they’re going to stay with us again. And that makes it a great business reason, as well.”
With deeper visibility into the question of ownership, a picture of the perfect identity-driven marketer begins to emerge. This candidate could best be described as a renaissance marketer who possesses a rare but valuable combination of skills and insights.

“The successful marketer is smart as a whip analytically, but also understands that those insights need to be tied in creatively to engage and story-tell,” says Tebben. Talbot takes this one step further: “You need someone with a hybrid skill set of understanding technology and business value, and the ability to communicate that business value throughout the organization.”

There should be no expectation, however, that any one candidate possesses all the necessary traits to single-handedly deliver personalized marketing and customer experience. “I wouldn’t expect to find someone with five to seven years of identity marketing experience under their belt, because this is a new muscle for most organizations,” Sabo suggests.

“We’re not looking at behavioral and attitudinal data separately. We’re bringing it all together.”

Deborah Sabo
Vice President of Marketing
FOOD LION
CMOs interviewed agree that the ideal identity-driven marketer demonstrates true leadership traits, such as:

A tech/data mindset:
“Marketing has completely changed in the last two, three, four years,” Talbot says. “The background for people who work in marketing has moved from [knowing how] to talk to people to understanding fundamentally how technology works and how to leverage data.”

Proven innovation in other channels:
Because the sought-after skill set for this role is relatively new, a history of success in related facets is important. “They need to show and prove experience with segmentation, and be able to talk about personalized marketing,” says Sabo. “They need to demonstrate that they understand and appreciate both attitudinal and behavioral data.”

Coalition-building across the entire organization:
“The ideal candidate can get disparate systems and functions to work together to create on the vision and deliver it,” Lyle says.

A good working relationship with their IT counterpart: “It is hard to build a roadmap to customer experience unless you understand the importance of technology and learning as you go,” Tebben explains.

Strategic thinking:
Lyle describes it as “the ability to see around corners and know where the white spaces are” to anticipate what is – and isn’t – on the horizon.

Ability to prioritize: “Know when to say ‘no’,” Lyle notes. “The ideal marketing leader has to know where to make their investment bets, and have the courage to do it.”
**Identity in Action**

**Party Time**  
**FOOD LION**

“About six years ago, Food Lion went through a transformation,” recalls Deborah Sabo, the supermarket chain’s senior vice president of marketing. “We examined what was working, what wasn’t, then collaboratively developed a unique selling proposition and put together a playbook of how we could best serve our customer, who we refer to as ‘Ms. Johnson.’”

This is proving quite effective, Sabo says, because “all departments and all functions share the same common goal. We’re focusing on the same strategy, and we all have developed unique playbooks for our respective areas to deliver on that strategy.”

Sabo cites the example of graduation season and the opportunity sell party trays and festive cakes to Ms. Johnson. To boost awareness of these products, Food Lion integrated third-party data to deliver personalized offers to consumers searching online for anything graduation-related. The chain then offered up content either through social media or display advertising to drive awareness that Food Lion carries party trays, cakes and other graduation-related items.

“Before behavioral data, if ‘she’ had never purchased a party tray or cake from us, we would not have served her an ad or incentive for those items,” Sabo says. “This gives us reach beyond our loyalty program.”
While not a unicorn, the perfect specimen can be rare. “You see a lot of people who excel at the data and personalization side of marketing, and others who are exceptional on the creative side – the storytelling, engagement front,” observes Tebben. “But the marketer of the future who succeeds is the one who can excel at both.”

Finding that perfect identity-driven marketing leadership requires:

• Enterprise-wide understanding of customer identity and customer experience roles within the organization

• Adequate resources – people, budgets and tools – to build a data-driven competency in marketing

• Identifying candidates with proven leadership and potential to harness the power of personalized engagement

• A well-defined roadmap that leads the brand to enlightened customer views and boundless personalization opportunities.

With the right leadership in place, brands can begin to think more long-term, rather than simply generating quick clicks to their site, Murr says. “Marketing will be more about placing bets with your marketing budget by using customer predictions and all of that data to derive longer-term value and nurture you through the lifecycle.”

Sabo agrees. “It’s important for CMOs to get their hands on as much behavioral and attitudinal data as possible, so that they can better understand the customer journey and paths to purchase. But setting a clear strategy and mining the data effectively is the only way to be successful today.”

“Everybody wants an expert with all their experience from the digital world, but it’s really the ability to translate the physical world into the digital world that makes that marketer even more powerful.”

Kim Yates
Vice President of Marketing
VF CORPORATION/LEE JEANS
**The CMO Club**

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**Signal**

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