MARIGOLD™

Transforming the Retail Customer Experience

Leverage better data and personalized, cross-channel campaigns for stronger customer relationships

A World of Data (and Opportunity) Awaits

Global retailers continue to face a landscape marked by change and innovation. The last decade has seen the rise of ecommerce, the decline (and then upswing) of bricks and mortar, and increasing consumer demand for "right-for-me, right-now" experiences.

With more consumer data available to marketers than ever before, there's little excuse for sending inconsequential offers or for products the consumer has no interest in, or even worse, messaging based on data that has been surreptitiously gathered without consent.

Consumers expect to shop on any platform, at any time. They want brands to know what they want and not waste their time with irrelevant offers. Retail marketers who adopt a **relationship marketing strategy** will win the day. They work to understand what customers want so they can build a better shopping experience and longer lifetime customer value.

In this ebook, we examine the relationship between data, cross-channel engagement, and customer experiences to understand how great campaigns are built and what retailers risk losing if they fail to differentiate.

What is Relationship Marketing?

The foundation of relationship marketing is the journey between the brand and the consumer. It starts with turning an unknown consumer into a known customer. By building a strong foundation, that customer can become a loyal brand evangelist. Marketers must establish a true connection with each individual to grow customer lifetime value. The four key tenets of building the relationship are acquisition, engagement, personalization and loyalty.
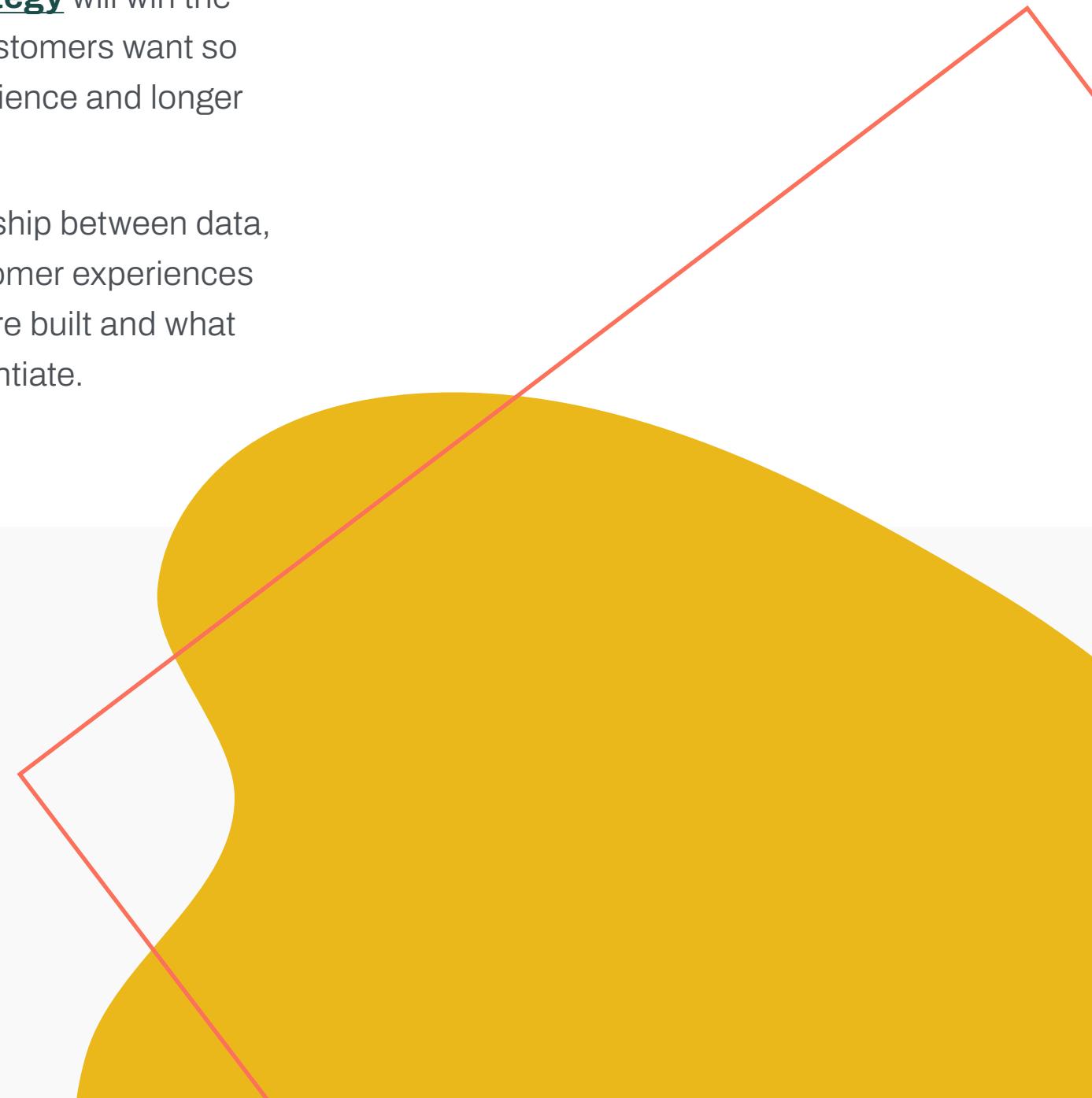
Email + Data Go Hand-in-Hand

Email's still got it

When leveraged as a part of a true omnichannel sales strategy, email holds its own as one of the most scalable and cost-effective channels for marketers.

Email remains a highly effective channel for driving sales, with 55% of U.S. consumers purchasing a product directly as a result of an email they received in the last 12 months. That's higher than both social media advertisements (52%) and posts (49%).

Consumers expect true personalization from their favorite brands, yet many brands still use batch-and-blast tactics. 39% of U.S. consumers have been frustrated by receiving irrelevant content or offers from brands. 35% have been frustrated by brand messages that failed to address their wants or needs

Personalization is the path forward

Real-time personalization provides the ability to quickly respond to changes in customer experiences — even as the customer is interacting online or through email. It allows your customers' behaviors and preferences to dictate which follow-up actions are taken, so you have the best chance of generating future purchases and long-term loyalty.

Using zero-party data — self-reported preference, behavioral and psychographic data — is the path forward in a constricted economy to increase revenue and customer retention.

Truly personalized messaging is the core of relationship marketing, and not about short-term wins or sales but focused on delighting customers for the long haul. In order to reduce attrition and continue to grow, brands need to deliver personalized messaging that shows empathy and an understanding of an individual's likes, interests, history and preferences while delivering in the moments that matter.

This means collecting, understanding and activating more zero-party data throughout a brand's entire messaging strategy.

The truth is, engagement isn't possible without personalization. And personalization isn't possible without data. Every time a customer comes in contact with your brand, it's an opportunity to create a more complete picture of who they are. If you aren't already, start gathering:

Demographic Data

- Date of sign up
- Date of first purchase
- Time since last engagement (open/click)
- Time since last purchase
- Gender
- Birthdate

Behavioral Data

- Total engagements (sends/opens/clicks)
- Metadata on link clicks/site interactions
- Total spend
- Total transactions
- Products purchased

Experiential Data

- Stated preferences
- Survey responses
- Quiz responses
- Product interests
- Style interests

Predictive Data

- Expected lifetime value
- Engagement propensity
- Transaction propensity
- Churn likelihood
- Customer segment

Balancing Data and Personal Privacy

Consumers love messaging from their preferred brands. Over three quarters of consumers agree that their preferred brands deliver a consistent UX (92%), treat data responsibly (88%), reward consumers for loyalty (88%), and treat consumers as individuals (85%).

Consumers will readily share personal data in return for it. But they are clear that permission must be asked for, especially if it involves a brand communicating with them on a different platform or device. 61% view display ads derived from third-party cookie tracking as creepy, not cool. But 84% like personalized birthday offers, 80% appreciate product recommendations based on past purchases, and 68% value abandoned cart reminders.

Zero-party data

Zero-party data is defined as information voluntarily provided by the consumer. With a reduction in the sheer volume and reliability of third-party data, retailers must turn to other tactics. Doing without is not an option.

Emerging AI and machine learning technologies offer new ways to collect data that's needed for better personalization. Interactive digital experiences like quizzes, surveys, polls and sweepstakes yield powerful clues on preferences, opinions and future purchase intent.

Because zero-party data comes from a retail marketer's own collection methods and directly from the consumer, it is more accurate, and therefore more valuable. First-party data can be used for retargeting purposes (whether via ads or lead nurturing) and to create a better picture of your ideal customer.

But it doesn't come for free. Consumers know the value of their data and expect something in return, which has become known as the "value exchange." More on that shortly.

The benefits of zero- and first-party data

Zero- and first-party data (collectively called "primary" data because it comes from the consumer first-hand) have a number of benefits that second- and third-party data can't even begin to contend with. They are:

Free.
Gather first-party data using the systems and channels you're already employing.

Safe from competitor access.
There's no risk of purchasing the same data as a competitor. It's proprietary to your brand.

A true source of actual customer behavior.
The data comes straight to you from the systems/channels you use instead of from an external source.

Highly transparent.
In the age of GDPR, first-party data is one of the most trusted and valuable types of user data. You own it and are responsible for collecting all necessary consents (but you are still required to comply with storage, usage, and confidentiality standards).

Highly predictive.
Primary data, particularly historical behavioral data that you've gathered over time, is more predictive than third party data like income, mosaic profiles, inferred interests, etc.

The best resource for creating personalized experiences.
If your follow-up marketing actions come from decisions made using first-party data, they will be directly reflective of your customers' behaviors and preferences.

Put your data to work

Collecting this data is only the first step. The next challenge is to leverage consumer data to create timely, personalized campaigns that resonate at an individual level — no small task when data is housed in disparate, unconnected systems.

With the right technology, it's possible to activate zero- and first-party data across all of your customer-facing channels and execute a seamless, cross-channel marketing strategy. This includes targeted experiences, personalized cross-channel messages, and loyalty programs — all of which rely on this highly personal data to deliver the most relevant and engaging experiences.

What is a "value exchange"?

Trust is the key to creating lasting relationships with your customers. One important way to build that trust is by ensuring that every interaction includes a "value exchange." No matter how a customer engages with your brand — whether it's by sharing some data, reading an email, or joining your loyalty, or even making a purchase — they should be getting something of value in return. For example:

Offer a discount on a future purchase in exchange for product reviews.

Reward loyalty program members for every interaction with your brand — not just purchases.

Ensure that customers open your communications by making sure every message is relevant and personal.

Offer a sweepstakes entry with the chance to win a great prize as part of a data acquisition campaign.

The Loyalty Imperative

Brand loyalty remains strong, with 63% of consumers willing to pay more to purchase from their preferred brands, an increase from 59% last year. Over two-thirds (67%) say a brand's loyalty program is a key factor in winning their lasting business, and 69% of shoppers who previously left a brand say they can be won back.

Loyalty programs continue to gain traction, with 39% of consumers more likely to engage in one this year, while only 8% say they're less likely to participate.

In times of economic uncertainty, a strong loyalty program can make all the difference. 43% of consumers plan to rely more on loyalty benefits before making a purchase, while 46% are more likely to wait for a sale before buying. Additionally, 48% are doing more research than last year before committing to a purchase.

With ongoing economic pressures, retailers must deliver both financial and emotional value. Consumers expect personalized rewards, meaningful engagement, and a reason to stay connected to a brand's identity, not just discounts. The brands that prioritize relevance, recognition, and real value will win the long game.

Use your zero- and first-party data across channels to create campaigns that:

Go beyond points.
Consider your customers' entire activity history (beyond just purchase-based points), including engagement with social and email, store/site visits, and more to drive powerful rewards.

Deliver personalized offers.
Use customer data to define, manage, and target highly personalized offers online, at the register, or even in-store with coupons, recommendations, and exclusive offers.

Tie purchases to reactions.
Connect POS and ecommerce systems with member profiles to update them with purchase/redemption activities and real-time reactions as they happen.

Reward the best customers based on loyalty status.
Offer special treatment to your best customers with a flexible tier structure that provides them with unique earning opportunities and exclusive rewards based on their loyalty status.

Deliver the right reward at the right moment.

Build even deeper loyalty with rewards that delight customers when they expect (and deserve) it most. Surprise them with recognition, digital rewards, and physical goods at the times your data indicates they've earned it.
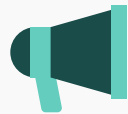
Harness customer voice.

Forge lasting relationships by giving customers a voice and listening to their poll responses and social posts. Then, use that advocacy to influence more word-of-mouth referrals.

Identify and reward your most valuable customers.

All of your customers deserve your attention. But not all customers are created equal, and rewarding your best customers is more efficient, provides greater loyalty, and generates more ROI in the long run. Primary data can help you understand what drives a high-value customer and how allocating more resources to them will benefit you.

In addition, zero- and first-party data can help you understand your customers and inspire new products and services. Armed with primary data, you can develop new tactics and strategies that will engage them on a deeper level. You will have a stronger understanding of their preferences and desires.

Building true emotional loyalty requires a dynamic mix of activities and interactions between your brand and customers that will drive engagement at every touchpoint. When achieved, emotional loyalty delivers higher customer retention, cross-sales (increased revenue for less cost), and unprompted brand advocacy from your most loyal fans.

The Right Martech *Opens* Doors

Assess your current martech solutions

Does your martech allow you to connect the retail dots?

Seamlessly acquire and analyze data.

- Do you have easy access to the zero- and first-party data generated by your platform?

- Can you listen to customer feedback and harness voice-of-customer data to build loyalty?

- Is your data easy to understand and interpret?

- Can you unify data from disparate sources to create a single view of each customer?

- Are you able to mine deep insights to predict customer behaviors and optimize future campaigns?

Activate data across any channel in real time.

- Can you use your data to power cross-channel campaigns?

- Does your data seamlessly feed into your loyalty programs to power personalized messages?

- Can you easily build and modify campaigns?

- Can you incorporate real-time performance and activities into current campaigns?

Integrate with other systems.

- Does your martech integrate with key business systems like CRM or POS?

- Are you able to push data back into other systems for easy activation?

- Can you track cross-functional elements of the customer experience?

Conclusion

Ensuring engagement, loyalty, and revenue growth means using a martech solution where email, data, and customer experience can truly work together in one native platform for the most complete picture of the buyer journey.

Note: The data supplementing this guide comes from Marigold's 2025 Global Consumer Trends index which you can access **here**.

Where *relationships* take root.

Marigold's approach to Relationship Marketing stands alone in a world of one-size-fits-all marketing technology companies. Our solutions are designed for your specific size, industry, and maturity, giving you the technology and expertise you need to grow the relationships that grow your business, from customer acquisition to engagement to loyalty. And, with a team of strategists that provide insights into what's working, what's not, and what's changing in your industry, you're able to maximize ROI every step of the way.

Great marketing isn't just about conversion, but true connection. Learn why 40,000 businesses around the world trust Marigold to be the firm foundation they need to help relationships take root.

Find out more at **MeetMarigold.com**

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