



#### Every Customer Journey Is Different

No matter how you try to funnel leads through marketing content and toward a conversion, each customer is operating with different pain points, interests, and timelines when considering their next purchase. Some are looking for a quick solution, and already know what they want and need. Others are just starting to consider a conversion, and aren't sure exactly what they need, or when they might need it.

Because of the flexible, ever-changing composition of this customer journey, many business owners become overwhelmed when facing the task of advertising to different stages of this process.

At the same time, every prospect is at a different stage of the customer journey—and each one is going at its own pace in determining whether your business is the best fit for their needs. How can a business effectively serve all of these individual prospects through their advertising—and do so in a way that not only covers its costs, but creates new revenue through your advertising spending?

This is the challenge of creating a marketing and advertising strategy that can serve the entire customer journey all at once. In this guide, we'll show you how a digital advertising partner like Cox Media can create an effective ad strategy that serves the full customer journey, improves prospect engagement, and sets the stage for higher conversion rates and increased revenue to grow your business.

Through data-driven campaign development, messaging that reaches the right customers at the right time, and a creative strategy that speaks directly to the needs of your target audience, Cox Media is invested in building small business success through a unique, collaborative partnership focused on building successful ad campaigns across a wide range of traditional and digital channels.

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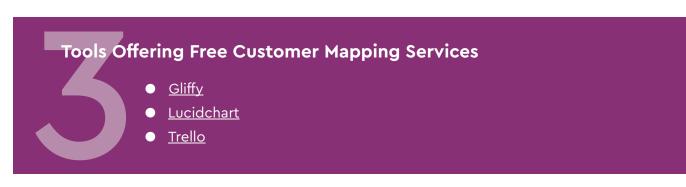
#### The Customer Journey: An Introduction

You're probably already familiar with the traditional sales funnel, which breaks down the sales process into a few key stages of making a purchase: awareness, interest and research, decision-making, and conversion/post-conversion. But within these broad sales stages are a handful of different advertising channels and customer interactions that play important roles in nurturing that prospect closer to an all-important conversion.

Businesses have a lot riding on this customer journey. According to a survey of U.S. consumers, 63 percent of your audience believes that the best brands are the ones that offer a rewarding, consistent experience across the entire customer journey.

That consistency is important as prospects engage with different types of ad content targeted to different stages of the customer journey. And keep in mind that, even in the best-case scenario, most of your prospects won't be converting to customers after a single advertising or marketing engagement: research suggests the average prospect requires around <u>eight brand interactions</u> before they end up converting.

Those numbers can vary depending on your industry and the type of products or services you're selling. But the bottom-line is that, if you want to build sustained advertising success that creates new revenue for your business, you need to cater your advertising strategy to your brand's customer journey. If you've never thought about this customer journey before, you can start visualizing this path-to-purchase by reviewing your current marketing and advertising campaigns, evaluating where referrals and conversions are coming from, and even identifying stages of this journey where prospects seem to drop off in droves—which could signal a crucial gap or inconsistency in your customer journey.



#### Building Reach & Awareness for Your Business

Once you've developed a basic frame of reference to understand your customer journey, you can start connecting ad campaigns to different stages of this journey by taking a top-down approach. The first stage of the customer journey always starts in the same place: with building awareness of your business through advertising targeted to your primary audience.

During this stage of the customer journey, prospects may be just starting to identify a solution or need to address—and they may not even know exactly what products or services they're looking for. In some cases, prospects may not even recognize their need or desire for whatever your business is selling—that is, until they see ad content that alerts them to what your company can offer.

# In most cases, the best tactics for building brand awareness are the following:

- Traditional TV and cable TV advertising
- TV Everywhere
- Paid search
- Display advertising

The value of each of these ad channels is realized through their ability to position your brand in front of curious prospects at the very start of their customer journey. These prospects may not even be aware that they're about to embark on a customer journey, and the individuals in this target audience may vary in the specific pain points they want to address, and/or their purchase intent at the start of the process.

Regardless, awareness-level ad campaigns can position your brand at the moment this customer curiosity is piqued. Paid search campaigns can be targeted to keywords your research has associated with awareness-level consideration. Cable TV and TV Everywhere can build brand awareness in your local market, offering a quick pitch and connecting your business to a problem or area of need consumers may be facing.







Remember to run these campaigns alongside one another to keep your brand visible across the prospect's journey. A TV ad may inspire a related online search. Similarly, a display ad might remind an online user of one of your branded TV ads viewed days, maybe even weeks earlier. Keep in mind that roughly half of all consumer eCommerce purchases <u>start on Google's search engine</u>—which means this advertising channel could be a reliable source of engagement with prospects.

## Simple Steps to Building Brand Awareness

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- 1. Identify the biggest pain point (or set of pain points) that drive customers to your business.
- 2. Use website referral data to determine which keywords drive traffic to your site.
- 3. Create calls to action that encourage the user to learn more.

#### **Engaging Your Interested Prospects**

After brand awareness has been cultivated, your advertising strategy should focus on cultivating a relationship through interactions relevant to the prospect's consideration phase of the customer journey.

This engagement is crucial to showcasing the strong brand experience you're hoping to use to convert each prospect. Similarly, prospects are paying close attention to these early interactions to find out if your company can meet their expectations. Research shows that 87 percent of customers consider the customer experience to be "very or extremely important" when evaluating their <u>relationship with a business</u>, so the pressure is on to deliver relevant messaging that demonstrates your expertise and personalized service.

Through engagement, you can also qualify each prospect to determine their potential value as a conversion. This can help sales teams prioritize their selling efforts alongside ongoing advertising and marketing campaigns. As for the campaigns themselves, the channels best-suited for engagement include the following:

- Paid search
- Display advertising
- Social Media
- Listing management
- Digital audio



Each of these channels can be used to connect prospects with resources and other content that can answer important questions, offer more background on your products and services, and/or facilitate ongoing interactions that may include phone calls, emails, or even online chats and social media messaging.

Through clear calls-to-action (CTAs) like "click here to learn more" or "call today", targeted promotions, and segmented campaigns that target relevant ad messaging to the right audiences, these channels can target—and retarget—interested prospects to keep your brand active and top-of-mind as they research and consider their options.

# Digital Tools to Support Efficient Lead Engagement

- 1. Customer relationship management (CRM) software.
- 2. Chatbots and other online chat management tools.
- 3. Website landing pages targeted to specific campaign messaging.



#### Closing the Deal and Converting a New Customer

Motivating a conversion is the hardest part of any sales or advertising effort. In the end, though, your advertising success is measured by the revenue you're able to generate for your organization.

But while closing sales is important, taking a traditional approach to closing the sale could blow up in your face. Today's buyers and leads don't respond well to aggressive sales tactics as they approach their final decision. Instead, 66 percent of sales leaders across multiple industries believe that digital methods of engagement are more effective than traditional sales methods that try to leverage urgency and pressure to force a decision.

Digital ad campaigns can support these efforts by maintaining engagement with leads while delivering different messaging that focuses on other pain points from what past interactions might have addressed. Top channels for engaging the conversion point of the customer journey include:

- Social media
- Digital video
- Paid search
- Display advertising



Instead of attempting to force the issue, local businesses can build greater success—and improve their local brand reputation—by embracing patience and taking a diverse approach to digital engagement. As prospects approach their decision, invest in ad campaigns and assets that show different sides of the value your business can offer, and let the strength of your overall customer experience speak for itself.

## **Tips to Optimize Conversions**

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- 1. Use personalized CTAs in your ad and marketing content.
- 2. Use drip email and retargeted ads to stay visible as customers weigh their final decision.
- 3. Create anchor text CTAs instead of button CTAs. (Research suggests anchor text CTAs outperform buttons by 121 percent)



#### Investing in Customer Loyalty and Retention

A successful conversion may be the end of the sale, but it's far from the end of the customer journey. If you're determined to maximize the lifetime value of your customers, you'll want to develop ad campaigns that continue to engage and support your customers after their first conversion.

These ad campaigns can promote new sales, products, service packages, events, or other offerings that may be of interest to your customers. You can also use retargeting campaigns to promote products the customer may have viewed on your eCommerce site or abandoned in a virtual shopping cart. Customer retention can be supported through the following ad channels:

Display
Social media
Cable TV
TV Everywhere

If you're worried that you are wasting money by targeting ads to existing customers, think again. The cost of acquiring a brand-new customer is <u>five to 25 times higher</u> than the cost of retaining an existing one. By investing into ad campaigns that prioritize customer retention, you're able to generate more revenue with less ad spend, increasing your overall advertising ROI.

Over time, analytics can help you evaluate your ad campaigns from the start of the customer journey through the loyalty and retention phase, generating insights that you can use to optimize engagement and build a better experience that makes this customer retention even easier—and more profitable.



#### Start Building a Better Customer Journey Today

The path to creating an excellent customer journey may be clear, but executing this vision is a much different challenge. As a local business, you probably don't have the in-house resources or expertise needed to develop, create, and manage these campaigns across so many different channels at once—especially if you want to optimize your overall performance and ROI.

Fortunately, you don't have to make all of these decisions on your own. A trusted digital ad partner can offer the industry expertise you need to create a comprehensive digital ad strategy that serves every stage of your customer journey, achieving gains in performance and revenue generation that may have once seemed impossible.

Through this partnership, your business can also collaborate with our Creative Services team to make sure your brand voice and messaging are consistent with your vision for the company. Creative professionals can then create every asset you need for these campaigns, allowing you to focus on what you do best: running your business.

Find out for yourself how Cox Media can take your business advertising strategy to the next level. Request a free consultation and digital audit today.

