

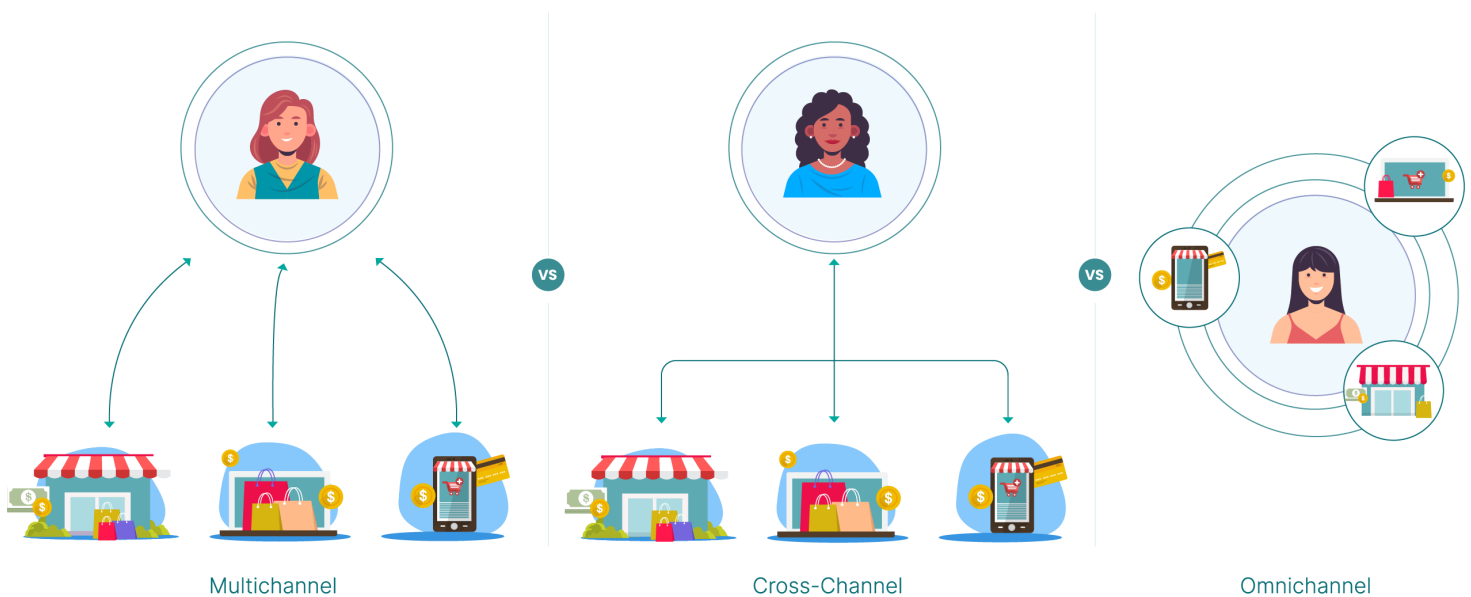
GUIDE **OMNICHANNEL**

HOW TO CREATE YOUR
OWN OMNICHANNEL
MARKETING STRATEGY
IN 5 STEPS



OMNICHANNEL MARKETING

Everyone is talking about omnichannel marketing. And no wonder, this is the logical next step after multichannel and cross-channel marketing.



A quick refresher: Multichannel marketing uses multiple channels to communicate the same message at the same time in the hope of reaching potential customers on one of the channels. Cross-channel marketing goes a step further and allows customers to move seamlessly from one channel to the next. With omnichannel marketing, the different channels merge and are used simultaneously. The focus lies not on the company and its messages, but on the customer.

This is a step-by-step guide for developing your first omnichannel strategy. As an added bonus we finish off by presenting three great examples of companies who already make successful use of omnichannel marketing.

Step 1: Shift your focus to the customer



When developing a long-term omnichannel strategy, the first step is to examine the focus of your organizational structure. If this has been centered around your company or brand, it is now time to put the spotlight on the customer.

This is a fundamental change that requires both time and a mind shift within the company. Particularly in large organizations, this transformation will not take place overnight. However, it is important to determine which short- and long-term changes are needed to make the company customer-focused.

When implementing an omnichannel strategy, one of the biggest hurdles is that departments such as marketing, sales, product development, PR, and customer service frequently operate independently. There is now a far greater awareness of the importance of communication between the different departments, but some companies still have a way to go.

This is about much more than improving interdepartmental cooperation by uniting all employees around one aim. Staff need to become aware that the customer experience is not the responsibility of a single department – everyone can contribute to its success.

Important information needs to be collected along the entire customer journey in order to continually improve the customer experience.

But what does that involve exactly? Well, gathering quantitative and qualitative data on customer experience is not only the task of the marketing department – the focus needs to go beyond a few selected touchpoints. After all, the customer journey does not end at conversion, but continues afterward to transform satisfied customers into brand advocates and perhaps even pro-active brand promoters.

Don't forget: Satisfied returning customers mean more sales – they deserve just as much attention as new customers. So, customer service also plays a central role in the customer journey. This department not only supports existing customers if questions and problems arise, but also collects information needed to optimize the customer experience.

Step 2: Collect customer data centrally and use it correctly



The second step lays the foundations for making your company not only customer-focused but also data-driven.

Gather data to find out everything you need to know about your target group so you can optimize their customer experience. A CRM system helps you to track the entire customer journey from the very first interaction to the purchase, and beyond.

But this is only the start. The next stage is to use social listening tools to track brand mentions and therefore discover even more about your target group. What does your target group care about? Which problems are they trying to solve? How satisfied are existing customers with your product or service? Analyzing your target group's online search behavior can also provide valuable insights.

You can even ask your existing customers for feedback so you can find out how to better design the customer experience.

There are three main questions to answer when collecting relevant information about your target group:

- Which channels do your customers use along the customer journey?
- HOW do they use these different channels?
- And are there specific situations when customers use more than one channel simultaneously?

The aim is to discover how to best combine and merge the individual channels in order to create a consistent customer experience across all media.

Pay particular attention to your offline channels – they will be central to your omnichannel strategy: The goal is not only to enable seamless transition between different end devices and channels, but also to make it possible for customers to use on- and offline channels at the same time.

Once you have decided on a strategy for acquiring relevant information on your target group, you need to consider how the data can best be visualized and integrated. The biggest database in the world is useless if the data cannot be interpreted and evaluated correctly.

Work out how to organize the data so you can access the information you need for your business model. Take advantage of the ever-growing range of software tools for quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The better you know your target group, the more successful your omnichannel strategy will be.

Step 3: Plan the ideal customer experience



After you have examined in detail how your target group ticks and how they use your various channels, you can then go on to planning the ideal customer experience.

The magic words here are: Segmentation and personalization.

You are bound to be familiar with the phrase “context is king” when talking about customer experience. When segmenting your target group and creating a personalized user experience, context really is crucial. You need to send the right message to the right audience at the right time – on the right channel.

And segmentation makes this possible. This involves dividing up your target group according to specific criteria, creating different subgroups. Read on to discover three possible ways to approach segmentation:

- **Segmentation by demographics:** Segment your target group using personal information such as gender, age, marital status, or location.

For example: If you provide financial advice targeted at women and all your services are solely available online, location is of almost no relevance, whereas you will definitely need to segment according to gender. But if you run a brick-and-mortar store, geographical location is a highly important criterion.

- **Segmentation by content engagement:** Divide your target group according to their interest in specific content and how they react to it. Another segmentation criterion could be the channels used.

For example: You sell a wide range of products to a very heterogeneous target group and demographic data does not help you to determine which product line is relevant for a potential customer. Instead, you segment your target group according to the advertisements they engage with, as this indicates interest in a specific product line.

- **Segmentation by purchase behavior:** Companies can learn a great deal from previous buying patterns. This criterion goes far beyond using information on previous purchases to recommend new products. You can, for example, segment by date of last purchase with the aim of activating customers who haven't shopped at your store in a while or rewarding particularly loyal customers with special offers.

For example: You sell sports goods and customers' shopping habits tell you which sports they are interested in. You can then segment by sport to create relevant offers for each customer segment.

As you can see, there are many ways to assign customers – potential and existing – to different segments. Your choice of segmentation depends on your industry, business model, and, of course, your marketing strategy. You may also need to subdivide the segments to make effective use of the information.

Once you have created your segments, you can personalize the customer experience.

This doesn't mean just addressing your customers by name in a newsletter. Direct address can help to increase the opening and click rate but true personalization takes far more into account.

The aim is to design the ideal customer experience for each of the target group segments you defined. Which brings us to the juicy bit: In omnichannel marketing, there is no one ideal customer experience. Instead, various different paths exist to guide a potential customer to their destination.

You therefore need to create an ideal customer experience for every segment or subsegment by defining which content, offers, services, etc., are relevant at each stage of the customer journey.

Afterward, you need to define which channel is most suitable for each type of content and which situations emerge where several channels are used simultaneously. Don't forget to optimize the content for the end device your customers will be using.

This is easier said than done – but the ideal customer experience isn't planned overnight. If you work for a company that makes use of brick-and-mortar retail as well as online trade, you could consider the following:

- Analyzing user behavior on your website, making use of the information to suggest relevant content, offers, or products.
- Using location data to provide services such as a store locator.
- Displaying personalized upselling or cross-selling offers for existing customers.
- Reminding visitors to your online shop to continue shopping if they fill their basket without checking out.

These are just a few of the many possible options open to you. Rather than just focusing on the transition from one specific touchpoint to the next, remember to take into account the whole customer journey. Personalizing this journey means defining a logical sequence of content, offers, etc., for each segment, all the way from the first to the last touchpoint.

Don't forget that the customer journey does not end with customer conversion – repeat customers are at least as valuable for business as new customers.

Once you have designed the ideal customer experience for each individual target group segment, you can move on to planning the practical implementation.

Let's say you run an online shop selling rare seeds. Instead of sending a monthly email with your current offers to all subscribers, you could opt for automated emails triggered by specific user behavior on your website.

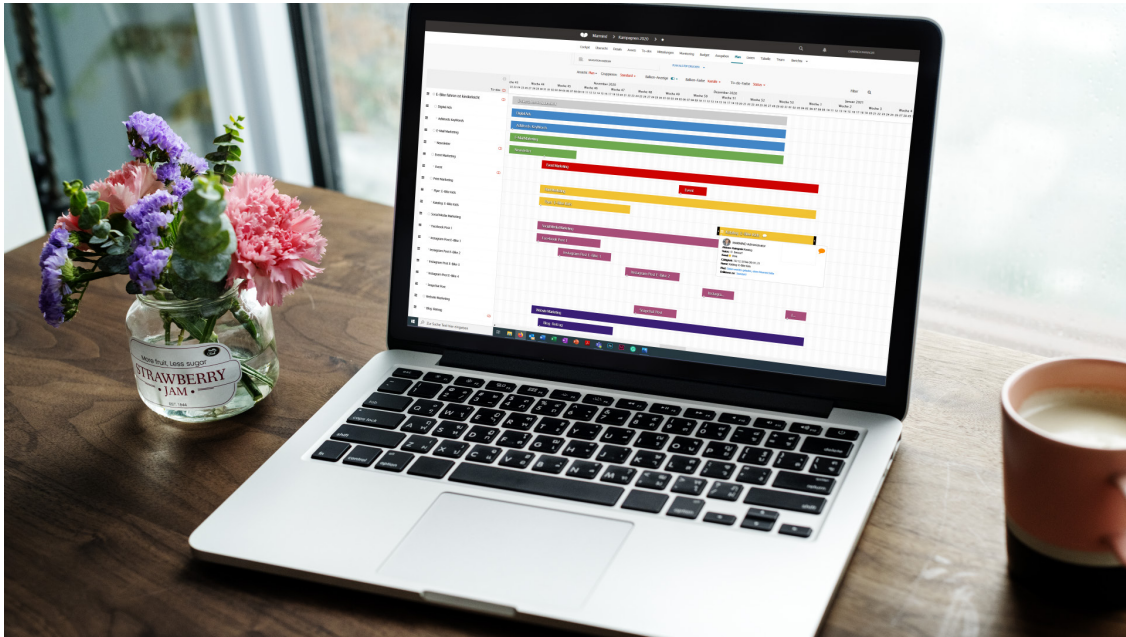
It could work something like this:

A user reads your blog article about rare tomatoes – three days later they receive an automated email with a discount code for tomato seeds. Another user has recently ordered tomato seeds – they are sent an article about plants that can be particularly well combined with tomatoes. A couple of days later, they receive a discount code for the relevant seeds.

This sort of approach helps companies to send the right offer at the right time, increasing the likelihood that a customer will decide to make a purchase. All thanks to personalization.

When you have planned the ideal customer journey and thought about practical implementation, you can go on to the next step of selecting the tools you need.

Step 4: Put together your perfect marketing tech stack



Your marketing tech stack needs to be as individual as your ideal customer experience. You probably already use several tools, but now need to add additional software to the mix.

A lack of choice is unlikely to be the problem: The marketing technology industry has grown at sonic speed over the last few years. The challenge is rather to work out which of the many available options suit you best.

Consider the type of software you need before comparing different providers. The basic foundation of a solid marketing tech stack usually consists of solutions for the following areas:

- Customer relationship management
- Email marketing
- Marketing automation
- Analytics
- Content management
- Social media

Medium-sized and large companies also make use of Marketing Resource Management solutions to keep track of their large number of marketing employees, branches, brands, and channels, and make optimal use of resources.

When choosing software, check which other tools can be integrated – that way you avoid accumulating stand-alone solutions.

Step 5: Keep testing and optimizing



Once you begin implementing your omnichannel marketing strategy, you can start a process of ongoing testing and optimization. A/B testing can show you whether your strategy is successful.

Try and find out which type of content is most well-received by your target audience and is most likely to result in conversions:

Vary the length of your texts to work out if shorter or longer pieces are the most suitable. Find the perfect formula for email subjects to up the opening rate. Experiment with different types of images to see which result in more clicks – there are so many ways to fine-tune your omnichannel strategy.

Keep on optimizing – this is the only way to ensure that customers always get the right message at the right time and that each interaction with your company is a positive experience.

One last, very important, point: Be patient with yourself and your team. An omnichannel marketing strategy is no side project – its development and implementation require a good deal of work at the start. But this effort will pay off later.

Finally, we now want to show you three concrete examples of companies that already make very successful use of omnichannel marketing.

Three examples of successful omnichannel marketing strategies:

TIMBERLAND

Timberland sells and manufactures outdoor wear and shoes – and its stores successfully merge the online and offline world. In-store, customers can use huge TouchWalls to look at products that are only available online. The screens can also be used to create personal shopping lists for products available in the store or online.



Source: Wayne Pelletier

The shops also have tablets that make use of near-field communication. If a tablet is held in front of a product, all product details and information on current offers are displayed. Using information on products viewed, the personalization software installed on the tablet displays additional items that may be of interest.

NEIMAN MARCUS

Neiman Marcus is an American chain of luxury department stores – and one of the most well-known examples of impressive omnichannel marketing.

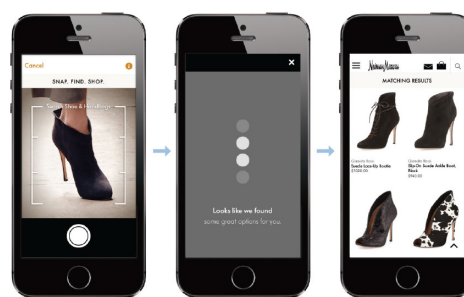
If a customer frequently searches for clothes and shoes in a specific size, the website later displays products that nearby stores stock in the correct size.

Location data is used to provide customers with relevant information on new products and local events – not only on the website but also via newsletter and in personalized print advertisements sent by post.

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 Then **SHOP** to your heart's content!



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Source: Neiman Marcus

In the department stores themselves, Neiman Marcus makes use of innovative technology such as the Memory Mirror. Customers make use of a 360-degree view to film their outfits and save the videos in the mobile app. They can watch the videos later and make a purchase decision as and when it suits them.

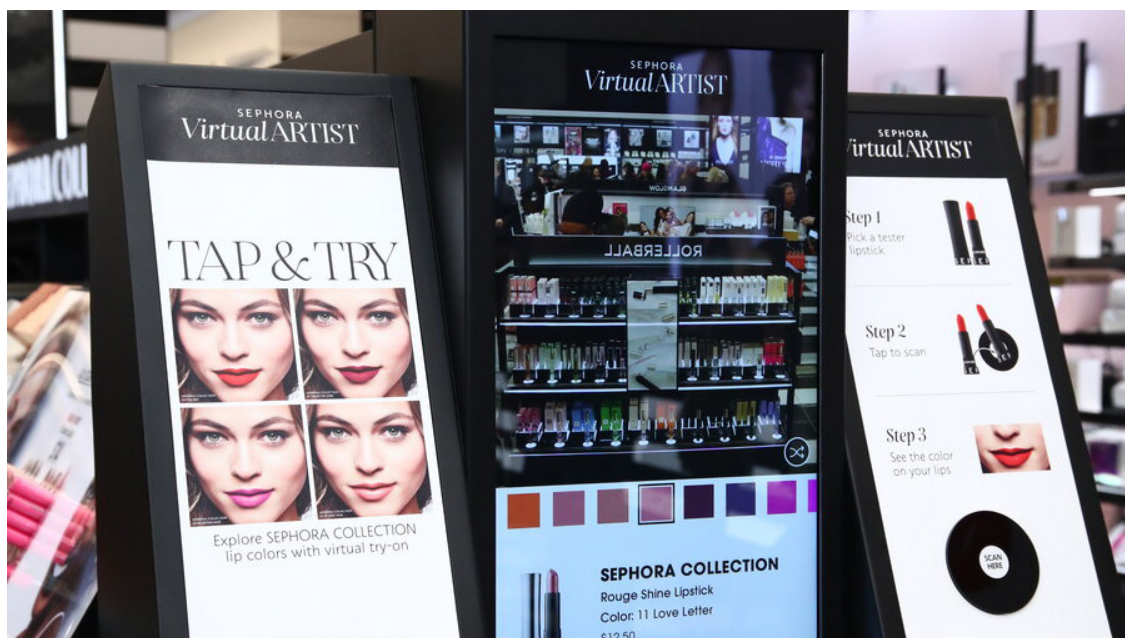
The icing on the cake is the “Snap. Find. Shop.” app, where users can upload photos of shoes and handbags. The app suggests similar products that can be immediately ordered online.

SEPHORA

The cosmetic chain Sephora also makes impressive use of virtual tools to enrich the shopping experience in the analog world.

The mobile app uses location data to identify when someone enters a Sephora store. Users then receive information on current offers and are provided with a map that directs them through the shop.

Customers can use in-store mobile devices to try on makeup virtually in Sephora Virtual Artist, an augmented reality application. If a product isn't in stock, it can be ordered directly in the store and delivered home.



Source: Sephora

The Virtual Artist is also available in the Sephora app so that customers can use the feature on their own devices at any time. In addition to trying on makeup, users can also watch beauty tutorials in the app with the option of selecting their own face as the model. The color match function works out which shade is perfect for each skin tone – customers simply upload a photo of their face.

Any further questions?

Want to really get going with omnichannel marketing? Are you currently putting together your ideal marketing tech stack? We are more than happy to help you choose the right Marketing Resource Management solution for your needs.

Simply [book a meeting in our online calendar](#) for a free consultation.