

# The Digital Engagement Continuum

By Bruce Petillo, GM and VP of ECENTA Digital

**As digital customer experiences continue to evolve, so too should the ways in which marketing engages customers.**

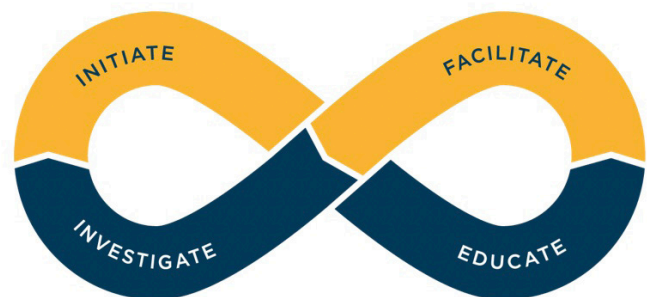
Expanding beyond traditional sales funnels or customer journeys, the focus needs to be on identifying customer interactions points in an ever-evolving engagement continuum—and adjusting strategies, tactics, channels and technologies along the way.

Applicable across virtually all digital customer journeys, the Digital Engagement Continuum framework helps modern marketers identify multiple interaction points throughout the experience and engage customers in more meaningful ways. Leading with strategy, leveraging data, aligning technology, diversifying channels and providing the pieces of the story that allow the customer to “choose their own adventure,” the Continuum provides a more contextual and relevant experience that does not have a beginning and end, but continually navigates the “what’s next.”

At each stage of the Continuum, strategies, tactics, channels and tools adjust to deliver an appropriate and relevant experience. This requires the marketer to think about multiple micro-campaigns and journeys that evolve at each defined conversion point. The result is a more engaging customer experience that ultimately leads to better business outcomes.

The Digital Engagement Continuum consists of four distinct stages: Initiate, Educate, Facilitate and Investigate. The campaign objective can be just about any marketing initiative, from demand generation, to awareness, to ecommerce. Once the campaign objective is identified, the focus should be on identifying the desired interaction points at each stage and then continuing to evolve the experience through each subsequent stage.

## The Digital Engagement Continuum



**Do you want to connect with your customers in a way that will lead to meaningful customer experiences? Then now is the time to speak with ECENTA Digital.**

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**A brief overview of each Continuum stage follows:**

## **Stage 1: Initiate**

**Initiate is the stage most marketers do well.** Here the focus is on initiating the first interaction in a marketing strategy. Examples are getting a prospect or customer to click on a paid media ad, fill out a form, read an article, watch a video, click through on an email, or add a product to a shopping cart. Unfortunately, this is where many marketing initiatives stagnate or don't maximize this initial engagement.

Too often, engagement is initiated and then the marketing strategy moves on, never fully realizing the potential and value of the initial engagement. Billions of dollars are spent each year in initiating contact, but much of that money is wasted, as significantly less effort is spent on Educating the customer towards the next interaction point.

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## **Stage 2: Educate**

**Once engagement exists, the reality is that the vast majority of customers are not ready to move to the marketer's desired phase in the consumption cycle.** As a result, Stage 2 helps further educate the client or prospect to continue the progression through the cycle. Now, while many marketers might have a nurture stream to throw the customer into, that only addresses a single channel in which that customer can be engaged. Modern digital marketers have a plethora of channels in which to engage, but often times rely only on a single channel like email.

Some example questions to ask yourself when developing your Educate stage are: What are the interaction points in the education phase? Are there new behavioral, sales, opportunity, ecommerce, social and other data points available to gain a better perspective of the customer or prospect? How can we help educate them to those conversion points? Has our messaging evolved from initiating contact to content that further educates the client or prospect? Do our paid ads repeat the same messages as initiate or are they evolving the engagement? What other marketing channels are available to educate? What marketing tools are available?

These are just some of the questions that can be answered as you are developing this stage of the Continuum.

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### Stage 3: Facilitate

During this phase, the customer or prospect is now more deeply engaged. They might have been converted to an opportunity, abandoned and returned to a shopping cart, engaged with more content, or started speaking with a sales rep. Now that the customer or prospect is deeper in the cycle, how are you changing your engagement strategy?

Similar to the Education stage, are you revising how, where and why you are engaging the customer? What are your new interaction points in the Facilitate stage? Is it a won opportunity? Completed ecommerce transaction? Attendance at a webinar? Ultimately, how have you evolved your marketing strategy to help drive towards the desired outcomes?

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### Stage 4: Investigate

Now that customer has arrived at the final interaction point of this cycle, it's time to Investigate campaign performance. What does the data and analytics show about the overall performance of the campaign? How did the campaign perform in each phase? Did your end results match your target objectives? How did each channel perform? What content was the most engaging? What do you see? What would you change? Where would you place more focus? If you want to understand and improve your campaigns and outcomes to deliver better results and improve the customer experience, these are just some of the questions you must answer.

With the constant pressure to do more, there is a tendency to not truly investigate and understand what story the data can tell. But in order to get more from every resource and marketing investment, Investigation is essential. While it takes more time and effort, the payoff for using these learnings to optimize current and future campaigns will be evident in the results. Finally, use the data to continue the engagement, asking what's next and moving the customer to the next Initiate phase.

**What's next?** We've all heard the adage that it costs 5-7 times more to sell to a new customer compared to an existing customer. Now you have any opportunity to evolve the customer experience into the next level of the Digital Engagement Continuum.

What have you learned about the customer and what is the best way to engage? Is then next phase an awareness Continuum? A cross-sell Continuum? An advocacy Continuum?

**Ultimately, the Digital Engagement Continuum is a methodology for continual customer engagement. From this perspective, the possibilities are limitless.**

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