

Acquia

INSIDER'S GUIDE TO B2B PERSONALIZATION

Consumers are already starting to expect their online experiences with brands to be personalized. Doesn't it stand to reason that your business-to-business (B2B) prospects and customers expect the same?



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FOREWORD

YOUR B2B BUYERS HAVE INCREDIBLY HIGH EXPECTATIONS WHEN IT COMES TO THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE THEY SEEK – AND YOU KNOW PERSONALIZATION IS KEY TO DELIVERING ON THOSE EXPECTATIONS.

Businesses that succeed with personalization are typically rewarded with impressive ROI.

However, you may face challenges in achieving your personalization goals. Often times, this can be down to an inability to make time for crafting detailed customer personas – or developing enough content to keep your prospects engaged. On top of that, you may find it hard to access high quality data or lack the right technology to scale your personalization for future growth.

This guide offers ideas you can use to create personalized experiences for your customers, empower your team to overcome any internal or external challenges you may face in doing so, and create valuable business opportunities for your company now and into the future.

—Acquia thought leader Eric Williamson, VP Digital Marketing



Eric Williamson
VP Digital Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Personalization isn't a new concept. You, me – probably everyone we know – sends personalized notes, letters, texts, and emails via one-to-one communication every day.

But in this digital age, how can we leverage digital tools to deliver that kind of experience to people we haven't even met – instantly and when they need it?

Short on time – and overwhelmed with choices – your prospects seek compelling solutions to their challenges. If you can make their buying experience simple, personalized, and memorable, they may reward you with their business now and long into the future.

B2B companies pursue personalization because it has been shown to drive sales, boost retention, and lead to meaningful long-term customer relationships. However, many companies, confronted with challenges ranging from a lack of resources to an inability to commit to creating high quality content, struggle to achieve their personalization goals.

LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THOSE CHALLENGES – AND EXPLORE SOME IDEAS TO RESOLVE THEM:

B2B PERSONALIZATION: THE CHALLENGES

Personalization is no longer a tactic reserved only for B2B brand leaders with the largest budgets. As the universe of solutions competing for your prospects' attention continues to expand, effective personalization has moved from "nice-to-have" to "must implement as soon as possible."

Sixty-eight percent of digital experience leaders consider it a high priority for business success. But, just 25 percent of firms cited that they use standalone personalization solutions. [\(Source: Forrester\)](#). What obstacles prevent these businesses from succeeding with their personalization efforts?

Research by SiriusDecisions indicates that B2B businesses pursuing personalization face challenges in four key areas:

1

**CUSTOMER
PERSONAS**

2

**CONTENT
QUALITY**

3

DATA QUALITY

4

TECHNOLOGY



1. CRAFTING CUSTOMER PERSONAS HASN'T BEEN PRIORITIZED

For stakeholders at these companies, carving out time to develop personas either hasn't been prioritized, or the results lack the detail needed to draw useful conclusions.

Without sufficient insight to their prospects' tastes, preferences, challenges, and goals, it will be difficult to attract them and lay out a path that helps them discover the value of your offerings.

2. CONTENT DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS ARE INCONSISTENT

Keep in mind that fifty-one percent of B2B buyers rely on content to move along the buying journey to a buying decision – and 47 percent of them will view three to five pieces of website content before engaging with a salesperson.

If you are not actively posting relevant content, or prospective customers don't think the content they encounter is adequately tailored to their specific needs, prospects may look to the competition for the advice they need.

51%

of B2B buyers rely on content to research their buying decisions.

47%

of B2B buyers view three to five pieces of content before speaking with a salesperson.

Source: [Demand Gen Report](#)

3. DATA IS WEAK AND HARD-TO-ACCESS

Even those businesses determined to provide more personalized experiences on their websites face headwinds in terms of accessing and properly leveraging their data for this purpose. Many companies find that their data are siloed, nonexistent, or of insufficient quality to provide meaningful value.

According to an Experian survey, the biggest challenges with personalization are:



Source: [Marketing Charts](#)



4. NO TECHNOLOGY IN PLACE TO ADDRESS PROSPECTS AT SCALE

With so many personalization technology platforms and applications on the market today, B2B companies are also unsure about how to effectively use all of these tools in concert with one another.

When businesses hit these roadblocks to implementing personalization efforts, they may struggle to convert prospects and retain customers as well as their competitors do. To survive and thrive in the marketplace of the future, B2B businesses must capitalize on the opportunities that personalization makes possible.

Of those not currently personalizing content:



Source: [Seismic](#)

PERSONALIZATION: THE OPPORTUNITIES

The good news? Difficult as these challenges have been – efforts to personalize are paying off in the form of increased ROI for companies that have found ways to implement them.

Seventy-nine percent of organizations that have exceeded their revenue goals [have a documented personalization strategy](#) in place.

What's more, these organizations have a dedicated budget for personalization [83 percent of the time](#). Stakeholders at these organizations find that personalization helps encourage visitors along their customer journey and create new opportunities for cross-selling, upselling, and retention.

HOW CAN YOUR B2B BUSINESS ACHIEVE THESE RESULTS?

Consider what follows a tour of tried-and-true advice on delivering improved website personalization – an *insider's guide*, if you will. With the right personalization strategy in place, you can capture and analyze visitor behavior to better understand who your prospective customers are and what they need.



Why Personalization Is So Important

**PERSONA-
INFORMED
PERSONALIZED
CONTENT**



**HIGHER
RELEVANCY &
ENGAGEMENT**

**HIGHER
CUSTOMER
ENGAGEMENT**



**BETTER LEAD
QUALITY**

**BETTER LEAD
QUALITY**



**HIGHER
CONVERSION
RATES**

- Adapted from Lauren Welschenbach, Capterra

REPOSITION YOUR COMPANY TO REAP THE REWARDS OF B2B PERSONALIZATION

Your company can achieve success with B2B website personalization by taking these ten steps, overcoming any internal or external challenges you may face to deliver a satisfying customer experience that generates impressive ROI.

1. UNDERSTAND YOUR PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS

To meet your customers' needs, you must first know who they are. One of the best ways to do this is by creating a buyer persona: a profile that represents your ideal customer based

on their goals and biggest challenges. From there, you can use this information to deliver an experience tailored to their needs and interests. Buyer personas will enable your company to demonstrate you understand the challenges your visitors face.

2. SEGMENT THESE PERSONAS INTO STRATEGIC GROUPS

One suggestion here is that if you see at least three distinct segments, aim to create content journeys for all three from the start. This will help you collect useful information about engagement and effectiveness later.



3. ALIGN YOUR PRODUCTS OR SERVICES WITH THESE SEGMENTS


With those personas' challenges on one end and your offering on the other, map out the middle ground for them. What insights will help them discover the value of those products?

4. CREATE CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPS

Once you know who your customers are and have built customer personas to match, it's important to address their needs at every stage of the customer journey.

Create customer journey maps to visualize your interactions with each customer as they progress through each stage of the conversion funnel. In the next step, we'll focus on how you'd create content for each step along the customer's buying journey – but for the moment, consider how you'd map that journey for your visitors.






For example, you can greet (top-of-the-funnel) visitors who are just embarking on the customer journey with easily digestible content such as infographics and blog articles. At this (TOFU) stage, your goal is to attract a broader audience of visitors with potential to become more qualified leads.

As you gain their interest and build credibility, you can encourage these prospects further along the customer journey. At this stage, you can invite leads to share some of their personal data in exchange for richer tailored content, such as tip sheets or eGuides that will provide value to them.

Now that your prospects have demonstrated a stronger level of interest at the middle of the funnel (MOFU) level, you might provide them the relevant case studies and white papers.

Though you'll still want to resist heavy-handed sales copy at this stage, it's generally okay to strategically weave in mentions of specific products or solutions if they will help your prospects solve a problem.

Once your prospects have reached the very bottom of the funnel, or BOFU, you can offer them a free assessment or trial of your product or services.



By serving them the right content at the right time, you will consistently meet the customer's needs at each stage and be able to better qualify your most interested leads.

5. CREATE PERSONALIZED CONTENT

An effective customer journey map depends on high quality, personalized content. With this in mind, you'll need to invest a certain amount of time, talent, and resources into creating personalized content for each stage of the customer journey.

This is one of the most critical aspects of a successful website personalization strategy. You'll want to create at least three to five pieces for each buyer persona, as customers want to see that amount of content on average before contacting a sales rep.

Consider the emotions you might want to inspire at this stage. Good storytelling with an emotional hook tends to work especially well at the beginning of the customer journey, for example. In any case, it doesn't hurt to provide content that demonstrates a direct link between actions they can take – and a clear ROI.

“

Marketing content to engage with customers is the most critical area that firms look to personalize: 75 percent of firms doing personalization aim to personalize content on their website.”

Source: [Forrester](#)



6. FACTOR-IN A WIDER AUDIENCE OF B2B DECISION MAKERS

Aim to include ideas that help B2B decision makers build an internal business case for adoption or purchase. One upside of a B2B sale is that price points tend to be higher than your average consumer sale. But the flip side is, you may have more people to convince. Often there can be a board or buying team that makes the decision.

7. ENSURE EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COLLABORATION AND BUY-IN

Website personalization also requires effective cross-team collaboration and proactive buy-in from internal stakeholders. Pay close attention to the people and processes involved as well as the tools. For example, your personalization project team needs clear business objectives, proper systems in place, and proactive change management well in advance of any new rollout.

Executive sponsorship is also essential for success with any personalization effort you pursue. You'll need the approval and support of top leadership, particularly when it comes to communicating the process and technology changes associated with personalization. With executive buy-in, you will find much easier to gain traction for personalization projects at your company.

8. DEFINE PERFORMANCE GOALS AND TRACK PERFORMANCE

Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) and measure your progress against them each week as you are getting started.

This is how you will know if your personalization strategy is achieving its intended impact. You'll also be able to quickly address potential performance problems early on. These KPIs are flexible and not set in stone – you can adjust them as needed as you refine your strategy.



9. TEST AND OPTIMIZE YOUR PROGRAM

Optimize your results by testing offers and continually enhancing your campaigns. For example, you can use A/B testing to show visitors two different versions of a piece of content or two different methods of consumption, whether that's a free sample of a whitepaper or brochure instead of a full download option.

That way, you can figure out which content type performs better and how your visitors prefer to access it. You can use this valuable insight to give them an even better experience.

10. UNDERSTAND THAT PERSONALIZATION IS A PROCESS

Personalization is a process, not an event. B2B companies that succeed with website personalization understand that it takes time to accomplish. Personalization is actually a series of continuous improvements rather than a one-off initiative.

**As the saying goes,
you have to crawl
before you can walk.**

THE CRAWL-WALK-RUN APPROACH

You can build on early personalization strategies to strengthen your capabilities over time:



“CRAWL”

You can start these strategies immediately from a content and data standpoint, driving quick results with in less time and with less effort – but with varying impact.

Crawl personalization strategies include leveraging geolocation data to showcase local events, assessing visit frequency to gauge customer interest level, and using mobile device type data to serve up popular content.



“WALK”

Walk strategies require more content and more data collection, so they are medium to high effort in nature, but they deliver medium to high impact.

Walk personalization strategies include assessing browsing behavior to serve up relevant website content or analyzing pages viewed to encourage prospects along the conversion funnel.



“RUN”

Run strategies need even more content, more personalization events, and additional data. They are high effort, but they deliver high impact for a longer period of time.

Some example strategies include CRM integration, cross-channel marketing, and the combination of multiple crawl personalities.

Source: [You Know You Need to Personalize, Now What?](#)

CASE STUDY: HUBERT BURDA MEDIA

Hubert
Burda
Media

Hubert Burda Media is a private, family-owned printer and publisher based in Germany for more than 100 years. In addition to iconic names such as *Elle*, *Bazaar*, and *InStyle*, Hubert Burda Media supports hundreds of brands around the world.

SITUATION

As readers shift from print to digital channels, traditional revenue streams are drying up for newspaper and magazine publishers. Traditional advertising and issue sales are shrinking faster than can be offset by new revenue from online subscriptions. Hubert Burda Media needed to develop a sustainable strategy as audiences move from print to digital devices at an ever accelerating rate.

CHALLENGE

Hubert Burda needed to find out: Who is “the reader?” What do they like? What do they read? What do they spend their money on? Until now, it has been difficult to capture that information to deliver a personalized experience.

SOLUTION

Hubert Burda Media uses the Drupal distribution it developed and maintains, called “Thunder,” combined with Acquia Lift (plus a few other technologies) to drive two main approaches to third-stream engagement and personalization.

Personas can be assigned to visitors based on patterns and paths revealed by Acquia Lift.

Then, on subsequent visits to a Burda site those visitors will see personalized content on the homepage that is tailored to their interests.

“

We had the readers, and now we have the tools. Drupal and Acquia are helping us turn 52 million anonymous readers into addressable consumers.”

– Ingo Rube, CTO of Hubert Burda Media

RESULTS

Burda is now able to engage previously unknown visitors, converting them into loyal customers.

Access to user data surrounding newsletter subscriptions, open rates and click-throughs, reading and purchase history, and more.

“

Using Acquia Lift, we have a backchannel to the user. We use this relationship to build better, more accurate profiles, which in turn lead to the ability to deliver known users content and products that truly interest them ... recommendations and personalizations to achieve our business goals.”

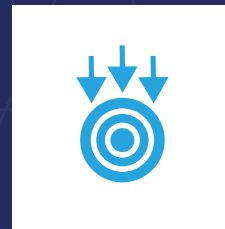
– Matthias Möller, director of project management, Hubert Burda Media Office of the CTO

KEY TAKEAWAYS

You can convert prospects into new customers and boost the satisfaction and loyalty of your existing customers by giving them what they want: personalized experiences that are responsive to their specific needs.



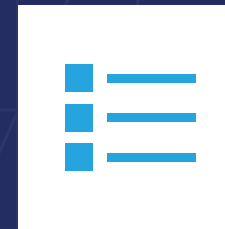
1. Personalization helps B2B companies boost ROI, increase conversions, improve retention, and enhance customer satisfaction.



2. Many of these companies know that website personalization is key to their success in the near and long term, but – whether due to time and bandwidth constraints or not having the right technology in place – they face challenges in achieving their personalization goals.



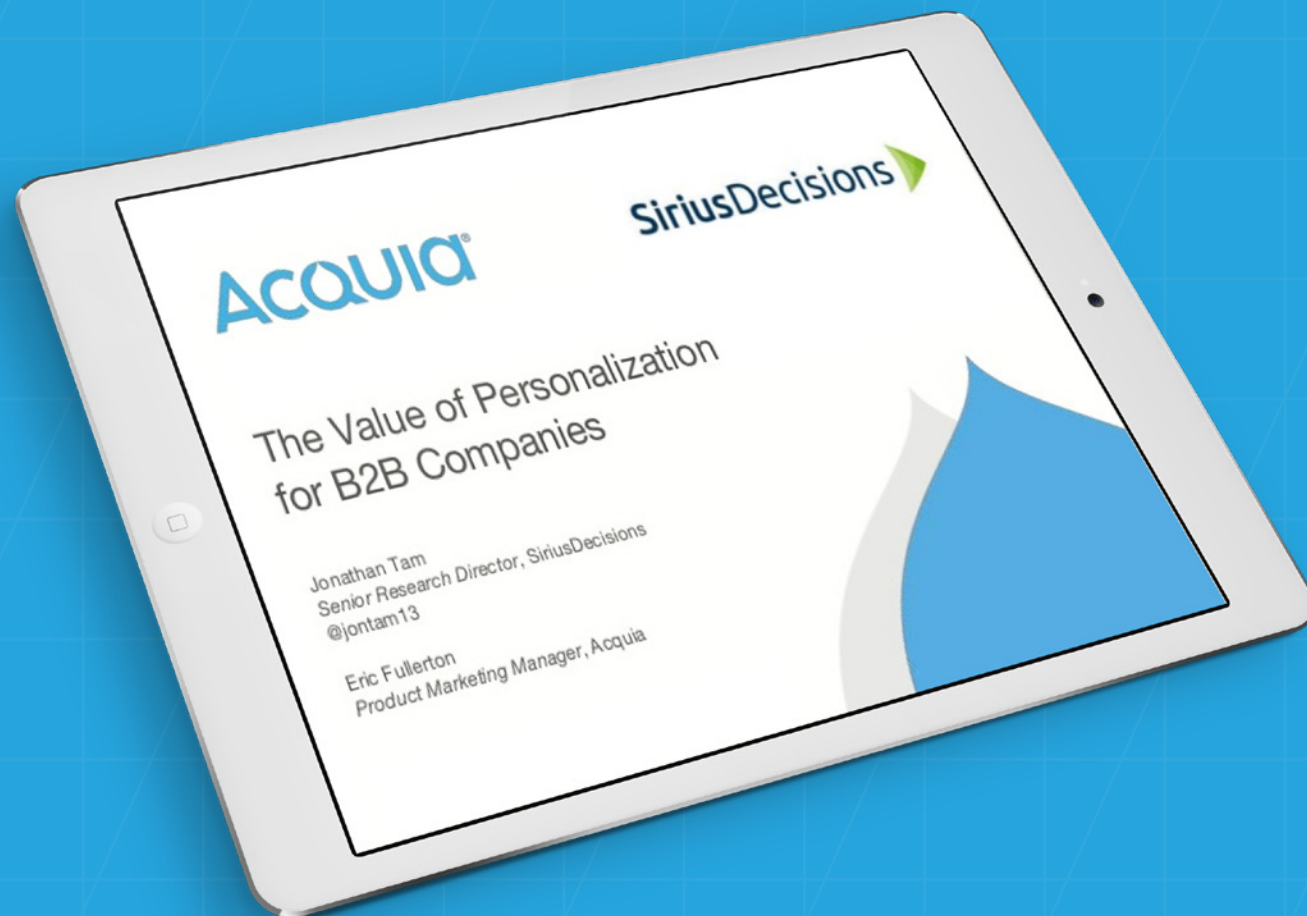
3. B2B businesses pursuing website personalization face challenges in four key areas: customer personas, content quality, data quality, and technology.



4. To succeed with personalization, businesses should create customer personas with customer journeys to match, creating personalized content for each stage.



5. Bridge the divide between the lead generation and web teams by involving all stakeholders in the process



ACQUIA

Gain more insight on how to overcome these challenges – and an overview of simple steps you can take to provide a more compelling, personalized experience for your business customers – in the webinar presentation,

“THE VALUE OF PERSONALIZATION FOR B2B COMPANIES.”

WATCH THE WEBINAR

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ABOUT ACQUIA

Acquia is the open source digital experience company.
We provide the world's most ambitious brands with technology that allows them to embrace innovation and create customer moments that matter. At Acquia, we believe in the power of community – giving our customers the freedom to build tomorrow on their terms.