

Acquia
EXPERIENCE DIGITAL FREEDOM

***6 PERSONALIZATION
TRENDS YOU
NEED TO KNOW***



CONTENTS

TAKEAWAY 01:

The Future of Personalization Is Bright...and Crowded

TAKEAWAY 02:

Personalization Efforts Stall Due to Lack of Resources and Expertise

TAKEAWAY 03:

Marketing Leads the Charge on Personalization

TAKEAWAY 04:

Email Remains the #1 Most Personalized Channel

TAKEAWAY 05:

Driving Conversions Is the #1 Goal for Personalization

TAKEAWAY 06:

Trust and Data Sharing Is a Problem, but Customers Will Exchange Data for Good Experiences

Introduction

At Acquia, we've been at the frontlines of helping customers deliver personalized experiences for the past five years. We've learned a lot from our customers and partners about the experience challenges they are trying to solve, and how personalization can help create more engaging digital experiences. But we wanted to learn more about what was driving decisions around personalization and how marketing and optimization teams were delivering on the promise to make the digital space more personalized.

So, we asked. We ran two surveys on personalization — asking thousands of customers, prospects, partners, and consumers at large about the personalization space — and we want to share those findings with you.

In this e-book, you'll get the six top takeaways in personalization, as well as a course of action for companies getting personalization initiatives off the ground.



TAKEAWAY 01

**The Future of Personalization
Is Bright...and Crowded**



The Future of Personalization Is Bright...and Crowded

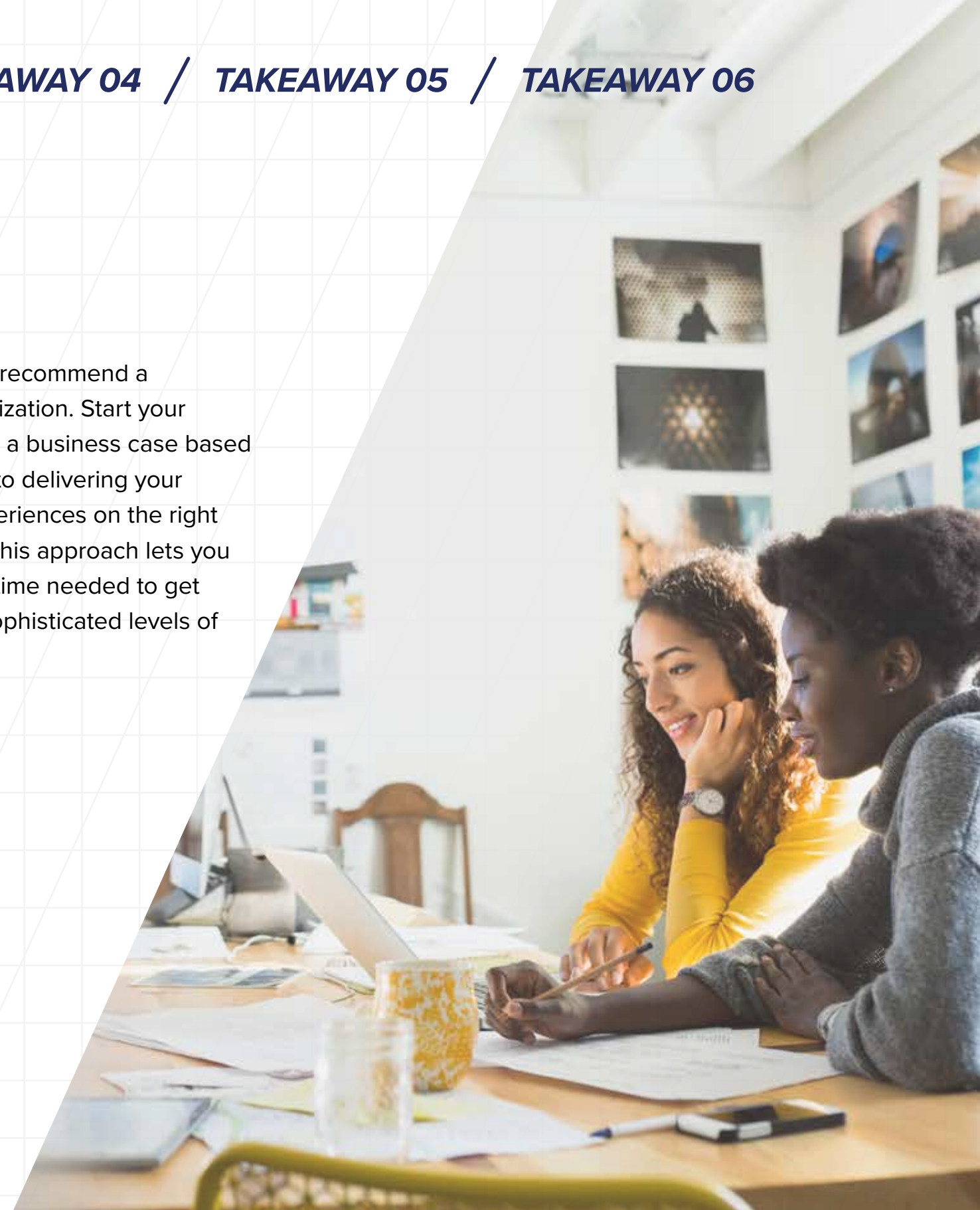
We found that the overwhelming majority of digital businesses were interested in personalization. Only 8% surveyed were not interested in delivering personalized experiences. This was not surprising given the power of personalization when it comes to creating more engaging digital experiences and, frankly, more effective marketing.

What was interesting was that the largest group of those interested in personalizing the experience were actually those not personalizing today but interested in doing so soon. Expect to see many more organizations dipping their toes in the personalization space in the next 12 months. As a fairly new practice, these teams will need to be prepared to not only “do personalization” but to do it well and see success.

KEY CONSIDERATION

Doing personalization right requires time, resources, content and technology.

That being said, to simplify things, we recommend a Crawl/Walk/Run approach to personalization. Start your personalization efforts slowly, building a business case based on evidence of success, and work up to delivering your customers’ preferred content and experiences on the right channels at the right time and place. This approach lets you get started quickly and gives you the time needed to get comfortable before moving to more sophisticated levels of personalization.



CRAWL

Crawling starts with data collection and aggregation, the most important aspect of personalization. Data collection gives you visibility into your audience's implicit preferences and a more complete understanding of your visitors. Start by tracking parameters like geolocation, device type and visit frequency. Then, customize landing pages for your visitors that reflect the insights your data reveal.

WALK

Personalization at this stage will require additional content and more data. “Walk” personalizations involve medium to high effort and deliver medium to high impact. Personalization here involves creating and delivering an individualized experience determined by the visitor's browsing behavior on your website. For example, you can serve up specific content based on which pages your visitor has already viewed or how frequently the visitor has interacted with different pages on your site.

RUN

The final step is delivering great, personalized experiences to all your prospects and customers, even on channels you don't own. “Run” personalizations require additional content, more personalization events and more data. They are high effort — requiring data collection and integration from other systems, moderate to extensive content creation and more research and resources to build and execute rules — with high impact over an extended period of time. “Run” personalizations often include a multichannel approach and/or a combination of multiple Crawl/Walk personalization efforts.

TAKEAWAY 02

**Personalization Efforts
Stall Due to Lack of
Resources and Expertise**



Personalization Efforts Stall Due to Lack of Resources and Expertise

As discussed above, there is a lot of interest in personalizing experiences for users. Yet 50% of those interested said they weren't actively personalizing today. So what is holding organizations back from executing on this? We asked this too, and the #1 response, at 65% of respondents, was lack of expertise or resources.

But expertise and resources are hard to define. And as marketers know, if there is clear ROI around an initiative, companies will invest in expertise and resources.

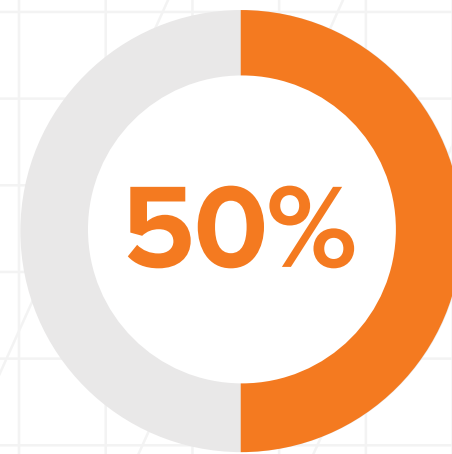
KEY CONSIDERATION

Yes, you need to be able to demonstrate ROI in order to gain access to resources. Here's the good news: There's proof that personalization has a measurable impact on business results. Indeed, McKinsey has shown that personalization can deliver 5-to-8 times the ROI on marketing spend and lift sales 10% or more.

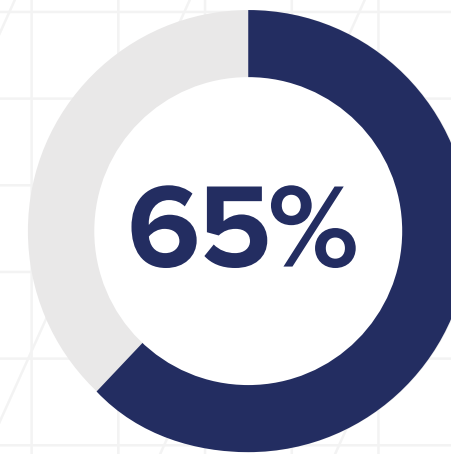
The other thing to remember from both an expertise and a resources perspective is that you don't have to do it all at once and you don't have to do it all on your own. As we just said,

you can take a Crawl/Walk/Run approach allowing you to start with the resources you have on hand and then add more resources as your efforts prove fruitful.

Of course, if that pace is too slow for you, as resources become available you can certainly engage the services of third-party experts who can drive your personalization efforts forward.



of those interested in personalizing their user experience said they weren't actively personalizing today



of respondents lacked the expertise or resources for personalization

TAKEAWAY 03

**Marketing Leads the Charge
on Personalization**



Marketing Leads the Charge on Personalization

For organizations who are either practicing personalization today or interested in getting personalization efforts off the ground, the top two teams leading the personalization charge are marketing and executive leadership.

While marketing leads the way (with executive support), personalization requires cross-functional involvement from team members in IT, operations, content, web and even sales and product. However, while all these teams bear some responsibility, the accountability for results and outcomes will squarely fall to the marketing team.

KEY CONSIDERATION

Know how to rally the troops and advocate for personalization. In order to be an effective leader here, you must be able to articulate the following:

What Personalization Means at Your Company and What Your Company's Personalization Strategy Is:

Don't undertake a personalization initiative just for the sake of personalization. Clearly articulate the goals of your personalization strategy and how you will go about achieving those goals.

Who It Is You're Personalizing For:

Understand how you will be segmenting your audience by identifying the different needs and expectations of your customers and grouping them accordingly.

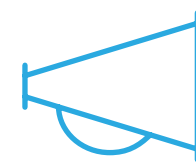
What You Need From a Resource, Organizational and Technology Perspective:

Personalization needs time and effort from the content team, the marketing team and the dev team, among others.

Align your cross-functional teams by agreeing on the essential components:

- What content needs to be created
- How much time will be needed from each functional group
- How you're going to start
- What deep personalization will look like for your enterprise
- How you will progress from your starting point to full-blown personalization

Be your biggest champion. Turn yourself into a personalization evangelist who gets stakeholders aligned and sets the strategy to shape personalization efforts.



Accountability for results and outcomes from personalization efforts will fall squarely on marketing. While that may seem like a heavy burden, keep your eyes on the prize: Personalization works.

TAKEAWAY 04

**Email Is the Most
Personalized Channel**



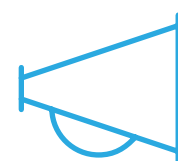
Email Is The Most Personalized Channel

75% of those doing personalization today are personalizing emails, making it the most commonly personalized channel.

Website are a close second, with 53% personalizing web content. While this is not surprising, it points to a broader challenge. Personalizing emails is a natural place to start “personalizing” — putting in a name or a past purchase is a simple way to claim personalization. Collecting rich data and visitor insights to deliver a truly personalized web experience isn’t as easy, but it is more impactful and truly personalized.

KEY CONSIDERATION

Email personalization is a natural place to start personalizing. But is putting someone’s name in an email subject line really personalization? Not if you don’t have a clear understanding of your customer’s interests when interacting with your brand. While it depends on how an organization is structured and what their most engaged audiences are, personalizing on the website enables you to collect robust data on geolocation, device type, visit frequency and browsing behavior to help identify your customer’s implicit preferences and buying intent. From there you can guide visitors down the conversion funnel to clearly drive ROI beyond simple clicks on an email.



You don’t need to know your customer’s name to do personalization well.



TAKEAWAY 05

**Driving Conversions Is the
#1 Goal for Personalization**



Driving Conversions Is the #1 Goal for Personalization

Over 70% of survey respondents pointed to driving conversions (including form submissions, leads and sales) as the key goal of their personalization efforts. Indeed, respondents reported improvements in conversion rates of up to 25% from these efforts. Other goals – increasing time on site, increasing total pages viewed, decreasing bounce rate, etc. – were deemed less important by survey respondents, though they may be reasonable goals in some cases.

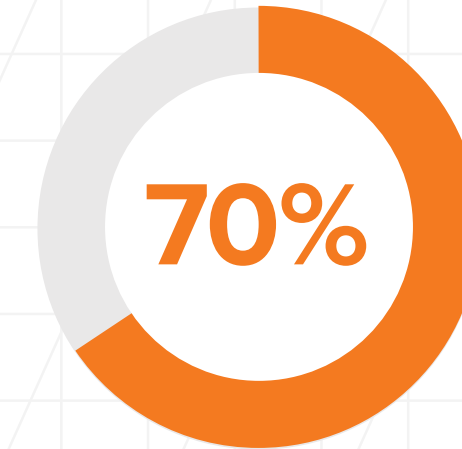
KEY CONSIDERATION

The overarching goals of personalization involve concrete business results: lead generation, sales, repeat purchase and so on.

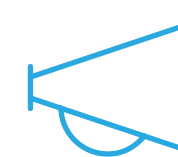
Prior to those outcomes, personalization, particularly on your website, has one very particular goal: to turn anonymous visitors into known prospects. That being said, even before you know a visitor's identity, you can still personalize their experience if you place them in the appropriate segment. For example, you can use website data to divide visitors into two segments, "first-time visitor" and "returning visitor."

Furthermore, there is a slew of additional data – device type, geolocation, the domain they're coming from (is it the domain of a current prospect or customer?), etc. – that you can use to personalize the experience of unknown visitors.

Of course, if you know something about the visitor – if they have previously attended a webinar or downloaded a white paper – you should absolutely use that data to personalize their experience and move them closer to conversion.



of survey respondents pointed to driving conversions (including form submissions, leads and sales) as the key goal of their personalization efforts



The overarching goals of personalization involve concrete business results.

TAKEAWAY 06

**Trust and Data Sharing Is
a Problem, but Customers
Will Exchange Data for
Good Experiences**



Trust and Data Sharing Is a Problem, But Customers Will Exchange Data for Good Experiences

Data and trust are huge pieces of the personalization puzzle. True personalization requires collecting rich data about visitors and customers. In a world where data and trust are top of mind, consumers are wary about having their data collected. This means that establishing trust between your brand and your customers will ultimately make or break your personalization efforts.

According to Acquia's survey of 1,000 U.S. consumers:

55% of respondents either don't know or are not sure how brands are using their data.

65% of respondents either don't know or are not sure which brands are using their data.

65% of respondents would stop using a brand that was being dishonest about how it uses consumer data.

59% of respondents wait at least a month to share personal data with brands.

Consumers are most motivated to share personal data with brands in return for promotional offers.

KEY CONSIDERATION

To personalize content, you need data. And you need it on several levels.

On the audience level, you need to collect as much granular data as you can in order to refine your personalizations. This requires a critical step: elimination of data silos.

Marketing collects data on customers. Sales collects data. Customer service and support collects data. If these separate data repositories are not connected, then you have two related problems. First, you can't create a comprehensive view of your customers. Second, because you lack this comprehensive view, you can't adequately personalize content. That means you can have some bad personalization misses, such as making a special service renewal offer to someone who has an unresolved support ticket open.

In addition to this granular view, you also need a bird's eye view of your data in aggregate. How many customers visit your site on a daily basis? What are the most common paths visitors follow on your site? Which offers and landing pages perform better than others? Easy access to this data empowers you to understand the performance of your personalization efforts and identify opportunities for optimization and improvement.

As you collect and use data, however, be ever mindful of violating the trust of your visitors. If it is clear that you are using data to make the experience better, then you are fulfilling customer expectations for personalization.

Acquia's Take on Personalization

At Acquia, we know how important personalization is to successful brand management. And though the work involved can seem intimidating, personalization doesn't have to happen in a complex, convoluted way. It can be manageable and effective, even at a small scale.

Personalization requires cross-functional alignment. It also requires the elimination of silos and the creation of central repositories for content and data. With that in place, each business unit should be able to support the personalization initiative as a matter of course:

- Marketing should be able to manage personalization without IT support.
- IT should be able to trust that the toolset marketing is using will comply with all governance requirements.
- The content team should be able to trust that any and all content being published on the website and/or other digital channels has been approved.



You Can Do This!

When personalization is done right, it can be the most powerful persuader in your efforts to influence customer behavior. On the other hand, doing personalization badly is worse than doing no personalization at all. Fortunately, you can avoid those bad outcomes by getting into personalization slowly, step by step.

Start by aligning your internal teams, including marketing, IT operations and content, and centralize your data to get a complete picture of your customers and prospects. Use data to build your segments and use your knowledge of these segments to build trust with your customers.

Our incremental Crawl/Walk/Run approach has given small organizations and enterprises alike the confidence to make a gradual but deliberate transition to personalization. It also paves the way for the more sophisticated multichannel personalization strategies that allow brands to compete and win in today's expanding digital marketplace. You can do this. And Acquia is here to help.



Learn more about personalization and understand how Acquia works with many of the world's best brands to deliver customized and consistent customer experiences across all of their market segments. **Pick up the phone, we'd love to talk!**

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.



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