Do Your Customers Suffer from a Case of Mistaken Identity?

Build loyalty by better understanding your customers.

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Today’s Environment

Customers expect brands to know them. When a brand meets their expectations through relevant and personalized experiences, customers often become loyal patrons and promoters. And yet, many brands still struggle in their efforts to recognize who their customers are, let alone understand their behaviors. Companies serve customers across a variety of channels and devices, yielding multiple views of the same person. The result is a mash-up of experiences that fall short of a customer’s expectations and perpetuates which turns into, what we call, a case of mistaken identity throughout the customer journey.

47 percent of consumers will abandon a brand when not treated as a recognized customer.¹

Knowing a customer is one thing, but the challenge is how a company manages a customer’s identity when they interact across multiple channels. Many brands have advertising, marketing and product groups that each maintain their own distinct approaches to recognizing and understanding customers. The bulk of the data collected by these groups ends up isolated in siloed repositories. No common identifier, or “key,” exists to tie these disparate data sets together, creating a number of incomplete, inconsistent views for each customer.

58 percent of marketers cite the lack of a “single customer view” as the leading obstacle to marketing success.²

As brands offer customers access to an increasing number of channels across multiple devices, recognizing and understanding each customer are more complex and business-critical than ever.

Point B’s Perspective

Every mistaken identity is a missed opportunity to grow sales and build loyalty by better understanding your customers. Point B partners with a wide array of companies to improve their identity management – from defining holistic, enterprise-wide strategies to implementing unified services across their lines of business.

In each case, we begin by focusing on three questions:

» How is your brand collecting identity signals across customer touchpoints?
How is your brand connecting these captured identifiers to an individual customer?

How is your brand integrating this resolved identity with other customer data systems?

Collect identity signals across touchpoints.

It is critical to capture all eligible identity signals across the various touchpoints a customer uses—and, preferably, to do so via a single, centralized service. This capture may include anonymous identifiers (IDs) such as browser cookies, mobile ad IDs (MAIDs), app publisher IDs, connected TV IDs, etc. Known identifiers are also important—email addresses, social handles, home addresses, and phone or mobile numbers. However, these known identifiers come with responsibilities to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Both types of identifiers—anonymous and known—must be collected in a manner that complies with privacy policies and regulations.

Large and growing companies find it especially tough to identify the high volume of anonymous or unknown digital customers who interact across their portfolios of brands every day. This is usually due to the lack of an aligned strategic plan that enables a company to develop and deploy an enterprise-wide service that captures eligible identity signals across its digital offerings. To address this gap, we use our proprietary Product Compass™ framework to help a company understand market trends and align with stakeholder needs to inform a new, customer-focused identity strategy. We also identify and address core challenges, such as organizational readiness, technology and privacy issues, that can hinder a company from achieving its product vision. Finally, it takes clear success metrics, strategic focus areas, and a product roadmap to guide downstream execution.

Connect eligible identifiers to an individual.

The more persistent the identifier (e.g., does not churn), the better your ability to recognize the customer over a longer period of time. Persistent identifiers are often associated with a registered user who has logged into a brand’s site or app, which ensures that all of their interactions are known. But unless your brand requires a user to authenticate across all touchpoints, there are bound to be anonymous or unknown interactions along the customer’s journey. The challenge is in finding ways to map both known and unknown identifiers to the same individual.

Companies that have relied heavily on email addresses for customer identity are looking to shift to a more unified view of each individual, and with good reason. Many companies have a loyalty program that uses email as the primary identifier for customers—even though many customers use multiple emails and often interact as anonymous or unknown customers. As companies begin collecting more identifiers on customers, such as PII from point of sale, they need a resolution across all disparate identifiers. Resolving identifiers back to one individual ID transforms the definition of the customer from an email or device to an individual user.

Integrate resolved identity with other data systems.

With this in mind, the next step is to map various collected identifiers to an individual. Otherwise, you risk optimizing recognition only for a specific device, and customers expect brands to know them, not their devices. If a common identifier exists across different interactions, then a deterministic (e.g., definitive or exact) match is possible. However, when a common
key does not exist, it takes a probabilistic (e.g., modeled or inferred) method to associate IDs.

Once these connections are made, you can use the resulting identity map or “graph” to bring disparate data sets together across multiple platforms for a more unified customer view. The identity graph must be integrated with all relevant data systems to ensure a customer’s behaviors and attributes are tied to their resolved identity. By providing real-time access to the identity graph, you'll empower all groups to recognize and understand each customer across multiple channels.

We help companies create a customer data platform strategy with resolved identity as its centerpiece. Using our Product Compass™ framework, we lead a collaborative strategic planning process that gathers inputs from key stakeholders and ensures alignment across business and technology groups. This process focuses on why a unified customer data platform is needed, the business value it will deliver, and how the platform will create that value. The strategic plan has identity resolution at its core – specifically the mapping of disparate digital and device identifiers to an individual customer. The identity data set puts a company in a better position to connect these various customer behaviors, attributes, events, etc., by way of a common key. Teams can then activate the unified profile data for advertising, marketing and personalization across business units.

The Bottom Line

By leveraging solid identity management approaches, a brand is better positioned to create a unified, 360 degree view of each individual customer.

A unified data asset helps drive smarter media targeting, personalized experiences and relevant conversations with each customer. And the benefits of better customer recognition extend far beyond engagement; an identity graph can improve attribution and measurement in tracking customer behavior over time. By using common keys to match different first-, second- and third-party data sets, a brand can generate a more complete view of customer events and interactions. As a result, they can identify their best customers and discover how to increase engagement across different channels. With improved recognition, they can deliver more relevant experiences at the right time and in the right context. This creates opportunities to more effectively upsell and cross-sell by understanding an individual consumer’s behavior.

In the end, brands that create an evolving identity graph for each customer will prevail. The more identity signals you collect and connect on a regular basis, the more effective your advertising, marketing and personalization efforts will be. No more identity crisis; now you’re truly able to know your customer – and show it – in an ever-changing and connected world.