7 Lessons from visionary Context Marketers

Why the Context Marketing mindset matters —and how you can get it

DEMAND MORE PERSONALIZATION

sitecore®
Own the experience®

Customers are kings

We all know it's true. Customers have more power than ever before. They have huge expectations of the companies they do business with. And they won't hang around waiting for you to catch up.

We all know it's true because we're all customers. And all of us—the modern, connected, empowered customers— are demanding context.

The wildfire proliferation of mobile devices has brought the internet into every part of our lives, with information and content always at our fingertips.

We can compare prices and product reviews online while we're shopping in a store. We can find a great nearby restaurant with a few taps and swipes. We can even pay bills while taking a walk in the woods.

Now that we're all used to these kinds of intuitive, contextual experiences, we've developed a completely new mindset as customers. Which is why, as marketers, it's critical that we develop a new mindset to match.

It's time to evolve and thrive—or stand still and wither away.
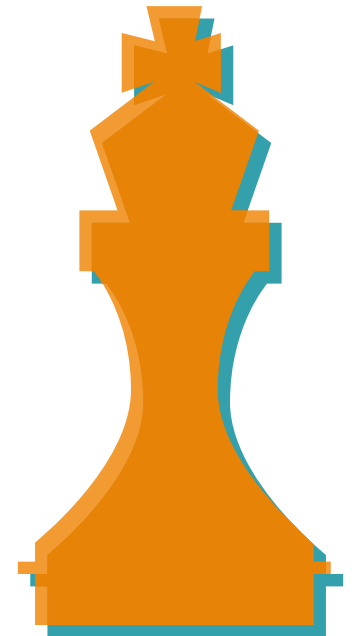
We're in the age of the empowered customer…

"The customer is now using technology to price precisely, to be able to critique your products precisely and publicly. And, to be able to buy anywhere. The power is shifting away from institutions, toward the customers."

George F. Colony,
Chairman and Chief Executive,
Forrester Research

…where experience is the last differentiator…

89% of companies in a recent Gartner survey plan to compete primarily on the basis of the customer experience by 2016.

Gartner CMO Spend Survey 2015:
Eye on the Buyer

…and customer loyalty is hard to win—and harder to keep.

Two-thirds of US consumers say the number of brands or companies they consider before purchase has increased significantly compared to 10 years ago.

Customer 2020: Are You Future-Ready or Reliving the Past?
Accenture, 2015

Context is the ace up your sleeve

That's why context matters. With context, you can understand exactly where customers are on their buying journey and give them useful, relevant content, at the point when they'll be most receptive to it.

Understanding each customer's journey depends on understanding what triggers the first step, and every step that follows, from awareness and interest to conversion. The secret lies in finding out the context of every customer—on every channel. And that's where Context Marketing comes in.

Context infrastructure

Today, marketers have access to a growing array of options to put customer information in context. The infrastructure is already here:

- Ratings and reviews
- Mobile apps
- Social media
- Geo-location data
- Internet of Things

Context Marketing:
the customer experience game breaker

The point of Context Marketing is that it allows you to effectively own and manage the customer experience.

That requires the ability to deliver the right content to the right person, in the right place and at the right time, based on a complete understanding of the sum total of their past behaviors and current needs.

With context, marketers can identify how, where, and why buyers start their journey to a purchase and the series of steps they take to get there.

Context helps marketers understand that buyers move at their own pace, in the directions they want, and that they take a confusing set of apparently disconnected steps on their route to a purchase.

Understanding context helps marketers provide relevant, personalized content and offers at each stage of the buyer journey and take actions to keep prospects moving in the right direction.

Context disruption

So here's the thing...

The importance of personalization throughout the customer journey isn't a new idea. Way back in 1993, Don Peppers and Martha Rogers published a book called *The One to One Future*, with a clarion call to marketers to embrace personalization.

What's changed since 1993 is that companies (often the coolest, most disruptive ones) are now turning that theory into a mighty reality. Think what the ability to put every customer interaction in context has helped Uber, iTunes, and Netflix do to their industries.

Hailing a cab used to be pretty miserable (and expensive) experience, but Uber came along and turned the taxi business on its head.

By building an experience with the customer's needs as the starting point—and throwing in some neat geo-location tech—Uber has tapped in to the modern customer's expectation of experiences based on detailed, real-time knowledge of their changing needs.

Just like Amazon, another company that completely redefined its market through personalized experiences, Uber hasn't turned a profit in its first few years of business. But a recent $50 billion valuation says that's likely to change soon—and fast.

Contextual personalization

Contextual personalization has been talked about for a long time, but now the infrastructure is in place to make it a reality. The majority of companies, however, are still just *talking* about personalization rather than *doing* it. And the barriers seem to be getting bigger rather than smaller:

- **Marketing silos** of expertise and technology are growing
- **Integration projects** are seen as painful rather than rewarding
- **Disparate data pools** are more common than integrated data lakes
- **Business processes** are increasingly at odds with one another
- **Inadequate measurement** means the benefits can't be quantified

Yes, customers are king but, sadly, confusion still reigns in increasingly siloed organizations all around the world.

Data silos are killing context

The data to power personalization is out there, but how do you bring it all together?

See our take on why data silos are killing context and conversions.

The Context Marketing mindset

One-to-one marketing is no longer a vision. The tools and platforms to make it happen are widely available. And pioneering companies are showing that it's possible to understand each customer to such an extent that you can genuinely market in context. But it requires a specific mindset to make it happen.

What does it take to turn something so easily said into something that's actually happening? It takes a visionary Context Marketer who can:

1. Understand the customer
2. Take meaning from behavior
3. Respond with considered content
4. Disrupt organizational norms
5. Focus on the business case
6. Use metrics that deliver real results
7. Keep everything integrated

Context Masterclasses

We could just tell you how we think a Context Marketing mindset works. But it's better than that. We've asked three of our customers who are living by these rules every day to show you what it takes to put thinking into practice in the real world.

Here are their stories.

DANONE NUTRICIA

REDKEN
5TH AVENUE NYC

Mizuno

Max Goijarts,
Technology and CX Manager,
Danone-Nutricia

Max is leading a project to provide context and content to new mothers.

He's part of a team that's been working to develop a mother's journey for personalized, actionable content in the right place, at the right time.

Matthew Courtney,
Director of IT,
L'Oréal Redken

Matthew drives a context project to build skills for hair salon pros.

His team has been building a framework to support customers on their future development and career path.

Keith Neely,
VP of IT, Ecommerce & Customer Support,
Mizuno USA, Inc.

Keith is heading up a project to provide context for sportswear buyers.

His team has been using data to give customers a consistent, responsive digital experience.
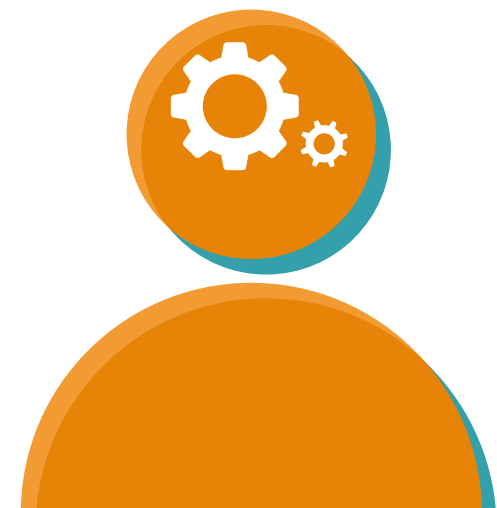
① Understand the customer

Context Marketers understand that listening to customers trumps shouting at them.

They're prepared to spend time and effort to get inside the minds of their customers using research and real-time information. Whatever strategy they adopt for collecting the data they need, the primary goal is to get a thorough understanding of what makes customers tick.

Having a depth of customer information helps Context Marketers provide relevant content and offers at precisely the right point in the customer journey, as we'll see in section three.

Context mindset tip:
Map journeys

Take a step back and think about your customer personas. What drives them? What are the key milestones in their world? Every ounce of knowledge you can squeeze out at the beginning will flow through teams and tools to be used, developed, and actioned.

Danone-Nutricia on customer understanding

Goal
Understand the mother's journey as a parent to provide them with help, support, and product information.

Key task
Identify mother's "moments of truth" from conception through pregnancy to child's third birthday.

Benefit
Lay out our most relevant services, content, and tools around the moments when they are commercially right.

Explained
"We identify the emotions and decision–points mums experience along the way—and that drives all of our customer experience decision-making."

② Take meaning from behavior

Constant customer analysis is at the heart of Context Marketing. It's essential to look for changes in location, lifestyle, and social experience—and apply it all to future engagements.

Behavioral data is a gold mine for Context Marketers. They know that understanding —and predicting—customer behavior is central to meaningful engagements. They also know how important it is to take account of the channel, device, time, and location of these behaviors to put them in context.

**Context marketing tip:
Profiling and analytics**

By storing your customer data in a single, accessible repository, you can view traffic sources, keywords, interactions, and campaign responses. And backed up with conversion analytics, you can enable future optimizations with ongoing learning.

L'Oréal on extracting meaning

Goal
Understand what customers are doing, and what that means, so it can be applied to future content and offers.

Key task
Identify key activities and events that work as milestones on specific and consistent behavior journeys.

Benefit
Uplift in ability to recommend relevant classes and skills with higher conversion rates based on historic patterns.

Explained
"We know if they've taken classes at the L'Oréal Academy and we can then recommend the most appropriate class they should take next to advance their skills."

③ Respond with personalized content

Context Marketers don't go straight for the conversion jugular every time. They take a nurturing approach based on delivering useful content—content that answers prospects' questions, alleviates their anxieties, and encourages their desires, in context.

By offering considered content at the right time, Context Marketers don't just focus on making the sale; they develop long-term customer relationships and build communities of brand advocates.

Context marketing tip: Personalization

When you track (and extract meaning) from user interactions, you can add to what you know about them. And that means you can offer personalized content that reflects the user's context to drive better conversations and stronger conversions.

Danone-Nutricia on personalization

Goal
Combine customer journey mapping with detailed, up-to-date customer information to offer useful services and tools to mothers —in context.

Key task
Create specific, helpful content around key moments of truth like a child's due or birth date to inject personal context into every mother's journey.

Benefit
Provide expert advice, ranging from general health advice to specific hands-on consulting that links advice with product recommendations.

Explained
"We'll know when a mum will be looking for pregnancy health advice, feeding plans, or recipe ideas for her toddler, so we can offer expert advice and help at exactly the moment when mums need it most."

④ Disrupt organizational norms

Context Marketers think like entrepreneurs. They challenge traditional business models and processes and think, not about what is, but about what could be. They want to get involved and support customers when it's needed. They don't just fire out weekly promotional communications when it suits their own schedules.

They don't challenge the status quo to be difficult. They know that by building data, expertise, platforms, and processes around customer journeys, they'll see better business outcomes. It's the essence of Context Marketing.

IDEAS

**Context marketing tip:
Smart email**

It's time to put an end to the Tuesday batch-email send. Communicate based on an understanding of a buyer's profile, interactions, and personal requirements—and communicate at the best time *for the customer*—and you're on your way to true Context Marketing.

Mizuno on disruption

Goal
Create a consistent, unified customer experience across all the sub-brands on our website.

Key task
Form cross-functional teams to discuss sub-brand promotions and assess how they will impact every part of the site.

Benefit
Give customers a frustration-free online experience, with clarity on promotional activity and consistency throughout the site.

Explained
"We know that many of our customers shop across multiple categories, so delivering a consistent experience wherever you are on our site is essential for us."

5 Focus on the business case

Context Marketers always start by asking, "Why?" They zero in on why things need to change and the results they expect to achieve.

A focus on business outcomes must be the starting point for any context-driven project. It's vital for getting the budget and board-level commitment needed for success. (And defining outcomes is the only way you'll ever know if the project has been a success.)

A well-documented business case will also introduce clear accountability into the process —a key factor in driving project success.

Context marketing tip:
Federated experience

A great Context Marketer will do whatever it takes to reach the customer. Federated campaign management will ensure you can personalize your content and integrate your learning across your entire web platform back to your business case.

L'Oréal on business cases

Goal
Be clear on how innovative customer context and experience initiatives will benefit the business as well as the customer.

Key task
Generate a clear business case for context to help everyone in the organization think smarter about what's being done.

Benefit
Cutting through the shiny slogans, straplines, and web ideas to identify projects built around true contextual needs of customers.

Explained
"It's not always a case of nailing down the financial ROI, but you need, at least, some robust KPIs and solid ways to measure them."

⑥ Use metrics that deliver real results

A disruptive innovation, a solid business case, and clear accountability—the next item on the Context Marketer's checklist is to have analytics in place to measure performance. They know that x-ray transparency is the best way to achieve real results.

Modern marketing analytics tools use customizable reports and smart metrics, such as Sitecore's Engagement Value Points, to measure the real business value of complete projects, as well as individual campaigns.

Instead of collecting siloed metrics from different applications, Context Marketers use integrated metrics that start from the point of view of the customer experience, not the application. That way, they can see how every individual customer has interacted with the brand across every channel over time (and how they're interacting right now).

Real-time reporting dashboards help senior managers keep track of the return they're getting on their investments, but they also help marketers make fast, informed decisions based on which campaigns are under-performing or over-performing.

With the right metrics (and the right analytics), Context Marketers can test and refine content, offers, and campaigns to fine-tune the way they engage with customers along their buying journey.

**Context marketing tip:
Measure from the customer's point of view**

Context Marketers are interested in more than just open and click-through rates or web page views and referring sites. They measure the value of each digital customer interaction, wherever it occurs. That way, they not only know how engaged the customer is, but also how far along they are on their buying journey.

f 🐦 in

Danone-Nutricia on big metrics

Goal
Use KPIs to make sure business cases are tested against the initial hypothesis at all times.

Key task
Create a clear, tough but achievable target for all Context Marketing activities and be prepared to act on them.

Benefit
Ensures successes (and failures) can be identified and analyzed so focus remains on the activities that count.

Explained
"We send around a million emails each month to our database, and get an average click-through rate of 28.5%, which shows we're doing a great job of making our content relevant to our customers."

⑦ Keep everything integrated

Context Marketers know that keeping things in silos puts a limit on the business value of the customer experience.

They work hard to bring down silo walls and take a more holistic approach to marketing operations: Do the outbound email and social teams know what content is available from the content marketing team? Is the taxonomy of the CRM data aligned with the web content management system? How can we build systems that encourage and enable collaboration?

Inter-team collaboration is an essential part of the Context Marketer's toolkit. Too often, marketing efforts are hampered by silos

of expertise and data. It's only when it's all brought together that true context begins to take shape.

Integration extends beyond customer data and internal teams, too. Context Marketers know how to inject marketing content into the things customers are already doing, to offer experiences that feel like a normal part of the customer's everyday life.

For example, marketing pizzas (and taking delivery orders) on social media during sports events would be convenient and fun for sports fans and offer a boost to the brand's public profile and sales.

**Context marketing tip:
Bring it together**

The best marketing is holistic marketing. The best way to make sure marketing can grow as a team rather than a series of silos is to make sure customer and campaign data feed into a single point of truth where it's ready to be evolved at all times.

Mizuno on integrating organizations

Goal
Ensure our online customers can easily access the up-to-date information they need.

Key task
Integrate accurate product data from multiple sub-brand teams with ecommerce and content management.

Benefit
Makes it simple for customers to find the information they're looking for to make purchase decisions easier and faster.
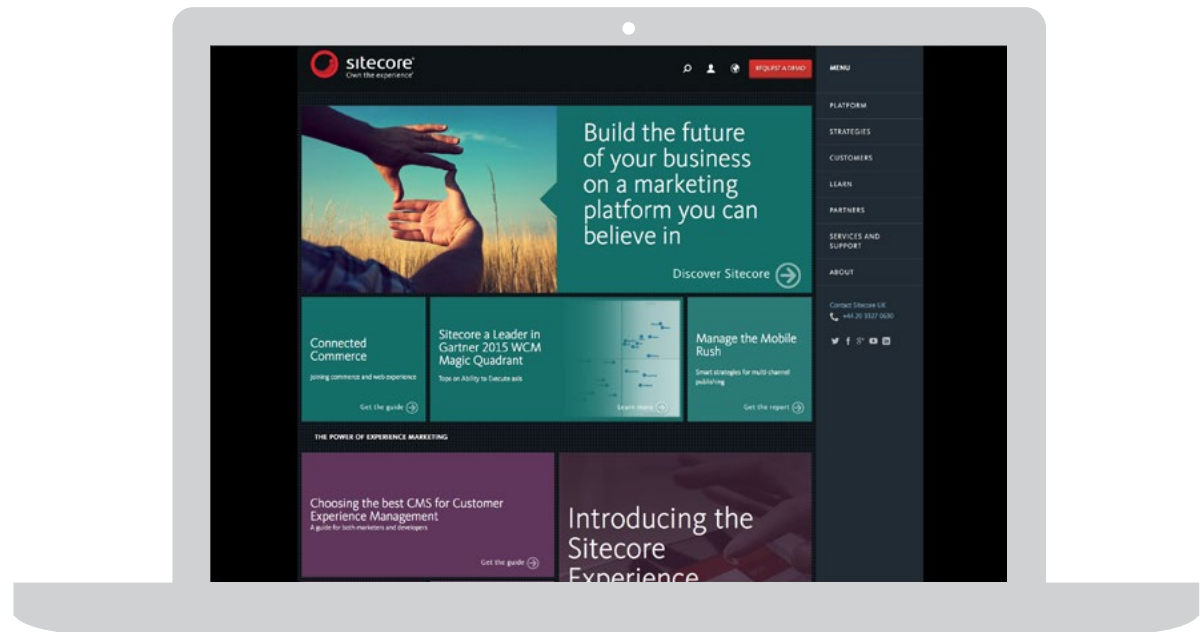
Explained
"The biggest challenge is to get serious about the data that drives your website. For example, by integrating PIM with site design and our commerce engine, we can now offer a much easier buying experience."

Beyond the Content Marketing mindset

Bringing context to marketing needs a special kind of mindset.

And Context Marketing visionaries understand that the mindset is just the beginning. True personalization requires an integrated platform that enables:

- Content management excellence
- Customer behavior insights down to the individual level (residing in a single behavioral database)
- Omnichannel automation to deliver consistently relevant content wherever and whenever it's needed

Next steps

The Data Rant
Data, data all around
but not a drop to drink

Data, data everywhere,
but not a drop to drink

Why data silos are killing context and conversions

DEMAND MORE PERSONALIZATION

sitecore
Own the experience

The Commerce Story
The power of context-driven
commerce

Commerce:
It's always personal

How context-driven content fuels sales growth

DEMAND MORE ROI

sitecore
Own the experience

Sitecore is the global leader in experience management software. The Sitecore® Experience Platform™ manages content, supplies contextual intelligence, and automates communications, at scale. It empowers marketers to deliver content in context of how customers have engaged with their brand, across every channel, in real time. More than 4,400 of the world's leading brands—including American Express, Carnival Cruise Lines, easyJet, and L'Oréal—trust Sitecore for context marketing to deliver the personalized interactions that delight audiences, build loyalty, and drive revenue.

Visit us at sitecore.net

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