

Bold Predictions for 2020

As we begin a new decade, one thing is certain, change is the only constant. Looking to 2020, we're excited and optimistic about the ever-evolving customer engagement landscape. Our predictions were formed by being active listeners, curious students, and brave individuals. We're excited to share them with you.

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▶ **CMOs and CIOs will team up and spend more time optimizing their MarTech platforms than installing them**

According to Gartner, despite increased spending on marketing technology, marketing leaders only use 61% of their MarTech stack's capabilities. In 2020, CEOs are going to hold their executive teams accountable to figuring out how to use the tools on which they spent significant capital. Results-driven CMOs will force their organizations to stop asking for more money for tools and, instead, to spend time and resources on learning how to maximize the toolsets they have. "It's not the machine, it's having the right person behind the machine" will become the mantra that will enable their existing platforms to perform at their best and for brands to drive better content relevancy and results.

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▶ **The AI buzz will shift from Artificial Intelligence to About Individuals**

Sure, everyone talks about AI, but the limitations of current AI technology to automate relevant interactions with customers will loom large. Brands will rethink where to start and look more to human insights than engineering insights. AI initiatives will continue to surge but become more aligned to the CMO's office as companies realize the voice of the customer has to be the focus if they are going to provide the right outcomes. This will lead to a shift in team talent—bringing in anthropologists, psychologists, and frontline employees to get closer to the human perspective of brands' customers. This shift to individual vs. artificial will also be reinforced as more searches will be made by voice than keyboard in 2020.

▶ **Loyalty program technology platforms will see a decline similar to brand advertising**

Brands looking to drive better loyalty and customer tracking will put their money into APIs and building flexible micro-services vs. installing another expensive application into their infrastructure. Due to the rise in digital capabilities provided by an expanded technology landscape, brands will be able to track, credit, and report on customer engagement with much more lightweight integration than they have in the past. Third-party “tracking” applications won’t need to be integrated into their already complex environment, rather the time and money saved will allow budgets to go toward more engaging experiences and interesting partnerships...a benefit that will be truly recognized by the customer.

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▶ **B2B companies will get personal**

Historically, B2B companies have relied on marketing that has been rather impersonal. The approach they’ve grown accustomed to using is a combination of traditional brand marketing and individual sales reps delivering the company message to sell their goods and services. But, that is simply no longer meeting buyers’ needs or expectations. Today’s buyer is looking for an approach that focuses on solving their individual business challenges and for messaging that serves up the answers for them. In 2020, we expect to see B2B companies seek out the expertise and experience needed to deliver a personalized marketing approach by adapting relevant techniques and channels that are tablestakes in B2C.

▶ **Competitors are going to stop building walls and start building bridges**

Consumers have been taking charge of the buying and selling of goods and services through what has been dubbed the “shared economy.” This allows them to exchange goods and services in a fast and easy way, which removes them from the traditional purchase path. Companies who want to take some control back will need to get creative and devise new ways to guide consumers down a more favorable path, or risk losing them. In 2020, we expect to see courageous companies embracing the idea of the shared economy and establishing business relationships with unexpected partners to align with consumer demand, as evidenced by the recent Amazon, Apple, Google, Zigbee Alliance announcement to create an open standard for smart home devices.

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▶ **Consumers will pay more to remove advertising than brands are going to spend on advertising**

With a general election year comes an onslaught of advertisements in every channel and every venue, every day. It's nearly inescapable and regardless of where you stand, it can be overwhelming. In 2020, we expect more consumers to take matters into their own hands by paying for subscription services to bypass ads, renting movies at home rather than going to the theater, doubling down on streaming services, buying noise canceling headphones, and in extreme cases, avoiding favorite venues. For the first time, consumers will spend more money to avoid ads and unwanted messages than advertisers will spend trying to broadcast them.

In 2020, we expect more consumers to take matters into their own hands

▶ **Citizen developers will become the most in-demand skillset for companies looking to improve customer engagement**

This new breed of talent combines an understanding of technical and analytical principles with business and customer intuition to drive solutions using off-the-shelf, low/no-code technology platforms. From customer onboarding (Appcues, Chameleon) to integrating complex customer data between systems (Zapier, Segment), these multi-faceted professionals have the ability to learn tools quickly and the aptitude to apply them to the business in creative ways that make a big impact. By accelerating implementation and iteration while reducing the need for development resources, companies will evolve their digital experiences at an exponential rate.

▶ **Influencers will grow at the micro level**

Business is booming for influencers, and the industry is showing no signs of slowing down. As brands seek to maximize their ROI next year, they are going to identify and partner with influencers who have smaller, more engaged audiences. Recent studies have shown that influencers with less than 25K followers are reaching engagement rates of almost 2X that of influencers in similar genres with larger audiences, which can mostly be attributed to the authentic reputations that these influencers have built with their follower base. In 2020, brands will be competing for the up and coming influencers, with small but growing followings, to strengthen and humanize the connections they have with their customers.

Cheers to an inspiring and purposeful year ahead!

Stay bold,
Margaret Murphy, CEO & Founder

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