



Mindtree

A Larsen & Toubro Group Company



# How to Create An Effective Personalization Experience? A Data-driven Marketing Approach



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## 1. Introduction

In 2019, Researchscape International and Evergage Inc. surveyed 300+ marketing professionals across industries and countries. The research brought out some key facts that would interest every marketer.

- a. 85% of marketers stated that their customers or prospects expect a personalized experience.
- b. However, only 16% were delighted with the level of personalization in their marketing effort, while 50% of them were slightly/ not satisfied.

The above findings indicate that marketers are not adopting effective strategies, technologies & best practices towards personalization.

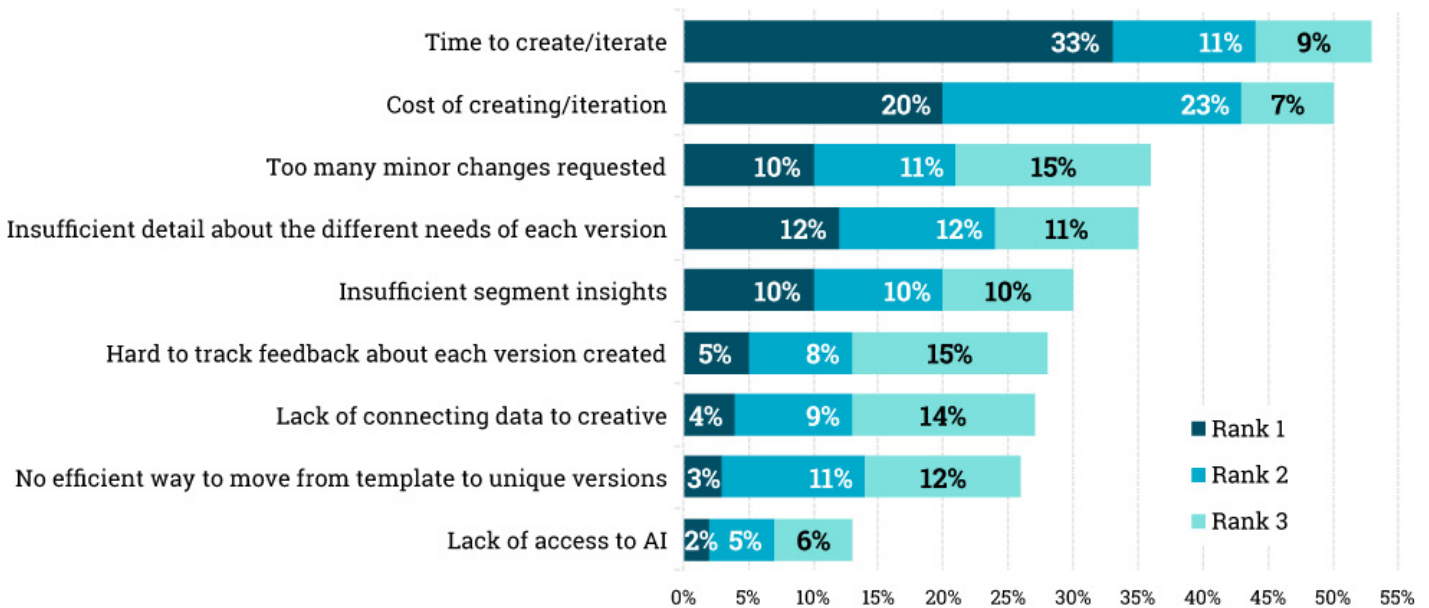
This paper sheds light on the top challenges & barriers associated with achieving effective personalization. It attempts to provide an approach aimed at overcoming these barriers using a data-driven approach. It also recommends best practices to ensure a better RoI while implementing personalization.



## 2. Top Barriers to Personalization

A recent research by Adobe in North America shows that the biggest impediment is the scarcity of resources

### Top Barriers to Personalizing Content & Digital Ad Creative



Published on MarketingCharts.com in October 2018 | Data Source: Adobe

Based on marketer, advertiser and agency respondents from a survey of 1,037 creative, marketing, advertisers and IT professionals in North America, a majority of whom are from brands with more than 500 employees.

## 2.1. Marketers' perspective

Consider the below findings:

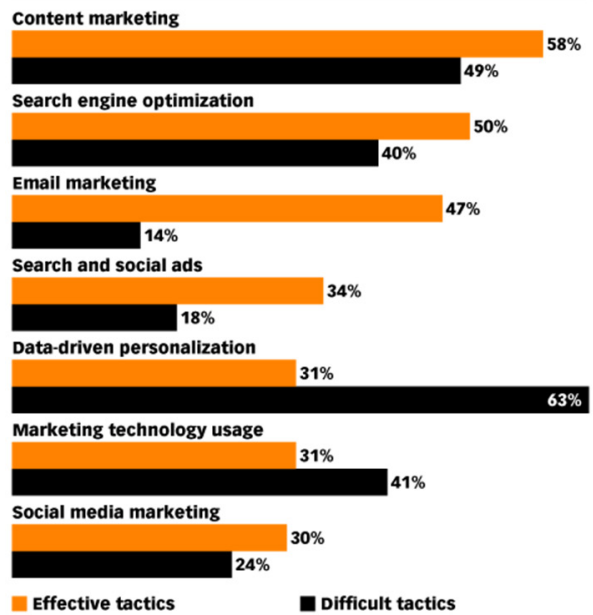
1. In the research above,
  - a. Respondents reported that it takes them an average of 12 days to get a single piece of content with all variants to market.
  - b. 60% note that they struggle to personalize content in real-time, yet 77% believe real-time personalization is crucial.
2. Another survey by Ascend2 states that content marketing is perceived as the more effective tactic as compared to data-driven personalization tactics.

As per the survey above, most marketers believe that personalization translates to having creative variants for different user segments. In fact, this is the most resource-consuming tactic & yields a lower RoI. On the other hand, data-driven personalization, which is perceived as the most difficult tactic, yields a better RoI.

A study by (McKinsey & Company, 2017) reveals that brands who have implemented data-driven personalization have seen a 20% increase in marketing RoI. Hence, there is a lot of scope of improvement in optimizing the strategies.

### What Are the Most Effective Online Tactics Used vs. the Most Difficult Online Tactics to Execute in a Digital Marketing Strategy for Companies Worldwide?

% of respondents, Oct 2018



Source: Ascend2, "2019 Digital Marketing Strategies," Oct 10, 2018

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www.eMarketer.com

## 2.2. Customers' perspective

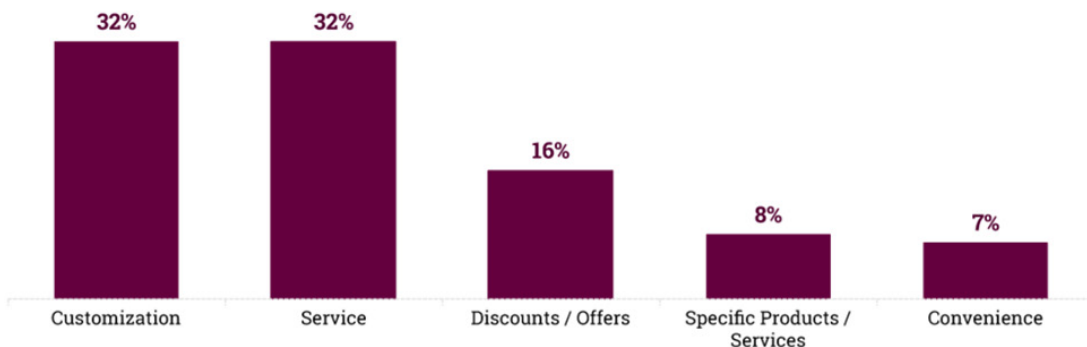
To understand customers' perspective, a survey was carried out, as a part of which, 1,000 adults between 18 to 64 years of age were interviewed. The survey participants did not belong to marketing, advertising, public relations or market research industries.

32% of survey participants see personalization to customize as per customer preference. Another group of 32% participants think of it as a service provided by marketers to ensure customers get to see what they want, based on customer behavior data.

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## How US Adults Interpret Personalization



**Examples -** **Customization:** "It means it's something suited to me exactly so that I'm more likely to be interested in what they're selling."  
**Service:** "It means that the company will know what you want, your likes and dislikes and make sure you have what you want."  
**Discounts/offers:** "They offer personalized offers, products and coupons that meet your needs and are items you typically buy."  
**Specific products/services:** "...dedicated shopping assistant, order puller- have the order ready. Curb service, disabled entry doors."  
**Convenience:** "It means noticing how I shop/surf the internet and customizing advertising and shopping options to my preferences."

Published on MarketingCharts.com in January 2018 | Data Source: Epsilon

Based on a survey of 1,000 US adults ages 18-64 not employed in the marketing ecosystem. Q: "For this survey, we will be focusing on the topic of personalized experiences that a company might offer to their customers. Thinking about these personalized experiences, what does this mean to you? Please be as specific as possible."

Customers appreciate personalized content/ message that provide them with value, based on their current needs – essentially something that they have not thought of themselves.

To have a comprehensive view of your customer/ prospects & their needs, it is imperative to create a 360-degree view of customers to provide a context-relevant, personalized experience.

### 3. Personalize with Precision – Data-driven Strategy

Even today, most brands use essential customer data for customer segmentation and show same content to the audience from a specific segment. The best-in-class go beyond the basic data (age, gender, region, preferences etc.) and study consumers' behavior across channels to provide more personalized content even within a given segment.

The secret sauce is to gather customer data from different sources and third-party systems, clean and structure it - to build a single, comprehensive customer profile.

#### 3.1. Creating a Customer 360-degree view

Customer 360-degree view is the comprehensive view of a customer that companies can create by using data from various interactions in the customer journey, both online & offline.

As per Gartner - Fewer than 10% of companies have a 360-degree customer view & only 5% use this view to systemically grow their businesses

To have a complete picture, the data should be collected from customers' past & present interactions across channels w.r.t. product & services offered by the business, which include:

- a. Customers' demographics
- b. Recent product views/ inquiries
- c. Purchase history across channels
- d. Customer interaction history across the channel etc.
- e. Social media interaction w.r.t. the product/ service
- f. Customers' views/ posts on forums related to the product
- g. Response to the campaign activity
- h. Customer complaints/ requests registered through call centers

The customer's future action/ behavior can be predicted based on structured data from past & present interactions. This can be used to cross-sell / up-sell products and in personalizing the user experience during the next interaction.

One of the greatest examples of all times is from Amazon, which uses behavioral targeting & predictive modelling to create personalized experiences for its users. In all, 44% of customers buy products based on 'frequently bought together' recommendations by Amazon.

#### 3.2. Benefits of 360-degree customer view

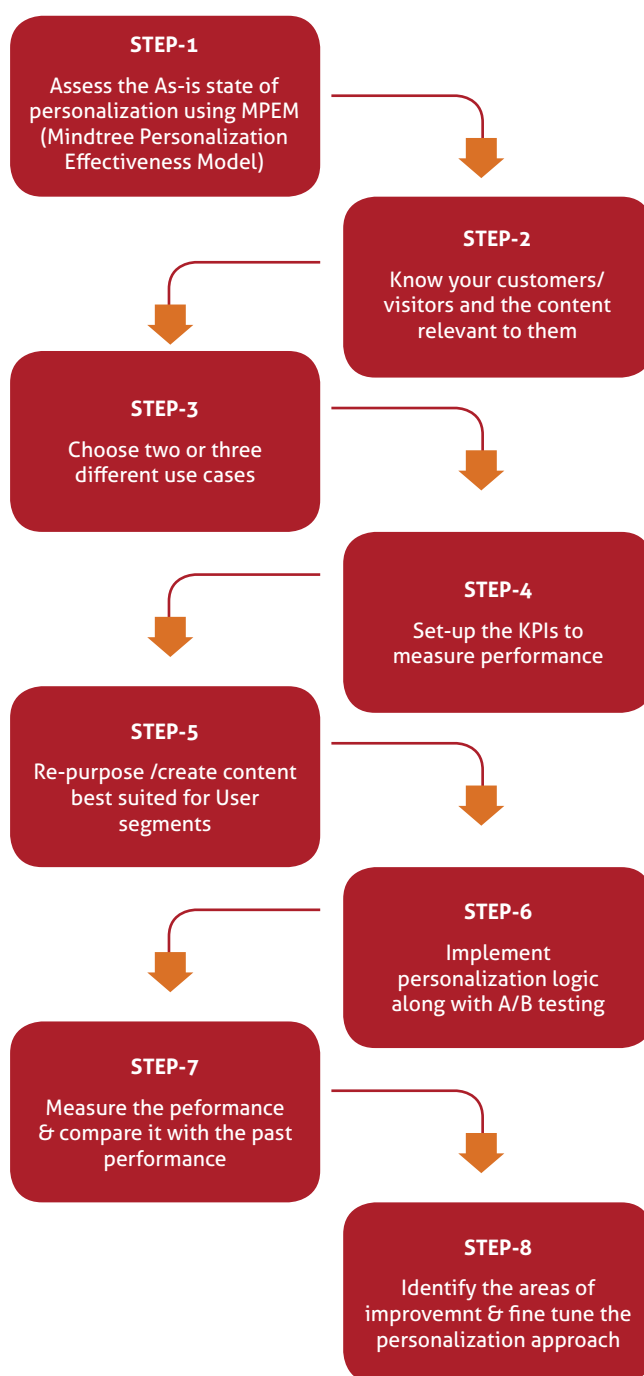
1. Enables predictive analysis based on past behavior
2. Improves engagement with the customer by offering a personalized experience
3. Drives brand loyalty
4. Provides insights on the target customer base & their expectations from the brand

### 4. An Approach to Effective Personalization

Most of the companies try to implement a Persona-based Segmentation approach and provide experiences based on certain rules. On the other extreme is the automated personalization approach that provides experiences using Artificial Intelligence/ Machine Learning techniques by analyzing a user's behavioral history and analytics data available from other users in the specific segment.

The personalization steps given below is a mid-way approach. It is based on the data-driven strategy of using insights from a user's profile and gives complete control in the hand of marketers to set the rules of personalization to maximize RoI on digital marketing spend.

The below steps portray an effective way to implement personalization:



The following table elaborates on the approach given above with a detailed list of activities & outcomes expected during each step:

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To have a complete picture, the data should be collected from customers' past & present interactions across channels w.r.t. product & services offered by the business, which include:

Steps	Objective	Activities	Outcomes	Accelerators
<p><b>Step 1:</b> Assess the As-is state of personalization using <b>MPEM</b> (Mindtree Personalization Effectiveness Model) &amp; capture the desired state of personalization. A roadmap can be created defining key milestones and expected outcomes at each milestone. (Personalization Objectives)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mapping the current state of personalization effectiveness using <b>MPEM</b> (Mindtree Personalization Effectiveness Model)</li> <li>2. Defining the main objectives to be achieved using personalization</li> <li>3. Identifying the next level of personalization based on inputs from key stakeholders (Product Owner, Digital Marketing team, Technical Manager/ Architect etc.)</li> <li>4. Creating a roadmap to reach the desired state keeping in view organizational structures, processes &amp; procedures</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Map As-is status of personalization</li> <li>2. Engage with key executives (CIO, Marketing heads and Technology heads, Program Managers etc.) to bring out the vision on personalization</li> <li>3. Assess the readiness of the organization/ unit to go to the next level as desired               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Skills mapping of the team</li> <li>b. List existing tools &amp; technologies being used currently</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Getting CMO/CIO support &amp; sponsorship to realize the vision</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personalization roadmap/ strategy document</li> <li>2. Infrastructure (tools/ technologies) requirement</li> <li>3. Skills requirement</li> <li>4. Executive active involvement &amp; commitment to realize the vision</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>MPEM</b> (Mindtree Personalization Effectiveness Model)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Step 2:</b> Know your customers/ visitors and the content relevant to them, well before applying personalization (Segment Audience)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It's imperative to draft key personas from the data available for your consumers across different channels           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define key personas for your business and their online customer journeys</li> <li>- What content would they be interested in or will benefit from?</li> <li>- From where these customers would come to the site?</li> </ul> <p>The companies already using advanced personalization strategies may choose to skip this step or fine tune the personas/ audience segments</p> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gathering customer related information from different sources possible to build a single view of customer profile</li> <li>2. As-is analysis of all the features/ functionalities available on the site</li> <li>3. Content usage analysis to discover the most viewed &amp; least viewed content</li> <li>4. Tracking anonymous visitors behavior for real time personalization</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creation of key personas (both authenticated and unauthenticated) for the online channels</li> <li>2. Identification of content / features / offers / utilities that is driving traffic to the site or web app.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. STP Model (Segmentation, Targeting &amp; Positioning)</li> <li>2. User persona templates</li> <li>3. Analytics report to get insights on content usage, users demographics etc.</li> </ol>

Steps	Objective	Activities	Outcomes	Accelerators
<p><b>Step 3:</b> Choose two or three different use cases based on the personalization strategy.</p>	<p><b>B2B Use Cases</b></p> <p>There can be different use cases for B2B, the most common ones are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Account-based marketing</li> <li>Persona-based marketing</li> <li>Location-based marketing</li> <li>Behavior-based marketing</li> </ol> <p><b>B2C use cases</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic-based</li> <li>Preference-based</li> <li>Persona &amp; History-based</li> <li>Seasonal/ time-based</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the organization that are beginning now on it's better to start with what is available For e.g. Targeting audience/persona for which content and offers are already available</li> <li>For advanced users, personalization strategies can be tailored based on previous history &amp; buying behavior using modern technologies like Predictive Analytics &amp; Machine Learning.</li> <li>Select the most relevant use cases to implement for personalization</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapping available content to the identified personas</li> <li>Defining the customer journeys and the conversion funnel for identified personas</li> <li>Identify the key personalization use cases that are important from business perspective, along with the priority of those use cases</li> <li>Alignment of use cases with the personalization roadmap/ strategy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying use cases that can be easily implemented using available content &amp; Infrastructure</li> <li>Gaps w.r.t. content, that needs to be created to implement the desired Use case for personalization</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer journey templates</li> <li>Personalization roadmap/ strategy</li> </ol>
<p><b>Step 4:</b> Setting-up the metrics and measure the current performance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's critical to define the KPIs/ metrics for the selected use cases and measure the current performance for the defined audience segments/personas. This can be used as a base to measure the improvements post Use case implementation</li> <li>The measurements would provide key management summary in terms of RoI, most relevant personas to target, geographies to cater etc. This also provides feedback based on which personalization strategy can be further fine tuned</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selecting KPIs that would track user behavior on the website or mobile app, specifically w.r.t. personalized features. For e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversion Rate</li> <li>Stickiness Rate</li> <li>Average Session Duration</li> <li>Average Page views per Visit</li> <li>Click Through Rate</li> <li>Top Traffic Sources</li> <li>New vs. Returning Visitors</li> <li>Most viewed content</li> <li>Segment performance</li> <li>Bounce Rate</li> <li>Website Traffic to Lead Ratio</li> </ul> </li> <li>Measure the current performance to gauge effectiveness of existing personalization features as measured through KPIs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well defined set of KPIs to track improvement in customer engagement that would ultimately lead to higher conversion.</li> </ol>	NA

Steps	Objective	Activities	Outcomes	Accelerators
<b>Step 5:</b> Leverage existing content, Re-purpose content and create customized calls-to-action that leads to personalized content	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To drive the customer down the sales funnel, it's important to create/ select the content that needs to be served at all the stages of customer journey</li> <li>For B2B this means taking them through a journey that include content on awareness, interest, evaluation and commitment. For B2C, the journey will have content on awareness, consideration and decision.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To drive the customer down the sales funnel, it's important to create/ select the content that needs to be served at all the stages of customer journey</li> <li>For B2B this means taking them through a journey that include content on awareness, interest, evaluation and commitment. For B2C, the journey will have content on awareness, consideration and decision.</li> </ol>	1. Personalized content for different segments and customer journeys of users	1. Content strategy templates
<b>Step 6:</b> Implementing the use cases integrated with analytics and applying A/B testing	A/B testing is used to gauge which personalized variant of a page or campaign is getting better response in terms of Ad conversion, improved web engagement, conversion of visitors into lead etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting up the personalization rules that serve personalized content for a specific audience of the website</li> <li>Apply A/B testing to gather insight on which version of page gives better conversion</li> <li>Integrating analytics engine with the website to measure the KPIs and track performance</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalized content (targeted products or services) to provide an individualized experience</li> <li>Best page for each pre-defined audience</li> <li>Tracking of user behavior that helps in fine tuning personalization strategy for better Rol</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tool selection &amp; optimization approach</li> <li>UX pre-defined templates</li> <li>Best practices</li> </ol>
<b>Step 7:</b> Measure the performance post implementation & compare with the past performance	This is to measure the effectiveness of personalization strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measuring the KPIs and underline the increase or decrease as desired</li> <li>Compare it with past performance to measure the effectiveness &amp; link it with the Rol on personalization</li> </ol>	1. Identify the areas of improvement and what's working well to focus the future initiatives	NA
<b>Step 8:</b> Fine tuning personalization approach	The information gathered from KPIs can be used to further fine tune the aspects of personalization, since it provides enhanced data about customer demographics, key segments, their area of interest, features they like the most etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review/ Modify the existing customer segments in the light of insights gathered to further fine-tune the individualized experience</li> <li>Enhance features most liked by users &amp; use those as an opportunity to up-sell, cross-sell other relevant products &amp; services</li> <li>Check for problem pages and take the corrective actions. For e.g. if there are un-usually high exit rates for key pages like home page, product page etc. this needs to be identified soon and page should be modified urgently.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved customer engagement to drive relationship forward</li> <li>Open up avenues of growth via referral, social sharing &amp; advocacy</li> </ol>	NA



## 5. Best Practices

The approach discussed above is ideal and aimed at helping companies in effectively implementing personalization strategies for maximum RoI.

Companies at a different maturity level of personalization would need to create a clearly defined roadmap and build the business case to implement personalization. MPEM (Mindtree Personalization Effectiveness Model) can help customers in the identification of the current maturity level w.r.t. personalization, apart from determining the resources and commitment needed to take it to the next level of personalization.

There are a handful of best practices that should be considered at different phases of implementation, with the key ones being discussed below:

### 5.1. Know your customers & their behavior

An effective personalization strategy has audience segments at its core. Hence, it is paramount to identify the key customer/user segments, their demographics, online behavior and likes/ dislikes for meaningful engagement.

### 5.2. Data-driven approach

The best customer experience can be provided by leveraging data - on customer segmentation, content strategy, segment behavior & channel strategy. A key initiative is to enable 360-degree customer view based on data from enterprise systems such as CRM, ERP, etc. Other sources of data like social media, third parties and call center information must also be considered.

### 5.3. Use CDP/DMP to create a customer profile

Customer Data Platforms (CDP) gather user information from different sources including CRM, website, email marketing platform, etc. to create a comprehensive customer profile. The highly structured data is made available to the marketing, sales or product teams for better decision making.

Another approach to building a customer's profile is by using Data Management Platforms (DMP). It collects first, second- or third-party data from online & offline sources and performs customer profiling. Then, it uses this data mainly for advertisements and campaigns.

The key difference between DMP & CDP is that the latter mainly uses first-party data, which is used during the customer journey.

### 5.4. Test and Target

It is important that personalized content is A/B tested to ascertain which content/offer is performing better, so that experiences can be modified accordingly. Infographics/ images, for example, have a higher conversion than text content. You can either use the best performing content/ offer or create a new one based on the best features from different variations.

### 5.5. Use of AI/ML

Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning (ML) enable a marketer to carry out real-time & automated personalization to achieve scalability. The number of online users using different channels and devices, with varied demographics, has increased exponentially. In a true sense, it is a nightmare for any marketer to create a truly personalized context-relevant experience to all these users.

AI & ML solve this problem by creating customer segments based on user behaviors. Then, relevant content is provided using past behavior, demographic information and analytics data. This is the most advanced form of personalization, as the user experience is customized for each visit. However, this is still in the early stages of adoption, and companies will still take some more time to start using these technologies and give systems the authority to take decisions. This, however, can be used along with other personalization approaches to operate under broader user segments created using static rules.

### 5.6. Measure and revisit your strategy regularly

Measurement is vital to gauge the success of your personalization strategy and to ascertain the focus areas to bring in a better RoI. It also reveals the problem areas that need improvement. This brings to the forefront a new perspective with respect to an entire customer segment and their behavior. There are many metrics to measure the success of your personalization effort, but their usability may vary based on the specific use case.

Once the focus areas have been identified, it is time to have a relook at the personalization strategy, components, methods, etc. to provide an experience that is highly contextual and relevant to users, wins their trust and engages them in a long-term relationship.



## 6. Conclusion

With 4.3 billion online users using different channels, coupled with ever-increasing user expectations for personalized content/ offer/ service, the importance of personalization cannot be ignored anymore. Failing to implement an effective personalization strategy is akin to losing to competition.

Mindtree has helped many organizations access their current state of personalization by creating a roadmap to get to the desired state, keeping in mind business objectives, organizational agility and best practices, thus ensuring a future-proof solution.

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### ABOUT MINDTREE

Mindtree [NSE: MINDTREE] is a global technology consulting and services company, helping enterprises marry scale with agility to achieve competitive advantage. "Born digital," in 1999 and now a Larsen & Toubro Group Company, Mindtree applies its deep domain knowledge to 350+ enterprise client engagements to break down silos, make sense of digital complexity and bring new initiatives to market faster. We enable IT to move at the speed of business, leveraging emerging technologies and the efficiencies of Continuous Delivery to spur business innovation. Operating in more than 15 countries across the world, we're consistently regarded as one of the best places to work, embodied every day by our winning culture made up of 21,000 entrepreneurial, collaborative and dedicated "Mindtree Minds."