

Multi-Channel and Cross-Channel Marketing Are Not Interchangeable

Getting it right is a matter of methodology, not terminology.

By [Stephan Dietrich](#)

While many marketers understand the benefits of communicating with customers using multiple channels, few have actually mastered the nuances of true cross-channel-not just multichannel-marketing. The terms "multichannel marketing" and "cross-channel marketing" are often used interchangeably; however, it's more than just semantics. "Multichannel" infers the ability to drive marketing through more than one channel-something most marketers have certainly achieved. "Cross-channel" is different. It denotes the ability to drive a single campaign with a consistent message that is coordinated across channels.

Email campaigns, for example, are rarely coordinated with direct mail or outbound calling initiatives. If an organization takes advantage of emerging technology, such as mobile marketing, the problems caused by the lack of coordination are exacerbated. Disparate systems often located both in-house and at vendor sites, make it difficult to track interactions, and multiple, disconnected communications can leave customers and prospects feeling angry and frustrated.

From direct mail and email to mobile and social media, each channel has unique communications attributes that marketers must be sensitive to in order to present consistent and coordinated information to customers. To do this effectively, marketers require a single view of each customer or prospect and the ability to centrally drive campaigns that span both traditional and emerging channels. Marketers that persist in treating channels as independent silos will suffer from continued declines in response rates and weakened customer relationships.

A key enabler for cross-channel marketing is having a single marketing view of customer and prospect data using a centralized marketing data mart. Through this one up-to-date system of record for customer and prospect data, organizations can target and segment profiles, keep a detailed track of all past cross-channel marketing interactions, personalize and automate marketing efforts across multiple channels, and accurately measure audience reaction and effectiveness.

Consider global recorded music company EMI Music, which was faced with the challenge of having to figure out who, exactly, was downloading its artists' music, and how to maximize communications with those consumers to strengthen relationships and drive more revenue. EMI Music France implemented a centralized marketing data mart, and configured its cross-channel marketing platform to automatically update customer profiles. The company could then capture, store, and continually merge, purge and de-duplicate relevant information. EMI Music's marketing staff could then precisely target customers according to media habits and preferences, musical tastes, online behavior, shopping habits, and socio-demographics. Today, EMI Music launches nearly 100 targeted campaigns each month on the basis of these criteria, spanning mail, email, and mobile channels.

Many of today's customers and prospects are in constant motion, and aren't always accessible using traditional marketing channels. With a single record of each customer or prospect, organizations benefit from flexibility and agility, defining and orchestrating a cross-channel strategy and targeting customers regardless of their location or the nature of the content. Plus, with coordination between channels, if a customer doesn't respond via one channel, an organization can try another-escalating to high-cost channels only for the highest value customers. Or, an organization can choose a channel based on the message: A timely

message can be delivered via text messaging or email, or a communication that relies on extensive imagery can be delivered via hard copy direct mail or the Web.

One organization that has been very successful at this is AXA Bank, a global financial services firm. By building a centralized marketing data mart and implementing a cross-channel marketing platform, AXA Bank has been able to plan and execute coordinated, cross-channel campaigns. When conducting a phone campaign on a new savings account, for example, AXA can follow up with email for contacts that have opted in to that channel. AXA Bank has found it can double its conversion rates when its prospects across channels. It has also successfully added mobile marketing to its cross-channel mix.

A cross-channel marketing platform greatly simplifies the execution of cross-channel campaigns, enabling marketers to essentially create single campaigns that are replicated across various channels. Content, graphics, and offers remain consistent. Campaigns are coordinated across channels and with previous campaigns. Software can be configured so that, for instance, no customer receives more than one email offer a week. Opt-outs are automatically managed and adhered to, reducing the risk of CAN-SPAM violations.

Integrating emerging channels with traditional channels through cross-channel marketing enables marketers to attain the "Holy Grail" of marketing: reaching the right person with the right offer through the right channel at the right time-reducing the cost and improving the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

Over the next several years, the range of channels through which marketers will be able to reach customers and prospects will continue to grow, making the move to true cross-channel marketing more critical than ever before to an organization's success. An organization's ability to integrate and manage traditional and emerging technologies-and the ability to use any of these channels interchangeably-will enable them to reach customers in motion and optimize the full customer experience, with consistent communication from direct mail to email to text messaging to video communication at the point of sale.

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