

The changing face of web content – Personalisation for all

By Deborah M. Collier



Personalisation has come to the forefront again recently, as organisations seeking the competitive edge, maximise the value of their online presence, strengthen customer loyalty and increase staff efficiency.

For the big boys alone?

For many years, I have been working on strategies and solutions for web personalisation, it is not just for the big boys!! Technologies, and more importantly ideas around leveraging those technologies, have evolved, to allow smaller organisations the ability to engage their users in a personalised way.

Giving customers and users content that is relevant to them at all times, is the ultimate in personalisation. So the key questions on most business leaders minds are - Is personalisation for us? What level of personalisation do we need and how do we best implement it?

Know Your Customer

Successful online business comes down to knowing your customer! Similarly gaining optimal use and productivity from your intranet, involves understanding your employees. In fact, the way individuals each interact with content will differ from persona to another. The answers lie in identifying those personae and the choice of information delivery used for them - whether that is text, graphic, audio, video or animation.

Same content fits all

For organisations with one single clearly defined audience, it's easy. One content fits all...or does it? The answers lie in the choice of mediums you use to deliver your content. Some people are visually orientated, whereas some prefer audio. Others will prefer lots of technical or detailed information. It's the ability to offer choice that is key.

Content based on browsing or purchase history

Amazon is a good example of how products are pushed to their customers (not only on the web site but via email, based on their purchase history). This method has a few flaws. Imagine that you buy your grandmother a knitting book for Christmas. Unless you are into knitting, you don't want to receive alerts about knitting books. What if you share a pc with colleagues and friends? Do you want to have unsuitable products or content pushed to you? Behavioural targeting also has implications for privacy and brand reputation.

Customer chooses content



Enabling customers to choose what products and content they see not only helps build trust and enhance sales, but also increases long-term brand loyalty.

Web users already personalise their own content. Just take a look at the BBC web site where visitors can choose what content is displayed to them. RSS feeds (The ability to choose what news feeds you receive) are another excellent example of how individuals personalise their own content.

The implications for online retail using '*content self-selection*' are huge. Never before have retailers been able to so concisely target the right products and services to their customers, and in doing so increase brand loyalty. Echo E-Business are leading the way with innovative strategies for e-retail and personalisation. Knowing the technologies and how to customise them to the optimal effect lies at the heart of our advice.

Personalisation is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Even the smallest of organisations can add a more tailor-made experience to their web site visitors. It comes down to old-fashioned selling – who are your customers and what is relevant to them?

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Deborah is the founder of the Certificate in Online Business™ (COB) series of globally-recognised industry qualifications, which were established in 2008. She developed the reputation of the programs among well-known brands gaining testimonials from Directors and managers at government organisations and leading companies such as Mars, Schneider Electric, House of Fraser and Procter & Gamble. Deborah leads the strategic direction of the training programs and company. In addition, she oversees marketing, partnerships and licensing.



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