



10

PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING AMAZING ONLINE EXPERIENCES

DIGITAL STRATEGIST **GREG RANDALL** LAYS OUT THE KEY PRINCIPLES FOR RETAILERS WHO WANT TO SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGE WITH CONSUMERS ONLINE.

All retailers want to deliver amazing online experiences, but only a few are making it happen. The starting point is to create a frame of reference by understanding the characteristics of a great *physical* retail experience:

- A great salesperson will modify the information based on a consumer's questions and preferences.

- The information presented is easy to understand.
- The salesperson has tools and deep knowledge to assist decision making and introduces information at the right time.

The consumer feels this experience is personalised, relevant and is presented on their terms.

Like the physical experience, amazing online experiences must be considered from the consumer perspective and be based on a one to one interaction.

When a consumer has a buying intent they will:

- Seek out relevant information on their device of choice.
- Choose the extent at which they continue, complete, or pause based on their situation.
- Complete the mission only once they have met their need.

To meet this consumer requirement, retailers need to be:

- Visible in the right places.
- Easy to deal with.
- Speak the consumer's language.
- Add value (provide content to assist with decision making).

For retailers to deliver amazing online experiences they must be selling (presenting content) in the identical manner in which a consumer wants to purchase (receiving content).

This can be summarised in 10 principles:

1. Consumers are on a journey

Consumers are on a journey and these are becoming longer. A 2013 Google study found that, on average, consumers referenced 12 sources of information online before buying online or in store. In 2010, the average was five.

2. Each journey comprises multiple steps

In the eyes of the consumer, a 'step' occurs when they take an action and new content is presented (or the same content appears differently). Each time they view relevant content,

consumers feel they are moving closer to their need being met.

3. The function of 'User Experience' or UX

To understand how 'UX' contributes it needs to be broken down into two parts: Interaction Cost, and Value Design.

'Interaction Cost' is the effort required of consumers to undertake each step within their journey, both physical and mental. Physical effort is when action is required: clicking, scrolling, and swiping. Mental effort is where the consumer needs to think about their next step, which can include being lost or viewing irrelevant information.

The goal is to reduce both forms of effort as much as possible.

'Value Design' is the creation and presentation of content to simplify decision making. Examples include video, detailed product content, and guided selling tools.

In isolation, interaction cost and value design do not deliver amazing online experiences.

4. Respect the Fold

The 'Fold' is as important as it was many years ago, but the dynamic has changed.

Though today's consumer is more prone to scrolling, they will only make the effort if they perceive the content below the fold (Diagram 1) will add value to their journey.

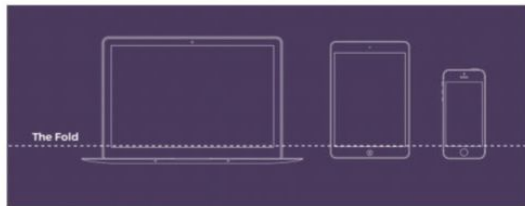


Diagram 1

If meaningful content is above the fold, the assumption is there will be more relevant content down the page.

5. Let data do the decision making

Having access to the right data is an important part of determining what is and what is not working. Use data insights to answer:

- What are you doing right to acquire new customers.
- What are your customers' pain points?
- What are the pain points of the people who come to you but do not end up purchasing?

Insights gathered from #3 will enhance experiences and drive acquisition, partly because consumers are now more loyal to their own needs than to a brand.

This insight drives the focus for 'value design' creation.

6. Apply Best Practice (the 'Science')

The world of eCommerce and digital conduct has been around for 20-plus years, providing a wealth of knowledge for businesses to expedite their digital evolution.

7. Wireframing

The process of translating the experience plan to touchpoints is done through wireframes.

Wireframes are plain boxes guiding page element placement.

Wireframes ensure the integrity of the experience by eliminating the subjective and emotional influences of look and feel.



8. Design 'Consumer First' not 'Mobile First'

The retailer has the ability to leverage varying screen sizes to improve the consumer experience. Key considerations include:

- Simultaneously create wireframes for all touchpoints.
- Consider context (and what experience the consumer is looking for on a particular screen).
- Don't forget about the enlarged monitors which are growing in popularity for desktop.

9. Design experiences for intent driven 'micro-moments'

A 'micro moment' is a consumer's moment of high intent and need for engagement.

Thanks to smartphones, it is nearly impossible to predict where buying intent comes from and when it starts. This makes the world of the retailer very complicated and is why the use of demographics as a proxy for people is not effective.

For example:

Susanne is a happily married mother of two, who drives a four-wheel drive, works part time and lives in a large city.

A beauty retailer would be better to focus on when Susanne runs out of eyeliner and goes online searching for eyeliner products.

10. Be iterative (Continuous Improvement)

Creating amazing online experiences is not a one-off process but includes:

- Data mining, insight gathering and hypothesis creation. Over time, with the right foundation in place, data-driven decision-making becomes the norm.
- Iterative and agile development programming. Many of the decisions require development and technology enhancements. Technology is the enabler for everything. **NZB**



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