

**Best
Practice**

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING AMAZING ONLINE EXPERIENCES

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HAVING A TOP-SHELF DIGITAL EXPERIENCE IS ESSENTIAL IF YOU WANT TO ACQUIRE NEW CUSTOMERS OR TURN EXISTING SHOPPERS INTO REPEAT CUSTOMERS. AN AMAZING ONLINE EXPERIENCE CAN HELP YOU DELIGHT YOUR CUSTOMERS AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS.

Before discussing the 10 principles required to create amazing online experiences, it's important to understand what amazing online experiences look like. To understand this, we will review a great face-to-face physical retail experience.

Consider a scenario where a consumer has buying intent, makes the effort to head to a physical retail store and has a one-to-one interaction:

THE 10 PRINCIPLES

1. CONSUMERS ARE ON A JOURNEY

And these journeys are becoming longer. Consumers want to remain in charge and are becoming more informed before making decisions.

According to a 2013 Google study, consumers on average referenced 12 sources of information online before buying online or in-store. In 2010, the average was five.

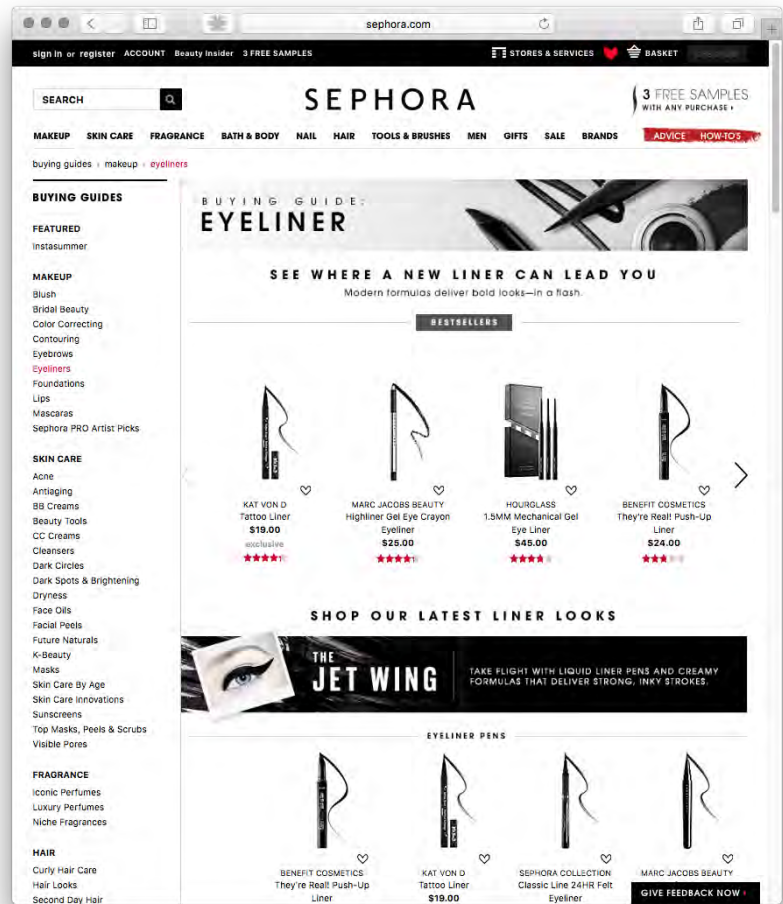
2. EACH JOURNEY COMPRISES MULTIPLE STEPS

These are the actual steps consumers take on their journey. 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). If the presentation of content is relevant, it gives consumers the sense they are moving closer to having their need met.

For the steps to seamlessly flow together, the right actions (or calls to action) should appear at the right times and be obvious.

3. THE FUNCTION OF UX

User experience (UX) plays a critical part, but it is a part of a bigger whole. To understand how UX contributes, it needs to be broken down into two parts: interaction cost and value design.



INTERACTION COST

Interaction cost is the effort required of consumers to undertake each step within their journey. It's made up of two forms of effort: physical and mental.

Physical effort includes clicking, scrolling, swiping, typing and waiting for pages to load.

Mental effort includes consumer confusion, not being able to find relevant information, dealing with content that was not requested (pop-ups), needing to memorize content in order to make a decision (cognitive load).

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

VALUE DESIGN

Value design is the creation and presentation of content to assist consumers in their decision-making process.

For retailers to get this right they must have a firm grasp of a consumer's pain points and when these occur in the journey.

Examples of building extra value include articles, diagrams, videos and guided selling content and tools.

Reducing interaction cost is like a desert highway: it is efficient in moving you from A to B but it is boring.

Value design is like a coastal mountain highway: the scenery is beautiful but it takes longer to get from A to B.

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

- You can reduce interaction cost, but no extra value is being added
- You can create content that contributes to decision-making, but if the experience is confusing or hard to use, consumers will not endure the process

To improve customer experience, these two functions should work together. An example of these two parts coming together can be found at Sephora.

Consumers looking for eyeliner on Sephora are presented with a variety of 'eyeliner looks' along with the products.

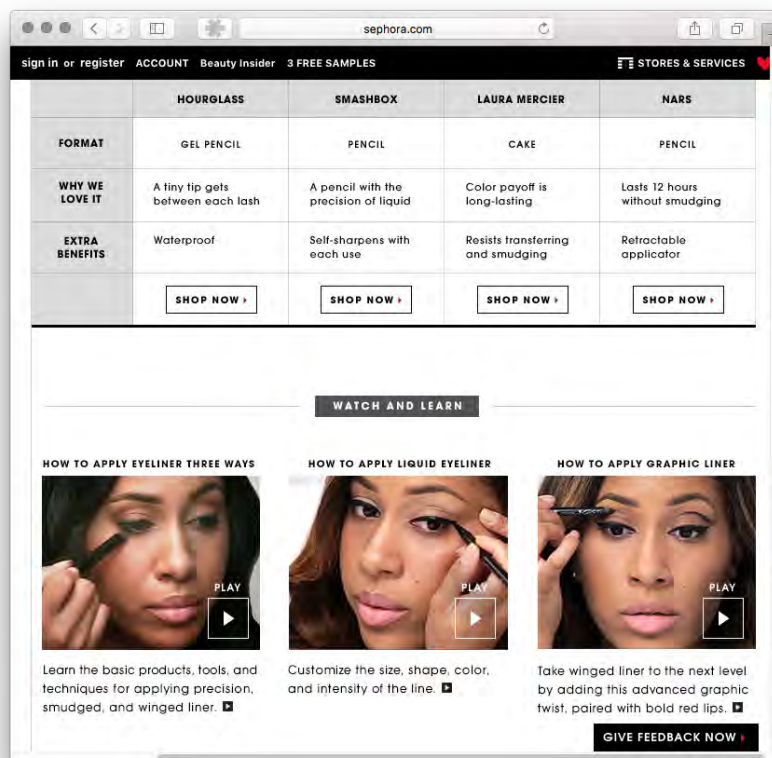
The bottom of the eyeliner category page presents 'How To' videos providing further guidance to those who need it (a potential pain point).

4. RESPECT THE FOLD

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

Though consumers are more prone to scrolling, they will not exert unnecessary effort if they believe the content below the fold will not add value to their journey.

If they view relevant/meaningful content above the fold, the assumption is there will be more relevant content down below the fold.



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. Focus on insights that bring clarity to the following:

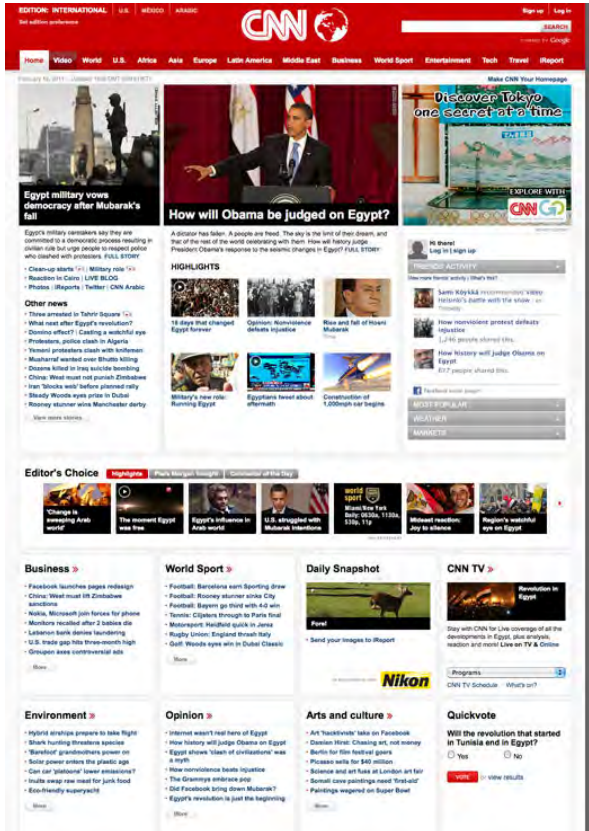
- What is working that turns 'consumers' into 'customers'?
- What is bringing your customers back?
- What are your customer pain points?
- Why are consumers not turning into customers? What are the pain points of the people who come to you but do not end up purchasing?

This final point helps enhance experiences for consumers where their loyalty resides with themselves and their own needs, not with your brand. With consumers becoming less brand loyal, this is a crucial insight.

The depth and understanding of the data translates to a retailer's ability to deliver the right experiences at the right times, driving value design creation.

6. APPLY BEST PRACTICE

There are best practice methodologies, principles and processes for e-commerce, digital strategy and digital conduct. Use them. Digital best practice will expedite a retailer's digital evolution.



7. WIREFRAMING

The first step to translating customer experience designs from planning to touchpoints comes via the use of wireframes.

Wireframes are ugly plain boxes that guide page element placement for all site pages and for all digital touchpoints. Wireframes ensure the integrity of the experience by eliminating the subjective and emotional influences of look and feel.

The impacts of subjective and emotional influences can be felt when businesses translate their online customer experience plans directly to designed visual mock-ups.

Wireframes provide design teams the context they need to visually represent the brand's DNA and bring the plan to life.

8. DESIGN 'CONSUMER FIRST' NOT 'MOBILE FIRST'

Designing for a screen type (such as 'mobile first') introduces two potential risks: the design develops around the wrong focus, making the screen the priority; and it can limit the experience design to other touchpoints.

Instead of applying the experience design plan to the mobile screens and scaling up, do the following:

- Simultaneously create wireframes for all touchpoints
- Consider consumer context
- Leverage the experience capabilities available for all touchpoints

9. DESIGN EXPERIENCES FOR INTENT-DRIVEN 'MICRO-MOMENTS'

Micro-moments is a term used to describe a consumer's moment of high intent and need for engagement.

It is nearly impossible to predict where intent comes from and when it starts. This makes the retail world complicated and is why the use of demographics as a proxy for people is not an effective approach for designing experiences.

Micro-moments are not replacing persona development, they are revolutionising it.

10. BE ITERATIVE

Avoid approaching the online experience design process as a one-off. The iterative continuous improvement discipline comes in two parts:

1. Data mining, insight gathering and hypothesis creation. This is the part everyone talks about and is crucial. Over time, with the right foundation in place, data-driven decision-making becomes the norm.
2. Iterative and agile development programming. This is the part no one talks about. Technology is the enabler for everything. All principles are powerless unless they have the right technology as the enabler.

Swannndri and eStar

Working together to deliver brand success

The Challenge

Swannndri was constructing a digital strategy with a purpose to build direct connectivity to Swannndri customers. The strategic plan was a big one and had many moving parts. The first challenge was to find an eCommerce technology that would support these new initiatives.

The Solution

When Swannndri presented the strategy, the eStar team immediately understood what Swannndri was trying to achieve. eStar's experiences with large apparel retailers plus their knowledge of how to translate the Swannndri strategy across the eStar eCommerce technology made Swannndri's decision to partner-up an easy one.

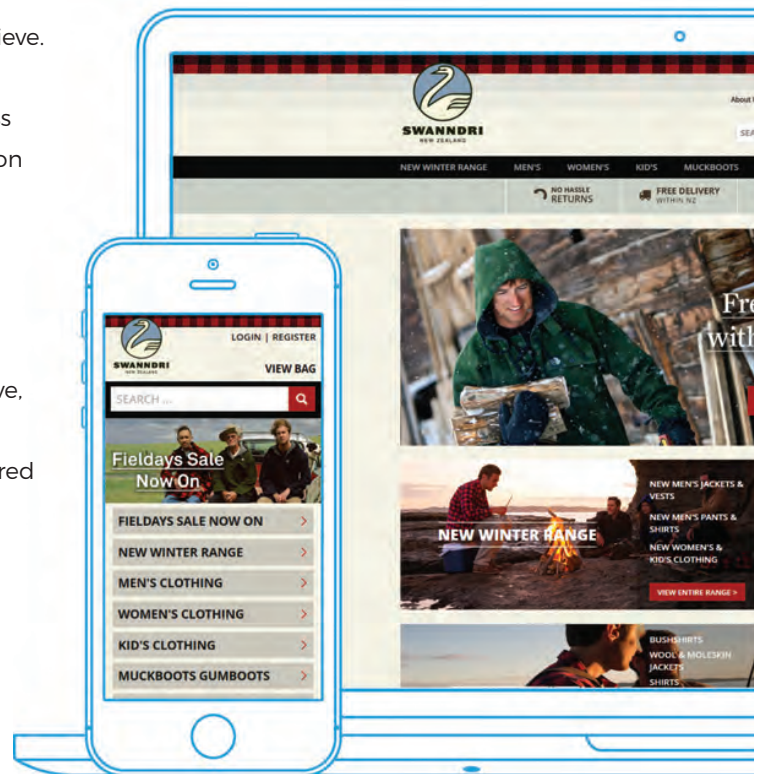
The Results

After the first six months of the new Swannndri site going live, the business impacts of what Swannndri and eStar worked together on became very clear (these numbers are compared against the same period from the previous year):

- Consumer engagement grew by 107%
- Transactions grew by 135%
- Online revenue grew by 160%
- Mobile revenue grew by 2,000%
- Mobile conversion rates grew by 200%

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We went to eStar looking for help in implementing our direct to consumer strategy. They came back with a great offer, access to their design team, and eCommerce functionality to support our strategy.

Angela Lee - Head of eCommerce and Social Swannndri



To read the full case study go to www.estaronline.com > Resources

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