RESULTICKS

The Resulticks Omnichannel
Readiness Bootcamp

REAL-TIME MARKETING:
A PRIMER
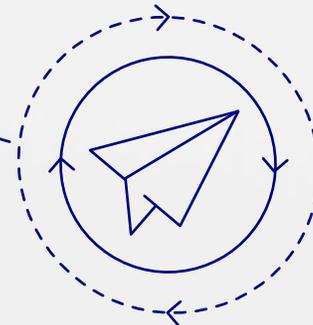
Introduction

Accustomed to seamless experiences, empowered by the immediacy of their mobile devices, and expecting instant gratification, consumers have no patience for delayed responses and slow deliveries. Businesses, in turn, seem locked in a race against time, pressured to keep up with the restless, omnichannel customer, pushing their systems to the limits to interact immediately.

The imperative to conduct business in real time is real. Combined with advancing technology, it has dwindled the tolerable time for a response from minutes to seconds, and now, to milliseconds.

But here's the thing: **Real-time marketing doesn't always mean "now".**

Speed isn't everything

Distilled to its essence, real-time marketing means consistently delivering contextualised interactions for every customer at just the right moment and through the most appropriate channel.

Sure, instant responses, like post-purchase thank-you messages or location-specific push notifications, can be part of the mix.

But being in the moment shouldn't translate to harrying customers with ceaseless, manic communications that kickstart the instant they interact with the brand. Contacting the customer at the right time doesn't necessarily amount to real-time marketing. Even a delayed response could be much more valuable in some scenarios.
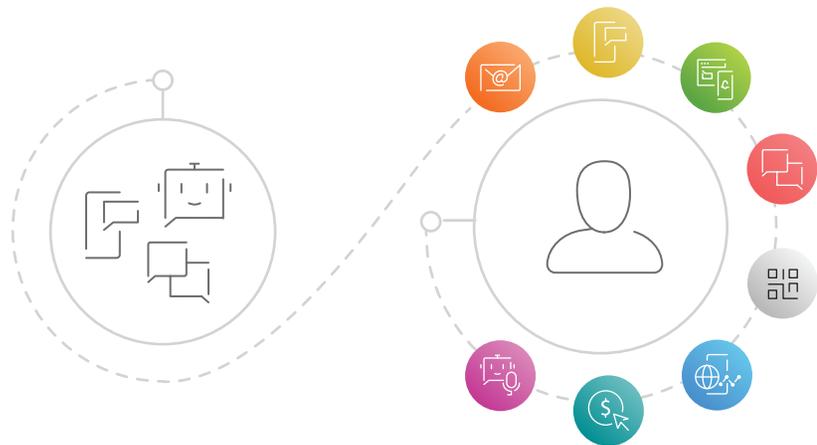
Real-time marketing isn't limited to social media, chatbots, or mobile phones either. While consumers have come to expect instant exchanges on these channels, brands must weave all relevant channels into a seamless journey.

Finding your real-time zone

Real-time marketing needs to align with each business' objectives. It must also reflect the needs, preferences, inclinations, and evolving journeys of its customers, and account for changing trends.

One thing is clear, however: Real-time marketing is both complicated and increasingly essential for businesses of all stripes. In fact, a recent Resulticks study of enterprise omnichannel readiness in Southeast Asia found that 65 percent of businesses say real-time marketing is the priority for them in 2019. This underscores the fact that as companies undergo more intensive digital transformations, the concept of real-time interactions among consumers, businesses, and communities will become a given globally.

So, how do businesses that haven't yet begun, start to lay the groundwork for real-time marketing? And, for those already on the real-time pathway, what resources, strategies, and solutions should they embrace to ensure the best outcomes?

This primer addresses those questions. Though by no means an exhaustive guide, it aims to highlight several areas that demand attention—data consolidation and integration, individualisation and security, and context and relevance. It also offers some practical guidance for making real-time real.
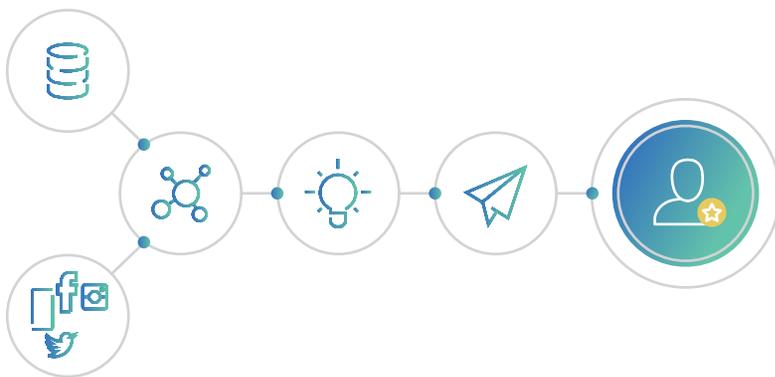
Establish a robust data foundation

When it comes to real-time marketing, or any advanced marketing efforts for that matter, having the right data is paramount. Simply gathering more data is not the point. Finding data that will guide and optimise marketing efforts and specific interactions with today's diverse consumers is.

The challenge, however, for too many businesses is three-fold:

1) a seemingly overwhelming volume of data, 2) data that is scattered across silos, and 3) manual processes and/or legacy systems

that diminish the full power because they can't process the volume and granularity of data efficiently and effectively.

Businesses, therefore, must make sure they have the data management capabilities and technology to actually go real-time. For example, if a business cannot act on website behaviour data, which must be processed in real time and at scale, it will lose valuable opportunities for engagement and most likely impede conversions. And because potentially thousands of opportunities are at stake, wasting them can result in significant losses.

However, it's not enough to just process data, it's also critical to unify it. Linking relevant attributes to individual customer profiles will help brands recognise each individual across multiple touch points and deliver responses relevant to every specific moment.

Be it **demographics, behaviour, psychographics, transactions, audience propensities, or emotions**, businesses should consolidate different attributes from existing sources into a robust data foundation. By constantly enriching this base with new data gathered from ongoing interactions, marketers can develop a single, comprehensive customer view that yields deep insights into each individual.

Too much data isn't always the problem, of course. Many businesses are held back by insufficient or incomplete data. To expand the customer view beyond the most basic attributes, data-starved businesses will have to design and run campaigns that will yield additional data and increase their audience intelligence.

Balance speed and personalisation with trust and security

Just because brands can execute interactions in milliseconds doesn't mean they should. Consumers can't stand being bombarded with unwanted information. That underscores the importance of securing consent and demonstrating a sufficient level of knowledge about what types of communications each customer prefers—as well as when and where they'd be most inclined to receive them.

Marketers should also tread carefully the line between the individualised and the alarming. While consumers do expect tailored interactions with brands, most would shudder to see overly personal information revealed in marketing communications. Researching best industry practices and sustaining a productive dialogue with its audience can heighten a brand's sensitivity to the messages it sends.

As businesses scale operations and adopt more robust solutions to execute real-time marketing, they must also ensure their security readiness relating to data, infrastructure, system, application, and network. It's also crucial to implement rigorous encryption and obfuscation of customer data, whether in storage, in transit, or even on display.

In insurance and banking industries, which face more regulations, a pure cloud solution might not be the safest choice. A better alternative would be a solution that offers a hybrid deployment option, one that hosts critical customer data on premises but still enables the advantages of cloud-based marketing automation.

These are only a few of the areas where security readiness is needed. A comprehensive approach to customer data security will not only help businesses comply with regulations, but it will also sustain the hard-earned trust of their customers.

Design relevant customer journeys that evolve in real-time
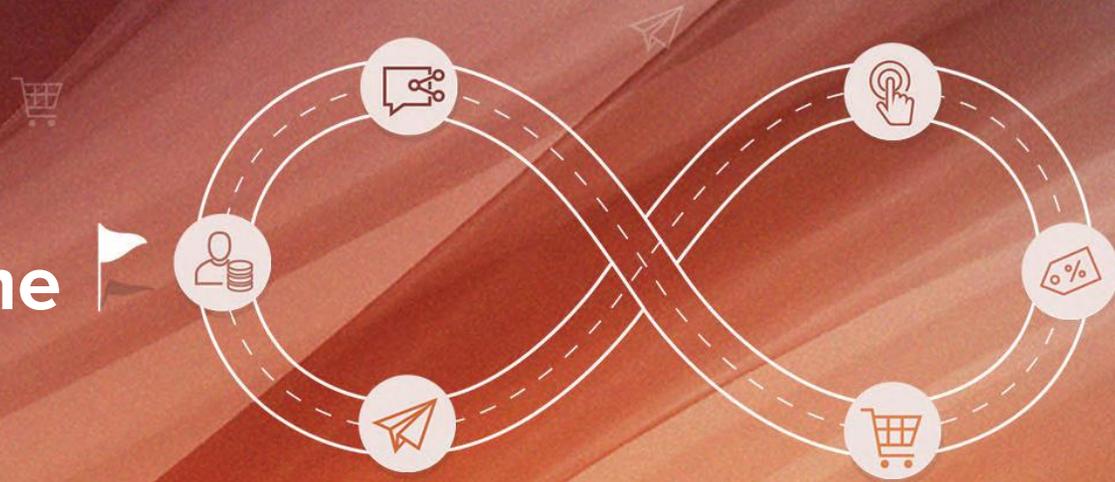
Clearly, real-time marketing is not an exercise in spontaneity.

Maximising its impact requires combining sophisticated journey mapping with the dynamic ability to contextually adjust interactions in real time.

Sending a message at a predetermined, critical time is just table stakes. Customers expect a seamless, ever-evolving journey across touch points. That means every interaction should be individually relevant and delivered through the right channel at precisely the right moment. It's no easy feat, but the rewards—faster conversions, increased revenue, enhanced customer loyalty, and more—are well worth the extra effort.

That extra effort involves identifying the full range of critical audience actions and events and then mapping multidimensional customer journeys that dynamically change course in response to customer behaviour. This, of course, also requires the ability to identify each individual customer across multiple touch points.

With every encounter, the brand must instantly recognize the individual with whom it's interacting. Failing this will not only limit the brand--at best--to executing a broadly targeted, generic response, but also squander a precious chance to enrich that individual customer's profile and make the next interaction even better.

An omnichannel rules engine can help businesses execute dynamic customer journeys at scale. The engine governs the type, frequency, and content of responses to potentially every interaction across different channels with individual customers. Operating according to "if-then" rules, the engine recognises customer actions in real time and prioritises the rules based on individual's audience type, communication frequency, propensity, transactions, and more. It then triggers an automated, highly relevant, contextual response to facilitate the customer's ongoing journey and to maximise the end results for the business—all in real-time.

10 Tips for your real-time marketing success

1
Set specific, actionable goals for adopting real-time marketing, and make sure to connect them to revenue goals. This will support your attribution efforts later.

2
Define what real time means for your business. What will work best for your target audiences and eventually, individual customers?

3
Identify a set of scenarios where real-time responses are needed. Then set appropriate businesses rules to define real-time communications based on specific customer contexts and needs.

4
Assess your technology gaps. Can your data infrastructure handle streaming data and scale to accommodate growth? Is processing engine robust enough to support real-time communications across channels?

5
Before you begin, ensure that all your data sources are consolidated so data is always available and actionable. Also, develop utilities and dashboards that will trigger internal notifications and alerts to manage exceptions.

6
Do test runs in selected scenarios to identify and fix glitches in user flows and improve technology readiness accordingly. Gradually roll out pilot programs using these scenarios as they become more ready.

7
Gather customer data from every real-time interaction. Then run data you've collected through your modelling and analytics engines to extract insights, stream-line your processes, and optimise business rules and data follows.

8
Monitor key metrics to determine which real-time interactions yield the greatest returns. Use your findings to fine-tune responses and audience journeys so that ROI is maximised.

9
Extend the scope and application of real-time scenarios to, for example, accommodate environmental data such as weather. Utilise machine learning and AI capabilities to execute advanced interactions such as dynamic offers, next-best action recommendations, and intent-based responses.

10
Always stay updated on your customers, their evolving habits, and relevant shifting trends. Hone your real-time marketing strategy so it is always evolving, and better still, a step ahead of the curve.

About Resulticks

Built from the ground up by marketers for marketers, Resulticks is a real-time conversation cloud enabled by the world's first marketing data blockchain. With its big data-driven, AI-powered, omnichannel approach, Resulticks is changing the marketing automation landscape worldwide. Resulticks global presence includes the United States, India, Australia, and Asia.

For more information, visit

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