Individualized E-Commerce
GREAT EXAMPLES OF REAL-TIME PERSONALIZATION
It’s common to think about the shopping experience on your site as a journey. You want to help guide shoppers along that journey from the homepage to your category pages, to your product detail pages (PDPs), and to checkout. But the truth is that real shoppers don’t uniformly flow through your website. Each shopper’s individual journey is unique. And each shopper has unique interests, attributes and behaviors.

You need to approach personalization in a different way. Think about each point of interaction on your site and how you can help each shopper achieve his or her goals at each point along the way. Personalize the homepage, PDPs, category pages, and more based on everything you know about each person. This will allow you to create a relevant, individualized e-commerce experience for every shopper.

In this eBook, we’ll walk through the key challenges and solutions for optimizing each customer’s e-commerce journey. And we’ll provide examples of how to best leverage real-time personalization each step of the way.
The Homepage

The goals for your homepage are varied. You want to inspire new visitors while still being relevant to repeat visitors, enable quick navigation to other parts of your site and, ultimately, drive purchases. With personalization, you can make sure each visitor receives a relevant experience to encourage deeper exploration of the site, lowering your homepage bounce rate and improving engagement.

TAILOR YOUR HOMEPAGE TO DIFFERENT PERSONAS

CHALLENGE

Deciding what to feature on your homepage can be a struggle. You need to immediately capture the attention of your visitors, but how can you pick one experience or offer to promote in such an important area of your site? Many sites opt to promote a “lowest common denominator” offer or present multiple different experiences in a homepage carousel.

SOLUTION

Show your visitors that you know them by displaying a relevant experience on the homepage based on what you know about each person. Target different geo-locations with different homepage content, feature each shopper’s favorite category, or tailor content to the visitor’s persona – just to mention a few ideas. By catching the attention of each shopper immediately, you lower the risk of bounce and improve your chances of visitors sticking around to explore the site.

With its diverse shoe categories, Shoeline.com has many different types of shoppers with unique needs. The company delivers personalized homepage experiences to visitors based on their preferred categories. For example, a shopper who has engaged with the nursing shoe category may see a nursing-specific homepage hero and call-to-action. These experiences have resulted in clickthrough rates up to 26%.
ENCOURAGE EXPLORATION OF FAVORITE BRANDS

**CHALLENGE**
Many retailers offer a wide variety of brands on their website, and it’s often impossible to ensure that shoppers find their favorites. What if they don’t realize you offer a particular brand and leave your site to find it somewhere else? What if they aren’t swayed by the brands you do show?

**SOLUTION**
When shoppers engage with your site, they tell you their favorite brands with their behavior (the time they spend looking at each brand, the brands they purchase, etc.). So when featuring brands on your homepage (or elsewhere across your site), make sure you show each shopper the brands they prefer to encourage them to explore.

Marketers can select and sort the brands highlighted on the homepage based on shopper behavior. Brands that shoppers have engaged with most, or brands that are most similar to their preferred brands, are featured prominently on the homepage. Each shopper sees a different assortment of featured brands depending on their behavior on the site.
PROMOTE THE RIGHT DEALS

CHALLENGE
At any given time, an e-commerce site may be offering many different promotions. You don’t want to overwhelm the site with all the latest deals, and you don’t want to waste an opportunity to drive a conversion by showing a shopper an irrelevant deal instead of something meaningful.

SOLUTION
Leverage personalization to determine which promotions are relevant to different shoppers and make the most use of the space on your homepage. If a long-time shopper regularly engages with one category on the site, show her promotions in that category — rather than a category she has not shown interest in before.

Academy Sports+Outdoors personalizes the promotions it features on the homepage. For example, visitors who have engaged with deer hunting equipment will see the deer hunting promotion, but visitors who have never expressed an interest in deer hunting will see another, more relevant promotion.
**CHALLENGE**
You can learn a lot about your visitors from their actions on your site, but you can’t learn everything. How can you engage new visitors to your site to ensure they find personalized product recommendations immediately? How can you encourage them to continue exploring your site?

**SOLUTION**
Sometimes the best approach to learning more about your shoppers is just to ask them. Leverage survey questions at the right time to learn more about your customers and use that information to personalize their experience across the site.

With its flash sale model and large catalog of products, Rue La La wants to help new members find products that will appeal to them quickly. It provides a survey to new members to learn more about their style preferences. Once the survey is completed, Rue La La sends them to a personalized boutique of products that match the preferences uncovered in the survey.
The goal for your category pages is pretty straightforward: help shoppers find products they may want to purchase — and do it quickly so they don’t move on to another site. To accomplish this goal, you need to make the best use of the real estate you have on each category page, and make sure that each product, sub-category or promotion featured is relevant to each individual viewing the page. That’s a lot to ask of a category page, but it’s possible with personalization.

LEVERAGE PERSONALIZED MESSAGES

CHALLENGE
As with most pages of your site, when a shopper lands on a category page, you want to capture her attention quickly. How can you make sure she has a relevant and meaningful experience on a category page?

SOLUTION
Typically, category pages aren’t the first place marketers think about for personalized messages. But a well-placed message can demonstrate that you understand your shoppers, and it can encourage them to keep shopping. Consider what specific messages you can share on your category pages — targeted at segments or individuals — that will provide value to your shoppers.

Academy uses geo-targeting to display a relevant message on category pages to shoppers in specific locations. As a sports and outdoor retailer, geolocation is an important variable in determining which sports team a shopper may support. Academy displays subtle inline messages to provide these relevant and unobtrusive messages to shoppers.
RECOMMEND RELEVANT SUBCATEGORIES

CHALLENGE
It’s a little known fact that the categories you promote across your website are a great opportunity for you to be relevant to your shoppers in a subtle way. If a shopper is on the category page for “shoes,” she may be looking to browse a specific subcategory, like “casual” or “ankle boots.” How can you help her browse these subcategories quickly and easily?

SOLUTION
Recommendations aren’t just for products. Make the most use of your category pages by highlighting the subcategories that are most relevant to each shopper to guide them to products that will interest them.

This site has a highly visual section on its category pages that it uses to recommend subcategories to shoppers. Each individual sees a different selection of subcategories depending on his or her preferences and behaviors across the site.
“Social proof” is a great tactic to alleviate purchase anxiety and encourage shoppers to convert. But the most common forms of social proof (ratings, reviews and Q&As) require an input from your shoppers. That means that you may not always have as much social validation for your products as you’d like.

Real-time counters of the number of shoppers who have viewed or purchased a product each day are a powerful (and easy) way to enhance the effectiveness of reviews or fill in gaps where reviews are missing. They can alleviate some purchase anxiety and encourage conversion.

Ashley Stewart displays a real-time counter of shoppers who have viewed products each day to provide social proof and create subtle urgency to purchase.
CHALLENGE

Most e-commerce sites sort products on the category page or search results pages according to generic “relevance,” typically giving shoppers the ability to sort by recency or price. But if a shopper doesn’t see something that interests her on the first page of the search results, you risk her leaving the site to find something relevant elsewhere.

SOLUTION

Sort products by their actual relevance to each individual instead. Leverage each person’s preferences for certain brands, colors, styles, price ranges, and more to show the products most likely to interest them. The faster you can show relevant products to your shoppers, the more likely they will be to keep shopping on the site.

In this example, products on the category pages are sorted based on each shopper’s intent and preferences. Products more likely to appeal to each shopper based on their engagement, brand affinity, styles, sizes, geography, gender, price sensitivity, etc. are placed higher on the page. This minimizes the time it takes for shoppers to find products that interest them.
Your shoppers can arrive at your product detail pages (PDPs) from any number of places. No matter how they got there, your main goal is to ensure that the PDP is not the last page they view on your site. If this is the first page they’ve landed on, you want to provide them with something that catches their eye immediately. And even if it isn’t their first page, you want to ensure they keep clicking through your site, rather than close the tab (or, better yet, decide to purchase the product they’re viewing!).

PROVIDE QUICK ACCESS TO SIMILAR PRODUCTS

**CHALLENGE**

Product recommendations are nothing new to e-commerce marketers, but one of the toughest challenges they face is making sure their recommendations are relevant and effective. How can you make sure the products you show your shoppers will get their attention?

**SOLUTION**

Know what matters to your customers. Taking product popularity (most viewed, most purchased) into account is important, but you should also consider an individual’s affinities and preferences based on the time they spend and level of engagement they exhibit with particular brands, categories, styles, etc. – along with their purchase history, location and inventory levels – to create product recommendations that are unique and highly targeted to that person. Cookie-cutter algorithms are a thing of the past; retail marketers can now have total control of what products are being shown to their customers.

Zumiez delivers personalized product recommendations based on each shopper’s affinity and in-the-moment intent in its “You Might Also Like” section. With these personalized recommendations, Zumiez has seen a 4x increase in engagement and a 2.7x increase in conversions.
HELP SHOPPERS FIND COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCTS

**CHALLENGE**

Most retailers have products that pair well together. A shopper looking for a dress may be interested in shoes and other accessories to go with that dress. A visitor looking at leaf rakes may also be interested in paper lawn bags. But not all products are created equal in shoppers’ minds. They each have their own preferences for brands, styles, colors, etc.

**SOLUTION**

Show recommendations for complementary products on your PDPs that go beyond the traditional “shoppers who bought this also bought” model. Use the individual preferences of each shopper to create one-to-one recommendations that not only pair well with the product being viewed, but also align with each individual’s affinities.

In this example, a visitor is offered “complete the look” recommendations on the PDP to help her find complementary products. However, the recommendations are not generic; they are tailored to the shopper’s individual tastes.
Personalized experiences don’t have to end once the shopper gets to the cart. You can use this opportunity to encourage the shopper to complete the checkout and even increase basket size. Personalization can help ensure that each shopper has a unique cart experience that drives him or her toward conversion.

CROSS-SELL WITHIN THE CART

CHALLENGE
When you want to grow revenue, you can increase the number of conversions on your site or you can grow the average order value. Driving shoppers to the cart is an important step toward conversion, but don’t forget that you can increase order value while they’re there.

SOLUTION
It’s never too late to provide additional recommendations. As a shopper is proceeding to the checkout page, recommend other items the visitor may also like. Be creative with the types of products you recommend. Display products the visitor has engaged with during the session, products from the shopper’s favorite brands, or products that pair well with the items in the cart.

This site adds complementary products to its cart page to grow basket size. It leverages the “customers who viewed this item also liked” model, but includes product recommendations that consider each visitor’s preferences and intent.
INCREASE BASKET SIZE WITH PERSONALIZED INCENTIVES

**CHALLENGE**

The cost of shipping has been cited as the top reason for cart abandonment among shoppers. Once visitors arrive at the cart page, they’re making their final decisions about whether they want to pay all the costs associated with their purchase. What can you do to motivate the customer to make the purchase?


**SOLUTION**

Use personalized messages or recommendations to alleviate shipping concerns and encourage shoppers to pull the trigger. Recommend products (relevant to each individual, of course) that can be purchased at no additional shipping cost or that the shopper can add to the cart to qualify for free shipping. You could even remind the shopper of any outstanding credits or loyalty points. Just make sure the message or offer is relevant and timed appropriately.

This site adds an inline message to its cart page to recommend a relevant product to its shoppers at no additional shipping cost. The message is inserted seamlessly into the webpage, helping increase order value, like an online version of an impulse purchase.
Other Places on the Site

Customer experiences aren’t usually limited to a single point of interaction on your site. Whether you’re providing a search function from any page, asking for email addresses, or providing an easy way for shoppers to return to their favorite products, personalization should be considered across all experiences.

PERSONALIZE SEARCH FOR EVERY VISITOR

CHALLENGE

Visitors who use the search bar on your site are incredibly valuable, because they’re telling you exactly what they’re looking for. But most e-commerce sites make shoppers type something into the search bar, navigate to a search results page, and then scroll through the results until they find something that catches their eye. When it takes too long to get to a relevant search result, you risk losing the shopper’s interest.

SOLUTION

Shorten the process by providing relevant search results directly in the search bar itself. But don’t display just any search results – tailor them to the preferences of each shopper. Show them the brands, colors, genders, price ranges, etc. that they prefer so they’ll be more likely to click through and keep shopping.

Zumiez offers recommendations directly in its search bar, completely customized for each shopper based on their behavior on the site. For example, a shopper looking for “shoes” could see women’s shoes from Vans based on the products she has engaged with most on the site.
CHALLENGE
On most sites, shoppers rely on the back button to navigate back to products they viewed in their current session. When it takes multiple visits for a shopper to convert, how do you offer easy navigation that enables visitors to find the products they are most interested in?

SOLUTION
Present each shopper with a customized list of products they’ve recently viewed, sorted based on what they’ve spent the most time viewing in the current session and over time. This “shopping companion” enables visitors to quickly access their recently viewed products prioritized by their level of interest. This tactic provides visitors with quick navigation back to the products they are most inclined to purchase.

Shoeline.com provides a “recently viewed” tab on the right side of the screen that is pervasive across the entire website. This tab allows shoppers to find the products they have engaged with most in the past or current session, and even lets them quickly find the products they previously purchased so they can find their favorites easily.
DRIVE CONVERSIONS WITH CARRY-THROUGH MESSAGING

**CHALLENGE**

E-commerce companies lost an estimated $4.6 trillion worth of merchandise to abandoned carts in 2016, so it’s no surprise that cart abandonment or exit pop-up messages have become a must-have tactic for retailers. But they’re often treated as a last-ditch effort to keep a shopper on the site, with little personalization and no tie-in to the rest of the site experience.


**SOLUTION**

Cart reminder messages can definitely catch someone’s attention, but they are even more impactful when they contain highly relevant content or offers. Use them, for example, to remind visitors of any special incentives they’re eligible for to encourage conversion and provide a cohesive experience across the site.

This site provides personalized cart abandonment messages to its shoppers, but it takes it a step further than other retailers. When it offers a promotion to cart abandoners, it carries that message throughout the site, along with an image of the product left in the cart, to remind shoppers of their additional purchase incentive, with a timer to create urgency.
CAPTURE EMAIL ADDRESSES AT THE RIGHT TIME

CHALLENGE
Most e-commerce websites have email capture pop-ups targeting visitors when they immediately arrive on the site, which are almost always dismissed. Instead, why not ask for a visitor’s email when she actually start engaging with your brand?

SOLUTION
After a minimum number of page views or time on site, give engaged visitors an incentive for providing their email address. For example, create a sense of urgency by setting a “today only” promotional deadline. Or highlight the brand benefits of becoming a member of your loyalty program. This message can be extremely valuable for building a relationship with your potential customers to help drive conversions and more repeat purchases.

Zumiez provides first-time visitors with an email prompt that, rather than uses a discount incentive, focuses on the unique benefits of being “on the list.” Since introducing the campaign, Zumiez has seen a 55% increase in the number of people signing up for its email list.
Email & Mobile

Personalization isn't just limited to your website. Your email campaigns and mobile experience should deliver the same level of personalization as your website. In these channels, you want to enhance your ongoing relationship with your customers, create consistency across touchpoints and, of course, facilitate product discovery.

PERSONALIZE EMAILS IN REAL TIME

CHALLENGE
When personalizing the content of your emails, timing matters. A lot can change from when you send an email to when it’s opened – a product can go out of stock, the price could change or the recipient may have already purchased it. An email that isn’t relevant is a missed opportunity to engage a customer.

SOLUTION
When sending product recommendations or other content to your customers, make sure that the email messages are individually relevant – not when you send it but when it is opened! Make real-time updates when circumstances change so that the recipient always receives the most up-to-date information and offers.

Marketers can send emails to their customers that include personalized recommendations. These recommendations should be updated at open time to reflect changes in inventory or price, remove products that have already been purchased, and show the most up-to-date recommendations that match each customer’s interests and intent.
CREATE PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES ON MOBILE DEVICES

**CHALLENGE**

More than a third of consumers say they expect their mobile apps and websites to be more personalized over the next three years. Yet while marketers are making strides in their website personalization initiatives, mobile is sometimes an afterthought.

Sitecore, “How to Keep Pace with Consumer Expectations,” conducted by Vanson Bourne. May 2016.

**SOLUTION**

Consider how your mobile shoppers use their devices and target them with personalized messages at the right time. While you should leverage all of the techniques already outlined in this eBook (such as one-to-one recommendations and carry-through messaging), you should create uniquely mobile experiences as well.

Rue La La creates personalized experiences across its mobile website and mobile app, reminding shoppers about outstanding credits, free shipping, and more. In one example, Rue La La recognizes iPhone users on their website and encourages them to download the mobile app if they haven’t already.
DELIVER CONSISTENT MESSAGING ACROSS CHANNELS

CHALLENGE
Retailers often treat a shopper as a different person on different channels. But when you’re trying to build a relationship with your shoppers, the first step is to recognize them no matter which channel they use. After all, each interaction will impact their overall impression of and satisfaction with your brand.

SOLUTION
The ability to unify your customer data across systems and platforms is critical to providing a great customer experience regardless of channel. When your data is unified, you can keep your messaging consistent across your website and mobile experience to remind visitors of abandoned carts, ongoing sales, outstanding loyalty points or credits, and more.

By sharing data across platforms, Publishers Clearing House (PCH) is able to keep its personalized messages consistent across its several websites and across mobile and desktop. With its cross-platform, individualized reminder messages, PCH generated over $1 million in incremental revenue in just a 90-day period.
About Evergage

Evergage’s real-time personalization platform delivers The Power of 1, enabling digital marketers to transform the dream of 1:1 customer engagement into reality. Combining in-depth behavioral analytics and customer data with advanced machine learning, Evergage provides the one platform you need to systematically understand and interact with each person that visits your site or uses your app – one at a time, “in the moment” and at scale – to deliver a maximally relevant, individualized experience.

Contact Evergage at 888-310-0589 to speak to an expert about your needs today!