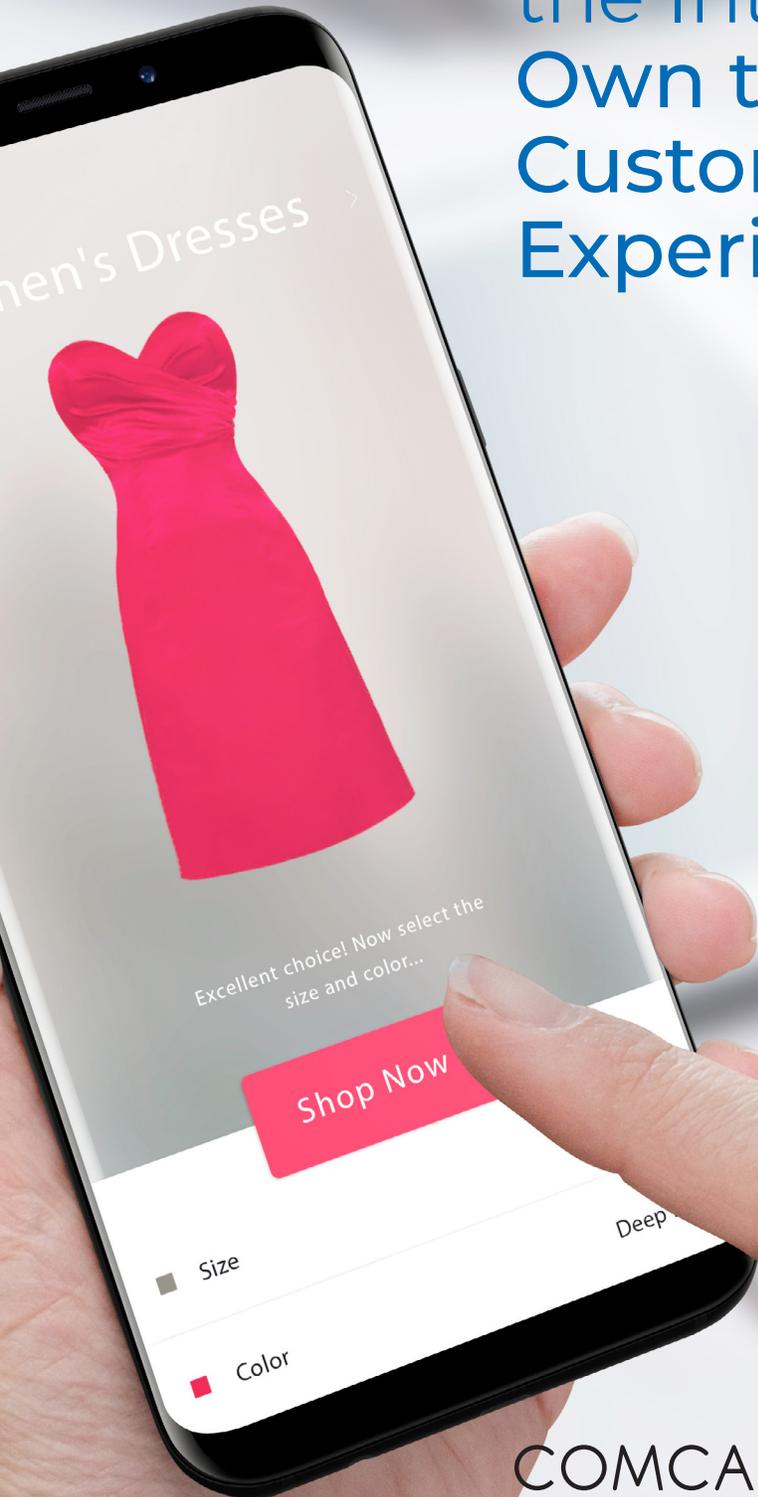


Leverage  
the Internet to  
Own the  
Customer  
Experience



COMCAST  
**BUSINESS**  

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BEYOND FAST

# Leverage the Internet to Own the Customer Experience

Channel your energy into the right platforms to create a stronger bond with customers—and stronger prospects for success.

## Internet Commandment #1: Know Thy Customer's Online Habits

Are you and your customers using the Internet the same way? Tracking shifts in ecommerce and social media patterns can help you to identify opportunities to engage more productively and profitably with your customers. This can be especially valuable for owners of small and mid-sized businesses who have limited time to invest in staying abreast of all available Internet platforms and channels. By learning where and how your customers and prospects spend time online, you can narrow your focus to the strategies most likely to produce the results you seek.



To begin, you need to recognize the growing dominance of mobile devices. Studies have found that beginning in 2016, more people accessed the Internet via smartphones and tablets than from laptops or desktops. They're doing business that way, too: during the third quarter of 2017, "23 percent of all digital e-commerce dollars were spent via mobile devices," [Statista reports](#). That's why it's no longer enough to create a website that's mobile-friendly. Internet business strategists now recommend designing for mobile and retrofitting the mobile architecture to laptop/desktop needs.

But your website is just one component of your Internet presence. You need a mix of social media activity, as well, and to engage productively on those channels, you need to know who spends time there—and why.

In its [Social Media Use in 2018](#) study, the Pew Research Center reports that 88 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds use social media. That rate drops to 78 percent for ages 30 to 49, 64 percent for ages 50 to 64, and 37 percent for those 65 and older. That's a good indicator of how important it is to integrate social media into your Internet strategy. But Nicole Barth and Roberto González Rey, co-founders and co-Creative Directors of digital creative agency Ronik, caution against trying to "be everywhere" and simply replicating the same information across all social media.



"It's futile to blast out that same simultaneous message," Barth says. "If you have customers who are following you on more than one channel, you're losing an opportunity. And you're not using each platform for what it does best. There's knowing where your audience hangs out. There's also knowing the breadth of your audience and talking to each part of it in the right way."

## Reimagine Your Online Presence

Social media posts are your best opportunity to interact with customers in real time. Twitter provides a platform for announcing news or sharing brief thoughts on a topic that's trending. Facebook posts can offer snippets—teasers—that drive traffic to full posts on your website's blog. "Then the website continues to be relevant and alive," González Rey says. "Google and other web crawlers will rank it higher."



You can also use those platforms to experiment in ways that aren't possible via your website by, for example, asking questions and soliciting input. The responses create an opportunity to do real-time data mining as well as AB and ABCD testing of new branding messages. "If it's compelling and triggers a lot of likes, follows, and re-shares, you can evolve and drive your direction from that," González Rey says.

And according to the Pew study, "roughly three quarters of Facebook users and around six in ten Snapchat and Instagram users visit each site

daily," which means you have the opportunity to tweak messages and get multiple points of feedback from those users in a single day.

Facebook's ad platform can perform a similar role in refining and targeting advertising, Barth notes. "You can direct sponsored content toward particular users, AB test your ads, and see metrics on how well your content is doing on Facebook," she says. That data enables you to act on how people are engaging with the content. By contrast, she adds, Instagram encourages greater intimacy with customers and prospects by allowing brands that "embrace proximity" to "lean in and use more casual conversation," which "lubricates any kind of marketing that follows."

Understanding the function that each platform or channel serves helps you to select those that are best suited to your business and to use them in the most constructive manner. In this way, you don't simply amass followers.

### **Prioritizing Your Social Media Activity**

To identify your company's optimal social media strategy, you need to consider what each channel does best, which demographics each attracts, and how those demographics align with your base of customers and prospects. And the demographic findings reported in the Pew study may surprise you.

What's the most-used channel? If you guessed YouTube rather than Facebook, give yourself a point for social media savvy: 73 percent of adults reported visiting the video platform, while 68 percent are on Facebook. Another surprise? Both sites attract more than half of Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers who are active on social media: 56 percent of survey respondents age 50+ use YouTube, and 55 percent are on Facebook.

At the other end of the demographic spectrum, 94 percent of young adults (ages 18-24) use YouTube; 78 percent use Snapchat (and 71 percent say they visit that channel "multiple times a day"); 71 percent use Instagram; and 45 percent use Twitter.

Tracking these activity levels can help you to identify your company's social media sweet spots and develop content that's appropriate and engaging for your priority platforms.



Rather, you compete more effectively for customers' and prospects time and attention so that you can make real gains in building connections, relationships, and loyalty.

The more engaged people are, the more likely they are to see the content you create as a resource rather than a sales tool. Your audience will be more likely to seek out new blog posts and interact with you following positive or negative experiences with your company. And that feedback can play a critical role in guiding and sustaining your company's growth.

"Social media is an exercise in SEO," Barth says. "That's why it's smart to have a realistic and evolving strategy for social media."

## Lights, Camera, Interaction

Is it time to rethink your perspective on video? Its utility isn't limited to promotion; you can use video to inform, instruct, and connect in new ways with your customers. For example, videos that show buyers how to assemble your products could equip your customers to put them together without draining time and labor resources required to walk individual customers through assembly by phone. Think about what your customers need to know and how video can meet those needs.

And video is more affordable than you may realize, because it can be created through formats that can accommodate any budget. "Still photos with animated titles can be just as impactful as moving video," says Effie award-winning video editor Conor O'Flynn. "By simply animating the still photos, adding some artfully designed titles, with some music, you can create a very compelling visual story."

### Are You Ready for Your Close-up?

If you're considering filming—and starring in—a video, O'Flynn offers these pointers:

- Being on camera is a skill and requires practice, perhaps even media training.
- Don't just write a script and read it. You need to be interviewed on camera by a professional, and then the interview must be professionally edited.
- How convincing, professional, and authentic you sound translated into how believable or effective the video will be.
- Don't expect the filming to be done in a single take. Multiple takes and effective editing help to ensure that you control your message.
- If you don't appear comfortable on camera, high quality still shots may convey a better impression of your company.

Flynn has a background creating 30-second TV commercials. “It’s a timeframe that people are used to viewing. We’ve developed a storytelling technique to be able to tell a complete story within 30 seconds,” he says. Online, companies have experimented with much longer videos—only to discover that people preferred the shorter formats. So, when you’re thinking about video, modest ambitions (like modest budgets) can be effective in engaging the audience.



To test the video waters, start by thinking about the images you already have or can create with the tools on your laptop. Headshots, product photos, and your company’s logo can be “animated” (think, for example, of the way that’s done in Ken Burns films). You can use PowerPoint to create single slides that feature animated text blocks or growth charts. And an editor can pull these together to create a budget-friendly video.

Even soundtracks are affordable via stock music licenses. “That can be done very inexpensively, particularly for web use,” O’Flynn says. “That’s no longer the barrier it was. There’s a lot of good stock music that’s recorded professionally, sounds good, and is already pre-cut to 30- or 60-second pieces that can work very well.”

In addition to adding another dimension to your content strategy, video also has the potential to capture an audience you could miss with just text. Words require more effort from the reader. Conversely, O’Flynn says, “You can engage the passive viewer and give them a lot of information about yourself quickly and compellingly.”

## Building—and Sustaining—Your Community

You may win a percentage of business from new customers who find you via search. But word of mouth, recommendations, and referrals are still most likely to connect you with customers whose expectations align with your product and service standards. And by providing value online, you give your customers reasons to direct others to your Internet platforms and begin to become acquainted with your company. For example, instead of rewarding large or frequent purchases with a discount coupon, send two coupons—one for the customer to use, and another to share.



Similarly, the more reasons you can create to draw people to your website or social media—and encourage their friends to visit—the more opportunities you create to build community and become part of their lives. That takes the relationship to a level beyond purchases and other transactions. “You’re having this conversation,” González Rey says. “You’re allowing the user to communicate with the brand or feel part of the brand.”

With the right strategy, you can create positive impressions not just of the quality of your products and services, but about your company’s integrity and ethics. Barth offers the example of using Instagram photos to show your products’ origins: the working conditions at the factory where they’re produced, for example, or the quality of the ingredients or materials you select.

“A word that’s used a lot today is authenticity, and Instagram and these other channels are allowing these brands to be themselves,” she says. “It’s also an opportunity for brands to create community by living their ethos and exposing their mission. It gives them the opportunity to flesh out the perception that people have of them as more than a transactional company that wants to take your money. And if they demonstrate values that we believe in, then we get close to them for the right reasons.”

Adopting this strategic approach to cultivating your Internet presence strengthens your company by giving it greater insight into customer needs and preferences and more channels for responding effectively to that input. By converting that knowledge into a competitive edge, you position your company to sustain meaningful relationships, genuine loyalty, and the quality of community necessary to promote long-term success.

### Chatbot Checklist: Dos and Don’ts

With all this emphasis on human connection, it may seem counterintuitive to use chatbots to interact with customers. But managed properly, chatbots can be a productive addition to your customer service strategy. Try these tips for developing a positive chatbot experience:

- Clearly label the chatbot link so customers know they won’t be speaking with a real person.
- Make sure customers are aware of their other service options (live chat, email, and phone) so that they can switch gears if the chatbot experience becomes frustrating.
- If chatbots are your after-hours solution, make sure customers know the hours when they can connect with a live representative.
- End the session by asking if the chatbot answered the customer’s questions or provided the solution needed. If the answer is no, review the session transcript to see where there are opportunities for improvement.
- Invite customers to provide feedback on their chatbot experience with your company. Consider offering a promotional coupon in return for their comments.

## Resource Guide

*These online tools can help strengthen the performance of your Internet strategy*

So many platforms. So little time. Small and mid-sized businesses don't have unlimited capacity to invest in social media. You need to identify the channels best suited to your needs and pinpoint a strategy for using them competitively. These resources can help you craft your most productive and profitable approach to your Internet presence.

### General Reading

- [The Basic Social Media Mistakes Most Companies Still Make](#)
- [The Most Successful Brands Focus on Users—Not Buyers](#)
- [Shoppers Need a Reason to Go to Your Store—Other Than Buying Stuff](#)

### Optimizing Use of Social Media

- [SEO vs. Social Media](#)
- [Does Engaging with Customers on Facebook Lead to Better Product Ideas?](#)
- [How to Attract Customers with Facebook](#)
- [Instagram for Business](#)
- [Snapchat for Business](#)
- [How to Get More Twitter Followers](#)

### Video Production

- [14 Video Production Tips to Enhance Quality and Drive Views](#)
- [8 Beginner Tips for Making Professional Looking Videos](#)
- [20 Pre-production Tips to Create Successful Video Content](#)

### Chatbot Strategy

- [Your Customers Still Want to Talk to a Human Being](#)
- [Your 2018 Chatbot Strategy Needs These 4 Levels of Interactions](#)
- [6 Chatbot Marketing Strategies You Need to Use in 2018](#)