

EBOOK

# What in the world is coming next?

Marketing leaders share their predictions for 2021 and beyond.



# We expect even more change and marketing innovation in 2021 and beyond

Last year, our 2020 Marketing Predictions eBook delivered 10 expert insights, but not one of them predicted a global pandemic. In the wake of such an unpredictable event, we have seen abrupt changes and remarkable trends in the marketing landscape. Needless to say, it has been quite a year—one that brought with it lots of change. Virtual events have replaced large, in-person conferences. Online spending has surged as customers have shifted their shopping and purchasing patterns. And 44 percent of all CMOs are looking for ways to do more with less as they struggle with budget cuts and uncertainty.<sup>1</sup>

Adversity breeds innovation, and we're ultimately optimistic about what's to come.

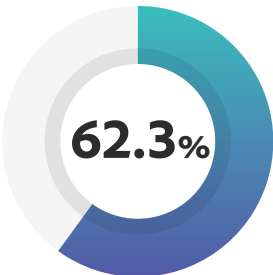
Last year's predictions focused heavily on AI and machine learning, and we have only just begun to explore that realm of possibility. This year, as we continue to adapt to the ever-changing "new normal" brought forth by COVID-19, we've again asked marketing experts from all industries, regions, and backgrounds to weigh in on what they believe lies ahead for marketing.

We hope that these predictions help you to discover new ideas of your own, and ultimately move you and your business forward in 2021 and beyond.

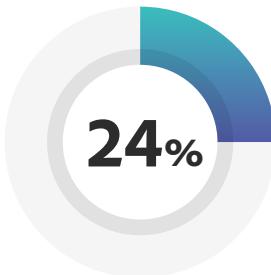
**Please note: The views that follow are those of the highlighted individuals and do not necessarily represent their associated organizations.**

## Marketing during a pandemic

**With the pandemic having demanded so much longer-term adaptation than any of us hoped, marketing leaders are thinking hard about how the marketer's role will evolve<sup>2</sup>:**



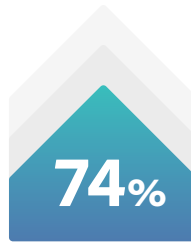
of marketers report that the marketing function has increased in importance.



of marketers do not expect the jobs lost during the pandemic to return.



increase in spending on mobile during the pandemic.

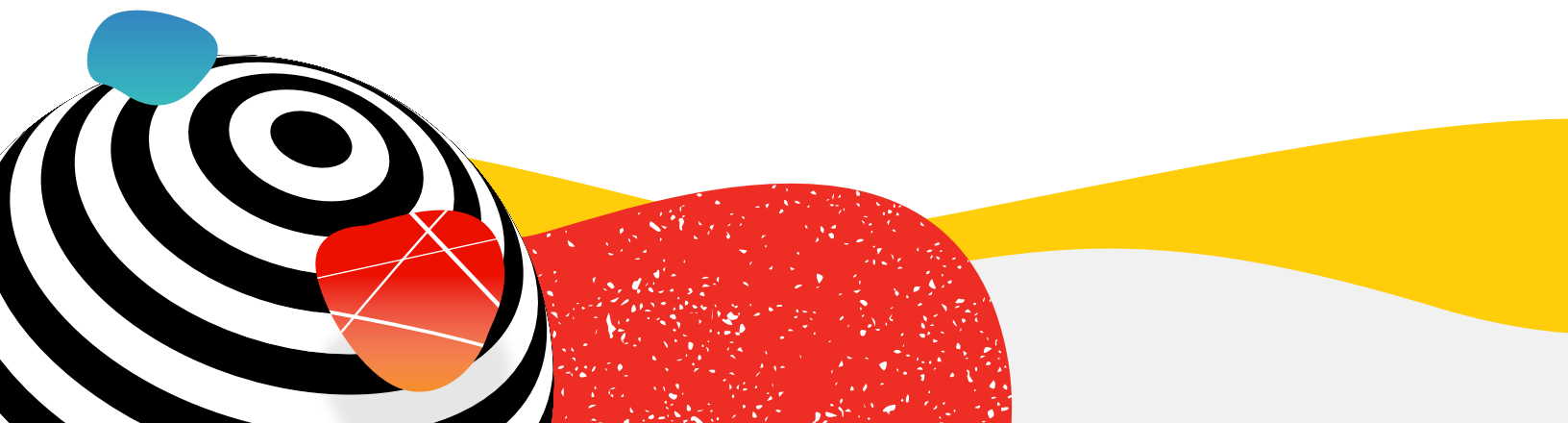


increase in spending on social during the pandemic.

Both are expected to increase further within the next year.

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# The rise of emotionally intelligent marketing

Look at the emotional mindset of customers to determine what's driving market shifts



David Armano

David Armano is a B2B/B2C marketing leader who has helped some of the world's most recognizable brands connect with consumers and customers in ways that drive business and brand value. He's currently working as interim chief marketing officer of Suzy, the leading consumer market research technology that provides brands with human intelligence on demand.

Emotional intelligence is not a new concept. In fact, it's a very old one—but it just might be one of the most valuable tools a modern marketer has in their toolbox as they navigate consumer needs in a post-2020 world.

We're witnessing massive shifts in consumer behavior that pivot and evolve in real time. Peloton, for example has seen sales surge 172 percent since the start of the pandemic<sup>3</sup> while United Airlines reported a 1.6 billion dollar loss in their second quarter.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile 58 percent of consumers polled in a recent survey tell us that they are spending more online while 42 percent have indicated buying more from local/small businesses.<sup>5</sup>

There's no shortage of data points that demonstrate shifts in consumer behavior. But it takes emotional intelligence to understand what's driving that data and how marketing needs to adapt and evolve at the speed of the customer in order to anticipate future needs.

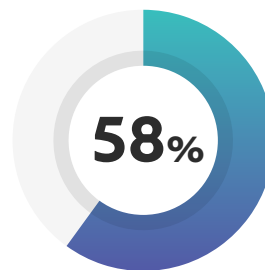
## Consumer behavior in a post-2020 world



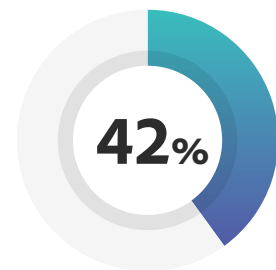
Peloton has seen sales surge 172 percent since the start of the pandemic.



United Airlines reported a 1.6 billion dollar loss in their second quarter.



of consumers are spending more online.



of consumers are buying more from local/small businesses.

## Dig deep to determine what's driving customers

Emotional intelligence gets at the motivators behind what makes people do what they do, choose what they choose, and buy what they buy.

For example, it's easy to understand that people are flying less frequently due to fear of exposure and reduced need for in-person business travel. But it's more complicated to wrap our heads around the new behaviors that come with the needs people will have as they become acquainted or reacquainted with road trips, local travel, supporting a local business, or investing in their homes vs. investing in expensive travel options.

What does this consumer look like one or two years from now? Will they pick back up on pre-pandemic behaviors or continue creating new ones? Emotional intelligence helps us understand the emotional state of mind of the consumer that's driving their behaviors, actions, and of course purchases.

*Psychology Today* defines emotional intelligence as “the ability to manage and identify one's own emotion's as well as the emotion of others.” It is the first part of this definition that probably seems incongruent with business and brand objectives. A business does not have emotions—and this is somewhat accurate.

But it is also this reality that often puts a business at odds or out of sync with the needs of a consumer. If a piece of marketing content—an email communication, ad, or otherwise—does not anticipate the emotional mindset of the consumer, it simply comes off as self-serving and tone deaf.

## Find connections, especially in times of uncertainty

The price of operating as self-serving, tone deaf, or even worse—manipulative may become increasingly high as people deal with uncertainty, change, and anxiety and seek out products, brands, companies, and relationships that enhance their well-being rather than take away from it or take advantage of it.

Peloton promises better physical health while connecting you to a community at a time when you're feeling especially isolated—an emotionally intelligent value proposition that's made at the right place at the right time.

Marketers who find themselves in situations where the value proposition is less relevant or valuable will have to find deeper ways of understanding their customers. And that's emotionally intelligent marketing.

# Bring your store closer to customers

## Three ways to increase your marketing impact in 2021



Jeff Barrett

Jeff Barrett is a Shorty Award winner and was previously named in the Forbes Top 50. He's traveled to over 45 cities writing about start-up ecosystems for Inc and Entrepreneur—of course back when travel was a thing.

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For years I have been providing marketing projections about small market shifts or disruptions of otherwise functioning processes.

And then 2020 happened. It accelerated digital adoption. We essentially moved five years forward in about eight short weeks.<sup>6</sup>

2020 showed us that we can do a lot more things remotely, and it will have far-reaching consequences in some industries, and very little impact in others. It's not a catch-all recession, which makes it even harder to project.

2020 budgets were already set for most companies when COVID-19 hit. Going into 2021 those will be adjusted, and with that will come heightened scrutiny over the effectiveness of marketing efforts to make sure the juice is worth the squeeze.

## Timing is everything

In an already targeted world, expect that demand to go even higher. This will create more innovation. Buying directly in Instagram, eventually TikTok, and where people spend the most time will seem like second nature. Don't plan on people visiting your commerce site. Plan on bringing that to them—and with the specificity of knowing what time that person buys the most and what prompts work best. A targeted ad at 11:00 am on a weekday is not the same as one at 9:00 pm.

## Embrace the pop-up

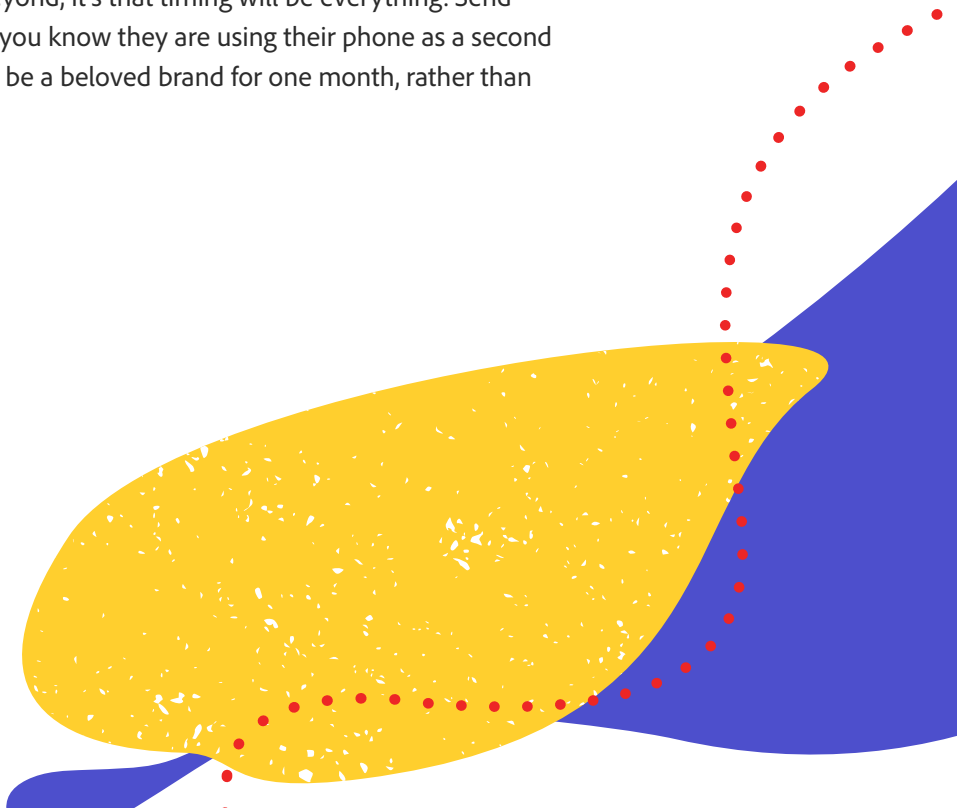
Retail is not dead. And people will long for communal experiences again—especially when done well. With plenty of office and retail space, expect marketers to embrace the idea of the limited pop-up. We already see this with Halloween stores, but if you're a business that primarily does well only two months out of the year, why do you own a store for all 12? I'm talking about Halloween costume shops, toy stores, flower shops, etc. Developers will also have to get creative, with so much retail space available.

## Use proximity

This pandemic conditioned us to trust and demand delivery more. With that added demand, online retailers will feel the pressure to speed delivery times. This is where local marketing has an advantage—for now. Well, until the drones. I, for one, welcome our drone overlords.

But if you're a GameStop, you have an opportunity. Consumers are going to buy games now direct to console. It's easy and allows you to buy the cheaper console. You're still local and have the technology. You can get a cable to someone in 15 minutes rather than two days. That's valuable. Look for companies to figure out how to market and provide specific things to local markets quickly and efficiently.

And if there's any singular takeaway for 2021 and beyond, it's that timing will be everything. Send prompts when people are most relaxed, and when you know they are using their phone as a second screen. Be able to get them something quickly. And be a beloved brand for one month, rather than "just there" for 12.



# It's time to reinvent your demand generation strategy—again

**Marketing evolved at record speed in 2020, but we'll have to keep innovating to win in 2021**



Hayley Ferrante

Hayley Ferrante is the head of Marketo Engage commercial demand generation at Adobe. She oversees DG activities across the funnel while partnering with other cross-functional marketing teams and sales stakeholders. When she's not working, she can most likely be found trying to keep up with her golden retriever.

They say necessity is the mother of invention, and the past year has certainly proven that to be true. The event landscape is transforming, inboxes are becoming more packed, and people are ignoring the noise more than ever before. It's required marketers to become more agile, innovative, and resilient.

The coming year will bring even more challenges as the shiny new ideas 2020 brought may become dull and overused if we aren't careful. So, here are three things to think about when crafting your 2021 demand generation plans.



## Take time to understand your audience

Quality personalized touches, in a time when everything is virtual, are tough but critical. Not simply using a first name token, but keeping an eye on what content your audience consumes—where they click, and any other actions—is vital to personalization. It will allow you to respond in real time with the appropriate message.

Spend time in the coming year understanding your audience and building programs to prove it. Did someone visit three email marketing related pieces of content in the past week? Great—send them something related to guide them along the funnel with a topic they're showing interest in. Did someone visit your pricing page twice in two weeks? Even better—send them an email with a case study and a secondary CTA to see if they want to discuss it the following week. Be where your audience is—and not only that, serve them up more of what they are blatantly showing they want

## Rethink intent data

Intent data saw challenges in the past year due to technology roadblocks. That most likely meant a dip in volume for your organization. And, even though it's getting better, it may continue, which means it's time to reinvent the way you look at your intent data strategy.

Take time in the coming year to make sure you are surfacing as many quality surging accounts as possible. It might mean shifting the way you look at intent to give your sales team more at-bats, or to increase your audience size for intent-based demand programs.

Any changes you make should keep quality in mind and give you opportunity to run new, innovative programs off that data.

## When everything is virtual, find ways to stand out

Lastly, now that almost every event is virtual, it means it's time to differentiate. Your field events have gone online, your webinars were already online, and now—so are everyone else's. The good news is that 84 percent of customers are putting a higher value on digital experiences.<sup>7</sup> But you still have to work hard for their attention.

Create engaging experiences by adding video, polls, surveys, chats, etc. Maybe bring a few sales reps in to chat with your audience on a late stage webinar. Or try a fireside chat that allows speakers to show more personality.

Have you ever asked registrants to send in questions before the webinar so your speaker can answer them in the session? Why not? Now is the time to think outside the box and give your audience a reason to attend and engage.

# Agility and being prepared for change

The ability to adapt effectively will equip marketers for 2021



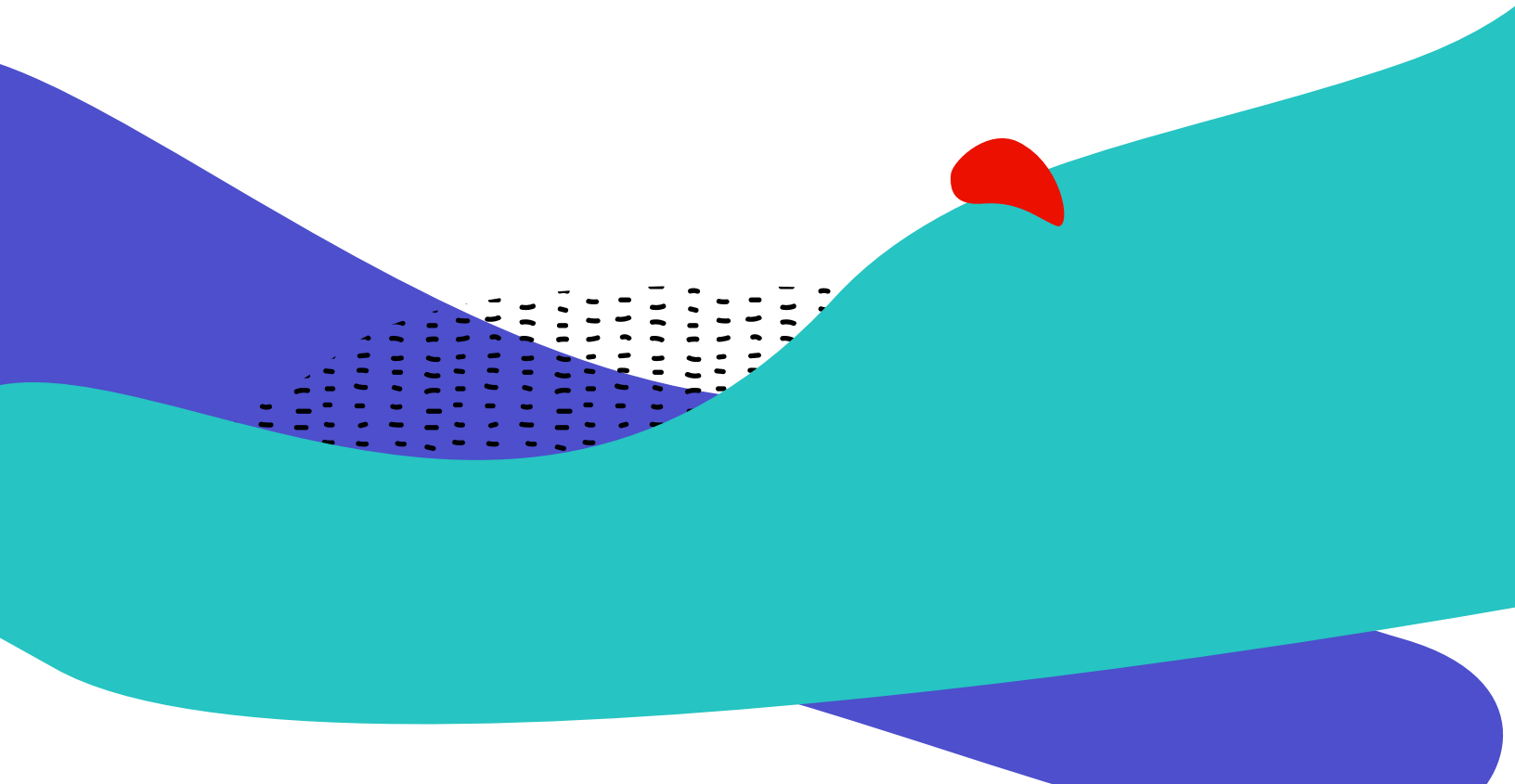
Ian Gertler

Ian Gertler is an experienced marketing, communications, editorial, and digital strategy executive. He has worked with industry-leading organizations and startups, including many years as the founder/CMO of Symplegades. Influencer, board and advisory roles include the international IoT Community and Adobe Insiders, as well as accolades like the Forbes Top 50 CMOs by Social Influence. [linkedin.com/in/iangertler](https://www.linkedin.com/in/iangertler) | [twitter: @iangertler](https://twitter.com/iangertler)

One year ago, many experts shared their marketing predictions for 2020. Now, flashing forward, some of those assumptions have come true, while others simply evaporated with the onset of the pandemic. Challenges remain, but countless lessons, insights, and practices have emerged that will define the future of marketing, work, and life in 2021.

Customers and employees are experiencing a new work/life integration, especially with quarantines, losses, sickness, remote learning, and work-from-home mandates. Almost twice as many knowledge workers are still working in remote locations than in offices now.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, we've also seen organizations around the world forced to embrace and implement multi-year digital transformation plans in mere months. So, what can we expect in 2021?



## Top four insights for 2021

**An increasingly omnichannel and 360-degree view of value-based marketing.** Digital marketing efforts will use conversational commerce, AI, chatbots, immersive mobile experiences like augmented reality, and multi-format connected content marketing.

**The extension of on-demand trends and behaviors.** Instead of sticking to schedules, we're seeing more customers demand what they want in the moment. This is partly because of prolonged sheltering-in-place and video conference fatigue. Ironically, it's generating even more use of video and podcasts.

**Increasing reliance on less-polished deliverables,** combined with an ongoing shift toward trusted connections, user-generated content, social interactions, and the use of niche nano- or micro-influencers vs. celebrity endorsements. As customers navigate the void created by the coronavirus, they're driven by a growing need for community.

**The expansion of agile methodologies to agility-based mindsets and execution,** in order to effectively address change and emerging trends in the moment. This will also lead to new forms of marketing innovation, where emerging technologies will replace older, less-effective platforms and actions.

## What does all of this mean for marketing?

Get ready to see some new marketing breakthroughs in 2021—and a lot of experimenting. But, ultimately, success during this time period will be determined by how effectively you can act on the changing situations.

As my good friend Brian Solis says, "Each business is a victim of digital Darwinism, the evolution of consumer behavior when society and technology evolve faster than the ability to exploit it. Digital Darwinism does not discriminate. Every business is threatened."

As Charles Darwin himself allegedly noted, it's not the strongest nor the most intelligent that will survive, but those most adaptable to change. Marketers—and most of society—will certainly need to continue embracing change, agility, resilience, experiences and empathy in 2021 and beyond.

# Marketing and sales automation will evolve together

## How teams will improve alignment in 2021



Sam Gong

Sam Gong is a director of inside sales for Adobe Experience Cloud, responsible for building qualified pipeline for global teams in the commercial segment. He sees growth as everybody's goal and loves building cross-functional teams to approach winning in the market as an end-to-end problem. His COVID hobby is making custom ukuleles.

The rapid adoption of sales automation platforms has been a boon to companies trying to make contact with more prospects. But in the rush to embrace new tech and processes as quickly as possible, many businesses have skipped the important step of aligning their sales automation motion with marketing.

This oversight is surprising given that 87 percent of sales and marketing leaders believe collaboration and alignment are critical to business growth.<sup>9</sup>

In 2021, I predict that more businesses will invest in making sales automation and marketing work together. A holistic approach to lead qualification, business development, and inside sales will help you get a lot more out of your marketing and sales investments.

**87%**

**of sales and marketing leaders believe collaboration and alignment are critical to business growth.**

## Make great sales teams even better

If you're doing it right, your sales teams will understand where their marketing leads are coming from, where they are in their journey to research and evaluate solutions, and the best shot they have to convert those leads into qualified opportunities.

Great sales teams have always implicitly understood how to do this. But now we have the tools to build playbooks, share leads between systems, and scale best practices for the marketing-to-sales handoff.

## Identify what messaging resonates

On the other side, marketing finally has a platform to help with sales messaging. Marketing had a mature set of practices for testing and improving messaging in email and on the website. Marketing has written email templates for sellers before. But we've never been able to close the loop and directly see what's resonating with prospects.

Companies that embrace good marketing and sales automation will embed marketing more closely with sales to help improve sales messaging. It's not about A/B testing email templates. Good marketing teams will get into the trenches with their sales partners to understand their process and their needs.

## Get teams working better by working toward the same goal

The last marketing change we'll see from sales automation in 2021 is the org design. Do we set up our operational support teams to manage tools? To manage training or messaging? Or do we set them up to deliver results?

The more the tools enable you to manage your customer engagement as a continuous journey through the marketing and sales funnel, the bigger the advantage cross-functional teams will have in the market. You can get a lot done across dotted lines on the org chart, but there's no substitute for a team that breathes the same air, has the same culture, and pushes toward the same goal every day.

Companies that figure out how to build their orgs around improving the buying process and customer experience have an even bigger advantage in a world where sales automation and marketing automation work together. We'll see more businesses win based on the strength of their go-to-market engines.

If you're doing it right, 2021 should be a lot of fun for everybody in sales and marketing.

# Virtualization will change the event landscape forever

## COVID-19 brings hardship as well as new and unexpected innovation

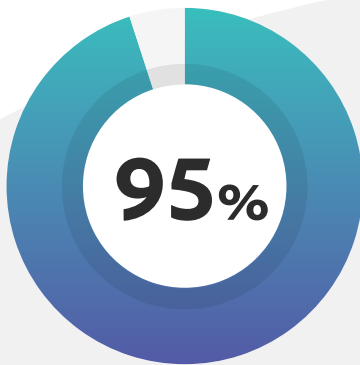


Caroline Hull

Caroline Hull manages the commercial field and partner marketing teams for Adobe, focusing on the Marketo Engage and Magento Commerce products. Caroline has spent her career in the high-tech industry building go-to-market strategies focused on delivering unique and scalable regional campaigns. An experienced field and event marketer with a demonstrated history of success in sourcing, influencing, and accelerating pipeline, she works cross-functionally with the greater marketing organization as well as customer success, partner, and sales to ensure she delivers the ultimate ROI.

If there is one thing we can all agree on, it's that 2020 has thrown us more curveballs than we ever thought possible. We have had to pivot, be agile, and try to predict the future. Some things we know for sure: 97 percent of marketers have put the pause on in-person marketing engagement—tradeshows, sales/store visits, etc.<sup>10</sup>

We have seen that marketing leaders can rise in challenging times. And now that we have one of the craziest years behind us, how will we take our learnings and use them to plan for the future?



**95%**  
of marketers have put  
the pause on in-person  
marketing engagement.

In fact, from an event perspective, my company is seeing a decrease in attrition from our registrants. And that's because it's a lot easier to attend something from the comfort of your own home than it is to drive or fly to a destination where you may not know a single person.

If we do continue on the virtual path (spoiler alert, we will), then the experience must follow. There may be a virtual reality component added to events or conferences. If done right, this could be a fantastic way to connect with others near and far. We will also see direct mail linked with virtual activities. It's always more meaningful when you receive something tangible for a virtual program.

## New organizations will build around virtual experiences

From an organizational standpoint, we are going to see new roles evolve around virtual events, virtual platforms, etc. We are learning quickly how to produce virtual experiences, and that requires dedicated resources that can elevate your programs to the next level.

Web teams are strained trying to build events from scratch. Event teams that have never needed to go virtual are working with brand new departments. It is a learning curve for sure, but now that we have established the virtual landscape as a growing channel, so will the talent.

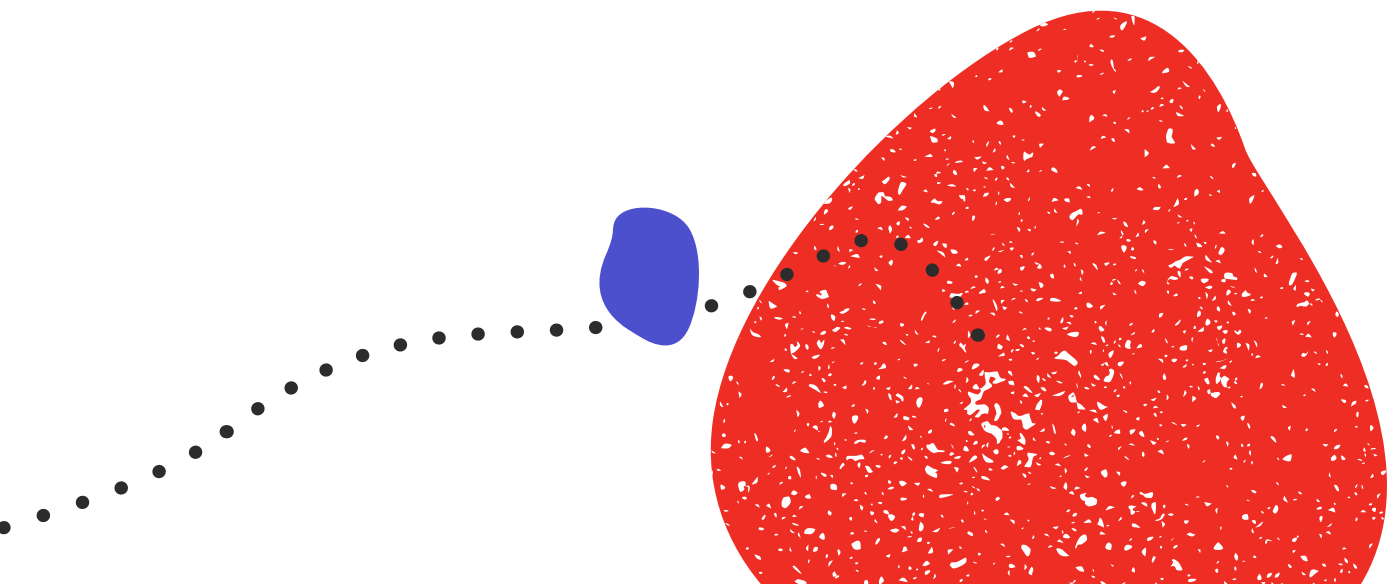
## Empathy is—and will continue to be—our greatest tool

When the pandemic hit, marketers everywhere took on different tactics for communicating with their audiences. The least impactful was leveraging the pandemic as a means to sell products and services in the cloud. However, those that pushed their bottom line aside and focused on their customers because they cared on a personal level came out ahead.

This brings me to my next point—empathy will lead the way. Empathy can help you grow your business, your network, and your employees' morale. It's not enough to say, "we care." There needs to be action. I predict we will see more corporate responsibility in a direct and impactful way.

## Layoffs will lead to a new wave of leaders and entrepreneurs

Finally, 2020 has brought some unfortunate circumstances for the marketing world. Budget cuts have led to layoffs at small and large companies. Much of the talent pool is without work. That being said, I've seen many skillful marketers take matters into their own hands and create their own businesses and services. I expect we'll see talent strive for new and exciting opportunities—and, of course, a surge in marketing entrepreneurs.



# Marketing will get more personal—especially for educators

## Know your audience and what they need at any given moment



Chelsea Kiko

Chelsea Kiko is a 4x Marketo Champion, MCSA, Fearless 50 member, and winner of the 2020 Adobe Experience Maker Award: Ambassador. Chelsea has an extensive record of working with enterprise clients to create cleaner, faster, and more engaged buyer funnels that result in more closed-won deals. Chelsea has successfully implemented creative, technical marketing influenced campaigns at companies like Hileman Group, General Electric, and PR Newswire. Chelsea is now the marketing operations manager at McGraw Hill where she focuses on data infrastructure, marketing and sales alignment, and using the martech stack to create superior customer experiences.

The global pandemic has accelerated the shift to digital technologies. And while this is the case for many industries, it's particularly true in education.

At McGraw Hill, where I work with the PreK–12 team, we found our ourselves switching gears almost completely as classrooms shifted to all-virtual or hybrid learning models. We moved away from printed textbooks and curriculum and kicked our eLearning platforms and products into high gear.

## Less noise, more empathy for what teachers are going through

We learned very quickly that our customers—mainly teachers—needed real help. No one knew what teaching would look like, especially in the first month of the pandemic. We didn't want to bombard our customers with self-serving promotions and other marketing "noise." So, from a marketing perspective, we've moved away from promotions and have tried to focus on genuine partnership. Moving into 2021, I predict that personalization and martech will gain even more traction.

## Thoughtful personalization is what customers want

While we've been quieter from a marketing perspective, we're still intent on getting meaningful content to the right customers at the right time. At McGraw Hill, we do a lot of content personalization by audience segmentation, all based on different types of products, platforms, and curriculum interest areas. Data is critical here. Unless we can dig deep and generate meaningful insights, we're not going to have successful campaigns.





## More martech pieces will be added to the stack

Platforms, add-ons, and partners will continually evolve to complete the ecosystem and help address the needs of our customers and the business.

## Privacy and consent is another issue—particularly knowing who NOT to market to

Data privacy laws have ramped up in response to customer demand. A Pew Research Institute study found that 79 percent of Americans are concerned about how their data is being used.<sup>11</sup> I expect we'll see even more regulations in the future.



**79%**



**of Americans are  
concerned about how  
their data is being used.**

## AI and ML will become even more critical

With little face-to-face engagement, sales reps must be able to reach out to customers and prospects in an automated and intelligent manner if they want to get the virtual conversations going.

## More strategy and purpose in planning

Budget cuts are pervasive. Before investing in new products, consider hiring the right talent/expertise to help you get more from your existing martech investments.

Many of 2020's changes are here to stay. Companies realize that their employees CAN productively work from home. And so we'll see this trend continuing to a certain extent even when the pandemic's over.

On the education side, too, I predict we'll maintain some sort of hybrid educational model moving forward. We're discovering that some kids learn better at home. And while we're focused on helping teachers be successful, we'll also do whatever it takes to help students succeed.

# Marketers will become more strategic in their customer focus

**2021 is about building confidence, connecting with customers, and "micro-moments"**



Mike Madden

Mike Madden is a marketing leader with extensive experience building effective demand generation strategies for growing and accelerating pipeline. His past roles include director of commercial demand generation for the Adobe Experience Cloud. Outside of work, he is a big fan of M&Ms, early morning rounds of golf, and hiking.

2020 was a tough year in marketing—filled with uncertainty, dashed expectations, and disappointing returns. It's difficult to market to customers when no one really knows what "normal" is or when "normal" will return. A recent survey suggests that we're operating in a "homebody economy" where 64 percent of US consumers say they are not yet returning to "normal" out-of-home activities.<sup>12</sup> Like I said, lots of uncertainty.

But we must move forward somehow. And the great news is that 2021 offers all of us another chance to reflect, strategize, and innovate. My advice moving forward: pause, focus, and be purposeful in your efforts.

## Marketers will have a far greater focus on what they can actually control

2020 was the year that rattled marketers' confidence to produce net new names, sales-ready leads, and in some cases enough closed won business to keep the company growing.

Said a different way, marketers felt burned. Millions of marketing dollars went into an uncertain, turbulent market and returned far less ROI than what was anticipated. As a result, marketers should spend more time in 2021 improving what they can directly control and impact. If it's free, how can we make it even better? More A/B testing to optimize all programs. Website enhancements that ease the buyer's journey, encourage content binging, and allow sales ready leads to raise their hand. GTM changes, TAM analysis, and building a better ideal customer profile.



## B2B buyers will expect B2C experiences

Yep, you heard that right. Maybe a silly hunch but with almost everyone working from home (and theoretically reconnecting with the things that make them happy), our buyers have changed from decision-makers at key accounts to real people with real interests.

Gone are the days of sending a coffee mug to get a meeting booked. Sure, most people drink coffee, but they do other things, too, you know. Finding ways to connect with buyers on a more personal level will be paramount for breaking through the B2B marketing noise and actually forming meaningful relationships with our prospects and customers.

## Marketing-assisted outbound will become a thing

Like I said, 2020 was a tough year, especially for generating inbound leads. We thought our dollars would go to work for us, but unfortunately, the uncertain market conditions swallowed them up and gave us nothing in return.

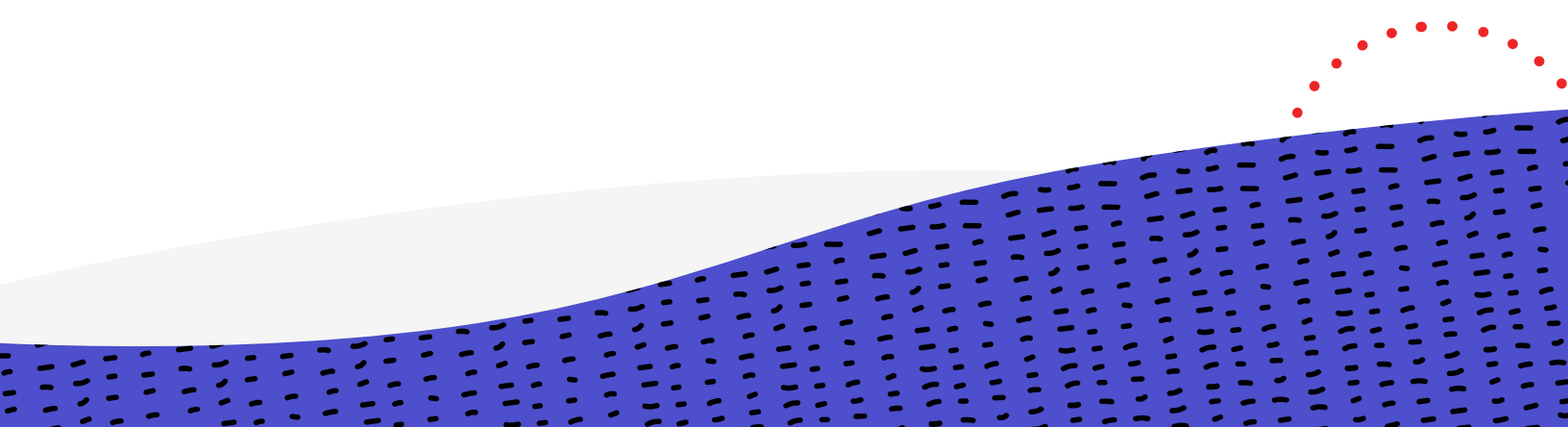
Marketers will look for other ways to inform sellers of people/accounts that may be in the market to purchase but haven't showed any first-party interest. Intent data will become the most crucial part of the martech stack, enabling marketers to surface accounts outside of their regular purview to hungry salespeople needing to make quotas. And you know what? It'll work.

## Shift from macro-campaigns to micro-moments

Marketers are storytellers, and for far too long we've been crafting stories as if we can tell them over the course of weeks, months, or even years. All companies have varying sales cycle lengths, and at first glance, telling a story in line with a sales cycle makes sense. But buyers don't work like that. They own their story, their journey, and their actions in how they engage with your brand.

So how do we build campaigns around our buyer's tendencies rather than what we want them to see? The answer is looking for micro-moments, which are moments in time where a buyer engages with your brand, and you're ready with something relevant for them in that very moment.

This is achieved with marketing automation, allowing marketers to trigger campaigns based on what people do, when they do it, and how they do it. By engaging with prospects and customers when they engage, we speak on their terms and have a better chance of showcasing our brand in just a few moments than we did over the course of months.



# Get ready to succeed in 2021

Be prepared for customer journeys, privacy rules, and AI to evolve



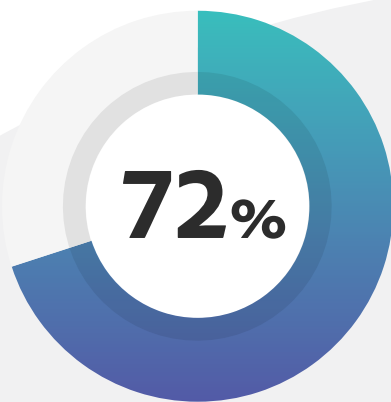
Paulo Martins

Paulo Martins is the head of commercial global digital marketing at Adobe. With 15+ years of experience in the digital space, Paulo has had the chance to work in Latin America, Australia (APAC), and currently in North America, running global digital campaigns for Adobe DX.

Marketing is always a moving target with evolving customer trends and new technology innovations. The global pandemic adds even more complexity to the overall picture. Fortunately, as digital marketers, we're pretty experienced at adapting to change. If you want to get ready for 2021, I suggest taking a closer look at the following trends.

## Non-linear journeys will become the norm

Most of the companies in the tech industry have already announced that they'll be continuing work-from-home policies for most of 2021 and/or even longer. A PwC survey of remote workers in the US also reveals that more employees—72 percent—want to continue working from home at least two days a week.<sup>13</sup>



**of employees want to  
continue working remotely  
at least 2 days a week.**

It's no surprise then that professional and personal lives are merging. It is way more than just being able to see their homes, family/pets, and routines via video calls. People are increasingly using their mobile devices, and they are often jumping back and forth between their personal network and VPNs connected to their offices.

As a result, in 2021, it'll be common to see a non-linear customer journey that goes beyond typical channels. Especially, for the B2B digital marketer, it'll be much harder to connect the dots—the behavior that occurs across multiple devices and networks—to the same individual and account.

This is an opportunity to get ahead of the competition. Make sure you have the right tools in place to measure behavior across multiple screens, connect the dots, and target your audiences with relevant messages.

## Privacy will tighten in 2021

As digital marketing technology evolves, there is a growing concern among customers about privacy and how much marketers should be able to track.

In 2021, digital marketers will see even more impact from privacy policies like GDPR and CCPA. Google's announcement to phase out Chrome third-party cookies next year will impact how digital advertisers can target audiences and preserve their privacy. As the most used browser in the B2B environment, we should expect to see some limitations, but also new technologies coming to replace (in a better way) the function of cookies.

## Artificial intelligence will continue to evolve

It's impossible to talk about the future of digital marketing and ignore AI. It's repeatedly appearing in predictions for a reason: it's still evolving, and it has a long way to go until reaching its full potential. AI is already influencing the way we target audiences in digital channels in 2020, and it'll get even better in 2021. Artificial intelligence will help the digital marketer get a better ROI by finding the right audience, reducing the cost per click, personalizing the digital experience, and so much more.

Stay tuned. Exciting changes are headed our way. Let's see what 2021 has to offer!



# Get creative in 2021

## As marketing shifts digital, turn uncertainty into innovation



Josh Pickles

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The global pandemic has altered the marketing playing field. Consumer migration into the digital space is massive—with 84.4 percent of consumers becoming more open to new digital offerings.<sup>14</sup> With this shift also comes increased adoption of marketing automation technologies.

From balancing the customer journey to building trust and doing more with less, ultimately, I see 2021 as an opportunity to get creative.

### Focus on the customer journey—but strike a balance

As more marketers play in the digital space, there's often uncertainty about where to go with your online strategy. I always tell people to get back to basics—focus on your customer journey to help you better understand your customer's goals and challenges, just don't lose sight of your business goals and challenges!

This is where many marketers go wrong. They're either too focused on one or the other. Always ask if there is a way to use new technologies—or even existing technologies—to better address customer and business challenges simultaneously.

**84.4%**

**of consumers are becoming more open to digital offerings.**

## Make connections in the digital space

We've definitely moved away from the age of "spray and pray" marketing—to a digital ecosystem that makes it much easier to get to know your customer and personalize information.

For example, if you've been to my site and you've downloaded content, you've given me information that allows me to put you on a more personalized journey. I now know what types of products to start serving to you from an automation standpoint. Predictive Content—an AI-powered capability in Marketo Engage that serves up personalized content—is ideal for this kind of thing.

At the same time, be careful. You don't want to creep your customers out by feeding them everything they want. This is where personalization can go bad. Every once in a while, throw in a wildcard.

What I mean by that is feed them new ideas about what they MIGHT want, with product recommendations that are adjacent to their known interests. For example, if your customers have been searching for kitchen cabinets, you might also show them content on wallpaper and flooring.

## Work hard to build customer trust

Our job as marketers is to build trust. Sometimes that means breaking down barriers. We need to guide customers long term—and create comfort and trust in the digital space. We can't simply introduce something new and expect it to catch on. There must be continued communication to gradually get customers onboard with new ideas and new ways of doing things.

## You don't need a large budget to be creative

Budget cuts are an unfortunate byproduct of COVID-19. Here in New Zealand, we're accustomed to operating with very small budgets. One of the benefits, however, of doing things digitally, at least in the automation space, is that it's a relatively inexpensive operating environment. This is the perfect opportunity to start thinking outside of the box.

When COVID first hit, my team regrouped. We asked ourselves, "If we had an unlimited budget, what would we do?" This exercise helped us identify our goals, and together, we were able to collaborate and develop creative solutions for marketing activity on much smaller budgets.

These are tough times. But they're also exciting times. My advice is to put your head down and continue doing what you do well. Strike a balance in the way you engage customers—and take advantage of these extraordinary times to innovate.

# Stay the course—even in a new normal

And always put your customers first



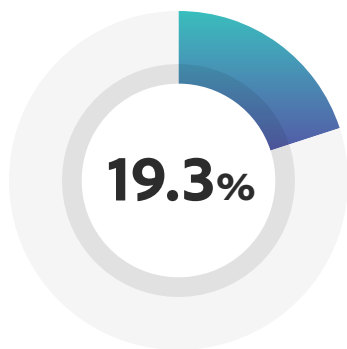
Ross Quintana

Ross Quintana is a futurist, founder of Social Magnets, and head of Social Adobe Partners. He is one of Buzzsumo's Top 100 Social Media Influencers, a business strategist, and personal branding expert. His agency, Social Magnets, helps brands, influencers, and executives grow their social media audience and online authority.

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Marketers, like many consumers today, are uncertain about the future. They're trying to figure out how to adapt. Many are wondering if what they're currently doing still makes sense? Will society bounce back from the pandemic? Or will things change forever? Online sales, since the start of the pandemic, have grown significantly—up 19.3 percent.<sup>15</sup> But who's to say if that trend will continue?

The good news is that much of the change to come in marketing is not new. The pandemic has only accelerated the inevitable. And marketers who can adapt quickly to this new normal will ultimately fare much better than the laggards.



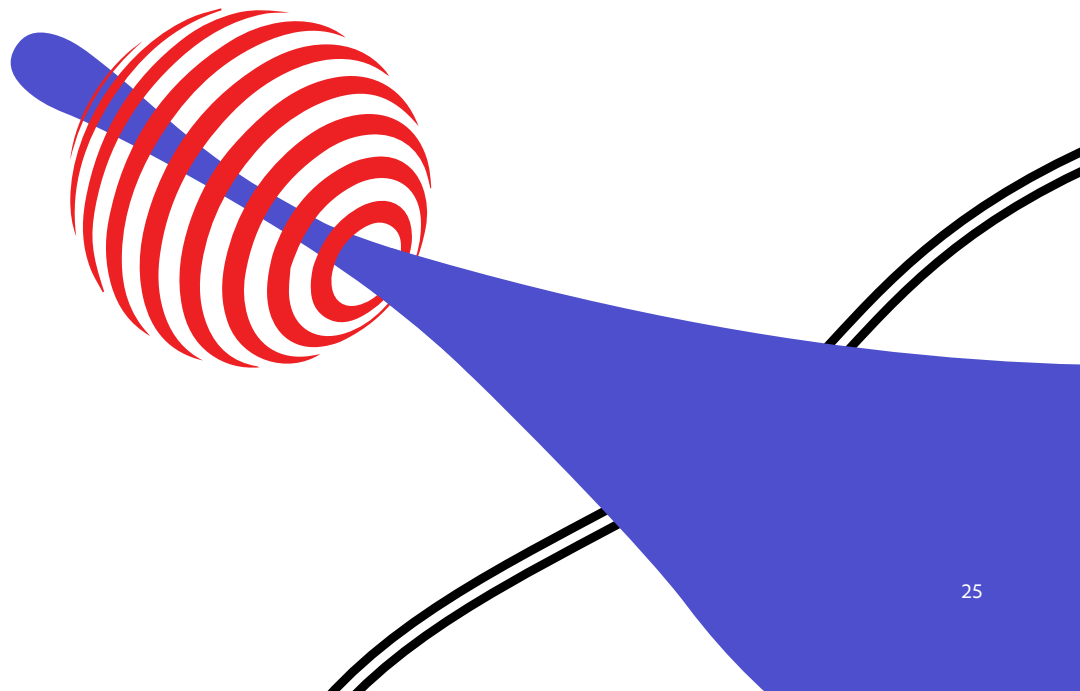
**19.3%**  
**of online sales have grown since the beginning of the pandemic.**



# Continue to put customers first in a “digital first” world

“Digital first” marketing is quickly becoming a requirement in the same way that “mobile first” became the standard not too long ago. My predictions below follow this premise. And these ideas are valid, regardless of whether things get better or worse.

- The attention economy will only get worse as more facets of our lives become “digital first” and “digital only” (i.e., work, play, family, entertainment).
- Individuals and organizations must prioritize agility and capability.
- Society will gradually become a gated ecosystem, where brands must earn entry through personalization, relationship, and consistent value delivery.
- Interactive content will gain market share with the adoption of VR experiences, RCS, and conversational AI.
- Bold vs. tentative organizations will achieve an early rebounder advantage in the new normal.
- Social media, influencer relationships, and partnerships will be critical if you want to earn attention, relevance, and loyalty.
- Failure to provide value to your customers from design to long-term relationships will exclude you from people’s digital worlds. Selfish business models will fail.
- Brands will focus on more marketing that doesn’t scale.
- CLV (customer lifetime value) will drive more decisions.



# Doing more—and more digital—with less

Marketers will need to make every dollar count as budgets shrink and the pandemic continues



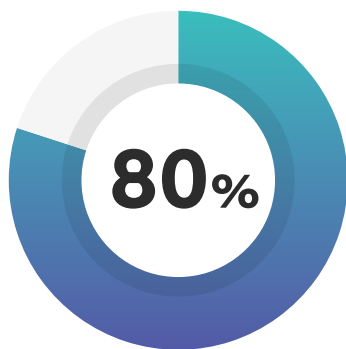
Christina Zuniga

Christina Zuniga is senior marketing operations manager at Databricks. She's a 2x Marketo Champion and a member of the inaugural Fearless 50 Marketer class.

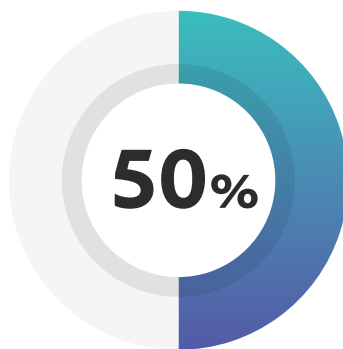
The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift of marketing to digital channels. Many companies have shifted in-person events to virtual experiences, for example. And more than 80 percent of marketers say they will continue to do this into the future.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, marketers are dealing with shrinking budgets. Almost half of CMOs are reporting a budget cut of more than 5 percent, with many reporting cuts of more than 15 percent.<sup>17</sup> To win in this environment, marketers will need to carefully weigh every investment while ensuring they have the tools to deliver a great customer experience online.

It won't be easy, but I hope the following predictions—based on my own observations and talks I've had with other marketers—will help you set priorities for the months and years to come.



of marketers will continue shifting to digital marketing channels.



of marketers experience increasing budgets cuts.



## The big bet: governments will hit the pause button on privacy policies

As COVID-19 continues to spread, and countries are preoccupied not only with keeping their citizens safe, but managing their economies and dealing with ongoing issues, I believe we're going to see governments holding off on enacting any new privacy legislation until the situation stabilizes.

Even though I support an individual's right to privacy, as a marketing professional I also know firsthand the scramble that's involved when new legislation is introduced. We are continually responding to changes as more countries and more states enact new privacy laws.

While privacy laws will continue to become more stringent and widely adopted, the pace is likely to slow for now, which will free marketers—in the near term—to focus on other issues.

## Partnerships will help marketers make budgets stretch further

I see more marketers relying on partner events or joint promotions moving forward. In fact, "partnerships" recently ranked second, after organic growth, as a strategy for marketing growth. This means more lead sharing, in spite of existing privacy laws. While businesses will find ways to make sure they're legally compliant—on the consumer side, we're going to see our names show up on a lot more lists because of events we've gone to—especially if multiple partners were involved.

Partnerships allow us to share resources, which is helpful as budgets shrink. You can get the same number of leads with fewer internal resources. If new privacy laws aren't being written, partner events are easier to pull off and you benefit from more lax sharing rules or disclosures.

## Marketers will use data to pinpoint their most profitable niches

During this time, I also see marketing becoming more strategic—with a greater focus on our "ideal" customers. Of course, this includes account-based marketing (ABM), but it's also about intent data and determining who is more likely to convert, especially as budgets are impacted. We can't boil the whole ocean. We're going to want to home in on a few key groups that are more likely to become—and stay—our customers.

## Critical martech investments may slow—especially at smaller firms

As budgets are cut, leadership teams may be more reluctant to invest in marketing technology—even as the need for digital marketing increases. As a result, I think we're going to see larger companies with more resources pulling ahead, and the gulf between enterprise companies and smaller companies expanding.

If you're a marketer at a smaller firm, you will need to make a strong business case for automation and identify case studies from similar businesses. Over the long term, marketing automation can help you compete more effectively with larger companies—especially if you have a small team.

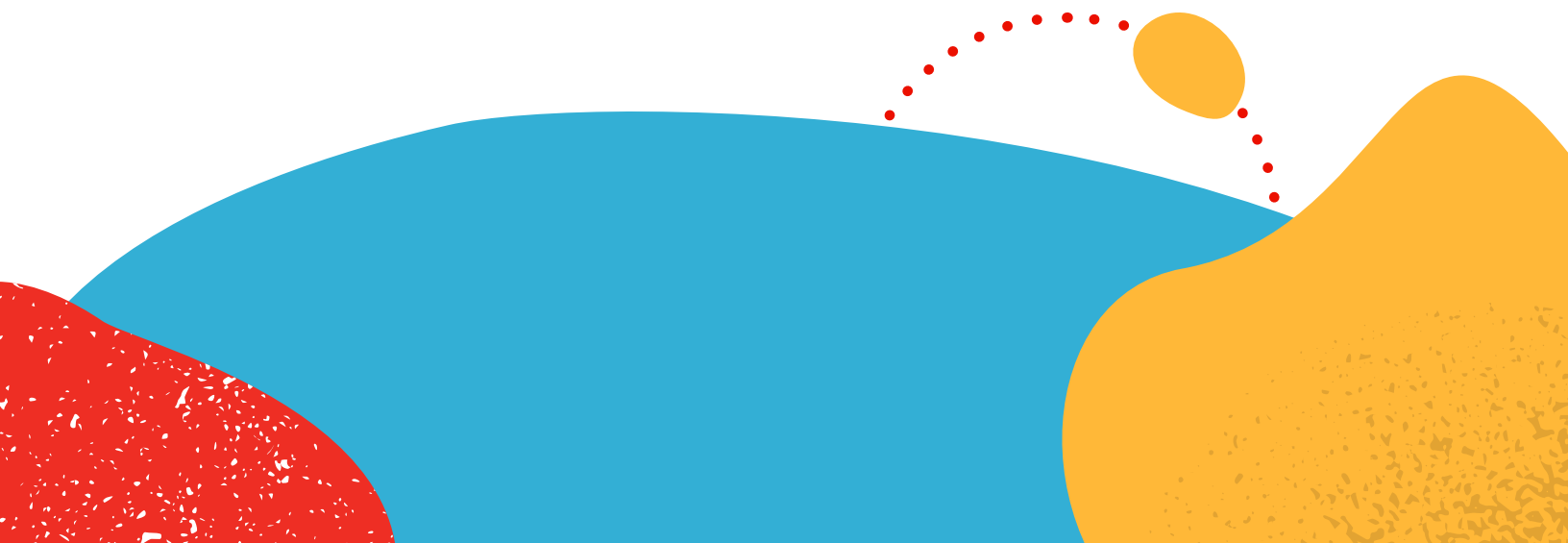
## Digital marketing is here to stay

Even as the pandemic comes under control, it's likely that many consumers and business buyers will continue to demand digital options.

Post-COVID, some areas will reopen but some individuals will still be uncomfortable attending live events. Organizations will adopt or expand live streaming to capture interest regardless of attendee location. I believe virtual meetings and events, personalized online content, and online support will continue to play a big role in the customer experience.

## Take the next steps

Change brings hardship, but it also brings opportunities. Our job as marketers is to identify those short- and long-term opportunities. If we learn and adapt, become resilient and innovative, we can weather the pandemic and be a force for real change.



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## Adobe Experience Cloud

Adobe Experience Cloud is the most comprehensive suite of customer experience management tools on the market. With solutions for data, content, engagement, commerce, personalization, and more, Experience Cloud is built on the world's first platform designed explicitly for customer experience. So each product is infused with artificial intelligence and works seamlessly together, but also integrates with your existing technology and your future innovations so you can consistently deliver the right experience every time.

## Marketo Engage

Marketo Engage specializes in customer engagement over complex B2B buying journeys. As a complete solution for lead management, it brings marketing and sales together to nurture leads, orchestrate personalized experiences, optimize content, and measure business impact across every channel. Marketo Engage natively supports both demand and account-based marketing strategies, providing a single, integrated lead management platform from acquisition to advocacy. Build engaging, personalized experiences at scale and prove impact with Marketo Engage.



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