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REPORT
SPECIAL REPORT

WHAT'S WORKING IN CONVERSATIONAL MARKETING

USING THE POWER OF AI & VIRTUAL SELLING
ASSISTANTS TO CREATE SEAMLESS BUYING
EXPERIENCES, STRENGTHEN ABM CAMPAIGNS

Hi!
How can I help you?





Introduction

As advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) continue to grow and buyers demand more self-service journeys, B2B marketers have realized the value of highly relevant conversations. This has ushered in a new wave of conversational marketing initiatives to engage with prospects and gather valuable data for future efforts. Conversational marketing is no longer about live chat — it's a comprehensive strategy that does everything from providing 24/7 customer support to guiding prospects quickly through their buying journey.

Conversational marketing works to close the most challenging gaps for buyers, as **research** shows that:

- Frustrations with unresponsive brands on social media or email grew **5.7X**;
- Frustrations with services feeling impersonal grew **2X**; and
- Frustrations with a lack of service outside of normal operating hours grew **1.4X**.

“We are in a whole new reality of conversational marketing,” explained Amy Noel, Marketing Strategy Lead for **Tegrita**. “The solutions that worked two, three years ago as the space was emerging may not work in the weeks, months and years ahead.”

Conversational marketing can help organizations see the most success in five key areas, according to Mark Kilens, Marketing Strategy Lead for **Drift**: Lead generation, booking more meetings, generating more efficient pipeline, accelerating the sales cycle and creating better, more seamless customer experiences. Through integrations with existing martech stacks and collaboration with internal departments, organizations need to view conversational marketing as an extension of their team.



Throughout this report, we'll discuss how conversational marketing:

- Seamlessly guides prospects through the customer journey;
- Automatically provides prospects and customers with the most relevant content;
- Identifies and qualifies leads to inform sales and marketing who to target and engage with;
- Personalizes the buyer's journey by analyzing intent and other data forms to anticipate a buyer's next move; and
- Strengthens and further personalizes ABM campaigns and helps eliminate internal siloes.

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AMY NOEL, TEGRITA



Harnessing Conversational Strategies To Create Seamless Buying Experiences

As conversational marketing evolves from traditional form fills and chatbots with limited functionality, prospects are looking for experiences personalized to their interests and are engaging with relevant content at higher levels. **Research shows** that the amount of content consumed in 2020 increased by 22% since 2019 and buyers were 15% quicker to consume additional content.

To meet the demand for content-centricity and keep up with accelerating sales cycles, organizations need to enable seamless conversational experiences that guide prospects through their website and deliver them to the most relevant information that will promote further engagement.

New developments in conversational marketing technology can identify where leads are coming from and what they're looking for, empowering marketing and sales teams to analyze previous interactions with a website to determine where they left off and the next best steps. Additionally, it provides relevant information to sales reps so they can pick up the conversation where automation left off.

“Chat helps guide people to the appropriate places and content so that they can drive their own journey,” said Noel. She continued that when this seamless movement is coupled with immediate, relevant responses from sales teams, it creates a powerhouse strategy that meets the ever-growing desire for self-service buyers’ journeys, as **51% of marketers** would stop engaging if a vendor was too slow to respond.

“By architecting a conversational engagement model that can flow data through and enable teams to look back and inform their next stage, it increases trust and confidence,” said Noel. “There’s nothing more frustrating than going through customer care and having to repeat yourself, especially when you’re looking to spend money.”



Case In Point: How Okta Doubled MQL To SQL Conversion Rates

THE CHALLENGE:

Okta, a cloud security platform, uses its website as the centerpiece of its digital brand. With over 1 million visitors each month, the company wanted to enhance its ability to capture intent in a way that adds value for prospects while accelerating the process of passing leads to sales.

THE SOLUTION:

The company formed a partnership with Drift and implemented the solution across its website and used it for email, video and event support. While the company initially utilized Drift in the U.S., it expanded the solution internationally to its primary marketing websites. Additionally, it expanded the use to other functional groups within its organization, such as the SDR and event teams, and enabled four foreign languages in Drift.

THE RESULTS:

Since its partnership with Drift and implementation of virtual selling AI, Okta has seen:

- A 30% quarter-over-quarter increase in pipeline influenced over the first six quarters;
- A 2X higher conversion rate from MQL to SQL; and
- No. 1 fastest channel to convert MQL to pipeline.

Personalization At Scale: Engaging Buyers 24/7 With Conversational AI

By Mark Kilens, Drift



2020 was a year of rapid change.

For marketing and sales teams, nowhere was that change felt more than in the customer experience. Almost overnight, we became a world with digital to a digital-first world. In-person engagement was gone and people shifted online.

Now buyers say there's no going back.

Marketers were challenged to deliver buyer personalization at scale long before the digital transition. According to Drift's **2020 State of Conversational Marketing Report**, 53% of buyers are frustrated by the amount of irrelevant ads and emails they get and 35% say that services typically feel impersonal. Personalization is no longer something buyers want — it's a necessity.

Over the years, **conversational marketing** and chat technologies have helped businesses and buyers engage in real-time conversations while swiftly moving buyers through the funnel.

But we're now entering a new era of marketing. One where buyers expect tailored experiences at each step of their journey. Buyers today have more power, more information and higher expectations than ever before. They want a fast and customized experience when interacting with B2B brands. To meet these demands head on and scale personalization, we need to add something more to our conversational marketing strategies: Conversational AI.



Conversational AI has elevated marketing teams to the next level. It gives those who use it a competitive advantage by enabling them to:

- Accelerate sales and revenue growth;
- Get more actionable insights from marketing data;
- Predict consumer needs and behaviors with greater accuracy;
- Reduce time spent on repetitive, data-driven tasks; and
- Shorten the sales cycle.

There's huge potential for Conversational AI to deliver hyper-personalized and efficient buying experiences through solutions like virtual selling assistants, video and chatbots.

The Five P's Of Conversational Marketing

- 1 Planning**, as organizations must build intelligent strategies to see conversational marketing success. Conversational AI chooses keywords and topics for content optimization and analyzes online content for gaps and opportunities.
- 2 Production**, which includes creating intelligent, data-driven content. With the predictive power of conversational AI, marketers can measure content performance before deployment and enhance website content for buyers.
- 3 Personalization**, which generates intelligent consumer experiences. With so many choices readily available, buyers will stop interacting with a brand if their experience is not personalized for them or if the brand is uninformed of their needs. The speed and efficiency of conversational AI allows marketers to develop closer connections with buyers, gaining a sense of their preferences to recommend highly targeted content in real-time.



4 Promotion is all about managing intelligent cross-channel promotions. While working to deliver individualized buying experiences across channels, conversational AI adapts targeting strategies based on behavior and lookalike analysis.

5 Performance turns data into intelligence. Conversational AI unlocks insights into top-performing content and helps forecast campaign results based on predictive analysis. Using this information, marketers have an idea of what strategies work best.

Conversational AI tackles these manual marketing and sales tasks, so you have time to focus on things like **creative problem solving**. And buyers get the authentic, empowering experiences they want 24/7.

Conversational AI brings the human element back to B2B, and the future is here. But what's really exciting is that it's still just the beginning. As marketers continue to better understand AI technology, Conversational AI will become the leading solution to growing revenue faster.

“There’s huge potential for Conversational AI to deliver hyper-personalized and efficient buying experiences through solutions like virtual selling assistants, video and chatbots.”

MARK KILENS, DRIFT



Increasing The Success Of Personalized Campaigns & ABM Strategies

The overall mission of conversational marketing is to automate marketers' mundane tasks and collect and analyze a variety of data — including intent, pain points and company information — to inform sales reps and marketing teams of their next-best action. Through this streamlined process, marketing teams can construct targeted advertisements to catch prospects' eyes. Conversational intelligence can conduct surface level conversations and guide prospects through the website into the waiting arms of the sales team.

“No matter what conversational marketing tools you use — whether it's integrations on social platforms or informing your campaigns — the buyer's journey must be architected to refer to previous engagements,” said Noel. “This also helps you learn the prospect's experience going forward.”

For account-based marketing (ABM), the experts explained that this highly targeted journey complements ABM strategies through the lens of a three-layer pyramid. The first level is the creation of ideal customer profiles (ICP) and cross-referencing it with visitors on the website who might be a good fit.

The second level revolves around identifying known accounts on the website, enabling the AI to notify the account executive in real time about those engagements to facilitate a targeted conversation. The very top of the pyramid is reserved for identifying accounts 100% likely to act, which signals sales reps to deliver hyper-personalized, VIP experiences with even faster response rates.

In ABM, conversational marketing enables sales reps to identify in-market accounts, shift the context of the conversation and curate the right experience going back to the who, what and where framework, whether it's booking a meeting with the sales rep or a demo. “This helps strengthen the larger marketing strategies as it gives you a better understanding of how people engage,” said Noel. She continued that the insights inform organizations about high-demand areas so they can tailor investments and improvements accordingly.



Case In Point: How Lessonly Saw 400% Higher Conversion To Demos

THE CHALLENGE:

Lessonly, a training, enablement and coaching software, needed to level-up its ABM strategy as it moved upmarket to service enterprise organizations with larger teams. The company needed a solution that unified and personalized the customer journey across the funnel, as well as helped align sales and marketing teams.


THE SOLUTION:

Lessonly utilized the Drift platform to create a more personalized, responsive and engaging buyer experience across its website, which included chatbots on higher-trafficked pages. From there, Lessonly developed unique messaging across its entire website that was based on the prospect's progress in the buying cycle. Additional changes include un-gating its high-value content and creating a shared information hub to break sales and marketing out of their siloes.

THE RESULTS:

After implementing conversational marketing solutions, Lessonly:

- More than doubled its chat meetings month-over-month;
- Saw a 400% higher conversion rate to demo;
- Generated 20% to 30% more leads from content; and
- Saw an 18% improvement in user to lead conversion.



The Rise Of The Virtual Selling Assistant

We're no longer talking about your mother's chatbot: Today's chatbots have earned the title of "virtual selling assistants," as they take over more mundane sales rep interactions. Through natural language processing (NLP) — AI's ability to understand text and spoken words in much the same way humans can — virtual selling assistants can take over large chunks of the sales and marketing processes.

"A virtual selling assistant can qualify visitors coming to the website at all hours of the day, so it helps the human be more productive in gathering insights and providing creative solutions," explained Kilens. "Virtual selling assistants allow someone to come to that website, ask questions anytime they want and even book meetings. This provides prospects with faster answers and recommendations on next steps in a human-centric answer versus a normal, more repetitive chatbot answer."

Of course, this doesn't render sales reps' jobs obsolete, as the virtual selling assistant provides context to salespeople on a case-by-case basis to help them identify prospects' pain points and come up with highly targeted solutions and gameplans for each buyer's particular preferences. When sales reps aren't tasked with identifying that information, they have more time to create personalized campaigns and strategize about the next best steps.

"A virtual selling assistant can qualify visitors coming to the website at all hours of the day, so it helps the human be more productive in gathering insights and providing creative solutions."

MARK KILENS, DRIFT



Case In Point: How Gong Influenced \$1.3M In Closed/Won Through Conversational Marketing

THE CHALLENGE:

Gong, a revenue intelligence platform, was faced with audiences who didn't quite understand its services. Tasked with having to educate its prospects, the company needed a sales and marketing platform that would fit with its existing martech stack, provide a highly relevant experience to prospects and intelligently handle large amounts of website traffic.

THE SOLUTION:

Gong utilized Drift's revenue acceleration platform to create targeted content and humanize the buying experience. Most notable is Bruno, Gong's 24/7 virtual selling assistant. Bruno tapped into Gong's existing knowledge pool — no manual programming necessary — and can now factor in criteria more quickly than humans, while the continuous interactions with customers strengthen Bruno's database.

THE RESULTS:

Through the creation of Bruno, Gong saw results such as:

- \$9 million in pipeline influenced;
- \$1.3 million in closed/won influenced; and
- Increased meetings booked by an average of 44% quarter-over-quarter.



Conclusion

The evolution of conversational marketing from a simple chatbot into a highly intelligent assistant has enabled B2B orgs to increase lead conversion, personalize the buying journey and enable seamless communication and engagement with prospects and customers. As the AI powering these platforms continues to grow and more companies realize the value of conversational marketing, this strategy is poised to further establish itself as an essential component of marketing and sales' playbook.

“Conversational marketing helps the customer relax, share and, most importantly, informs them on their journey,” said Noel. “This is especially important in the B2B lens, as it helps promote understanding them and provides buyers with the appropriate content as they’re engaging. The two biggest things that influence the sales cycle are trust and ease.”



Drift is the Revenue Acceleration platform that combines chat, email, video, and automation to remove the friction from business buying. With Drift, you can start conversations with future customers now, on their terms – not days later. There are over 50,000 businesses that use Drift today to generate more revenue, shrink sales cycles, and make buying easy.

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Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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