



How to Optimise Your Content Management System

for the Consumer
Search Experience





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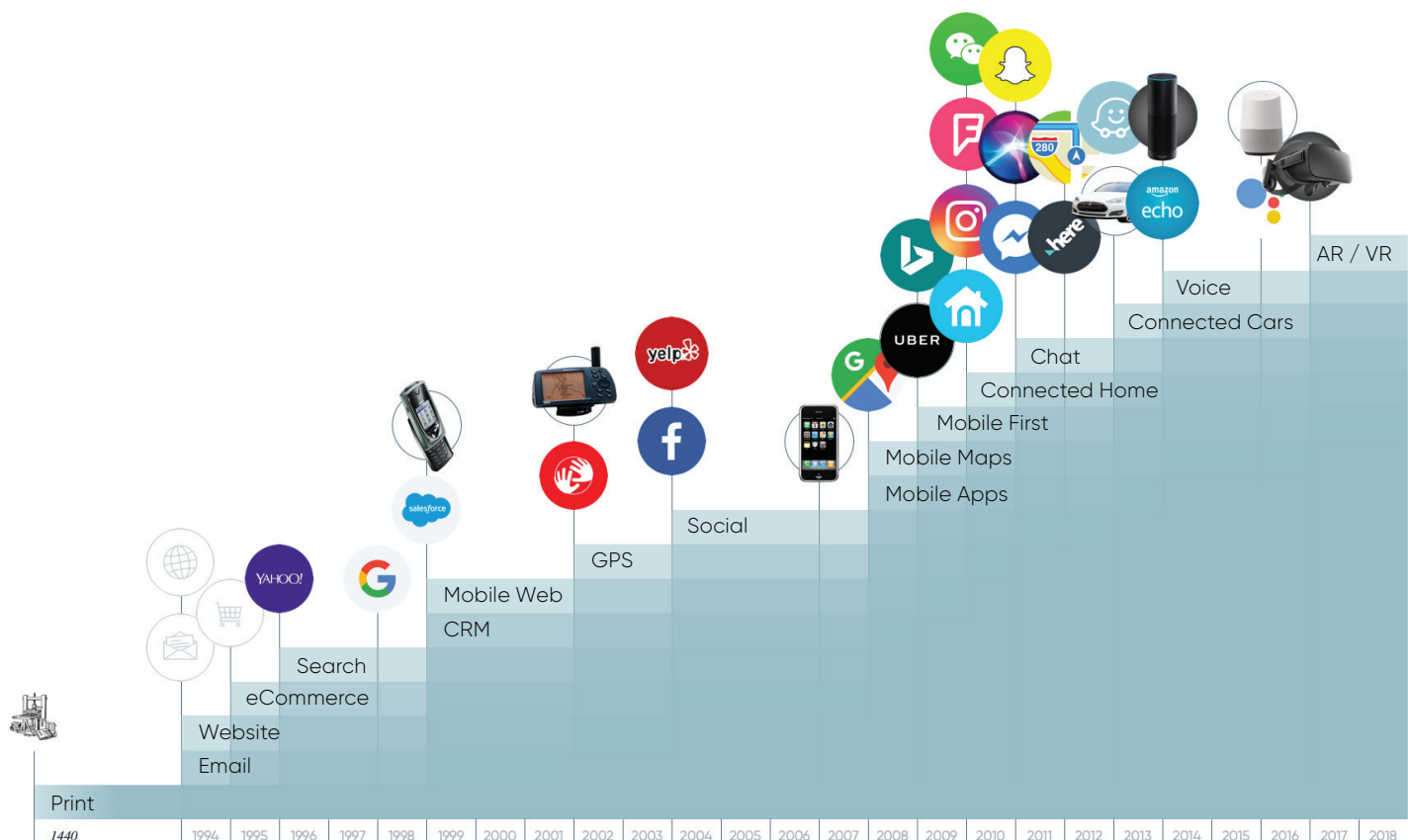
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The customer journey is fragmenting.

Today's digital customer journeys are more varied and fragmented than ever before. With the rise of voice search, mass adoption of connected devices, and the continued evolution of third-party discovery experiences like Google, Pinterest, Bing, Yelp, and others, the landscape of digital channels is growing increasingly complex. Customers have more ways than ever to discover, engage, and transact with a brand. Organisations that still rely on the marketing funnel model will be left behind: as Google puts it, today "most journeys don't resemble a funnel at all... no two consumer journeys are exactly alike."¹

With so many touchpoints and unique paths to transaction, how can marketers deliver great experiences at scale across these multi-channel customer journeys?

Data from Forrester shows that 95% of customers use three or more channels to connect with a company in a single interaction, with 62% using more than one device.²

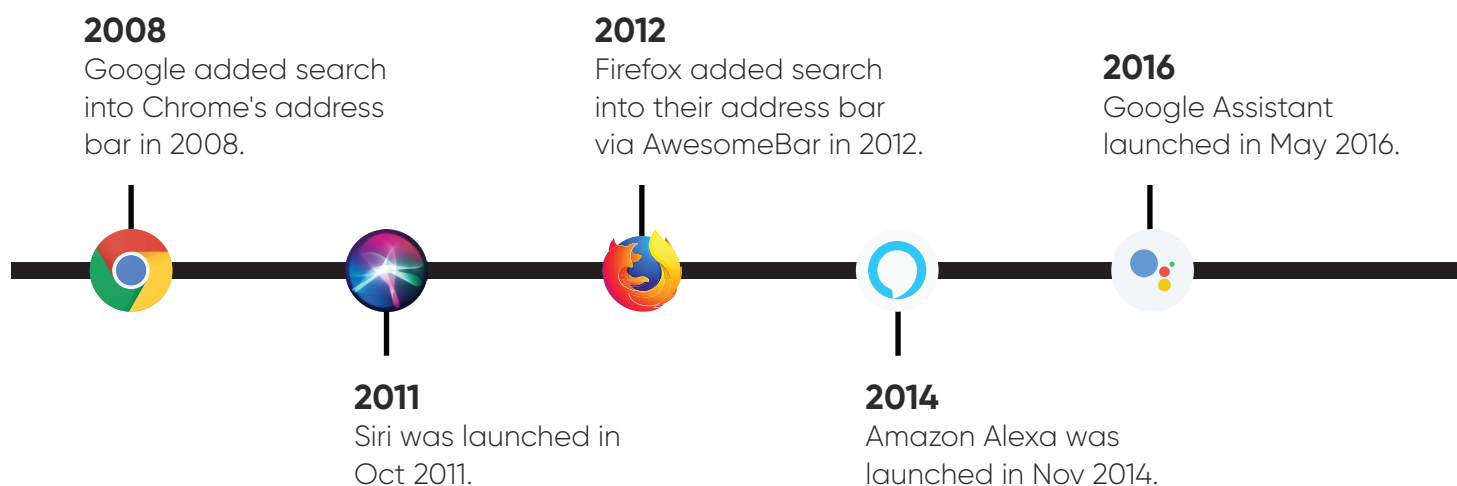


Luckily for marketers, customer journeys increasingly revolve around search experiences – whether customers are looking to find information, book an appointment, or make a purchase. In fact, over 90% of customers report that they use search at every stage of their customer lifecycle, presenting an opportunity for marketers to impact each individual journey.

Consider how the technologies we use to access the internet have evolved over the past decade:

Each of these innovations has helped further interweave search into the fabric of our daily lives, from tighter search integrations in our browsers to the rise of voice search we are witnessing today.

Read on for three new realities facing marketers today – and three ways to help your CMS-built content stand out in search.



"As new technology reshapes the customer journey, marketers need strategic solutions for managing their brand experience. By pairing exemplary experience tools with structured data management and a customer-first mindset, brands can reach consumers in their moments of intent and drive engagement and conversion."

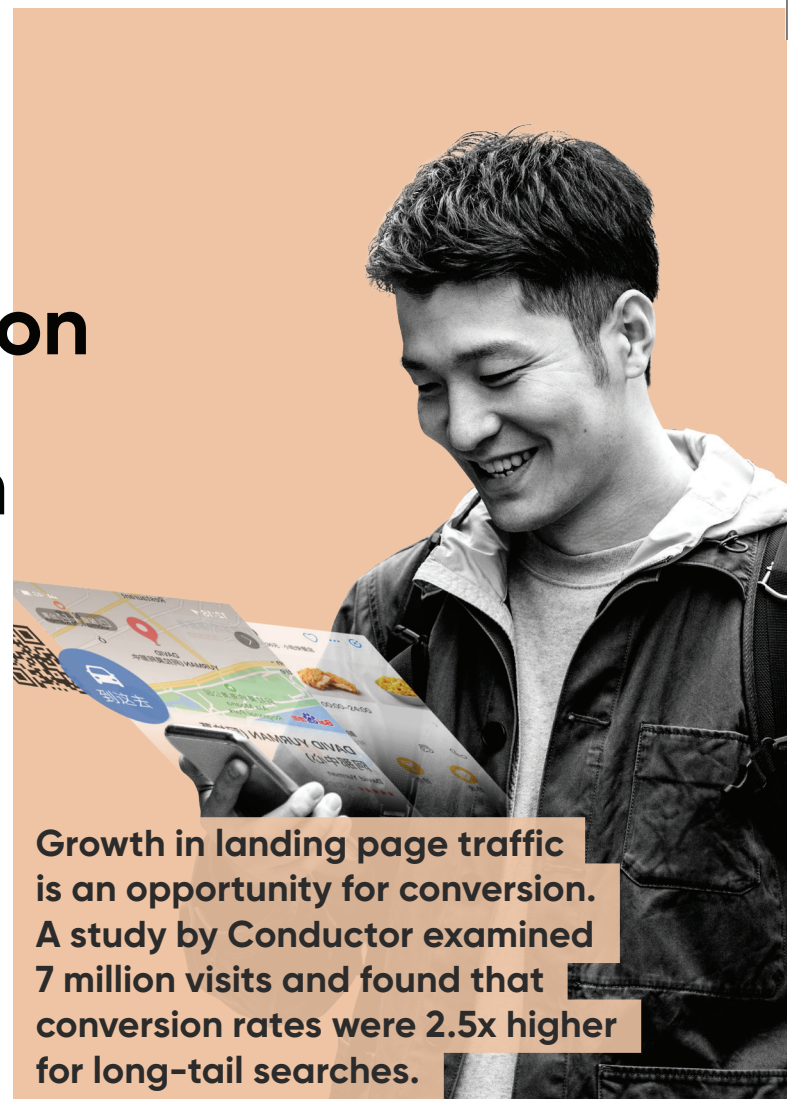
Cody Cnrkovich, Head of Platform Partners & Strategy



Customers arrive on pages deeper in your website than the homepage.

Instead of purely ranking for keywords and search terms, search engines now parse the intent of the searcher when surfacing results and answers. Consumers benefit from this improved search experience; for marketers, it marks a shift in the way customers arrive at your website. Increasingly, they land on pages that meet their highly specific needs, rather than navigating from your homepage through your digital experience.

Customers are also leveraging long-tail searches more often as they navigate through their complex digital journeys and refine their objectives. Long-tail keywords are highly specific terms with low monthly search volume. They are more likely to drive conversions, and are easier to rank for than more general terms with higher search volumes.



Growth in landing page traffic is an opportunity for conversion. A study by Conductor examined 7 million visits and found that conversion rates were 2.5x higher for long-tail searches.

Marketers, take note: Google is looking to match better answers with the searcher's intent — which means specific landing pages on your website such as category pages, articles, and local pages may continue to outperform and attract more traffic than your homepage. At Yext, we see clients with flat or declining homepage traffic over the past two years getting 2–3x their homepage traffic on other pages.

WHAT TO DO:

Optimise your CMS-built pages for search intent.



Stay up to date with keyword research:

Ensure you have landing pages that deliver what consumers are searching for. Common search modifiers include competitors, location, transactional keywords, informational terms, and navigational keywords.



Develop pages and content for questions:

Consumers are asking questions about your products, services, and your brand. You can find these questions in your search data and by analysing the content that ranks for your target terms. Adding these questions and their answers to an FAQ page, product knowledge base, or blog can drive increases in share of search results and organic traffic to your website.



Update your reporting to uncover this behavior:

Across dashboards and reports, segment traffic and analytics to compare location pages, category pages, articles, and other landing pages against the homepage.

Structured data is the foundation for the evolving internet.

Marketers must adapt to this ever-evolving, diversified mix of channels, platforms, and devices by rethinking how their website and transaction points interface with and connect to their customers' digital journeys.

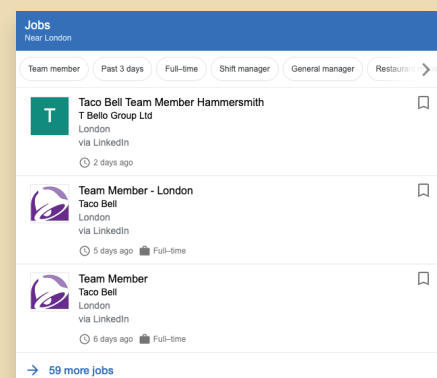
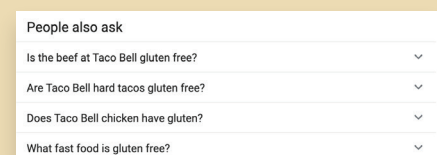
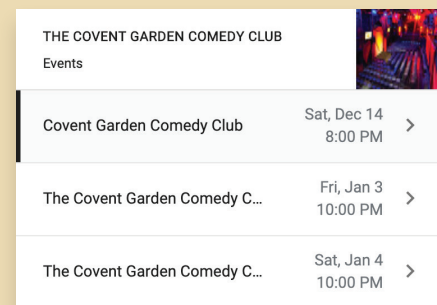
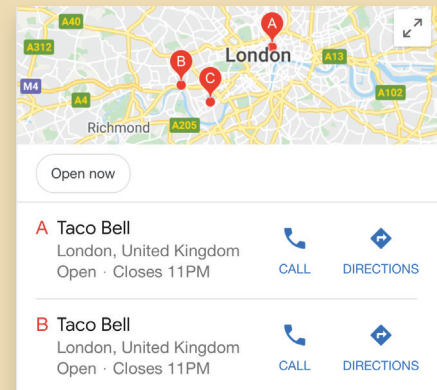
Search results used to consist of 10 blue links on a page. But now, search engines provide consumers with structured, direct answer experiences that reflect the user's search intent.

Whether it's the local map pack or the product carousel, third-party search experiences require detailed information from brands – the same specifics that pull users to the pages on your site that meet their search intent.

Structured data helps search engines understand your content more accurately, and at a deeper level, both allowing users to find more relevant results and enabling "enhanced appearance in Google search results."⁴ For pages on your website that directly map to a specific feature in the SERP, such as local pages, event pages, or product pages, it's important to leverage structured data so you can establish that connection with search engines and intelligent assistants.

"In general, rich results help users to better understand how your pages are relevant to their searches, so they translate into success for websites." For example, Google found that Eventbrite leveraged event structured data and saw a 100% increase in the typical YOY growth of traffic from search.⁵

Google



WHAT TO DO:

Optimise your brand data for search.

Conduct an internal structured data analysis. What kinds of structured data are you surfacing on your website? Common types include locations, products, events, jobs, and professionals.



First: Is that data accurate?

Where does that data come from internally? And who owns it?



Second: Is there a landing page for every single piece of data?

Is there a store page for each store? Are there product pages and category pages? And does each doctor have their own profile page? Every single landing page can be the answer to a consumer's query, and missing a page represents lost business.



Third: Is the data on each page properly marked up to Schema.org best practices?

Google offers a [Structured Data Testing Tool](#) which scrapes and interprets a URL as it would appear to their web crawlers.

Third-party experiences increasingly drive engagement and traffic.

As search experiences evolve, not only are customers taking different paths into your website, they're directly taking action on third-party experiences. On Google, Yell, and other platforms, customers can engage with brands by clicking through directly to a site's e-commerce experience, making a phone call, placing an order, getting driving directions, and more. In 2017, we found that on average, brands see 2.7x more impressions on third-party experiences like apps, maps, search results, social networks, and others, compared to the brands' websites.⁶

This represents a significant number of customer journeys, many of which will continue to your website. In the case of voice search, 28% of customers call a business after a voice search, while 27% go on to visit the website.⁷

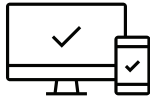
Marketers must capture these high-intent leads by ensuring that their brand is present in these contexts, and that these experiences are optimised to drive users back to the brand website. This presents an opportunity to extend the CMS to connect and power these off-site experiences.



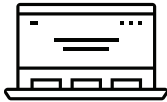
28% of customers call a business after a voice search.

WHAT TO DO:

Optimise to drive traffic from your off-site brand presence.

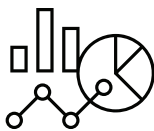


Ensure your brand is present and accurate on third-party experiences. Data such as phone number and address are used by voice assistants and ride-share apps to connect customers with your brand, and missing information disrupts the customer journey.



Customise landing pages for the third-party contexts that are valuable to your business. Here are some examples:

- For consumers viewing your London store listing on Google My Business, deliver a seamless customer journey by linking to the relevant location page as opposed to your homepage or storefinder.
- In the food and hospitality industries, create and link location-specific menu and service pages, location-specific online ordering and booking pages, and ensure your reservation platform URL is properly linked.



Segment reporting to include off-site impressions and engagements, as well as traffic driven by off-site experiences. Leverage multiple tracking URLs to turn on traffic reporting from each platform like Yelp or Google.

PLUS:

The rise of voice and visual search experiences promise further fragmentation.

We've shown you how to pivot your strategies to face today's realities, but tomorrow's aren't far behind: The global market for voice search devices grew 187% in Q2 of 2018.⁸ 76% of smart speaker users perform local searches weekly and 46% use voice search to find a local business on a daily basis. And these local voice searches indicate high intent to interact through other channels. After making a local voice search, 28% of users call the business, 27% visit the website, and 19% visit the business itself.⁹

In addition, there are now more than 600 million visual searches conducted on Pinterest every month.¹⁰ Image-based Pinterest ads reportedly boast an 8.5% conversion rate, and Pinterest is projected to exceed \$1 billion a year in ad revenue by 2020.¹¹ This growth is driven in large part by millennials – an estimated 62% of Generation Z and millennial consumers reportedly desire the ability to search visually over any other new technology.¹² And Google, Amazon, Pinterest, and Bing have developed significant capabilities in this area, alongside Google and Amazon's continued focus on furthering their voice recognition and voice search capabilities.



Gartner predicts 30% of web browsing sessions will be screenless by 2020.¹³

Conclusion

These shifts have major implications for how marketers approach the tools in their arsenal. Although at first glance it may seem like an enormous challenge lies ahead for marketers, there is an opportunity for marketers to leverage their already robust website. The content management system has historically contained information like locations, events, job openings, and products, while also enabling customers to take action – whether to purchase, make an appointment, or get directions.

To solve for the evolution in search journeys, marketers today need to take their CMS experience and extend and connect it to search engines and other unbranded experiences across the internet via structured data. By not extending the reach of this information into search engines and off-site engagement points, marketers risk missing out on brand appearance in SERP and in voice search.

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The customer journey starts with a question, and every day consumers search for answers about brands. However, they are increasingly served false or misleading information from sources other than the brand. Yext, the Search Experience Cloud company, exists to help brands regain and maintain a direct relationship with their customers. With a mission to provide perfect answers everywhere, Yext puts businesses in control of their facts online by delivering brand verified answers straight from the source – wherever their customers are searching.

Companies like Taco Bell, Marriott, Jaguar-Land Rover, and thousands of businesses around the world use Yext to take back control of the customer journey, starting on their own website.

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