Unleashing GenAI in personalized experiences: three tips for CMOs

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To stand out in the marketplace and better link products and services with their intended consumers, chief marketing officers (CMOs) have been tasked with maturing omnichannel and personalization capabilities for the past 15 years or so. These advancements required enterprise coordination and transformation strategies that have touched all parts of the organization — and then, practically overnight, generative AI (GenAI) opened new horizons of possibilities, if leaders can build greater operational excellence and governance.

In the GenAI future, business models and interrelated decisions can grow more complex and more powerful than ever before. But today's narrative concerns artificial intelligence (AI) connectivity across the enterprise, enabling new innovation and disruption as well as personalized product and service recommendations using customer profiles, past data and recent interactions.

Where does the CMO sit in this future — and what are the hurdles that need to be cleared in the present? Recent research points toward the answers. When asked to identify which function is the highest priority for deploying GenAI, nearly half of C-suite respondents in the EY Innovation Realized Survey 2023 cited sales and marketing — far and away the top response overall. CMOs have also historically been at the nexus of data, analytics and enabling technologies, and a Forrester report from 2018 showed that 62% of organizations whose CMOs led digital transformations put up double-digit growth vs. 50% when CIOs oversaw the upgrade.

But this transformation is not merely a tech implementation exercise. Much as the automobile reshaped our cities, and the internet upended how we market, GenAI (and AI more broadly) must drive a reimagination of how we work. The challenge is to think bigger and acknowledge that these technologies will define our business models and processes instead of vice versa — and that humans should remain at the center within the realms where they add the most value across a spectrum of new possibilities. The EY-Adobe Alliance can help CMOs accelerate this leap into our GenAI future.

In every part of marketing, we already see powerful new examples of GenAI

Business outcomes

Corporate outcomes

Growth	Profit	Shareholder value

Marketing outcomes

Brand equity --------- Conversion --------- Consumer lifetime value

Business needs

Create and manage audiences	Create and manage content	Create end-to-end journeys	Manage paid, owned and earned campaigns	Measure and optimize
First-party data strategy and scaling	Content analysis and insights	Lead scoring and nurturing	Campaign strategy	Reporting
Data enrichment	Content creation	In-channel optimization	Campaign planning	Optimization
Internal data	Content management	Cross-channel optimization	Campaign execution	KPI/performance analysis
External data	Tagging and taxonomy	Recommendations	Campaign optimization	In-channel measurement
Audience data and insights	Rights management	Direct-to-consumer e-commerce		X-channel measurement
Audience segmentation	Content syndication	Third-party e-commerce		
Audience strategy		Loyalty		
Consumer privacy and consent		Customer care		

Sample GenAI use cases

Create and manage audiences	Create and manage content	Create end-to-end journeys	Manage paid, owned and earned campaigns	Measure and optimize
Sentiment analysis	SEO keyword generation	Product page optimization	Campaign generation	Customer trend analysis
Review summarization	Taxonomy generation	Order summarization	Keyword optimization (SEO)	Insights generation
Preference summarization	Language translation	Website personalization	Conversational SEO	Marketing mix modeling using large language models
Community management large language models	Image generation	Call agent script generation	Tag generation	Report summarization
	Copy generation	Automated lead retargeting	Auto/robo-influencer	

Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High

Marketer level of difficulty

Illustrative

Why GenAI, and why now?

For GenAI, the objective for many organizations has been to wade in slowly and gauge how the technology can benefit either the top or bottom line of your operation, while scrupulously managing risk and privacy concerns. While caution and experimentation are warranted, it's also imperative to make headway before your competitors do, because the playbooks of marketing are being rewritten right now.

AI is being deployed to drive efficiency through the entire marketing apparatus, as shown in the graphic above. Marketing automation strategies such as A/B testing of page layouts, ad copy, search engine optimization, follow-up emails, last-mile suppressions and contextual chat support are all accelerated by the technology, freeing up human resources to focus on other elements of the sales cycle.

These technologies will not replace human resources but rather create a collaborative environment where humans and AI can work together to achieve more – particularly in scaling greater personalization – and to ultimately optimize the customer experience and boost sales.

But underpinning these capabilities are robust data architectures and governance, organizational structures that smash down silos, and empowered and emboldened personnel. Here are three crucial domains to focus on, in which EY professionals combine their sector-focused insights and technology-enabled skill sets and with the power of Adobe's suite of platforms to help CMOs connect the dots and develop ROI faster.

A sports brand's strategic shift: from B2C to direct-to-consumer growth

This company's goal was to build on its brand and create a marketplace of the future, where they could leverage a direct relationship with the consumers and better understand their preferences. However, it struggled to deliver this ambition, so it turned to EY professionals as its enterprise data and AI provider. Together, we drove use cases across a wide spectrum of key customer experience transformation needs, including segmenting, identifying triggers for churn across the lifecycle, bringing its marketing mix modeling in-house, and better selecting and targeting different audiences. EY teams leveraged our AI-powered Customer Decision Journey to identify new opportunities and led a deep dive into one specific opportunity focused on product substitutes. Through strategic personalization, the brand tripled its e-commerce sales, and better harnessed market demand totaling over US$1.5 billion thanks to an innovation on its app.

Building trust through data compliance

Managing and enabling data

Oftentimes, the source of value in generative AI – or the barrier to value – is in the data being utilized and how that data is accessed.

Generative AI requires large volumes of data to learn from and generate useful outputs. If there's not enough data, the AI programs can end up with inaccurate patterns or false assumptions, which significantly impacts the performance of the generated content or campaigns. Most organizations have no shortage of data, but gathering and maintaining it can be a challenge, and if the input data is incorrect, irrelevant, outdated or biased, the outputs will reflect the same limitations.

Many companies struggle with data fragmented across separate systems and platforms, encompassing consumer profiles, purchasing histories, browsing behavior, social media engagement and more. This data diversity helps the AI understand various aspects of the customer journey and develop more rounded and effective marketing strategies or content. Breaking down these silos to create a unified view can provide AI systems with a more holistic and accurate understanding of the customer journey, but it can be technologically and organizationally challenging.

Housing such data can also involve navigating complex privacy regulations across the world, alongside ethical considerations, all of which are evolving rapidly.

The EY and Adobe difference

By leveraging the skills of EY advanced data and analytics professionals, CMOs and their teams are equipped to collect, manage and unify first-party, real-time data from all channels. Our people have decades of experience with some of the largest companies in the world, helping them build the technological foundations for managing, curating and examining data and ultimately translating it into intelligent, action-driven insights.

Adobe Experience Platform (AEP) is core to that mission, a unifying application with functionality that streamlines collecting, managing and acting on customer data, with the flexibility to enable current and future applications. EY capabilities help amplify Adobe Analytics (within AEP) by providing customized and versatile reporting dashboards and interpretations that inform your organization's customer experience KPIs and other strategies.

Lastly, customer trust, privacy and security go hand in hand. EY practitioners have extensive competencies in regulatory and compliance, parallel to Adobe's robust data management capabilities, verifying that your ultimate go-to-market process is compliant based on data privacy regulations, like the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act, as well as industry-specific rules, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Growth built from personalization

Providing personalization at scale

This data foundation and AI enable the next generation of marketing and sales effectiveness: greater personalization. To score points with discerning buyers, personalization at scale derives an endless number of combinations (or permutations) of targeted messaging, content structures and methods of channel delivery.

GenAI uses the extensive data available to classify prospects and customers into clearly defined categories or segments based on characteristics such as demographic information, past buying history, behavior and preferences. Then it can offer personalized product recommendations as well as customize product descriptions, emails, social media content and more. GenAI can analyze when a user is most likely to engage with content and through which channel, then deploy content accordingly for maximum effectiveness, while also continuously evaluating and learning from data, so that marketing tactics can dynamically adjust to consumer behavior changes in real time.

The EY and Adobe difference

With our experience with global companies and deep sector insights, in addition to AEP's unique technology that streamlines collecting and acting on customer data, organizations can leverage insights to scale personalization efforts and cater to a growing and diverse customer base.

The EY strategic alliance with Adobe is central to establishing and transforming data-driven customer profiles into cohesive customer journeys across digital and physical touchpoints. The EY approach to customer experience, combined with AEP analytics and data features, helps deliver consistent personalization at every interaction and drive enhanced, long-term value.

And AEP's content management features include making content creation and delivery more efficient, verifying the delivery of the right content for every customer touch point, within one platform. Complementing AEP content management features, EY digital strategy teams help you unlock, improve and digitize sustainable growth strategies through marketing approaches that drive better outcomes across revenue, profitability and market share.

Meanwhile, Adobe Commerce adds more dynamism in developing AI-driven personalized experiences for B2B and B2C customers. It enables personalized digital buying experiences, combining a customer-centric approach with the right integrated back-end processing ecosystems – for instance, with personalized site search, product recommendations and browsing. EY teams can help build a digital presence, supported by Adobe Commerce, to help drive revenue.

Empowering new practitioners and new operations

In this new paradigm, the balance between human and machine must be reimagined. The opportunities outlined above, when looked at skeptically, can begin to seem more like challenges: a relentless pace of content inside today's manual and disconnected workflows and siloed operations. But when looked at thoughtfully, GenAI is a driving enabler to work more efficiently and cohesively.

GenAI creates an onramp to AI and other technology, spanning applications that face both internally and externally, personally and professionally. And it's a democratizing force that research has shown to narrow the gap between top-performing employees and lower performers, through interfaces that are conversational in typical human language, not code, reducing the barriers to entry for lots of skill sets. Reimagining the enterprise by placing humans at the center of AI-enabled, enterprise transformations can help unlock value creation across a spectrum of new possibilities.
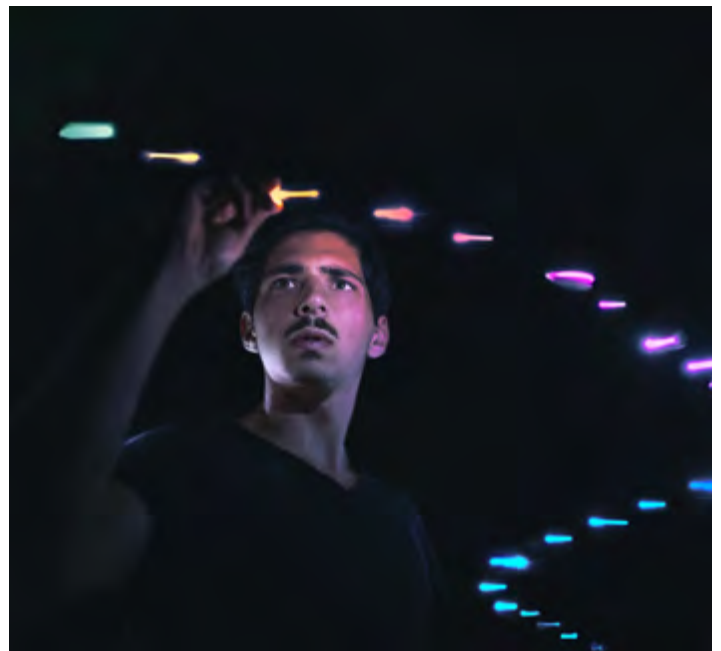
CMOs have an opportunity to deliver not just on powerful technology but to reshape tool sets, mindsets and skill sets. Their efforts can mean the difference between success and failure in a rapidly evolving landscape — a stark challenge, but also a profound opportunity.

The EY and Adobe difference

Through the EY.ai Maturity Model, EY teams evaluate your current level of AI adoption and uncover gaps to propel your business transformation with a detailed analysis and benchmarking of your enterprise AI strategy and roadmap. It's one facet of EY.ai, a unifying platform through which your organization gains a trusted advisor that understands your business and industry, brings together a broad ecosystem of collaborators such as Adobe, and can seamlessly connect AI capabilities to help you drive AI-enabled business transformations.

The multidisciplinary EY organization can pinpoint the potential challenges and opportunities within people and processes and intelligent automation and workflows. For instance, EY Skills Foundry is a workforce upskilling and reskilling platform that helps businesses adapt at pace by equipping people with the skills they need to continuously realize transformation. And EY Change Experience is a new, more personalized and immersive approach to change management, informed by client experience and Harvard Business School research, which addresses factors that most influence workforce transformations.

And in the nuts and bolts of next-generation marketing, Adobe and EY teams help clients integrate people and content, managing work from start to finish for delivery of measurable outcomes. Adobe tools enable coordination across teams and accelerate content production with automated workflows (while reducing time-to-market and enhancing productivity).

To learn more, visit: EY and Adobe Alliance | EY - US.

Questions for CMOs to ask

CMOs who leverage a transformation mindset and reimagine the nature of work will be best positioned to drive exponential business, societal and human value and advancement. Consider your answers to these better questions to inform your next steps on this journey to greater value creation.
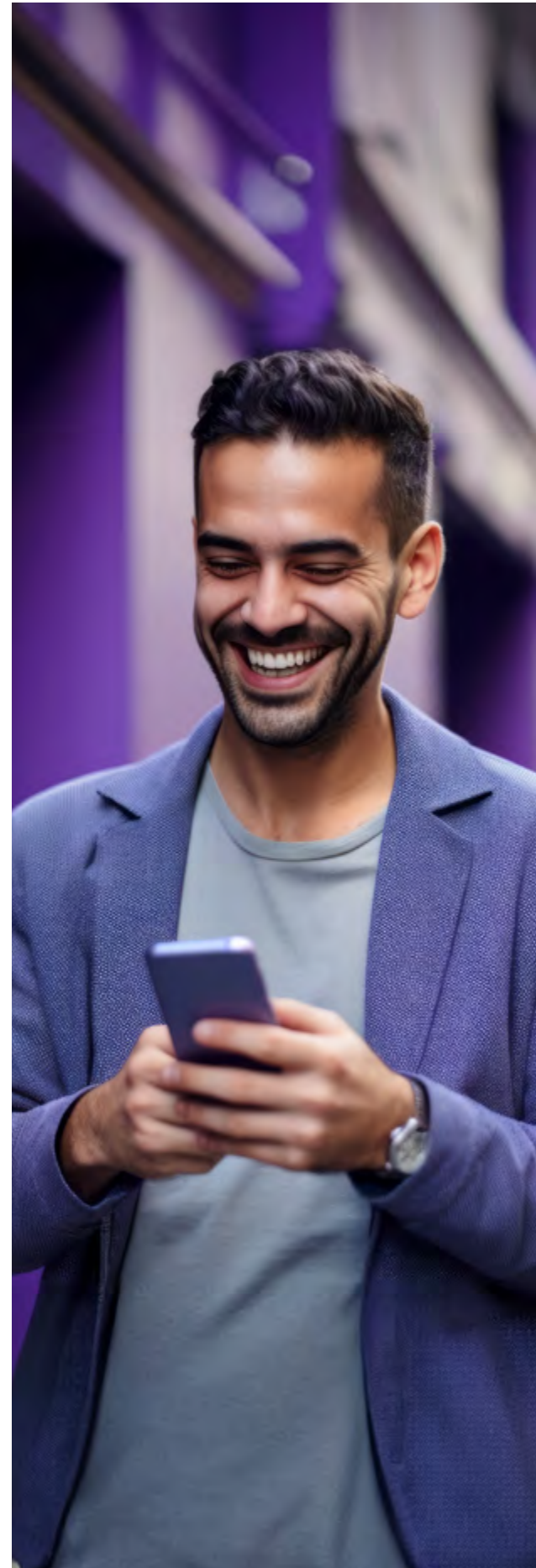
Overall strategy

▸ Which specific areas within the value chain do you and the broader C-suite believe present the greatest AI opportunities? How do they translate to sales and marketing?

▸ What metrics or key performance indicators are you looking to improve through AI adoption?

▸ What are some organizational barriers for mass AI adoption?

Data

▸ Is your data sufficiently accurate to drive valid signals, and is it updated often enough to be consistently useful? Is it complete enough to support meaningful analysis?

▸ Do your key data attributes follow a standardized format to enable interoperability?

▸ What models extract the best insights from that data? How do you interact with those models?

Getting started

▸ Have you embraced a test-and-learn culture to empower employees and gain feedback from customers in pilot projects?

▸ Can you create collaborative environments where humans and AI can work together – and learn?

▸ What approaches are you following so that your use of AI is responsible and ethical?

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EY | Building a better working world

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Enabled by data and technology, diverse EY teams in over 150 countries provide trust through assurance and help clients grow, transform and operate.

Working across assurance, consulting, law, strategy, tax and transactions, EY teams ask better questions to find new answers for the complex issues facing our world today.

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