The DTC Collective is a community that brings together influential, global voices to realize the potential of digital retail. The group was founded in response to three force majeures that occurred in rapid succession: First was the onset of GDPR in Europe, which sent retailers who sell or market on digital channels scrambling to update their communications to comply with guidelines that weren’t designed in response to companies like theirs. Second was the slow and still ongoing elimination of third-party cookies by companies like Mozilla’s Firefox, Apple and soon, Google. And third was the onset of coronavirus, which expedited what many analysts had previously predicted would be a three-year journey to a 50–50 online/offline shift in retail. The founding members saw a need for a community to come together and discuss how to do things differently in an all direct-to-consumer world, and help actively shape the trajectory of the retail industry.

This Fall, the DTC Collective convened to discuss how the ownership of technology and data governance has shifted as C-suite roles continue to evolve — all while keeping customers at the center. Below, see a summary of key themes that surfaced during the conversation.

### Marketing and IT: Shared Narrative, Shared Outcomes

Traditionally, IT owns customer data and Marketing owns data activation through customer outreach and communications. However, friction exists between those two groups on what projects take priority in order to deliver on the customer experience. Is it a CDP project to get a complete view of the shopper? Is it a personalization project to enhance communications across channels? The key to a successful partnership between marketing and technology is alignment on the definition of the customer experience and lifecycle. Teams that educate each other and collaborate on how to grow those experiences in the rise of digital will maintain that level of alignment throughout the year. For example, marketing teams should bring IT teams through their conversations about how that vision manifests in marketing outreach despite which team is executing what.

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**MEMBERS OF THE COLLECTIVE STATED**

> At the end of the day, if you have a company that’s operating with synergy and alignment of goals, it doesn’t matter where the technical aptitudes or resources lie as long as the customer benefits.

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**THE TAKEAWAY**

The foundation for collaboration and alignment between Marketing and IT will be KPIs associated with the vision for customer success. Whether the KPIs are customer acquisition costs, lifetime value or something else; joint measures will enable prioritization of projects that will benefit the customer directly, rather than running parallel projects with competing objectives.
Rigidity Kills: An Organizational and Tactical Mindset

We all know agility is necessary in a fast-changing retail environment, but to the extent with which we practice it is another story. Even at the most tactical levels, rigidity can cause bottlenecks that impact every aspect of the customer experience. For example, larger companies experience administrative bottlenecks due to tension with roles and responsibilities and a lack of visibility into that unified customer-centric vision. Content was identified as an example of this tension. Retailers experience delays in content creation, production and optimization because team members struggle to understand which image will resonate closely with shoppers and the vision of what a customer wants to see. So it’s clear that a one-size fits all approach won’t work. A lifestyle image for a customer who is evaluating products closely will not help her see the detailed texture and size of a handbag she’s considering buying. Similarly, a product image for a customer who is exploring new brands will not help her discover new products she might be interested in.

THE TAKEAWAY

Understanding shopper context and preference and dynamically automating what products each shopper is seeing with that down-to-the-second level of fluidity is critical in delivering hyper-relevant experiences for customers. Not only will that deliver relevant experiences, but it will build on those individual customer insights over time to only serve what each shopper wants to see. That holistic understanding of each shopper will take the guesswork out of determining what visual assets, content and images each shopper wants to see. This way, you will alleviate some of that rigidity with your automation being flexible for you.

Shiny Objects: What the Customer Really Needs

With new technology like augmented reality and more, it can be easy to be distracted by the bells and whistles of the different capabilities that your customers “need.” Balancing the future view with new technology and where shoppers will be shopping with what customers will always fundamentally require can be challenging. However, building a fundamental understanding of what shoppers will always want from your brand is the best place to start.

THE TAKEAWAY

Right now, if you can solve something as basic as showing a shopper a product they would be interested in based on their preferences and where they are in the customer lifecycle, you’re already delivering dividends on the customer experience and how that impacts your bottom line.

FOR INQUIRIES RELATED TO THE DTC COLLECTIVE AND BECOMING A MEMBER, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE.