


The link between content, context and commerce

Fab Di Carlantonio explains how retailers can connect with customers on a much deeper level than previously possible

 The strategic importance of content to e-commerce has dramatically increased in recent years. According to the old adage, content is king, and retailers are beginning to realise that to deliver the type of experience customers expect, they need a cohesive content management strategy. This will give them an advantage when it comes to building a customer community, improving loyalty and ultimately driving sales.

There are several sources of content for retailers to consider as they begin to define their content management strategy. From proprietary product to partner supplied and user-generated content, retailers have access to more information than ever before. Customers are also becoming active participants in the online experience by contributing product feedback, sharing opinions, as well as promoting products via social networks. As Forrester states in its recent report *The future of online customer experience*, online experiences will be: “customised by the end user, aggregated at the point of use, relevant to the moment, and social as a rule, not an exception.” Self-service and research driven customers have come to expect access to digestible and reusable content across channels.

And what additional value can retailers achieve by leveraging this content? Content provides context. It gives retailers the ability to create targeted communities, personalised offers, and connect with customers on a much deeper level than previously possible. So what can retailers do to strengthen the link between content, context and commerce?

Firstly, conduct a content audit. Determine where your content resides and make sure you consider all sources, including third-party content. Once you have an idea as to what/where your content resides, determine what you want to accomplish with it. Set goals

and metrics, and make sure you articulate requirements independent of your current technology capabilities.

Remember, your customers will talk about you, whether or not you give them a home for such dialogue. Encourage user-generated content by giving your customers a place to create and share content about your products. If appropriate, build community sites, blogs, wikis, or whatever other social meeting ground you think will appeal to your customer base. Research has shown time and time again that customers seek out user-generated reviews before a purchase, and reviews are considered a highly effective tool in the sales process.

Finally, whether it's your own content or user-generated content, ensure all product information is optimised for 'findability' on the major search engines. While retailers are currently doing this today for their own proprietary content, most do not consider user-generated content an asset they should pay equal attention to. Ensure all content is properly indexed and tagged. After all, your Web site is only one of a number of channels where your customers can find information about your products. Online retailing is becoming less about driving traffic to a fixed site and more about driving your content across channels.

Retailers have more content at their fingertips than ever before; however, traditional content management systems are not developed for the unique requirements of e-commerce. Solutions like CommerceLive combine the robust content management and e-commerce capabilities of Microsoft SharePoint and Commerce Server to manage such diverse content management needs.

FURTHER INFO:

www.cactuscommerce.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fab Di Carlantonio is the senior VP of sales and marketing for Cactus Commerce. Fab has specialised experience with selling IT consulting services and solutions to large Fortune 1000 customers, with the last 8 years specifically focused on delivering e-commerce solutions for the retail, consumer goods, and media and entertainment industries.