

5 ways to better digital engagement for your business in 2023

By [Brent Haumann](#)

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After Covid-19, businesses expected 2022 to be the year when they returned to normalcy. It's turned out to be anything but. Geopolitical uncertainty, inflation, and the looming threat of recession mean that few businesses (apart, perhaps, from the oil companies seeing record profits) feel entirely comfortable about their short to medium-term growth prospects.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Within this environment of uncertainty, digital engagement remains critical. But just as the global business environment has again shifted, so have the factors driving the importance of digital communication. Throughout much of 2020 and 2021, it was the only way for businesses to engage with their customers, especially when lockdowns were at their peaks.

Today, it's more about meeting customers where they are, no matter where in the world they might actually be. This shift is only further underscored by the fact that the global online audience will be almost as big as the global TV audience by 2023.

This growth and change of priorities mean that the strategies needed to optimise digital engagement have shifted too. And they will continue to shift. If anyone thinks that 2023 will bring about a return to some preconceived notion of normal, they haven't been paying attention.

Knowing that, what strategies should you put in place to optimise digital engagement in 2023?

1. Double down on engagement as online and social growth slows

Today, there are an estimated five billion people around the planet who are online. With the planet's population having passed eight billion people this year, that suggests there's still a lot of room left for growth. But growth is stalling. Even in a country like South Africa, which has a significant digital divide, 80% of the population has access to the internet. At the same time, it's estimated that more than 75% of eligible populations already use social media.

For organisations, this slowing growth suggests that there's more to be gained from doubling down on digital engagement with the customers already on your digital channels than there is in persuading the people who aren't on them to join.

Remember, if you get engagement right, you'll get to the point where your most loyal customers become brand advocates and bring in new customers.

2. Don't rip out the carpets

Similarly, in the face of overwhelming change, it can be all too tempting for businesses to completely overhaul their digital engagement practices. But that's unnecessary, expensive, and may even set the business further back than it was before.

A far better approach is for the organisation to maximise and complement its existing platforms. This allows it to continually improve engagement and adapt as it goes rather than having to start from scratch all over again.

3. Always be where your customers are

Maximising existing platforms does not, however, mean that organisations should be averse to exploring new ones. Research shows that, even as internet penetration has grown globally, the average amount of time a person spends online hasn't.



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That means that any time people start engaging in a new online activity, it's likely because they're spending less time doing another online activity rather than abandoning an offline one. Organisations need to be aware of what these activities are and whether they can leverage them for engagement. That does not, for example, mean setting up a stall in the metaverse "just in case". What it does mean, is keeping an eye on shifting consumer behaviour and ensuring that you're prepared to build a presence on a new platform if need be.

4. Ensure you understand your customers' digital behaviour

In theory, we all know that knowing customers is critical to optimising engagement with them. We know why too. Imagine trying to have a meaningful conversation with a stranger who you know nothing about. You might strike it lucky occasionally, but chances are that you're going to struggle most of the time.

But as anyone who's ever been served an irrelevant ad online (that is, everyone) will tell you, it's something that even big tech players who've built their businesses on customer data prowess get wrong.

When it comes to personalised and meaningful digital engagements, however, the consequences of getting it wrong can be a lot more significant than they are for an irrelevant display ad. It's therefore critical that organisations build the deepest

possible understanding of their customers' digital behaviour to ensure that all engagements are done with the right messaging, on the right platform, at the right time.

5. Find the right partner

Of course, organisations don't have to undertake this optimisation on their own. By partnering with a customer engagement specialist, they put themselves in a much better position to simplify, individualise, and maximise engagement across the board.

The ideal partner will also prioritise getting things done over drawn-out processes and consulting, meaning that engagement can start improving as quickly as possible.

Resilience in the face of change

Ultimately, optimising digital engagement this way doesn't just put organisations in a better position to ride the current wave of changes but also to build resilience in the face of future shifts. The world is going to keep changing, along with customer expectations. The best way to ride that change is to always ensure that digital engagement is taking place as optimally as possible.

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