Pathways to Effective Content Personalization

The Rise of Individually-crafted Customer Experiences

With the growth of increasingly sophisticated technologies for web content management, marketing automation, and digital marketing, the ability for marketing organizations to provide highly personalized website experiences is on the rise. Today, visitors and customers expect customized experiences that address their individual needs and desires, and often quickly leave websites that treat customers as "one-size-fits-all".

But how can marketers create personalized content for all of their diverse prospects and customers without giving customers the feeling that the marketing efforts are getting too personal? How can marketers continuously design individually crafted communications that attract both prospects and returning customers, with all the relevant use cases for products, at every stage of the buyer journey? And how do personalized customer experiences better result in purchases?

The Value of Personalizing Content and Communications

Happily, personalized content has a great deal of value for both customers and vendors. For customers, it's usually pleasing to be greeted as a real person and to receive the most relevant information to help with buying decisions. For companies, it's a lot more productive and fun to communicate with customers on a truly individual level, to connect them to the content that they desire and really help them with purchases.

Content that has the personal touch contributes to building lasting relationships, drawing customers back to purchase again, and often leads to customers recommending brands and websites to colleagues and friends. When relevant customized content is delivered to customers, they perceive vendors as truly understanding their needs and wants. Such perceptions spotlight companies as

being committed to supporting customers sincerely to help them get the most out of products, solve their problems, and figure out the best way to make purchases.

Personalized content can point the way to help the customer move forward, whether making a purchase or taking important next steps in the buying journey. This contributes to converting more visitors into customers or users. Customized communications resonate more strongly with customers because the content has timely relevance for what the customer wants to do. On the other hand, most customers have no interest in generic content and messaging. These days, "one-size-fits-all" content does more harm than good.

At the most basic level, content personalization can bring in more traffic

for websites and increases time on site for improved SEO. It's critical to utilize the first seconds of a website visit to grab visitor interest and quickly show them what the site has to offer and what their next steps are. Customized content keeps the website fresh for each individual visit. Visitors look forward to finding something new that will interest them with each return to the site. This results in fewer lost opportunities.

Personalization also contributes to good sales conversations earlier in the buying journey. Through the customer data analytics "behind" personalization, Sales teams have accurate and timely information to use for more meaningful conversations with customers based on detailed knowledge of customer interactions with website and email content and other related customer data.

Value Created by Personalization

Increases Visitor Engagement
Quickly connect visitors to what they want, and they're more likely to take action
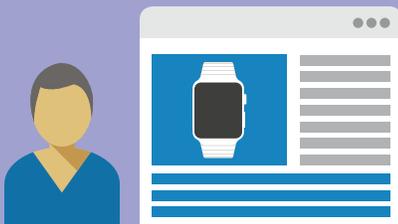
Increases Conversions
The more visitors to the website, the greater opportunity for conversions

Freshens Website for Future Visits
To keep customers coming back, give them content and offers that fit their needs

NEW PRODUCT
20%
DISCOUNT

What to Consider When Setting Up Content Personalization

Know who you're talking to.
Continuous up-to-date customer data is critical to personalize content. Is this a first-time visitor, a repeat customer, or even a former one? For each type of visitor, a different digital experience should be delivered. Customer segmentation and personas take advantage of customer data analytics to refine marketing strategies and tactics further to deliver unique customer experiences. Content should reflect an authentic interest in each customer.

The right content to the right customer at the right time.
Providing the right personalized content is a powerful way to deliver marketing that positively affects each visitor. Marketing teams should collaborate with Sales teams when aligning content with buyer journeys and sales cycles. Most importantly, ensure consistent experiences across digital sites, including mobile, for each type of visitor. And remember: The buyer journey is from the customer perspective—how they want to research and purchase products.

Create and re-purpose relevant, quality content.
Content should make a difference to customers and anticipate their needs. Relevance for customers can only come from extensive data analytics and sophisticated monitoring of visitor behavior on the website. Knowing customers inside and out is the most important step for truly engaging them. Quality content demands excellence in writing with a solid focus on the interests of each kind of customer.

Sophisticated web content management and marketing automation technologies.
These tools are essential to be able to personalize content quickly and cost effectively. It used to be an enormous task to deliver ever-changing content and layouts for webpages to match the behavior and profiles of different visitors. The evolution of powerful website optimization and content targeting technologies has put the creation of personalized content initiatives within the reach of more marketers. Marketing automation, lead scoring, and lead nurturing processes continue to bring more targeted management and a better human touch to the delivery of content and communications to diverse customers for different stages of buying journeys.

Don't be intrusive.
It is critical to ensure that personalization endeavors aren't perceived by customers as intrusive, inappropriate, too intimate, or even as stalking. Clearly display disclaimers about what information you have and with whom it will be shared. Make it easy for customers to opt out. Only use customized content and communications where people expect them to occur. The purpose of personalization is to help the visitor feel at home on vendor sites.

From Customer Data to Personalized Experiences

1

Know Your Customer

Continuously collect and
analyze customer data

2

Personas and Segments

Create appropriate categories
and profiles for customers

3

Content and Communication

Design content aligned with customer
segments and buyer journeys

4

Unique Customer Experiences

Craft individual customer experiences
consistently across digital channels

CXM

Customer Data Is Essential to Personalize Content

Data analytics contribute greatly to a better understanding of customers and provide context around customer behavior and desires. Accurate and timely data is a must. Achieving a full-bodied view of customers requires the right technologies for collecting, validating, and analyzing a lot of information about customer interactions, including responsiveness to marketing and sales efforts, buying behavior, and purchase outcomes. Data analytics help websites deliver the most relevant content, graphics, offers, and calls to action, all in order to create an experience uniquely customized for each visitor.

The driving force here is context: What does the customer want to do? Is the best content or information available to meet customer needs? Many of the data elements contribute to contextual data, which defines personalization for real-time users, where content or messaging is relevant for a specific person on a specific device (particularly mobile) at a specific time.

But care must be taken not to invade customer privacy or risk customer information security. With so much customer data available, companies must work hard to avoid the "creepiness factor" that will only serve to drive away customers.

Sophisticated Personalization Platforms Reveal Important Information About Customers

Customer Behavior	Customer Profile
Product Interest and Buying Intent	Demographics
Site Browsing History	Firmographics
Search Terms and Referring Sites	Socioeconomic
Buying History	Psychographic
Number of Visits	Current and Prior Geo-locations
Actions Taken	Personal Interests
Frequency and Length of Visit	Device Type
Date and Time	

Ways to Achieve Highly Effective Content Personalization

Once a marketing organization more thoroughly understands different kinds of customers and how they buy, it can put together plans of action to deliver personalized content at different stages of buying journeys. Marketing must take into account the types of information that their target customers would likely want to find and provide it to them.

For example, location data for website visitors (determined by personalization technology) allows a retail vendor to extend invitations to events in stores near the visitors to offer a more personalized experience and present to the visitor relevant recommendations and offers. Visitor search criteria give the vendor the opportunity to serve up the likely content that the visitor needs.

Website

Vendor websites are still a top destination for most customers. Providing a relevant, individualized experience for each visitor encourages longer stays on the site and a likely return to the site in the future. The real "messaging" for customers is the personalized experience that they have on the website each time they visit. The look and feel of the site and how the content is presented are significant factors that can engender positive experiences and buying decisions.

Engaging personalization is not just a matter of adding some pop-ups and widgets. It's the overall design that shows that the vendor truly understands what customers need and want from the website and the vendor's products. Most customers respond more strongly to native personalization than to undifferentiated promotions. Calls to action, next steps, offers, recommendations, and so on should be customized as much as possible to connect to what each visitor is interested in.

Content

Content often provides the answers to customer searches for information on products or how to solve problems. Generic answers are less helpful— customers are looking for information tailored to their needs. Personalization allows companies to vary which offers or content recommendations are delivered to each visitor. This means the creation of multiple content assets and messages, customized for each visitor. To generate multiple experiences from one content item, personalization tools can mix and match existing content components, such as offers, images, and even portions of the copy. Change out headers, logos, and images for individualized content experiences that reflect who each customer is.

Mobile

Mobile is a distinct medium, so personalization must be approached differently. What works on the desktop or even tablet frequently is not right for mobile phone devices. For people on the go with their mobile devices, content personalization must be more dynamic (real-time) but must also harmonize with content and experiences on other digital sites and devices. Decisions must be made regarding the creation of a mobile website versus a mobile app for personalized customer engagement and purchases. Mobile is much more about contextual messaging where location, preference, and time are key attributes for defining compelling personalized communication.

Targeting and Testing

The analytical groundwork for audience targeting boils down to understanding more about customers and what they might want from products and services. Test, measure, analyze, and improve all processes for deriving customer intelligence and content personalization. Take advantage of A/B testing and other methods to deliver the right content at the right time.
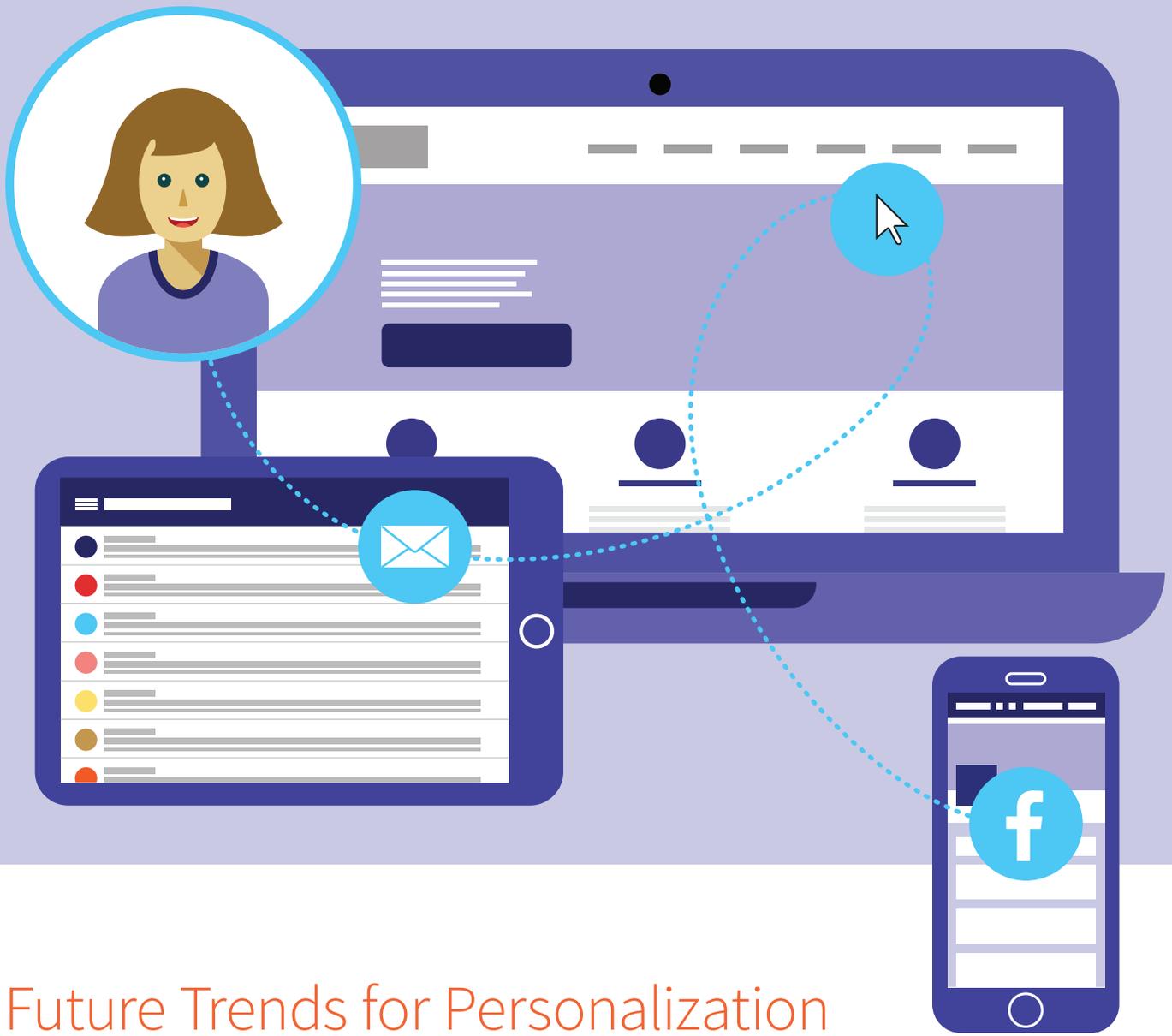
Future Trends for Personalization

As highly relevant customized content and digital marketing become the norm, experimentation will continue in order to achieve more effective and more pervasive modes of customized communications and experiences. The vast majority of future trends draw on advanced analytics (predictive analytics, big data mining, and analytics) to enable extremely "personalized" experiences for individual customers. Future trends are likely to include:

"Hyper-personalization" for Everyone

"Hyper-personalization" aims to deliver truly customized experiences for each individual, not just based on personas or customer segmentation categories. The ultimate goal is that no two visitors will see the same content on the website. Personalization platforms will gather data on device type, geo-location, time of interaction, browsing history, and other information to fine-tune the selection of content for each person. This "hyper-personalization" should greatly improve customer engagement and, ultimately, sales conversions and revenue.

Delivering Better Personalized Content for Anonymous Visitors

Anonymous visitors remain a challenge for personalization, impeding improved experiences and engagement. This is a very important segment to address since anonymous visitors are by far the largest "demographic" coming to most websites—obviously a significant opportunity to convert these visitors to leads and buyers.

Technologies are becoming available to utilize whatever is known (device, location, referrals) about each anonymous visitor when they are on a website to provide

Pathways to Effective Personalization

- The core of personalization derives from customer data and segmentation— accurate and timely data is critical to optimization

- Personalization is a continuous process of change and improvement to keep pace as customers change

- Integrate analytics, search, CRM, and web content management technologies to improve the quality of personalization

- Sophisticated automated processes are instrumental for customized experiences

- Deliver consistent personalization across channels for each customer

- Creative work with content and communications plays an important role for personalized customer experiences

- Test, monitor, analyze, improve, adapt

context for personalization processes that will help deliver more individualized content. Even if not highly customized, content that is a cut above generic text still does a better job of keeping anonymous visitors on the site longer, both helping to move them closer to conversion and to provide additional data for future personalized content.

Sophisticated Automation Pathways to Customize Content on a Large Scale
Data-driven automated personalization takes individualized content to the next level, beyond A/B testing and traditional rules-based targeting for known visitors. This sort of automation will also make a difference for tackling the anonymous visitor challenge. Automated personalization is built on predictive analytics and integrated customer data sources for assessing customer information and behavior to determine

quickly which content should be delivered. With pattern recognition processes in place, visitors can be matched to the right content. Automated personalization initiatives can be set up for long-term runs since they are based on continuous automated data analytics that fine-tune personalization processes over time.

For all marketers, the most important future objective is the continuous improvement of how personalization initiatives are executed. At its best, customized content helps and entertains customers while providing useful information. Personalization should never intrude on customer privacy or make the customer feel uncomfortable. There will always be room for enhancing content personalization initiatives that give each customer an individual "human touch".

Personalization Meets the Real World of Commerce in Five Steps

Now that we know what personalized content is, what it does, and where it's going, it is worthwhile to think about how it actually works. Let's use this example: Sally has a business. She sells seashells. She used to sell them by the seashore, but traffic and environmental concerns forced her to move inland. Now she runs Sallyco, a multi-national conglomerate that sells a host of seashell-based products. Her most popular product is commercial grade calcium carbonate, a derivative of seashells.

Her main clients are in the construction industry, and they use her products in road and building construction. Her headquarters is far from the beach, but her website is optimized to sell to customers no matter what coast they're on and worldwide. But Sally has a problem—her website doesn't personalize content. She's losing sales because her site's visitors don't feel a personal connection to Sallyco's content. They're turned off because they don't see content that's relevant to them.

Sallyco's offers are impersonal, the content does not meet their "pain points", does not "solve" the problems they have, calls to action don't reflect the realities or their customer journeys, etc. So they don't buy.

But Sally can re-invigorate her seashell business through offering personalized content and get back to the seashore (or her beach house).

Step 1

Building Foundations with Quality Content

First, Sallyco's web development team works to personalize the content that reaches visitors that come to the site. Instead of offering the same material to visitors from every location, Sallyco uses Content Personalization features to make sure that each customer views content that is applicable to their unique customer context (e.g., their available demographic information from their IP address or the browser they're using, or their site behavior from what they do when they are on the site).

Sallyco's Marketing team first works to produce content that resonates with her target consumers. Her team uses Web Analytics to determine what content is most accessed by visitors from various locations and the most-searched-for keywords, then works with her team to use Kentico's A/B Testing tools to make sure that the materials (headlines, paragraphs, images, buttons, etc.) hit the right notes and avoid confusion between consumers in different markets that have different needs.
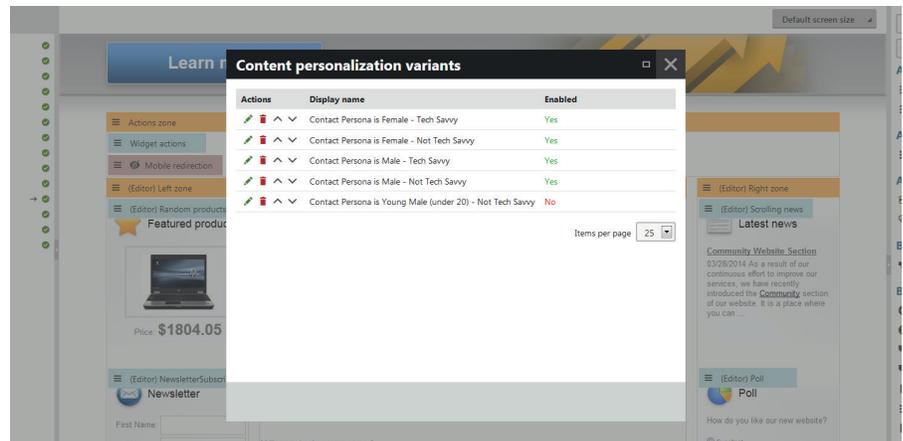
Using Personas Gets Content Right First Time

Sallyco's marketing team is further assisted because they can use Kentico's Personas module to create personalized contact rules for each site visitor. They are able to organize quickly and easily what content each pre-defined persona sees. This can include anything her team wants, from a particular language or currency to industry-specific material, offers, or messages regarding holidays. Sallyco's team creates

several different personas based on where their customers interact with the site. For example, when a customer finds the site and comes from a particular location (based on their IP address), Sallyco's pre-created personas offer that customer specific material based on these and other criteria.

Thus, when a prospective customer—let's call him Evan—reaches Sallyco's website

with an IP address that places him in Australia, Sally knows that Evan should see content that reflects his location, so she offers Australian-specific language, references, currency, and shipping information from her closest shipping location to where he is. Sally knows that her site should offer Evan discounts on her top-selling product in his region, as a minimum.

Step 2

Step3

When Personalization Takes Over, Results Happen

This brings Sallyco's team to the crux of the matter. As we've discussed, the goal is to reach Evan, and anyone else like him, with personalized content that meets his needs based on not just where he comes from but also where he's going and what he's doing. In Kentico, delivering that personalized content is a matter of setting rules based on customer actions. Think of it as a "choose-your-customer's-adventure"—in advance. Sallyco's team easily defines a series of cascading actions that take place based on Evan's interactions with the site. Wherever Evan goes, a series of rules dictate what content he sees based on, for example,

where he's been on the site previously. The first "rule" in the string to be "activated" is the one that "controls" what Evan sees. For example, we know where he's come from (geographically), but when he visits, let's say, "Products" on Sallyco's website, her team may have defined a rule that he'll see products that are available for shipment at her warehouse in Australia or products that correspond to a search he does on the site. He may also see a list of whitepapers or helpful materials that cover materials' use or conditions where he is. As he clicks products or moves through the site (seeking to evaluate Sallyco as a legitimate

purveyor of seashells, for example), the created rules present content that reflects where he's been, always with the first condition controlling the content provided.

Because Sallyco's team has created an effective content personalization rule-set, Evan receives content that is relevant to his needs, keeps him interested, and helps him relate to the site. He provides further information, including his email, which allows Sallyco's team to engage him further on a personal level.

Lead Scoring Distills Good Leads into Great Ones

Industrial-sized orders of crushed shells, the type that Evan needs for his project, are not a purchase made lightly. Sallyco's Sales and Marketing teams know that these projects have a several-month period before purchases are made, and that sometimes sales happen or don't happen for reasons out of their control. Sally and her team can now use Evan's contact information to determine just how "hot" Evan is as a lead using Kentico's

Lead Scoring tools. This ranking starts with Evan's first form completion, assigning him points based on where he is from and whether or not he provides information like his phone number and email address. After that, Lead Scoring further scores Sallyco's site visitors based on what they do on the site (download materials, visit certain pages of content, etc.). This automatically assigns a score to Evan based on his interactions with the site and

determines how likely he is to buy, which helps Sally treat his interactions with the site accordingly. Luckily for Sallyco, Evan is an interested buyer with a live project that he needs to supply. Because his interactions with the site show he is a hot lead, she and her team know when to reach out directly to Evan with particular offers that are targeted to the interests he's shown, and the hotness of his lead.

Step4

Marketing Automation Nurtures Leads Into Sales

It is possible that Evan may do several months of evaluation before making his purchase. In that time, Sallyco can make full use of Kentico's Marketing Automation features to nurture Evan as a lead. Marketing Automation allows Sallyco to reach out to Evan with specific content based on his customer journey. This could include content about how to use industrial calcium carbonate to construct roads and buildings more effectively and how to store it to prevent caking, thus damaging the project at hand. Because of his customer journey, and the interactions he's had with the site itself, Sallyco knows that providing this information will be helpful to Evan and will keep him engaged and interested in buying. And all of this happens because the content is personalized to Evan's needs. Evan buys Sallyco's crushed sea shells.

Evan received personalized content from the moment he initially visited Sallyco's website. His location determined what content he would receive. Once he visited Sallyco's site, his customer information was segmented based on his contact so that he continued to receive material that was specific to him. As he visited and revisited the site, his data became more exact, and Sallyco could achieve a clearer and more specific effort to reach him as a person with content, depending on the level of quality he had as a lead based on Lead Scoring. Finally, Marketing Automation was used to maintain his interest and nurture him as a lead until he was ready to buy. Sally, by virtue of using this personalized content, makes sales with greater efficiency and less effort—and can finally get back to the seashore.

Step 5
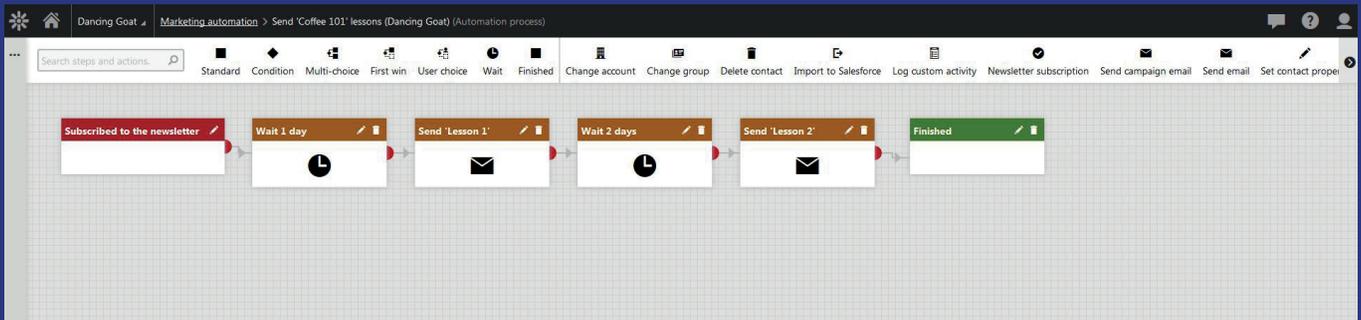
Kentico is an all-in-one CMS, E-commerce, and Online Marketing platform that drives business results for companies of all sizes both on-premise or in the Cloud. It gives customers and partners powerful, comprehensive tools and customer-centric solutions to create stunning websites and manage customer experiences easily in a dynamic business environment. The Kentico Web Content

Management Solution's rich selection of out-of-the-box web parts, easy customizations, and fully-documented API quickly gets websites operational. When combined with the full set of integrated solutions, including Online Marketing, E-commerce, Online Communities, and Intranet and Collaboration, Kentico fully optimizes the digital customer experience across multiple channels.

Founded in 2004, Kentico is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner headquartered in the Czech Republic with offices in the US, UK, Netherlands, and Australia. Kentico has 1,000 digital agency partners and powers more than 25,000 websites across 100 countries. Customers include Bacardi, Twinings, Great British Chefs, Gibson, Mazda, Mighty River Power, Run and Become, Sony, and Vodafone.

SCHEDULE A 1-ON-1 DEMO

to learn how Kentico EMS
can accelerate your digital marketing success
www.kentico.com/Download-Demo