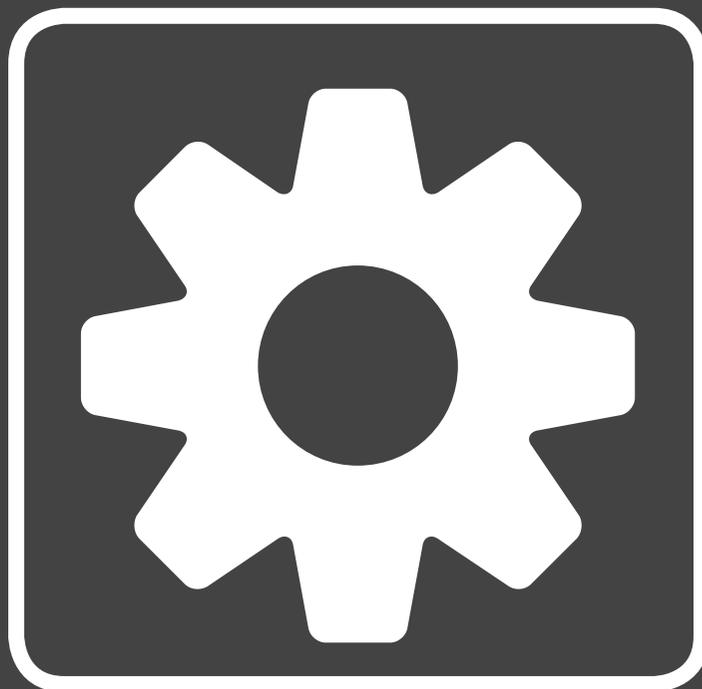AN INTRODUCTION TO USING

DYNAMIC CONTENT IN MARKETING

How to Make
Content Adapt to
Each Individual
Viewer

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INTRODUCTORY ◄········ *This ebook!*

Introductory content is for marketers who are new to the subject. This content typically includes step-by-step instructions on how to get started with this aspect of inbound marketing and learn its fundamentals. After reading it, you will be able to execute basic marketing tactics related to the topic.

INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate content is for marketers who are familiar with the subject but have only basic experience in executing strategies and tactics on the topic. This content typically covers the fundamentals and moves on to reveal more complex functions and examples. After reading it, you will feel comfortable leading projects with this aspect of inbound marketing.

ADVANCED

Advanced content is for marketers who are, or want to be, experts on the subject. In it, we walk you through advanced features of this aspect of inbound marketing and help you develop complete mastery of the subject. After reading it, you will feel ready not only to execute strategies and tactics, but also to teach others how to be successful.
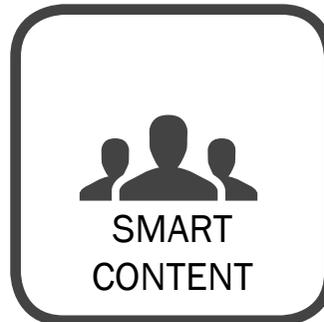
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AN INTRODUCTION TO USING DYNAMIC CONTENT IN MARKETING

By Meghan Keaney Anderson

Meghan is Product Marketing Manager for HubSpot, a marketing software company in Cambridge, At HubSpot, Meghan oversees the launches, internal education and market strategy for the company's fifteen-component marketing software. Meghan came to HubSpot through the company's 2011 acquisition of Performable, a marketing analytics and automation company focusing on multiplatform and multi-channel analytics. Prior to Performable, Meghan worked as senior director of communications at United Way of Massachusetts Bay where she created the organization's first social media strategy.

Meghan also teaches Writing for Mass Communication as an adjunct professor at Boston University's College of Communication.

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CONTENTS

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WHAT IS DYNAMIC CONTENT?

DYNAMIC CONTENT 🔊

Dynamic content is the term for aspects of a website or email that change based on a website visitor's profile data or history of interactions with a company.

your website or email

The Origins of Dynamic Content

"May the ground rise to meet you. May the wind be ever at your back." This old Irish blessing seems surprisingly relevant to the world of marketing.

As marketers, we wish to guide and support our prospects and leads along their journey with our brand. While this is a noble wish, it doesn't necessarily tell us what the *right* support is. People engage with your content in different ways and with different goals. In response to their unique needs, you need to engage with them in different ways. This is where dynamic content comes into play.

Dynamic content came out of a desire to provide prospective customers a seamless, near intuitive path down the sales funnel--one that would recognize each potential buyer as an individual and adapt to his or her needs.

Dynamic content is the term for aspects of a website or email that change based on a website visitor's profile data or history of interactions with a company. It creates an experience that is tailored specifically to the user.

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"*The first generation of websites was essentially brochure-ware.*"

The first generation of websites was essentially brochure-ware. They presented information about a company or service, but that information seldom changed.

With the emergence of blogging, RSS feeds, and CMS-based websites, updating your website content became astronomically simpler. From a content perspective, website began to become more dynamic. Yet the dynamism of those ever-changing websites was merely about the content and the company itself.

Only recently have we developed the capacity to adapt websites to individual viewing experiences. Think Amazon.com. When you visit that website, you see one set of purchase suggestions; your friend, on the other hand, will see a completely different set of suggestions. That is only natural! You have different identities, with your own preferences and needs. The website should adapt to match your browsing behavior, not the other way around.

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The Technology Behind Dynamic Content

To achieve dynamic content for your website or email campaigns you'll need a set of core tools:

A CENTRALIZED MARKETING DATABASE

Your marketing database is the brain behind your dynamic content. It stores your contacts' download and interaction history with your site.

EASILY EDITABLE WEB PAGES

A dynamic site has to be one that is easily editable. If you have to go through another department or a contractor, updating your site will always be a bottleneck.

A SMART CONTENT GENERATOR

Smart content is content that is informed by data and a set of rules. A smart content generator will show or hide content (blocks of images and text) based on your marketing database.

AN INTEGRATED EMAIL SYSTEM

Dynamic content doesn't have to be relegated to your website alone. If your email system is tied into your contacts database, you can also add dynamic content in email sends.

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CHAPTER 2

HOW DYNAMIC CONTENT BOOSTS CONVERSIONS

"*The key to dynamic content's effectiveness is its relevancy.*"

The key to dynamic content's effectiveness is its relevancy. We've long known that marketing that is targeted and more relevant to the recipient tends to see greater results. In no place is this more true than email.

Relevant emails drive **18X** more revenue than broadcast emails. $$$

SOURCE: JUPITER RESEARCH

Personalized emails improve click-through rates by **14%** and conversion rates by 10%.

SOURCE: ABERDEEN GROUP

But relevancy spans across inbound marketing. When it comes to search, for instance, you're optimizing for keywords so that your content is found at the moment a prospect searches for it.

Using dynamic content is an extension of that strategy to nurture leads with relevant calls-to-action and content as they progress through your site and marketing funnel.

On average, nurtured leads produce a **20%** increase in sales opportunities.

SOURCE: DEMANDGEN

Nurtured leads make **47%** larger purchases than non-nurtured leads.
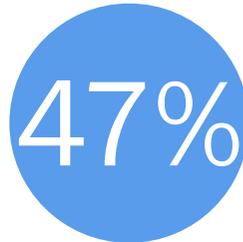
SOURCE: THE ANNUITAS GROUP

The same rule behind the effectiveness of email personalization applies to your website.

The more you can create a relevant experience for website visitors that reflects their interests and past experiences on your site, the more likely they will be to click through and convert on landing pages. Dynamic content tools, like HubSpot's Smart Calls-to-action, make this kind of automatic customization possible.

Think for a moment about this scenario. A visitor lands on your website and downloads your most popular ebook. Liking the content, they come back to see what else your company has to offer. Does it make any sense to show them a call-to-action for the same ebook they've already read? Not at all.

Showing them the same offer is not only repetitive for your lead, but also causes you to miss an opportunity as a company for another conversion. Smart calls-to-action (CTAs) enable you to recognize who has already converted on a given offer and replace that CTA with a new offer the next time they return. In this way, your relationship with the lead and the content they see is always evolving.

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HOW TO SET UP DYNAMIC CONTENT

> *"When you first start to learn about dynamic content, it can feel a bit like magic."*

Like any technological advancement, when you first start to learn about dynamic content, it can feel a bit like magic. That's why you might feel tempted to create dynamic rules for every possible case and really open things up. Before doing so, though, make sure you have a solid reason for personalization.

Use dynamic content to assist the website visitor and ensure a good user experience. Think about the implications of what you're personalizing.

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If a company adapts a page to reflect the viewer's gender, for example, it makes a number of risky assumptions:

- That certain products are expressly "female" or "male."

- That the individual is buying for themselves and not someone else.

- That you are accurate in your data.

Our advice? Stick with dynamic content that has a clear business use-case and a tangible benefit for the viewer. In this chapter, we've pulled together a collection of dynamic content examples that we think are pretty effective.

Adapt by Lifecycle Stage

When we talk about "lifecycle stage," we don't mean whether the visitor is a senior citizen or a college student. What we mean is, how far along in their decision process are they with your company. Is this their first visit? Are they just doing research or comparing your product/service to that of the competition? Have they been a customer for a while?

Lifecycle stages are important to businesses because a lead that has just downloaded their first piece of content from your site is going to have very different needs and interest than someone who has been talking to your sales team and has a near complete understanding of what you offer.

Leveraging your marketing database, dynamic content would enable you to trigger different calls-to-action depending on where your lead is in that decision process. At HubSpot, we define our lifecycle stages as the following:

SUBSCRIBER ●········► CUSTOMER
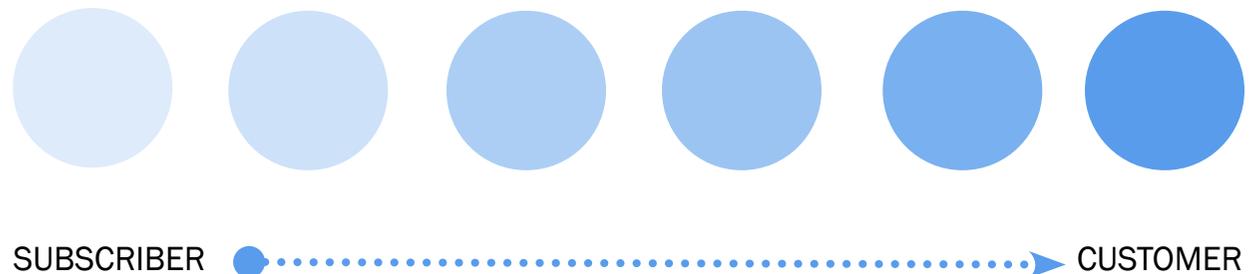
Stages of the Customer Lifecycle

The way you communicate and interact with your contacts should vary considerably depending on what lifecycle stage they are in. For instance, HubSpot's marketing team uses lifecycle stage settings to ensure that our customers don't receive emails intended for prospects and leads.

Using lifecycle stages properly ensures that your communications are calibrated to the unique needs and concerns of all of your contacts, from first touch to loyal customer and beyond.
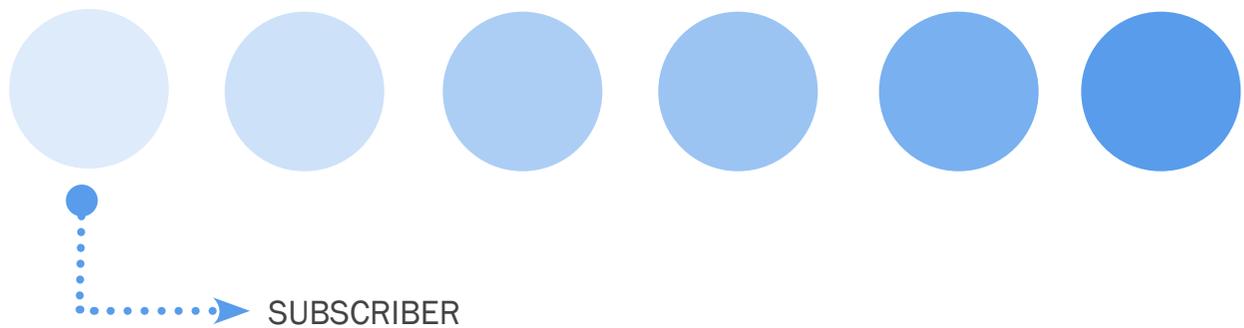
SUBSCRIBER

Think of subscribers as those folks who know about you and have opted in to hear from you periodically. In many cases your subscriber base are the people who have only signed up for your blog or newsletter.

You should develop a long-term relationship with subscribers and offer them content that will increase the chances that they will move forward in the lifecycle stage.
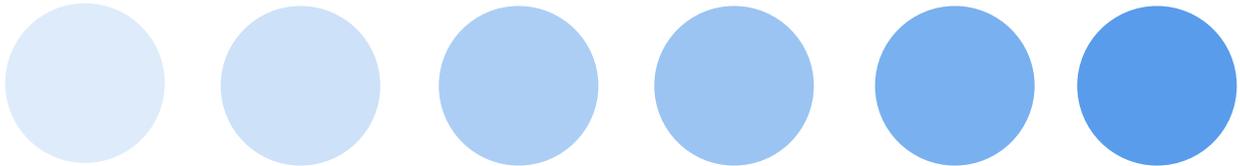
LEAD

Leads have shown more interest in what you offer than subscribers have. Typically, a lead has filled out a form with more than just an email address, often for some sort of a marketing offer on your website.

Companies generally assign a lead lifecycle stage to contacts who convert on broad, top-of-the-funnel marketing offers, such as ebooks and webinars. As each lead demonstrates a higher degree of sales readiness and qualification, they will move to further lifecycle stages.
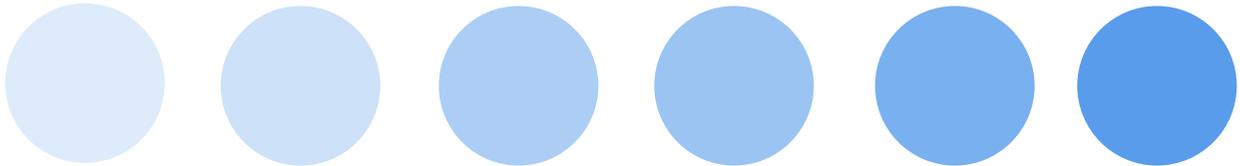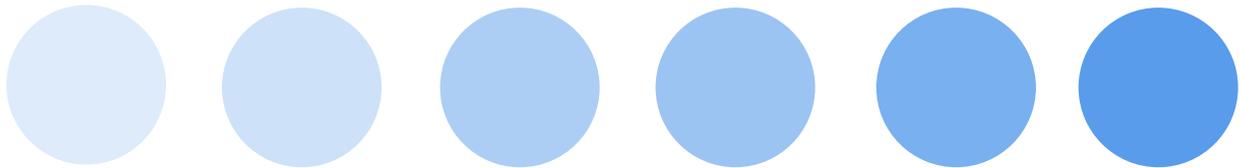
MARKETING QUALIFIED LEAD

Marketing qualified leads, commonly known as MQLs, are those contacts who have raised their hands (metaphorically speaking) and identified themselves as more deeply engaged and sales-ready than your usual leads. Yet marketing qualified leads haven't become fully fledged opportunities.

Ideally, you should only allow certain designated forms to trigger the promotion of a lead to the MQL stage. These are the forms that gate bottom-of-the-funnel offers. Demo requests, buying guides, and sales consultations are examples of such offers.

SALES QUALIFIED LEAD

Sales qualified leads, also known as SQLs, are those contacts that your sales team has accepted as worthy of a direct sales follow up. Using this stage will help your sales and marketing teams stay on the same page in terms of the quality and quantity of leads that you are handing over to your sales team.
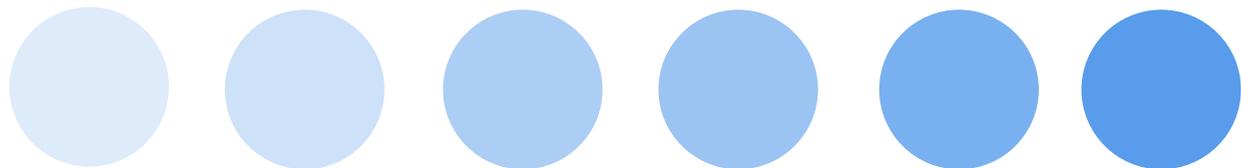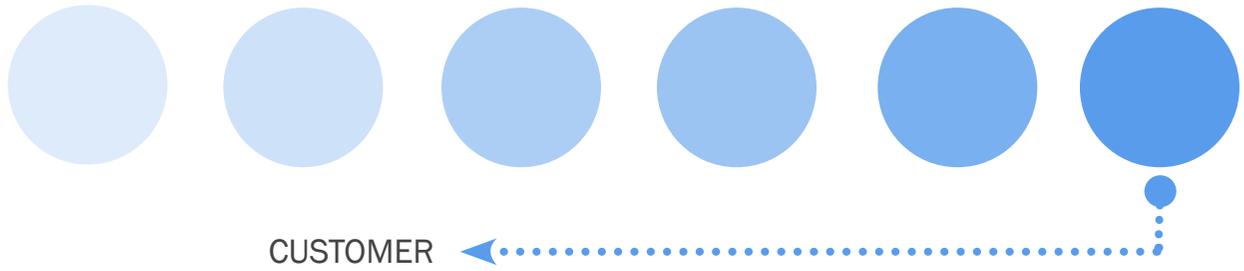
OPPORTUNITY

Opportunities are contacts who have become real sales opportunities in your CRM.

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CUSTOMER

This is everybody's favorite lifecycle stage: an actual, paying customer.

Your work isn't done when someone buys. Your marketing should then shift again to focus on retention, repeat purchases and enabling advocacy.

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Here is an example of a dynamic call-to-action that we at HubSpot have created.

It changes based on lifecycle stage. When one of our subscribers visits a page on HubSpot.com that features this call-to-action, they will be invited to download our ebook "101 Examples of Effective Calls-to-Action." Our goal is to convert the subscriber into a lead.

When an existing lead visits that same page, however, the call-to-action will change because it will seek to push that contact down to the next lifecycle stage. Our goal here is to further qualify the lead with a more advanced offer.
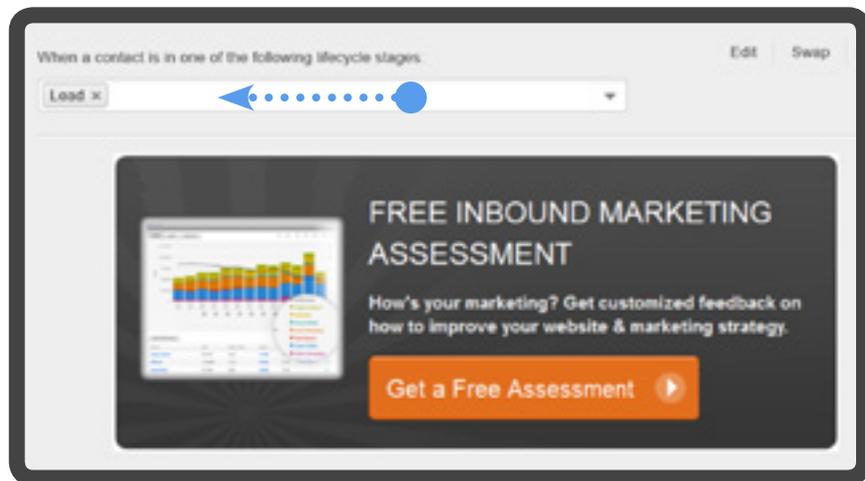
DYNAMIC CONTENT IN ACTION

“Using dynamic content, we can ensure that our customers never have to go through any excess steps.”

By the time someone has become a customer of HubSpot, they've most likely completed a registration form along the way. But becoming a customer doesn't thwart their interest in some of the content we offer.

Rather than having a customer fill out yet another registration form, using dynamic content can enable you to recognize a viewer as a customer and give them a call-to-action that lets them bypass the download form and get straight to the content. Using dynamic content, we can ensure that our customers never have to go through any excess steps.

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In the screenshot below, for example, we are distinguishing between all website visitors and those who are our current customers. When we use this call-to-action, customers won't have to fill out a lead capture form in order to access this piece of content. Everyone else, however, will need to fill out the form in order to download the ebook.

Adapt by Geography

Another clever way to integrate dynamic content in your marketing campaigns is to use what you know about a lead's geographic location to give them a more personalized experience.

Let's take the example of a banner at the top of your webpage. Often the most visually powerful component of a page, the banner welcomes visitors and gives them a sense of what they can find there. So how can you use it to segment people by location?
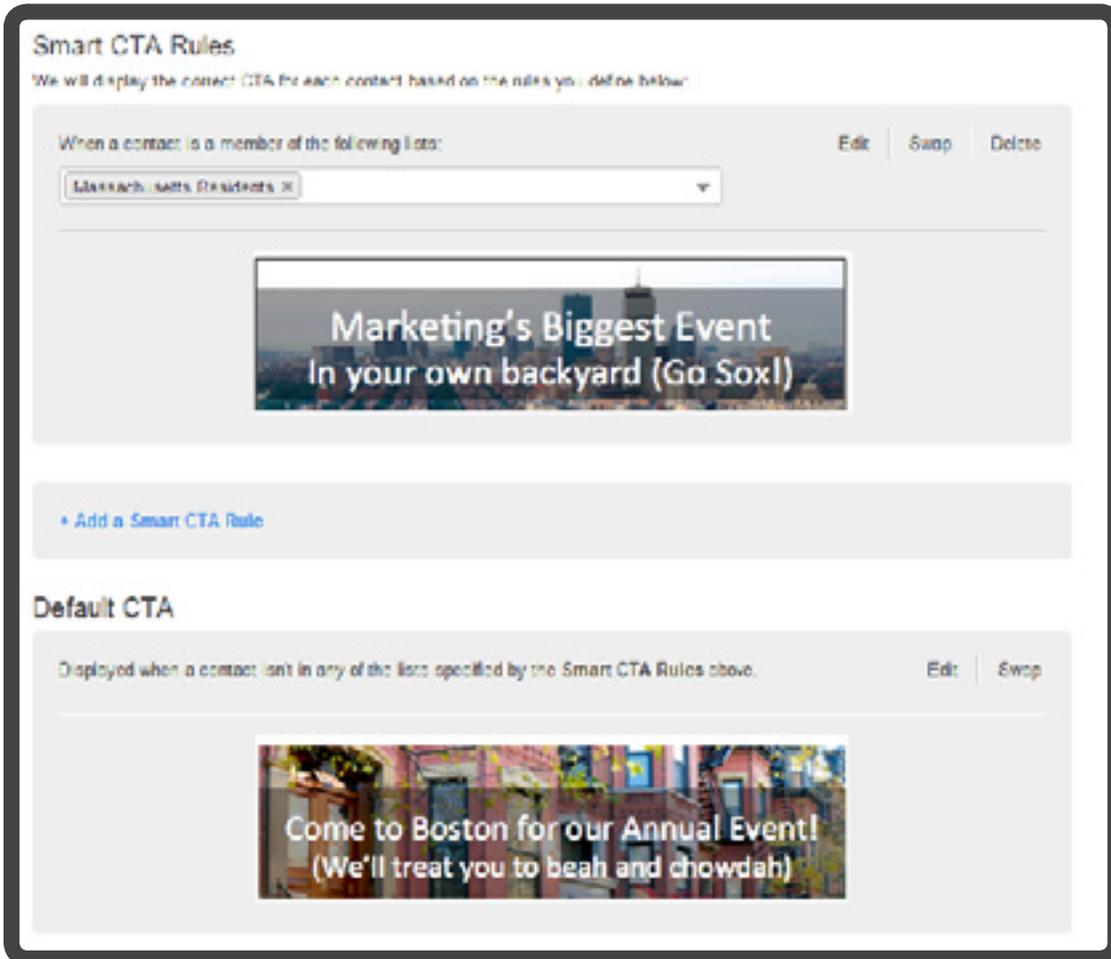
● LANGUAGE

Does your company serve populations in multiple countries? Use data from your marketing database to trigger different text on your banner based on the most common language of those countries. Make the same banner say *Bienvenue* or *Welcome* depending on who is looking at it.

REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE

In the example below, you'll see how dynamic content and location information can be used to create a deeper connection with the viewer.

Adapt by Industry or Persona

Most companies serve a number of different personas from a variety of industries. While it may be difficult to tailor to every different industry you touch, dynamic content can help you create a highly customized experience for your highest value industries.
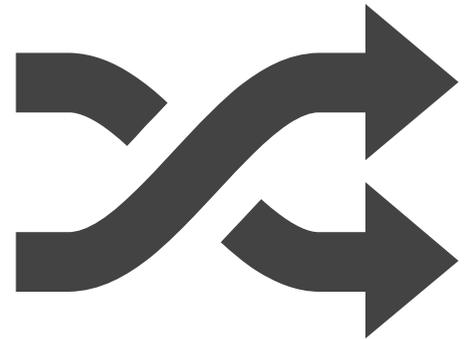
In the past, this was most commonly achieved by building separate pages for each industry. Thanks to dynamic content, you can achieve the same goal with less effort and more elegance. Now it's easier than ever to surface different information to different personas. So how should you go about it?

1 Start by talking with your sales team about the different personas or industries with whom they have had the best success.

2 Pick one or two industries to focus in on at first as a test.

3 Set a default homepage image that could represent a company from any industry.

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Then choose images that are specific to the other one or two industries you've selected and set a rule in your marketing software that will swap the default image for one of the tailored ones when someone from one of those industries visits.

In the example to the right, an image dynamically changes based on what the contact database knows about the industry the viewer is in.
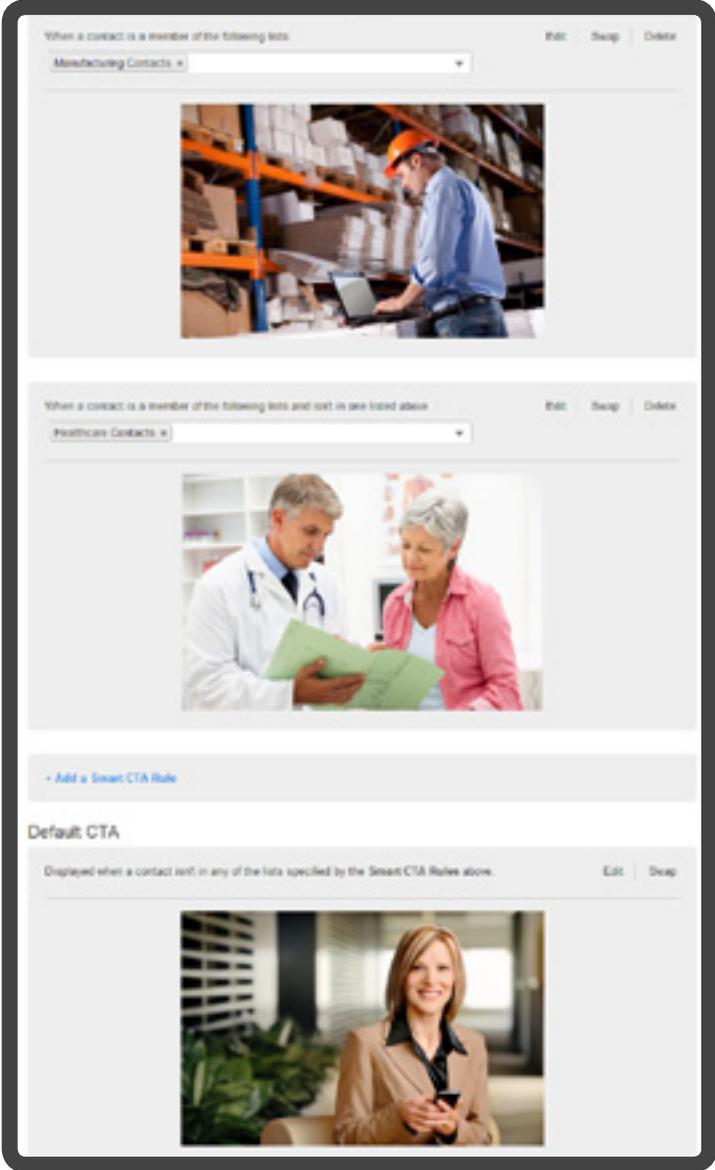
Recommendations by Past Behavior

Actions speak louder than just about anything. Start by thinking about what past actions a lead could have taken to indicate a certain preference or interest. The most universally known example of this is the recommendation engine in Amazon.com. A particular type of dynamic content, the engine uses an algorithm to base recommendations on past purchases.

You can implement a simpler version on this though just by looking at the topics of your offers. Have they downloaded content on a particular subject area most frequently? Have they requested information on a particular product or service? Leverage the data you have to prioritize content that aligns with their past interests.
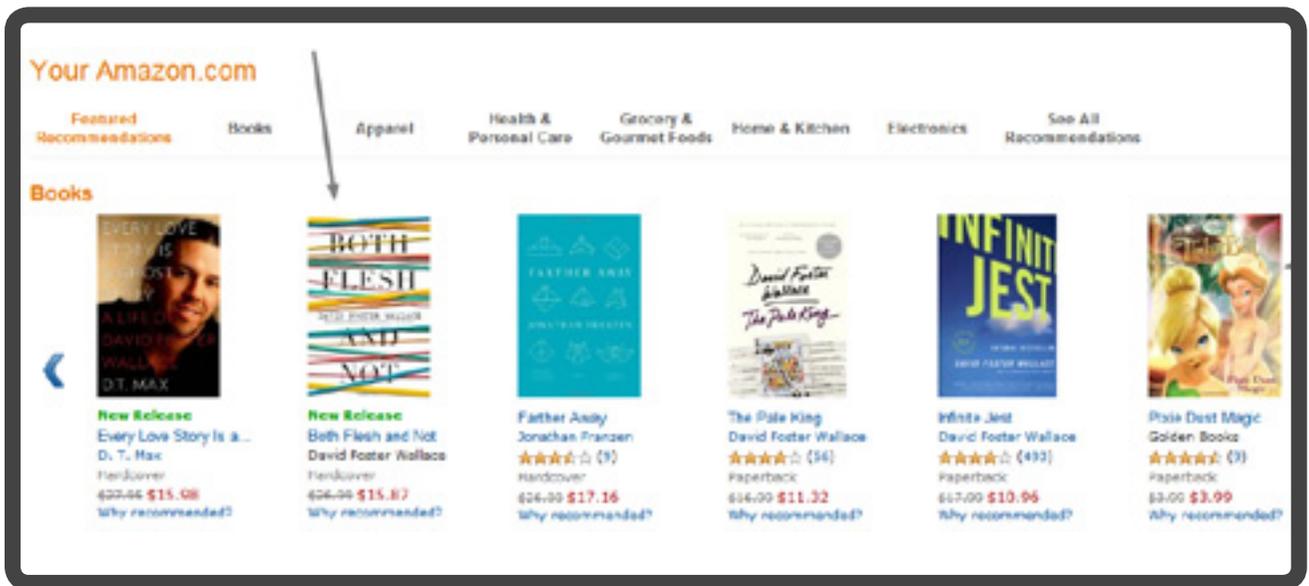
Adapting by Name

Years ago I received a fundraising email from my alma mater Boston College. The email was tailored to me thanking me for past donations and using personalization tags to include my first name. What was even more interesting was that when I clicked through on the email, the landing page included my name in a banner as well. "Stand up and Be Counted Meghan," it said.

That page stuck with me for awhile, not only because it appeared to "recognize me," but also because it stood out from all of the other fundraising appeals I had received. In fact, it was the first fundraising appeal that ever prompted my friends and former classmates to send email examples of their own custom pages to me asking, "How did they do this?"

Under the right circumstances (and when artfully done), using a website visitor's name in your content can be powerful. Just make sure the inclusion of someone's name adds to the experience rather than making it creepy.

One good example would be a simple welcome message for repeat customers. As with any dynamic text, when you're first getting started, test it out with a segment of your audience to see if it enhances the experience or clutters it.

Marketing Agency Via Luna Group, for instance, targeted a microsite using the first name of their leads. The interactive experience was built to stress customer service, a value the site demonstrated by "knowing the name" of the person viewing it.

If you are considering using a person's name as part of your dynamic content, think first about the goal of the experience and the value you are trying to convey. In the case of Via Luna Group, the use of the first name had a clear purpose and wasn't overused.

CONCLUSION & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

" *Dynamic content will help you make marketing people love.* "

The end goal of using dynamic content is to enhance your readers' and website visitors' experience with your content. As a marketer, you have the opportunity to put out website pages and emails that provide your audience with the *right* support.

Dynamic content leverages the valuable insights your readers have provided you with: their interests, preferences and historical behavior. Put that knowledge to work and assist them with the information they are looking for. That will help you make marketing people love.

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Dynamic Content through HubSpot Software

HubSpot 3 is an easy, integrated, and powerful marketing platform that was built to enable companies of all sizes to have the adaptable or "smart" content in the same way that marketing giants like Amazon and Netflix do. HubSpot's dynamic content includes:

SMART FORMS

Smart forms adapt and minimize over time. As a company gathers contact information about a given lead, the forms remove fields that have been satisfied in past submissions, making for a better user experience.

SMART CTAs

CTAs or Calls-to-Action are important decision points on your site. Often taking the form of a button, CTAs encourage people to take action. Smart CTAs from HubSpot, assign CTAs based on where a visitor is in their decision process.

SMART IMAGES

Operating much like Smart CTAs, HubSpot's Smart Images change based on a viewers industry, persona, geography or other core aspecgts of their profile.

SMART WORKFLOWS

HubSpot Workflows leverage contact profiles and a series of rules set by the marketer to create dynamically evolving segments and automate marketing actions. Workflows enable you to send emails that are triggered by customer interests and behavior rather than an arbitrary marketing schedule.
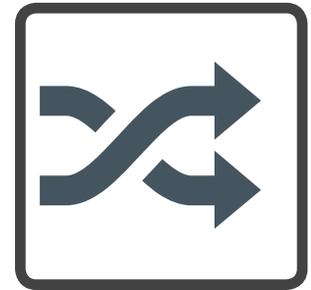
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