

A close-up photograph of a person's hand placing a wooden block on top of a stack of other wooden blocks. The background is a blurred, light-colored wall.

7 Keys to a Great Content Experience

A guide for content strategists and content marketers

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About the Authors

This ebook was written by Tendo Communications staff. Tendo is an end-to-end content agency that supports some of the world's best-known B2B brands. Content is all we do: Our team of content marketing and content strategy experts combine their skills to help our clients achieve their toughest marketing goals. Get in touch to explore how we can help you plan, create, and optimize content experiences for your customers and prospects: inquiries@tendocom.com.

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Introduction

The role of content strategy has evolved as the number of digital touch points has exploded across new platforms and channels. Think social media, IoT, AI-driven chat and voice experiences, and more still to come. B2B marketing leaders and strategists must think holistically about how customers engage with their content and how individual pieces of content work together to shape a consistent and considered customer experience.



CONTENT EXPERIENCE FUNDAMENTALS

What Is Digital Content Experience?

Definition: The progressive engagement of audiences in a series of related content elements designed to fulfill key informational or transactional needs.



A Simplified Example

In this example, the core content is a very well-written State of Marketing report. Built around it are several derivative pieces of content, including social banners and a blog post. By putting these together in a flow, it creates a consistent and high-quality content experience.

A Second Example of Content Experience

CUSTOMER —————

“I need a solution to my business challenge”



Personalized and Consistent

In this example, personalized content assets are developed in relation to one another and arranged in a consistent flow to help users easily find the information they need. That’s a good content experience.

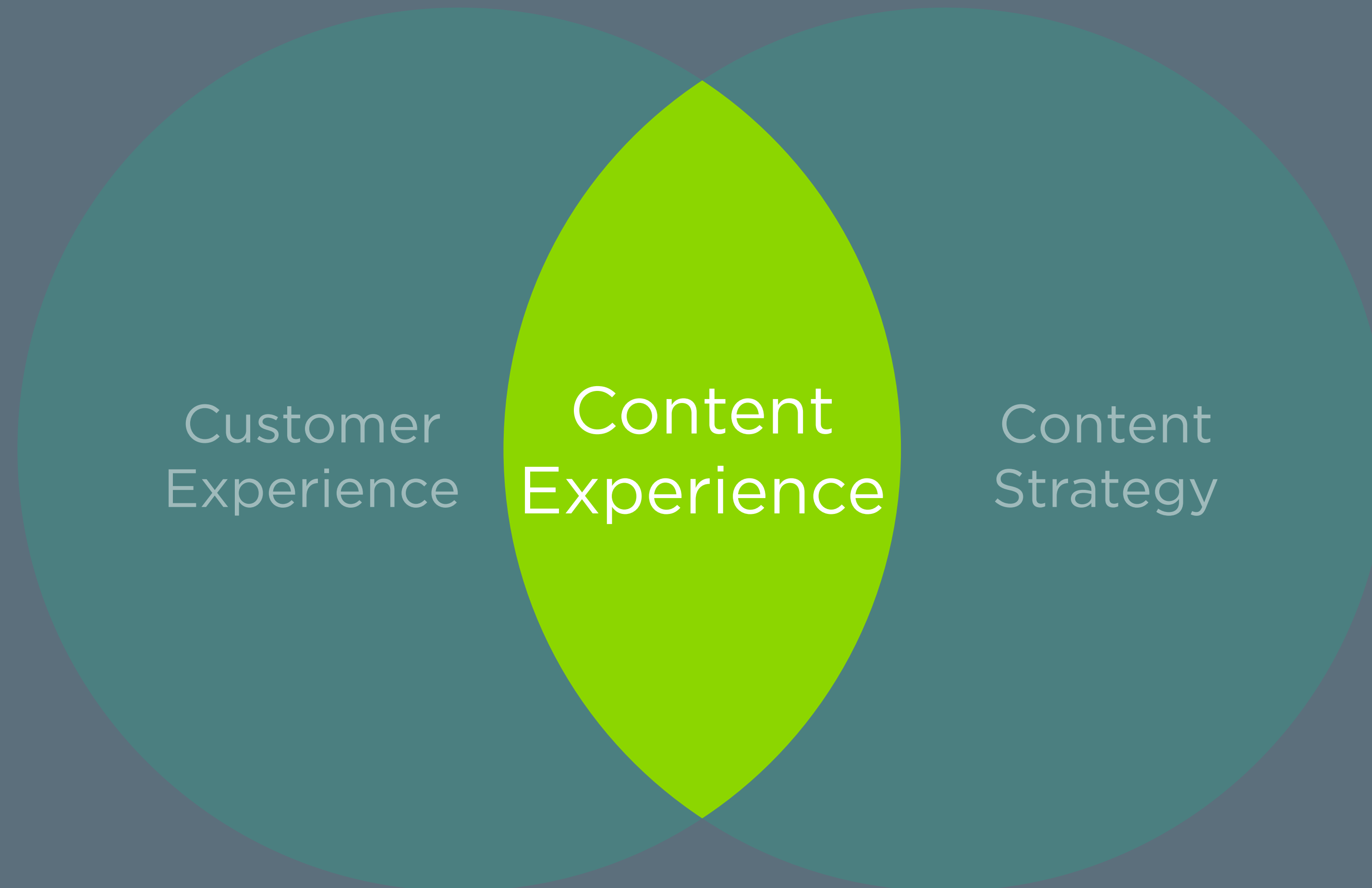


Customer Experience

Today's customers expect companies to understand their needs and expectations. When it comes to digital content, this means frictionless, personalized experiences. That's why content experience is deeply intertwined with customer experience.

Content strategy focuses on defining, measuring, and optimizing how content is created and distributed. The goal is to deliver consistent and relevant content that meets an audience's needs. Among content strategists, there is a growing focus on the overall content experience: How do customers engage with content at each step of their digital journey? Is their experience consistent and smooth, or frustrating and disjointed?

Content Strategy



Content experience is an emerging area of focus that is inspired by customer experience and informed by content strategy.

Shifting to a Content Experience Mindset

Think bigger

Today's marketers and content strategists cannot focus only on the quality and performance of individual content assets and marketing campaigns. They must consider the end-to-end experience they're creating and optimize how users engage with their content.

See the connections

Content experience recognizes the connective tissue between content types—landing pages, social posts, banner ads, assets, chat, IoT, kiosk display content, even customer service talking points. Content should be orchestrated to support the customer journey at each step.

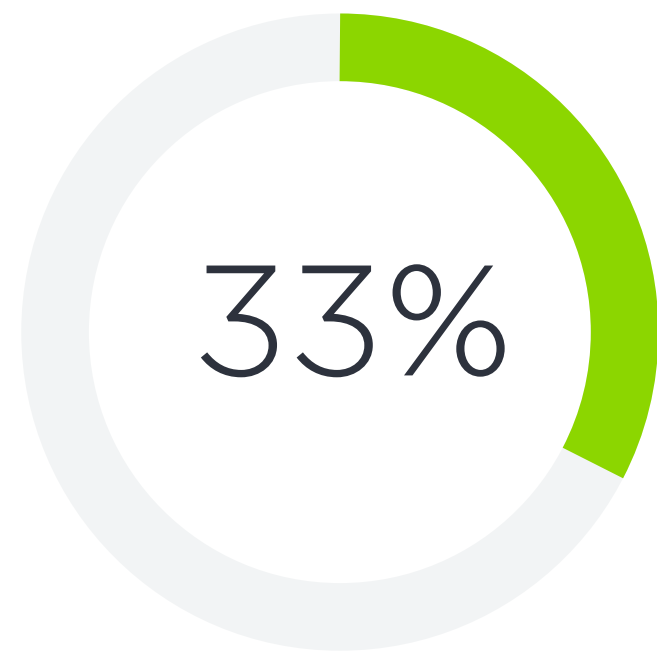
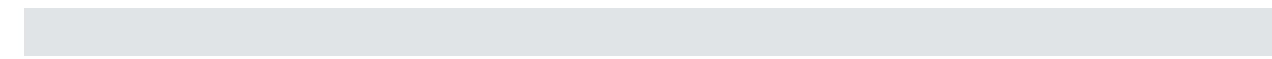
Focus on the user

The goal of a well-designed content experience is to deliver the right information to the right person, in the right way, at the right time and place. To do this you must create content that is consistently focused on customers' needs and top tasks on their digital journey.

Content is now central to every digital journey, every customer touch point.

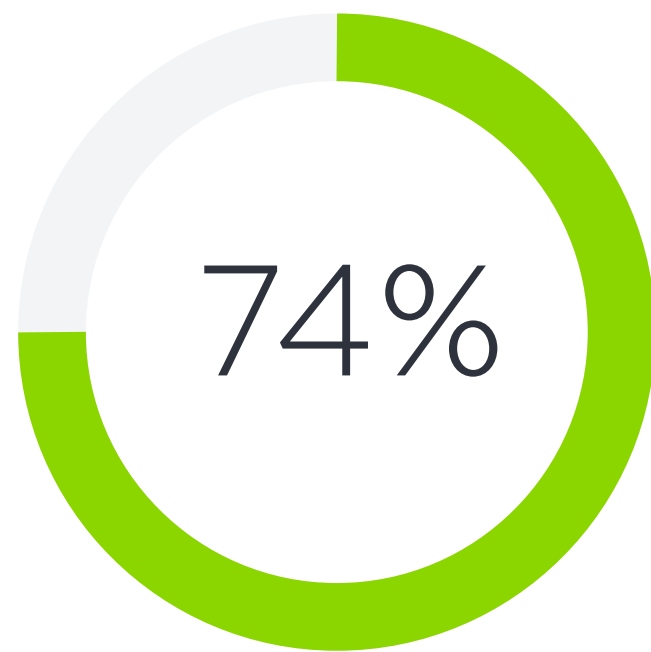
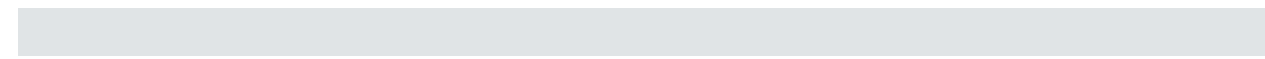


Why Care about Content Experience?



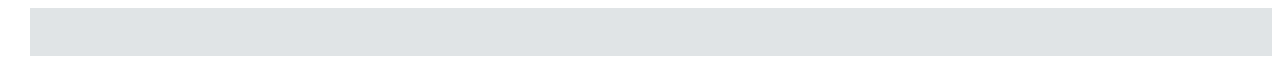
33% of marketing assets go unused or underutilized.*

In a content-saturated world, it's harder to get your message across. The bar is now higher for quality, but that's not the only factor. For content marketing efforts to succeed, your content must be surfaced in the right context. That means serving it up to customers and prospects at the right time over the right channel. Too often, that doesn't happen, and the effort that went into creating content is wasted.



74% of online consumers are frustrated by irrelevant or impersonal content.**

Customers expect personalized experiences (thank you, Amazon and Netflix) and content that maps to their current stage in the digital journey. They get frustrated when you drive them to a website that doesn't match their interests and expectations or doesn't acknowledge that you've already had a conversation with them.



25B connected devices worldwide by 2021***

Between PCs, mobile phones, watches, and smart-home gadgets, our world is exploding with connected devices. The marketer's challenge is to communicate with our audiences across multiple platforms in a consistent and personalized way. That requires a more holistic thought process and attention to the content experience.

Sources:
* IDG study sponsored by Adobe, "Proving the Value of Digital Asset Management for Digital Marketers and Creative Teams," 2015
** Janrain, 2013 Online Personal Experience Study
*** Gartner forecast, Gartner IT Symposium/Xpo 2018

7 ELEMENTS OF A GREAT CONTENT EXPERIENCE

Create Content Experiences that Reflect These Characteristics

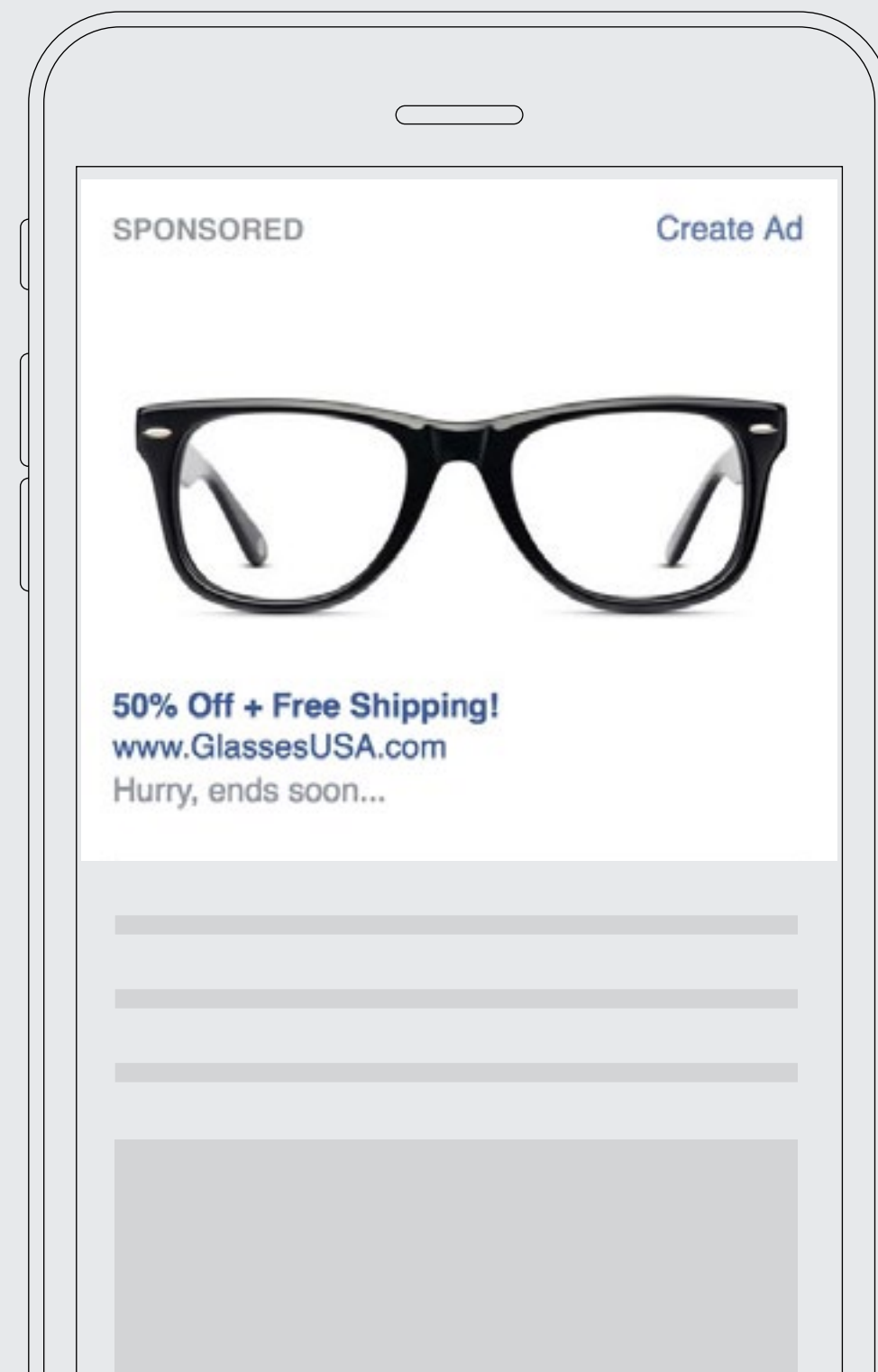
What do superlative content experiences look like, and how can you engineer them consistently for your customers and prospects? When we put content experience under the microscope, its core characteristics come into focus. The content assets you create should, together, deliver an experience that reflects these seven characteristics:

1. Progressive
2. Connected
3. Contextual
4. Engaging
5. Relevant
6. Guided
7. Structured

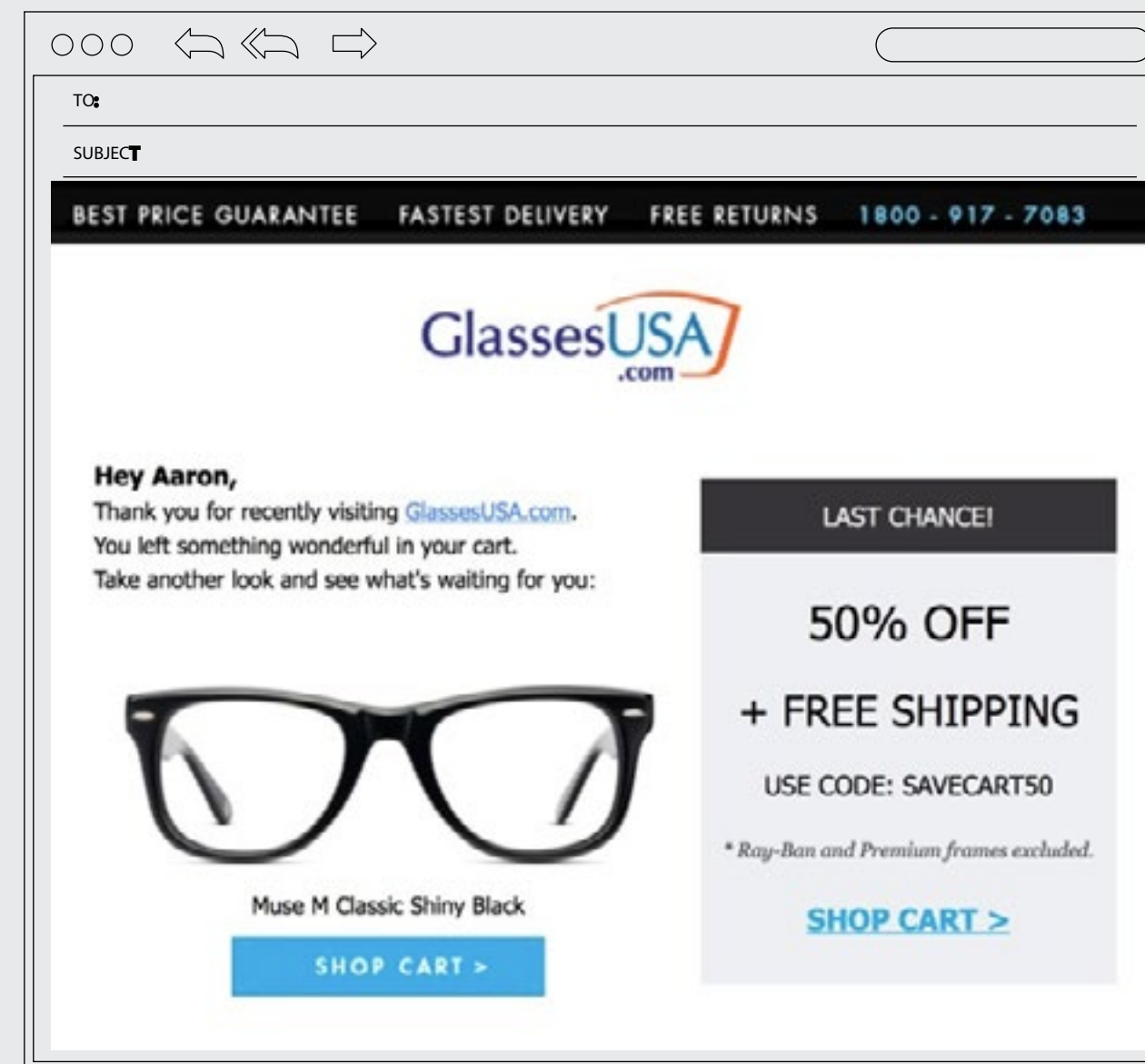
Progressive Content Experiences

A progressive content experience is one in which each touch point builds on the previous one, rather than repeating it or existing in isolation. In this example, we see a progressive experience from ad to website. When we know a user has clicked the ad, we recognize their interest, and we can progressively add more information—and incentives—to the conversation. We're building a progressive experience based on what we know about the user.

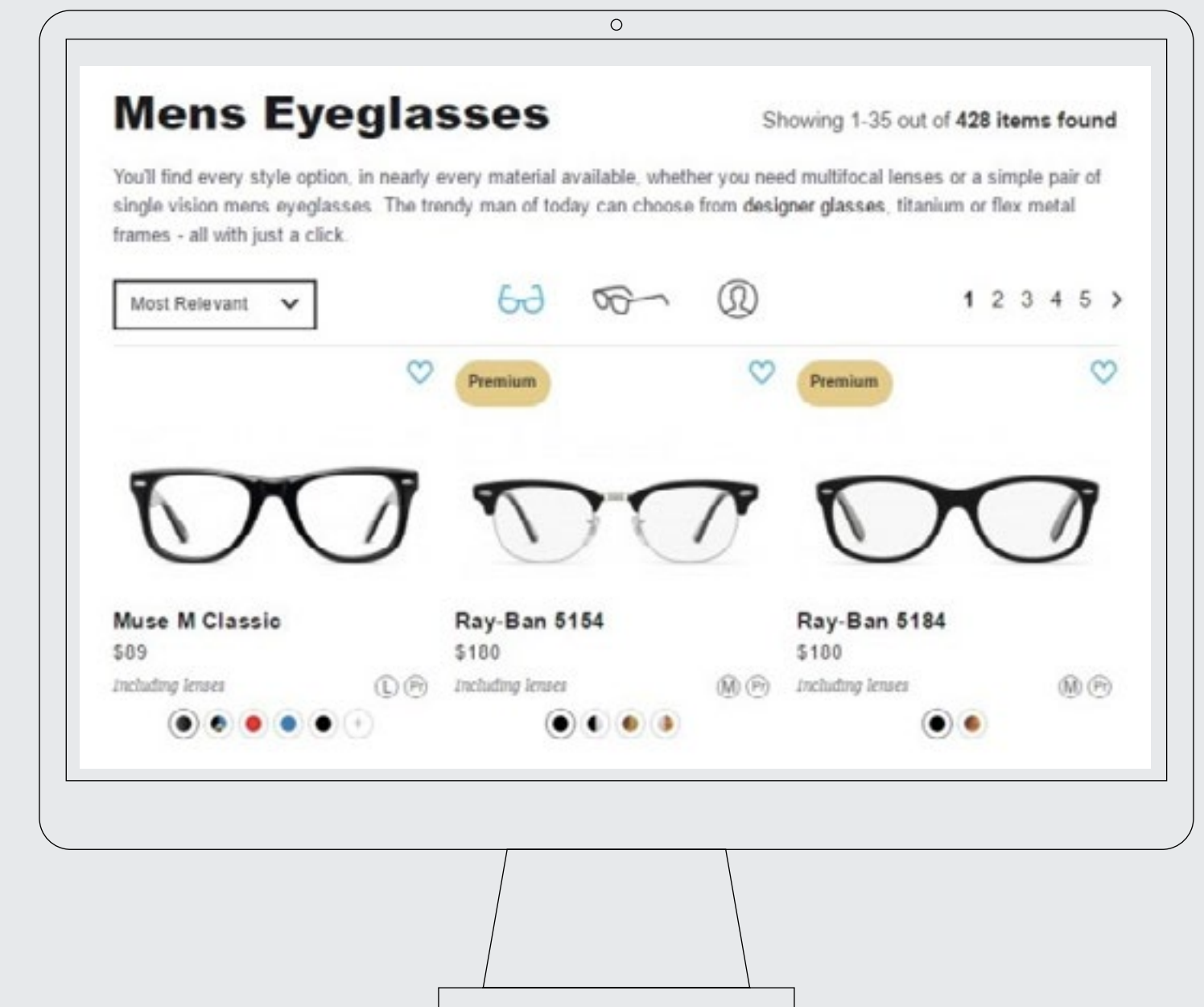
AD



EMAIL



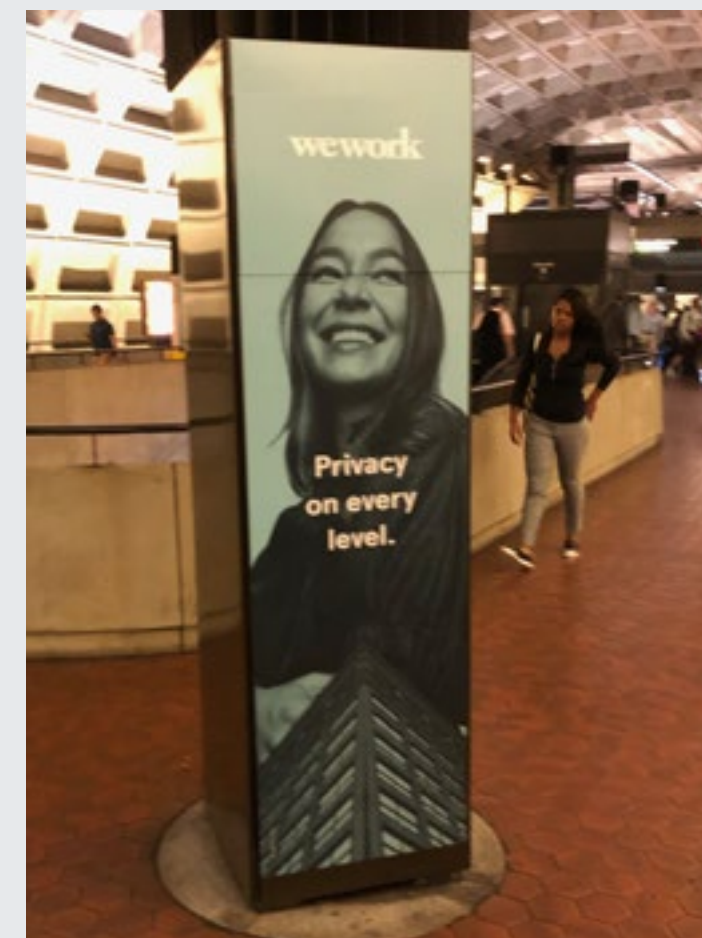
WEBSITE



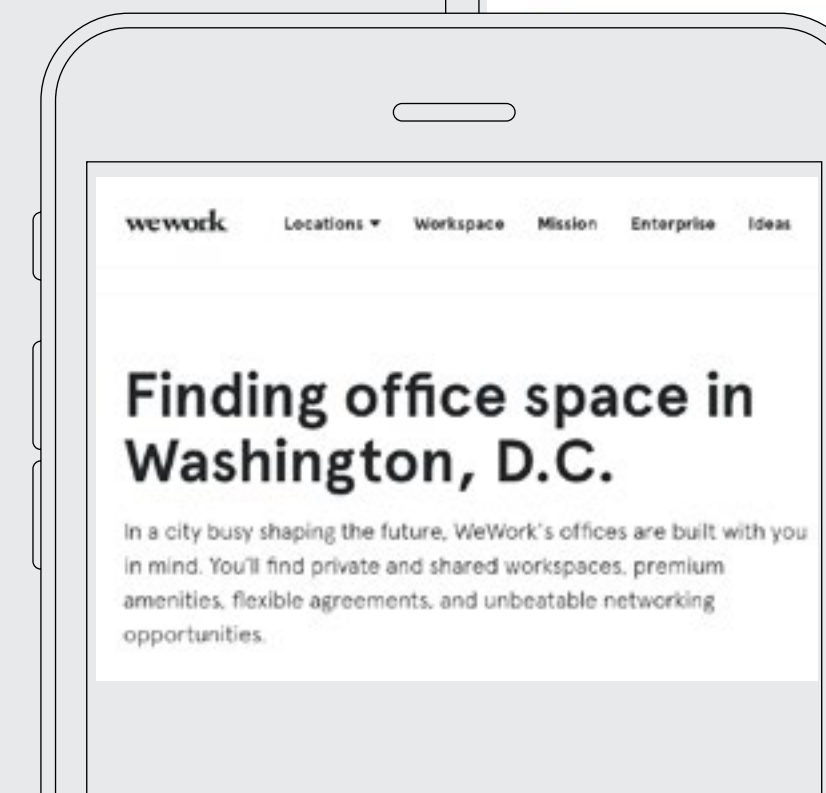
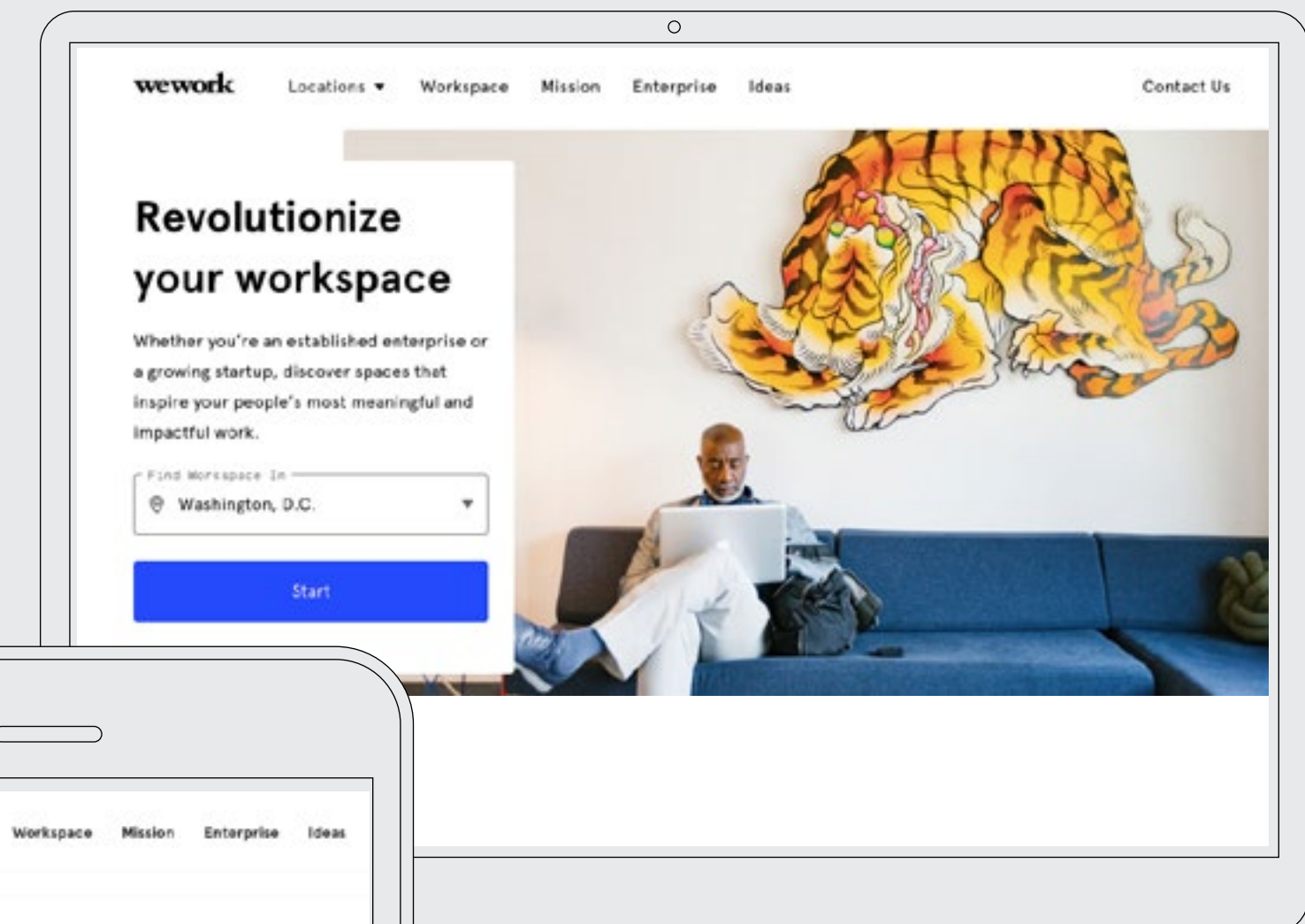
Connected Content Experiences

In a connected content experience, each touch point bears some resemblance to the previous one and maintains consistency of campaign messaging, personalization, or design. In this example, we see a disconnected experience: An advertising “takeover” campaign in a Washington DC metro station—with corresponding digital ads—focuses on the needs of this regional market (privacy and secure office space). But when users click to the company homepage, that connection is lost: the homepage contains generic messaging and does not reflect the messaging or style of the takeover campaign. This is a missed opportunity and the customer’s interest is more likely to evaporate.

CONNECTED OUTDOOR CAMPAIGN



DISCONNECTED FROM ONLINE



MAIN MENU

3

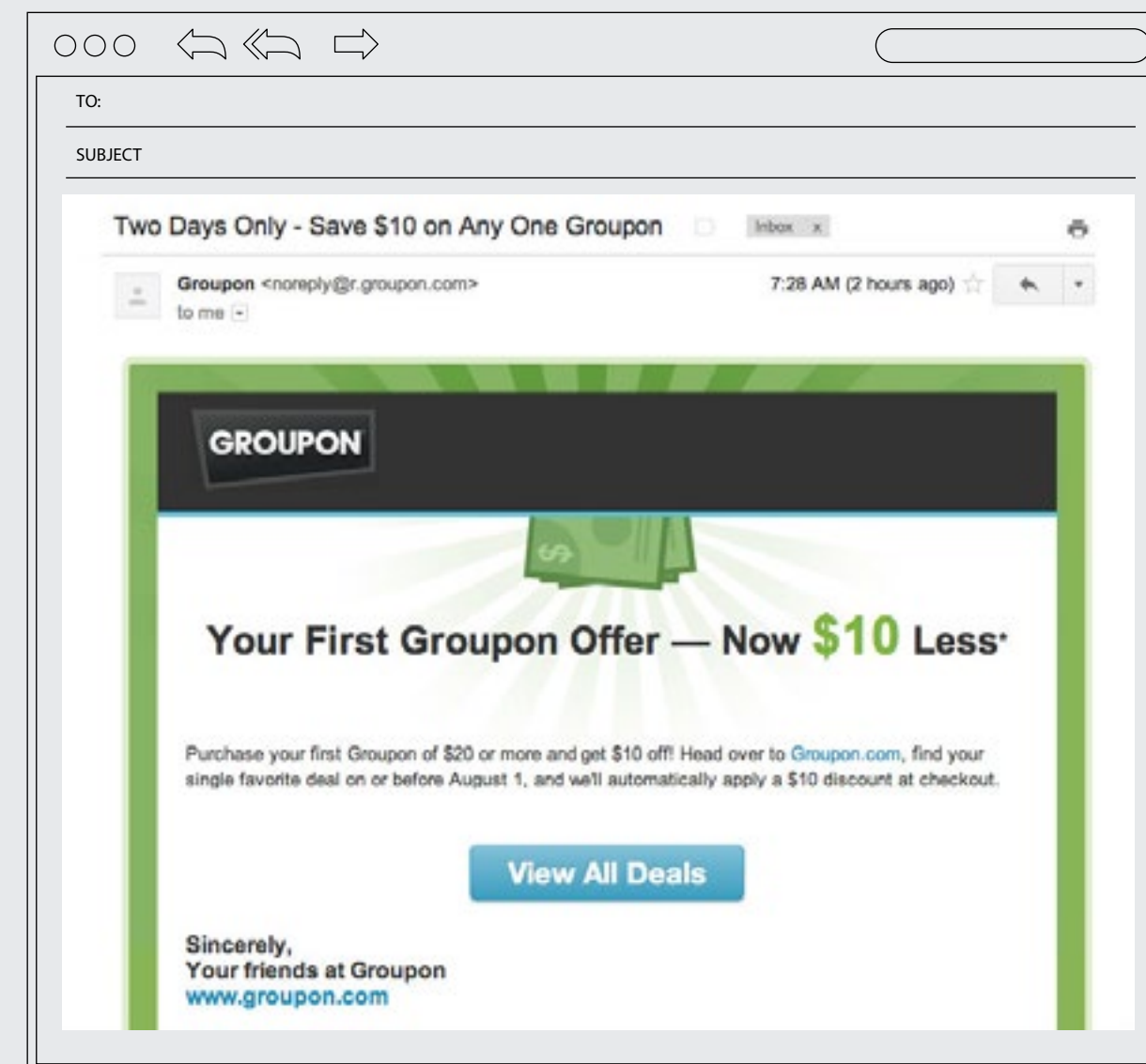
Contextual Content Experiences

How your customers experience content depends on the context in which they consume it. To break through with the right message at the right time, you can serve up contextual, personalized content based on the type of device, time of day, location, journey stage, relationship with your company, or other factors. Giving thought to context is critical to delivering excellent content experiences.

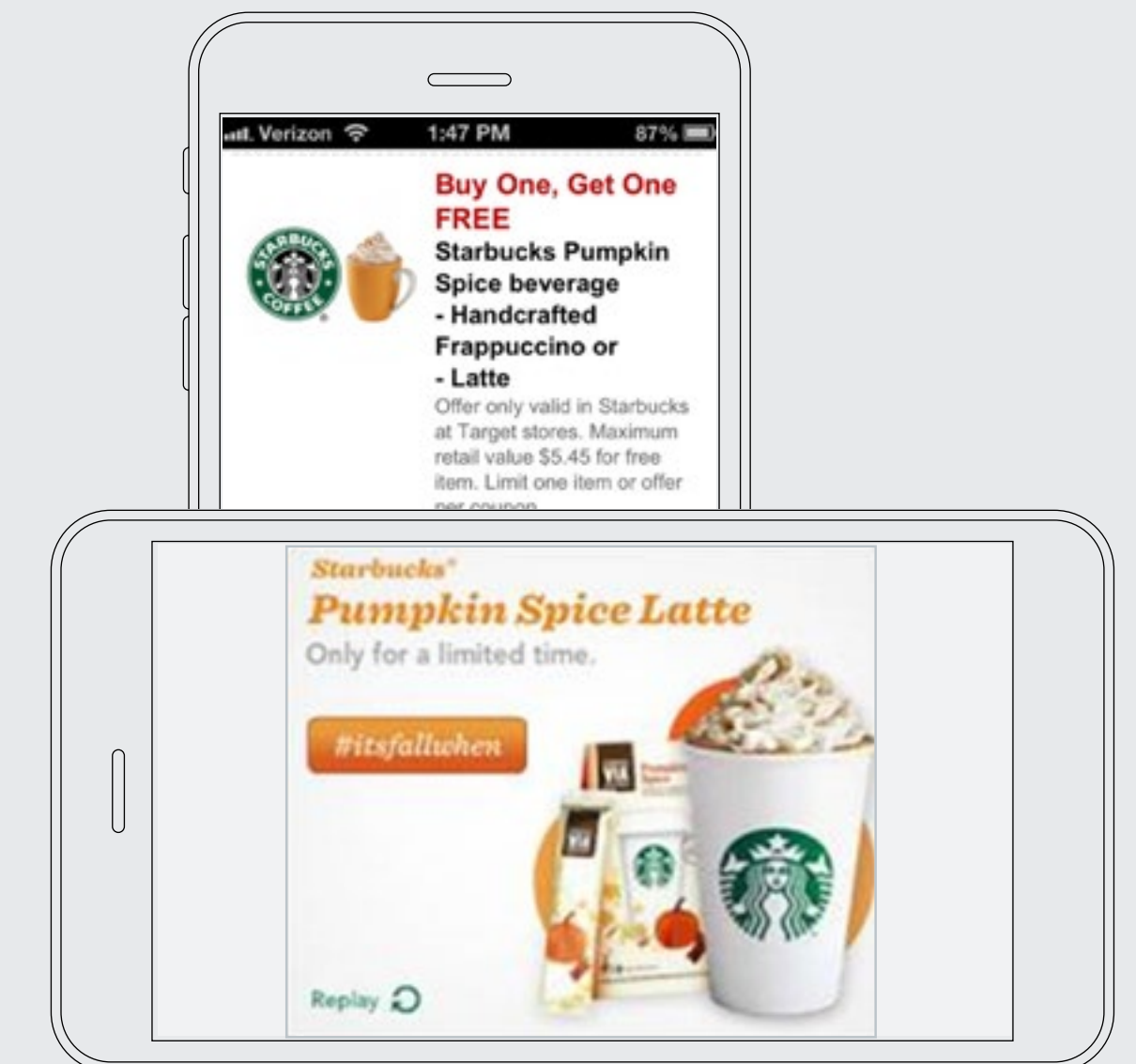
DAYPARTING



JOURNEY-BASED



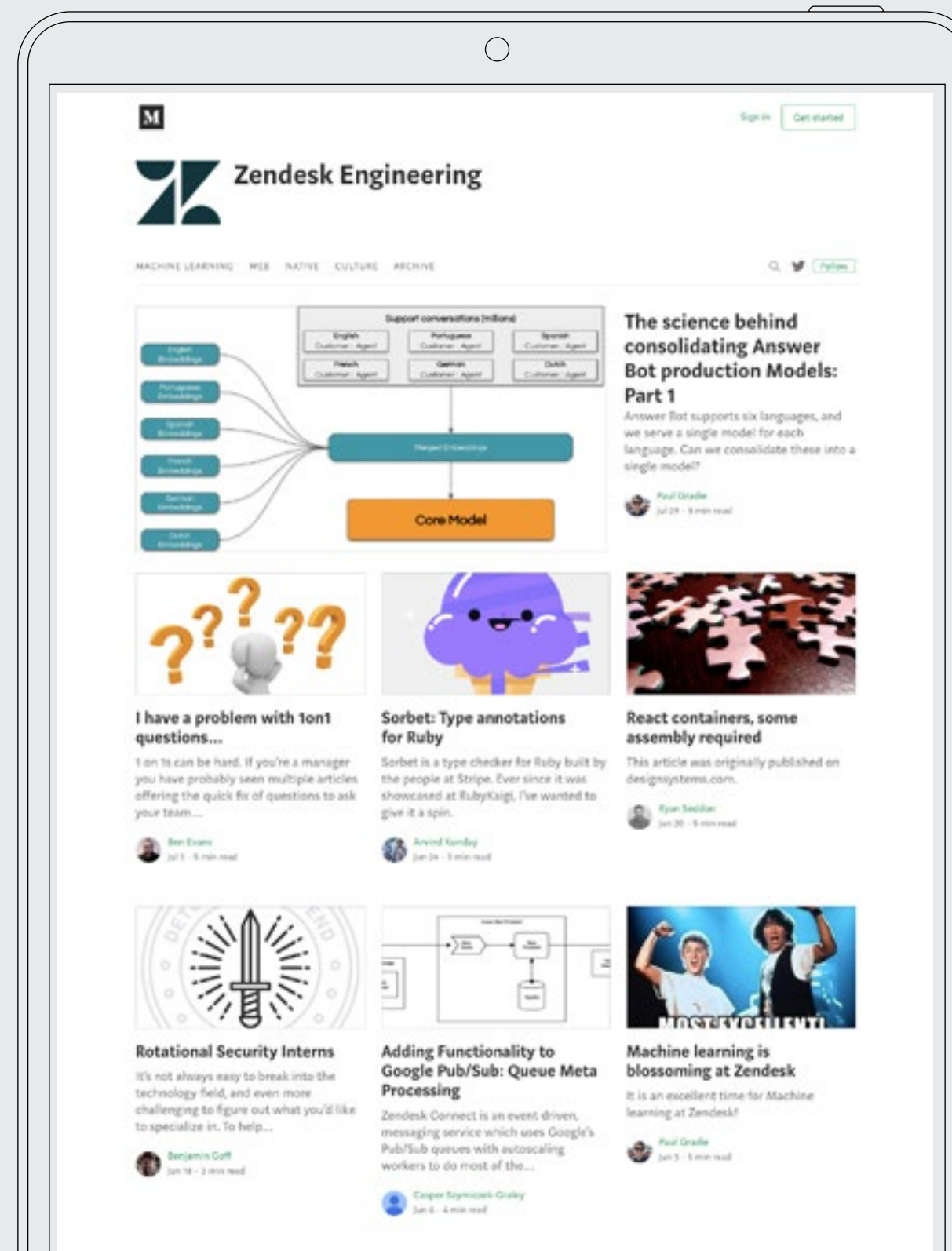
LOCATION-BASED MOBILE



4

Engaging Content Experiences

You are competing for your audience's attention with a veritable feast of sensory experiences, which is why it is more important than ever to draw them in with content that is fresh, immersive, and creative. Engaging content experiences take many forms—from virtual reality to collaborative storytelling that includes audiences in the process. Choose the right format carefully to create the best experience for your audience and to deepen their engagement with your brand.

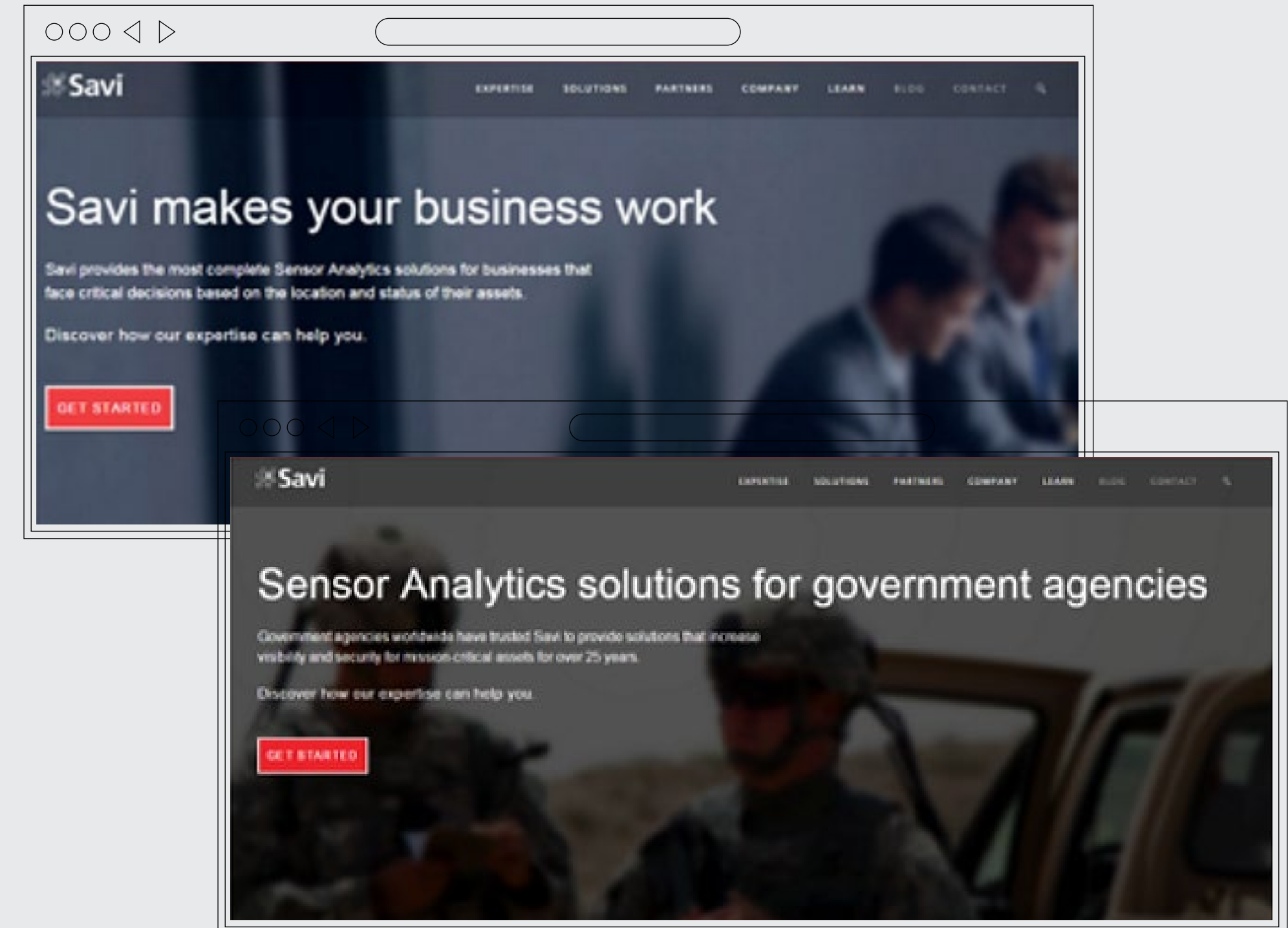
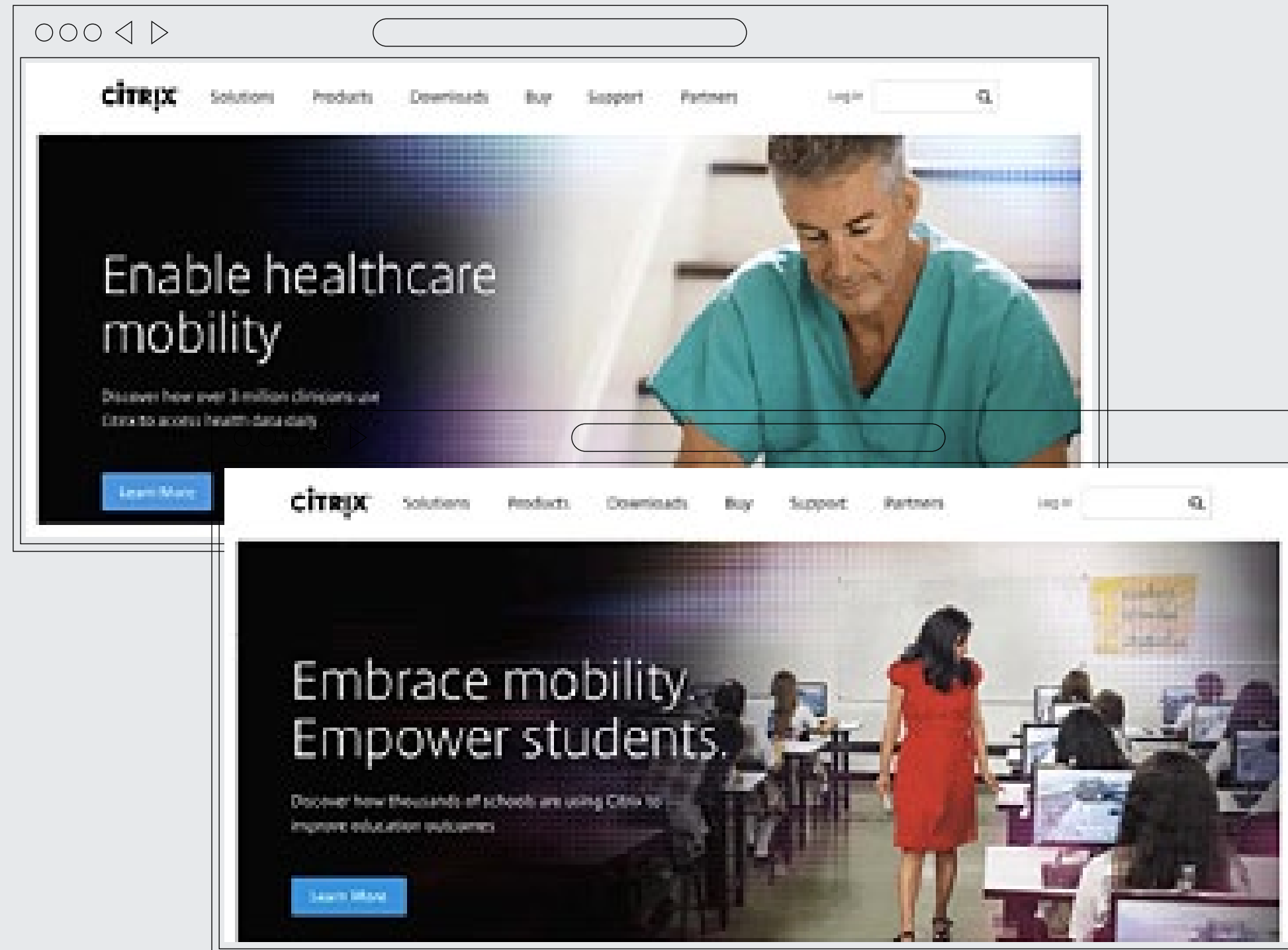


MAIN MENU

5

Relevant Content Experiences

When you understand your audience—their industry, role, behaviors, or preferences—you can serve up relevant content that resonates and converts. The magic of personalization gives you myriad options. For example, your homepage can display different hero banners for visitors who work in education versus healthcare or government.



6

Guided Content Experiences

By curating a guided journey, you're deepening audience engagement by suggesting the next relevant piece of content to consume. Think "Recommended for you" or "You may also like." Give your audience little prompts and nudges for the next action to take. If you've dedicated budget dollars to get someone to arrive at your landing page, the worst thing you can do is leave them hanging with nowhere to go (except off your website).

salesforce success cloud <http://pages.mail.salesforce.com/gettingstarted/sales-cloud/>

SUCCESS WITH SALES CLOUD

CONNECT WITH EXPERTS, GET BEST PRACTICES, AND LEARN WITH TRAILS

Plan Implement Train What's Next

PLAN

SALES CLOUD BASICS

Are you ready to connect to your customers in a whole new way? Start your Journey from preparation to deployment by following the steps below.

GOT QUESTIONS? JOIN OUR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Plan Implement Train What's Next

Humanity's future is the future of cities. Explore the crowded favelas, greened-up blocks and futuristic districts that could shape the future of...

The big picture

Curated by TED

Must-listen talks about the future of the environment, crime, technology, government and the human race.

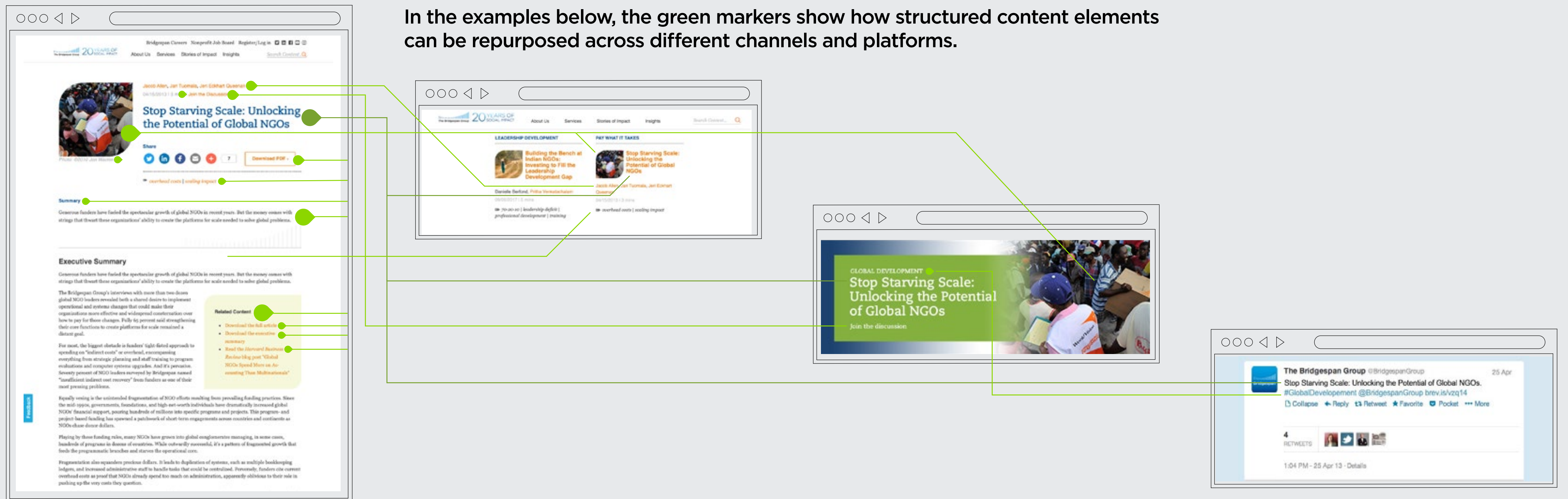
WHAT TO WATCH NEXT

Majora Carter: Greening the ghetto
18:36 Posted: Jun 2006
Views 972,259 | Comments 180

Ellen Dunham-Jones: Retrofitting suburbia
19:23 Posted: Jun 2010
Views 483,505 | Comments 112

Structured Content Experiences

Properly structuring your content allows you to create it once and push it out automatically across multiple platforms—blog, social post, landing page banner, Google listing—to meet your audiences where they are. Structured content is a geekier topic than the other characteristics of content experience, since it depends on the technical, back-end setup of your platform or CMS. In essence, it's about breaking up content into component pieces—title, image, rich snippet, reviews, category/tag, publishing date, location/map, and other structured fields. Structuring your content saves time and allows you to more easily create rich, consistent content experiences across channels.



OPTIMIZING THE CONTENT EXPERIENCE

6 Steps



6. Test and optimize

5. Build a content architecture

4. Develop task flows

3. Determine their top tasks

2. Map their journey

1. Identify key audiences ←

Step

1

Identify Your Key Audiences



IT Purchasing



Business Owner



College Student

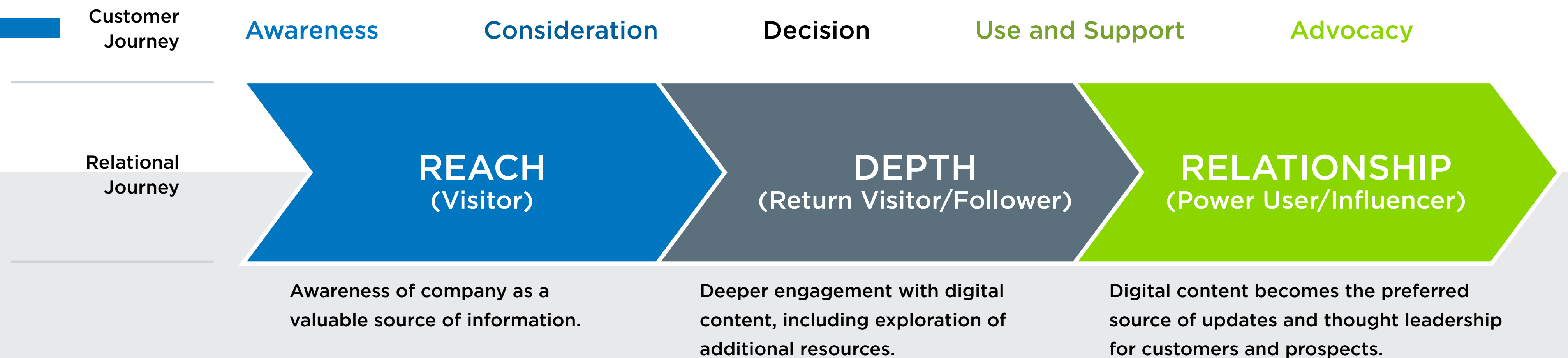


“Home IT Guy”

Any content creation effort should begin by identifying your key audiences and their needs, careabouts, behaviors, preferences, and pain points. As you develop your personas with content experience in mind, remember that personas are not segments—they are multidimensional representations of real users or customers.

Step 2

Map the Customer Journey and the Relational Journey



To guide your content creation for each persona, map out the stages of their customer journey as well as their relational journey with your brand. For the latter, determine their level of awareness of your products or services, as well as the depth of their engagement with your content. Are they a return visitor, power user, or influencer? Do they share your content or is this their first time viewing it?

Remember that a customer journey and relational journey may not map to one another exactly: A long-time, loyal customer might not necessarily be a power user of your website or follower on social media. These journey maps will allow you to develop content that addresses their needs at each stage—and deepens their engagement with you.

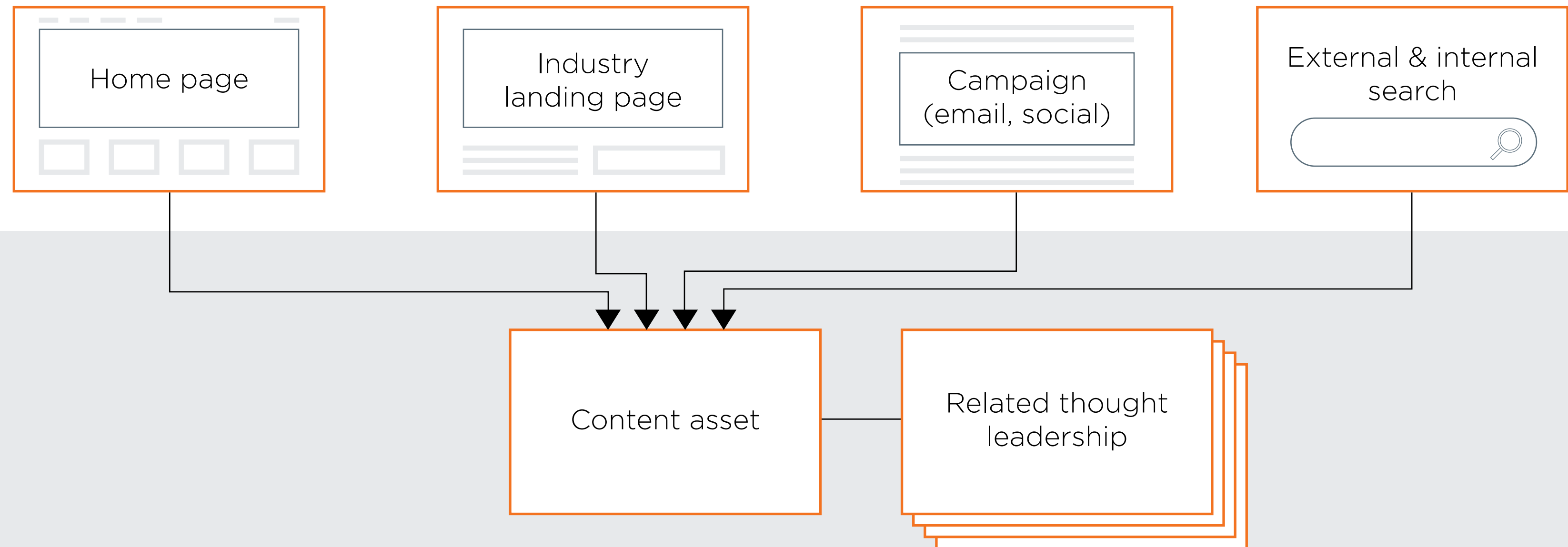
Step 3 Determine Your Audiences' Top Tasks



“I want to hear from others who have bought this product.”

The work you’ve put into developing personas and building journey maps should lead you to an understanding of the top tasks (informational or transactional) that each persona is seeking to achieve at each step of their journey. List each one in sentence form.

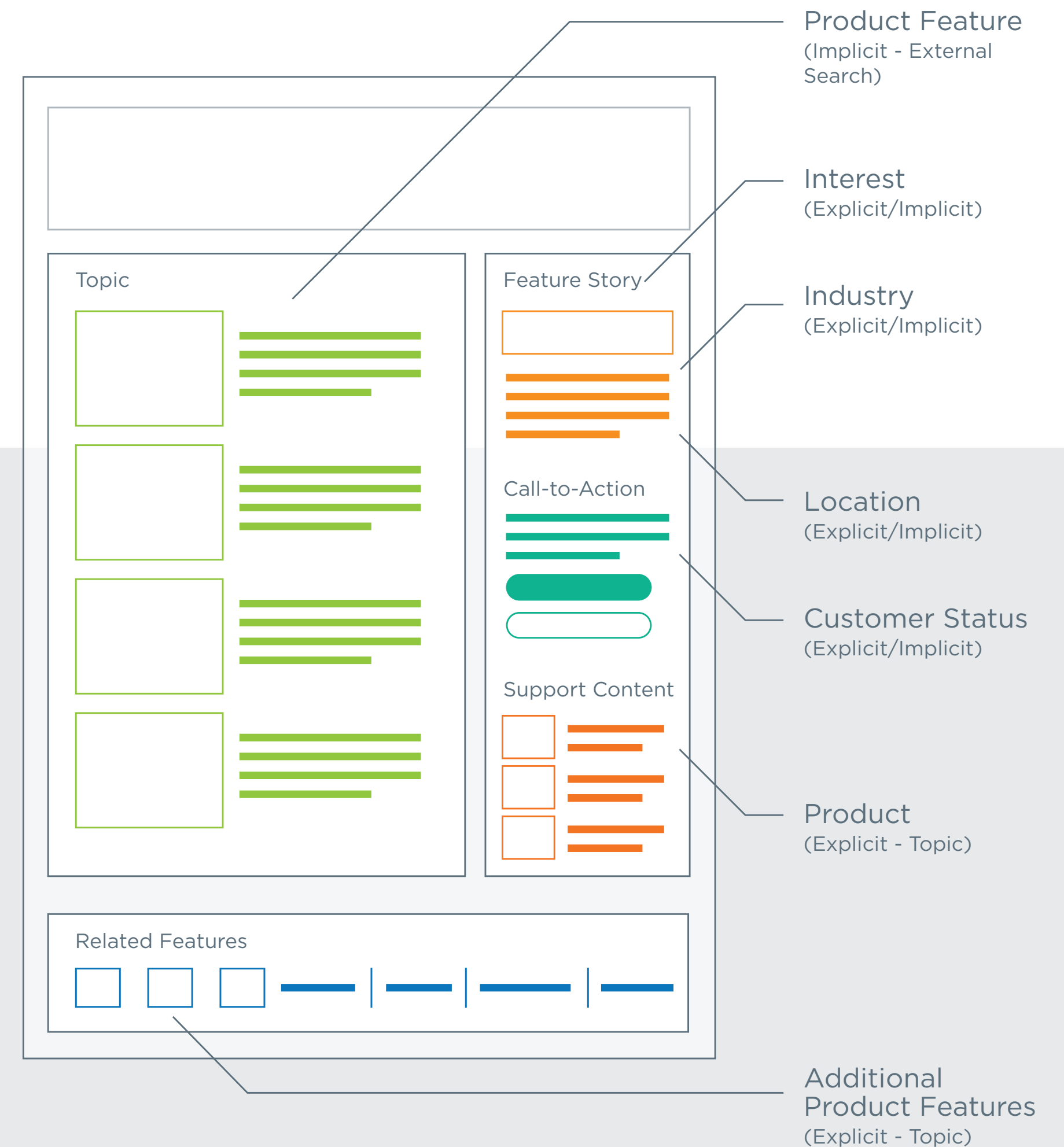
Step 4 Develop Task Flows



Now that you've listed the top tasks for your personas, think through what content you'll create to help them achieve those tasks. Map out a task flow of their steps to complete the task, as well as the content you'll provide along the way to answer their questions and move them to the next step. Consider all the ways a person can consume your information during this process: through your website, or via external search, or in response to an email or a campaign. Go beyond your dot-com.

Step 5 Build a Content Architecture to Support Top Tasks

Create a content architecture document that defines the specific content required for each touch point. This is the architecture of the content, not just a webpage wireframe. It may include content priority (high/medium/low), editorial guidance, content specifications, content variations for alternate channels, and personalization rules. While the example on the right shows a webpage content architecture with personalized elements, remember to think beyond the website: You are creating multiple versions of content in different formats so that it's ready to go as part of an integrated experience.



Step 6 Test and Optimize

URL	TITLE	CONTENT TYPE	QUALITATIVE					AVERAGE					QUANTITATIVE					TAKE ACTION	NOTES		
			Brand and style consistency	Plain language	SEO keyword use	Relevance	- Business goals	- User needs	- Current	Exposure	Engagement	Conversion	- Registration	- Deeper engagement	Influence	Age					
			5	4	3	4	3	4	5	3		3	2	1	4	2	1	5	3		
			1	2	3	2	3	4	4	3		1	2	3	2	3	4	4	3		
			2	3	2	4	5	4	3	3		3	2	3	2	3	1	3	2		

As with any marketing effort, the final step is to test and optimize. Is your content doing what you intended it to do? A content scorecard that measures content against both qualitative criteria (relevance, consistency, engagement, etc.) AND quantitative measures (views, shares, time on page, etc.) helps to assess whether content is performing in spite of its quality or because of it, and to indicate where it may just be in the wrong channel or format. This is, of course, an ongoing process. What you learn from assessing your content will be used to adjust and optimize the next time around to dial in your content experiences.

Next Steps for Marketing Leaders

Content is an essential part of every customer journey and touch point. Content experience shapes customer experience. But in B2B organizations, a range of teams must work together to create that experience: digital marketing, solutions marketing, product marketing, sales, customer service. No single department controls content experience.

Senior leadership, from VPs to the CMO, must now embrace the task of optimizing content experience and work to align teams—in the same way that it aligns them around shaping an excellent customer experience. The outcomes are worth the effort: improved lead conversion, better customer loyalty, and increased revenue.

Talk with Tendo

Tendo Communications has helped some of the world's most recognizable B2B brands to create and optimize their customers' content experiences. Our team of content marketers and content strategists apply their skills to help you achieve your goals and get a greater ROI on your digital and content investments. Contact us today to take your content to the next level:

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Web: www.tendocom.com