

Marketing Automation Category

A Beginner's Guide To Integrated Marketing Communications

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When I think of integration, I picture a well-oiled machine.

All the varying parts are working together to create one unified result. That's exactly how an integrated marketing communications approach works in marketing. It works toward aligning all your marketing messages across distinct communication channels.

Modern businesses understand the importance of streamlining marketing messages, actions, and tasks, to provide a central database for all interactions. To help achieve this, companies are adopting **marketing automation software** to create personalized marketing experiences for specific **customer segments**.

What is integrated marketing communications?

An integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategy takes your marketing department from disparate functions to a single, interconnected approach. IMC merges your various marketing collateral and channels – **digital marketing, social engagement, public relations**, and direct mail with one clear and consistent message.

IMC campaigns can be very helpful in understanding a company's mission. If the sales team delivers a different message than the organization's social platforms, it can be challenging to identify what a brand truly values. IMC seeks to eliminate these inconsistencies and ensure you send the same signals regardless of team or priority.

If your marketing team struggles to deliver a cohesive message, it likely stems from a lack of understanding of the importance of an integrated marketing approach.

Not every campaign has to consist of IMC. This strategy combines old and new methods, and its relevance will depend on the campaign's content and the desired effects.

Integrated marketing communications examples

Creating a unified and seamless marketing experience is top of mind for all marketing teams. But it can be challenging to work with all the moving parts of a marketing strategy in a unified manner. To understand how the process of IMC really works, let's look at some real-life campaigns.

1. Always' #LikeAGirl campaign

Always, a brand that sells menstrual hygiene products used its voice to shed light on the

The brand created the **#LikeAGirl** campaign to change how we perceive the phrase, “You ____ like a girl.” The campaign spanned multiple mediums, such as TV, print, and social media. The video below is easily the most memorable of the integrated marketing efforts, as it showed the differences in how older girls perceive their limitations compared to younger girls.



2. Domino's AnyWare Campaign

When you're hungry, especially "pizza hungry," you want food immediately. You don't want to wade through endless topping options, enter your payment information, update your current address, and patiently await the delivery person.

Domino's AnyWare campaign addressed this issue by creating a streamlined system of orders that could be completed through almost any platform. Hungry customers could use Twitter, text messages, smartwatches, and smart TVs to get their orders in. Not only that, but Domino's pre-established pizza profiles had their consumers' go-to orders saved.



Source: **Domino's**

This campaign garnered over 2 million impressions on social media and was featured on multiple celebrity talk shows. It also significantly increased the number of pizza orders made through digital devices.

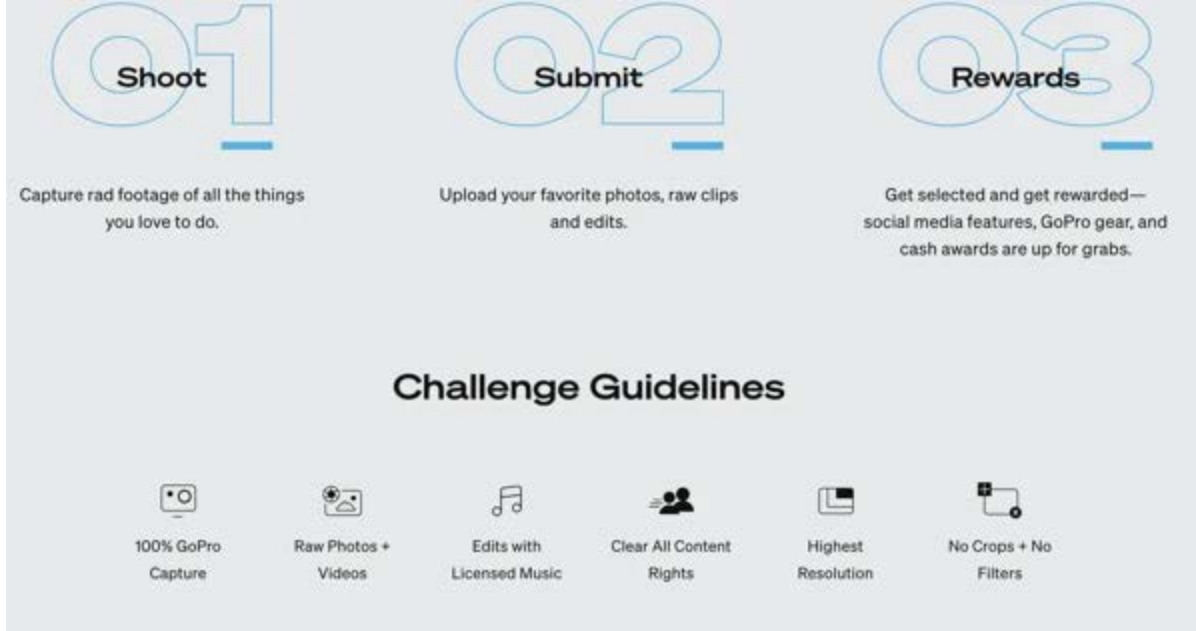
The best news? This service continues to be available and is only more accessible with the recent advent of home smart devices (like CarPlay). Domino's lets customers order pizza through Google Home, Alexa, and Facebook Messenger. Talk about integration!

3. GoPro: Be a Hero

GoPro, a video camera brand, used its **Be a Hero campaign** to appeal to the masses emotionally. The campaign spanned multiple channels, including magazines, billboards, in-store displays, and digital marketing.

It was mostly created to advertise its new Hero device to inspire and encourage people to live a full life using the company's ecosystem of adventure cameras, mounts, and accessories.

The campaign includes footage from many of these heroes, from surfers riding the waves to drivers heading into the sunset. The brand's message is clear: heroes are all around us.



The graphic is divided into three main sections. The top section contains three numbered steps: '01 Shoot' with the instruction 'Capture rad footage of all the things you love to do.', '02 Submit' with 'Upload your favorite photos, raw clips and edits.', and '03 Rewards' with 'Get selected and get rewarded—social media features, GoPro gear, and cash awards are up for grabs.' Below this is a 'Challenge Guidelines' section with six icons and their corresponding rules: a camera icon for '100% GoPro Capture', a photo icon for 'Raw Photos + Videos', a music note icon for 'Edits with Licensed Music', a person icon for 'Clear All Content Rights', a resolution icon for 'Highest Resolution', and a crop icon for 'No Crops + No Filters'.

Source: [GoPro](#)

4. Snap Inc. Spectacles

We've all heard of wearables: Apple watches, Fitbits, and Google Glass (may it rest in peace). When Snapchat released its **Spectacles**, it changed the game of wearable technology. The glasses powered by **augmented reality** take photographs and videos in real-time and send them to users' mobile devices through Bluetooth - piquing audience interests worldwide.



Snapchat went beyond this initial invention with its guerrilla marketing campaign of installing vending machines around certain cities called Snapbots. Consumers would wait in line to purchase the glasses, creating conversation and buzz around an already



Source: **The Guardian**

This integrated marketing campaign found a way to blend a digital product with a physical sales booth. People increased the reach of this campaign by posting about it on their social media profiles, leading the campaign to gather even more attention than it would have from Snapchat alone.

5. Snickers' "You're not you when you're hungry" campaign

This one struck a chord with me as someone emotionally affected by low blood pressure. Arguably, its most popular execution was the release of commercials featuring celebrity cameos wherein the celebrity would act out, leading Snickers to reveal it was a regular person who wasn't acting like themselves because they were hungry.



Source: [Florida International University](#)

Snickers continued this campaign through social media, print advertisements, and retail. This campaign blew up for Snickers, mainly because of the celebrity appearances during [Superbowl 2015](#).

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How to execute integrated marketing campaigns

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communication to send out messaging, there is no step-by-step process every team can follow to execute a perfect campaign.

The biggest aspect of running an IMC campaign is identifying the best channels for your brand and what approach to take with the messaging (e.g., humorous or informative). Here are some ideas on what actions will most likely result in success.

- **Streamlined messaging.** To ensure total alignment across different channels, all teammates must be clear on the goals of the messaging. There is no time for misunderstandings when executing an efficient and successful integrated marketing campaign - the foundation of which is cohesive and consistent brand messaging.
- **Clear leadership roles.** The IMC process is cross-functional and impacts different organizational areas, such as sales or **business operations**. Thus, it is necessary to identify a team and associated leadership with final authority on campaign budget and timeline decisions.
- **Goal setting and metric tracking.** Determining your goals before beginning an IMC campaign could be the difference between success and failure. Practice **goal setting** to answer questions like, "Are you looking for more engagement or annual recurring revenue?"

Once you've set campaign goals, consider diving into metrics supporting them and tracking them for continuous improvement.

- **Structured workflows.** If we're rounding up, an integrated marketing campaign has about a million moving parts. Use **project management** principles to establish a clear workflow to ensure effective collaboration and milestone achievements.

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Benefits of an integrated marketing campaign

Integrated marketing communications are beneficial to multiple audiences. It helps your customers gain trust in your brand and works to align your organization's stakeholders better.

As with any marketing strategy, it is a good idea to identify how IMC can help your company before investing in it.

- **Highly engaging.** – First of all, it works. You saw just some of the results listed above in relation to the campaign examples. Two million impressions on social media are not something brands come by every day. To see success like that, it's necessary to strategize every step of the way. IMCs are thought out from top to bottom.
- **Cost-efficient.** These campaigns also allow users or potential customers to do some of the marketing work for you. Remember when we said interested customers waiting in line for the Snapchat Spectacles used their social media profiles to increase awareness? While the campaign might be an investment, the surrounding publicity is free.

These campaigns reduce costs by developing multi-use materials. Videos, imagery, copy, and more can all be passed from one medium to another.

- **Better brand recall.** Integrated marketing campaigns are effective because they are everywhere. You see the Snickers commercial not just on the TV between Friends episodes but during the

- **Customer-centric.** Integrated marketing campaigns are all about the customer. You're trying to build rapport with them, increase **brand awareness**, and improve your reputation. These campaigns get customers talking about you casually, similar to how one might mention running into an old friend or seeing a new movie that just came out.

A message that values and pursues consistency will result in more understanding from your target audience. It's important the various departments within your organization are all saying the same thing and sharing the same message. In this way, consumers know who to trust.

Integrated marketing communications challenges

As with everything, it's important to consider any potential risks. Going beyond the benefits to understand what trials could lie ahead will help you be more prepared to handle any challenges.

Cross-functional support and resource buy-in

Think of all the different departments involved in an integrated marketing campaign. Before you can integrate externally, you have to integrate internally. This means designing and working with sales, various marketing departments, public relations, and other teams involved in your campaign execution process.

One challenge of IMC is that professionals often don't want to relinquish their authority or share the budget that exists for their team. IMC campaigns require that teams come together in agreement while also sharing resources to do so.

Consider the objectives that may arise from other departments and how you will overcome them. Remember the shared goal you all have in common.

Creative limitations and idea restrictions

When choosing to execute an IMC, consider the attention and time that will have to be devoted to this one project. As established, the point of an integrated campaign is to present cohesive messaging so consumers clearly understand your angle.

campaigns competing for attention. This can sometimes make your creative teams feel stifled or ignored.

It can also be challenging to align differing creative views and create a system of accountability and ownership, especially if the creative team doesn't feel inspired by the campaign.

Another point to consider is using technology and customer data across various teams. Getting past the processes and approvals of different departments can sometimes take away from the premise of running an integrated marketing campaign to engage and persuade customers with ideas.

The (g)lue behind the brand (va)lue

An integrated marketing campaign is your opportunity to show customers the extent of your creativity and deliver a distinct message across multiple channels. When done well, it can have your brand name bouncing around in thousands of text messages, emails, or weekend brunch conversations.

The effects of this attention and awareness are impossible to measure completely, as so much of the response to an integrated marketing campaign is subconscious. Is someone buying a Snickers bar in the grocery store's checkout line because of the incredible integrated marketing campaign they've been privy to or because they're hungry and a chocolate bar caught them in the right place at the right time?

These specific questions we can't answer, but what we can definitely attest to is — the squeaky wheel gets the customers.

Got a stellar idea for your next integrated marketing campaign but unsure how to fine-tune the social aspects of it? We've got you covered with our in-depth guide on [social media marketing](#).

This article was originally published in 2018. It has been updated according to new

Grace Pinegar

Grace Pinegar is a lifelong storyteller with an extensive background in various forms such as acting, journalism, improv, research, and content marketing. She was raised in Texas, educated in Missouri, worked in Chicago, and is now a proud New Yorker. (she/her/hers)

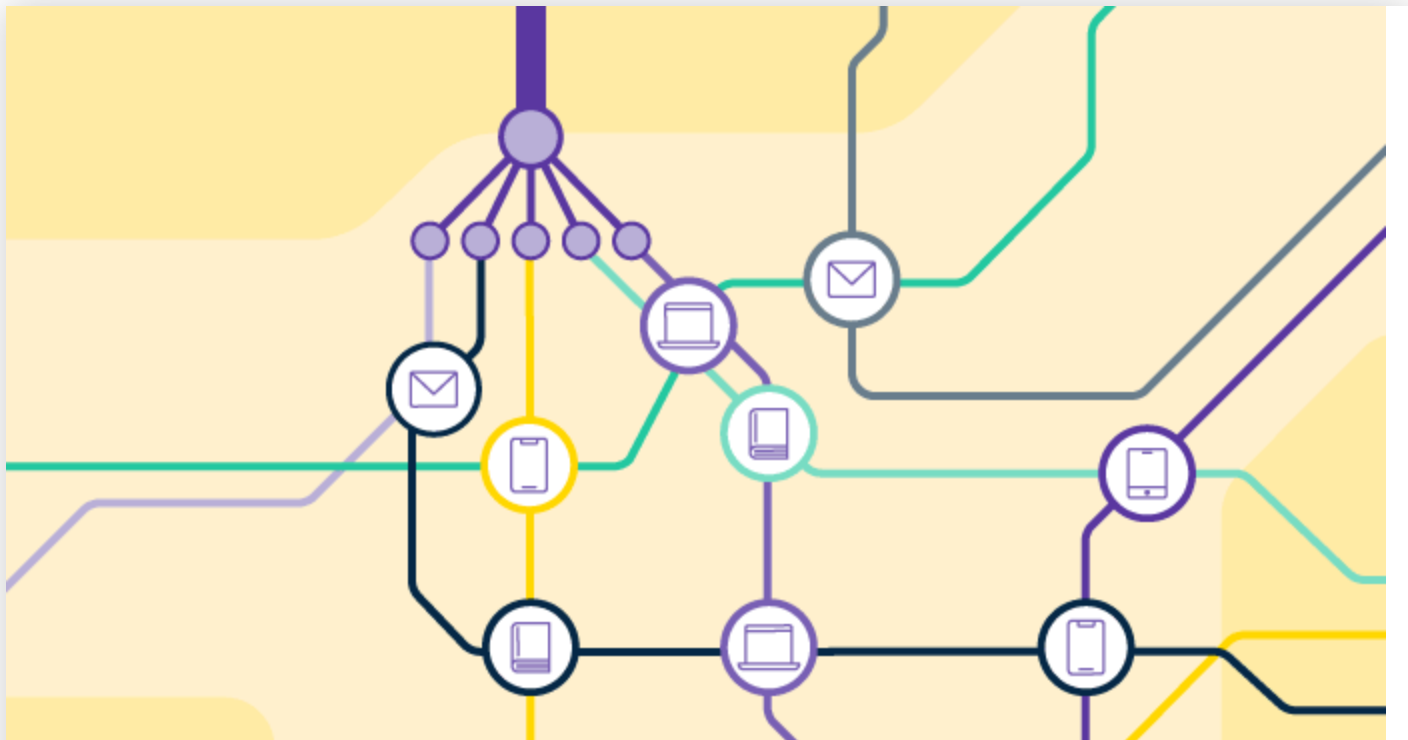
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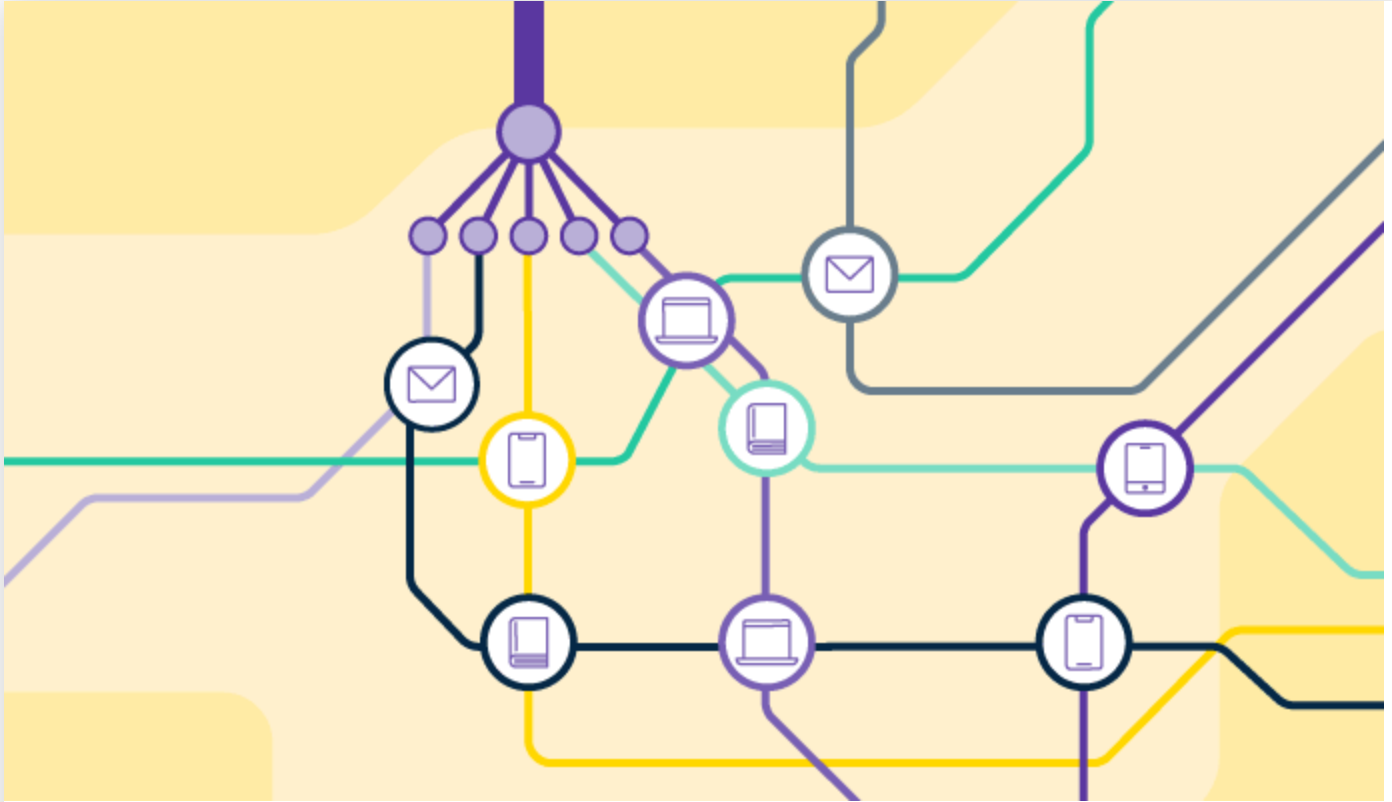
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