

# Macy's prioritizes contextual relevance and segmentation over 1-to-1 email personalization, says VP

Article

Macy's uses personalized [email marketing](#) to drive second purchases, which the company has identified as vital to customer lifetime value. "Getting that next interaction right is an extremely high-value use case [for personalization]," Bennett Fox-Glassman, senior vice president of customer journey at Macy's, said during The Lead Summit last week.

Fox-Glassman said email personalization requires two things—context and relevance—to make sure customers are reengaging with the correct next item. In other words, email marketers need to make sure follow-up emails account for past purchases. Here's what that looks like for Macy's:

- A consumer who bought a moisturizer may be served related products to complete the beauty regimen.
- Someone who purchased jeans may be served the same jeans in a different wash.
- A shopper who purchased a dress is probably less likely to buy the same thing in a different color, but could be served a handbag that complements the dress.

Marketers shouldn't focus too heavily on the potential promise of 1-to-1 personalization and should instead focus on improving segmentation, said Fox-Glassman. For example, Macy's is investing in data that will allow for hyper-personalization, but that may not be useful to deploy if granular segmentation of emails can achieve the same KPIs, he said.

Generative AI plays a significant role in hyper-personalization. More than half (53%) of email marketers worldwide currently use or plan to use AI for content personalization, according to July 2023 data from Ascend2. The tech can be used for email creative, descriptions, and copy, but it's difficult to deploy at scale.

"We're proceeding with caution," said Fox-Glassman about using generative AI for email hyper-personalization. He said Macy's is currently using generative AI for subject line personalization, which is important as [AI innovations make it more difficult to stand out in the inbox](#). But AI-powered marketing messages present brand safety concerns.

"We care about protecting our brand and protecting the customer experience and interaction," said Fox-Glassman. But Macy's, like all brands, does risk the occasional mistake in email marketing. Those misses can be an opportunity, said Fox-Glassman.

"If you are authentic in your relationship with your customer, it's okay to sometimes miss because you can actually come back and say you missed, and it's just as powerful," he said.

Fox-Glassman said follow-up emails admitting to mistakes makes it clear to customers that it's real people, not a "marketing machine" behind emails, which is important for building lasting customer relationships.

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