

# How data and creators help Michaels and Shutterstock grow

Article

For brands like Michaels and Shutterstock, growing their customer bases takes a mix of art and science.

Michaels has invested in digital and in-store crafting classes. “For us, it really starts with inspiration, or if you don’t know how to do a project, it’s just education,” Heather Bennett,

executive vice president of marketing and ecommerce at Michaels, said at last week's eTail event in Boston.

Shutterstock believes understanding what your customer data says is key. "I have different metrics for SEO than [search engine marketing] or email marketing, but how do you bring all those together so they really complement each other well?" said Sara Resnick, global head of organic growth and SEO at Shutterstock.

## **Michaels is focusing on marketplace and customer experience (CX)**

This year, **Michaels launched MakerPlace**, an online marketplace meant to compete with Etsy. That comes as **US retail marketplace ecommerce sales** are expected to grow by 10.2% YoY in 2023, according to our March 2023 forecast.

Bennett emphasized that executive-level support played an important role in creating the marketplace.

"It's really easy to abandon things ... you have to have that perseverance to say, 'We will get this done, we are going to invest in it,'" she said. Part of the investment was adding "talent that had experience, specifically in bringing startups and new businesses to life," said Bennett. "We went from having around 200,000 SKUs online to adding another 1.3 million."

Features that improve the CX are also helping Michaels grow:

- Buy online, pick up in-store has grown 8% YoY, according to Bennett
- Wait time was reduced by 13% this year
- Curbside pickup is 16% faster

Finally, Michaels relaunched its brand identity **with a new tagline**: "Everything to create anything."

## **Shutterstock is listening to the data**

In addition to training the organization on SEO's impact on growth, Resnick said it's important to have a central source of truth showing key metrics. "Try to get a dashboard that will help tell that story," she added, stressing the need for automation.

Some other data sets Shutterstock has been focusing on include:

- **Social listening:** Monitor what customers are saying on social. US adults will spend 11.2% of their **total daily media time** and 18.1% of digital media time with social platforms this year, according to our forecast.
- **Trends across channels:** Google trends data is helpful, but don't stop there. Resnick said Pinterest trends data offers a great view into visual elements that are trending. For example, Shutterstock has seen a huge surge in searches for Barbie-themed images since Greta Gerwig's movie started to trend.
- **Internal search data:** Monitoring this gives a unique view into what your customers are asking for.

### **The common thread: Collaboration**

While Bennett touted executive buy-in and appointing teams tasked with innovations, Resnick said it's important to break down silos, even if it's difficult.

“Once you make the case for it, make sure you have the data to prove it. Or if you don't, say, This is why we're doing this because of some very good reason that the competition is doing something,” Resnick said.

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