


The Daily: Why personalization matters, an email exhibition that made headlines, and charging X users to post content

Audio



On today's podcast episode, we discuss some personalization tips and tricks that emerged from research, examples of personalization done well, and how AI is accelerating it. "In Other News," we talk about why an email exhibition at a design museum made headlines and a plan to charge X (formerly Twitter) users to post content. Tune in to the discussion with our director of Briefings Jeremy Goldman and Malinda Sandman, senior director of global acquisition marketing at Intuit Mailchimp.

Subscribe to the "Behind the Numbers" podcast on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [Pandora](#), [Stitcher](#), Podbean or wherever you listen to podcasts. [Follow us on Instagram](#)



Episode Transcript:

Marcus Johnson:

This episode is made possible by Mailchimp. Ever heard of a customer? It's the result of marketers grouping customers with different behaviors into one big mess, but with Mailchimp,

you can use real-time behavior data to personalize emails for every customer based on their browsing and buying behavior, turning your customers into customers. Intuit Mailchimp, the number one email marketing and automations brand. Visit mailchimp.com/personalize for more information, based on competitor brands publicly available data on worldwide numbers of customers in 2021, 2022. Availability of features and functionality vary by plan, which are subject to change.

Malinda Sandman:

There's a lot of opportunity there for marketers to actually think about like, "How do you use email to personalize?," but often, what we found in the study too is that marketers struggle to figure out how to use the data that they have, right? So the data is plentiful, but how do you actually think about using that to make the most effective personalized marketing?

Marcus Johnson:

Hey, gang. It's Tuesday, October 24th. Malinda, Jeremy, and listeners, welcome to the Behind the Numbers Daily, an eMarketer podcast made possible by Intuit Mailchimp. I'm Marcus. Today, I'm joined by two folks.

Let's meet them immediately. We start with our senior director of Global Acquisition Marketing at Intuit Mailchimp, it's Malinda Sandman. Welcome to the show.

Malinda Sandman:

Thanks. Excited to be here.

Marcus Johnson:

Yes, indeed. Excited to have you. We're also joined by our senior director of Briefings, it's of course, Jeremy Goldman.

Jeremy Goldman:

Happy National Bologna Day to you.

Marcus Johnson:

Is it?

Jeremy Goldman:

It is, 101st anniversary.

Marcus Johnson:

Why do you know this?

Jeremy Goldman:

You know, I'm an analyst.

Marcus Johnson:

How are you spending your time? Okay, let's get to know these folks a little bit better before we get on with the episode. It's time now for speed intro. So a couple of questions for these guys. We're going to go back and forth like a tennis match.

Let's do it. We start with Malinda. First question, where are you from and where are you based?

Malinda Sandman:

I'm from San Diego, California, and San Diego area.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello.

Malinda Sandman:

And I am currently in Atlanta, Georgia.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay, very nice. As far away as possible.

Malinda Sandman:

Exactly.

Marcus Johnson:

Coincidence, or not?

Malinda Sandman:

Maybe.

Marcus Johnson:

Jeremy, how about you?

Jeremy Goldman:

Oh, I'm really exotic. I grew up on the Upper West Side of New York City, and now I live on the Upper East Side of New York City.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello. Making moves. Question two, Malinda, what do you do in a sentence?

Malinda Sandman:

I find customers and convince customers that Mailchimp will help unlock their customer growth.

Marcus Johnson:

Jeremy?

Jeremy Goldman:

I lead a team of analysts, helping clients figure out new market opportunities.

Marcus Johnson:

You look up random information about baloney. Favorite song ever? Jeremy, I'll start with you.

Jeremy Goldman:

In Your Eyes, Peter Gabriel. Is that okay?

Marcus Johnson:

Whoa. I don't know. Malinda, are we okay with that?

Malinda Sandman:

I do, actually. I agree with you. Not my favorite song, but I do really like that song.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, okay. All right. We'll allow it. Malinda, yours is?

Malinda Sandman:

I'm going to be corny and do Just The Way You Are, Billy Joel.

Marcus Johnson:

Oh, well played. Yeah, she wins. The final question, Malinda, last piece of content you consumed was what, book, movie, TV show, podcast, maybe something else? What was it?

Malinda Sandman:

I am really into fashion and I just cannot stop Instagram influencers. It's a bad habit.

Marcus Johnson:

Uh-oh. Jeremy?

Jeremy Goldman:

Yeah, it's a bad habit for the bank account, right? I have another bad habit, which is serial killer shows on Max.

Marcus Johnson:

Huh. So I did some trivia recently, and there are a lot of questions about serial killers, and it's good if you get them right 'cause it helps your team. It also makes you look like a maniac if you get them all right. It's like axe-throwing on a first date. If you go axe-throwing, it's like a thing that people do now.

If you go, if you're good at it, it makes you look like a serial killer. If you're bad at it, it's embarrassing. It's lose-lose. Just avoid it as a date. I haven't been, but I can imagine that's how it goes.

All right, that's it for the speed intro. Let's move to the fact of the day. So who invented the pinball machine? So do you guys know this?

Malinda Sandman:

No.

Jeremy Goldman:

Benjamin Franklin. When in doubt, that's what you said.

Marcus Johnson:

Yes. No. That's a good guess. He invented everything else. So bagatelle is the ancestor of pinball.

This is a game that was played in the 1700's in France, and it's a game where small balls are rolled up a sloping board as you try to get them in these holes, and there's kind of pins that are in the way, acting as obstructions. That's where the name pinball came from. French soldiers brought bagatelle to America during the American Revolution in the late 18th century, and then inventor, Montague Redgrave from Ohio, turned bagatelle into the first pinball game, and then engineering game creator, Steve Kordek from Chicago came up with the modern twin flipper pinball game in 1948, and that's where it came from. Are we fans of pinball?

Malinda Sandman:

No. My children are.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay.

Jeremy Goldman:

Everything old is new again. You know, they say it.

Marcus Johnson:

Jeremy, you fan?

Malinda Sandman:

True story.

Jeremy Goldman:

I like to look at it. I'm more of a Street Fighter guy. Sorry.

Marcus Johnson:

Yes. Well played. No sorry is needed. I'm uncompromisingly bad at pinball. Street Fighter, same. Today's real topic, folks, let's talk about it, why personalization matters. So in today's

episode, first in the lead, we'll cover personalization, then for another news, we'll discuss why an email exhibition at the museum. The museum, there are multiple, at a museum at, you know, the one-

Malinda Sandman:

London Design Museum.

Marcus Johnson:

That's the one, made headlines, and then what to make of X, formerly Twitter, experimenting with charging users to post content, but we start, of course, with the lead, we're talking about why personalization matters. When we were thinking about this topic, Malinda, something that came to mind was, "What the hell are we talking about here?" Like personalization, I feel like it can mean a million things to a million people. What does it mean for you and what does it mean for Mailchimp?

Malinda Sandman:

Yeah. So as a marketer, what I really think of a personalization when I work with my teams to lead them through is it's the heart of being customer obsessed, right? So you personalize because you're trying to speak to your customer and show them that you know how to solve their problem. So whatever it is you're selling will solve their problem, so it is figuring out what your customer problem is and showing them that. So it's funny, so at Mailchimp, our customers are marketers.

It's kind of Meta. We are literally trying to solve marketers' problems, advanced marketers' problems, and we're trying to show them that personalization can help them do this for their customers at scale. So at Mailchimp, well, as we think about personalization, it's really using segmentation, using automation to be able to sell to a lot of different customers. Our big campaign and mark right now is called the Customer Campaign, right? So you have this like cluster of customers, and by using personalization, you actually get that customer to separate out into individual customers that you can talk to on a much more one-on-one basis, but still talk to them at scale and show them that you understand their problem, and you can solve their problem with whatever you're selling.

Marcus Johnson:

Jeremy, any thoughts on the definition of personalization?

Jeremy Goldman:

Yeah. I mean, it's definitely one of those things that I think people have gotten a lot more evolved on over the last few years and started to realize that it's one of those things that can just come to life across your whole entire ecosystem, including email, because actually, there was an Ascend2 study relatively recently that said that content personalization is the number one thing that email marketers are going to be leveraging AI for in the near term, and you see more and more of an understanding that personalization just means hitting people with relevant content, relevant offers, relevancy, period, and that's why I'm actually a big fan of the Customer Campaign. It really makes a lot of sense when you see it, and when you kind of help marketers wrap their head around what it means to really get personalization on behalf of your customers.

Marcus Johnson:

So Malinda, you and the folks at Intuit Mailchimp recently published some research in October. It was a piece called This Holiday, It's Personal, and it was on personalization, and that research translated into some pretty impactful tips and tricks. We're going to talk through some of those now. The first one is just on email and just how it still is such a force in marketing, in society at large, and even though it's not new and shiny and has caused some other things, it's still as relevant/more relevant than a lot of things out there. Talk to us a bit about what you found with email still being how in front.

Malinda Sandman:

Yeah, absolutely. So our research that we did with Edelman Data and Intelligence, not surprising as an email marketing platform, we really found that email continues to be that linchpin and that core marketing channel for marketers, and some of the stats that we found is actually nine in 10 marketers say that email marketing is very or extremely important to their overall marketing strategy still. So what this research study actually looked at, when we talked to both marketers and customers, so we get both of the perspectives of those who are talking to the customers, and then what the customers are thinking of as they're receiving this marketing, and so not only are marketers finding over more than 90% email still really important, customers are still saying four and five customers are still saying that they prefer email over other modes of communication, which was really fascinating.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Yeah, 'cause prefer is, I think is a key word there, 'cause a lot of people use, but to prefer something, I think is really quite telling, and 90% of Americans use email. It's almost all Americans. 90% use email according to Radicati Group. Over 80% of it use it monthly, according to our forecasting team, and email usage is high across every age. Statista has some numbers.

I think they're actually pointing to the Radicati numbers, over 85% across every single age category. So it's not just older folks or younger folks, it's all folks, but to your point, people preferring it as a channel is, I think quite key there. Then, it being the most effective channels for personalization in the digital experience, marketers worldwide saying that number one, 65% of folks saying it's the most effective to use for personalization in the digital experience. That's up over last year. Websites were actually 52%, so quite far behind.

That was down. Live chat was even further behind, also Ascend2, same source that Jeremy mentions. Jeremy, what do you think of when you look at the fact that email is still just head and shoulders above a lot of other channels in terms of trying to communicate with customers?

Jeremy Goldman:

I mean, I think it's one of these things where over time, you have a list of people who've opted in for communications. It kind of forces you in a weird way from a strategy standpoint to figure out who you are as a brand, what your value proposition is in order to build a relationship where people are going to give you information over time. Some of this is explicit and some of it is implicit, but I think the ultimate idea of just being able to control your destiny a little bit more forces brands to get serious about email because it remains this number one way of just getting information, building an ongoing relationship, and email just seems like it's the thing that stands the test of time. Other things might come and go, other things might be sexier technologies to adopt as part of your MarTech stack, but email is that old, reliable thing that is the workhorse that is kind of constantly in the background that keeps a lot of organizations going.

Malinda Sandman:

Yeah, Jeremy, I feel like you kind of hit that on the head too, and why email continues to be so important is it's that often, that first connection point that customers have, and because it is first-party data, it actually kind of leads into some of the other insights that we found, is when

you were talking around how customers can control, somewhat write the information that they're giving, and so they can control how brands are talking to them and how they're thinking about personalizing, same thing holds true on the marketer side. Some of the kind of interesting different tension points that we uncovered in this study is that customers are actually willing to share a fair amount of information. They're expecting transparency, they're expecting to be able to obviously consent in, and so it's great to know that customers want to give that data. There is a little bit of a discrepancy, though, in terms of what customers are willing to share, and then what marketers think customers are willing to share, which we found out there. So there's a lot of opportunity there for marketers to actually think about, "How do you use email to personalize?," but often, what we found in the study too is that marketers struggle to figure out how to use the data that they have, right?

So the data is plentiful, but how do you actually think about using that to make the most effective personalized marketing?

Marcus Johnson:

So customers willing to share more than you think, and there's some hopefulness and some kind of trust already built in, which I thought was quite surprising. Some research from Redpoint Global is saying the number one reason Americans opted into sharing data with the brand wasn't because it required them to browse the site or because they wanted a promotion or discount or anything. It was because they trusted that that data would be used to improve their customer experience. One of the stats you had in this report, 87% of customers more likely to click on an email, or into an email if it's personalized to them. Jeremy, what's some of your thoughts around customers actually quite willing to share more data than perhaps conventional wisdom would suggest?

Jeremy Goldman:

Yeah. I think it's one of these key things where there's been so much coverage of late in terms of privacy and how much consumers expect privacy. Sure, but I think that what they're really looking for is a pretty legitimate value exchange. If you're giving something up and you're going to get something that's relevant, if it's going to be used in some way, for good, or to improve the relationship, most customers are okay with it, and we've seen upticks in recent years from various studies in terms of things like even like your stance on social issues. You're more likely to want to and be willing to share with the brand because you believe that they're going to be using it in some way to personalize, to improve their products, and the key thing

is, "Is there that trust that you're asking for something because you want to act on it for good, for the betterment of the relationship, or are you just asking it to ask it?," and that's where you start to see more of a drop-off like, "I don't know why I should trust you with this."

"What are you doing with it?" So there's a bit of a tension there.

Marcus Johnson:

So Malinda, what to you is some examples of personalization done well?

Malinda Sandman:

Yeah, some examples are ... Well, maybe personalization not done well is, I think that-

Marcus Johnson:

Start there.

Malinda Sandman:

Help me tell my story. People often think that personalization means that you're going to have the email address to you. Like the subject line's going to say like, "Hey Malinda, we've got a sale for you." That's not what we mean in the research that we don't don't know what Intuit Mailchimp, what we mean by personalization, kind of going back to my point before. It's around figuring out what the customer has shared, "What are they showing in data around, like in an e-commerce example, what are they browsing from?," "What does their purchase history say?," and then think around, "How do you continue to evolve that relationship so it's useful to them?," kind of exactly what Jeremy was saying.

So I think some of the examples I've done well is where ... I mean, thinking around, if I think about personal examples, like how I've already engaged with the brand, and then it's continuing kind of that next step with the brand. So some of the examples that we've shared in our report, and we often kind of talk to our customers about is that, "How do you think about solving their problem, and how do you think about engaging a segment of customers like your best customers? How do you provide maybe exclusivity to them, and show them kind of like a peek behind the brand?" So I'm definitely a best customer at several different retail brands. I enjoy the privileges that I have by them, personalize the experience, and to me, because I am a best customer.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, that's interesting, taking the relationship further, not just remembering your name, but doing a bit more than that, remembering other things that you've done, and taking that relationship to the next level. Jeremy, what do you think of when you think of kind of the best kinds of examples in terms of personalization?

Jeremy Goldman:

I'd say the best kinds of examples are ones that involve essentially grabbing the right kind of information, but then, you also need the function of really understanding what that information means, and a perfect example is if you grab something about somebody's like ethnicity, their heritage, not just to do some surface-level kind of changes to an email asset or a website asset that feels very much like you don't actually understand that person. So the key thing is the capturing the information, the acting on it, but then, also making sure that you truly understand that particular demographic, that particular need that you've been able to derive from asking that question in the first place.

Marcus Johnson:

Let's finish the lead by talking about artificial intelligence. How could we not? Malinda, how, to you and Intuit Mailchimp, is AI accelerating personalization, or making it worse, maybe?

Malinda Sandman:

It's making it better. So AI, I think is just such a game-changer for marketers, in particular. So at Intuit Mailchimp, we have developed a suite of generative AI tools, kind of branded as Intuit Assist, but what it's really going to do is it helps marketers figure out like, "How do you harness AI to look at the data?," and actually think around, "How do you segment and create audiences to be able to personalize?," so you can do that, but I think the biggest game-changing aspect of AI is content, and that's always a marketer's challenge, is, "If I'm now going to personalize, I need more content to be able to make sure that I am leveraging that relationship, and building trust with those audiences, and speaking to what their problem is." That's always been the challenge, especially in some of the businesses that I've worked in, and so AI can actually create content, and I think that's the biggest game-change, is thinking around, "How do you use AI to basically have almost like an extra person on your team?" Right?

It's like an additional copywriter, an additional marketing assistant to help you think through different options, different content, so AI is 100% accelerating personalization, I think in a

good way, especially for marketers.

Jeremy Goldman:

I'd just say very quickly, I agree with that marketing assistant. I've kind of internally thought of it as a bit of an MBA intern, where it can guide you, it can make a lot of really good decisions. Still, human in the loop makes a lot of sense for a lot of different reasons, just from an operational efficiency standpoint, giving you more options and allowing you to iterate off of things, and figure out what works and what doesn't faster, and adding more hours in the day. That's what a lot of the marketers that I speak to on a regular basis are saying, "Here's where we're seeing the biggest dividends 'cause of AI."

Marcus Johnson:

MBA intern, I like that analogy. All right, folks, that's what we've got time for for the lead. Let's move to the second half of the show today in other news, why an email exhibition at the museum made headlines and why Elon Musk wants to charge users of X for the ability to post content. Story one, Tim Harford of the Financial Times recently published a piece titled *Why We Can't Quit Email Even Though We All Hate It*. In it, he wrote, "It's the sheer variety of emails that bewilders a heartfelt break-up letter, that could have been written on paper in the 1960's."

"A note from Joe to his friend Brian, suggesting a way to make a bit of cash, which turned out to be the founding document of Airbnb. Printed large and displayed on the wall of the Design Museum in London, each of these emails is part of a temporary exhibition." This exhibition, ran from September 28th to October 22nd, it was called *Email is Dead. Just Finished*, and the show was created in partnership with, and funded by you guys, by Intuit Mailchimp. So Malinda, tell us why you guys decided to put this exhibit on in the first place and what you found most interesting.

Malinda Sandman:

Yeah. So this is the heart of what Mailchimp's was built on, right? It's the history of Mailchimp. So Mailchimp is actually a 20 plus-year-old company, proud part of Intuit as of about two years ago. So when we look at the history of email, very near and dear to Mailchimp's heart, and I think we talked about it a little bit before, is it's that versatility of email and how it lives in so many different parts of people's lives, and so I think this was an amazing, super creative. We have an incredible internal agency called Wink, that really explored, I think all of this fun,

tactile way that we think of email, but it's the emotion at the heart of it of, is how email has been part of so many different parts of everyone's life.

Then, if you kind of back up and think of that as what that means as a marketer and some of the other work that we were speaking of before, all of the different things you can do with it and how you can have that one-to-one relationship with customers, with your family, with your friends, however it is, is really how email has really been so ubiquitous and stood the test of time.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Jeremy, what do you think?

Jeremy Goldman:

I mean, it's just like people were saying for a long time, TV is dead, and it's completely not true. It's just that TV is transformed. TV is now streaming, not exclusively, but largely, right? So it's really evolved. Email, it's far more likely that email is going to continue to evolve rather than ever dying anytime in our lifetime. That's for sure.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. The only reason I know when this exhibit ran is because I wanted to go, so I looked, I heard about this, read about this, looked it up to hoping that it would still be running through Christmas when I'm back home, but it won't be. I don't know if you guys want to put it back on again just for me. Malinda, that'd be fantastic.

Jeremy Goldman:

You should send them an email.

Marcus Johnson:

I'm going to send them. Well played, Jeremy.

Jeremy Goldman:

Sorry.

Malinda Sandman:

I have a video I can send you.

Marcus Johnson:

Well played. Oh, really? I'll take a video.

Malinda Sandman:

Yeah. Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

I'll take it.

Malinda Sandman:

Oh, great

Marcus Johnson:

Story two, Elon Musk has started testing a plan to charge users of X, formerly Twitter, \$1 a year for the ability to post content to the social network, as well as like posts, reply, repost, and quote other accounts, reports Fortune, as Todd Spangler and J. Kim Murphy of Variety explain, "New X users who do not pay the \$1 a year fee will only be able to take read only actions," as they're called, like reading posts, watching videos, and following accounts. But Jeremy, what's your take on this test that is currently going on in the Philippines and New Zealand?

Jeremy Goldman:

I mean, this is a really critical test because frankly, how else is Elon Musk going to eat? But in all seriousness, I think it's one of those things where it is really important, obviously, if you're building a brand to be aware of the fact that you're often building it in somebody else's walled garden, and they've got the ability to change the rules at any point. So if you're a brand who built a really strong following on Twitter back in the day, and now it's obviously X, there are things like this and some other things that we've covered that might give you pause, obviously, if you were to exclusively build some of your relationships through these, where there's essentially a gatekeeper, and I think that in some ways, you might even say that this is the argument for building a strong email list and first-party data accumulation in general.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Yeah. Some Pew Research about Twitter usage, now X, are saying that about 10% of users are responsible for 80% of the content. So if this was a money-making scheme, it's probably not going to go down too well 'cause there are a lot of people who are just passive users. That 10% of people who post, I think they averaged 124 tweets per month versus the rest of the folks, the other 90%, who are responsible for just 20% of the content.

The other 90% of people tweeted twice a month. So there's probably a lot of people who this doesn't appeal to. They're happy to just read along, but Mr. Musk saying, "It's the only way to fight bots without blocking real users. This won't stop bots completely," but he says, "It'll be 1,000 times harder to manipulate the platform," so that's why he's trying to do this, it seems. We'll see.

That's what we've got time for for this episode. Thank you so much to my guests. We thank first Malinda.

Malinda Sandman:

Thanks for having me, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

Of course. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you to Jeremy.

Jeremy Goldman:

Pleasure to be with you.

Marcus Johnson:

Yes, sir. Pleasure was all ours. Thank you to Victoria, who edits the show, James, who copy edits it, and Stuart who runs the team, and thanks to Jillian, who is also at Intuit Mailchimp, for helping us put this episode together. Good to see her again. We miss you. She's worked for us.

And thanks to everyone for listening in to the Behind the Numbers Daily, an eMarketer podcast made possible by Intuit Mailchimp. We hope to see you tomorrow for the Behind the Numbers: Reimagining Retail Show, hosted by Sara Lebow, where she'll be talking to Zach Stambaugh and Jeremy, who you just heard from, all about what second Prime Day can tell us about the upcoming holidays.