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EXPERIENCE DIGITAL FREEDOM

# ***TAMING DIGITAL SPRAWL***

**What CMOs  
Need to Know**

**By Lynne Capozzi**



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# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Defining Sprawl</b>	<b>6</b>
The Evolution: From Creative to Digital, From Brand to Sprawl	<b>8</b>
The CMO's Dilemma	<b>10</b>
<b>Symptoms of Digital Sprawl</b>	<b>12</b>
Self-Assessment	<b>12</b>
Steps to Overcome Sprawl	<b>15</b>
<b>The Secret to Curing Sprawl: A Digital Factory Model</b>	<b>17</b>
Adopting a Digital Factory Model	<b>19</b>
Personalization: Using Data to Enhance the Customer Journey	<b>21</b>
Orchestrating the Connected Customer Journey	<b>26</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>29</b>

# INTRODUCTION

## Imagine how smoothly your marketing operations would run if:

- You could completely control all of your expensive content and media, police your brand, and pool all your data, while simultaneously empowering not just your marketing team but your entire organization, *and*
- You could confidently tell your marketing teams they no longer had to worry about things like patching software, zero-day exploits, or the platform crashing courtesy of a traffic spike during your next Black Friday sale



## Would they believe it was possible? Would you?

If you're feeling a bit skeptical, I don't blame you a bit; like you, I've been in marketing long enough that I believed I could have things one of two ways: on-brand and completely locked down, with only a few people capable of making changes (or the Marketing Bottleneck model) or open to others on the marketing team, crossing my fingers that the brand is on target most of the time (AKA the Wing and a Prayer approach.)

As a CMO, the Wing and a Prayer approach makes me lose sleep at night, so I tend to opt for the Marketing Bottleneck—which I can tell you from experience may work for a tiny company, but becomes increasingly painful and unsustainable as the company grows. The more people, tools, campaigns and assets you use, the bigger chance you'll start suffering from digital marketing sprawl. When you do that, you'll find that a third marketing model develops (and CMOs, if you don't like the out-of-control feeling you get from the Wing and a Prayer approach, this one is going to make you feel even queasier).

When digital sprawl enters the picture, so too does the Marketing Workaround model—and this is exactly what it sounds like. It's where your teams do any and everything they can to accomplish their tasks without exposing themselves to the bottleneck (i.e. you and your policies) putting your brand in grave danger once again.

**So how do we find this magic sweet spot between control and empowerment? How do we know what's necessary and what is sprawl? And why is it so important that we “tame” sprawl right now? Let's talk. But first, let's define sprawl.**



# DEFINING SPRAWL

**When I say “sprawl,” the first thing that may come to mind is “urban sprawl” which is basically the uncontrolled horizontal growth of cities—think Los Angeles, Jakarta, Brisbane—where everything is spread out all over the place.**

Digital sprawl works in a similar way; some of your assets may be located in Dropbox, while others are in a Google Drive folder and still others are on a hard drive in your Chicago agency’s office because they’re huge video files and no one has gotten around to uploading them to the agency server...yet. Sprawl extends beyond brand. Sprawl also refers siloed planning and budgets, where different teams -- sometimes within the same department -- are spending money on redundant software and services or creating and re-creating the same types of creative assets, with each group using its own agency. Sprawl leads to messaging that is all over the place. Rogue messaging leads to rogue websites, where quality can be questionable. Sprawl can infect an organization, with major impact on ROI.



## The whole concept of digital sprawl is very real

—and is a very real problem for many organizations, regardless of their size. And it isn't that you simply lose time when you can't find your stuff. You also jeopardize brand consistency by inadvertently using an out-of-date corporate logo instead of the updated version. You rely on faulty mechanisms, like institutional memory and “Drew, where's the \_\_\_\_\_?” which are great for the short term but are neither sustainable nor hit-by-a-bus-proof.

In short, if you're suffering from digital sprawl, it is having an impact on every single area of your marketing ecosystem. It's poking its grubby little fingers into the eyes of your team members and rubbing its tainted mitts all over your processes, your tools and your data. Yikes!

But how did we get here? Here's a closer look.



# The Evolution: From Creative to Digital, From Brand to Sprawl

**In the past—and by that I mean as recently as the last five to seven years—marketing was all about creating, promoting and maintaining a consistent brand.**

As marketers, we focused all of our efforts on developing, deploying and updating our single corporate brand site, working with our agency (not agencies!) of record to ensure all of our leadership photos looked sharp and none of our links were broken. We ventured into the new channel of email marketing, giving the term “spam” an entirely new meaning, and debated the merits of leaderboards versus skyscrapers when it came to banner ads.

And data? Oh yes. We have more than data points than human beings can even process: media data, CRM data, consumer and customer data, product level activity data, sales data...the list goes on. Making sense of data in those days was reserved for two types of enterprises: Those with IT staff talented enough to manually “decipher” pages of web logs OR or those with enough budget to pay top dollar for rudimentary analytics software which parsed millions of numbers into some form of information that was supposedly understandable by the human brain.



## Fast forward to today.

Digital marketing has exploded, and it's all about the customer experience. As marketers, we're responsible for creating, promoting and maintaining not one site, but thousands—and doing it all in spite of the challenges that things like ad blockers and GDPR bring. Add omnichannel marketing opportunities, customer journey mapping, attribution tracking, specialized agencies, artificial intelligence and a plethora of other complexity to the mix, and it's easy to see just how radically marketing has changed in a short amount of time, and how today's tools and technology will continue to impact it.

But the fact remains that there's work to be done, and a lot of it. The new rules of digital have made many CMOs so dependent on data that data it has actually begun to cloud the big picture.

**If we cannot harness and focus the power of the data we have—and soon—we stand a large chance of falling victim to the very thing that has transformed our industry.**





## ***THE CMO'S DILEMMA***

In working with Acquia clients over the years, I've had more than one CMO take me aside to ask, "Lynne, we've got all these amazing tools in our martech stack generating incredibly rich data. But why does it have to be so darn hard to use? Everything is disconnected from each other." And when I hear that question, I understand—it's a pain I've felt myself. When I'm asked that question, I tell the CMO that digital sprawl is the cause of their pain—and unless they cure the sprawl, they'll keep feeling its effects.

## ***SURMOUNTING SPRAWL:***

### **Astellas Builds Transparency and Trust into its Digital Experience**

Seventy percent of consumers are choosing to manage health and wellness online. This shift has changed how patients, caregivers and stakeholders interact with pharmaceutical companies, and the increased visibility is not without its challenges. Many organizations struggle to properly govern the distribution of content across various regions, languages and product lines. For Astellas, its brand has always been built on trust and transparency; this philosophy needed to be at the center of its digital strategy.

#### ***CHALLENGE:***

A legacy content management system prevented Astellas from creating the user experience that stakeholders expect. Regional staff felt the pain too; content had to be manually updated across all 30 regional sites. As Astellas continued to increase its global, this manual effort came unmanageable.

#### ***SOLUTION:***

Acquia partnered with CI&T to help Astellas identify the best platform for multisite management: Drupal 8 CMS and Acquia Cloud Site Factory. A site template was built that could be used across all regional sites. ACSF's utilization of Drupal 8 distribution made the creation of regional sites faster and more efficient than ever before. ACSF helps enforce brand guidelines to minimize the gap between global and regional sites.

#### ***RESULTS:***

With Acquia Cloud Site Factory, Astellas launched its corporate site in less than five months. Soon after, Astellas also launched its Japan site, which includes the largest volume of content for users followed by 12 regional sites for audiences in Indonesia, China, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, India, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Australia, and Malaysia. Next, Astellas will continue to leverage ACSF to launch regional sites in both American and European regions.



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# SYMPTOMS OF DIGITAL SPRAWL

Does your marketing suffer from sprawl? If you're reading this eBook or even asking yourself the question, there's a good chance it does. Here's a check list of digital sprawl symptoms; put a check mark next to each statement that accurately describes your company.

✓	SYMPTOM OF SPRAWL
	Teams insist on control of their own digital marketing, handling their own solutions
	Difficult to get new sites on short notice at reasonable cost
	Data siloed inside your brand
	Paying too much for digital content and creative
	Suffering integration issues between org's IT stack, data center and dev/ops
	People are asking you the dreaded, "Did you know about this?" question regarding "rogue" digital solutions
	Time-to-value for martech and digital campaigns is slow
	Inconsistent data collection between brands, lines of business and martech solutions



# ***SYMPTOM SELF-ASSESSMENT***

## **1 TO 3 CHECK MARKS:**

Your company isn't overwhelmed by sprawl yet—by proactively addressing it you can minimize its impact

## **4 TO 6 CHECK MARKS:**

Your business is knee-deep in sprawl and the time to address it is now, before it gets worse

## **7 OR 8 CHECK MARKS:**

Ouch. It's amazing you can get anything done with these sprawl-related challenges impeding your marketing efforts—but you can still turn things around

## **0 CHECK MARKS:**

What if you looked at all of the symptoms and didn't find a single one that related to your organization? Congratulations, that's fantastic—and unusual! But don't think that digital sprawl is something that can't and won't happen to your business. If your business grows, and I hope it will, some amount of digital sprawl is inevitable. However, by facing it head on, you can overcome it rather than letting it overtake your business and knock you off track.



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## ***SURMOUNTING SPRAWL:***

# **SABMiller Slashes Production Costs by Half**

SABMiller needed to provide consistent brand experiences across an enormous portfolio of websites. But it needed to do so in a way that minimized risk and kept costs down.

### ***CHALLENGE:***

With more than 200 brands in 80 countries, built up through a series of mergers and acquisitions, with dozens of agency partners, SABMiller needed a platform that could guarantee brand consistency at a reasonable price.

### ***SOLUTION:***

The company deployed Acquia Cloud Site Factory to consolidate its portfolio of sites and Acquia Lift for site personalization.

### ***RESULTS:***

The vast majority of SABMiller's brand sites (90 percent) of SABMiller's brand websites are now on Acquia Cloud Site Factory, and the company's web production costs have decreased by 50 percent. Additionally, the company has built or migrated more than 100 sites across six regions in less than 20 months, something that would've have been unthinkable prior to deploying the Acquia Site Factory solution.



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# STEPS TO OVERCOME SPRAWL

As the old saying goes, the first step toward solving a problem is admitting that we have one in the first place, and there's no denying that we CMOs and digital leaders have our work cut out for us. When it comes to identifying and tackling ongoing challenges, we must:

**Maximize working dollars—not only must we do more with less, but we must prove the impact and value of every initiative and dollar.**

**Serve as watchdogs for brand management and consistency—across not only channels but also across brands and sub-brands, in paid and organic marketing efforts.**

**Ensure personalization is key in digital strategy, no matter the organization's digital maturity—because we know that customers don't just expect this, they demand it.**

**Drive profitable growth—after all, it's the bottom line that counts.**



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If that seems like a huge weight on our shoulders, you're absolutely right. But fear not my fellow CMOs, because it gets better from here. The emerging opportunities for us make all of that heavy lifting worthwhile, because the opportunities far outweigh the challenges:

### **CHANGE AGENTS:**

It's time for us as CMOs to become the org's change agent—because we alone have the mix of skills and vision to guide our businesses into the future.

### **SMARTER BUSINESS DECISIONS:**

We have the tech budgets to prove it—meaning that we get to make smarter business decisions backed by intelligent data.

### **CUSTOMER CHAMPIONS:**

We become customer champions—we own the customer experience and make it about their journey.



# ***THE SECRET TO CURING SPRAWL:***

## **A Digital Factory Model**

Once we tackle these challenges and seize these opportunities we can start moving toward actually curing sprawl. And when we implement this cure, not only will it ease our teams' burden when it comes to hunting down content and stamping out off-brand, out-of-date digital, but we'll be able to maintain loose control without losing control, allowing our teams to work, respond and even innovate at the pace of digital without needing to ask for permission or open a ticket.

Curing our digital marketing sprawl by implementing this solution allows us to more confidently plan and execute tactics instead of focusing our energies on recapturing missed opportunities, overcoming technical blockers and extinguishing daily fires.

So what's this magical solution that will solve all of our problems as CMOs? It's hardly magic—in fact, it's downright straightforward. To cure our digital sprawl issues, we must get our digital content, data, tools and services all aligned on a common denominator platform, ideally one based on open source tools and scalable cloud architectures that allow for worldwide access.

McKinsey calls this platform a “digital factory model” and defines the concept as

*Like its bricks-and-mortar counterpart, a digital factory brings together the skills, processes, and inputs required to produce high-quality outputs. These outputs are generally journeys, a series of interactions to complete a task...The factory models a new way of working to develop new products, which are then introduced and integrated into the broader business.*

—McKinsey & Company, “Scaling a Transformative Culture through a Digital Factory”

# ***ADOPTING A DIGITAL FACTORY MODEL***

What do you think of when you hear the term “factory?” If you’re like me, your mind automatically jumps to visions of conveyor belts, assembly lines and mass production. And McKinsey likely had similar thoughts in mind when they coined the term “digital factory” while urging their clients to adopt a factory approach to taming digital production and delivery, data aggregation, cost containment, and risk reduction through an assembly line model.

What makes a good digital factory? First, it’s open source, lowering costs and reducing your risk by ensuring you aren’t locked into a particular vendor’s product roadmap that may differ from your own needs. Next, it’s cloud-delivered, allowing you easy access from anywhere. And finally, it’s highly adaptable and future-proof, allowing you to easily tweak it to suit your specific needs—so that everyone from your creative agencies and developers to your third-party service providers and legacy custom customer database administrators can do their part to make your digital marketing successful.

**In essence, a good digital factory gives everyone that touches your digital marketing common ground upon which they can build. Get that part on autopilot and you can move on to the next level of digital marketing where you can really have an impact on ROI—managing the customer experience.**

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## ***DIGITAL FACTORY BENEFITS***

***MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY***

***COST SAVINGS***

***FUTURE-PROOFING***

***RISK REDUCTION***

***MULTI-AGENCY FRIENDLY***

## ***A “GOOD” DIGITAL FACTORY IS:***

***OPEN SOURCE***

***CLOUD-BASED***

***HIGHLY ADAPTABLE***



# Personalization: Using Data to Enhance the Customer Journey

Your first step in a successful digital factory implementation is to give control to the people in your organization who need it in a way that provides assurances to you, the CMO, that everything is being run efficiently, compliantly and on-brand. Once that's in place and you've aligned all of your people, processes and assets on a single platform, you'll be poised to get into the really fun stuff—personalization and customer journey mapping.

By adding personalization to your digital factory, you'll bring in all of the customer data you've been gathering, putting it to good use by meeting your customers where they are with the right offers at the right time—in other words, creating a truly connected customer journey.

**Digital factories give CMOs the best of all worlds:**

- The brand control and compliance necessary to keep your brand on point
- The flexibility and access you need to make your teams efficient, effective and autonomous

# ***A CONNECTED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE***

There are three primary stages involved in delivering a connected customer experience: Crawl, Walk and Run.

Let's take a closer look at each of them.



# CRAWL: A GRADUAL INTRODUCTION

Just like your baby girl needs to learn how to explore the living room on her hands and knees before eventually asking for the car keys, your marketing program needs to take a similarly phased approach to personalizing using customer information. You don't scare away customers by going from 0 to 60 without taking the time to gradually introduce yourself and your brand—with the key word here being gradual. Here are the types of activities your marketing team should focus on personalizing in the Crawl stage.

- **Data collection & segmentation** (Sending offers based on previous actions)
- **Unify known & unknown** (“We missed you at our last event; will you join us next week?”)
- **Geolocation** (“Free shipping for our Boston customers”)
- **ABM/CRM integration** (“Just for you, Brand X Team”)
- **Device type** (“A special just for iPhone users”)
- **Content tagging** (“Because you read our SecurityWatch blog,...”)



# **WALK:** **A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING**

Think about the walk stage of your customer relationship like you would your baby growing up—she's a young adult now and is fully capable of standing and walking on her own two feet. Similarly, your marketing program should reflect this long relationship and greater understanding of your customer and should move beyond the surface of who they are and dive deeper into what they do. Here are the types of activities your marketing team should focus on personalizing during the Walk stage.

- **Browsing behavior** (“Here’s a post on \_\_\_\_ you missed”)
- **Pages viewed** (“Here’s more info on \_\_\_\_\_”)
- **Marketing campaigns** (“Have questions about \_\_\_\_\_”)
- **Completed events** (“Buy another ticket, get one free”)
- **Visit frequency** (“Something we said? It’s been a while since we’ve seen you.”)





# ***RUN: AN AFFIRMATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP***

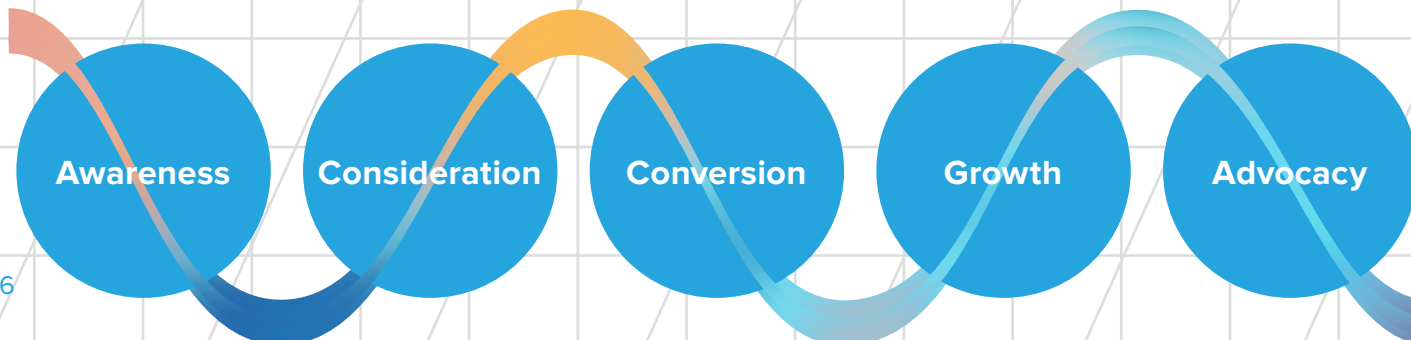
The run stage of your customer relationship is when your baby is all grown up, an adult fully capable of making her own decisions and choices. Your marketing program should honor this long-standing partnership by showing your customer that you've been paying close attention to their likes, dislikes, habits and preferences. Here are the types of activities your marketing team should focus on personalizing during the Run stage:

- **Cross-Channel personalization**  
(Personalizing messages on mobile, desktop, etc.)
- **Best-Next action** (Accurately predicting and anticipating what the customer will do next)
- **Combinations of crawl & walk personalizations**

# ORCHESTRATING THE CONNECTED CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Today's customer journey includes a higher number of touchpoints than it did even six or seven years ago—especially when you include digital and non-digital—and each touchpoint works together to create a connected experience or journey. As CMOs, our job is to move the customer from awareness through to advocacy. But to do that, we must switch our own internal mindset from delivering content-driven experiences with no-personalization to delivering data-driven experiences with high degrees of personalization. And like Forrester says, it must be seamless [emphasis added]:

“The customer journey spans a variety of touchpoints by which the customer moves from awareness to engagement and purchase. Successful brands focus on *developing a seamless experience* that ensures each touchpoint interconnects and contributes to the overall journey.”



# CONTINUING THE JOURNEY POST-WEB

## (AKA It's the Journey, Not the Destination)

Do websites still matter? Yes! But the reality is that we're already living in a post-web world. Marketing leaders are those who continue the customer experience beyond the web and into digital signage, voice, IoT and more. This isn't optional—this is a new requirement to win and retain customers. But don't just take my word for it; here's McKinsey, once again:

*“Our research finds that growing customer expectation of superior service drives efforts to advance and refine digital solutions...It is also clear that those expectations will continue to evolve quickly, pitting incumbent companies' profitability against their ability to deliver services in new ways and master a complex landscape of technologies, marketing approaches, and operational capabilities.*

*...What is required is a more radical abandoning of traditional ways of working in favor of new approaches. By rethinking traditional operating models that hinder companies from achieving their potential and combining digital technologies and operating capabilities in an integrated, well-sequenced way, companies can create customer-centric strategies that can sustain new levels of speed, agility, efficiency, and precision.”*

From McKinsey's [“Mastering the Digital Advantage in Transforming Customer Experience”](#)

Our marketing must be cohesive and provide a consistent customer journey, regardless of the channel. And because the endpoints of content and information distribution are limitless, so CMOs would be wise to extend their reach beyond the conventional browse and focus on the journey, not the destination.

## ***SURMOUNTING SPRAWL:***

# **University of Iowa Uses Drupal for Content Everywhere**

Already running 600+ sites on Drupal and the Acquia platform, the University of Iowa wanted an innovative way to keep its students even better in-the-know.

## ***CHALLENGE:***

With ever-changing menus, activities and other campus offerings, keeping students updated on their options was tough for the different departments in charge of making it happen. Making and distributing flyers and other information was time-consuming and never-ending—there had to be a better way to easily, rapidly and continually disseminate info.

## ***SOLUTION:***

The university deployed Drupal Digital Signage service to power screens in residence halls, dining halls, academic halls and other buildings across campus.

## ***RESULTS:***

Since starting the program, more than 32 colleges representing 70 units are actively taking advantage of the service to keep students informed, using simple drag-and-drop tools to create beautiful signage. Staff time has been saved, training time is down and hardware and licensing costs have decreased significantly.



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# CONCLUSION

Let's level set. Yes, digital sprawl is an expansive problem, but there is hope! The best way to tackle sprawl is to adopt a digital factory approach, one that lets you regain control while still empowering your organization. I'm here to tell you, it really is possible. I hope this whitepaper and the experiences I've shared with you will serve you well as you embark on this journey to eliminate digital sprawl for good. And if I may give you one final piece of advice, it would be to take it step by step. Factories aren't built in a day. But if you can be the champion for change, maintain a degree of patience, keep your customers top of mind -- you will be golden.



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