



GUIDE

Keep up the digital momentum

How businesses can move from quick fixes to long-lasting success



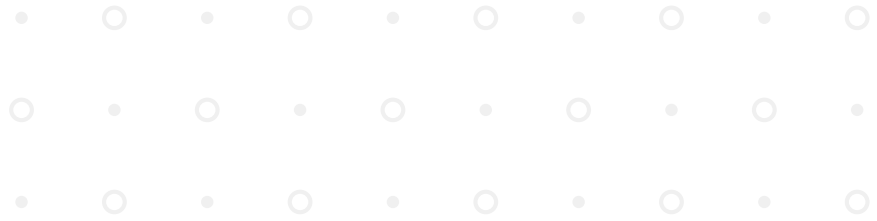
Making sense of an unprecedented year in marketing

We've lived through an unpredictable and challenging time recently, and marketers have had to deal with extraordinary change. For many businesses, this involved a rapid acceleration of their digital transformation and the roll-out of new martech solutions to adapt their marketing efforts.

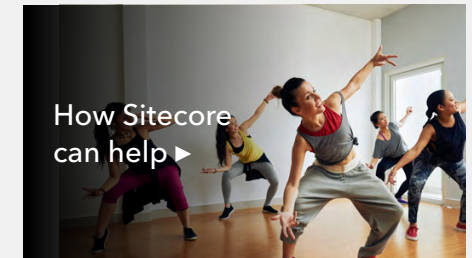
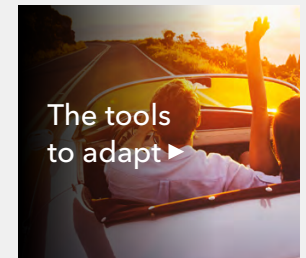
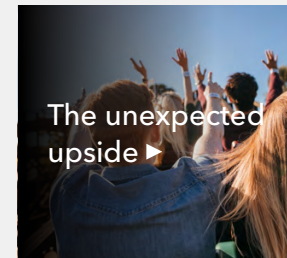
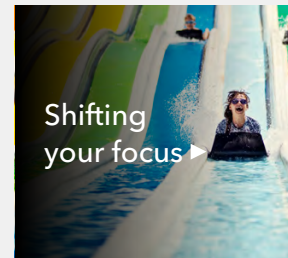
But change itself isn't new, nor is it going to suddenly stop. We have always lived in a changing world and, particularly for marketers, the recent past can teach us how to deal with the present and plan for the future.

That begs the question: how can marketers use the lessons learned during the pandemic to continue making progress – and accelerate their companies growth throughout the recovery?

To help pinpoint the answers, Sitecore commissioned research into the pandemic's impact on marketers and their programs. This guide highlights some of the findings of our research, including how marketers have dealt with the challenges, how they can continue their digital transformation, and the priorities that will shape it.



Navigate this guide



About the research

Advanis surveyed marketers across three key geographies:

- 400 marketers from the UK, 88 from the Republic of Ireland, and 402 from the US in March 2021

Top industries across all three countries included:

- Retail
- Manufacturing
- Financial services and insurance



Moving forward from a time of rapid change

Our research confirmed that digital marketers have taken on more responsibilities and seen faster innovation than ever before. Change was thrust upon many unprepared businesses by the pandemic, and, at the same time, they needed to stay competitive.

In fact, the research revealed that 77% of US businesses saw more marketing innovation in 2020 than in the previous three years combined, as new martech tools were deployed to keep pace with customer demands.

During the pandemic, we saw the accelerated adoption of mobile digital technologies and stronger interest in migrating software and services to the cloud. As a result, the digital-first world has become even more deeply ingrained into our everyday lives.

But while it might be tempting to neatly define “pre-pandemic”, “pandemic” and “post-pandemic” conditions when describing the changes to martech stacks, customer behavior can’t be so easily delineated.

That’s why smart marketers know that change and adaptation are just part of the game. The world is going to continue to shift at a rapid pace. And the solutions implemented during 2020 can serve as the foundation for your ongoing digital experience success – right as priorities change again to meet new opportunities and challenges.

Shifting your focus

When change occurs, priorities shift. Being nimble and flexible in the digital age is crucial to successfully navigating unpredictable waters, like we saw in 2020. Overnight, teams across the world were suddenly working and communicating remotely, and the importance of the cloud in facilitating this new way of working became paramount.

Now that the feeling of sudden disruption and rapid adaptation has passed, it may be tempting to stop and take a deep breath. However, momentum is everything and hitting pause could cause you to lose your competitive advantage.

Instead, now is the time to shift your focus away from short-term thinking, back to long-term planning. In particular, check that your recent investments are prepared to seamlessly deliver on newly entrenched digital preferences and adapt as we see a return to in-person experiences. In other words, it's vital to check whether the tools you implemented during the pandemic are capable of supporting your brand goals in the long term.

78% of US marketers

(75% in the UK) say they'll need time to "stop and clean up". Mid-sized businesses are particularly worried about how their quick fixes will hold up in the long run.





The unexpected upside

Businesses moved quickly to change their operational priorities during 2020, and this resulted in a highly productive time for many. Significant tech stack investments left 81% of US businesses feeling more connected to their customers (75% in the UK).

There was also an increased focus on upskilling during the pandemic, with the top areas being: social media customer engagement (51% in Ireland, 50% in the US, 44% in the UK); digital experience platforms (49% in Ireland, 54% in the US, 43% in the UK); and data capture and customer insight analysis (35% in Ireland, 44% in the US, 41% in the UK).

These skills - along with personalization, website accessibility, and automation of customer service - have long been seen as crucial to the future of digital experience delivery. Those businesses who dedicated time to upskilling have put themselves in a better position to get ahead of the pack.

Positive work outcomes

Working remotely has been positive for many marketers. Some of the outcomes reported include:

- Better creative problem solving (the number one positive outcome in all countries - 36% in the UK, 42% in Ireland, and 41% in the USA)
- Able to innovate at quicker pace
- More visibility with senior leaders
- Better balance between work and home life
- Greater ownership of projects

The tools to adapt

The best way for organizations to take advantage of new opportunities is to have the right martech tools in place. And it's crucial that these tools allow teams to adapt quickly to changing market dynamics and new customer behaviors.

Key to your ongoing success will be continuing the transition to cloud and SaaS offerings, as martech deployed this way gives marketers greater flexibility and enables far more efficiency in spend - 42% of US organizations are already prioritizing moving marketing technology to the cloud.

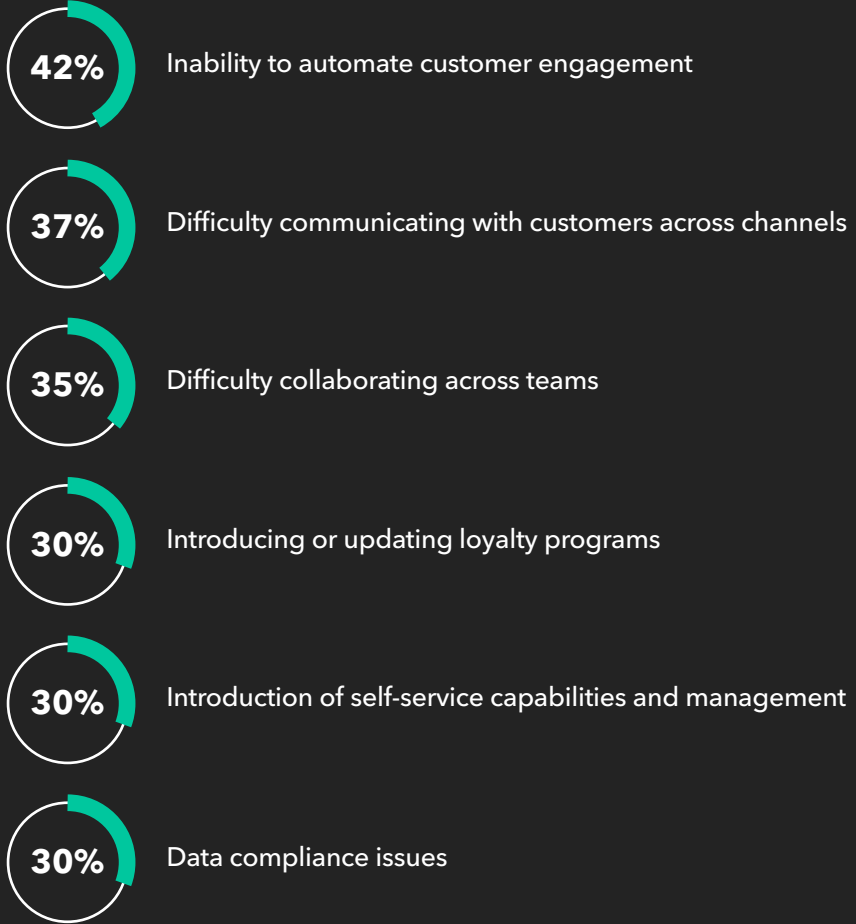
The strong digital-first foundation that has been created should allow marketers to benefit from modern automation, which will power better experiences.

If change enables anything, it's the opportunity to think, work, and act strategically with a fresh mindset to plan for a more robust future.



The right tools to fix relevant issues

Most common major tech headaches experienced by US marketers during the pandemic:



Keeping up the momentum

Looking to 2022 and beyond, businesses need to sustain the digital momentum they've created, empowering them to benefit from the digital-first policies and strategies that have already been implemented.

Many businesses radically changed how they operated as a reaction to the pandemic. Over the next few years, they'll need to focus on making their marketing strategies even more agile.

Continuing to optimize new and existing tools and processes will further reduce reliance on legacy systems. This will decrease the technology debt that had previously never really been addressed within their operations.

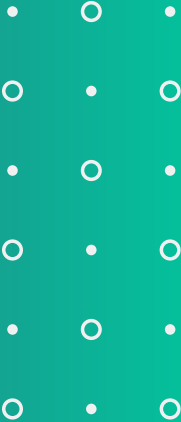
It's time marketers shifted their focus away from short-term reactive thinking back to long-term strategic planning. In the process, they'll do what they do best - create amazing experiences.



The workplace will look very different in the future



In the US, **27%** of marketers can't wait to go back to the office (30% in the UK) and **23%** want to work from home permanently (25% in the UK).



Senior marketers are more likely (**32% vs 17%**) than junior staff to want to return to the office.



How Sitecore can help you adapt

Sitecore allows marketers to create human connections in a digital world. And, today, that's never been more important. We're helping businesses stay agile and focused on their mission, keeping the momentum of 2020 rolling into exciting new experiences for a new world.

The suite of Sitecore technology - from our market-leading Sitecore Experience Platform™ to our Sitecore Content Hub™, Sitecore Commerce®, and Sitecore Managed Cloud™ - is flexible enough to suit any marketing need. It's a unification of content, connections, and personalized experiences, underpinned by AI. Used together as a single, integrated platform, Sitecore becomes something more powerful entirely.

Sitecore's suite of end-to-end content, commerce, and personalization tools empowers brands to deliver real-time, individualized digital experiences. Available in the cloud via Sitecore Managed Cloud™ or SaaS deployment models, our technology is purpose-built for this moment.

Ultimately, Sitecore returns the power of choice. Our technologies have been designed to integrate easily around existing tools and workflows or replace patchworks of "quick-fix" systems entirely.

For businesses looking to take back control of the complete content lifecycle, connect with customers across channels, personalize with precision, and gain granular insight - all while reducing spend - Sitecore is the answer.

We begin by helping you to understand your current level of digital maturity and use this as a foundation to move you forward with added confidence. We've built a series of assessment tools to help you do this.

Our **Content Maturity Assessment** can give you a great indication of how well you're currently connecting with customers through content. This interactive tool also comes with a personalized report.

Meanwhile, our **Digital Experience Maturity Model Assessment** provides an understanding of where your organization stands in the critical area of digital experience provision.

If you're looking to embrace change and move forward with digital momentum.

Get in touch today.





About Sitecore

Sitecore delivers a digital experience platform that empowers the world's smartest brands to build lifelong relationships with their customers. A highly decorated industry leader, Sitecore is the only company that combines content, commerce, and data in one connected platform. Leading companies including American Express, ASOS, Kimberly-Clark, L'Oréal, and Volvo Cars rely on Sitecore to provide more engaging, personalized experiences for their customers.

[Learn more at sitecore.com](https://www.sitecore.com)

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