



EBOOK

The omnichannel hero's journey

Aligning customer communication with the right story



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INTRO

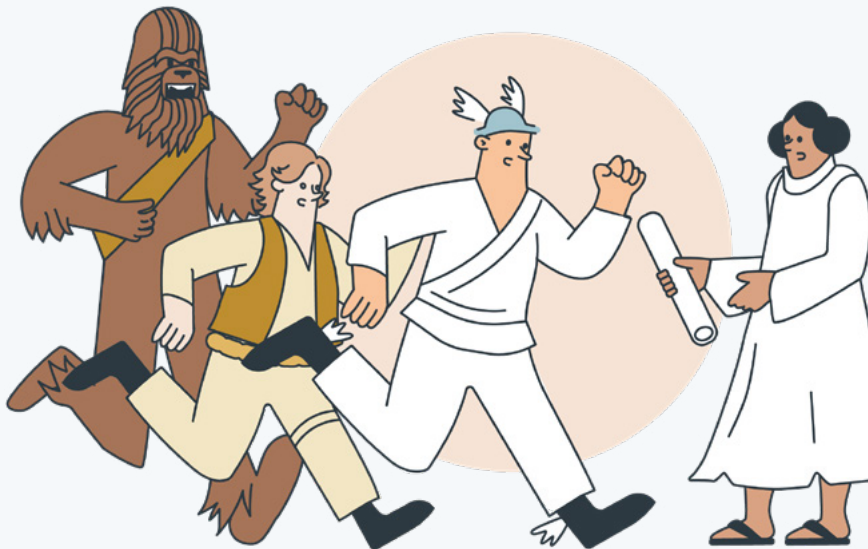
Reimagining customer experiences

Before we dive into customer journeys, the customer experience, and omnichannel communications, let's talk a little bit about life.

Life is full of twists and turns, isn't it? Think about some of the biggest moments in your life: The challenges you've overcome, the wins and losses, the heartbreaks, and the happy endings. These are all stories you tell yourself and others. And each one stars you as the main character.

In some of your personal stories, there's no doubt that **different brands and products have played supporting roles**. Maybe it was a fitness app that helped you reach your health goals. It could have been a real estate agency that helped you sell a house and move into your dream home. Perhaps it was a SaaS company that helped your business grow or a platform that helped you land a job.

The keyword in all those examples is "helped". You are the hero in these stories and you found helpful tools, sage advice, encouragement, and ideal solutions along the way. As the representative of your company's brand, those roles switch. **You become the hero's helper**. You're like Han Solo and Chewbacca backing up Luke Skywalker on his adventure.



When someone moves through a customer journey, they'll receive different messages from brands. Those could be marketing emails and mobile messaging for reminders and confirmations. Customer service and sales conversations can happen on platforms for voice, video, and chats while social messaging apps can provide additional info on products and services. Maybe they'll even interact with artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of a predictive chatbot. Now imagine all these conversations are seamless and provide a cohesive customer experience. Conversations that happen on one channel can continue on another. **That's omnichannel communication in action.**

If you're aiming for a customer-centric strategy, you need to reach people wherever they are in life. Your brand needs to be available on all of the channels your customers like using.

We're entering a new era of brand communication. It's one in which there is already a wide variety of digital channels where companies and customers engage in two-way conversations. Plus, those experiences can be highly personalized.

The brands that will win in this increasingly complex world are able to reach their target audience...

- At the right time
- With the right message
- On the channels the customer prefers

To make that happen, you need a solid understanding of who your customers are and what they're going through. Don't forget... **They are the heroes. You are the helper.**

Come on a journey with Mailjet by Sinch as we explore how a timeless storytelling framework can help your brand **build an omnichannel communication strategy.**



PART 1

Omnichannel 101

Not that long ago, the channels brands used to directly communicate with customers were very limited. You could try telemarketing, send direct mail, or, in more recent years, leverage email as a key digital communication channel.

Then, **the smartphone entered the scene and everything changed**. Now, more than 6.5 billion people around the world are carrying mobile devices that can connect them with brands at any time in any place.

Those personal devices offer a wide variety of ways to communicate with customers. As organizations undergo ongoing digital transformation projects, **brands that diversify their communication strategy stand to achieve success and build loyalty**.

Six key digital communication technologies

Here's a quick look at different digital communication channels, their strengths, and how they're used in the customer experience.



1. Email

Email is the godfather of digital communications. Gary Thurek is credited with sending the first marketing email for his computer company in 1978. He claims it generated \$13 million in sales.

While email's use for personal communication has dwindled in the wake of instant messaging, it remains a key channel for brand communication. Beyond marketing and promotions, transactional emails help customers with everything from order confirmations and shipping updates to account creation and password recovery.

Omnichannel stats: *It's estimated that more than [333 billion emails](#) will be sent every day in 2022. Other [research indicates](#) the majority of all generations feel email is the most personal method of brand communication.*





2. SMS, MMS, and RCS

All three of these acronyms represent forms of mobile messaging. Think of it this way:

- **SMS** (Simple Messaging Service) is like a plain text email.
- **MMS** (Multimedia Messaging Service) is like a well-designed HTML email.
- **RCS** (Rich Communication Service) is similar to a dynamic, interactive email. RCS provides more of an app-like experience in messaging. At this time, RCS is only supported on Android devices.

SMS is often used for similar purposes to email. That includes order confirmations as well as appointment reminders, fraud notifications, two-factor authentication, marketing, and promotional campaigns.

As the name suggests MMS is capable of delivering messages with images and video, making it more visually appealing and engaging than SMS. RCS also has more advanced features, including suggested replies, CTAs via response buttons, and video messages. Mobile messaging is also subject to many of the same regulations as email which include GDPR and CCPA, although they vary by region.

Omnichannel stats: Findings collected on [SMSComparison.com](https://www.smscomparison.com) indicate 95% of text messages are read and responded to within three minutes. SMS has an impressive average clickthrough rate of 19%, which is significantly higher than email.



3. Voice

Voice communication typically involves customized solutions that support, engage, and convert customers through both inbound, outbound, and automated phone and in-app calls. It's an effective method for alerts and notifications and also supports verification, one-to-one, and anonymous calling, including number masking).

Voice communication using automated systems can include features like interactive voice response (IVR) technology and text-to-speech functionality. Of course, there will be times when your customers need to talk with a live human being. So, voice services include a way to connect with customer service call centers.



Omnichannel stats: Nearly 70% of respondents in a [2021 survey](#) cited speaking to a live agent on the phone as one of their preferred methods of communicating with customer service. But it's also *estimated* there will be 8.4 billion digital voice assistants in use by 2024. That's more digital assistants than people on the planet.



4. Video

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people grew accustomed to conducting business and personal matters over video calls. That's leading to opportunities for brands to use video as an effective communication channel.






For example, innovative brands are integrating voice and video calling into their applications. This opens the door for authentic face-to-face engagements with customers. One of the most notable uses for video communication is telemedicine. Video calls are also an effective way to provide help with physical and digital products, including maintenance, DIY repairs, and talking to customer service about product defects.

Omnichannel stats: [McKinsey & Co.](#) reports that the use of telehealth services stabilized at 38-times higher than its pre-COVID baseline. Video conferencing is also useful for many other professionals, including lawyers, financial advisors, tutors, and business consultants.



5. Messaging apps

The SMS inbox isn't the only place where direct messaging happens between brands and their customers. Mobile messaging applications include a myriad of possibilities to connect. Some of the most popular messaging apps include:

-  Facebook Messenger
-  Instagram
-  WhatsApp
-  Telegram
-  WeChat



Messaging apps allow people to engage with sales and customer service on the channels they feel most comfortable using. They can also be used for conversational marketing and commerce in which brands deliver personalized product recommendations over messaging apps while allowing customers to customize and potentially place an order without leaving the application.

Omnichannel stats: *Conversational commerce is on the rise. Among retailers, [Juniper Research](#) predicts a 590% increase between 2021 and 2025. Global consumer spending through conversational commerce was \$41 billion in 2021 and could hit \$290 billion by 2025.*



6. Chatbots

Artificial intelligence (AI) is another factor that's shaping the future of customer communication. It includes brands that are developing custom chatbots to enhance the customer experience. These friendly bots can solve common problems and answer frequently asked questions in an instant. Plus, they work 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

That cuts down on contact center volume and leads to happier customers who don't have to wait for answers. But when people do need to speak with a human being, chatbot AI is also able to identify the right time to transfer the customer to a live agent.

Chatbots built with conversational customer engagement in mind lead to interactions that feel real and relatable. Chatbots can be implemented within a variety of messaging channels and can keep up a consistent conversation between those channels. When used within the framework of a website or application, chatbots give brands more control over where and how conversations happen. That's helpful for brand voice consistency and for industries, such as finance and healthcare, in which privacy is important

Omnichannel stats: *Chatbots are the fastest-growing communication channel. Insider Intelligence predicts worldwide [retail spending via chatbots](#) will reach \$142 billion in 2024 up from \$2.8 billion in 2019. According to [Salesforce](#), 69% of consumers prefer using chatbots for quick answers to simple questions.*

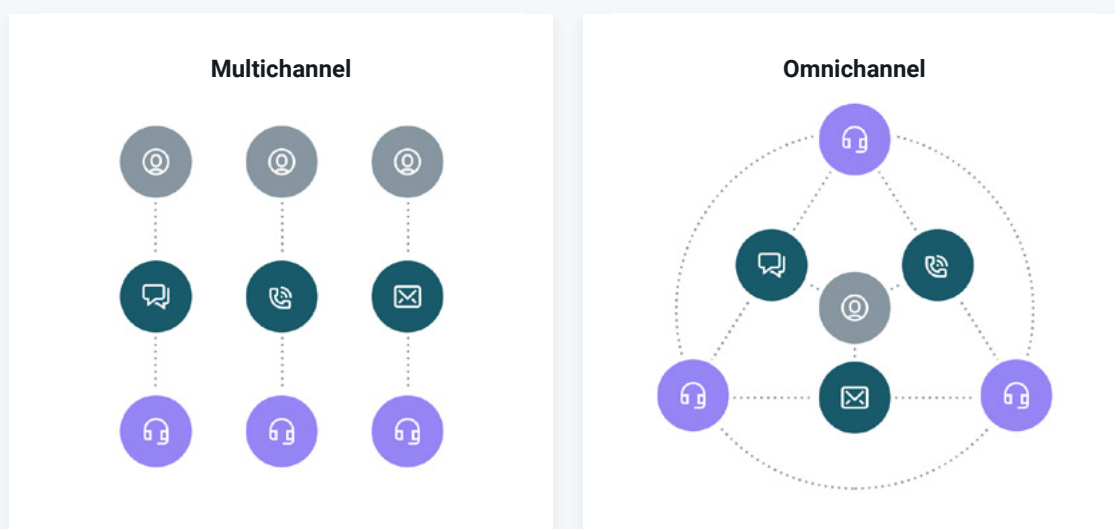


Omnichannel vs multichannel

There are some important differences between multichannel and omnichannel communication. An eye-opening [report from Sinch and IDC](#) found that 100% of survey respondents were using more than one channel for customer engagement. However, the report notes that there's more to omnichannel communication than just the use of several channels.

Using more than one channel for customer engagement does not equal omnichannel communication.

The prefix "omni" literally means all. This suggests a very comprehensive approach to customer communication. But even more importantly, an omnichannel approach to customer communications breaks down silos. Instead of different conversations occurring on multiple channels, an omnichannel communication strategy enables a continuous, cohesive conversation, regardless of how contact is made.



Here are **four characteristics of omnichannel communication** that separate it from a less-advanced multichannel approach.

- 1. Customer preferences:** People can engage with your brand on the platforms they actually use every day. It's convenient for customers, not just the organization.
- 2. Conversational engagement:** Omnichannel should include authentic two-way conversations. It's not about using multiple channels to blast messages with no way to respond. It's about creating an experience in which your customers are heard. That builds relationships and encourages loyalty.
- 3. Connection:** Not only does omnichannel encourage a brand-consumer connection, but the communication channels themselves are also connected. A customer can start a conversation on SMS or an in-app chat and continue it on a social messaging app.
- 4. Context:** Finally, omnichannel communication provides important context to customer engagements. Information from conversations on one channel carries over to the next, creating a cohesive customer experience.



When done well, omnichannel communications give brands the chance to be present throughout the customer journey. There are opportunities to engage at touchpoints from the start of the path to purchase and throughout the customer lifecycle. That means **your brand can play a memorable role in the stories that emerge from a customer's everyday life**.

CPaaS: The secret to managing omnichannel communication

If you're thinking about all these different methods of communication, the ever-expanding customer experience, and wondering how the heck brands can handle all of this – we get it.

That's why there's growing interest in a solution known as a **Communication Platform as a Service (CPaaS)**. Think of it as your central command for customer communication. CPaaS gives brands cloud-based middleware that includes APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) and SDKs (Software Development Kits) to support the integration of various channels into business processes and applications. CPaaS also includes enterprise solutions for IVR, authentication, and number masking to keep things anonymous. It is a complete solution for mobile marketing and call center communication.

A robust CPaaS solution from industry leaders will include some important benefits:

- 1. Seamless consistency:** CPaaS makes it possible for different platforms and channels to integrate and talk to one another. It provides key data for a personalized customer experience in one place, and it connects customers to live agents without losing a step.
- 2. Scalability:** A good CPaaS solution makes adding or expanding into new channels simple. The provider must support a wide range of channels and be on the cutting edge of emerging digital communication methods. That way, any viable option can become part of a brand's omnichannel mix.
- 3. Flexibility:** A strong CPaaS solution is highly customizable so it can meet the needs of the organization and its customers. That includes a variety of APIs so that brands can build the best solution as well as benefits like the ability to develop a custom chatbot.
- 4. Privacy and security:** A CPaaS provider needs measures in place to protect sensitive customer data in a compliant way. The platform should meet or exceed regulatory requirements like GDPR and CCPA.
- 5. Infrastructure:** The best CPaaS solutions provide a cloud-based infrastructure, including wireless carrier relationships and an extensive network of telecommunication partners. This means the organizations using CPaaS don't need to spend money on expanding their infrastructure. They don't have to strike their own deals with carriers either.
- 6. Complete solutions:** The software that employees access has an intuitive user interface (UI) for email marketing, contact centers, chatbot design, mobile marketing, and similar communication solutions.
- 7. Cost efficiency:** CPaaS is a cloud-based solution that greatly reduces the need for in-house development and maintenance of communication infrastructure. Plus, CPaaS solutions are customizable, so you only pay for the features you need.



Just because a message is automated AI doesn't mean it needs to be cold and calculated. **Conversational customer engagement is essential to an effective omnichannel strategy.** And that's 100% possible using AI. As the report from Sinch and IDC points out:



"AI adds an emotional flair that converts an interaction into an enjoyable engagement to ensure repeat engagement. It elevates interactions from transactional to emotional and leaves a lasting impression."

Courtney Munroe, Research Vice President, IDC

Ultimately, a CPaaS solution makes omnichannel communications easy and more enjoyable for everyone involved: developers, marketers, support, and especially the customers themselves.

Honestly, there are no winning or losing channels in the future of communications. It's about designing the ideal experience for your business and your customers. Take it from the CEO of Sinch, a leading cloud communications company:



"Every form of digital communications has its unique benefits, and delivering high quality at scale requires both extensive technical capabilities and deep subject matter expertise."

Oscar Werner, Sinch CEO

The questions you need to ask are:

- What kind of journey are your customers embarking on?
- What role does your brand play in that journey?
- How do email and other channels help guide customers on their journey?

Believe it or not, we can get some answers about the future of digital communications by exploring myths and legends that have been around for centuries.



PART 2

The monomyth and marketing

Many marketers, innovators, and entrepreneurs think of themselves as brilliant storytellers.

But who are we telling stories about, and what kinds of stories really resonate with people? As it turns out, there is a certain type of story that emerges throughout history and across cultures. It's known as **the monomyth** or **the hero's journey**.

Literary professor Joseph Campbell is credited with identifying the monomyth as he studied different stories from around the world. Campbell wrote all about it in his 1949 book, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces". He noticed common themes and a framework that revealed itself in many different myths, regardless of when or where they first appeared.

You'll find it in ancient stories like "The Odyssey" and in various Native American legends. The hero's journey is present in the plays of William Shakespeare as well as the fantasy tales of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. You'll find strong monomythic storylines in nearly every Pixar movie and superhero blockbuster, too.

We're willing to bet that most of your all-time favorite books and movies follow the hero's journey. **That's because these narratives tell us something about who we are as human beings.** We identify with the heroes and relate to their stories. This kind of relatable story is a powerful tool for developing a marketing strategy and improving customer communication.

Hero's journey basics

Campbell summed up the idea of a hero's journey in this way:



"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."

Joseph Campbell, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces"

At its core, the monomyth is about an individual who leaves their comfort zone and has an experience in the unknown. After overcoming battles, meeting new friends, and fighting their foes, they return home with a reward.

There are several different monomyth frameworks, and some get pretty complicated. Campbell's own version has 17 steps, which include very mythical descriptions like "Meeting the goddess", "Belly of the whale," and "Atonement with the father." Writer-director Dan Harmon, the creator of shows like Community and Rick and Morty, uses a much simpler eight-step outline he calls The Story Circle.

In this ebook, we're going to base our exploration on steps that author and screenwriter Christopher Vogler outlined in his book, "The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers".

1. Ordinary world

The hero is at home and safe, but may be unsatisfied.

2. Call to adventure

Something happens that requires the hero to take action.

3. Refusal of the call

At first, the hero tries to resist going on the journey.

4. Meeting the mentor

A wiser, often older character appears and offers help.

5. Crossing the threshold

The hero leaves the ordinary world for the unknown.

6. Friends, foes, and allies

Challenges arise as the hero meets partners and enemies.

7. Moment of despair

The hero must make a sacrifice or may feel that all is lost.

8. The ordeal

A final battle is fought as the hero faces the toughest challenge yet.

9. The reward

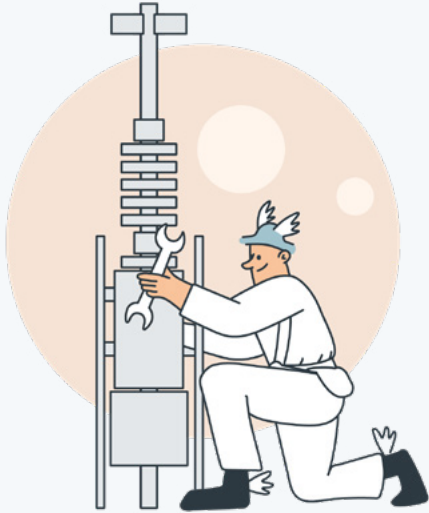
The hero wins the battle in the end and accomplishes the mission.

10. The return home

The transformed hero goes back to the ordinary world with the reward.



Let's look at how those steps play out in two popular films with strong hero's journeys: "Star Wars: A New Hope" and "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone".



Ordinary world

STAR WARS

Orphaned Luke Skywalker leads a dull life on Tatooine with his aunt and uncle.

HARRY POTTER

Orphaned Harry Potter lives under the steps of his cruel aunt and uncle's home.

Call to adventure

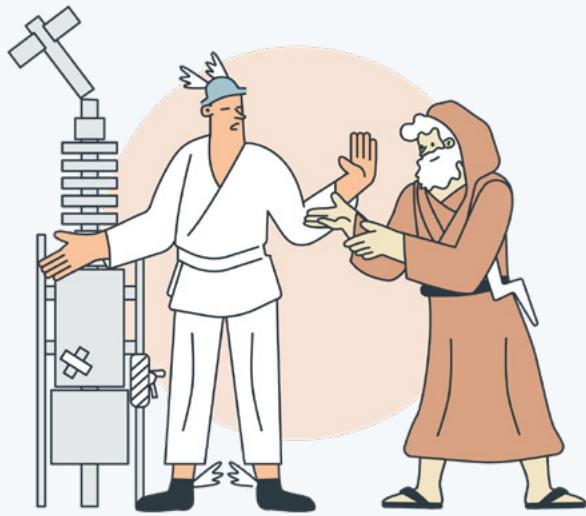
STAR WARS

Luke discovers R2D2's holographic message from Princess Leia, asking for help.

HARRY POTTER

Owls bearing letters from Hogwarts start arriving and invite Harry to join the magical school.





Refusal of the call

STAR WARS

Luke tells Obi-Wan he needs to stay on Tatooine and fulfill his obligation to work with his uncle.

HARRY POTTER

Harry loses hope as his uncle tries to stop the invitations from coming and hides Harry in a lighthouse.

Meeting the mentor

STAR WARS

After his aunt and uncle are killed, Luke decides to join Obi-Wan, learn to use the Force, and become a Jedi.

HARRY POTTER

Hagrid, the first of Harry's many mentors, arrives to take the wizard-to-be with him to Diagon Alley and introduce him to the magical world.



Crossing the threshold

STAR WARS

Luke leaves Tatooine and ventures into the galaxy, including a stop at the Cantina.

HARRY POTTER

Harry leaves his normal life behind. He crosses over to Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, boards the Hogwarts Express and arrives at his new school.



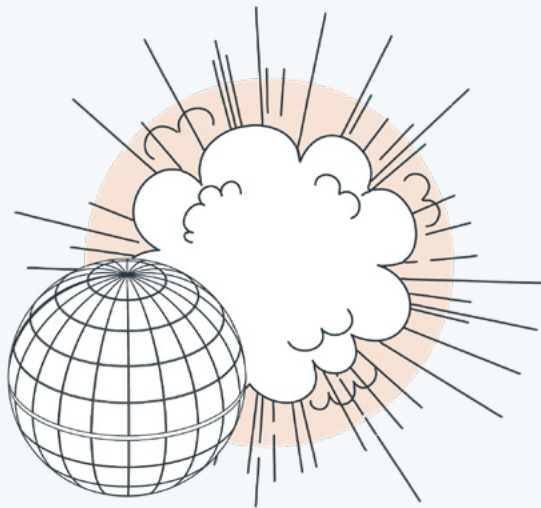
Friends, foes, and allies

STAR WARS

Luke joins up with Han Solo and Chewbacca. Obi-Wan teaches him to use the Force. They rescue Princess Leia and steal plans for the Death Star.

HARRY POTTER

Harry befriends classmates Ron and Hermione. He meets more mentors like Dumbledore. But he also makes rivals like Draco Malfoy and learns about Voldemort.



Moment of despair

STAR WARS

Darth Vader and the Empire use the Death Star to destroy the planet Alderaan, killing millions of people.

HARRY POTTER

Harry and his friends go through a series of dangerous tests. Harry gets separated from Ron and Hermione, leaving him to face the final battle alone.

The ordeal

STAR WARS

Luke joins the Rebel Alliance and flies an X-Wing. He's pursued by Darth Vader but manages to blow up the Death Star.

HARRY POTTER

Harry comes face-to-face with Voldemort (who is possessing Professor Quirrel). He passes out as Voldemort tries to get the Sorcerer's Stone, and Quirrel bursts into flames.





The reward

STAR WARS

Luke proves himself to be a real Jedi and becomes the hero he was destined to be.

HARRY POTTER

Harry keeps the stone away from Voldemort. He wakes up in the infirmary surrounded by gifts and is hailed a hero.

Return home

STAR WARS

Princess Leia awards medals to Luke and Han Solo for their bravery and service to the Rebel Alliance.

HARRY POTTER

Harry returns to the world of muggles with newfound confidence and the knowledge that he'll be heading back to Hogwarts next school year.



Your brand's role in a hero's journey

So, how does all of this apply to you and your brand's omnichannel communication strategy?

For one thing, sales and marketing professionals can be expert storytellers. However, it's not only the stories you tell to customers and prospects that matter. **What's just as important are the stories you tell yourself about your customers.** That's what sets your frame of reference for the target audience, including the best ways to reach them and serve them.

If we imagine your ideal customer as the hero, what part does your brand play in their journey?

In some cases, your brand may play the role of mentor, like Dumbledore and Obi-Wan Kenobi. Your brand may also provide the secret weapon the hero needs, like the Force or the magic Harry Potter learns to use. Or, perhaps a purchase from your company represents the treasure/reward the hero is seeking.

Keeping your customers at the center of the story helps you access the real emotions people experience as they engage with your brand. Because the truth is, we all make big decisions based on our feelings. We only use logic to justify our emotions about the decision.

A [Harvard Business Review article](#) titled "When to Sell with Facts and Figures, and When to Appeal to Emotions" states: "If you want to influence how a customer feels about your product, provide an experience that creates the desired emotion."

Note: *The hero's journey is a creative and effective framework you can use to enhance the way you view customer personas, how you build customer journey maps, and how you craft customer experiences.*

Interestingly, the customer journey and the hero's journey line up quite well. That's what we'll explore next.



PART 3





The hero's journey and the customer journey

Let's be clear... **the hero's journey is not a replacement for a customer journey**. Rather, it's another way of viewing the path to purchase and the overall customer experience.

Before you begin to apply the hero's journey to a marketing and communication strategy, you need to do customer research, create personas, and develop a marketing funnel.

Then, what you'll find is that the traditional steps in a customer journey, including Awareness, Research, Consideration and Comparison, Purchase Decision, and Loyalty, actually resemble and reflect the steps in a hero's journey.





Here's an example of how these journeys align:

The customer journey	The hero's journey
 Everyday life The customer is in their comfort zone, the normal routine.	 Ordinary world The hero is at home in a familiar, safe, and predictable place.
 Needs awareness A problem comes up or a life change occurs and the customer needs something.	 Call to adventure The hero is called to leave the ordinary world and go on a quest.



The customer journey	The hero's journey
 <p>Research and content consumption</p> <p>The customer starts looking for solutions, using search engines to find and gather helpful info from experts and thought leaders.</p>	 <p>Crossing the threshold/Meeting the mentor</p> <p>The hero leaves the ordinary world behind and first meets an older, wiser character who will help prepare and guide the hero for the quest.</p>
 <p>Consideration and comparison</p> <p>The customer weighs their options, engaging in an internal debate. Who can be trusted? Who is on their side? Do people like me do business with brands like this?</p>	 <p>Friends, foes, and allies</p> <p>The hero encounters a cast of characters. Some provide assistance on the quest, others will betray the hero or distract them from the mission.</p>
 <p>Purchase</p> <p>It's decision time. The customer must give something up (time, money, etc.) to solve their problem and get what they need.</p>	 <p>Moment of despair</p> <p>On the road to finding the treasure and winning the battle, the hero must pay a price or lose something along the way.</p>
 <p>Onboarding</p> <p>The customer has the solution, but now it's the moment of truth. Will they learn to use the tool and solve their problem, or will they abandon the journey for a different path?</p>	 <p>The ordeal</p> <p>The hero has power and confidence but still must risk their life to defeat an enemy or overcome the biggest obstacle of the journey.</p>



The customer journey	The hero's journey
 <p>Product adoption</p> <p>The customer experiences the value of the purchase decision. Their problem is solved and their needs are met.</p>	 <p>The reward</p> <p>The hero's mission is complete. They have acquired the treasure, defeated the enemy, or found the answers they'd been seeking.</p>
 <p>Loyalty</p> <p>The satisfied customer goes back to their everyday life. But now they have a positive story to tell family, friends, and colleagues.</p>	 <p>The return home</p> <p>The triumphant hero goes back to where they came from. But because of the journey, they are changed and so is the world around them.</p>

One of the potential drawbacks of practices like marketing funnels and journey mapping is how **they tend to put most of the emphasis on the purchase decision.**

This may work for major purchases like a new car or choosing a marketing automation platform. But in reality, a customer journey is about more than just making a purchase. There's usually something else at the core of the need. **Imagining the customer's life in terms of a hero's journey provides a different perspective.**

For example, it's hard to picture a consumer going on a dramatic journey to choose the best brand of organic milk. But choosing the right milk isn't the ultimate goal or the reward that the consumer is seeking. Instead, it may be part of a journey towards a healthier lifestyle or more sustainable food choices.

Considering a hero's journey helps you reframe the way you think about the customer experience. It informs you as to how to build the experience around your customers' everyday lives – not just the purchase itself.

That's also one of the biggest strengths of an omnichannel communication strategy. It lets brands reach customers on the communication platform an individual prefers, and it helps them deliver relatable, conversational messages at the perfect moment.



PART 4

Delivering an omnichannel customer experience

Okay, it's storytime. Are you ready?

In this section, we're going to put everything we've discussed so far into a connected narrative that follows a young couple through the journey of becoming first-time parents. We'll tell the tale of how they interact with two brands through omnichannel communications.

Meet our heroes

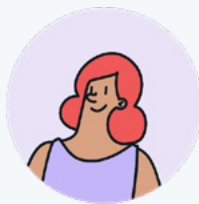


Ryan's bio

32-year-old Ryan is originally from India but came to the U.S. for a job where he met Angie and moved to Austin, Texas permanently.

Ryan works in corporate IT and is very tech-savvy. He always has his phone with him and extensively researches every purchase the couple makes, especially big decisions involving their growing family.

Ryan often uses WhatsApp to communicate with friends and family back in India. His mother is very excited about visiting after the birth.



Angie's bio

29-year-old Angie is an only child who never experienced what it was like to have a new baby in the home. Now she's preparing to be a new mom and has lots of questions.

She plans to keep working at her job as a preschool teacher until a week before her due date. But that means she's busy and needs help keeping track of all the appointments leading up to the big day.

Angie is an active social media user who posts to Instagram every day. She's using the app to share her new parent journey and to find trendy baby products.



Meet the brands



Athena Women's Care

This innovative regional healthcare provider specializes in serving women throughout their pregnancy. It uses groundbreaking treatments, cutting-edge technology, and a human touch to give expectant mothers the care and attention they truly need.

This brand will act as a mentor that provides expert advice on the hero's journey.

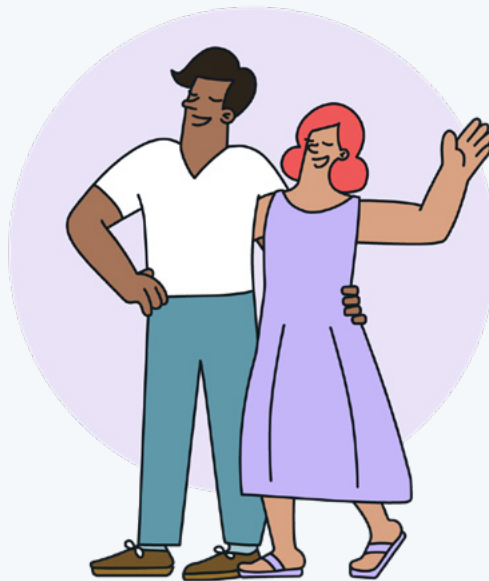


Bambino Baby Products

Millennial parents love this brand's stylish and sustainable options as well as its exceptional ecommerce experience. The company has grown rapidly in recent years thanks to its creative digital marketing efforts and reliable customer service.

This brand will act as an ally that provides tools for the hero's journey.

Now that we have our cast of characters, let's dive into the story and find out how our two brands use omnichannel communication to help this young couple navigate a major life change. We'll use the steps of a hero's journey to tell this story and call out important omnichannel touchpoints along the way.



Ordinary world

Since getting married four years ago, the Patels have become accustomed to life as a couple without kids. They have lots of friends, free time, and steady jobs. They know children are part of the plan sometime in the near future, but not today.



Little do they know, their lives are about to change.



Call to adventure

One day, Ryan comes home from work and Angie is waiting for him with a positive pregnancy test. They're both in a bit of shock. The first thing they need to do is to schedule an appointment with an obstetrician.

While researching the best doctors in the area, Ryan finds **Athena Women's Care** and they sign up for an email series on prenatal health.

Omnichannel touchpoint #1

Email marketing automation

*A **welcome email series** from Athena congratulates and encourages the Patels. The email content is personalized based on questions they answered in a sign-up form. The emails help guide the couple and let them know what to expect as first-time parents.*

A common aspect of the hero's journey is the "Refusal of the Call." Heroes may not feel they are cut out for the challenges ahead, just as expectant parents feel unsure about their ability to raise children. The right message, delivered at the right time, helps calm the Patels' insecurities. It also convinces them that Athena Women's Care is a provider they like and trust.

The first step on their healthcare journey will be an initial appointment with Angie's obstetrician – one of many appointments over the coming months.



Omnichannel touchpoint #2

Appointment confirmations & reminders

When they set up their account with Athena, Ryan and Angie can choose to get **appointment confirmations and reminders over email, text messaging, or with an automated phone call.**

These reminders are very helpful as Angie and Ryan balance their busy schedules with the demands of pregnancy.

Getting notified on more than one channel ensures they never miss an appointment. But they can always opt-out if it gets to be too much. These communications also provide ways to quickly reschedule appointments if needed.



Meeting the mentor

Athena Women's Care has a special birth coaching service for new moms who want a little extra help and guidance. Angie's birth coach works from home three days a week. So, some of their sessions will need to be virtual.



Omnichannel touchpoint #3

Telehealth video calls

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Athena invested in **in-app video calling** so that its doctors and specialists could continue serving women as safely as possible. It remains a popular way to meet with patients while reducing costs and no-shows.

Angie and her birth coach have bi-monthly video calls in which the coach mentors her through the different phases of the pregnancy and preps her for what's to come. All Angie has to do is log in to Athena's app and click a button to start the appointment.

Brands can mentor customers and prospects in many creative ways. It doesn't have to be as direct as this example. Your brand can also act as a mentor through educational or informational content that showcases subject matter expertise. Remember, throughout this journey, the Patels are receiving emails from Athena that direct them to helpful articles, videos, and other resources.



Crossing the threshold

After that first doctor's appointment, the shock wears off, and everything feels very real. The Patels have crossed the threshold and entered the universe of expectant parents. This is a whole new world for them - a world that will include a lot of purchases.



Angie and Ryan discover the brand **Bambino Baby Products** through an Instagram influencer. They both love Bambino's trendy baby furniture. Angie follows them on social media, and the Patels start shopping.

Omnichannel touchpoint #4

Conversational selling

When Angie has questions about a baby crib, she reaches out to the brand through Instagram messages to get answers. Then, she's able to place her first order on Instagram thanks to

conversational commerce experience.

Even though it's automated artificial intelligence, Angie has a positive, natural interaction with the brand. The conversational AI helps with customization, answers her questions, and even cracks a joke. She chooses to buy some sheets as well as a changing table that matches her crib.

Boxes are arriving at the Patels' doorstep every day. They're getting so many deliveries, it's hard to know what to expect and when. But Ryan wants to stay organized. He's tracking all their purchases and making sure every item they order arrives as expected. After all, these products are the tools they'll need to survive and thrive in this new world.

Omnichannel touchpoint #5

Order confirmations and shipping updates

*Every time the Patels buy something online, they immediately get **messages confirming the purchase.** These communications serve as receipts and provide helpful tracking information. RCS messages deliver a PDF copy of the receipt. The couple can also use SMS to reschedule delivery times to something more convenient.*

*Some of the order tracking emails the couple receives include **real-time shipping updates.** Others inquire about their satisfaction with the product and ordering experience, occasionally asking for ratings and reviews.*





Friends, foes, and allies

There will be many twists and turns along Angie and Ryan's journey to parenthood. Sometimes, brands will be the cause of challenges and frustrations. But the brands they interact with also have the opportunity to help. In fact, customer frustration is a perfect opportunity for brands to become supportive friends and helpful allies through omnichannel communication.

For instance, after ordering a car seat from Bambino Baby Products, the couple decides to be overachievers and get the seat installed months ahead of the new arrival. But it's not as simple as they thought. The directions confuse Ryan and he wants to be confident the car seat is safely installed.

Omnichannel touchpoint #6

Customer service chats

*First, Ryan interacts with Bambino's **chatbot on WhatsApp**. But he's still confused when he's out in the driveway struggling with the car seat. So, the bot transfers him to a live support agent.*

*Now, Ryan is able to have a **two-way conversation with a human being**. He can send the agent pictures of his installation problem, and she can send back helpful information. Plus, the Bambino agent already knows Ryan's purchase history and what he told the chatbot because it's all integrated into a CPaaS platform. This means Ryan doesn't have to waste time repeating product numbers and other basic info.*



Angie has a lot of questions about her health throughout the pregnancy, especially the symptoms she experiences. Is all this heartburn normal? Is back pain a sign of something more serious? When can I expect the baby to start kicking?

She's not comfortable with random internet advice, so she goes straight to her healthcare provider instead. Some helpful content is delivered in the personalized email content she gets from Athena Women's Care. But there also are times when she needs specific answers right away.

Omnichannel touchpoint #7

FAQs and beyond

*Athena Women's Care built a **chatbot that answers the common questions** of expectant mothers. They found this helps cut back on call volume while giving patients the trustworthy information they need in a timely manner.*

*Angie learns that heartburn and back pain are normal symptoms, and she finds out which over-the-counter medications are considered safe to take. However, if she asks a question connected to a more complex issue, the AI in the chatbot knows when it's time to **transfer Angie to a live healthcare professional for help**.*

*When that happens, the healthcare professional she speaks to already has access to the conversations Angie had with the chatbot. Patients can also contact a **toll-free, 24-hour nurse hotline** when tough questions and urgent situations arise. Angie can even send a text to the same toll-free number if she has follow-up questions.*

Some challenges are big and scary, and others are small and annoying. For example, Angie experiences some forgetfulness (aka pregnancy brain) and can't remember her password for the online account with Athena Women's Care.



Omnichannel touchpoint #8

Password resets and verifications

First Angie requests a **password reset email**, which quickly provides her with a link to create a new one. Then she uses her Android smartphone to grab an **SMS verification code**. She gets a one-time passcode that grants her access to the account.

Not only is the experience painless, but it also serves to build trust in the brand. Angie knows that Athena is taking steps to protect her sensitive health information by verifying her identity with **two-factor authentication**.



Moment of despair

In the hero's journey, the main character eventually hits a roadblock that throws them off course. It's the final plot twist before the big showdown, and it usually causes the hero to question herself and her ability to complete the journey.

For the Patels, this moment comes during the ultrasound appointment in which they planned to find out if they're having a boy or a girl. Instead, they found out they are having one of each... twins. The news may not cause them to feel "despair," but they definitely feel overwhelmed.



This is when Angie and Ryan start thinking about the true price of becoming parents. They're giving up a lot of freedom, and they're taking on a lot of responsibilities. The realization of having twins makes it feel as if everything they were expecting about this journey has doubled.

Omnichannel touchpoint #9

Email nurturing

*Once Athena Women's Care has the updated information about Angie's pregnancy, they include the Patels in a **new segment of subscribers** and are able to tailor email content to their situation. Now, **personalized emails arrive** explaining some risks and complications of giving birth to twins. It also connects them to a local parent support network for parents of multiples.*

Of course, now that the Patels are expecting two bundles of joy, they are going to need to do more online shopping. Some of their new baby products, like the stroller, won't work with twins. This is another area where omnichannel communication supports an ideal ecommerce experience.

Omnichannel touchpoint #10

Returns, exchanges, and repeat purchases

*Ryan goes back to his email inbox to find and print return labels for products that are still in the box. Then, he **uses WhatsApp and talks with customer service** at Bambino Baby Products to work out how to return things he's already assembled.*

*Angie prefers SMS for customer communications, and with an omnichannel approach, that can be a rich experience too. **RCS (Rich Communication Services) brings an app-like experience to text messaging**. Angie can browse different colors and designs for baby products she's already purchased – because now she needs two of everything!*





The ordeal

The climax of the Patels' journey will be the birth of their twins. This is what it's all been leading up to, after all. It's where everything they've learned, all the solutions they've gathered, and everyone who's helped them along the way come to fruition.

Even at this point, there are opportunities for omnichannel communication to make a difference.

Omnichannel touchpoint #11

The final communications

*The couple meets with Angie's doctor and birth coach on a **telehealth video call** to go over her birth plan. They discuss everything from pain medication to the lighting in the room during delivery. Because this call takes place within the clinic's platform, sensitive medical information is completely private and protected.*

*Since the delivery is scheduled, Athena Women's Care is able to send the Patels final reminder messages a day ahead of time. **An encouraging email and a text message** from Angie's healthcare provider give her confidence and mention personal items she may want to pack for her hospital stay.*



Finally, the moment of truth arrives. While nobody would say that labor and delivery were “easy,” the twins come into the world without any unexpected complications. Angie and the two newborns, Josie and Jayden, are happy and healthy.



The reward and return home

Of course, the real treasure the Patels were seeking wasn't the best doctor or the perfect bassinet. That's not what the journey was about. The reward is the gift of two healthy babies and the joy of holding them in their arms for the first time.

Ryan drives his new family home with Josie and Jayden buckled safely into their expertly installed car seats, and the Patels return home to a new normal.



How other brands can act as allies

The brands that provided an exceptional customer/patient experience, including clear communication along the way, played an integral role in this adventure. However, as you may have guessed, just as one journey ends another begins. In Hollywood, they call that a sequel. For the Patels, it's more like life goes on.

Here's how brands in other industries could use omnichannel communication to play the part of an ally, friend, or mentor as the Patels continue their journey into parenthood.



Food delivery

While Angie is home on maternity leave, she gets her favorite dishes delivered from local restaurants. Omnichannel communications over email and SMS cover transactions and order tracking. She's even used Instagram messaging to order a pizza.

One day, a driver mistakenly delivers the wrong order. Thankfully, Angie is able to call the driver using the food delivery service's mobile app. The application includes a call masking feature. That means Angie and the driver can communicate while keeping their phone numbers private.



Travel and transport

Ryan's mother is excited to come from India to visit her new grandchildren. He arranges a flight for her, and the airline delivers email and SMS confirmation messages, mobile boarding passes, flight reminders, and gate change information to grandma's preferred communication channels.

After landing at the airport and calling for a ride, Ryan's mother has trouble finding her driver's vehicle. But, they're able to connect thanks to in-app chat features and the driver points her in the right direction for pickup.



Financial services

Ryan and Angie have big dreams for the twins' futures, and college degrees are part of the plan. So, they open up college savings accounts for Josie and Jayden a few months after they're born.

They meet with a financial advisor over video chat to discuss a savings strategy. Then they securely set up an online account that includes two-factor authentication. Their bank notifies them of suspicious or fraudulent activity via text messages and emails them monthly statements so they can track their progress toward savings goals.





Media and entertainment

In the early days, there will be plenty of late-night feedings and other reasons for interrupted sleep. Thankfully, Ryan and Angie can stay awake and entertained while bingeing shows on media streaming services.

When they finish the last season of their favorite program, Angie gets email recommendations on what to watch next. Later, she engages with the streaming service's chatbot on Facebook Messenger to explore more content on the platform. Because the bot was built with conversational AI, it feels like she's having a chat with a friend who knows all about the best movies and TV shows.



Automotive

Not long after the twins are born, Ryan's lease ends on the sports car he's been driving. He and Angie decide it's time to become a minivan family. Rather than take babies to visit a dealership, they decide to buy a vehicle online.

The couple gets questions about minivan safety answered by a chatbot. A personalized email delivers them options based on their needs. Instead of a test drive, they take some virtual video tours to learn about the features of their top choices. The sales rep they work with sends them a Thank You email after they make a purchase. Finally, Ryan gets SMS notifications about parts recalls and reminders for regular maintenance at the local dealership.



PART 5

What about B2B?

We've talked a lot about how an omnichannel communication strategy impacts a brand's relationship with consumers. So, does an omnichannel strategy have a place in the world of business-to-business marketing and communications? Of course. Can you still apply a hero's journey to B2B customers? Absolutely.

After all, **it's still a human being at the other end of your messages.**

B2B omnichannel communication

Getting B2B omnichannel communications right is simply a matter of understanding the customer journey, identifying important touchpoints, and determining the best channels and messages for that moment in the journey.

Take a SaaS customer experience as an example. A new customer may:

- Sign up for email communications and get placed into the right segment with a personalized nurture track.
- Communicate with customer service, sales, and support via a messaging app.
- Attend a video call with sales reps who provide a product demo.
- Get email and SMS payment confirmations after signing up for a monthly plan.
- Use SMS for two-factor authentication when accessing their account.
- Receive helpful onboarding content emailed to their inbox.
- Interact with a chatbot when they have basic support questions.
- Connect with a live agent when things get overly complicated.
- Fill out a customer satisfaction survey in an RCS message or interactive email.

With a detailed omnichannel strategy and a CPaaS solution to manage it all, the software company working with this person can provide a cohesive and seamless customer experience.

B2B brands that have already adopted an omnichannel sales approach are seeing success. According to McKinsey & Co., 83% of B2B leaders believe omnichannel selling is more effective than a "face-to-face only approach." That's up from 54% who felt that way before the start of the pandemic in 2020.



The B2B hero's journey

B2B contacts will have personal preferences for different types of communication. Likewise, B2B customers and prospects will embark on unique, emotional, and sometimes risky customer journeys that lead to purchase decisions and partnerships.

Research from Google found that B2B relationships tend to be even more emotionally driven than those of B2C brands and buyers. Google and the CEB Marketing Leadership Council had Motista conduct a survey of B2B and B2C brands with interesting results:



“Not only did the B2B brands drive more emotional connections than B2C brands, but they weren’t even close... On average, B2B customers are significantly more emotionally connected to their vendors and service providers than consumers.”

Think with Google, “From Promotion to Emotion: Connecting B2B Customers to Brands”

One reason for this is that B2B purchase decisions can be very high stakes. The future of the company or someone's career may be on the line (not to mention large sums of money).

Emotions also run high because multiple stakeholders are usually involved in making B2B purchase decisions. This means there are opinions, egos, and interpersonal work relationships entering the story as well.

When imagining a B2B hero's journey, it's important to keep in mind what is at stake and the emotions behind the decision. Since multiple people influence the decision, it may also be helpful to imagine the journey as an ensemble of heroes.



PART 6

Final thoughts on email and omnichannel

Email may be an indispensable communication channel. However, **email marketers will have to adapt as brands adopt omnichannel strategies.**

First, it's important to accept the fact that email isn't the only digital communication channel in the game. There will be instances when other channels and platforms provide a better experience. There may also be some customers who prefer avoiding their email inboxes.

As brands diversify their portfolios of communication channels, smart email marketers will also diversify their skillsets and learn how to use other means to deliver relevant messages. Luckily, you've probably learned some things about subscriber behavior, engagement, and communication experiences that will help. **Don't hesitate to bring those lessons from email to your organization's overall strategy.**

The truth is, email could lose ground if it fails to evolve and find its rightful place in an omnichannel communication strategy. The email industry should carefully consider ways it can adapt. Here are three important places to start:

1. Integration

Email needs to become a team player if it's going to work effectively in a CPaaS platform. That means you need a way for email to easily integrate with other applications. Email needs to connect to the CPaaS solution so that important information can be shared to create a cohesive customer experience.

Thankfully, since major CPaaS providers are including email in their service offerings, it's safe to assume that the future of email and customer communication is in good hands.

2. Two-way communication

Conversational customer engagement goes far beyond friendly copywriting. Email needs to become a better channel for back-and-forth communication between brands and customers.

In many cases, email subscribers don't have the opportunity to respond to messages in their inboxes. The rise of omnichannel communication is a sign that the no-reply email address needs to go for good. However, this means you need ways to quickly respond to replies. That's where automation and CPaaS can help.



3. Automation and AI

In order to create a conversational email experience that scales, automated responses and artificial intelligence will be necessary advancements. That likely means finding ways to use machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP) in email marketing scenarios.

As email evolves to support more interactivity, these automated replies could also include things like multiple choice questions, ratings and reviews, or even the ability to complete a purchase within the email.

Your journey begins now...

Does it feel as if you are about to enter a strange new world? Consider this ebook your call to adventure. Will you refuse the call and remain in your ordinary world? Or will you cross the threshold and become the hero that your company and your customers need?

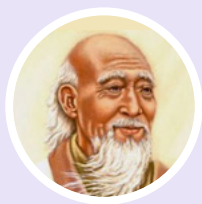
As you seek the treasure of a better customer communication experience, you'll need to find the right allies and secret weapons to overcome challenges along the way. That means identifying solutions and partners that can grow with you on this journey into omnichannel communications.

Your goal is to **keep your customers at the center of the story**. To do that, you'll need an omnichannel communication strategy that creates a positive experience along a customer journey. **Remember, the journey, the experience, and communication are all connected.**

Pursuing an omnichannel communication strategy is a huge process that will take time. But every brand has to start somewhere. Think about how you can slowly but surely enhance your email program to implement the benefits that an omnichannel approach provides your customers.

- Could you create a more personalized experience for your subscribers?
- Can you make email a more responsive channel with two-way communication?
- Are there ways to start integrating email with other channels and applications?
- Are there other communication channels that would benefit your customers?

As an ancient Eastern philosopher once said...



"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Lao Tzu, from the "Tao Te Ching"

PART 7

Resources

If you're interested in further exploration of the topics covered in our ebook, we've compiled a collection of additional reading, informative videos, and other content. Use these tools to learn more about the hero's journey, omnichannel communication, and customer journey mapping.



Watch

[What Makes a Hero? - TedEd](#): Check out an impressive animated short film explaining the hero's journey in detail while using *The Hunger Games* as an example.

[Dan Harmon's Story Circle](#): Find out how a cutting-edge showrunner uses a simplified hero's journey to write stories for the Adult Swim show, *The Adventures of Rick and Morty*.

[The world's leading customer engagement platform](#): See how Sinch is building solutions that help brands connect with different types of consumers on the communication platforms people use every day.

[Sinch Conversation API](#): Watch a quick explanation of how artificial intelligence can deliver authentic experiences on a wide variety of mobile communication channels.



Read

["The Hero with a Thousand Faces"](#): Get Joseph Campbell's seminal work exploring the monomyth and why humans around the world relate to the hero's journey.

["Building a Story Brand"](#): In this best-selling marketing book, author Donald Miller shows you how brands can use the hero's journey to tell persuasive, compelling stories.

["The Writer's Journey"](#): This book is based on a memo author Christopher Vogler wrote to Walt Disney Animation executives while he worked on *The Lion King*.

[Customer Journey Mapping - Planning Campaigns for a Better Email Experience](#): Check out this Mailjet article for essential advice on journey mapping and email strategy. (Includes a free downloadable template)





Download

[The Email Customer Journey](#): Get a report from Email on Acid with survey results showing how successful marketers conduct journey mapping and where email fits into the picture.

[The Ultimate Guide to Conversational Messaging Channels](#): Find out about the capabilities and benefits of different messaging options and pick the right mix for your communication needs.

[Conversational Customer Engagement - The Key to Futureproof Digital CX](#): Grab your free report from Sinch and IDC on creating a winning omnichannel strategy with a CPaaS partner.

[Meet Customers Where They Are](#): Download a report on customer journey management from Sinch, Adobe, Microsoft, Merkle, and Winterberry Group.



PART 8

How we can help



Sinch is the one-stop-shop for all your communication needs, empowering you to reach your customers in innovative ways. From messaging to voice or email, Sinch's customer engagement platform powers meaningful communication at scale on any channel and helps you deliver next-level customer experiences.

Build a mobile-first, connected brand experience with solutions for SMS, MMS, RCS, and all the leading messaging applications. Use Conversation API to connect everything with a single API for an omnichannel experience.

Turn marketing messages into conversation starters, boost sales with virtual assistants, and provide exceptional customer service with ready to use application solutions for mobile marketing, customer service, and conversational AI platform.

Get the voice services you need for seamless communication with your customers, co-workers, and more – all on the highest quality supernetwork.

Start your omnichannel strategy with the global leader in customer engagement.

[Visit Sinch](#)

Email solutions from Sinch



Use one of the world's most intuitive email marketing tools to drive results with meaningful campaigns delivered to your customers.

[Visit Mailjet](#)



Take advantage of a leading email delivery service with a powerful API to enable transactional emails and other automated messages.

[Visit Mailgun](#)



Test and preview email campaigns before you hit send to fix issues and provide an ideal inbox experience for every subscriber.

[Visit Email on Acid](#)





More than 40,000 companies around the world use Mailjet by Sinch to strengthen connections with customers and subscribers while building their businesses through email marketing. Brands like Microsoft, Kia Motors, and Toast trust Mailjet to send billions of emails every year. Mailjet combines an intuitive, drag-and-drop email campaign builder with easy-to-use deliverability features to help businesses create and send beautiful emails without touching a single line of code.

Founded in Paris in 2010, Mailjet has offices in tech hubs around the globe, including the UK, US, Spain, Germany, and France. Mailjet is proud to be part of **Sinch**, a leading Communication Platform as a Service (CPaaS) provider, offering messaging, voice, and video communication solutions to a large global customer base. Mailjet is both ISO 27001 certified and GDPR compliant, offering its clients the highest levels of data security and privacy.

For more information, please visit mailjet.com.

