The 4 Biggest Disconnects Between CP Marketers and Consumers

And how to fix them

SAP Emarsys

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Introduction: Minding the Engagement Gap

Our recently published Global Consumer Products Engagement Report asked 14,000 consumers and 750 senior marketing decision makers one big question: how well are brands really engaging with today's shoppers?

We wanted to understand:

- How are consumer products brands navigating this new Engagement Era?

- Where are they investing in data and AI, and does it match what consumers want?

- Which channels do marketers trust to reach people — and which channels do people actually use?

- And how are new generations, like Gen Z, reshaping brand loyalty and buying habits?

What we uncovered was eye-opening:
huge gaps still exist between what marketers think they're delivering and what consumers actually want.

In this guide, we've isolated the four biggest engagement gaps we found:

1 **Channel Mismatch:** the difference between where marketers show up and where customers really engage.

2 **Personalization vs. AI:** why AI-driven tactics miss the mark if they don't feel personal and human.

3 **Data & Trust:** how unused data and vague privacy practices erode customer confidence.

4 **Value & Loyalty:** why price-sensitive consumers won't stick around for loyalty schemes that don't deliver real value.

We'll show you why these gaps exist and, more importantly, **how you can close them** with practical tactics that align what you do with what your customers expect.

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Gap One: Channel Mismatch

When you compare the channels marketers invest in versus the channels consumers actually use, some clear gaps jump out. On the surface, there's good alignment: both groups rank email, websites, and social advertising high on their lists. But dig deeper and you'll see big disconnects:

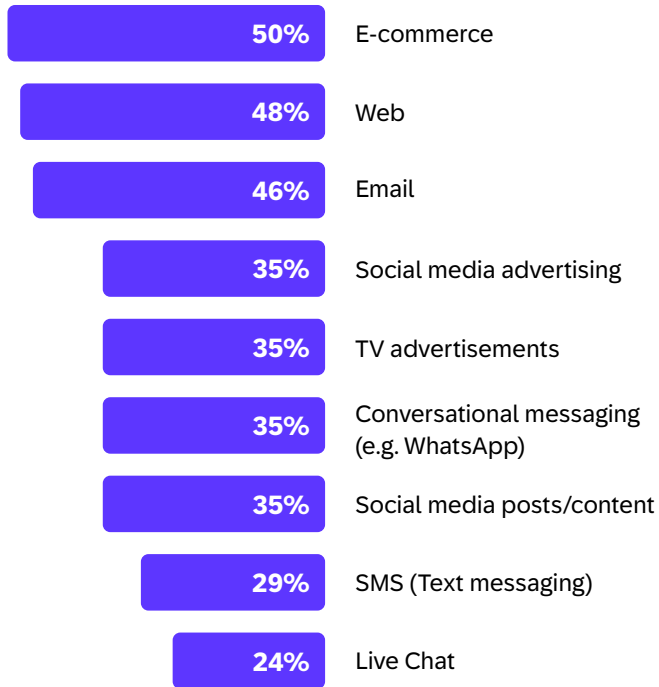**Conversational messaging, SMS,** and **live chat** all appear in the CP marketer's Top 10, yet are *totally absent* from consumers' Top 10.
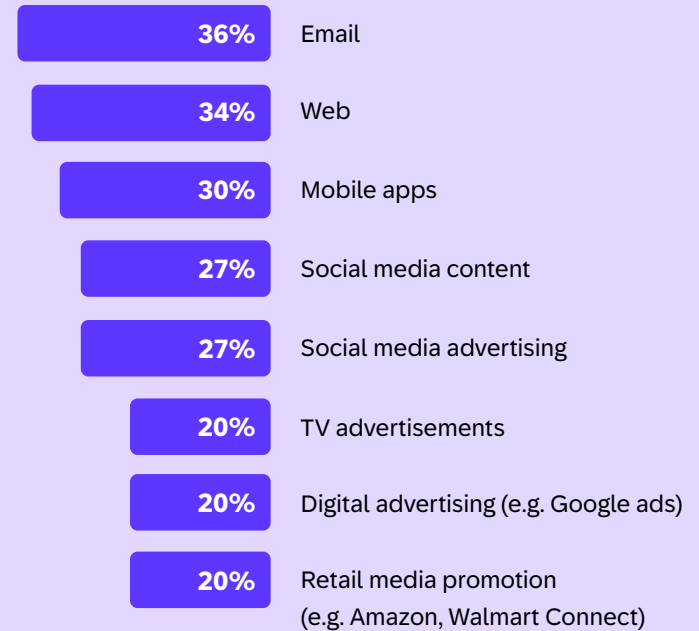
Mobile apps rank **third** for consumers as a preferred way to interact with brands, but they *don't appear* at all in the marketer's Top 10.

Channels used by CP marketers to engage customers

50% E-commerce

48% Web

46% Email

35% Social media advertising

35% TV advertisements

35% Conversational messaging (e.g. WhatsApp)

35% Social media posts/content

29% SMS (Text messaging)

24% Live Chat

Channels used by consumers to interact with brands

36% Email

34% Web

30% Mobile apps

27% Social media content

27% Social media advertising

20% TV advertisements

20% Digital advertising (e.g. Google ads)

20% Retail media promotion (e.g. Amazon, Walmart Connect)

Why This Gap Exists

Marketers naturally want to stay ahead of the curve, so they explore emerging channels like conversational messaging or live chat to grab attention. But chasing the "next big thing" can't come at the expense of the channels people already trust and use every day.

Consumers still rely heavily on familiar channels like email, websites, mobile apps, and social media because they feel convenient and easy to navigate. These channels work, but many marketers spread their budgets too thin or fail to build robust strategies for the basics.

It's not about ignoring new channels — it's about making sure the ones that matter most to your audience deliver consistent, relevant experiences first.
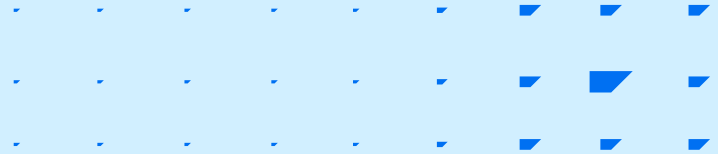
How to Close it: Focus on Email First

1. Tactic:
Deliver time-sensitive messages when a product is back in stock

2. Use Case:
Keep your audience engaged by letting them know when popular products, tickets, or special offers are back in stock, driving immediate sales and deeper loyalty. Email is the perfect channel for time-sensitive updates your customers actually want to receive.

3. Solution:
- Set an automation to detect when an item is back in stock.

- Target audiences who viewed the product in the past few days.

- Exclude anyone who already made the purchase — no duplicate offers!

- Send a personalized email to opted-in contacts with a direct link to buy before it sells out again.

How to Close it: Focus on Email First

Example Journey

A shopper browses your website and clicks on a popular product.

The item goes out of stock.

They sign up for a "notify me when available" alert.

As soon as it's back in stock, they receive a personalized email with a direct link to buy.

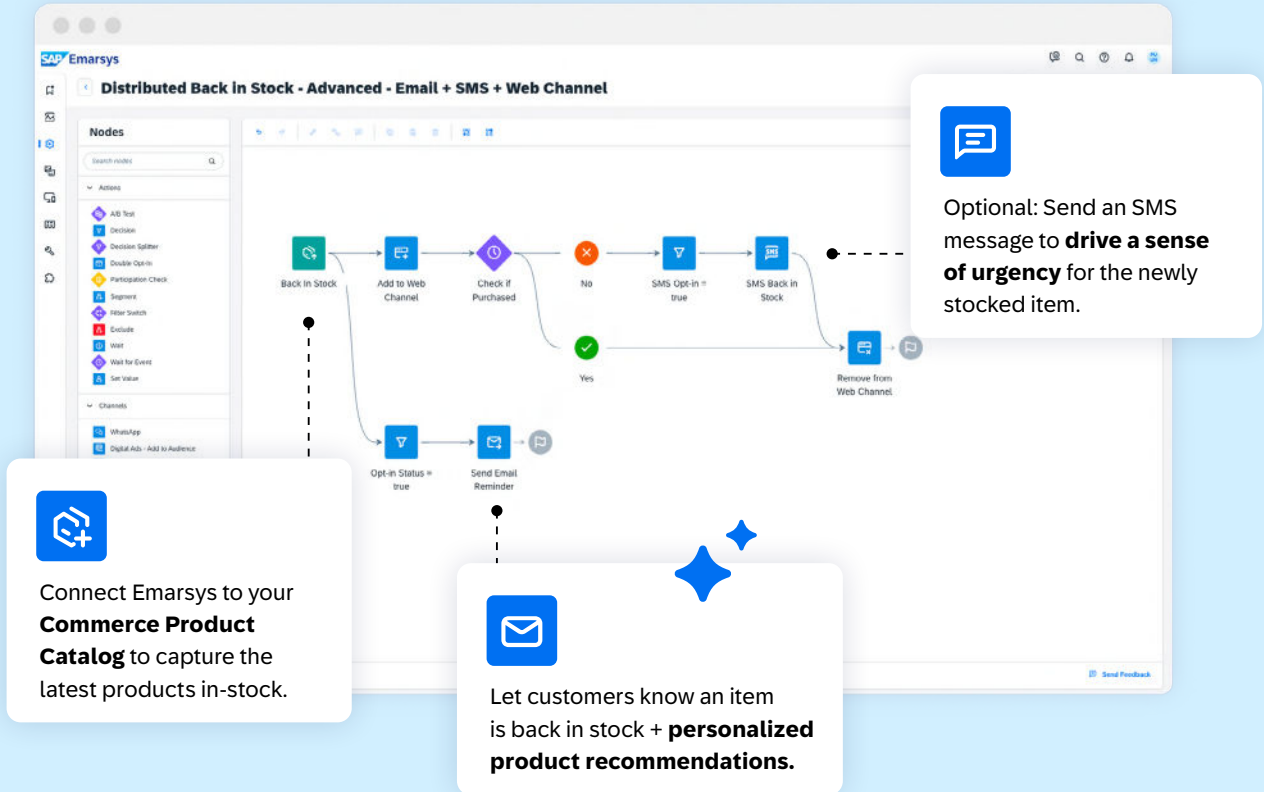They click through and complete the purchase before stock runs out again.

How to Close it: Focus on Email First

Example Workflow

Distributed Back in Stock - Advanced - Email + SMS + Web Channel

Optional: Send an SMS message to **drive a sense of urgency** for the newly stocked item.

Connect Emarsys to your **Commerce Product Catalog** to capture the latest products in-stock.

Let customers know an item is back in stock + **personalized product recommendations.**

How to Close it: Strengthen Your Website Experience

1. Tactic:
Identify website visitors and personalize their experiences

2. Use Case:
The moment someone lands on your website, your goal is to recognize what they're interested in, even if they don't log in or share an email right away. By identifying visitors based on their clicks and behavior, you can guide their journey in real time, delivering a tailored experience that keeps them engaged and coming back.

3. Solution:
• Use your website analytics and engagement data to spot what visitors are searching for and viewing most.

• Build rules that show personalized content blocks, images, or banners based on those behaviors.

• Offer sign-ups for newsletters, loyalty programs, or product updates when visitors show high interest.

• Keep refining your personalization so repeat visitors see fresh, relevant content each time they return.

How to Close it: Strengthen Your Website Experience

Example Journey

A visitor lands on your hompage looking for gift ideas.

They click through a few product pages and read a blog.

Your site recognizes their interest in a specific category.

The next time they visit, they see curated product recommendations, related articles, and an invite to sign up for early access to new launches in that category.

How to Close it: Use SMS to Reach Customers When It Matters Most

1. Tactic:
Send timely, relevant SMS messages to boost engagement and conversion

2. Use Case:
SMS is direct, personal, and gets seen fast — perfect for urgent updates, back-in-stock alerts, or limited-time offers. For consumer products brands, keeping SMS simple and relevant helps cut through the noise without feeling intrusive.

3. Solution:
- Start with clear use cases that genuinely add value — think back-in-stock notices, shipping updates, or last-chance promotions.

- Keep your SMS short, direct, and friendly — include the brand name, purpose, and a clear action (like a link to buy).

- Use customer data wisely: only send SMS to opted-in contacts and tailor messages based on preferences or past behaviors.

- Test send times to hit customers when they're most likely to read and act — for many CP brands, that's evenings or weekends.

How to Close it: Use SMS to Reach Customers When It Matters Most

Example Journey

A shopper joins your SMS list for back-in-stock alerts.

A sold-out product returns to stock.

They get a quick text with a link to buy.

They tap through and complete the purchase before stock runs out again.

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2 Gap Two: Personalization vs. AI

When it comes to personalization, many marketers see AI as the golden ticket. In fact, 76% of CP marketers say AI is essential for acquiring new customers, yet only 10% of consumers want more AI-driven interactions. Instead, 42% of shoppers say they want personalized deals and offers that feel real, human, and tailored to them, not generic or robotic.

Why This Gap Exists

AI can help marketers work faster and at scale, but here's the catch: customers don't want to feel like they're engaging with an AI. They want experiences that feel genuinely personal and relevant. Too often, brands lean too heavily on automation and fail to make offers feel unique. At the same time, clumsy data usage or one-size-fits-all campaigns can come off as cold and impersonal.

It's not about ditching AI — it's about putting it to work in ways that fuel personalization behind the scenes, so the customer experience still feels human and authentic on the surface.

How to Close it: Make Personalization Feel Real

1. Tactic:
Enhance consumer engagement with authentic personalization

2. Use Case:
Once you've identified a repeat web visitor, use what you know to make every click feel uniquely relevant. True personalization means tailoring content, offers, and recommendations to match each visitor's real interests, not just pushing generic messages.

3. Solution:
• Build interactive tools like quizzes or preference centers to learn more about your visitors over time in a way that feels helpful, not invasive.

• Dynamically update your website content. Show recommended products, articles, or offers that reflect what each person has browsed or searched for.

• Use clear value exchanges, like personalized discounts or exclusive content, to encourage visitors to share their preferences.

• Keep refining the experience so every visit feels fresh and individually curated, turning casual browsers into loyal fans to checkout.

How to Close it: Make Personalization Feel Real

Example Journey

A visitor searches online for health supplements.

They land on your blog.

They complete an interactive quiz.

The visitor instantly sees a tailored offer that matches their needs, along with a sign-up to receive more personalized updates.

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3   Gap Three: Data & Trust

Marketers are collecting more data than ever, but much of it never gets used, earning it the dubious title of "dark data." In fact, 52% of CP marketers admit their organizations suffer from dark data, while 84% of consumers say they expect brands to have clear data privacy policies. Even more striking, 73% of consumers are put off when brands ask for data without explaining how they'll use it.

Why This Gap Exists

Many brands either hoard data without a clear plan to turn it into better customer experiences or sit on a mess of unstructured data that they struggle to activate.

Meanwhile, consumers have grown savvier. They know their data has value, and they want to see that value returned in the form of trust, relevance, and tangible benefits. If people don't understand why you're asking for their information or don't believe you'll protect it, they'll hold back.

How to Close it: Make Data Use Transparent and Valuable

1. Tactic:
Create an omnichannel progressive profiling opt-in experience

2. Use Case:
Build trust by collecting customer data gradually in a way that feels natural and fair. Using progressive profiling tactics, you'll ask for small pieces of information over time, showing customers how each detail helps you serve them better, and always giving them control.

3. Solution:
- Start with basic data during the first interaction, like an email address or name, and ask for more details as the relationship grows.

- Use preference centers, pop-ups, or account profiles where customers can update their information when it suits them.

- Be clear about how you'll use each piece of information, explain the benefits upfront (e.g. better recommendations, exclusive deals).

- Reward trust with highly personalized content and offers that prove you're using their data thoughtfully.

How to Close it: Make Data Use Transparent and Valuable

Example Journey

A new subscriber joins your mailing list.

Later, they get an email asking for their product preferences.

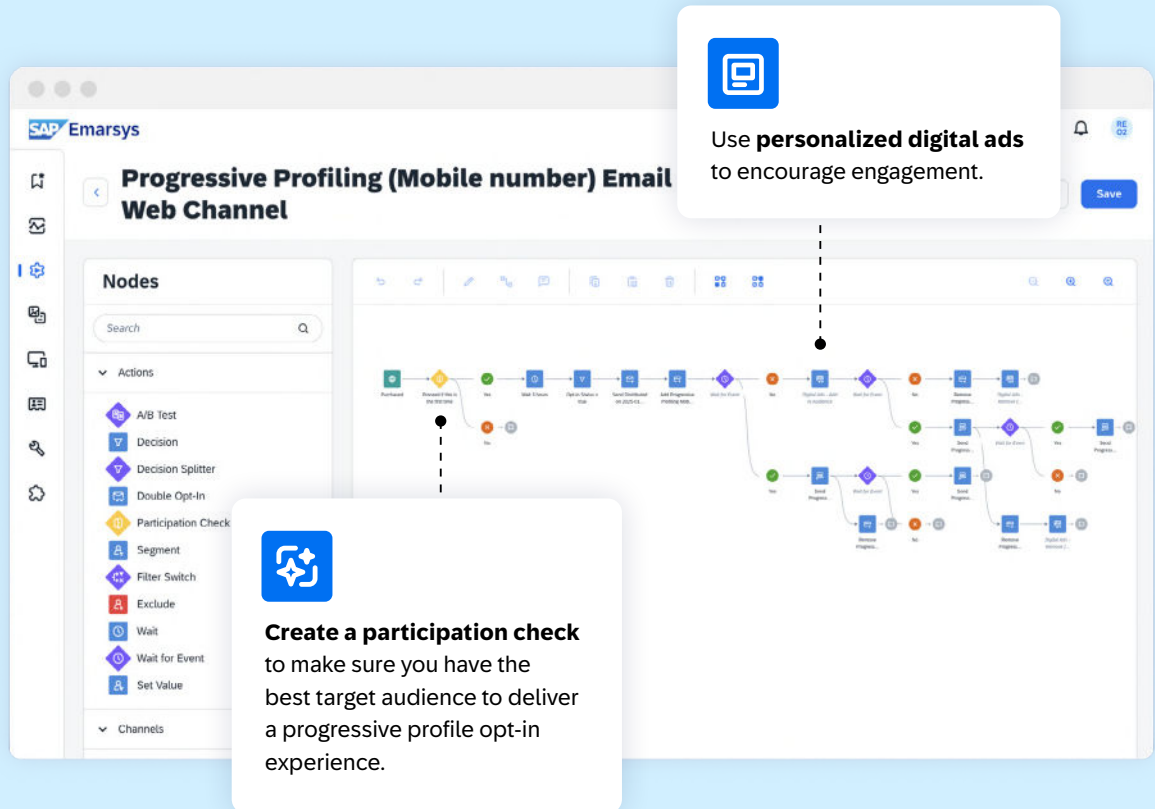**You tailor their next email with offers that match those interests.**

They can update their details anytime via your preference center.

How to Close it: Make Data Use Transparent and Valuable

Example Workflow

Use **personalized digital ads** to encourage engagement.

Create a participation check to make sure you have the best target audience to deliver a progressive profile opt-in experience.

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4 **Gap Four: Value & Loyalty**

Many marketers still pour effort into traditional loyalty schemes, but modern consumers aren't sticking around just for points. In our research, 63% of Gen Z shoppers said they don't care about brands if their needs are met elsewhere, and 86% of all consumers report making spending cutbacks. Price and value win out over brand prestige every time.

Why This Gap Exists

Today's shoppers, especially younger generations, are more willing to jump brands for a better deal, convenience, or faster delivery. Traditional loyalty programs often feel outdated if they don't deliver real, immediate value. Meanwhile, consumers expect brands to reward their engagement with perks that feel personal and worth their time, not just generic discounts or points that never add up to anything meaningful.

How to Close it: Make Loyalty About Value

1. Tactic:
Design an omnichannel loyalty strategy that delivers real perks

2. Use Case:
Meet consumers where they are by designing a loyalty program that's rewarding, easy to use, and connected across channels. Offer meaningful incentives, like personalized offers, invites to product launches, and exclusive content, to keep price-conscious shoppers coming back.

3. Solution:
- Combine online and offline data to understand your loyal customers' true behaviors and preferences.
- Reward loyalty with personalized perks, not just points. Think VIP access, special birthday offers, or mobile wallet coupons that feel exclusive.
- Use real-time triggers to deliver loyalty moments when they matter, like extra points for in-store visits.
- Keep your program simple to join and easy to redeem, so customers see the value immediately.

How to Close it: Make Loyalty About Value

Example Journey

A customer signs up for your loyalty program online.
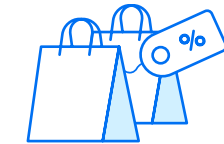
They make a few purchases and earn perks.

You send them a personalized push notification when there's a bundle offer on their favorite item.

They stay engaged with your brand because they see real value in every interaction.

Conclusion: Bridge the Gaps, Build Real Connections

Although the gaps between marketers and consumers persist, they're not impossible to close.

Your consumers want the same things you do: meaningful engagement, true value, and trust that lasts. The marketers who win won't just chase shiny new channels or AI for the sake of it, they'll use these tools to create experiences that feel personal, relevant, and rewarding across every touchpoint.

Ready to close the gap? SAP Emarsys is an omnichannel engagement platform that's purpose-built to adapt to your industry-specific needs.

Dive deeper into the insights and practical tactics powered by SAP Emarsys:

Global Consumer Products Engagement Report 2025

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