

Personalization In The Information Age: The User's Perspective

Personalization is the hallmark of Information Age products and services.

Through our custom and syndicated Internet research and many other information interfaces and technologies projects, The Elliott Group has acquired a unique insight into the concept of a **user-defined personalized service**.

What Are the User's Expectations of a Personalized Service?

- Builds a world on their interests, needs and wants
- Provides customized and relevant information, products and services
- Markets to their needs rather than sells on provider's terms
- Offers choice and control within their self-managed process
- Builds the relationship through cumulative one-on-one experiences

Components of a Personalized Service - A combination of all or some of the following components will constitute a user's personalized service.

- Communication channel(s) to build & maintain relationship
- A full complement of service, product & ancillary information sources including general & specific application information, safety data, 3rd party comparative evaluations and usage application tips
- Purchase-related information including discounts and deals on product or services
- Ownership, implementation and maintenance related information & customer service

In most cases, personalized ownership experience is more important than the purchase experience that initiates the relationship. The personalized purchasing experience is not a stand-alone event but a starting point for a long-term personalized relationship that the user wants to be seamlessly integrated with their ownership experience. This has implications for how users research and gather information on the full ownership or usage experience as well as what they need to know prior to purchase.

Potential Drawbacks of Personalized Service While significant benefits are available through personalization, users are wary of a variety of pitfalls, some based upon past experience

- "Pigeon-holing" with limited or static definitions that disregard evolving needs in response to changing life circumstances or new offerings
- Building a relationship as a pretense for selling. The 'bait and switch' in the Information Age
- Excessive or overly familiar contact before a relationship has been established, or after, by crossing user-defined boundaries e.g. contact by phone when email contact requested
- Misuse and/or abuse of personal information e.g. selling to third-parties without consent
- Effort cost: cost of starting and maintaining service exceeds value of using service

Personalization & Privacy: A Symbiotic Relationship

Personalization requires the use of personal information but this creates varying degrees of concern about sharing different types of personal information as well as intrusive information technology that can be used to invade privacy. The result of these concerns is a privacy sensitivity that is creating barriers to personalization that must be overcome before a company can provide the user with a personalized service.

Ask for The Elliott Group's **Info User Insights: "Personalization & Privacy: Barter or Barrier?"**