freshrelevance

PERSONALIZATION BUYER'S GUIDE

All-in-one vs best-of-breed

Hello!

Looking to get serious with eCommerce personalization?

You're in good company. **51% of marketers say personalization is their top priority,** which is no wonder since personalization is proven to boost revenue. In fact, the average Fresh Relevance client making full use of the platform sees a **25% increase in sales.**

But there are different paths to take towards implementing personalization into your tech stack or bringing your existing initiatives to the next level.

One option is to invest in a dedicated, best-of-breed personalization platform. This requires integration with existing technology, such as your ESP, eCommerce system and customer data platform (CDP).

Another option is to rely on an all-in-one marketing suite. These platforms aim to wrap your ESP, personalization engine and CDP into one software.

There are several aspects to consider when choosing the right solution for your personalization needs.

In this guide, we'll look at four key considerations and provide you with the knowledge to assess whether you could be better served by a best-of-breed or all-in-one approach.

1. You want a single source of customer data to aid personalization

An all-in-one suite might seem like a logical way to move towards a 360-degree view of the customer. Perhaps the solution will even perform the role of a CDP.

But there are a few considerations to address.

An all-in-one suite can leave you feeling locked in

Your ESP, CMS and personalization platform perform specific parts of your marketing or eCommerce strategy.

To get the best results, you'll need to experiment with these tools. You might want to change your ESP after two years or try out different personalization options, for example. But if you're using an all-in-one suite to send emails, personalize content and manage customer data, migrating everything at once will be a huge project.

This could leave you feeling locked into features you don't use, and unable to investigate new tools to help you meet your goals.
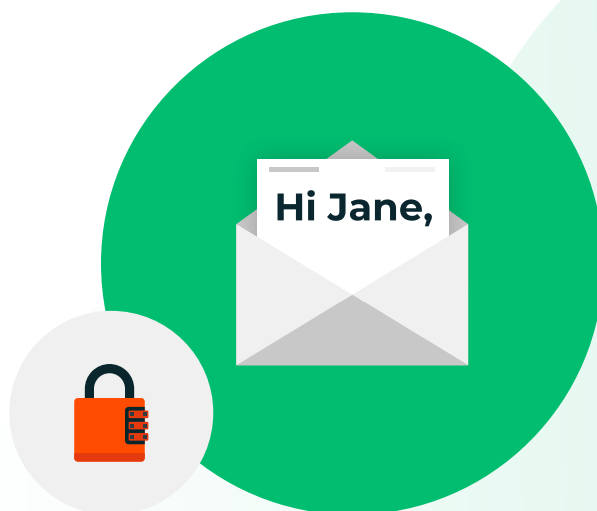
An all-in-one suite means missing out on the benefits of a dedicated CDP

A CDP takes the SCV to the next level, making the cleansed data available to integrate with your dedicated marketing or eCommerce software. It should be a core system around which other software integrates, and you'll likely want to keep this system in place for many years.

A **Single Customer View** (SCV) is a way of cleansing, matching and merging customer data. The aim is to provide a single source of truth for targeting marketing and eCommerce tactics.

A **Customer Data Platform** (CDP) is a packaged software that creates a persistent, unified customer database that is accessible to other systems.

Feature	Dedicated Customer Data Platform	All-in-one solution	Comment
Seamless integration with any future tools you need to add to your martech stack	✅	❌	To get the best results, you need to experiment with different tools. But if you're using an all-in-one suite to send emails, personalize content and manage customer data, migrating everything at once will be a huge project.
Ability to handle unique database structures	✅	❌	Many all-in-one marketing platforms are built around an email marketing solution and typically have an architecture which uses a fixed data model. This means limited ability to link together multiple database tables in a bespoke schema for each client.
Easy and flexible access to all of the data of any of your systems	✅	❌	Typically, an all-in-one solution doesn't have the APIs to efficiently and easily permit this kind of access. Clients will end up accessing the individual systems directly, losing the benefits of buying into a CDP.

If your goal is to clean up customer data and facilitate its use in marketing, you may be better off choosing a dedicated **Customer Data Platform**. This should be able to integrate easily with whichever ESP and personalization platform meet your needs.

2. You want to reduce costs by moving to one system

It might seem less expensive to adopt an all-in-one suite, rather than buying dedicated software to execute each part of your strategy.

But it's important to consider how costs will play out in the long run.
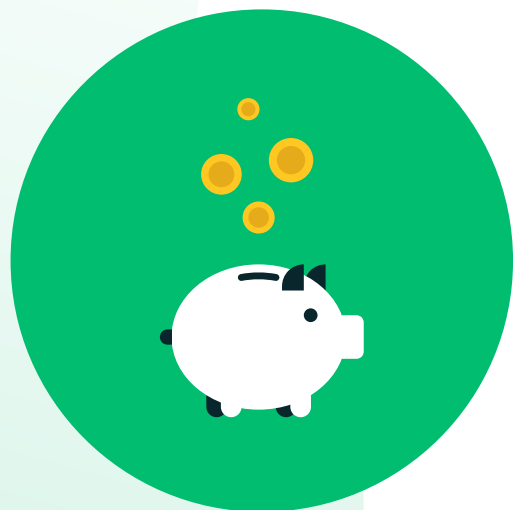
Ongoing costs of your tech systems

All-in-one marketing suites aim to replace all or most of your marketing functions. Marketers sometimes feel locked into increasing costs, as changing providers would mean replacing the entire marketing infrastructure.

Best-of-breed solutions operate in an open marketplace, with good competition between providers. As it's relatively easy to switch solutions, vendors are incentivized to keep costs reasonable.

All-in-one suite vendors lack this incentive to price new features competitively.

Integration with current and future technologies

When looking at an all-in-one suite, make sure you ask whether integrations will be more expensive if you want to go outside the platform's built-in capabilities. Will the platform's APIs be well developed enough to work with future tech you might adopt?

By nature, best-of-breed solutions are built for integration, so tend to work well with your core technologies - such as your CRM - and other point solutions. A best-of-breed approach frees up teams to experiment with new technologies to meet your business goals.

3. You want to deal with fewer vendors

It's tempting to rely on your all-in-one platform for everything, including personalization. You'll only have to deal with one vendor, one invoice and one support team, and if something goes wrong there's less likely to be finger-pointing between providers.

Yet, users of marketing suites cite lower customer satisfaction than those taking a best-of-breed approach.

According to the Email Marketing Vendor Satisfaction Report,

Only 53% percent of suite users feel that their feedback and requests are valued. In contrast, 87% of medium to enterprise ESP users say their requests are heard.

Find out whether you'll have access to a dedicated support team to help you make the most out of the software. And consider whether the platform will be flexible enough to keep pace with your needs. A larger platform could mean longer development cycles for new personalization features.
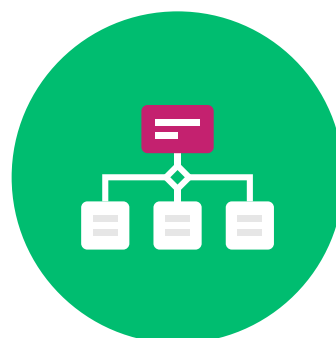
4. You want to empower your team

An all-in-one suite could reduce time spent switching between personalization, email and data tools.

But by using only one system, you might be sacrificing control over the future direction of your tech stack. It can be difficult to adapt to change when you're locked into an all-encompassing system.

All-in-one platforms often result from mergers and acquisitions in the martech space. And many started out as an email service provider (ESP), which means that one or more elements of the integrated system might not be best-in-class. You'll likely need to integrate additional technologies to meet specific needs.

When it comes to personalization, a dedicated platform can open up a range of specialized features. You'd be hard pushed to deliver these through your ESP.

On the next pages, you will find a few examples of what you can achieve with a best-of-breed personalization solution.
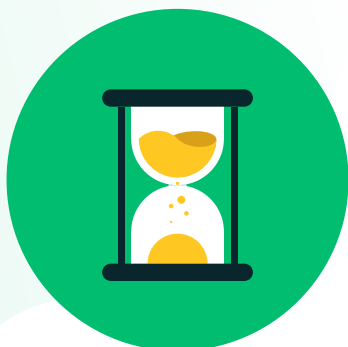
KEEP SCROLLING FOR EXAMPLES

Granular, behavior-based segmentation

Suppose you want to send different browse abandonment programs to your customer segments.

You can use segmentation based on a mixture of behavioral, customer and product data.

The system will need to collect:

- **Behavioral data** (e.g. the category and value of recently browsed products)
- **Customer data** (e.g. the shopper's location and favorite brand)
- **Product data** (e.g. live pricing and availability.)

You will need to be able to set rules to define which customers get which email program, based on this data.

The system will then need to identify shoppers who abandon a session, even if they aren't logged in, then trigger the appropriate email program within 30 minutes based on rules you assigned.

Email service providers may struggle to identify browsers who aren't logged in, and to perform real-time, behavior-based segmentation.
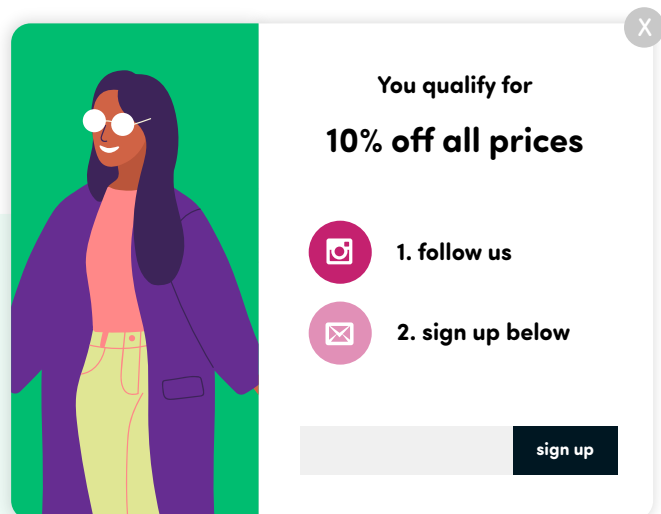
Example of segmented and personalized emails
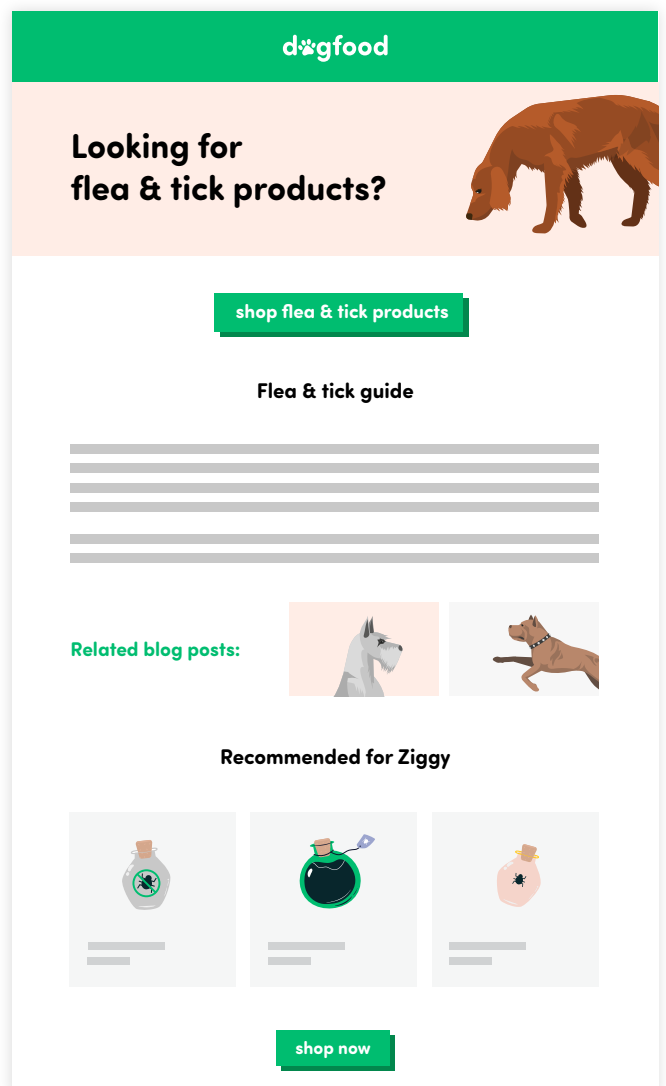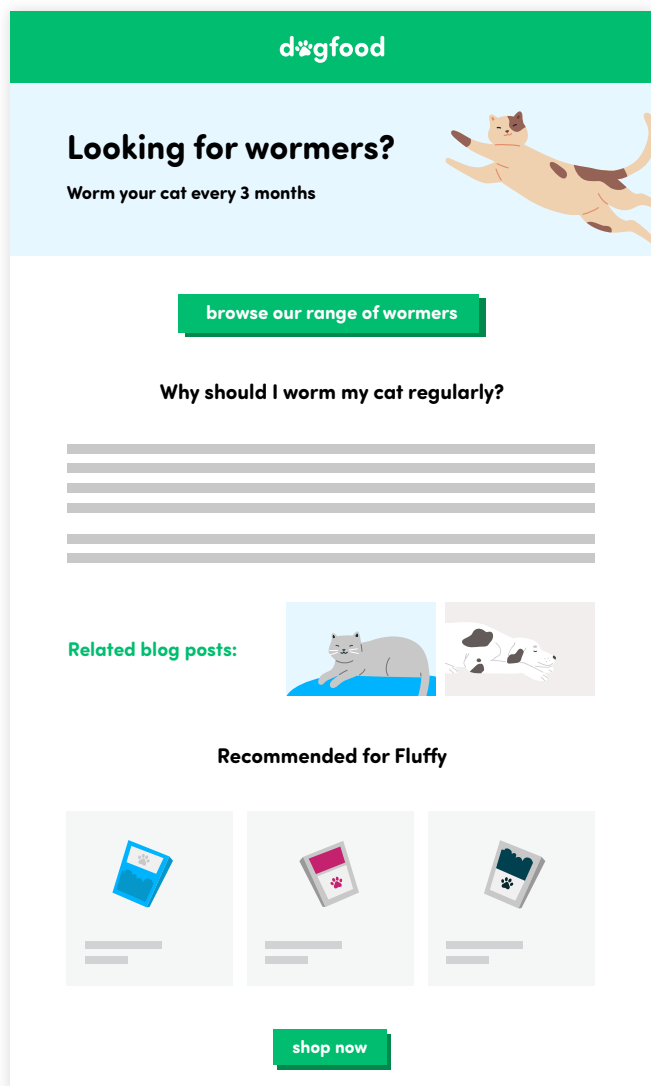
Real-time dynamic content

Marketing suites with a heavy email focus tend to be light on real-time content tools. For personalized images, sophisticated product recommendations, or location-based content, you'll likely have to add a specialized solution.

Intelligent product recommendations are a part of most eCommerce marketing strategies. Check whether your vendor can draw from multiple data sources. For example, to mix crowd-sourced recommendations, personalized suggestions, and AI-based rules. And what about serving a different mix of product recommendations to different customer segments?

You'll also need to consider the range of channels and the variety of content you want to personalize. For a seamless customer journey, the customized experience should flow through your website, emails and mobile apps. A marketing suite with an email focus may not be the best solution to personalize your website.

User identification is key to successful eCommerce site personalization. With the right software for onsite personalization, you can identify prospective customers early and throughout their customer journey.

Initial identification can be through a modal form that doubles as an email capture form. Once the person is identified, the software will start adding collected behavioral data about them. The customer behavior can be used to trigger personalized offers and guiding messages throughout the entire customer journey as the user moves between their inbox and your website.

Example of a user identification modal and a personalized message at a later stage in the customer journey
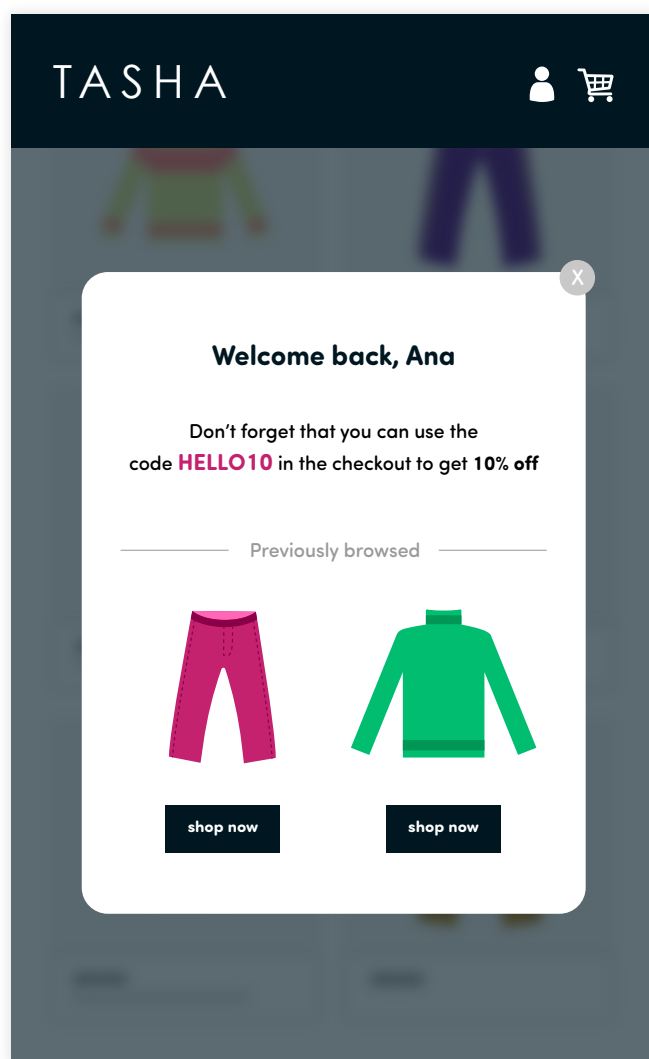
Ecommerce and marketing professionals are already realizing that one technology is rarely the best choice for all parts of the ecosystem. This is exemplified by the shift to headless commerce.

Increasingly, brands are using front-end CX technologies to build websites separately from the back end. Online retailers are able to build customized eCommerce systems that can quickly adapt to customers' needs, such as providing weather-specific content based on the shopper's current location.

Example of weather-based content

perfumetoday

Snowed in?
Snow problem!

15% OFF

Code: SNOW15

**Shop now**
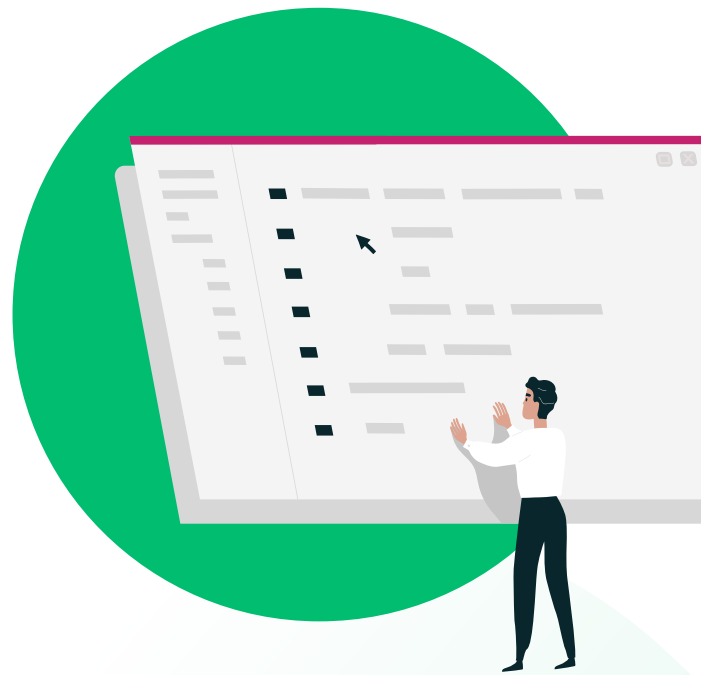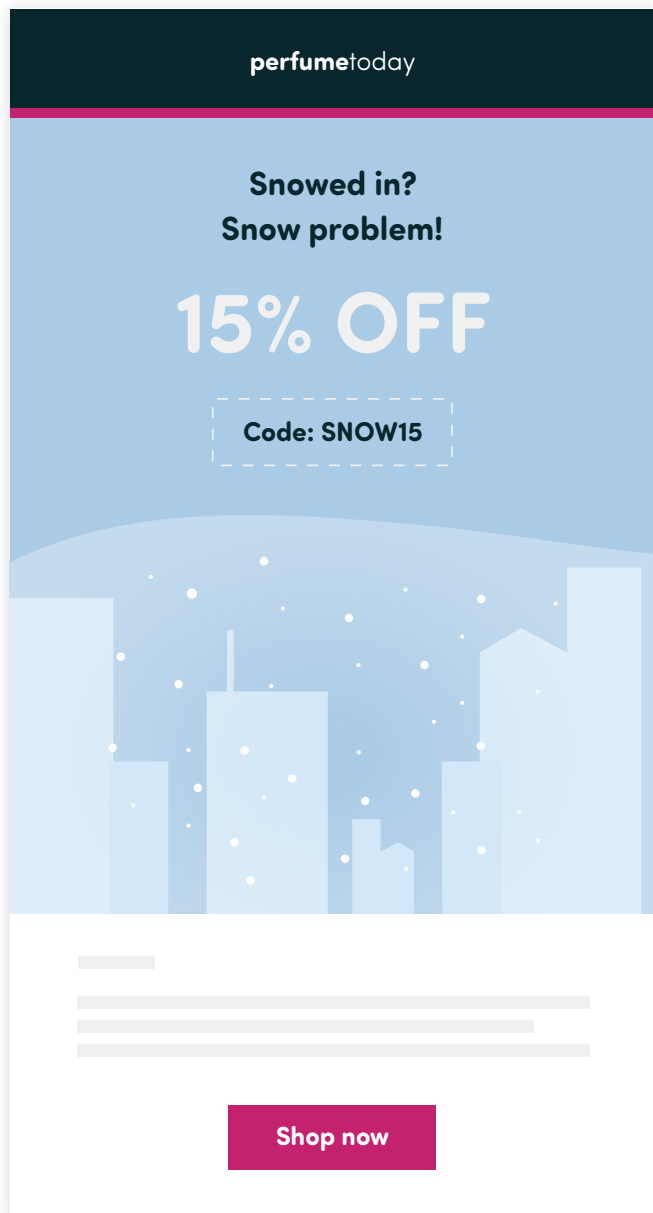
Choosing the best personalization platform

Before committing to a software or even comparing vendors, you'll need a clear idea of what you want to achieve.

Consider the tools you'll need to carry out your marketing or eCommerce strategy now and in the future. Ask whether a single provider can deliver on all of those requirements and decide where you're willing to compromise.

Will a "good enough" all-in-one solution really be good enough for your customer data and personalization needs?

Will your team feel empowered by wrapping these tools into one system, or constrained?

When it comes to best-in-class personalization, it's worth considering a best-of-breed tool for the job.
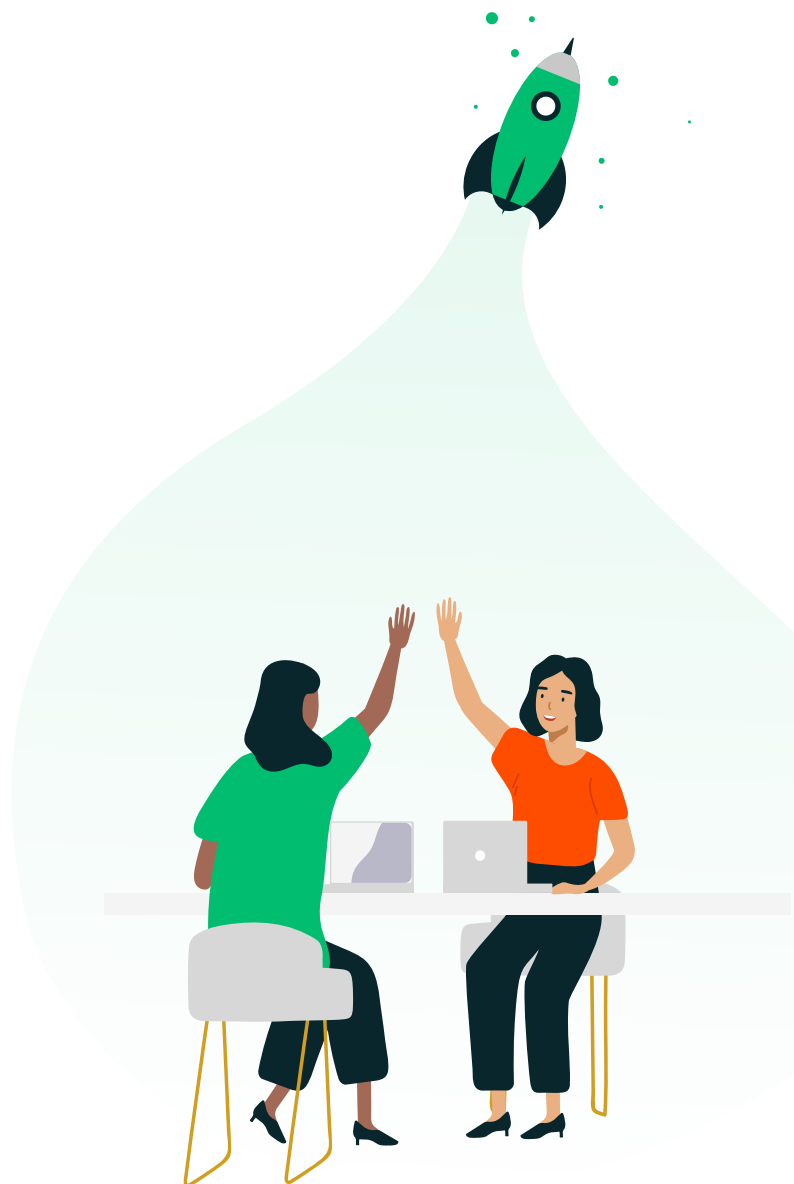
The best-of-breed personalization platform to boost ROI

With the right technology in place, it's never been easier to delight customers and drive revenue through personalization.

Automate better-converting lifecycle campaigns, coordinate customer data and convert more shoppers into customers with Fresh Relevance.

Book a free consultation to find out how Fresh Relevance could help your businesses get results.

book consultation
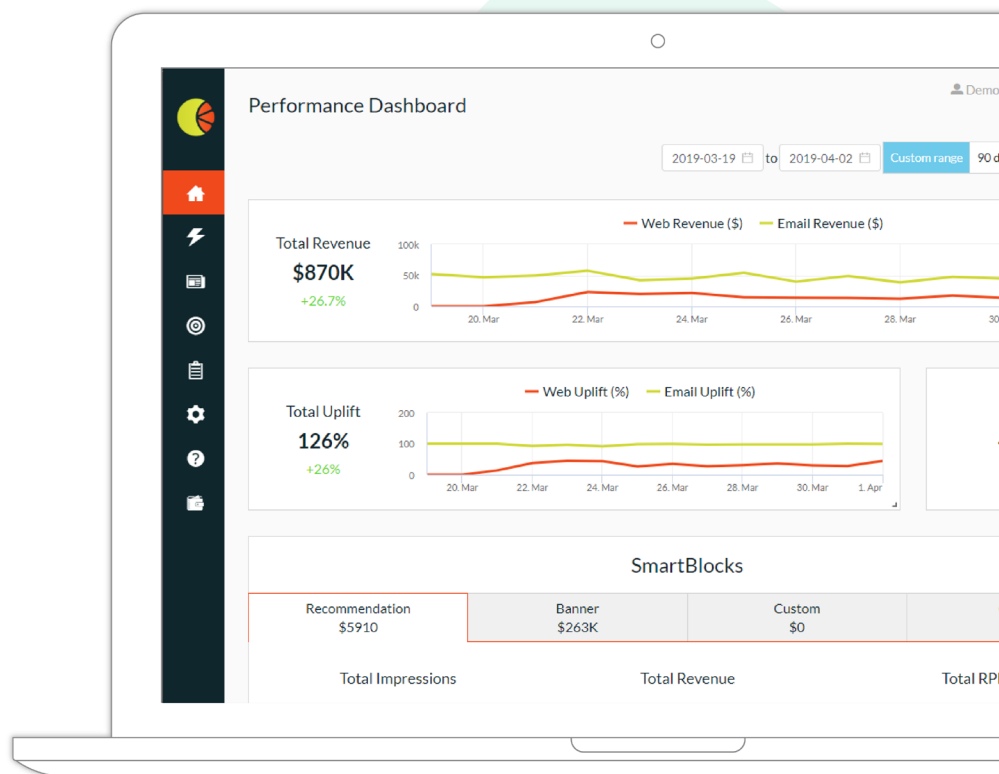
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Fresh Relevance is the comprehensive personalization platform for digital marketers that drives revenue and loyalty by delivering a targeted cross-channel customer experience. Powered by real-time data, Fresh Relevance seamlessly works with the existing martech stack, unifies siloed data and tracks all customer behavior to provide unique, actionable insights into each shopper.

Using machine learning, the platform helps select the most relevant tactics to guide customers along their journey across channels and devices. The platform's range of digital marketing tools is unrivalled and includes personalization, recommendations, triggered messages, dynamic contextual emails, social proof, campaign testing and reporting.

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