

A photograph showing several people in business attire leaning over a table, examining various charts and documents. One person's hand is pointing at a specific data point on a chart. The background is a soft, out-of-focus teal color.

Redefining your consumer: How 3 Canadian brands used intent to find their best customers

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Here, executives from three Canadian businesses explain how challenging existing assumptions about their audiences and focusing on intent helped them reach their best customers.

think with **Google**

The [evolution of online search and assistive technology](#) has empowered consumers to find what they want when they want it and, more recently, [how they want it](#). To keep up, [leading marketers are making data-driven campaigns a priority](#). We spoke to executives from three leading Canadian businesses—[Chartwell Retirement Residences](#), [CAA South Central Ontario](#) (CAASCO), and [Questrade](#)—to hear how gathering deeper insights about their customers helped them create more relevant online experiences.

Chartwell uncovers a new group of high-value customers

Founded in 2003, Chartwell Retirement Residences is the [largest owner and operator of senior living facilities in Canada](#) with almost 200 properties serving ~25,000 residents each day.¹



Sri Dinavahi
Senior Director, Online Presence

“When I joined Chartwell a little over four years ago, we assumed that because many of our customers were in their early 80s, they weren’t looking for retirement homes themselves—certainly not online—and that instead, their adult children were the ones looking for senior living solutions.

“To see how true that was, we set up ad campaigns and a new website with a unique phone number to track conversions. After collecting data signals from site visitors to learn more about them and what they were searching for before landing on the site, we were surprised to find that although 50% of our site visitors were adult children researching for their parents, the other half were seniors searching for options themselves!

“Based on those findings, we refined our ad campaigns and messaging to cater to the search intent of both groups:

1. Adult children, who were searching for facts about safety, standard of care, and accessibility (e.g. “Is there an on-site doctor?”)
2. Seniors, who were interested in finding information about atmosphere, ratio of male-to-female residents, and lifestyle (e.g. “Is there a pool?”)

“We also created a [series of YouTube videos](#) called ‘Ask Edna’ based on the questions and concerns we saw that our audiences were seeking answers to. The videos let us take a fun and witty approach to raising awareness of our services and shifting our audiences’ perception of senior living from being an inevitable step in aging to an exciting lifestyle choice.



“Since we shifted our strategy in 2013, our website—which has seen a 66% increase in visits—is now the second most-used source of information for new referrals, behind only family and friends. We’ve also seen a 50% increase in calls and a 10% increase in move-ins, both driven by our online channels.”

Canadian Automobile Association crafts a customer-first online experience

CAA is Canada's largest not-for-profit automobile association, providing its Members with such products and services as roadside assistance; travel; rewards; and discounts on home, auto, and travel insurance. CAA South Central Ontario (CAA SCO) is a part of CAA Club Group, the [largest of the eight Canada clubs with more than 2M Members](#).



Gary Jury
Supervisor, Digital Intelligence

"As a not-for-profit organization, we are always looking for the most efficient ways to grow while keeping Member safety as the #1 priority. CAA SCO ran into a challenge: high drop-off rates from our online membership purchasing funnel. We needed to find out what was keeping customers from converting so that we could remove those obstacles.

"We used the funnel visualization tool in [Google Analytics](#) to get a better idea of which pages our visitors were landing on, where they dropped off, and where they went afterward. Interestingly, we saw that many visitors who didn't convert cycled back into the funnel instead of exiting the website; although they dropped off, they didn't drop out. This behaviour led us to believe that either people weren't finding the information that they needed or something was standing in the way of their making a final purchase.

"Hands down, the key was testing and validation. Testing, optimizing, and improving with real data."

"We used that insight to develop user profiles of our site visitors and, based on where they dropped out of the funnel, continually updated our CTAs and ad copy to see what had the greatest impact on conversions. Hands down, the key was testing and validation. Testing, optimizing, and improving with real data.

"Not only has our membership continued to grow, but we also have one of the lowest digital membership CPAs of any of the North American clubs. Over the past two years, we've seen a 228% increase in our paid-search conversion rate and a 64% increase in our membership purchasing-flow conversion rate. I'm confident that the ongoing investments we've made in using digital to drive a customer-first strategy are critical to improving performance, especially when there's a strong need to demonstrate ROI."

Questrade goes offline to build a campaign based on customer insights

Founded in Toronto in 1999, Questrade is a Canadian online brokerage known for its online trading platform, which allows self-directed investors to buy and sell stocks, currencies, and other securities as well as manage their own portfolios.



Stephen Graham
Chief Operating Officer

"As a 100% online company, we put a lot of focus on optimizing our trading platform and helping customers navigate their investment accounts. But we wanted to go a step beyond the online interactions we had with our clients and truly understand their voice. So in early 2016 we went across the country and met face-to-face with current and potential customers.

"We learned that many Canadians were frustrated with their investing options and fees and felt powerless in addressing these matters with their traditional financial service providers. Everything we heard went into fueling our [#AskToughQuestions](#) campaign—a combination of digital, print, TV, and YouTube— that gave voice to their actual concerns and provided a national platform for them to rally around.



“Interestingly, we found that going offline and interacting directly with our customers added another dimension to our audience data. This approach ultimately fueled a powerful insight that led to an impactful digital campaign.”

Keep up with consumers by doubling down on intent

The very nature of empowered consumers means brands need to find ways to understand who their consumers are, what they’re looking for, and what they truly need to win their trust and consideration.

By [harnessing the data signals consumers provide as they browse, research, and make purchases online](#), marketers can paint a clearer picture of their consumers’ true intent and be ready to offer seamless assistance in the moments they need it most.

Don’t be afraid to challenge assumptions about who you think your consumers are. What you find might be a pleasant (and valuable) surprise.

Source

1 Chartwell Retirement Residences, “Second Quarter Report,” June 2017, Canada.