

White paper

# How to Maximize the Benefits of Adobe Target

**Step one: Scrutinize purpose and belief**

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You don't have to look very far to find examples of purpose-driven design. It is enmeshed in our lives: the height and placement of the traffic lights at the intersection near your home; the Nordstrom salesperson who walks around the counter to hand you your purchase; the openness and minimalism of Apple stores; the warm cookies DoubleTree provides at check-in; the placement of the dairy case at the rear of the grocery store. These are more than aesthetic choices. Each of these experiences was intentionally designed with a specific and definitive purpose in mind – whether to maximize visibility, foster a sense of attentiveness and comfort, or drive sales.

The design strategy in each of these examples is also a statement of belief. Each is an assertion, deliberate or not, about both the design required to best serve a purpose and the people it serves. Someone believed seventeen feet was the optimal height for maximizing driver visibility of traffic lights; that coming out from behind the counter would enhance customer service and satisfaction; that a clean, simple look would invite consumers to try products; that the aroma of fresh-baked cookies would stimulate comforting brand associations; or that placing the dairy section at the rear of the store would increase average purchase value.

Some design beliefs are based on historical data. Most, however, are based on experience, imagination, and instinct. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, sometimes it's the best alternative. Data (or time) simply don't exist to support every design decision in advance. Even when historical data does exist, it's directional at best and not always reliable. What was true yesterday may not be true today. Things change. Expectations change, behavior changes, and dynamics change. If the average size of vehicles altered substantially, the optimal height and position of a traffic light would likely change, as well.

Imagine if Apple had built its stores based on the prevailing best practices of the late 90s. The layout of its stores contradicted everything retailers knew and understood about store design at the time. In 2001 Bloomberg reported "I give them two years before they're turning out the lights on a very painful and expensive mistake." They would report again nine years later: "...Probably the highest grossing retail store in history."



What about the dairy case placement, which still persists? Perhaps it was once true that forcing a customer to trek from one end of the store to the other for the two items they wanted was successful at increasing basket size, but can that still be the case? It's almost a cliché to say that consumers today prize convenience above all else. Yet this grocery store design belief rejects convenience. It is wholly inconvenient. When that same customer can avoid the hassle of the store altogether and order milk and eggs from an app and have them delivered to his front door the same day from a competitor, the design belief has become antithetical to its purpose.

While not every design belief or assertion can be initially supported with data, they can be validated through testing and prototyping. As a digital CX consultancy, Hero works with a variety of leading B:B and B:C brands across site, app, mobile, community, and email experience design. An initial exercise we often conduct with clients for prototyping and test-based optimization focuses on probing and defining the underlying business purpose and design beliefs inherent in brand experiences. Every experience, touchpoint, asset, or gesture has a purpose – or should have one. And each, for the simple reason that someone created them, expresses an inherent belief.

We have developed a process to define the relationship between purpose and belief to drive optimization and innovation. It's a simple five-step process but an incredibly effective framework to support data-driven design.

Purpose	Beliefs	Prioritize	Test	Optimize
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define business purpose</li> <li>Map to digital objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define experience assertion / assumption</li> <li>Link each assertion to measurable business value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize which of those assertions has the potential to yield the greatest impact (or is the source of greatest debate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design test requirements to validate assertions</li> <li>Design test</li> <li>Implement test</li> <li>Evaluate results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modify experience as necessary based on results</li> <li>Document learnings</li> </ul>



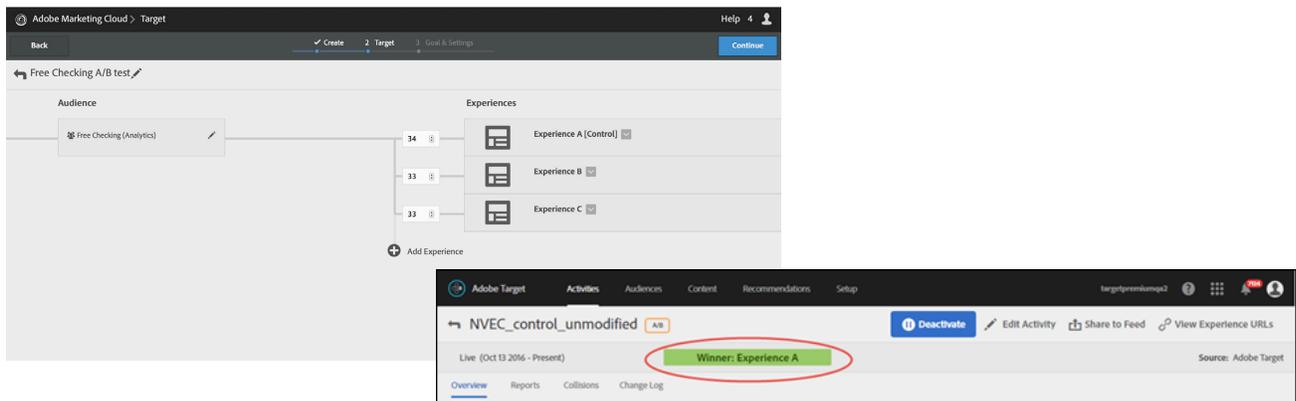
Following this framework, let's use a hypothetical example of a home page design that contains a carousel with five slides. A determination was made at some point that a carousel with five slides was the best design approach to achieve a specific purpose or goal. After speaking with the brand's stakeholders, we learn a primary purpose and goal of the home page is to drive product awareness.

Now, let's contrast that design belief with a competing view that three slides is the optimal number. Why three? Maybe there is some industry data to support the assertion that three is best. Maybe it's based on the experience of having built, implemented, and evaluated the performance of hundreds of home pages that contain a carousel. Or maybe it's just an instinct. Let's add another assertion that a grid, not a carousel, is the optimal presentation format for driving awareness across products. We now have our test.

(A full-scale optimization exercise would scrutinize a variety of beliefs across transactional, engagement, experience, and brand categories. These beliefs and competing views would then be prioritized based on which have potential to yield the greatest impact).

Purpose	Beliefs	Test	Optimize
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drive awareness across product brands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limiting the carousel to 3 core slides will drive greater cross brand engagement</li> <li>A grid rather than a carousel will drive greater cross-brand engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design test requirements (A/B, MV)</li> <li>Define evaluation criteria (time on site, page views, surveys, etc.),</li> <li>Define Creative requirements for test</li> <li>Develop assets</li> <li>Implement in Target</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modify experience as necessary based on results</li> <li>Document learnings</li> </ul>

After establishing our test requirements and success criteria we can implement the test in Target via A/B or multivariate execution, and determine which of the assertions is most true – assuming one combination clearly outperforms the others. The design is then modified and rolled out based on the results, and learnings are documented.



This is a vastly different method than “let’s create two (or three, or four) versions and see which wins,” or worse, never scrutinizing the beliefs in the first place. It’s a proven approach for using data to arbitrate design decisions that can be applied to any purpose and belief, and for every connected experience, touchpoint, or asset. It forces evaluation of critical decisions that impact business goals, provides a testing structure that can be quickly implemented in Target, and lays the foundation for documenting and socializing learning. It also lends itself to innovation by critically evaluating beliefs and decisions as they pertain to purpose, and developing alternative options and possibilities with which to experiment.

Lastly, this approach underscores the fact that experience- and performance-optimization does not typically consist of a few big ideas that result in huge performance gains. More often, transformational improvement is the result of hundreds, if not thousands, of incremental experiments, adjustments, and iterations.

