

# Do Your Products Need to Go Online?

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The internet of things allows everyday objects to be connected to the digital world. What will this mean for brands?

You may have an online presence, but does your stuff need a Facebook profile or a Twitter account, too? If this sounds like something from a sci-fi movie, it's time to wake up and smell the connectivity.

The internet of things is about giving products and other physical objects their own unique online identities, and it's already happening with high-value objects like cars and fast-moving consumer products such as soda and liquor containers.

At the simplest level, using a mobile device to recognize a product and link it to a social

network identity can be enough to give it a distinct digital identity and power personalized services and experiences for consumers.

### Adding service to objects

A world where consumers connect with their products (and products connect to other products) is made possible via the proliferation of smartphones and the technology of tagging, image recognition and embedded electronics. All of these connections turn an object into something bigger than itself. The effect is similar to Nike+, which brings together the physical proposition (the trainers) with the service proposition: helping your running performance, remembering where you've run and connecting you with other runners. This allows Nike to establish real and meaningful relationships directly with their customers, transforming utility-driven product interactions into meaningful, on-going experiences.

Verticals such as transportation are likely to embed electronics faster than consumer goods companies, but – in many ways – the FMCG category has the biggest opportunities.

### Personalized products and services

By using EVERYTHING (evrythng.com), large brands can turn their products into active, owned media, and companies are waking up to the possibilities. Diageo, the world's largest premium drinks business, has embraced this as a core strategy. The company is working closely with EVERYTHING to drive experiences and analytics tied to their products. For example, Diageo made Johnnie Walker whisky a compelling gift idea in Brazil last year by enabling the giver to attach a personalized film tribute to each bottle. Using a simple mobile website and a unique identity on each bottle transformed a present into a potentially emotional, highly personal connection.

And the benefits for Diageo extend far beyond sales; this type of initiative produces data rich insights about usage occasions and sales channels that could not have been captured without digital enhancement.

### Coming soon to a product or service near you

The results of the Diageo campaign demonstrate the appeal for gifting as a specific-use case, but it's easy to see possibilities in many other sectors. Imagine a glucose monitor

that is connected to the Web. It could deliver up-to-the minute, relevant information regarding a user's particular type of diabetes, age and medical history anytime, day or night. And look at Progressive Insurance, which is now promoting a policy that charges customers only when they drive their cars. Such a service is only possible when a car has a digital identity and recognizes when it's being driven, how it's being driven and who's driving it.

Connectivity will become an important ingredient in a surprising array of products and services. It also offers an extremely disruptive opportunity for brands to connect directly with shoppers through their own products.

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