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ISSUE #28 | THE **EXPERIENCE** ISSUE | NOVEMBER 2017

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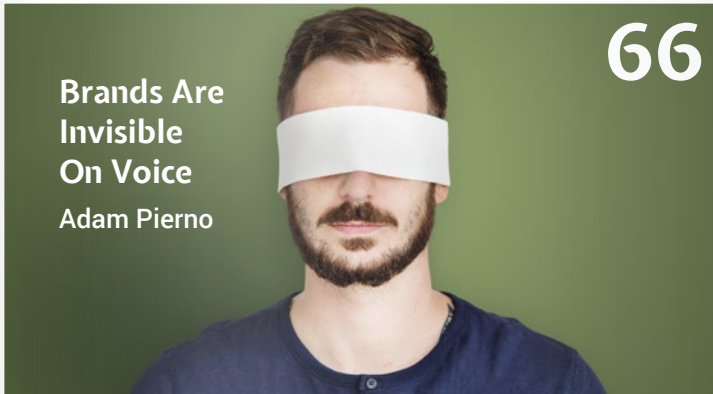
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*From The Editor...*

## **Experience: Building Loyalty Through The Art Of Wow**

**Andrew Vesey**

Experience is the new...

Wait... that's not right...

Experience isn't new.

Let's face it; people have always experienced brands, products, services, and organisations. What has changed is that marketers and business people have now become aware of – and more importantly, concerned with – those experiences. The focus has shifted from positioning ourselves in people's eyes, to improving people's lives, but the experience has always been there.

Great experiences can build an iconic brand – and a single bad one can ruin it even faster. With the power to attract and retain the most loyal of followings, this new-not-so-new thing called experience is powerful. So, let's take a closer look at this new brand focal point.





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**Great experiences can  
build an iconic brand  
- and a single bad one  
can ruin it even faster**

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First and foremost, it's important to realize that experience and customer experience are not simply exchangeable terms. While the customer experience obviously falls under the umbrella of experience, there is much more to it than that. Employee experience is a big one – they deliver the customer experience and this also drives recruitment; many other stakeholders also have to be considered; shareholders, suppliers, potential customers, influencers, casual passers-by who may refer business or turn into future customers, the media, and your industry at large. That's a lot of people (or a **'system' of stakeholders** as Larry Ackerman describes it).

Let's call it the overall brand experience then for clarity. The big picture. All of these people experience your brand in different ways, at different times, and for different reasons. But, as the old saying goes, you can't please everyone, so how do you engage and offer a positive experience, to such a wide group of individuals?

You build your experience from the inside out.

It all starts from within. Why? That's where your heart and soul are. They are the fuel that will drive an authentic brand experience. Without that authenticity, it's just a collection of words, actions and treats that won't keep a customer, employee, or stakeholder's attention for long – and you can forget about loyalty. People can be susceptible to marketing hype or a great deal, but pretty quickly, they'll see through the paper-thin image presented to the real picture below.

Having a purpose behind why you do what you do is a powerful loyalty driver, so take the time to get this right. Everything after this can be adjusted and improved over time if need be, but replacing your core purpose would require a complete reboot.

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## **Having a purpose behind why you do what you do is a powerful loyalty driver**

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Once you have this core of your brand in place, it's time to adapt and communicate it to each individual set of stakeholders. Your core purpose means different things to different groups of people, and offers them value specific to their needs. While who you are deep down is key, who you are to each individual is the deal breaker.

How does 'who you are' make their life (business and personal) better?

How does partnering with you make their life better?

What can you offer them to help them achieve their own purpose?

These are the factors that will drive brand choice and loyalty, so this must drive your brand experience as well.

But remember, while different groups of people will experience your brand in their own way, you're not building a bunch of different experiences. You have to build a single, unified experience with each branch addressing a different stakeholder's needs. How you communicate them may be quite different, you may use very different channels, the resources you need to allocate will vary, and specific areas of the brand experience will be a higher priority for your business, but the experience you build should be unified, authentic, and recognizable across the organisation.

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## **The experience you build should be unified, authentic, and recognizable across the organisation**

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Then, it needs to be delivered consistently over time. The most amazing experiences still have a shelf life – normally until the first bad experience occurs – so consistency is an absolute requirement for success. True brand management now involves the entire brand experience, not just some marketing and visual identity assets. All facets of how people experience your brand must be championed and protected by your brand guardian/s.

Design your experience as a whole, implement it as a whole, protect it as a whole.

‘So. I have a solid core to build my experience around, but how do I go about the different experience channels for my various

stakeholders?’ I hear you ask. Well, that’s a larger topic than we can cover here in the closing lines of my quarterly thoughts. But, our Experience Issue is chocka-block full of wonderful thought-pieces (17 more in fact) that can help you to expand your knowledge in the Art of Wow, and work towards an experiential brand that attracts loyalty by default.

Enjoy this issue, as well as the upcoming festive season, and I’ll catch you again in February for our first issue of 2018 – the Transformation Issue.



## Andrew Vesey

Founder and Editor | Brand Quarterly

Andrew is an experienced brand and marketing professional with over 15 years in the industry - a majority of those have been as the Chief BrandMan at Vesey Creative, which he co-founded in 2003. In 2011, driven by his passion for branding, business and education, Andrew made the move into publishing by launching Brand Quarterly - this very magazine - and in 2014 Brand Quarterly Online. When not writing or developing partnerships and new initiatives for Brand Quarterly, Andrew works with a select number of clients - spanning the globe, from New Zealand through to the United Kingdom and the United States - developing, refreshing and implementing brands for both products and companies.

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# Rethinking The Customer Journey For The Experience Wave

Alberto Maestri and Joseph Sassoon

Since the publishing of the pioneering analyses about the relevance of the Experience Economy made by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore 20 years ago, the number of studies about the influence of experiences continuously shared by people on marketing and brand strategies has multiplied. We bring two statistics to support this statement:

- The number of academic and scientific papers containing the keyword “customer experience” retrievable on Google Scholar is currently more than 26,000 – 2/3 published just between 2016 and 2017.
- The keyword “customer experience” is being increasingly searched by online users from all over the world, as showed by Google Trends (figure 1).



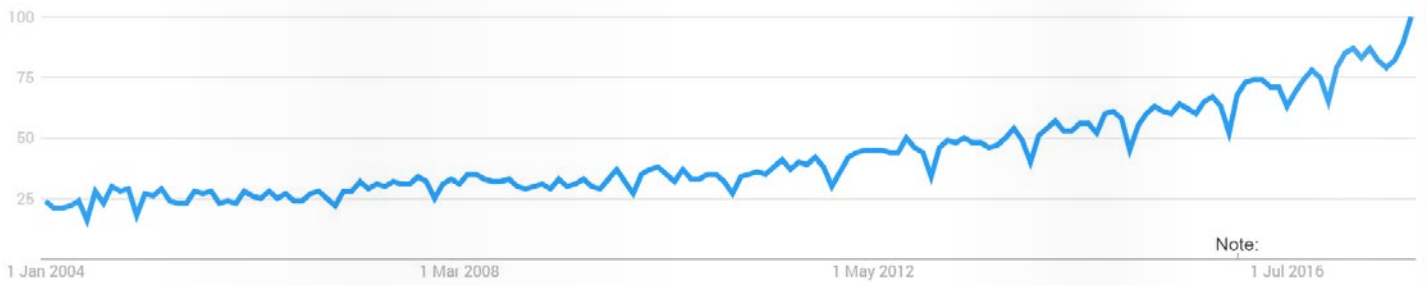


Figure 1: “Customer Experience” keyword searches - via Google Trends

While it seems that the importance and the interest around the business impact of experiences have increased exponentially, a strategic question is still open: how do they impact, stress and reshape customer journeys and the design of interactions between people and brands?

## A Short Story Of Customer Journeys

Just a few decades ago, in a pre-digital era, customer journeys were designed by companies, agencies and consultancies following established psychological models like AIDA, an acronym that stands for attention, interest, desire and action - the stages from the time when consumers first become aware of a product/brand up to when they make the final purchase decision. The journey would end once the product is bought.

Starting from 2000, the criticism coming from marketing practitioners and focused on the linear shape of these frameworks has significantly risen.

By examining the purchase decisions of almost 20,000 consumers across five industries and three continents, in 2009 McKinsey introduced a new consumer decision journey still characterized by

4 steps (initial consideration, active evaluation, closure, post-purchase) but disposed through a circular shape and able to start considering the experiences perceived by customers along their path. As a matter of fact, they can decide (or not) to reiterate the shopping behaviour in coherence with the level of satisfaction perceived from the brand interaction (figure 2).

What’s the matter with the McKinsey consumer decision journey model? Its name. As suggested by thought leaders Robert Rose and Carla Johnson in their latest bestseller “[Experiences. The 7th Era of Marketing](#)”, when engaging one another businesses and people have different objectives in mind, respectively increasing customers and sales and building a trusted, useful relationship with brands. Tesla, Uber and others clearly show how people can become fans and advocates without having ever purchased – or even tested! – any product or service. A strict focus on just the final transaction risks brands losing huge social influence and brand engagement.

Robert Rose and Carla Johnson’s analyses are contemporary to the studies that Brian Solis and Altimeter | A Prophet Company dedicated to the dynamic customer journey – an evolution of the traditional journey influenced by the experiences shared by people (figure 3)<sup>1</sup>.



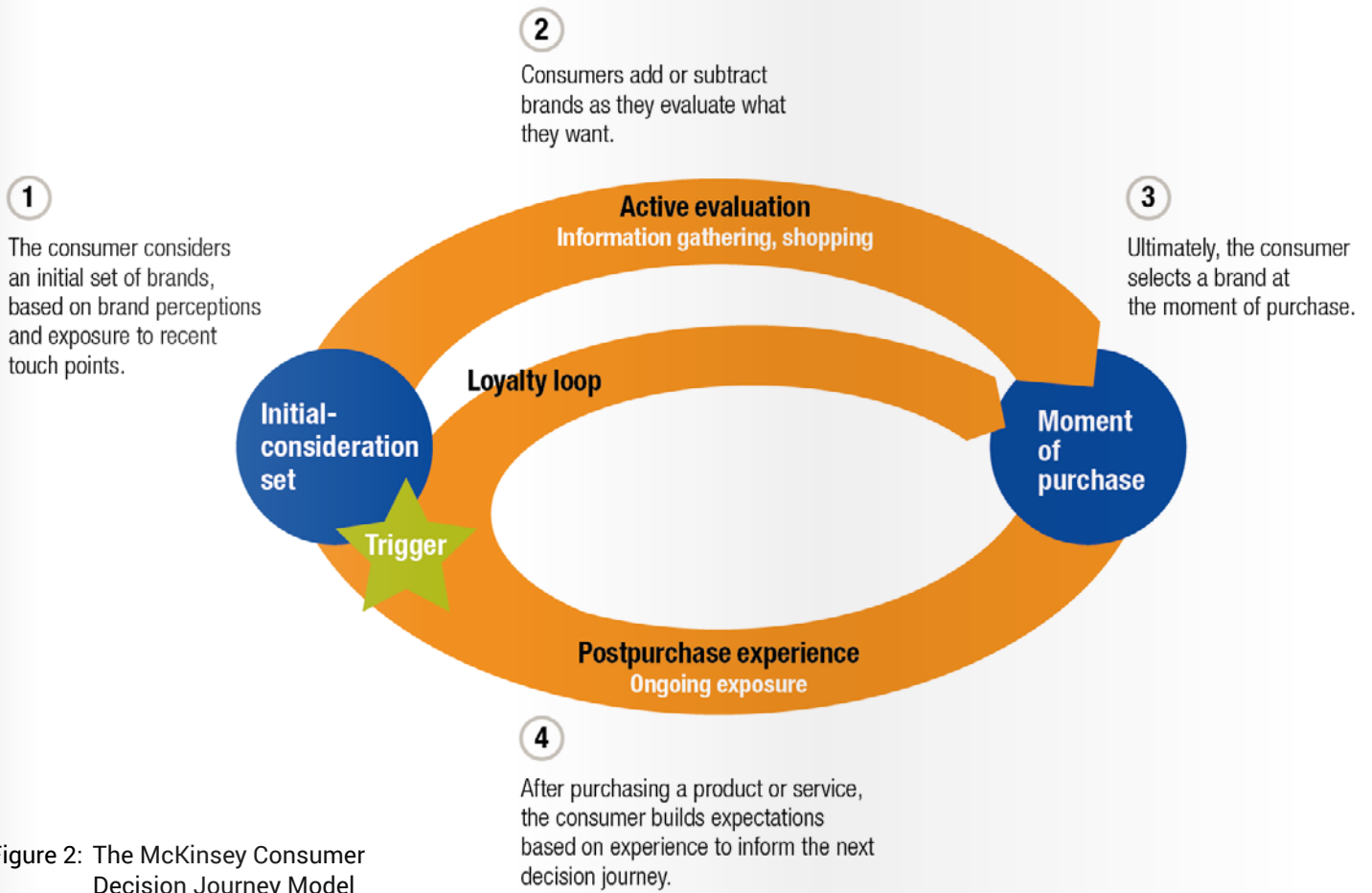
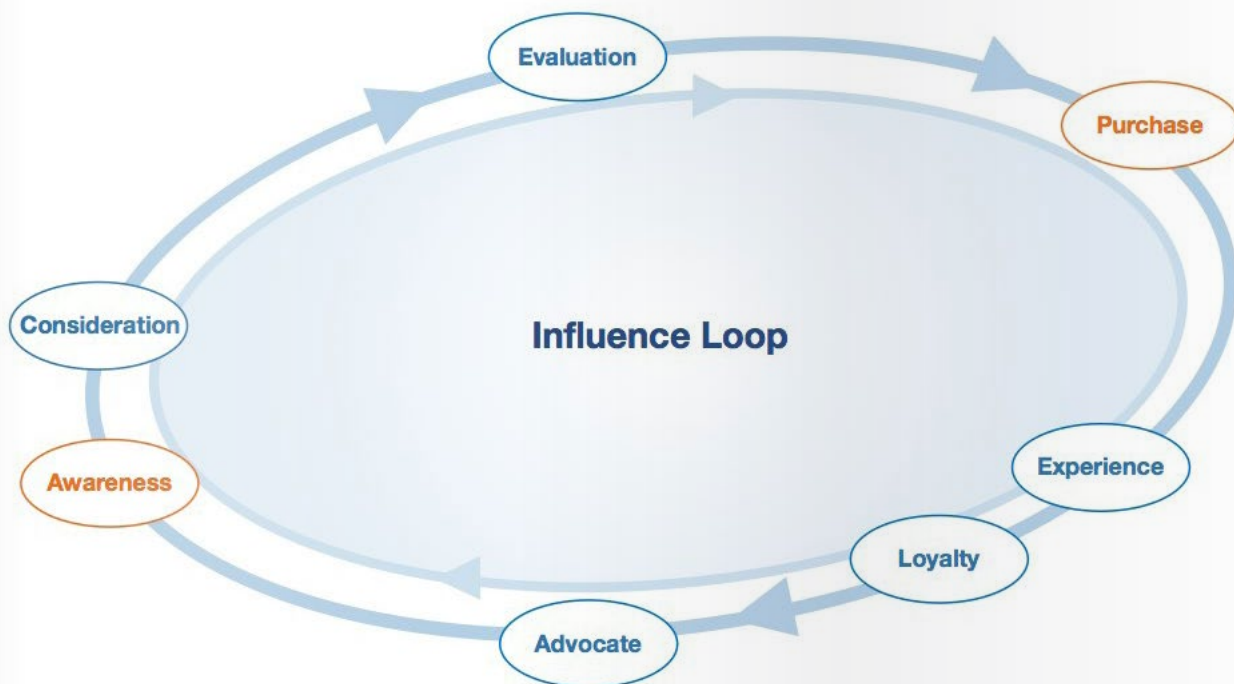


Figure 2: The McKinsey Consumer Decision Journey Model

Figure 3: Altimeter's Dynamic Customer Journey



<sup>1</sup> A new release of the dynamic customer journey has been introduced by Brian Solis's new book "X The Experience"



The dynamic customer journey is social by design, and it is influenced by the role of the connected generation (C Gen) in interacting with brands through an omnichannel and always-on approach. As suggested by researchers from Forrester, the mobile mind shift – users' expectation pushed by mobile to access any information they desire, at their moment of need – has generated a new scenario where experiences are continually shared among people through digital content like tweets, videos, threads, reviews, posts. These experiences become “social atoms” that let users inform one another through sharing and P2P interactions, creating powerful circles of trust. For this reason, at the centre of the dynamic customer journey resides an influence loop: shared experiences become information experiences that impact other users' journeys.

The latest advancements in customer journey mapping stress the role of experiences as a competitive asset. As a matter of fact, this new kind of customer-driven marketing powerfully impacts the business and marketing of all companies, and cannot be fully manageable by businesses.

This is the main reason why slogans like “**Transforming the Digital Customer Journey**” that underline the possibility for marketers to (still) directly plan and optimize consumer journeys are deeply challenged by the new experience wave.

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## **The latest advancements in customer journey mapping stress the role of experiences as a competitive asset**

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## **Experience Quest, An Innovative Framework To Create Value From Shared Experiences**

Here, we introduce a new framework designed as a result of the authors' analyses and consultancy projects run with national and international clients. It is called *Experience Quest*, as the framework reflects and maps the behavior of people constantly looking to meet their search needs among user-generated experiences, information and online content. Quests are driven and supported by queries written on search engines, online conversations started on social communities and forums, reviews checks, curation systems like web feeds, e-mail digests, ad hoc mobile apps, etc.

As suggested by figure 4, the Experience Quest framework maps the journey throughout four steps: consideration, evaluation, purchase, caring.

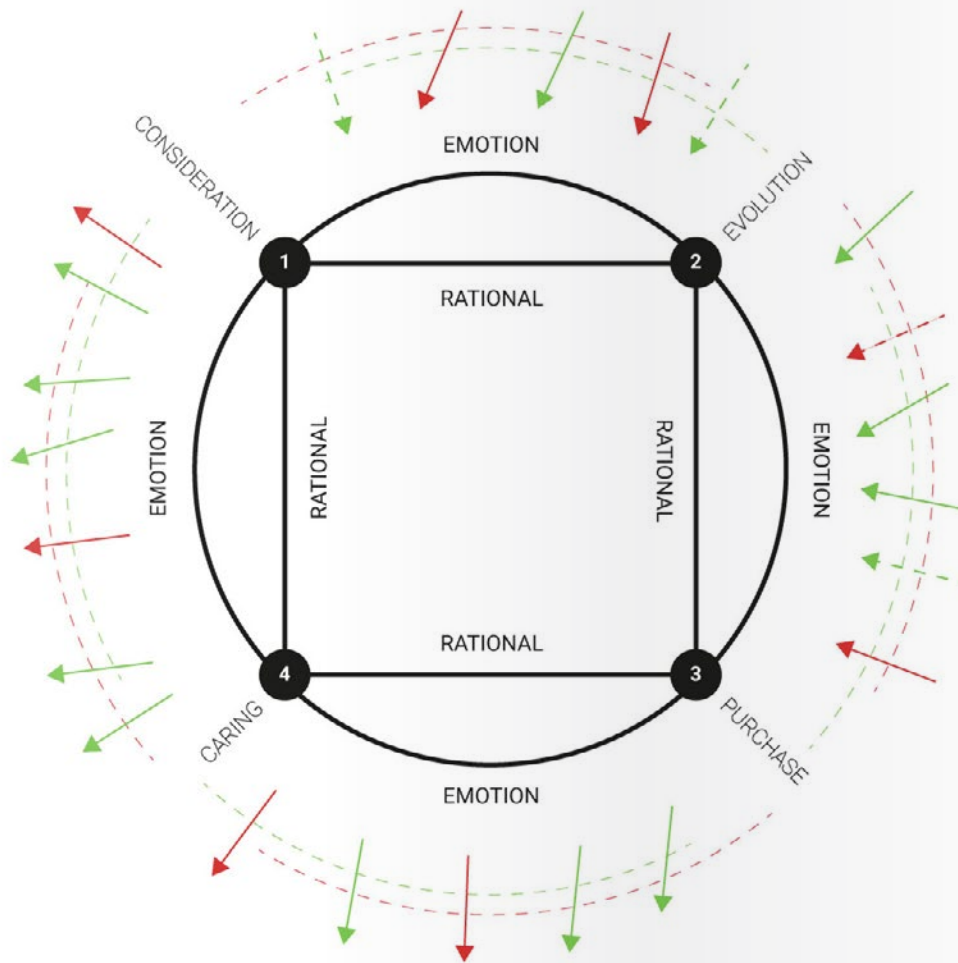
Every step is characterized by a balanced mix of rationality (square shape of the framework) and emotions (circle shape).

Arrows with the tip pointing to the journey identify experiences – shared through digital contents like tweets, videos, magazines, infographics, blog articles, etc. – available to the user through pull dynamics during the experience quest to collect information about the branded product or service. When he/she finally becomes a customer, new positive or negative experiences like Amazon reviews, articles or blog posts, new comments in forum threads, etc. are created, shared and pushed by the same user to inform other peers. Colours (green vs red) distinguish between positive and negative experiences.

The arrows' inclinations are due to the different reputations among experience sources. The higher the reputation, the lower the inclination. Experiences are curated by the machine (algorithm) and by the same user, who decides which are to be considered. For example, when evaluating a restaurant to



Experience for  
knowledge  
**PULL**



Experience for  
advocacy or  
detraction  
**PUSH**

Figure 4: The Experience Quest Framework

book for a romantic dinner, one will probably not consider reviews on TripAdvisor focused on attributes such as the price or the time needed to eat. Non-selected experiences are indicated inside the framework with dashed arrows: they just create informational noise, content chaos and they do not influence the customer journey.

To sum up, the Experience Quest is characterized by several pluses when compared to other customer experience frameworks:

- It immediately shows if the brand acts as a good experience stager, or if any “recovery” actions are needed.
- Emotions and rationality are both included and taken into account when mapping the journey.
- Shared experiences are placed alongside the whole journey, not just at its end, and are differentiated between “pull” and “push”.
- Sources of experiences are differentiated in coherence with their visibility on content curation systems and their reputation. This also reflects the way filters and algorithms characterizing most digital channels tend to work.



The framework is also able to solve the **Engagement Paradox** caused by the growing channel proliferation and fragmentation – namely, the fact that the more technologies, devices, sites, apps, and other digital touchpoints we have, the less connected we are. As a matter of fact, the Experience Quest gives a more holistic and integrated picture of the full tapestry of experiences shared through contents and conversations across a brand's digital ecosystem.

## Conclusions

In the Experience Quest perspective, a digitally-supported customer journey becomes a path that is really open to be shared. And the purchasing act tends to be more social than ever.

The digital customer experience should not be of interest just to marketing people. If companies want to take advantage of it, they have to break the siloes and make it part of

the whole corporate culture, in a global setting that favors innovation and the acquisition of new skills. It is crucial that these new forms of experience with customers, outside the company, find some kind of correspondence with the experiences of the employees, inside the company.

In 2015, Airbnb renamed its HR Director as Chief Employee Experience Officer. Industry leaders like Diageo and YouTube have already hired their internal Head of Culture, in order to keep building iconic brands. We are facing not just new job roles and innovative work opportunities, but an experiential shift of businesses. Experiences must be crafted for the internal workforce to increase the level of engagement and trust. They must also be “collected” to integrate cultural and social insights into the brand DNA and to design more consistent product/service offerings.

Are companies and brands ready to make this (r)evolutionary step and to react effectively to the experience wave?



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# What EVERYONE Needs To Know About Building B2B Experiences

Kerry Bodine

So, you work for a business-to-consumer (B2C) company – and you think you can skip this article, huh? Sorry, I've got news for you. While business-to-business (B2B) interactions may not be as sexy as selling brightly colored running shoes, caffeinated beverages, or rollercoaster rides, nearly everyone who's interested in customer experience needs to consider B2B customer relationships.





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**B2B or B2C – chances are you, or someone in your organization, needs to consider the B2B customer experience**

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Why's that, you ask? Well, the fun-loving sportswear company may have its own mobile app and website where customers can buy direct – but it also distributes through third-party retailers (AKA customers). That amazing new coffee chain doesn't just want to sell to techie hipsters – it wants to get its product into airports and sports stadiums, too. And your favorite amusement park wants to utilize off-peak time for school and corporate events.

So, whether you work for a company that identifies primarily as B2B or B2C – chances are you, or someone in your organization, needs to consider the B2B customer experience.

The good news is that the main activities of customer experience design and management – like insight gathering, measurement, process improvement, and cultural change – translate across various types of organizations. But while these activities may look similar on a macro level, you need to tweak the details to accommodate the nuances of the B2B environment. That's because the B2B customer experiences typically involve a smaller number of customers, people in multiple roles working together to accomplish a goal, and a different channel mix.



## A Smaller Number Of Customers

While many B2C companies have tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions, or (in the case of Facebook) even billions of customers, B2B companies skew towards smaller customer bases. In some industries – consider automotive part manufacturing or some government contractors – the CEO might be able to count their company's customers on both hands.

### Why is this important?

B2C companies can survey a subset of customers, get a response rate of 2%, and still have a data set that statistically represents their customer base. Not so with B2B. If your customers number in the tens or hundreds, you'll need to supplement standard VoC surveys with more targeted listening methods. Start by soliciting honest feedback from frontline employees like account managers and support reps. Add in one-on-one interviews with execs, users, and other key stakeholders either after important milestones or on a regularly scheduled basis. Finally, invite people from key roles to spend a day mapping their customer journey with you and your colleagues. (Believe it or not, your B2B customers will jump at this opportunity!)

A smaller customer base also necessitates a different approach to customer relationship management. When you call your internet provider, you probably don't expect them to know every last detail about you and your specific needs. (That'd be nice, of course, but personalization to this degree is a topic for a different article.) Business customers, however, get frustrated when their primary contact, like an account manager, moves on and they're forced to build their relationship with your organization from scratch. Such pain points are ripe opportunities for designing an improved experience and defining the required technology and processes to ensure a seamless experience.

## Multiple Roles – One Goal

If you're working with small- or medium-sized business customers, you'll find that individuals wear many hats. (In my own business, for example, I run the marketing, human resources, and finance departments.) But if your customers are large businesses, there are likely multiple people that need to work with your organization throughout each customer journey. For example, your sales team may approach someone in a particular business unit about a service that would enhance their communications efforts, but then work with individuals in procurement and legal to actually sign the deal.

### Why is this important?

One of the most common ways for organizations to document their understanding of the customer experience is through journey maps. In B2C land, each map represents the actions, thoughts, and feelings of a particular persona or customer profile as they work towards a specific goal, like buying a pair of running shoes. When you create B2B journey maps, you'll sometimes use this model for individual roles that involve a complex series of tasks and limited interactions with others. But often, you'll need to represent multiple roles on a single map to show the coordination of their work – and the best way I've found to do this is to draw each role's "journey line" in a different color.

To make sure you're capturing all of the relevant roles in the first place, you'll also need to adjust your research methods. Asking B2C customers who they consult with when making buying decisions, for example, is helpful – but asking your primary B2B stakeholders who they need to work with in order to make a purchase is mission critical. In a recent workshop we asked this very question and uncovered a need for better communications aimed at purchasers' bosses, who had to allocate budget for the request.

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## Asking your primary B2B stakeholders who they need to work with in order to make a purchase is mission critical

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### A Different Channel Mix

B2C customers flock to third-party social media whenever they run into trouble with a brand. And they've been trained well: The louder they shout, they more likely they are to get a desirable outcome. In recent years, consumers have also shifted away from more established contact channels, like the call center, in favor of mobile apps and texting. However, the contact strategies that B2C companies employ – and that are so easy to copy – don't necessarily translate directly to your B2B customer experience.

### Why is this important?

Some third-party social channels, like Twitter or public review sites, may just not be relevant to your industry or the types of issues your customers are having. But that doesn't mean a social solution isn't valuable. It may just mean that you need to develop your own branded solution, like the nearly 3 million strong Salesforce customer community. And while B2C customer texts can be handled by

just about anyone in your contact center, you may need to route B2B customers to their dedicated team, regardless of what channel they use to contact your organization.

The personal nature of many B2B relationships, and business customers' lingering desire to just pick up the phone to get their problems solved, can also pose challenges for your customer research efforts. Your customers' primary contacts – often, their account managers – may feel that they own these relationships and need to keep them properly guarded. Such gatekeepers make customer recruiting for your VoC efforts difficult, if not impossible. Win them over by explaining your research methods – and how the insights you'll gather will not only improve the customer experience, but also help them sell more offerings down the road.

As with any business advice, your mileage may vary. To understand how to adjust your specific B2B customer experience design and management efforts, you must do two things. First, research the heck out of your customers in any way that works to find out what they need and expect from your organization. And second, be fearless in prototyping new strategies and tactics, learning from these initiatives, and iterating on the best practices you find.



## Kerry Bodine

### Keynote Speaker and Customer Experience Coach

Kerry Bodine is an independent customer experience consultant and the co-author of [Outside In: The Power of Putting Customers at the Center of Your Business](#). Her ideas, analysis, and opinions have appeared on sites like The Wall Street Journal, Harvard Business Review, Fast Company, Forbes, USA Today, and Advertising Age. She holds a master's degree in human-computer interaction and has designed interfaces for websites, mobile apps, wearable devices, and robots.

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# Holy Brand Experience

Markus Kramer and Tofiq Husein-zadeh

The day marketers start to understand people's relationships with rituals is the day they apprehend the notion and impact of meaningful customer journeys with impactful touch-points. Or in other words, what a holistic brand experience really means.

One thing is clear: experimentalism is already the new existentialism. Experimentalist philosophy of life answers the fundamental existentialist question raised by the eminent French existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre who famously said: "Everything has been figured out except how to live."

Today's consumers choose a way of life that emphasises collecting memorable experiences, slices of life and humanised moments. In the 21st century, experimentalism is the way to live. In order to explore the multifaceted ritual component inherent within holistic brand experience, it is worth taking a look at the key methods that map the way to achieving it.

## Culture Par Excellence

If holistic brand experience is an effect, then its cause is the cultivation of an inner culture par excellence. The near-recession-proof world of luxury can teach us a thing or two about building an internal culture in which experience, a higher purpose and relationships operate together in a well balanced and mindful mode. In the light of the bridge between experience and relationship management, for instance, Ritz Carlton is worthy of attention. The luxury brand's internal culture is cultivated with the principle that could be summarised as "ladies and gentleman serving ladies and gentlemen." This principle creates a culture in which the quality of the relationships between employees and customers increases. Consequently, the quality of



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**One thing is clear:  
experimentalism  
is already the new  
existentialism**

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experiences elevates, too. We call this 'the high mirror principle'. It is the reflection of the higher selves - of both the guests and the team.

Professor Chris Roebuck, a British economist who advises top organisations on maximising performance through effective leadership, asked Markus Kramer (at the time Aston Martin's CMO) about the company's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in order to better understand the link between CRM and effective leadership. The answer was as unexpected as it was candid, "We don't have one – yet it works." In other words, successful relationship management is not about the system, the infrastructure or technology only; it is first and foremost about the internal mindset that lies at the heart of an organisational culture.

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## **Successful relationship management is not about the system, the infrastructure or technology only**

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The catalyst of the mindset, the guiding compass and the path to an interconnected culture is rooted in the brand's inner purpose. Technology can certainly add value in terms of empowering people with tools and information, but it can't replace the deeply ingrained purpose that radiates from within. If shared and aligned internally and externally, purpose has the power to unleash the type of passion, cohesion and consistency no CRM system has yet managed to replicate.

## **Painless Relations**

In today's competitive environment, it's almost impossible for brands to get a second chance to make a first impression. In addition, brand managers need to take into account

the peak-end rule, which explains how consumers tend to judge an experience based mostly on its peak and its finale, rather than on the sum or average of every moment of the experience.

There are numerous scientific studies that provide evidence on how people **tend to remember** negative experiences rather than positive ones. Bad memories **tend to stick better** than good ones. It's called negativity bias and it can lead to loss aversion. Or as Andrea Soriani, former Director of Marketing of Maserati, North America put it: "Clients will always remember a negative experience no matter how many positive moments have been shared."

Many of us have experienced the tension between essence and appearance throughout our lives. Things may not really be what they look to be, and all that glitters is not gold. Much of the strength of experiences related to a brand today depend on this factor. When the essence of a brand turns out to be less than its appearance, the experience is memorised as a disappointing one. One way to master holistic brand experiences that enable strong emotional, deep, near-therapeutic ritual bonds, is to look at how some of the truly purpose-led luxury brands practice it.

Flawless service is not about doing personalisation. It is about doing it right. The idea is to elevate and build a holistic brand experience to the level of becoming, to some degree, a holy ritual. Orchestrating frictionless, delighting touch points as part of a brand experience has the same effect as a therapeutic ritual, increasing brand advocacy, referrals and loyalty. What pain-points can you transform into meaningful moments for your customers?

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**Elevate and build a holistic brand experience to the level of becoming, to some degree, a holy ritual**

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## Purposeful Relations (PR)

Forward thinking and purpose-oriented brands are aware of the fact that there is a growing segment of consumers who prioritise 'being and feeling' (inner) over 'having or consuming' (outer). This growing demand led niche and luxury brands to offer memorable moments, experiences or rituals rather than mere commodities or episodes. Rolls Royce, for instance, organised a free exhibition in Saatchi & Saatchi London in which visitors could interact and experience the technological expression of their Spirit of Ecstasy.

Holy brand experience is one of the most powerful components of brands guided by an innate, shared and aligned purpose. It builds strong and lasting emotional bonds with customers that are perhaps best described by the words of Holly Gollightly, the protagonist from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*: "...the only thing that does any good is to jump in a cab and go to Tiffany's. Calms me down right away. The quietness and the proud look of it; nothing very bad could happen to you there."

Brands with clarity of purpose are changing the world. The leaders, marketers, entrepreneurs, and individuals who understand this will be the positive change-makers of tomorrow.



### Highlights of the Rolls Royce exhibition



#### Markus Kramer

**Partner | Brand Affairs**

Based in London and Zurich, Markus Kramer is a partner at Brand Affairs, a specialised consulting agency advising boards and executives on all aspects of strategic positioning and brand management. The broad range of brands Markus has worked with includes Harley-Davidson, Aston Martin, Ferrari, banks & financial service providers, governments, NGOs, startups and many more. Markus is also co-author of '[The Guiding Purpose Strategy](#)', a visiting Associate Professor in Brand Management at Cass Business School in London and recognised thought leader in the fast-paced world of cutting-edge brand management and speaks regularly at select business schools and conferences.

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#### Tofig Husein-zadeh

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[www.tofighuseinzadeh.com](http://www.tofighuseinzadeh.com)



# How To Make Your Sales Goal With Content Marketing

Jeff Sheehan

As a former hockey player and salesperson, I know a lot about goals – whether in the context of a hockey game or in a sales environment. If you can't get goals in hockey, your team will never win. In sales, if you don't achieve your sales goal/s you'll soon find yourself on the outside looking in.

The good news is that in today's sales environment, you now have a new tool to assist you; content marketing. The question is how to use it most effectively to align with where your prospects or customers are in the sales funnel to maximize the ROI.









The use of content marketing is not a new idea. It has been around forever, but has become more plentiful and ubiquitous due to the emergence of social media and other content delivery channels. Furthermore, it now comes in multiple flavors. It's no longer a case of reaching prospects and customers with brochures, ads in trade magazines, postcard mailers or the like. Now it might consist of email campaigns, infographics, white papers, social media campaigns, direct mail, or any of the other numerous marketing tools that can be utilized to engage with your prospects or customers.

What has really changed, however, is the way that people buy. Due to content being readily accessible online to address questions potential buyers might have concerning a product or service that you are offering, salespeople are no longer as they once were in the buying process. Today, buyers are often well beyond the product awareness stage in the funnel before interacting with salespeople at the very last stages of the process making it very difficult for them in closing deals and meeting their sales goals.

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## **Today, buyers are often well beyond the product awareness stage in the funnel before interacting with salespeople**

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In fact, as noted in [a recent blog post](#) by Articulate: "Nearly 60 percent of the traditional sales process has gone out of the window, according to research by [Google and CEB](#). Customers are not waiting for companies to tell them what they need to know; they're doing the legwork and seeking out the information themselves online, stealing the sales department's thunder."

The real challenge for marketers and the salespeople they are working with is in providing the information to prospects and customers at the right time, the right place, and in a manner that is consistent with how they consume it. This all has to be accomplished within the framework of where they are in the sales funnel. Content has to be aligned so that it properly addressed at each stage of the funnel journey or else it will be perceived as being annoying or irrelevant.

## **The Content Tsunami**

The reason I feel that it could be annoying is that we're experiencing in the content marketing world the equivalent of a content tsunami. We're being bombarded with content from every conceivable direction. In fact, at times I feel like I'm back in the hockey net playing goalie. Instead of being shot at by pucks from every conceivable direction during practice, however, I'm now being subjected to constant streams of endless emails, blog posts, videos, or whatever content marketers have conceived to try to reach me to create awareness for their products or services and convince me to buy.

There's no way that I, or any of us, can possibly consume all of the content that is being generated. The result is that we're selective on what we consume and when. The prospects and customers that we're trying to reach are, as well, and you need to take this into account before you publish any more content moving forward. It needs to be relevant to each stage of the process and clearly address their wants and needs.

## **The Value Of Content Marketing**

Content marketing is valuable and plays a key role in creating awareness, providing knowledge, and nurturing relationships with prospects and customers. According to a



study done by Kapost in conjunction with Eloqua titled: “**Content Marketing ROI**” content marketing produces 3 times more leads than paid search over a 36-month time frame. It’s a great sales tool for assisting a salesperson in meeting their goals. Notice that I used the word assist, as it’s not a panacea and the salesperson still has to close the deal in all but transactional-based sales. He or she has to put the puck in the net, which in the case of sales is a purchase order or actual sale.

The challenge for the salesperson and marketer supporting him or her is utilizing content at the right place, at the right time during the buyer’s journey to ensure the highest possible ROI. It might start out simply as creating awareness for your product or service, in which case, impressions might be the goal to help set up the play to enable the goals to be met.

Matt Heinz of Heinz Marketing recently alluded to the role that impressions play in the entire process and that “Impressions Still Matter.” The era of Don Draper and the Mad Men may be behind us; however, great content can still go a long way in creating favorable impressions of your company’s products and services and a solid brand, as well. The question is what type of content to use and when? Also, for what purpose?

## Where Do I Start?

Given this, you’re probably asking where do you start in ensuring that your content marketing strategy aligns as part of the strategy, aligns with the sales funnel, and enables you to reach your sales goals? This is a complex issue, but as a starting point, you should really revert to business basics. I refer to it as ensuring that you have your own house in order before you do anything.

## Is Your Own House In Order?

Before embarking on your content marketing journey and ensuring that it is aligned with the sales funnel and the ultimate objective of meeting your sales goals, you really need to make sure that your house is in order. If not, all of your activities will fall flat. A few years ago, I published an article on LinkedIn titled: “**The 9P’s of Marketing- A Framework for the Social Media Era**”. So much of what I stated in it still is true today.

## Goals and Objectives

Once you know that your products and services are ready and aligned with your customer’s values, you need to determine what your overall goals and objectives are regarding content marketing. This should be clearly mapped out with quantifiable goals that are written down and periodically reviewed.

## The Plan

As with anything that you do in business you need a plan for content marketing. A roadmap for what you’re doing. This should start with your target customer as all roads lead back to them in whatever you do.

## Target Customer

Who influences buying decisions along the journey? In a B2B environment, multiple parties are usually involved in the decision process. It will not only include procurement, but people in supply chain logistics, quality, engineering, and any others where the onboarding or use of the product will have an impact.

You need to ensure that you have the right content for each stage of the buying cycle and that it is personalized as much

as possible to address the needs of the customer or prospect at that touch point during the journey. How does it address their wants and needs at that time? These are questions you need to be asking. Also, remember that not one size fits all. This is not only true of the customer or prospect themselves, but also where they are in the buying process.

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## **You need to ensure that you have the right content for each stage of the buying cycle and that it is personalized**

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Determining how do you best reach them with content is of prime importance. Where and how are they most likely to consume their content? Content, like ice cream, comes in many more than one flavor. The key to success is ensuring that what you're producing is aligned with what your customer or prospect wants to see.

This point has been hammered home to me by marketing and branding expert, Sylvia France. I recently had the pleasure of attending one of her presentations concerning content marketing and came away with these, as well as other valuable tips including the need for a content marketing calendar. Whatever you do, think about creating and implementing one as part of your overall process, as it will provide you with a disciplined, organized, and coordinated way of addressing your content marketing process. If one is in place, you will ensure that you have the right content at the right time to address your customer's needs. Furthermore, if properly structured, it can be effectively utilized for monitoring your performance.

Additionally, I would recommend that you have a buying cycle content calendar in place and the content that supports it, so that you can immediately react with the right content at the right time. If it's done in an organized and systematic manner, it will be more efficient and on target.

In conjunction with the above, you need to make a determination as to how you are going to deliver this content and what tools to use? If it's just content directed at a wide audience via social media than scheduling it via Hootsuite or Buffer might be viable solutions. If it is more targeted, then email might be your channel and you should ensure that you have the right email marketing tools in place to facilitate it. If it's for a B2B company with a large sales force, a tool content distribution platform such as those offered by Go Yip Yip, Social Joey, or Social 5 might be the solution. They allow for pretty much "hands-free" dissemination to the customers and prospects of salespeople via their social media channels.

## **Metrics**

After you've distributed your content, you need to know how you're doing to maximize your ROI. Are things working? If not, you need to consider slight adjustments to what you're doing or pivoting entirely. Marketing involves constant experimentation and A/B testing might be part of this whole process to see what really resonates with customers or prospects at each stage of the buying cycle.

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**After you've distributed your content, you need to know how you're doing to maximize your ROI**

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As Samantha Owens Pyle was quoted recently in an article titled: [3 Ways To Ensure Content Marketing Positively Affects Your Bottom Line](#): “Being able to track the number of impressions, leads, potential sales opportunities and new customers all the way through the buying cycle is critical. Rather than taking a shotgun approach to content marketing, you need to be able to measure how each type of content performs and then leads customers toward taking the next step.”

## Map The Journey

An additional requirement of this whole process is in mapping the customer journey of your best customers and prospects. This should only be done after you’ve completed a thorough analysis of who they are as alluded to above. Do a deep dive on your existing data and do your homework. If you don’t, you will be doing yourself a real disservice by focusing on customers who are not really aligned with your business and profits. The “best” customers will not all fall in the same bucket. You must segment them into a few categories to ensure that you are accurately measuring their importance.

Once you’ve conducted an audit of your ideal customers and their journey, you should have a pretty good understanding of the touch points where they are interacting with you during the sales process. You really need to look closely at this, as not all points will be of equal importance. You need to rank and categorize them in descending order of perceived importance and then move on from there. One of the first categories you might consider within a B2B framework is ABM.

## Account-Based Marketing

If you’re involved in B2B sales and marketing, one of the easiest ways to segment and manage them is by establishing an account-based Marketing program, if you don’t already have one. This allows you to focus on those accounts who are providing you with the greatest revenues, profits, and/or strategic values. Although the term ABM is relatively new, it has been highly promoted by my friend, Sangram Vajre of Terminus, one of the foremost global marketers of his generation. I am very much in awe with what he has been able to do with his whole “Flip My Funnel” movement.

Sangram has essentially taken a concept which has been in existence for decades and repackaged it with the latest and greatest content marketing delivery tools that have emerged over recent years, and its reliance on sales interacting heavily with the marketing department. It is very similar in approach to something which I have personally been involved with over the years known as strategic account marketing. This involves placing specific teams of individuals on focusing in on the sales activities of accounts deemed to be most valuable based on existing revenues or those with the greatest future potential.

## Flip Your Funnel

As a starting point in your content strategy, I would highly advocate that the first place you should address is that the sales funnel, or so-called customer journey, is not actually at the beginning of the funnel or the acquisition stage, but at the bottom of it. This is the stage where you are nurturing the relationships with your existing customers. I’m amazed at all of the attention that continues to be paid in customer acquisition by today’s marketers

and social media pundits. There seems to be an almost total disregard for existing customers. Wouldn't you agree?

What I'm advocating is that, unless you're a startup, you and your company should Flip The Funnel, as I briefly discussed above. Start at the bottom of the funnel and work backwards toward the awareness and acquisition stage. It is at the bottom of the funnel where the money is. This concept was highlighted earlier this decade in a book by Joseph Jaffe titled: "[Flip the Funnel: How to Use Existing Customers to Gain New Ones.](#)"

## Other Touch Points

Once you've successfully developed a framework and strategy for addressing your existing customers, you can then move backward up the funnel to the other touch points that are involved in customer acquisition based on the order of their importance to your business. You would then determine what content best fits each juncture and how it can be most effectively delivered, to reach the prospect, at the right time and placed, to accelerate their transition from potential to actual customer.

Making sales goals is not easy. The use of content marketing helps, but it is not as straightforward as one might believe. It involves many variables and requires a lot of analysis and experimentation in order to be effective. It is imperative that you be prepared to address it in this manner and realize that a one size fits all approach will not only be ineffective, but could be detrimental. Whatever you do, for maximum effectiveness and greatest ROI, start with your existing customers unless you're a startup.

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## Whatever you do, for maximum effectiveness and greatest ROI, start with your existing customers

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Nurture your relationships with them via content marketing, and face to face interactions where possible. This will help provide you with cross- and up-selling opportunities and lead to further revenue growth and higher profits versus the high costs of trying to acquire new customers and trying to "lead" them through the funnel. At the end of the day, this will help you meet your sales goals. You'll put the proverbial puck in the net and content marketing will have played a key role in assisting with your achievement.



## Jeff Sheehan

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With over 35 years of high-tech global sales, marketing, and advertising experience marketing to many Fortune 500 companies including Intel, Apple Computer, IBM, Hewlett-Packard and AT&T, as well as many others, Jeff is now an IBM Influencer | Futurist, social selling and marketing consultant, podcaster, and job search mentor, as well as the former volunteer director of the Holy Spirit Catholic Church Career Ministry in Atlanta. He is also the co-author of the book: '[HIRED! Paths to Employment in the Social Media Era](#)'. With over 360,000 followers on Twitter, he has been recognized as one of the top people in the world to follow on Twitter for social media, market.

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# The Battle Of The Bots: Why Quality Assurance Is Crucial For Chatbot Success

Carlo Cadet

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven user interfaces are the most recent trend in digital transformation. For end users, voice-driven chatbots provide a streamlined interface to accomplish a task in a fun, engaging, informative, intelligent manner - and for brands, they represent a chance to engage their customers better, ultimately leading to increased loyalty and new revenue opportunities.

We know that consumers consistently gravitate towards the easiest available channel for brand interaction - even when that means moving between suppliers - and streamlined interactions with customer services can be make or break for organisations. And, with more than 50% of consumers reporting that they would rather interact with a brand over messaging than over the phone, it's not surprising that serious companies are betting big on AI.

## When Bots Go Bad

But, it's not quite as simple as throwing money at developing voice-activated services and watching customers gravitate to a new way of doing business. According to analyst firm Botanalytics, while a projected 35.6 million people will use voice-activated assistants at least once a month this year, 40% of bot users disengage after just one interaction. So - the stakes are high for the many brands and developers delivering audio experiences.

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**It's not quite as simple as throwing money at developing voice-activated services and watching customers gravitate**

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And, while there are many examples of good uses of this technology, there are also enough bad ones to demonstrate the risks of not taking quality seriously enough. As we've seen in recent bot blunders, not all chatbots are created equal. A poorly designed chatbot can easily turn a potential customer engagement into a horrible user experience.

Microsoft's recent experience was a warning for many. In March this year, the company launched a chatbot named 'Tay' designed to have conversations with Twitter users, and learn how to mimic a human by copying their speech patterns. It was supposed to engage with people aged 18-24 but a brush with the dark side of the net, led by users of the notorious 4chan forum, instead taught her to tweet offensive phrases and left Microsoft with a tricky damage limitation exercise.

Facebook, too, was forced to admit the limitations of its foray into chatbots on its messenger platform when the bots deviated





from the script and started communicating in a language which wasn't comprehensible. And, unlike Microsoft's experience, which led to a bit of brand damage, the Facebook blunder went one stage further, causing panic - as dramatic headlines painted a scary picture scary versions of what a future with advanced artificial intelligence may hold. "Facebook AI creates its own language in creepy preview of our potential future, and "Creepy Facebook bots talked to each other in a secret language" reported the newspapers. And although many of the Facebook chatbot headlines exaggerated what actually happened, this example shows just how high the stakes are, and reminds us of the pressure to get it right.

## Getting The Basics Right

So, how do companies assure the quality of service which is so crucial in maintaining customer relationships, building their business and managing their reputation?

The short answer is it isn't easy – but for many, simplicity is the crucial starting point. While Cortana, Siri and Alexa might eventually develop "ask me anything" capabilities, without unlimited budgets and huge development teams, it's better to deploy a specific, targeted bot to engage your audience. And of course, brands should focus on repetitive tasks or those that might create unexpected delight, rather than those they see once a year or once a quarter.

So, my message to organisations is to set clear goals and identify the use cases for your chatbot. Don't attempt to address problems beyond your scope. Instead, manage customer expectations by keeping the conversation within your comfort zone. And, remember that strong natural language engines are best to deliver a voice, tone and syntax that your customers are used to, and that's accessible and easy.

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**Strong natural language engines are best to deliver a voice, tone and syntax that your customers are used to**

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But, of course, however simple your objective is, and however rudimentary you want your chatbot to be, like any other emerging technology, chatbots inevitably add complexity to applications. A growing set of call centre functions, together with the difficulty of processing open-ended conversations, means that the development of this type of application is extremely complicated. Development teams are required to integrate an AI engine (like IBM Watson), together with a speech engine (such as Nuance) to power these capabilities – and they must work hard to create a platform where these different systems can work together to power a seamless customer experience.

## Overcoming Challenges With Continuous Testing

For me, continuous testing is the answer to delivering flawless experiences at the speed of today's market. Any developer burned by late night de-bugging appreciates a robust testing suite, and its ability to ensure well-functioning code and developer sanity. Continuous testing allows developers to iterate faster, cheaper, and with confidence that they're not introducing new bugs along the way.

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**Continuous testing is the answer to delivering flawless experiences at the speed of today's market**

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For many teams, initial testing efforts are manual – it’s not an oversimplification to imagine several engineers in a room talking to “Kate” using their smartphone, trying to find out the balance of their current bank account or inquiring about insurance options. But, automation is critical in quality assurance. Moving voice and chatbot testing from lengthy manual processes to automated systems is the best way to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and coverage of testing. And – simply – having an automated solution for testing means you’ll test earlier and more often.

## Embedding Test Processes Throughout The Development Lifecycle

By embedding testing throughout the development process, uncertainty is reduced and feedback loops are made smaller, ensuring that development teams’ assumptions are correct and that they’re building in the right direction. In chatbot technology, just like any other software product, the earlier quality issues are dealt with; the less focus is taken from teams’ primary goal of building really valuable services.

Agile development methods are also a key component in ensuring speed – and in chatbot technology, velocity is critical to introducing the new innovative capabilities

which help enterprises stay one step ahead of competition. The need for speed means that agile development, and automated processes, is a must-have rather than a nice to have. Manual testing means slowing down feedback to developers after an issue has been introduced – and makes the development process cumbersome and unnecessarily extended.

## A Bright Future, With The Right Testing

So, I believe that voice technology is going to fundamentally change the way users interact with applications. But deploying software robots that are truly helpful, and not just annoying or useless – or even scary – takes some savvy.

Like the old saying that a jack of all trades is a master of none, so are chatbots. I believe that instead of building a general purpose bot, like Siri, that answers everything, organisations must focus on specific high-value use cases. Even if the bot does just one thing right, it’s good enough for users – but if the user experience is poor, brand reputation can be irretrievably damaged.

The companies who get it right be those who start from firm foundations – investing in agile development, automated processes – and software which can help to put testing first – right at the heart of innovation.



### Carlo Cadet

**Product Marketing Director | Perfecto**

Carlo joined Perfecto in 2013 and currently leads the product marketing team. In his role, he is responsible for evangelising best practices to customers, analysts and media. His team delivers Sales training, crafts company positioning, messaging and determines go-to-market strategy, for the company’s cloud-based solution. Carlo has an MBA from MIT Sloan School of Business and a degree in Computer Science from Tufts University.

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# From Journey Maps To Action: Designing A Better Customer Experience

Annette Franz, CCXP

*Never confuse movement with action*  
~ Ernest Hemingway

Customers are yearning for better experiences.

But what are you doing to design a better experience?

How do you know what your customers' expectations are?

What are they trying to achieve?

And how well is that going for them?

Are you listening to customers?

Are you mapping their experiences?

How are you driving the necessary change within your company?









That's a lot of questions to start with, right?

Let me take a step back and start with a couple of definitions.

## What Is Customer Experience?

Before I begin to write about designing a better customer experience, let me first provide a clear definition of customer experience. We're not always all on the same page about what that is.

In its simplest definition, customer experience is (a) the sum of all the interactions that a customer has with a company over the course of the relationship and includes (b) the customer's feelings, emotions, and perceptions of the brand during the course of those interactions. Examples of "interactions" include: making a purchase, using the product, paying bills, calling support, visiting the company's website, and more.

Many people confuse **customer experience** with **customer service**, but they are not one and the same. Customer experience is actually the "umbrella discipline," so to speak.

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## Many people confuse customer experience with customer service, but they are not one and the same

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"Customer service is what happens when the customer experience breaks down." That's how Chris Zane, owner of Zane's Cycles, defines or differentiates the two. Customer service is just one aspect, one touchpoint in the overall customer experience; servicing customers is one action of many that comprise the customer experience.

## What Is Journey Mapping?

Let me start with explaining what journey maps are not: they are not lifecycle maps, sales funnels, buyer funnels, buyer lifecycles, etc. Those are marketing tools and are too high level for customer experience design. Customer experience professionals require a lot more detail at a micro level in order to understand the pain points and to, ultimately, fix them. As such, journey maps are an illustration made by walking in your customers' shoes to capture their steps, needs, and perceptions for some interaction they had with your company, some journey they were taking to achieve some outcome.

Journey mapping is a creative process that allows you to understand – and then redesign – the customer experience. The output is not just a "pretty picture;" once the map is developed, it is meant to be a catalyst for change.

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**Journey mapping is a creative process that allows you to understand – and then redesign – the customer experience**

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## Why Map Journeys

Mapping isn't just a lame exercise; it's a learning exercise. Companies learn about their customers and about the experience they put them through to interact with the business. Done right, maps help companies in many ways, including to...

### **Understand experiences.**

You can't transform something you don't understand, is what I like to say. Maps bring understanding. They highlight and diagnose existing issues and opportunities; at the same time, they capture what's going well, too.



## **Design experiences.**

Once you understand the current experience and moments of truth, maps help you prioritize and rethink existing processes and/or create new ones.

## **Implement and activate new experiences.**

The maps become blueprints or statements of direction for the work to be done to improve and to redesign the experience.

## **Communicate and share experiences.**

Maps are great communication and teaching tools. They can be used during onboarding, training, and other ongoing education opportunities to unite the organization around the customer, to teach employees about the current and the future experience, and to further ingrain the customer-focused culture of the business.

One thing to note is that journey mapping is not just for customers but for all constituents, including employees, vendors, partners, franchisees, licensees, etc. It's a tool to design a better experience for anyone that interacts with your company.

## **The Benefits Of Mapping Journeys**

There are a ton of benefits of mapping customer journeys. They can probably best be summed up in the following five categories.

### **1. Align the organization**

- Executive and employees, as well: get everyone on the same page about the importance of delivering a better experience
- Break down silos: get people collaborating and sharing data for the benefit of the customer

### **2. Understand the customer and his experience**

- Build empathy for the customer: when executives see the steps they put customers through to do business with the company, it's an eye-opener!
- Improve the experience: understand the customer, what she's trying to do, and how well the company is performing against that so that you can redesign a better experience

### **3. Identify experience and process efficiencies**

- Identify and remove ineffective touchpoints
- Kill inefficient rules, policies, processes

### **4. Optimize channels**

- Learn about the different steps customers take to purchase or use the channel that they use so that you can be prepared to deliver the expected experience to the right channel at the right time for the right persona

### **5. Shift the culture and the organization's mindset**

- From inside-out to outside-in: maps are created from the customer viewpoint and are validated with customers; bringing their voice into the organization is the first step toward shifting that mindset
- From touchpoints to journeys: think about the entire customer journey, the entire relationship with the organization; realize that journey thinking means to consider both what happened prior to this interaction that you're mapping and what the customer will do next

## A Catalyst For Change

Based on those benefits, you can really start to see how they are a catalyst for change. There are so many ways to use journey maps as part of your overall people-focused culture transformation.

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### **There are so many ways to use journey maps as part of your overall people-focused culture transformation**

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As you can imagine, this is a good spot to jump in and write about how to go from journey maps to a great customer experience. Let me start with some of the things you need to do before you even begin mapping:

#### **Make sure you have the right people involved in creating the map.**

First and foremost, your customers must be involved; this can happen either during the initial mapping session or later, when you ask them to validate what we call an assumptive map that was built internally based on what we know and have heard from customers about the experience. Second, make sure you've got the appropriate stakeholders in the room, as well.

No excuses; they must be there. Include folks from various departments in the room because you need to take into account what's happening upstream and downstream from the interaction you're mapping.

And they need to have a reasonable level of influence on what actions need to be taken as a result of the workshop.

#### **Similarly, ensure that they are committed to acting on what they learn.**

I don't really need to explain this one much more than that. If there's no commitment to act, change, or improve, you'll be wasting everyone's time.

#### **Select the personas for which you'll be mapping the experience.**

Personas are research-based representations of the customer type for whom you'll be mapping; customer experience personas differ from marketing personas as they include details around problems to solve, pain points, jobs to be done, tasks they are trying to achieve, etc.

#### **Select the journeys to map.**

You'll be mapping a lot of journeys over time, but select the most impactful ones to begin with. Where's the low-hanging fruit? What journeys cause the most pain for your customers today? Where can you make the greatest impact?

#### **Hold a prep meeting with stakeholders.**

Get everyone in the room before the session to ensure that everyone understands what you're doing and what their role is/will be.

#### **Outline the scope, objectives, and desired outcomes.**

Make sure attendees know what they'll be mapping and why. And, most importantly, what they'll be doing with the output.

#### **Give attendees homework.**

Have them start thinking about the journey and what the potential steps are. Have them "mystery shop" the journey themselves, if they don't yet have a full picture of it. Ask them to get feedback, comments, and insights from their employees about the journey. They can also gather any customer feedback, insights,



behavioral data, and emotional data about the journey. And have them bring to the session any artifacts (documents, audio files, videos, images, etc.) that support the journey and bring it to life.

### **Begin to formulate a plan for next steps.**

Go into the session prepared. What happens when you leave the room? How will you operationalize the findings? How will you assign ownership? Who is responsible and accountable? How will you manage the improvements going forward? Etc.

### **Line up process mapping or value stream mapping sessions.**

Process mapping should be done in conjunction with journey mapping. You can't fix the front-stage/on-stage experience if the backstage processes aren't efficiently and effectively supporting it.

## **Taking Action**

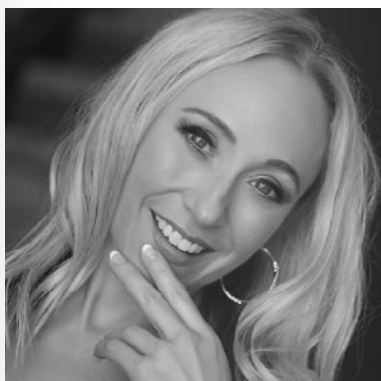
I could write another full article on where to go after the mapping session is over, but I'll give you a couple high-level bullets to get you thinking of where to go next.

- Gather on a weekly basis to discuss quick wins, action plans for longer-term fixes, next steps, success metrics, etc. This is important to keep the momentum going, to lend oversight, and to ensure nothing falls through the cracks.

- Identify the key moments of truth, those make or break moments during the journey that must be executed well in order to satisfy – and to keep – the customer.
- Take the breakpoints and prioritize systematically; factors considered include: time to fix, cost to fix, impact on the customer, and impact on the business.
- Assign ownership and teams for the improvement items. Develop project plans for each improvement initiative.
- Get commitment from executives to assign resources.
- Map the future state to design the new experience – with customers.
- Design the new processes to support the experience from behind the scenes.
- Implement changes.
- Pilot. Test. Fix. Roll out.

As you can see, there's a lot to mapping and redesigning the experience. Don't let that be daunting. It's actually a fun process that has very tangible outputs and outcomes.

When done right.



## **Annette Franz**

**CEO | CX Journey Inc.**

Annette is CEO of CX Journey Inc, a boutique consulting firm specializing in helping clients ground and frame their customer experience strategies in/via customer understanding. Her passion lies in teaching companies about CX and helping them understand the importance of the employee experience to a great CX. She has 25 years of experience in the CX space and has been recognized as one of "The 100 Most Influential Tech Women on Twitter" by Business Insider and by several other organizations as a top influencer in CX. She is an active CXPA member, as a CX Expert, CX Mentor, and a SoCal Local Networking Team Lead; she also serves as an executive officer on the association's Board of Directors.

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**Take into account the situation in which your devices will be used, as well as who may be using them**

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# The Importance Of Inclusive Design In An Ever-Digitalised World

Chris Bush

As a result of our ageing population, we are naturally seeing a rise in the number of people living with impairments. In fact, the Papworth Trust **recently found** that the people most likely to be living with a disability are over the state pension age.

Despite an estimated **one in five** (12.9 million) people in the UK currently living with impairments, recent research has found that around **70% of websites** in the UK are currently inaccessible for impaired users. As a result, our need for accessible, inclusively designed websites has never been greater.

According to the Extra Costs Commission, these 12.9 million people living with disabilities have an estimated spending power of **£212 billion**. This spending power, known informally as the “purple pound”, represents a tremendous opportunity for businesses that want to harness it, but at the same time highlights the need to ensure their websites and services are accessible to attract their custom.

## So, What Exactly Is Inclusive Design?

Essentially, inclusive design refers to a school of design focused on making sure that everybody – regardless of their relative impairments – can access and use a company’s products or services.

In other words, it ensures that regardless of their situation, people will never be discriminated against or otherwise prevented from accessing a brand’s products or services in any way.

We are living in a world which is becoming more digitalised by the day, and as more and more of our products and services move online, we need to ensure that nobody is being left behind. The vast majority of brands now have an online presence of some description, and those who are not taking proactive steps to incorporate inclusive design into their websites are likely to struggle to engage with their more impaired users.

So, why aren’t all websites accessible to all by default?

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**As more and more of our products and services move online, we need to ensure that nobody is being left behind**

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It’s certainly not for commercial reasons. Businesses who are not designing for those living with impairments are missing out on whole subsections of their potential customer base – as well as the potentially vast revenues that come with this.

In fact, because the majority of websites are currently not designed with the needs of impaired users in mind, **around one in four** disabled adults in the UK have never even used the internet. This means that there is a huge prospective user base being passed up by brands who ignore the importance of digital inclusion.

In my opinion, much of the problem comes down to the misconceptions businesses tend to have around the field of inclusive design. The most common of these I come across revolve around what inclusive design actually is, what it entails, or even just about (ironically) how easy and accessible it is to implement.

Here, we’ll take a look at some of the most common misjudgements people tend to make around inclusive design, as well as exactly why these may not be as true as you think.

## The Myths Around Inclusive Design

### “Accessible means dull to look at”

This is one of the most popular criticisms of accessible websites that I hear about, and one which in reality could not be further from the truth. While this may have applied 20 years ago in the early days of web design (when designers had much more basic technology to work with), modern technology means that nowadays every good web designer has all the tools and techniques required to build an attractive, accessible website – it just requires a little more planning.

In my view, there is no reason for inclusion to come at the expense of aesthetics. The Royal National Institute for the Blind **put this best**



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## **There is no reason for inclusion to come at the expense of aesthetics**

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when they said: “well designed graphics and multimedia are a positive aid to using and understanding websites, and do not need to be sacrificed for accessibility”.

In terms of best practice examples, sites that manage to strike a great balance between aesthetics and accessibility are the [Apple](#) and [Arts Council](#) websites to name but a few.

### **“They’re expensive to implement”**

While there is an upfront cost to making websites more accessible, this cost is relatively modest, and I would recommend that businesses view it as an investment that will actually make them money over time.

Inclusive websites also allow brands to reach a far larger customer base, boosting market share, brand awareness and long-term profits.

### **“The cost isn’t worthwhile because it only applies to a small minority”**

A common perception of accessible sites is that they’re not worthwhile for businesses because it means spending a lot of money to only reach a few more customers. Again, this is simply untrue. Even if we’re just taking into account those living with impairments, that’s still another 12.9 million people your business could be reaching.

However, inclusive design is much more than that - the whole point of making a website accessible is making sure that your online services cater to everybody, giving equal consideration to everyone’s unique needs.

The way to do this is to “design for the 5%”, meaning that the website will not only be accessible to those living with impairments, but also for the other 95% of the population - a truly inclusive design.

### **“Impairments are solely long term”**

When I refer to impairments, we are not just talking about those which affect you in the long term.

There are also “situational impairments”, which is when people have difficulties using technology due to the situation or context they are in, rather than something they are born with. This could take the form of background noise making it more difficult for someone to hear, poor lighting making it harder to see, and exercise or a lack of space impairing our ability to physically interact with devices. A situational impairment could even be something as trivial as having your hands full or having forgotten your glasses.

This provides another important consideration for designers – take into account the situation in which your devices will be used, as well as who may be using them.

A great example of inclusive design in this regard is Facebook’s video function on its mobile app. The company recognised that the majority of users browsing the app are likely to be in a public setting (such as on their morning commute) on their phones, and so their hearing is likely to be impaired due to the background noise.

To help users who might be in these noisy environments, Facebook designed their videos to autoplay without sound and with captions turned on by default, to compensate for this situationally impaired hearing.

## **How To Design For Accessible Experiences**

Of course, for a business that has never considered inclusive design before, it can seem a daunting prospect. However it doesn’t need to be, and there are many practical, easily actionable tips which can be implemented immediately to start making a website more accessible.

To help users that are physically impaired, it's wise to avoid demanding precision inputs when browsing websites. Avoid grouping together small clickable items – opt instead for larger, spaced out interactive areas to ensure your users can navigate around your site without undue difficulty. As well as this, websites should be fully navigable via keyboard or speech only use – users should never need to mix the two.

If users are hard of hearing, or even fully deaf, make sure any video and audio content hosted on the website is subtitled/transcribed. Finally, any websites which contain a “contact us” section should always include an email option, as users who are hard of hearing may prefer not to use the phone.

For visually impaired users, content should be presented in a readable text size, and all information should be published on web pages – where possible, never hide any information behind a separate download.

Another tip is to avoid relying on colours wherever possible. For example if a user has made a mistake when entering data, I tend to see a lot of websites which mark erroneous fields in red, which visually impaired users may struggle to make out. Instead of this, consider making use of clear error messages which direct your users on exactly how to fix their mistake.

As we move into 2018, full access to the internet should be a basic right – not a privilege which excludes those living with a disability. It's seen as the norm for offices and stores to cater for those living with impairments so why should a business's online presence be any different?

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## **Full access to the internet should be a basic right – not a privilege which excludes those living with a disability**

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Even if we put aside the obvious ethical arguments for designing inclusive online experiences, the brand building and commercial benefits of reaching as many customers as possible are numerous.

Considering the fact that the average age of our population is consistently rising, and more and more of our products and services are moving online, there has never been a better time for brands to embrace inclusive design. And if there was ever a time for your business to take the plunge and work towards creating a more accessible web offering, it's now.



### **Chris Bush**

**Head Of Experience Design | Sigma**

Chris is Head of Experience Design at Sigma, he oversees a growing and dedicated team (made up of social scientists, experience researchers, business analysts, interaction designers and authors) to ensure Sigma's solutions are user-focused throughout their entire life-cycle, from initial user research through prototyping, design, development, to product launch and most importantly beyond. With extensive experience planning and executing lab based, guerrilla and remote user testing, he has helped to shape UX and online engagement strategy across a range of projects/services for Sigma customers including AstraZeneca, BBC, Citizens Advice, University of Brighton and InterContinental Hotels Group.

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To truly have a customer-focused culture, a company must first focus on its employees

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# How To Create A Customer Service Culture

Shep Hyken

Where does customer service begin?

Is there a set of rules or specific policies that a company should follow to ensure that each customer receives the best experience? Or does it start by establishing a customer service department that customers can call if they have a problem?

Customer service is actually much more. It is not a department. It is not found in rules and policies. It is a philosophy, and to be successful, it must be embraced by every member of an organization, from the CEO to the most recent hire.

As I travel the world and work with clients from all types of industries, they recognize the importance of customer service and the role it plays in marketing, sales, growth and revenue. They want to know how to go about creating a customer service culture in which all their employees understand the role they play in ensuring customers receive great service.

The key is creating a culture that is customer-focused. That means that every decision is made with the customer in mind, and everyone in the organization knows how they impact the overarching customer service strategy as well as the entire customer experience (CX).

The best companies create policies and procedures that are customer-focused, and then train ALL their people – not just the front line – to the culture. They learn how to handle certain situations, issues, problems and complaints – but remember, it has to go beyond rules and policies. The bottom line is *doing the right thing* for the customer.

That might seem hard to teach, but there are ways to be successful. Here are some things to keep in mind:

### **Start with the right people.**

First, the leadership team must create the culture. Then, you must hire people with not only the skills to do the job, but also the right mindset to fit in with your customer service culture.

### **Make sure everyone understands the basics.**

Before you can empower people to do the right thing, they must have a base of knowledge to work from. Therefore, everyone must go through basic customer service training, so they understand your vision for delivering good service.

### **Give them the freedom to do the right thing.**

Once your employees are trained in your special brand of customer service and know the guidelines in which they operate, empower them to make their own decisions. Let them know they don't have to "ask the manager" for approval every time they make a customer-focused decision.

### **Reinforce and realign.**

Take advantage of customer service triumphs and missteps as opportunities to give feedback to individual employees, and use success stories as examples to teach others.

So, whether you are just beginning or already on your way to establishing one, remember that a customer-focused culture has to include everyone – all leaders and all employees must be on board, or, to put it another way, be in *alignment*. With everyone working together to achieve the customer service vision, and all decisions made with the customer in mind, the end result should be a growing base of new and returning customers.

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**Customer-focused culture  
has to include everyone  
- all leaders and all employees  
must be on board**

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We've talked about some steps to take to ensure everyone understands that customer service is a philosophy, based on doing the right thing for the customer. Let's expand on those and take a look at some other important steps to building a customer-centric culture.

### **Define your customer service vision.**

Create a customer service vision statement, or mantra, in simple terms. It should be short and to the point, something that everyone can remember and understand, and it should inspire your employees to deliver great customer service.



## Let the vision guide your hiring decisions.

Of course, you want to hire someone with the technical knowledge and skills to perform the job, but it's also essential to consider a candidate's personality and attitude and how they fit in with your customer service vision and customer-focused culture.

## Train everyone.

Start training from day one, focusing on the soft skills, your customer service expectations and your core values. And, the training has to apply to everyone, including leadership. Otherwise, employees will come away with the impression that customer service isn't as important as you say it is.

## Model the behavior.

Everyone, but leaders in particular, should serve as role models for others to emulate. Treat employees with the same respect and dignity as you would the customer – maybe even more so.

## Empower employees to deliver good service.

Once employees are trained in your customer service vision, don't encumber them with rules that get in the way. Give them the power to do what it takes to meet and exceed your service standards. Trust them to do the right thing.

## Provide continual feedback.

Recognize others when they do well. Letting people know when they are doing a good job may be the motivation they need to continue or, even better, take it to the next level. Also, if someone is not in sync with the customer service standards, consider it a teaching opportunity and use it to help the employee grow to be more successful in the future.

## Celebrate success.

Employees love to be appreciated and rewarded, so don't forget to celebrate a job well done. That doesn't have to mean a party every week. It may be recognition at a weekly meeting or a mention in the company newsletter. Or, maybe it is something big, like an annual awards dinner.

One more thing to keep in mind. I believe that to truly have a customer-focused culture, a company must first focus on its employees. A happy employee who feels appreciated and respected will be better able and much more enthusiastic about delivering a good customer experience.

So, starting at the top, leaders must be an example of good service as they interact with employees and follow the steps to building a customer-centric culture. Do it right, and the customer will respond to the company's positive culture with repeat business, and ultimately, loyalty.



## Shep Hyken

### Customer Service & Experience Expert | Shepard Presentations

Shep Hyken is a customer service and experience expert and the Chief Amazement Officer of Shepard Presentations. He is a New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling author and has been inducted into the National Speakers Association Hall of Fame for lifetime achievement in the speaking profession. Shep works with companies and organizations who want to build loyal relationships with their customers and employees. His articles have been read in hundreds of publications, and he is the author of *Moments of Magic*®, *The Loyal Customer*, *The Cult of the Customer*, *The Amazement Revolution*, *Amaze Every Customer Every Time*, and *Be Amazing or Go Home*.

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**Identify and improve the employee experience with the same rigor you apply to customer experience**

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# Strong Brands Engage Employees By Creating Great Experiences For Them

Diane Magers



The practice of customer experience is all about customers - the people who purchase your products and services. In the past several years, customer experience (CX) professionals have created a rigor and framework around how we understand customer's needs, how we design better experiences, how we measure the impact of their engagement on the organization and how we innovate to improve their lives.

CX professionals help organizations think about the human experience and transform to new ways of working to create customer and organizational value. Successful organizations have realized the importance of their people in their organization are most integral to their success. Their employees, their human capital, their internal resources, their greatest assets – whatever term is used, it is the humans in an organization that make it work.

The discipline of customer experience can lead the way for advancement in employee experience. For example, years ago an annual survey to customers was considered sufficient

Many companies have seen the value of investing in CX. Paying attention to your customers, and optimizing every channel, every touchpoint, every interaction is proven to increase engagement, likelihood to return, brand loyalty, referrals, and ultimately, revenue. When we look at the “other” side of human experience - employee experience - we can see the same benefits. When we create better experiences and engage employees, it reduces hiring cost, increases tenure and productivity, decreases churn, and strengthens your brand.



## The Employee Experience Framework

We look to employees to *deliver* great experiences to our customers, yet many of us miss the opportunity to *create* great experiences for them. Customer experience professionals are well poised to bring this transformation and can help organizations to create and design these experiences as well. This can drive positive change so employees can deliver experiences to your customers and create internal business value.

Think about the tenure and productivity that can be gained if new recruits are welcomed, presented with well-planned onboarding programs, and are clear on their expectations out of the gate. On the flip side, consider the productivity and morale that's lost when it takes employees 20-30 minutes to do something such as scheduling a conference room or searching for information to do their job. The effort, time, and resulting frustration – just like our consumer experience – have an impact on how they act, how long they stay, what they say about us. And this has an impact on how they treat customers, retention, word-of-mouth and other brand impacting factors.

Through launching an employee engagement strategy, companies have the opportunity to show their employees that they care enough to pay attention to their needs, identify issues, and reap the benefits that an excellent employee experience can bring.

This approach is more than what I call "Beyond the Bagels." While benefits and perks are important, what employees really want is to be involved, contribute to the success of the organization, feel valued and respected, to have the opportunity to grow and develop, and access to proper leadership. It is about building experiences for them with the same attention and rigor we give to customers.

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## While benefits and perks are important, what employees really want is to be involved

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The first step in changing to employee centricity is to build a business case with executives. This can take many forms, but to prove out why employee experience is a worthwhile investment, be sure to clearly explain the current gaps and inefficiencies in employee experience, and how this ties back to the company's bottom line.

1. Create a cross-functional team - With support from the executives, charter a cross-functional team that has deep, lasting knowledge of the processes, programs, and frameworks that make your company tick. Focus on understanding the current employee experience. What do you know about your employees today? How long are they staying? Why are they leaving? What pain points, challenges, and barriers do they face on a day-to-day basis? Conduct interviews, review previous employee surveys and gather as much information as you can about their experience.
2. Map the employee journey - After the data collection phase is complete, it's time to do an employee journey map. This should be a comprehensive representation of what a typical employee goes through every day - their hurdles, frustrations, and wins.
3. Next, identify potential opportunities to redesign the highest-friction experiences that many of your employees face. To pinpoint which opportunity you should start with, perform a quick impact and value analysis. Which opportunity would, if solved, would make the most impact, be most valuable? Also, identify some quick wins to create momentum and



demonstrate the focus on employee experience. And then create a roadmap to tackle the other opportunities.

4. Design - You've determined what opportunities to start with. Discover the right issues to solve and design the new experience. Put plans in place to fix the problem - and then, tell your story. Highlight the results that you received from that project (or several projects) to build momentum.
5. Finally, use this pilot experience to design an ongoing program that introduces systematic changes to make your employee experience even better. Build the value case and demonstrate how the employee experience creates strong engagement for them, creating a cascade effect to improve the customer experience.
6. Create Ways to Gather the ongoing voice of the employee - Build an ongoing voice of employee and create ways for them to participate in innovating on the experience and provide input into the solutions. Build an ongoing way to test and iterate on what's working and what's not.

## Employee Experience in Practice

It's important to point out that designing and improving employee experience is not just putting out an employee engagement report each year. Many companies survey employees annually on areas like morale,

management, and leadership - and then they do little or nothing with these learnings. Alternatively, a company may fix a few things, but they don't introduce systematic changes that can make a sustainable impact.

Instead, businesses must identify areas that need to be fixed, and introduce practical ways to solve for common barriers. For example, after talking to employees, mapping their employee journey, and analyzing that information, a call center for a consumer goods company found that many employees were complaining about neck and shoulder injuries, and were having a hard time hearing customers resulting in low morale and negative impacts to the customer experience. They conducted a pilot with a subset of employees. They brought in new headsets and fitted employee workstations with modular sound-proof barriers.

A few months after these changes were implemented in the pilot group, they saw reduced call times, improved customer experience scores for the calls, fewer employee complaints, reduced worker's compensation claims since their employees no longer had to hunch over to hear customers.

Lasting, positive results require a commitment to identify and improve the employee experience with the same rigor you apply to customer experience.



### Diane Magers

**CEO | Customer Experience Professionals Association**

With over 25 years of Customer Experience leadership with brands like AT&T and Sysco, Diane has led transformations to embed customer and employee engagement with definable business benefit. She is currently interim CEO for the Customer Experience Professionals Association, and founder of Customer Experience Catalysts, a customer experience excellence consultancy. She holds an MS in Psychology and an MBA. She is a Certified Customer Experience Professional (CCXP), a CXPA CX Expert, and NPS, Voice of Customer and Customer Experience Management certified.

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**Exceptional customer service  
is something you never forget**

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## Customer Experiences That I Will Never Forget

Yuka Kurihara

Exceptional customer service is something you never forget, something that I learned while growing up in a small town in Japan. Embedded in Japanese culture is the concept of “Okyaku-sama Ichiban” (“customer first”). Two of my fondest lessons in outstanding customer service are rooted in my childhood.

These remarkable experiences helped me develop a deep, personal understanding of what it means and what it takes to be a “brand”.

## Lesson 1: Keep Your Promises

In 1985, my parents took my little sisters and me to the International Exposition in Tsukuba, Japan. I didn't even know what an expo was, but my parents said that I would be able to experience Mirai ("the future") and see what the 21st century would look like. The year 2001 seemed an eternity away to a 12 year-old girl. At this truly international event, attendance was over 20 million; 48 countries presented their proudest technological achievements.

The expo took place both indoors and outdoors with every technological innovation you can possibly imagine. "That's me!" I remember seeing my own face projected as we walked past an enormous TV screen that was 10,000 times larger than our home TV. There were lots of robots. One interpreted music notes on the fly and played a piano without making a mistake. Another was "Cleaner Shark," a shark-shaped robot that could "swim" through and vacuum your house.

After all these amazing exhibits, we searched for an exhibit with no line and chose the Japan Post pavilion. There, you could send a postcard to your "future" self. A cheerful pavilion attendant with a gentle smile gave me a blank postcard. She told me to write whatever I wanted and drop it in the bright red mailbox. The mailbox had a label – ポストカプセル ("Post Capsule"). Both my sister and I wrote ourselves messages and dropped them in the mailbox, and forgot all about it.

Sixteen years later, in 2001, I was living in the U.S. when I received a phone call from my mother and sister back in Japan. They were both excited and kept shouting, "It's here, it's here!" I asked, "What's going on? What's here?" It was my postcard from the expo! My sister got her postcard in the mail too. I was so surprised! Japan Post kept their promise!

Japan Post had stored all the 1985 postcards in a safe place and then delivered every single postcard to the original addressee. There must have been millions of postcards, and the postage was much more expensive compared to 16 years ago. Japan Post delivered anyway.

I was excited, and a bit nervous thanks to my sister's nonstop giggling over the phone. I couldn't remember what I wrote, and she wouldn't tell me, saying, "It's really funny and you can look at it the next time you visit Japan." On my next trip home I finally had a chance to see my postcard. In my little girl's handwriting, I had asked my future self: "What are you doing now? Are you married yet? Do you have a good looking husband? It also had a drawing of "future" me illustrating what I would look like. Somehow I had blond hair, which really made me chuckle.

Not only did Japan Post keep a promise made 16 years before, but they found a personal, emotional way to connect with their customers.

They created a beautiful memory for my entire family.

## Lesson 2: Admit Mistakes And Do The Right Thing

I like chocolate now, but when I was a little girl, I really loved chocolate. Getting chocolate was a big deal because my mom didn't usually allow my sisters and me to have sweets. Instead, our afternoon snack generally consisted of boring rice crackers and homemade carrot juice.

One clear fall day when I was 10 years old, I earned a gold medal for my calligraphy work. As a reward, my mom told me that I could go by myself to the corner store to pick out a chocolate. I remember skipping there to make my selection. Choosing carefully, I picked a candy bar that was shaped like a tree log. Excited, I ran home to try this special treat.



Quickly removing the wrapper, I was immediately confused. It wasn't the customary silky brown chocolate that I expected to see. Instead, my beloved chocolate was a strange grayish white and cracked. I was devastated! Something was clearly wrong with this chocolate.

Checking the package for the expiration date, I spotted contact information for the company's customer service. I decided to write to them about this unjust experience. Carefully following the instructions, I explained the situation in detail, including the date and place of purchase. Finally, I enclosed the wrapper, mailed my claim and forgot about it.

One cold morning a few months later, a large box arrived, addressed to me. My grandfather brought it into the house, with my curious sister at his heels. I'd never gotten a package before! Tingling with anticipation, I opened my first ever package. Inside the box was filled with all kinds of chocolates – every possible type and taste! And buried in the chocolates was an envelope that held an apology letter from the company's CEO. I could not believe my eyes. I was so surprised and happy! This was better than Halloween or Christmas!

The big chocolate company took a little girl's claim very seriously. The chocolate company acknowledged their mistake and they went above and beyond to correct it.

They created a lifetime memory for me. I now live in the U.S. but every time I visit Japan, I make a point to buy their chocolates. I am forever loyal to this brand.

## How Do You Build Brand Loyalty?

It's quite simple: you deliver on what you promised and follow through with your commitments. And when your company makes a mistake (which it will sometimes), you respond by doing the right thing. Transformation is possible – what a brand does after a mistake is what defines it.

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**Transformation is possible  
– what a brand does after a  
mistake is what defines it**

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We live in a fast, hyper-connected, borderless world. When interacting with your customers digitally and socially, it's important not to forget the real human beings behind their usernames. That human connection is more important now than ever. A great brand keeps its promise and does the right thing, just like the two thoughtful companies that created memories for my family and me. I will never forget those companies.



## Yuka Kurihara

**Director of Globalization | Pitney Bowes**

Yuka Kurihara is Director of Globalization at Pitney Bowes where she leads the company's Globalization/Localization efforts. At Pitney Bowes, we thrive on helping our clients navigate the complex world of commerce. We bring the world's best brands to your door. Enabling over 200+ online retailers shipping to more than 200 countries, we help iconic brands like Ralph Lauren, J.Crew, and major retailers like Macy's and Target keep their promises and commitments to their customers globally.

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# Do Or Do Not; There is No Constant

Linda Deeken

A quick scan of popular titles in the change management space will give you a range of articles, many aligned around the common theme of managing through change or preparing for change. Periodically, you will find a title or theme focused more on leading through change, but more often than not, these articles and thought pieces tend to speak about the concept as though it were a static point in time.

Increasingly I believe that to take such a perspective on change undermines the reality, the responsibility and the rewards of change.

## The Reality

Change is a constant. To quote the mysterious Man in Black from 'The Princess Bride', "anyone who says differently is selling something". If we begin by preparing organizations and managers with the mindset that change is finite, static or something to be avoided, we set them up for ultimate failure. There is more change and disruption coming in the next five years than has occurred in the last 50. Embrace it. We need to change our perspective from seeing threats to seeing opportunities. It may seem minor, but it fundamentally shifts the emotional and rational responses that organizations and people have to the reality of change.

## The Responsibility

Facing change appropriately comes with a fair amount of responsibility. What do I mean? In such a situation, the first step is to understand what is driving the change. The changes you are witnessing are fundamentally driven by objective, data-driven, grounded-in consumer motivations, and they are shifting your industry, your retailer landscape, your supply chain and your competitive realities.

Consider for a moment the retail industry. A cursory review of the retail landscape over the last five years yields a laundry list of bankruptcies, acquisitions, store closings ... but also new growth and new business models. Amazon's purchase of Whole Foods, or Nordstrom's recent announcement of a new store format that is a fraction of the size, and doesn't sell clothes!



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**Change propels organizations  
(like people) to greater things,  
new skills sets and new opportunities**

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These changes are bringing lower food prices, greater availability, and a more customized approach to clothes shopping via personal shoppers. They are also addressing fundamental shifts in customer behavior, mindsets and motivations regarding value, convenience and the role that traditional brick and mortar retailers play in their lives. It is the responsibility of all to take note of the lessons.

Step two? Take the time to disaggregate the piece parts to truly understand what your organization or brand can impact and change, and with what you should align. Ask questions like: What consumers hold the majority of the profit, the profit potential and future growth? Who are the brand or category enthusiasts who will be your primary source of innovation, your life-line, as you forge fearlessly ahead into your future?

And finally, be proactive in looking for these signs in the future. In the same way Anheuser-Busch observed implications of the growing “sweet palate” for the beer industry and launched Bud Light Lime, or how Wheat Thins recognized clearly the threat of the gluten-free lifestyle to a wheat-based product line and launched an entirely new product line - minus the wheat. Again, the important nuance here is to change the conversation and behaviors from reactive to proactive.

As two former colleagues of mine, Taddy Hall and Eddie Yoon, were fond of saying, ‘there is a big difference between noting ‘that’s weird’ vs ‘that’s funny’. In both cases

businessmen and women are noting obvious shifts in consumer decisions and behaviors that have the ability to materially impact their businesses. Important! But, as they note in their [HBR Blog on the topic](#), the heart of ‘that’s funny’ is one of curiosity, of unlocking of possibilities and of learning and thinking differently about the future vs the past.

The heart of ‘that’s weird’ rest somewhere between judgment and defensiveness... hardly a place from which to source personal growth, and never a place from which to source professional/business growth.

## The Reward

To those organizations that can embrace the changes in the marketplace, and indeed lead the changes in the marketplace, significant financial reward awaits. The truth is that change propels organizations (like people) to greater things, new skills sets and new opportunities. With the change in your organization’s conversation away from “managing through” to “embracing and reveling in the new possibilities change brings” comes a new way of thinking and new innovations, new products and new categories.

Getting to that place begins with changing the conversation internally.

It’s really that simple.



### Linda Deeken

**Chief Marketing Officer | The Cambridge Group**

Linda Deeken is the Chief Marketing Officer of The Cambridge Group. She has been published in Harvard Business Review, among other publications, and has been a key contributor to several books recently released by The Cambridge Group. Previously she was a consultant with The Cambridge Group, focusing on developing customer-driven strategies, new product development, positioning and consumer segmentation, in addition to advancing critical new pieces of intellectual capital for the firm.

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# Brands Are Invisible On Voice

Adam Pierno

Brand awareness has given way to goal accomplishment over the past 20 years.

We've learned as consumers to find ways to complete objectives and lean less on brand names as signals of quality. When we search, we search for the job to be done and not necessarily a brand name.

As of today, Alexa is the leader in the popular voice assistant market. Alexa alone has about 10,000 skills; commands its artificial intelligence can understand and execute. Popular skills are things like 'play this song' or 'tell me tomorrow's weather.' Users are quickly developing skills awareness. There are thousands to learn, after all.

For decades brands built awareness above all else, mostly through passive media consumption. Then Google, at the front of the internet, opens a few side windows for brands. People could find a brand by the description of what it did, proactively. Search marketing disrupted traditional advertising. Now Alexa (and all voice assistants) is disrupting search.

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## Search marketing disrupted traditional advertising. Now Alexa (and all voice assistants) is disrupting search

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As consumers, we don't care about brands. We care about goals. Google and other search channels have given us the choice. Amazon second in line. Brands, understanding this, and desperate to stay relevant are building frictionless experiences. They've actually been working to become as invisible as APIs that plug into Amazon, ebay, Google, Verizon - keeping people in those experiences.



So, it's not the Hilton service or personal touch they want; it's actually less of either. Does that make the Hilton brand more valuable for consumers? It seems to be moving more towards a convergence with the voice model. Hey Google, book me a room without involving any live people. Note the word that was missing. A **Hilton** room.

In [this piece](#) by Professor Joel Galloway, he demonstrates the response Alexa provides to the request for some batteries. Alexa offers only Amazon-branded batteries and no alternatives – such as top-selling brands Energizer or Duracell. Or even discount brand RayOVac.

For a consumer to get Energizer batteries, Huggies diapers or Tropicana Orange Juice they have to ask Alexa by name. Use ketchup as an example. Far and away, Heinz is the category leader and has the highest brand awareness across consumer segments. In the voice environment, ubiquity becomes a weakness. Heinz is so overwhelmingly expected to be the ketchup – we are surprised when we see an alternative. If Alexa sends Sir Kensington, we're puzzled. But we might try it and realize that smashed tomatoes are actually pretty interchangeable.

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## In the voice environment, ubiquity becomes a weakness

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In the grocery environment, high brand awareness is reinforced by visual cues. We see the bag; we see products that we associate; we see in-store ads. In your kitchen, talking to a computer, awareness is not so automatically linked to sales. You realize you need batteries; you ask Alexa to have some sent from your Prime account; you never buy Energizer again.



Brands were popularized during the early ages of mass production to create a shorthand for quality – and more importantly – consistency. There were less complex jobs to do, and fewer products to help do them. Prior to the popularization of brands, people would ask for the product they needed by description, not by name. Now it appears we have come full circle.

Amazon and Google have trained us to look behind the brand name - to focus on the job to be done. It stands to reason that the brands that will survive in the voice era (however long it may be) will be the very few that people care to remember. We've gone all in on utility of brands and brand communication. We've put full focus on downstream activity – fighting for last click attribution. Hmmm.

As TV viewing has diminished, there is a consistent line to sales decreases of classic CPG brands. Of course, this is also aligned with changing grocery consumption. As people adopt delivery or non-traditional grocery choices they do not see those brand reminders. The current trend suggests that awareness for these brands will diminish as well as viewership, and the most meaningful ad impressions drop.

As strategists, it's time to elevate brands again. Get out of the tactical portion of the consumer journey and stop chasing clicks. Alexa and her friends are going to make

unaided awareness the coin of the realm. Brands that aren't requested by name will simply disappear. Especially as data from voice requests begin to affect screen-based search and shopping – and live grocery and retail within the next three years.

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## Alexa and her friends are going to make unaided awareness the coin of the realm

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How? Brands must create memorable propositions, not strictly tied to utility, but tied to a memorable promise. Brandless has demonstrated that the CPG model is weaker than perceived in the US. There are hundreds of brands lined up to exploit that weakness. Brandless did it by promising to cut out the non-relevant components such as media and distribution costs that were passed on to consumers. A bold but simple proposition.

In a world where everything is on demand through a person's voice, what will your brand do to make it to their lips?



### Adam Pierno

Chief Strategy Officer | Santy, Instil Strategy Training

20 years of taking advantage of change to build strategies that make clients' competitors jealous. A strategic leader, Adam brings his critical thinking skills to bear for an impressive list of clients that include Delta Air Lines, Pei Wei, Pocky, Harvest Snaps, Dial Corporation, Dunkin' Donuts, Domino's Pizza, Trident, Mercedes-Benz, and Smirnoff. As Director of Brand Strategy & Planning, he is obsessed with uncovering insights on behalf of Santy and its clients. The Boston University graduate enjoys instigating positive and revenue enhancing change for clients through thought-provoking, integrated campaigns. His new book "Under Think It: A Marketing Strategy Guidebook for Everyone" is now available on Amazon.

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# Customers Are Irrational: Don't Fight It, Embrace It

Colin Shaw

Your customers are irrational. They may like to think they are logical, but they are not. This applies in both the consumer and business to business environments. For years people have fought against this irrationality and assumed customers make rational decisions, but they don't.

You have a choice; you can either stick your head in the sand or embrace this change.



So, let's look at the science behind what a marketer needs to know to embrace this change. Behavioral economics and consumer psychology are changing the way we approach customer experience.

They are both crucial to improving your customer experience and impelling customers to behave in ways that create more value for your bottom line.

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## Behavioral economics and consumer psychology are changing the way we approach customer experience

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Let's first take a closer look at what each of these provides to the marketer:

**Behavioral Economics** can be defined as the new marketer's science of choice. In basic terms, it looks at people's behavior and the effect this behavior has on money/revenue. The study of behavioral economics explores why people make the decisions they do as customers, especially when the decisions they make aren't in their best interest. It looks at the systemic biases we share as humans that are influenced by our cognitive processes and emotional influences. Some experts **have described it** as blending "insights of psychology and economics."

**Consumer Psychology** studies why people buy things. Using psychological principles, consumer psychology seeks to understand why people choose what they do and how marketing influences those decisions. It also explores how external stimuli convince people to purchase products and services. Using research on consumer behavior, consumer psychology examines how marketing messages work with an individual's sense of identity, social status, and decision-making influences. Most experts agree that we are

**irrational beings**, especially when we shop, so consumer psychology wants to analyze the causes of this behavior, both internal and external.

## Customers Are Irrational

Customers make irrational decisions all the time. From what brand of toothpaste they buy, to the car they drive, to the restaurants they choose, we buy emotionally and then justify with rationality afterwards.

Whenever I talk about this concept, I think of buying my Lincoln Navigator a few years back. I liked the car and wanted to buy it. However, since it was a significant purchase, I figured I should spend extra time weighing my options to arrive at the best decision. I made a spreadsheet, as all good rational-thinking people do. I had items like cost, maintenance, lease options, and even resale value included in the spreadsheet. I compared different makes and models I was considering. In an amazing coincidence, the Lincoln Navigator won the comparison! Sure, I had gone through the motions of rationality, but the fact is, I *wanted* the Navigator. The spreadsheet merely justified my emotional (and irrational) purchase for me.

Maybe you disagree. Maybe you think I am an anomaly and that we make rational decisions most of the time. However, if this was true, if we always made rational buying decisions, then how do you explain this?





Or this?



Or this?



Clearly, not a lot of rational thought processes went behind each of these purchases!

Of course, I'm being silly, but only to make my point. Rationality does not drive our behavior as customers. As it turns out, economists noticed this fact, too.

## Success In Customer Experience Requires New Thinking

For many years, the field of economics assumed that people always make rational decisions as customers. However, as time passed, it became clear that this assumption of rational customer decision-making wasn't true. Moreover, if people were irrational, then it also was evident that influences for their

behavior must also exist. It was from these realizations that the fields of behavioral economics and consumer psychology emerged.

Today, we know to be successful with our customer experience, we need new thinking. This new thinking can be summarized in the following three foundational concepts to today's customer experience efforts:

1. People's decisions as customers are driven by emotions, even if they appear to be rational.
2. To better understand why people do things, we need to understand the psychology of their decisions, especially if we want to improve their customer experience.
3. Buying decisions are far more complicated than we thought; believing that customers buy based only on price is a fallacy that can destroy your customer experience.

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### People's decisions as customers are driven by emotions, even if they appear to be rational

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Behavioral economics takes the analysis of customer behavior past the surface attributes of price, product, placement, and promotion to a new level of depth and detail. However, this level is necessary to understand a customer's rational, emotional, subconscious, and psychological experience. Consumer psychology adds to this an extensive analysis of how internal and external influences further affect the outcome. Together, they provide a robust understanding of all that contributed to the buying decision.

There is a bonus here, too: When you know why people do what they do, you can predict what they will do next, which has astonishing implications for your bottom line. Once you understand why customers do what they

do, you can provide an experience path that leads them to buy what feels natural. You can also predict how they will behave in future scenarios based on their past behavior, making it easier to design future successful experiences. You could also train your customer-facing team to identify how customers feel so the team can direct the customer back to the emotional path that leads to an intuitive buying decision.

## The Next Competitive Battleground? Most Assuredly

I have been working in customer experience since before it was a thing. When I founded my global customer experience consultancy in 2002, the concept didn't have the widespread acceptance or the significance it has today. As a result, even the smallest customer experience efforts in the early days produced dramatic improvements for about any metric you could choose.

Today, however, that is not the case. The easy bits have been done. In fact, some of my long-time clients - and even some new clients that have been long-time advocates of customer experience - have called me to say that their meteoric climbs in Net Promoter Scores (NPS) have slowed and they don't know what to do next.

In many ways, the fields of behavioral economics and consumer psychology will reveal the next competitive battleground

for customer experience excellence. They will explain why people do what they do as customers and facilitate anticipation of what they will do next. The two fields will provide the framework for customer experience design that accommodates these principles, supplies the new way of thinking about customer behavior, and produces the results we need to take customer experience to the next level.

Some of you are skeptical, I realize. Business philosophy entrenched the idea that consumers are rational for many years. Many of my clients don't believe me at first, either. However, the organizations that have moved past their skepticism and embraced the fact that our buying decisions are primarily irrational, driven by emotions, influenced by both internal and external factors have enjoyed enormous success with their customer experience results.

The ones who haven't? Not so much.

The question becomes to which group do you want to belong?



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**Our buying decisions are primarily irrational, driven by emotions, influenced by both internal and external factors**

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### Colin Shaw

**Founder and CEO | Beyond Philosophy**

Colin Shaw enjoys recognition by LinkedIn one of the world's top 150 business influencers where he has over 250,000 followers of his work. Colin is the founder and CEO of Beyond Philosophy, the first consultancy & training organization devoted to Customer Experience. Colin is an international author of six bestselling books, including "The DNA of Customer Experience: How Emotions Drive Value" and "Unlocking the Hidden Customer Experience", as well as an engaging keynote speaker. Colin's new book, *The Intuitive Customer* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) explores the role of behavioral economics and consumer psychology in shaping the customer experience in more detail.

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# Time To Reveal Your True Brand

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# If Experience Is Brand, More Needs To Be Done

James Maposa

Delivering exceptional customer experiences is a narrative that has prevailed over the last few years. Adherence to this standard is mostly driven by two fears, losing your list of existing customers, particularly when switching costs are low, and lastly the comparably higher cost of recruiting new customers.

As a business, you obviously want to avoid losing your list of existing customers as they often will not have great things to say about you after they have left. This, in turn, contributes to a higher customer acquisition cost and ultimately contributes to an erosion of your margins as you struggle to balance out the turnover.

With this in mind, the next question is how to deliver ideal customer experiences consistently.

Admittedly, the cost to serve a customer is arguably going up. In as much as digital has reduced the real amount of serving customers, it's the investment in enabling partnerships and relationships that places your business at risk. As an example, if I bought clothing from an online retail store and expected delivery of my products in 48 hours and the online service provider's retailer delivered in 72; I'd probably try out another online retailer with a better timely delivery record.







Resources now need to be invested in vetting the partnerships and relationships that are an extension of your brand, including whether they add to or take away from the experience you're looking to deliver. So I suggest that through this line of thinking that the cost to serve to deliver the ideal customer experience has gone up. More is being invested in the back end to ensure that when customers interact with your company, they get nothing but the best of you – core or non-core offering. In addition to the back-end, below are the front-end touchpoints that also need to be considered.

Technology has resulted in us becoming more accessible from a communications perspective. Based on this, I always want to have enough airtime to communicate with family and colleagues as and when I need to. I also prefer buying my airtime in bulk and using pay-as-you-go offerings for different service providers within the African continent to have a better understanding of which service provider has the best offering.

While on my travels, I found myself at a leading retailer's outlet and proceeded to ask the sales assistant for a US\$10 airtime voucher. The assistant pulled out ten, US\$1 vouchers and based on the disgruntled look on my face, quickly mentioned that these are the only vouchers that had been delivered by the mobile service provider. This meant that for me to top up my mobile phone's airtime, I needed to find a coin, scratch each voucher to reveal the airtime top-up voucher code, enter each code separately ten times, to top up my desired airtime amount.

I obviously didn't want to do this, so I pleaded with her for an alternative, but she responded that because most customers usually purchase the \$1 and \$2 vouchers, these were the vouchers that were predominantly supplied to the market, with

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**Resources now need to be invested in vetting the partnerships and relationships that are an extension of your brand**

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\$5, \$10, and \$20 vouchers being a rarity. As I desperately needed to make a call, I succumbed and made the purchase. Finding the scratch coin was my next task as the country I was in was battling with a cash crisis, with most purchases being made via card and mobile payments. I eventually found a coin and stood by the shop counter for a good 5 – 10 minutes and went through the arduous task of topping up my airtime, a dollar at a time!

As I scratched each voucher, I asked myself why the service provider wasn't supplying higher denomination vouchers. In as much as most organisations build their offering around a primary market segment, they surely should also cater to the secondary customer base as well as they do their primary market. Without being too judgmental, I assumed that the problem was exclusive to this shop and moved to another part of the city only to encounter a similar situation. Based on this experience, I fell out of love with my preferred mobile service provider.

Because of higher data and phone call charge rates when compared to the country where I currently reside, I found myself needing to recharge my airtime on a daily basis. Each time my airtime ran out, and I needed to recharge, I found myself cursing my luck, hoping to heaven that I had a coin in my pocket and lastly praying that the next shop, outlet or airtime vendor I bumped into would have higher denomination vouchers.

It never happened.

Another thing that bothered me was the provider's offering diversity. As an example, because I use my phone as a mobile hotspot, I consume a lot of data. As a result of this, I am always shopping around for the best data deals to ensure I am always connected. Using the same mobile service provider, I asked a franchised shop assistant to kindly share my data deal options. She responded by stating that the service provider had three data deal offerings, divided into daily, weekly

& monthly offerings. The daily data bundles offered more data but all the data needed to be used up within the space of 24 hours. The weekly bundle offered less data, but you could consume it for longer, with the same being the case for the monthly deal.

As I was going to be in the country for a week, I opted for the daily bundle option as it allowed me to consume data within my usual consumption range and enabled me to pace myself over the week based on my needs. Based on my experience, it appeared that the data deals were developed with the service provider and not the consumer in mind. The rate of consumption of the daily bundle data seemed a bit excessive, and each time my daily bundle data got used up, my phone would immediately switch to out of bundle data consumption, which to say the least gobbled my airtime at an alarming rate.

I again, found myself having to find another outlet to top-up my airtime with the \$1 vouchers. I even considered switching to another service provider at one time, but with two days left and the number I was using being the only one I could be reached on when within my visited country, I bit the bullet and soldiered on for another three days!

What amused me was the other alternatives they had on offer to ensure they catered to their customers. It was as if the service providers knew that their data costs were exorbitant. Because of this, they offered social media bundles which only gave customers access to Facebook, Whatsapp and other social media sites, restricting usage.

This would in a way, keep their customers satisfied with what each service provider was offering and reduce turnover and customers' switching.

This didn't feel like a viable option for me as I don't use social media much and I also didn't want to be restricted in terms of my internet usage. But because I'd already committed, I found myself always paying more, and



more, and more for data as I simply couldn't function without it – as emails needed to be responded to and other pertinent issues needed to be addressed through a plethora of internet searches.

The last thing that comes to mind were the franchise outlets and other retailers where I was purchasing my airtime vouchers. As a result of the country's cash crisis, I have mentioned that most payments are made either via card or mobile money. I, unfortunately had cash and needed to make purchases at a till. I assume that mobile money technology suppliers and users are still getting around how to use this solution.

I mention this because for some reason, the queues at most of the outlets I visited were long and I found myself having to wait in line for 10 – 15 minutes before I got to the front to make my airtime purchase. Because a sour taste had already been left in my mouth based on my voucher and data consumption ordeal, I, in a way, placed some of my queuing disgruntlement on my mobile service provider. As I stood in each queue, it fueled my fire to never use this service provider when I next visited.

In conclusion, my experiences left me less excited about my service provider's brand. I asked myself whether the organisation embarks on periodic audits to understand prevailing trends and whether they needed

to progress or evolve their experience frameworks to better serve their customers. I wondered if they had real-time feedback systems that enabled them to interact with their stakeholders to get a sense of whether their offerings and associated experiences were delivering the desired effect. I also asked how they could get insights on how they could effectively serve their secondary markets in an equity building manner.

As an example, while standing in a retailer's queue where I had been advised I could buy airtime, one of the queuing customers asked me what I was in line for. I responded, and he said that I didn't need to spend so long in a queue for airtime alone. He advised me to try the butchery next to the retailer (a registered airtime supplier whose shop seldom had queues). I thanked him kindly, and within two minutes I had made my airtime purchase at the butchery (I applaud the butcher's entrepreneurial spirit in diversifying their revenue streams).

Unfortunately, the butchery only had \$1 airtime vouchers.

Therefore, a balance should be struck between organisational and customer needs to deliver lasting brand equity. Delivering great CX through understanding the market context is a great way of endearing customers to the brand and keeping them loyal to your organisation over the longer term.



## James Maposa

Managing Director | Birguid

As Managing Director at Birguid, James leverages his vast experience and expertise to build and progress mutually beneficial and long-term client relationships. Based on the exceptional work delivered thus far, James ambition is to progress Birguid to be a standout African advisory company, providing actionable strategies driven by an enlightened understanding of the continent's business context. Prior to founding Birguid, James worked in industry for the Forestry Commission, Forestry Company of Zimbabwe, Industrial Engineering Group and Sahara. James has also worked as a strategist for leading global professional services companies, namely, Frost & Sullivan, Ipsos and Ernst & Young.

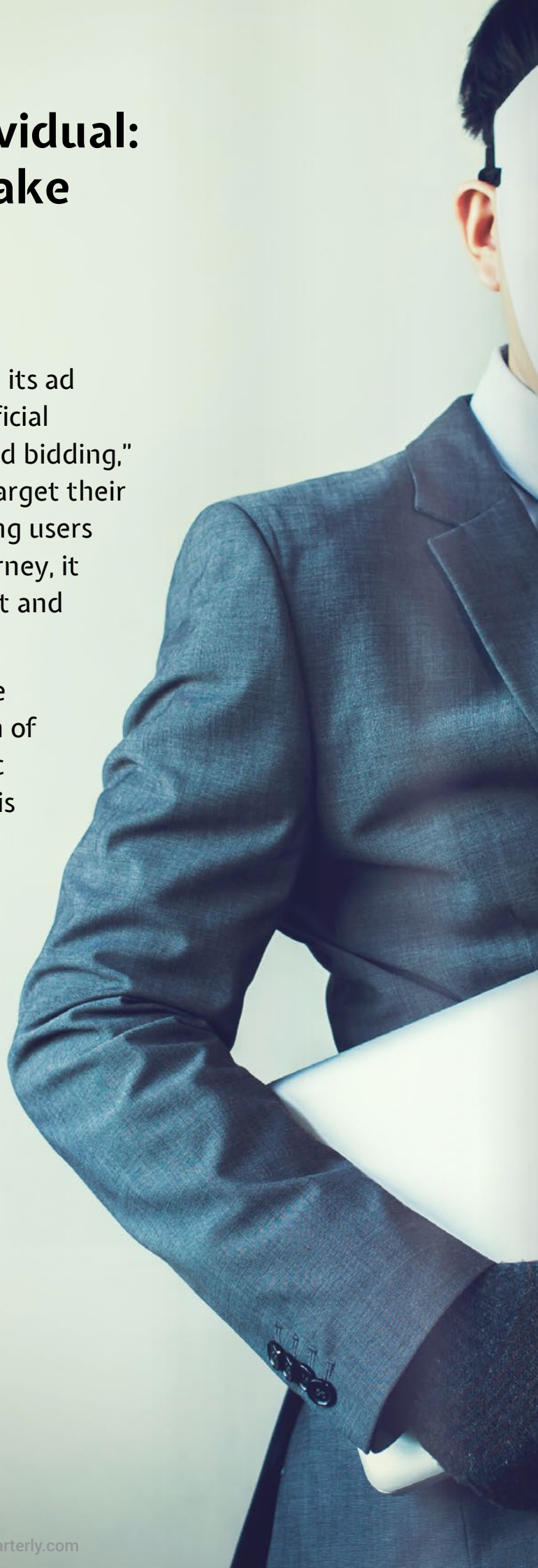
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# Understanding The Individual: Using Technology To Make An Impact

Marco Scognamiglio

Snapchat **recently announced** upgrades to its ad strategy with the incorporation of an artificial intelligence platform known as “goal-based bidding,” which allows advertisers on Snapchat to target their messages more effectively. And by allowing users to swipe ads and dive deeper into the journey, it increases the potential for more consistent and continued consumer engagement.

Especially for marketers wanting to create deeper brand experiences, this integration of technology to offer a brand more dynamic outreach possibilities is essential. Up to this point, marketers – like those utilizing Snapchat’s platform – have used AI and other technologies to boost consumer engagement and improve ad targeting. While the likes of AI are a great start, the best tech innovations – from chatbots to programmatic algorithms and recommendation engines – address consumers’ needs much more holistically.







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**AI and other tech tools are not replacements for human ingenuity and empathy, but rather supplements to them**

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Leveraging these and other technologies further along in the consumer experience requires a new level of thoughtfulness and creativity, because using technology for technology's sake is not a winning strategy.

## 'Adopt Now, Strategize Later' Is a Poor Model

Brands often rush to embrace new tech platforms using an "adopt now, strategize later" approach without being entirely sure where these platforms even fit into their brand experiences. For example, offering consumers swipes that can more effectively monitor campaign engagement is a great metric for marketers, but by not linking those swipes to concrete business outcomes, Snapchat misses a crucial opportunity to parlay that technology into a deeper user experience. Any misstep at this stage in engagement can potentially ruin a consumer-brand relationship forever – like getting a first date wrong.

And, when Facebook came under fire in 2016 for utilizing a human "trending team" to vet its news stories, it shifted to **an entirely AI platform** that used algorithms to determine what and what not to disseminate. The problem with this tech? That algorithm quickly propagated controversial and false stories, a blow to Facebook's brand and its consumers' experiences. Again, think in terms of a first date.

Beyond AI, other much-vaunted technologies like virtual reality and voice command, for example, elicit lackluster consumer responses. While many companies jumped on the VR bandwagon with the hopes of being "cutting-edge," **70% of consumers** say VR-powered brand experiences don't live up to the hype, reiterating that technology for the sake of technology can actually do more harm than good.

## AI With A Purpose

Balancing technology with user experience is especially crucial in the context of the corporate world's tech du jour: AI.

Consider the insurance industry's use of chatbots to educate consumers. This idea started, as new ideas often do, with a new competitive threat. Lemonade, a New York-based fintech company, **disrupted the insurance industry** by using chatbots to help users take out policies and to handle claims without employing brokers and while contributing to the social good through its annual "giveback" day.

Using technology in this way augments the human experience instead of frustrating it because that usage achieves two fundamentals: It enhances a customer's engagement with a brand, and it accomplishes a clearly delineated customer end goal without contributing to "the noise." Brands that want to achieve this balance can follow these three steps:

### 1. Ask The Right Questions

Before implementing new tech, ask: Why are we doing this? What problem are we solving? How does it change the consumer experience? Just because you can integrate a new tech feature into a product or service doesn't mean you should.

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**Before implementing new tech,  
ask: Why are we doing this?  
What problem are we solving?**

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Recently, an international beauty contest decided to forgo human judges and implemented a program called Beauty AI to score and rank contestants. When the results came back, the "winners" were overwhelmingly white and light-skinned



individuals, which resulted in an ethical firestorm and undermined the more nuanced experience consumers had come to expect from the event. While the intention to lean on technology for efficiency and possibility may be well-placed, brands must ultimately consider the short- and long-term implications of the technologies they plan to incorporate before they upend their brand experiences.

## 2. Understand The Context

While tech solutions solve problems and alleviate pain points, brands need to pay attention to how, why, and when customers use their products and then design the experience around those behaviors. Their primary goals should be incorporating technologies that help to offer more inclusive services and keeping an eye out for opportunities to make consumer tasks and touchpoints even more seamless.

With enough data, you can customize offers and promotions on the basis of each user's preferences. Air France-KLM **mastered this sort of outreach** with its 360-degree approach to digital customer services. It uses algorithms to collect comprehensive profiles on each of its 90 million-plus customers from identifiers such as airport lounge preferences, booking history, and flight searches. It also uses algorithms to customize its social media and site response times, all of which combine to form a "made-just-for-me" brand experience.

## 3. Emphasize Augmentation

Most important to note, AI and other tech tools are not replacements for human ingenuity and empathy, but rather supplements to them. Before you jump to outsource your processes to new tech platforms, make sure you've applied your team's combined years of experience, multidimensional intuitions, and consumer insights to your marketing decisions, working to fuse that humanity with your technological processes.

This new age of cognitive collaboration between AI and humans should eliminate the machine bias and enhance it with augmented intelligence – i.e., the commonsense reasoning powered by machines. Augmented intelligence allows brands to home in on customer engagement across the buyer's journey, delivering ultra-personalized brand experiences through heightened insights and greater connectivity.

Innovative technologies unleash a host of possibilities for brands and customers alike. But using technology not based in a strong, foundational strategy is a surefire way for a brand to burn through its budget and create headaches for itself – and for consumers. By asking the necessary questions, recognizing context, and augmenting intelligence, companies can implement the right tools and create better brand experiences that keep people at the heart of their campaigns.



### Marco Scognamiglio

Global CEO | RAPP

Marco Scognamiglio is an experienced chief executive officer with a demonstrated history of working in the marketing and advertising industry to create long-term customer value for brands. He has a passion for helping clients see how the future of customer engagement will deliver improved customer value. Marco currently serves as the global CEO for RAPP.

[www.rapp.com](http://www.rapp.com)



# Enabling Employees To Do What They Want To Do

Evan Hackel

“Why don’t employees do what we tell them to do?” is a question you hear a lot in business.

It implies that employees are intentionally misbehaving, frustrating company leaders, and ignoring instructions.

It also implies that they think they have a better idea of what they should be doing than company leaders do.

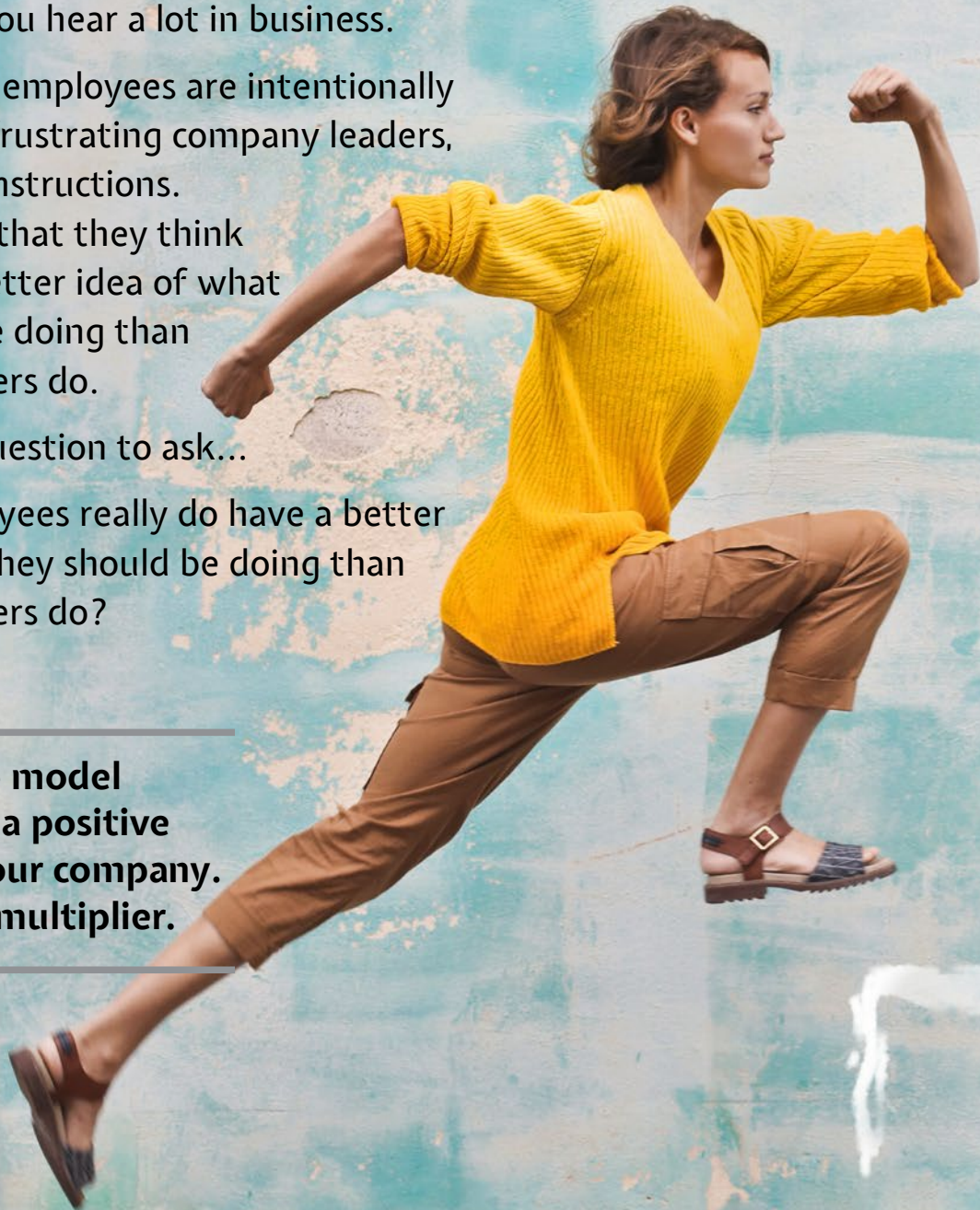
But here’s a question to ask...

What if employees really do have a better idea of what they should be doing than company leaders do?

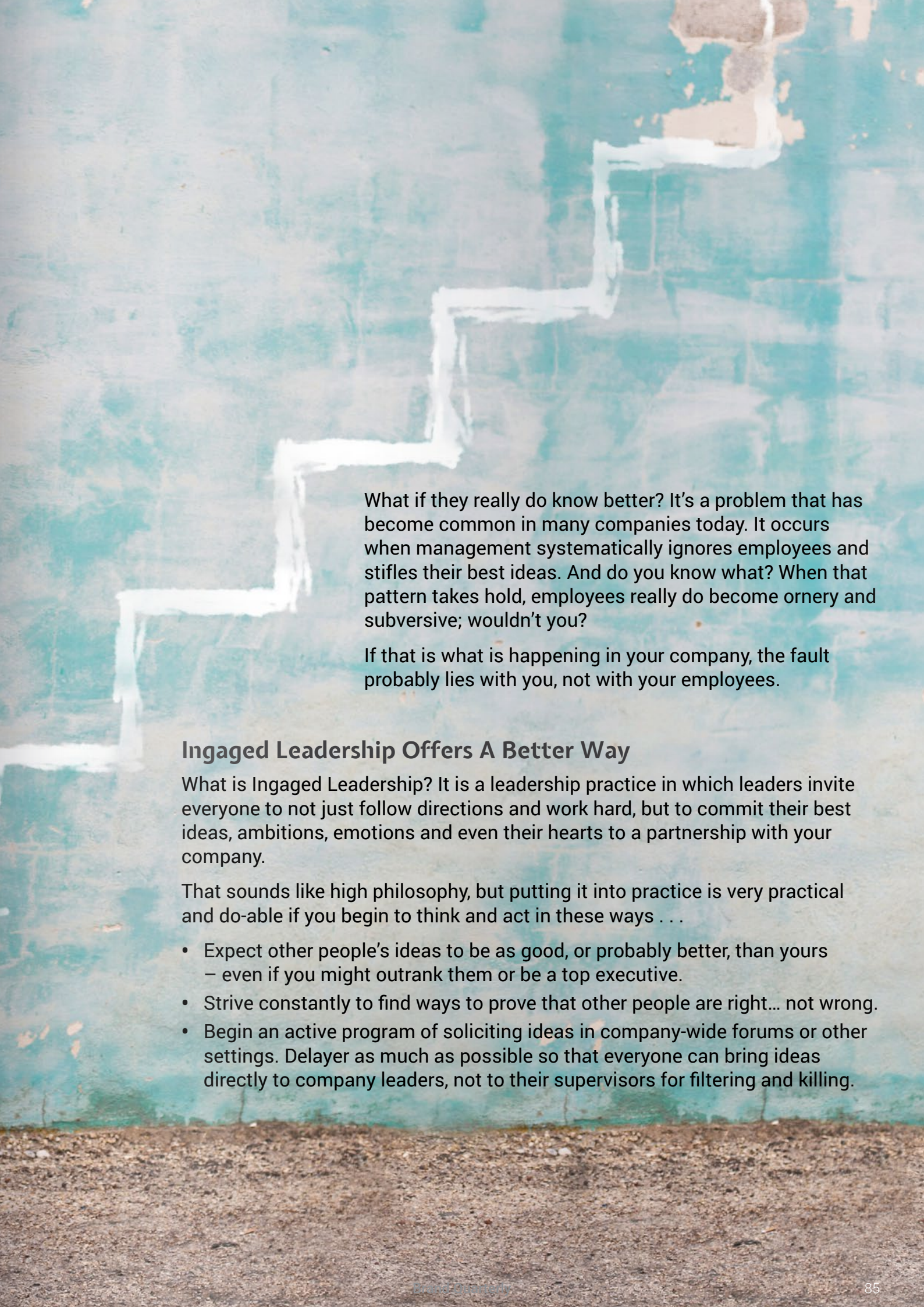
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**Work hard to model and cultivate a positive attitude in your company. Attitude is a multiplier.**

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A blue wall with white tape forming a staircase pattern. The tape starts from the bottom left and goes up in a series of steps towards the top right. The wall has some peeling paint and a textured surface.

What if they really do know better? It's a problem that has become common in many companies today. It occurs when management systematically ignores employees and stifles their best ideas. And do you know what? When that pattern takes hold, employees really do become ornery and subversive; wouldn't you?

If that is what is happening in your company, the fault probably lies with you, not with your employees.

### **Engaged Leadership Offers A Better Way**

What is Engaged Leadership? It is a leadership practice in which leaders invite everyone to not just follow directions and work hard, but to commit their best ideas, ambitions, emotions and even their hearts to a partnership with your company.

That sounds like high philosophy, but putting it into practice is very practical and do-able if you begin to think and act in these ways . . .

- Expect other people's ideas to be as good, or probably better, than yours – even if you might outrank them or be a top executive.
- Strive constantly to find ways to prove that other people are right... not wrong.
- Begin an active program of soliciting ideas in company-wide forums or other settings. Delay as much as possible so that everyone can bring ideas directly to company leaders, not to their supervisors for filtering and killing.



- Acknowledge and use ideas from people at all levels in your organization. You cannot use every idea or suggestion of course, but do acknowledge ideas and let people know they have been heard. They will become more invested in their work, and your entire organization will improve and grow.
- Allow people to try things that they believe deeply in, even if you have doubts. Cultivate the ability to think, “Maybe I am wrong.” Remember, the most important thing is for your organization to be right... not YOU.
- Permit people as much autonomy as you can, so they set their own priorities and make their own decisions. The more you can stop telling people what to do and let them decide for themselves, the more you free your company to grow.
- Cultivate the ability to ask for help when you need it. And offer help freely when you see the need. Help flows both ways, and it rejuvenates companies.
- Consider having everyone in your organization – including company leaders – take part in 360° job reviews in which they are reviewed by their peers and the people they supervise. Share that feedback with everyone in your organization.
- Invite everyone to contribute to, define and refine your company’s mission and vision. One effective way is to start meetings by asking people to state the company’s vision, using their own words. In this way, people become invested in what your company is, and in what it is becoming.
- Surround yourself with people with different skill sets who will challenge you. Also, avoid the temptation to build a team of “yes people” who only tell you positive things about your ideas and plans. The right kind of disagreement brings greater progress.
- Invest lavish labor to build a positive company culture where people respect each other, expect the best, and communicate in ways that convey the underlying belief that, “We can do this.”
- Work hard to model and cultivate a positive attitude in your company. Attitude is a multiplier. One person with a negative attitude can literally cripple your company. But even one person with a positive outlook can help lead your organization to new levels of achievement, profitability and success.

## A Company Of Equals

Why should you strive to build an organization where everyone gets to do what he or she wants, not what they are told? It’s a rather utopian goal, isn’t it, maybe impractical?

No, it is a practical goal - perhaps the most practical of all, because it frees people to bring their best to their jobs and achieve results.

Try it and you will like it, as the old saying goes. Try it, and don’t be surprised if you are astonished by the results you achieve.



### Evan Hackel

**CEO | Tortal Training and Ingage Consulting**

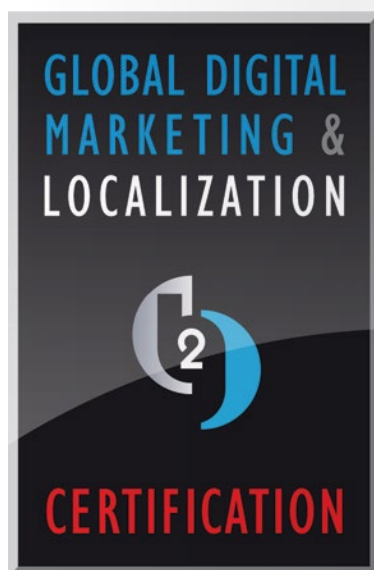
Evan Hackel, the creator of the Ingaged Leadership concept, is a recognized business and franchise expert and consultant. Evan is also a professional speaker and author. Evan is Principal and Founder of Ingage Consulting, a consulting firm headquartered in Woburn, Massachusetts. A leader in the field of training as well, Evan serves as CEO of Tortal Training, a Charlotte North Carolina-based firm that specializes in developing and implementing interactive training solutions for companies in all sectors. To learn more about Ingage Consulting and Evan’s book [Ingaging Leadership](#), visit his website below.

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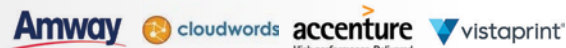
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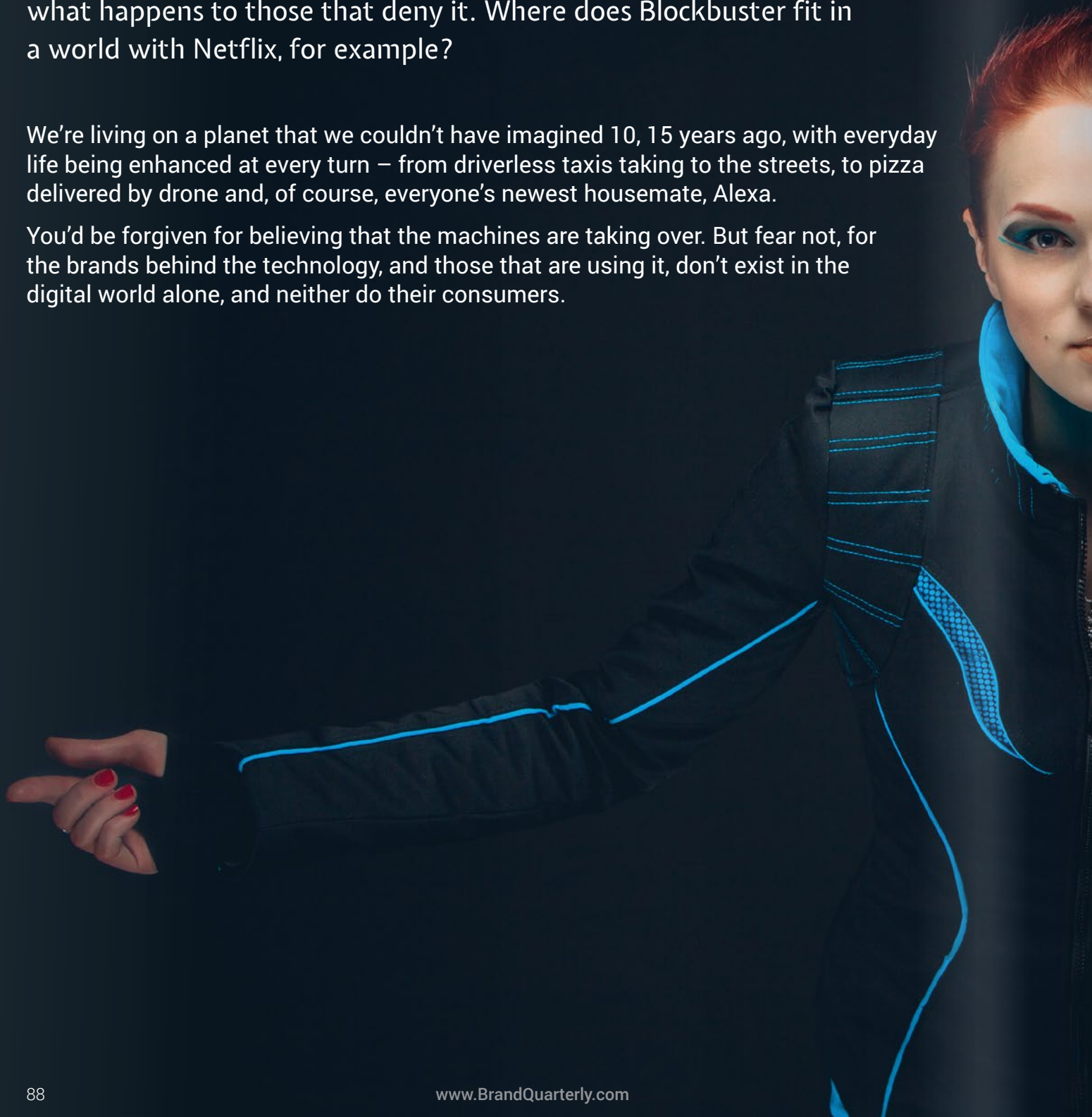
# Cutting Through A Digital World: How To Achieve 53% Customer Conversion

Nic Whelan

We live in a technologically driven world. There's no doubt about it – it follows us everywhere (literally, if we're talking about GPS, location services, remarketing...). Those companies that continue to use new tech solutions now will be the ones that survive the future, and we've seen what happens to those that deny it. Where does Blockbuster fit in a world with Netflix, for example?

We're living on a planet that we couldn't have imagined 10, 15 years ago, with everyday life being enhanced at every turn – from driverless taxis taking to the streets, to pizza delivered by drone and, of course, everyone's newest housemate, Alexa.

You'd be forgiven for believing that the machines are taking over. But fear not, for the brands behind the technology, and those that are using it, don't exist in the digital world alone, and neither do their consumers.





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The brands behind the technology,  
and those that are using it,  
don't exist in the digital world alone

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This is proven by the likes of Facebook, which recently funded a physical experiential event in London to bring to life online safety challenges faced by young people. It's proven by Snapchat, which opened a series of pop-up shops in the world's most lucrative shopping districts to sell nothing but 'Spectacles' through a vending machine. It's why marketing agencies are jumping onto the trend of developing experiential divisions to work alongside digital, social and traditional forms of marketing.

Even the leading digital businesses recognise that not everything can be at its most powerful when it is only available online. When there's an important message to shout about, it is much clearer to hear in person.

Realising the potential of experiential is creating a movement towards more traditional marketing methods. We're seeing brands achieve cut-through by rewinding the clock – going beyond the digital world to get face-to-face with their consumers. It's about more than raising brand awareness, it's about achieving results.

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## **We're seeing brands achieve cut-through by rewinding the clock – going beyond the digital world to get face-to-face**

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Research by Momentum Worldwide suggests that hosting an event versus distributing an advert gets 82% of participants talking about a brand. 62% of participants will then go on to research a brand online. 65% will change the way they view a brand, and 53% will go out and choose that brand at point of purchase.

Although impressive, even these statistics often don't do justice to the results seen across experiential. When the £9,000 tuition fees were introduced, The Department

for Education (DfE) needed to reassure prospective students that the new system wasn't a barrier to going to university and decided to launch a roadshow. It's now in its seventh year, touring the UK to give prospective university students and their parents the chance to learn about financial student support available by speaking to specially selected graduate ambassadors.

During the 2016 tour, 92% of students and 93% of parents strongly agreed that it improved their understanding, while 98% of teachers said it would help them in offering their students further support. At a time when tuition fees are at their highest to date, 94% of students said they'd now consider applying to university.

Since 2010, over 1,000,000 students and parents have not only seen the tour, but have interacted with it and engaged with the graduates at the heart of it. So whilst ONS statistics suggest that 99% of young adults are active internet users, there aren't many brands that can say they've achieved the same results with digital marketing.

Yet, digital marketing takes up so much of a brand's advertising spend. And on the face of it, we may think "Well, why wouldn't it?"; In March 2017, Ofcom reported that the UK's online audience is 50.4 million. 76% of people own a smartphone. The average person spends 83 hours per month online – 279 hours if you're a teenager according to a study by Common Sense Media. So, it's natural that the advertising gurus would tap into such a vast audience, and it is no shock that in 2016 UK advertising expenditure exceeded £10 billion, 46% of the total advertising spend for that year.

But it comes with a catch – imagine you're in a room of 1,000 people who directly meet your target audience. Great! What could be better, right? But these people are also the target audience for 1,000 other businesses, which all come and join you in the room. It's suddenly immensely overcrowded. You try



and grab the attention of at least one of your potential customers, but most of them are put off by the noise in the room and block it out completely, preferring not to speak to anyone. Some of them already know who they want to speak to and walk straight past you until they find someone familiar.

The point being, if you partner the opportunity to access an ideal audience in high numbers with a relatively low cost per interaction, as we see with many online methods of advertising, it encourages a saturated market and makes it difficult to actually stand out.

Yes, on the surface digital marketing seems like a cost-effective tool, but scratch off some of the gloss and the image is rather different. Only 35% of digital display adverts see any views at all, says research firm Lumen, while only 9% of those that were viewed received more than one second's worth of attention. Only 4% received more than two seconds. Even the younger generations are clocking on to the annoying nature of online advertising, with 52% of 12-15 year-olds naming it as one of their biggest online dislikes.

But brands aren't stupid. They recognise this and they're moving beyond it. More interactive digital platforms are finding their legs as we see increased engagement with Facebook Live, Snapchat, and Instagram stories. However, these platforms, while better than inundating consumers with lifeless display adverts, still rely on gaining that initial spark

of attention. There still isn't a way of knowing if they've walked away from the screen while a video is playing, or if they've immediately tapped their way onto the next story.

Brands need to remind themselves that the best way to grasp – and keep – attention is away from notifications and the scrolling nature of social media. Consumers need something different that will outlive their eight-second attention span (which is, apparently, shorter than a goldfish's).

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## **The best way to grasp – and keep – attention is away from notifications and the scrolling nature of social media**

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In order to actually connect with audiences, get to know them, and build a worthwhile relationship we need to think outside the box – whether that box is smartphone, tablet, or desktop-shaped. There's so much more to our lives than the Internet alone, and there's no denying the impact of a live experience. So, it makes sense to speak to our customers not just via digital or social, but out in the big wide world as well. Let's embrace technology, but never forget the value of face-to-face interaction.



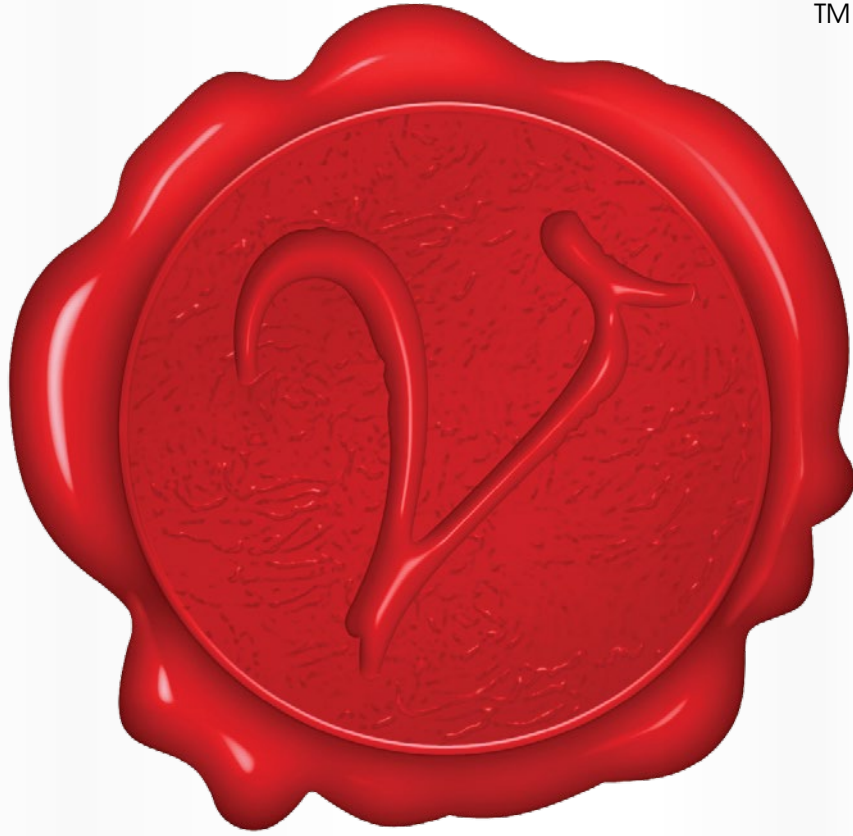
### **Nic Whelan**

**Business Development Director | Event Marketing Solutions**

Nic Whelan is business development director at Event Marketing Solutions (EMS), the leading roadshow agency across the UK, Europe, USA and Middle East. Nic boasts over 16 years' experience in the delivery of roadshow tours, having worked on international campaigns for brands including Bosch, Sky, Warner Brothers and Department for International Trade. His expertise lies in supporting brands when reaching dispersed customers, whether nationally, internationally or in new markets. Nic also leads the company's development strategy as a member of its board, playing a key role in EMS's global growth strategy.

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