

Customer engagement in an omnichannel world

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Omnichannel customer engagement revolves around so much more than just a technology-driven approach. A cross-channel strategy needs to be an integral human one if organisations are to remain competitive in an increasingly connected environment.



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Certainly, the cloud and the arrival of local data centres do play a role, but organisations are not treating it as a technology stack. Instead, it is viewed as a customer experience initiative and how to serve and engage with them more effectively. It boils down to becoming a mechanism for understanding customer behaviour.

Just consider the customer journey and all the touchpoints they have with either an organisation or the government. But this means very little if the business does not understand the profile of their customers. After all, it will engage very differently with a millennial than how it would interact with an executive or a retiree.

Take insurance for example. More insurtechs are emerging that are disrupting the market because they engage with customers on their own terms. They select a channel, such as mobile, and then drive all that communication and innovation through there to deliver a superior experience.

This is seeing the arrival of a paradigm shift when it comes to customer service. People used to think this revolved around business-to-consumer communication such as insurance or healthcare dealing directly with customers or patients. But it is happening in the business-to-business landscape as well where customers must be understood within the roles they play at an organisation. Think how you would deal with finance people as opposed to those in marketing, sales, or even IT.

A considered approach

There is a big difference between multi-channel approaches and omnichannel ones. For the former, it is about contacting customers through as many channels as possible. Yet, this is not done in an integrated fashion. Omnichannel, on the other hand, use multiple channels in an integrated manner. A motor dealership might want to engage with its customers in a better way to improve the way it sells cars. Omnichannel makes those discussions specific and relevant on an end-user level.

One of the mistakes traditional organisations are making when it comes to their omnichannel strategies is that they want to adopt a big bang approach where all the channels must be changed at once. Instead, they should start small and focus on one channel, master it, and then grow from there. Omnichannel engagement is all about protecting the brand and getting the identity right. People connect with a brand as individuals, so if there is a lack of emotion, they will likely move on to a competitor.

Most companies are using the same platforms whether it be social media, a website, or a call centre. The trick is to integrate these environments consistently from an engagement perspective. Simple things like keeping the content of a website up to date and managing information across channels can be incredibly difficult to get right.

Part of this entails creating a consistent look and feel across all the channels used to engage the customer with. Whether it is on social media platforms, your website, or even the call centre environment, people want the same brand identity to come through even though the messaging might be tweaked to suit the channel.

Beyond tradition

In a market driven by social media, mobile applications, and secure online portals, the level of sophistication required will result in traditional customer relationship management solutions being left behind. Yes, creating records of when customers contact a business are important, but the new dynamic requires using systems of engagement. Fortunately, technology has made this more easily available than in the past.

Giving impetus to this is how customers' expectations are also changing. People want information and they want it now! In an increasingly sophisticated competitor landscape, those organisations providing a personalised approach to the end user will be the ones that differentiate themselves. Omnichannel is a vital tool to help fulfil this.

Technology does play a part in making this easy in as much as the organisation can make the content fit according to the environment it is being published to. It is all about using the right tools at the right time to the right audience. Change will be driven by the customer. The way we operate in our personal lives will contribute to a change in the organisations we work at. Going forward, it is going to be a different environment.

Omnichannel will see change being focused on what customers need. Technology will certainly be an agent of this, but it is about listening to customers on a human level and then adapting content and engagement mechanics around that.

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